champions of change

Shelter NSW, Community Activism
and Transforming NSW's Housing System

Dr Tony Gilmour

National Housing Action 1988

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Shelter
NEW SOUTH WALES

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Foreword

by Sue Cripps and Karen Walsh

The year in which Shelter NSW turned 44 we decided it was time to document its history. This book not only captures the history of housing advocacy in New South Wales but takes every opportunity to position housing advocacy in the broader social, economic and political context, and each chapter paints a picture about how the players responded to or leveraged this in pursuit of the vision for a fair and just housing system.

This book is frank and honest in its interpretation and narrative, which bring to life many of the activists, prominent characters and quiet achievers committed to housing justice. It highlights the people, the champions, the struggles and the challenges that endured in broader society during this period. In reviving these stories it illuminates the gems, the personal recollections and anecdotes of these champions, many of whom have passed on yet remain legends and even heroes.

It's an important historical document in that, whilst the period is relatively recent, it demonstrates how fickle and short-lived many policies are, and how, with the stroke of a pen, with a change of government, years of good work and progress can take major setbacks. Systemic advocacy requires patience and is described as a 'long game'. When there are wins they deserve to be celebrated, and the achievements highlighted in this book show that Shelter has certainly played a key role helping to 'modernise' the NSW housing system and act as a champion of change. Importantly, this book highlights the fact that the way we approach advocacy today is very different to that of the 1970s, and through this highlights how the world has changed, yet in many ways is the same.

The highs and lows of the past five decades have certainly shaped the way that Shelter NSW has adapted to remain relevant and legitimate, and the abundance of goodwill and support towards Shelter has been much appreciated, especially during periods when funds were scarce.

Whilst there's so much that has progressed in the housing policy space, there are also headlines from the 1970s that still resonate today. Despite Australia boasting of its wealth and GDP and that, unlike many other jurisdictions, it hasn't experienced a recession for 27 years, we find ourselves in a housing crisis in 2018, with record levels of housing stress, a continuing trend in rising homelessness and growing numbers of people waiting for social housing. Poverty, discrimination, unemployment and homelessness remain daily headlines and are even barbeque stoppers. The impacts of urban density, urban renewal, social displacement, gentrification and renewal on low-income households were key policy challenges during Shelter's birth, and these policy challenges are prominent today. The quote (on page 3) by a Glebe Resident Action Group member in the Henderson inquiry report of 1975 could be repeated verbatim today and still ring true.

Another policy area of concern in the 1970s, as Tony Gilmour notes, was that tenancy legislation favoured landlords and was unfair to tenants. Whilst there has been limited positive policy shifts since then, this still needs urgent reform, and Shelter NSW with the Tenants' Union and others continue this work. With the decline in home ownership rates and an increasing proportion of private renters, the impacts of this unfair legislation is affecting more and more people.

For Shelter NSW, this important document is about us reflecting and looking back whilst also looking forwards. The housing crisis we find ourselves in today means there is much work to be done by Shelter and its members, supporters and partners. Whilst we can draw on our corporate knowledge, expertise and strong foundation of history, our future and the impact we make will depend on today's decisions and today's leadership.

Shelter is as important now as ever, acting (along with this book) as the institutional memory of the sector, helping prevent repeating the same old mistakes. How we adapt and influence in the future is critical, and whilst we can celebrate the wins of the past, we are also cognisant that to remain relevant in a crowded space and achieve collective impact in pursuit of our vision, we must continue to change and make use of new technologies and adopt new ways of doing business. Our future is reliant on how we mobilise our resources, how we collaborate and remain agile to respond to a changing environment – and this means we will need to focus our energies on areas where we will have the greatest impact.

When we spoke with Dr Tony Gilmour about this book, we had no idea what the end product would reveal. This book could have been a dry and dull read, but it is quite the contrary. It is testament to Tony's vision

that this book is a comprehensive, rich read that brings the facts, stories and personalities to life. He gave generously of his time and approached this project with gusto, passion and a commitment to documenting a story that has integrity and is an interesting read. Tony describes the journey of researching and writing as a 'labour of love'.

Introduction

Shelter NSW (Shelter) has a long and intriguing history. In continuous existence since 1974, the organisation's staff, volunteers and directors have been both witness to – and contributors to – the transformation of New South Wales's housing system. While this book tells the story of Shelter as a peak body, recording their highs and lows, it is not just about a single organisation. Shelter's extensive archives provide a lens through which to see what was happening, when and why across the NSW crisis, social and lower-rental housing sectors.

The role of activists is centre stage. Change did not happen in isolation, through a series of dry ministerial pronouncements or convoluted funding agreements. Rather, a dedicated group of neighbourhood leaders, radical political thinkers, researchers and agitators – outspoken, pushy and often plain eccentric – shaped governments' thinking, lobbied for new solutions and mediated the implementation of policies to best suit the needs of low-income households. In a quote misattributed to former German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, laws are like sausages and best not seen being made. Through this review of Shelter's work over past decades we gain insights into the messy world of the housing policy sausage machine and the role of outsiders in the process, including organisations like Shelter. What is a peak body? How do they come into existence? How do they balance outspokenness with fear of defunding? What role have they served in the past, and do they have a future?

Chapter 1 paints the background of 'slum' clearance, Green Bans and neighbourhood resistance in the 1970s that energised a generation of activists who were Shelter's bedrock. The organisation's history is told in Chapter 2 with Shelter, a volunteer-run progressive movement (1974 to 1984), and Chapter 4 when Shelter's funding came and went, and peak government relationships were negotiated (1984 to 1995). Then in Chapter 6 Shelter morphs from battling the system to a cosier inside-the-tent

relationship (1995 to 2005), and in Chapter 7 Shelter finds new roles in an increasingly crowded peak body market (2005 to 2018). The remaining chapters are thematic. Chapter 3 highlights Shelter's remarkable ability to support the emergence of new organisations and sectors, often resulting in its own mandate diminishing. And Chapter 5 charts the work of Shelter building its professionalisation and lobbying for policy change, with two case studies on the Olympics and homelessness and the gentrification of Millers Point.

It can be daunting for those starting housing careers to follow the complex overlay of Commonwealth, state and local government initiatives over the last half century. Prime ministers, premiers and housing ministers have come and gone. Exciting new initiatives are launched, then disappear as dust. New industries such as community housing emerge, others such as housing co-operatives wax and wane at the whim of governments. This publication provides a solid knowledge base on housing policy and politics, with attachments including a list of abbreviations, glossary, timelines and summary of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements.

Shelter was born out of the social upheavals of the 1970s and new ways of thinking. It has always relied on housing activists and supported housing activism. While campaigning techniques have morphed from picket lines and squatting empty properties to polished television appearances and social media, Shelter has remained the champion of change.

1 On Fertile Ground: Shelter's Origins

The idea for establishing an organisation such as Shelter NSW (Shelter) did not appear in a vacuum. People came together at both a particular time (when traditional societal norms were being questioned) and in a particular space (contested neighbourhoods in the inner ring of blighted neighbourhoods around Sydney's business core). The seeds for Shelter's birth were sown on fertile ground.

1.1 Slum landlords, squalor and workers' housing

The 1971 Australian census opens a window to housing conditions of the time. In terms of tenure, the headline differences between the 1970s and current times seem modest. When excluding 'other' and 'not stated' categories, NSW owner-occupation fell slightly from 71.5 per cent in 1971 to 67.5 per cent by 2016. Social housing in 1971 – which at that time meant renting from the Housing Commission – represented 64,320 homes or 5.2 per cent of dwellings. By 2016 social housing had dropped to 4.9 per cent, split 4.2 per cent for public housing and 0.7 per cent for community housing. Renting from private landlords increased from 23.3 per cent in 1971 to 28.3 per cent in 2016 (ABS, 1972).

Back in the 1970s the Housing Commission was still building new homes. An additional 10,162 had been added in the five years to 1971, and although the rate was falling, a further 7,664 public housing dwellings were added by 1976. One surprise in the 1971 census was the 26,000 NSW households renting from their employer, mainly in areas outside of NSW 'metro' areas, which included Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. More than three quarters of Housing Commission properties were in the metro area, and of these metro public housing properties 72 per cent were flats rather than houses compared to just 9 per cent of owner-occupiers in metro areas who lived in flats.

Behind the headline 1971 census data there is strong evidence of poverty. In the Sydney–Newcastle–Wollongong conurbation, with a total of 960,000 dwellings, 327 households had no electricity and 299 no gas or electricity. More than 63,000 of these households were without a television, and 225,000 households had no car – a quarter of the total. More shockingly, 4,276 households had no kitchen, 4,421 no bathroom and 1,853 neither a kitchen nor bathroom. Nearly 58,000 homes were not connected to a sewage system and had to use sanitary pans. Overcrowding was rife across NSW in 1971. Of households with four or more residents, 18,887 lived in properties with no bedrooms and 8,625 with just one bedroom.

Private rental pitfalls

During the Second World War the Commonwealth was given power to control private rents in support of the war effort. A 1948 referendum returned this power to the state, and only NSW retained rent controls. By the 1960s many private renters remained 'protected tenants' under the *NSW Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 1948*. This limited their rents to a 'fair' level – usually well below market rents – and prevented 'no grounds' evictions by landlords (Mortimer, 1996).

In the 1960s landlords and real estate agents lobbied to end protected tenancies, arguing they limited investment in property development. As a result, in 1968 the Liberal state government under Premier John Gorton amended the 1948 legislation such that it only applied to buildings converted into units before January 1969 and allowed landlords to evict a tenant if they could afford to rent alternative accommodation. This built on earlier changes that limited protected tenancies to properties built before 1955 (Schneller, 2013).

As a result of legislative changes, the number of protected tenancies fell from 207,000 in 1960 – when they represented two thirds of all private rentals – to just 20,000 in 1974. Comparing this number with private tenancies in the 1971 census, only around 7 per cent of private renters retained protected tenancies. By 2012 numbers had dwindled further to an estimate of under 900 (ibid., pp.7–8).

Rent assistance for low-income households was considerably more limited than subsequent decades. Supplementary Assistance was subject to a strict means test and not available to the unemployed, large families or people with disability. Fewer than half of private renters below the poverty line in 1975 were eligible for Supplementary Assistance (Henderson, 1975, p.160).

By the 1970s laws relating to private tenants needed reform. Typical problems included discrimination against applicants based on social status, Aboriginality, migrant background, sexuality, marital status or having children. Other issues included unequal bargaining power between landlord and tenant, poor property condition, landlords refusing to carry out repairs, uncontrolled rent increases, invasion of privacy by real estate agents, eviction without notice at the end of the lease period, and bond disputes.

The inner city was changing, with new wealthier residents moving into traditional working-class neighbourhoods. Gentrification was identified as an issue in the early 1970s even if the term was not then in use. As the Glebe Resident Action Group in their submission to the 1975 Henderson inquiry noted:

> The problem of insecurity of tenure in Glebe is on the increase, as the area is increasing greatly in value, and is becoming increasingly popular as a residence for the affluent. Developers and individuals are taking advantage of this to make large profits. The problem is especially serious for the low income earner and the aged and invalid (ibid., p.161).

A major conclusion of the Henderson inquiry was that the law was unfair to tenants, especially those who were poor or disadvantaged. It recommended better information for tenants, protection against unfair evictions or rent increases and a tribunal to resolve landlord and tenant disputes. Furthermore, 'new legislation must be weighted in favour of tenants, because tenants are in an unequal bargaining position' (ibid., p.303).

Commonwealth funding and the Housing Commission

In NSW the state's first Labor government passed the *Housing Act 1912*, which led to a number of 'model' public housing projects such as within the garden suburb of Daceyville in Sydney. However, the real impetus came with the establishment of the Housing Commission of NSW in 1942, which was initially tasked with housing war workers and later service personnel returning from the Second World War.

On the recommendation in 1943 of Ben Chifley, the minister for post-war reconstruction, a new funding model was started: the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA). Under the inaugural CSHA from 1945 to 1955, 38,000 new public rental homes were built in NSW with low-interest loans or grants provided by the Commonwealth (Martin, 2016).
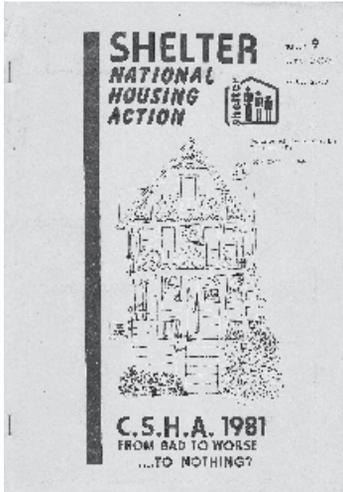
Shelter and the 1981 CSHA

Source: National Housing Action, 9. Both National Shelter and NSW Shelter lobbied governments on the CSHA negotiations, which typically took place every five years. As National Shelter noted in 1980, 'There has been little publicity surrounding the development of the new CSHA … the Commonwealth Government has done its best to dampen community participation in the discussion stages leading to this new Agreement' (ibid.). Shelter's role was to open the debate more widely, an objective it achieved with much success.

From the 1940s to the 1960s Housing Commission construction accounted for around one in five of all new homes built in Australia. This proportion fell to under 2 per cent by the 1990s (see endpiece, page 240).

Prime Minister Menzies' 1956 CSHA shifted 30 per cent of funds from public housing construction to subsidising home ownership, and Housing Commission sales at discounted prices to sitting tenants began. Between 1956 and 1970, 92,000 of the 153,955 public housing properties built across Australia – or 60 per cent – were sold. As a result, the average annual net supply of new public homes fell considerably from 8,740 in the decade to 1955 to just 4,425 between 1957 and 1971 (Wilkinson, 2005).

The CSHA had to be updated every five years or so, resulting in often strained negotiations between the Commonwealth and states over funding and policy direction. Up to the 1970s CSHA discussions tended to be between politicians, with voters and residents focusing more on how housing policy was delivered in their state. One of Shelter's great legacies from the mid-1970s was to involve the wider public – especially lower-income households – in CSHA debates by bringing home the real impacts that could flow from changes to what must have seen like an esoteric funding agreement.

For its first three decades, and arguably beyond, the Housing Commission of NSW fulfilled a different role to a contemporary social housing landlord. Its focus was building properties and collecting the rent from households where (almost invariably) the male member head of the family was working, not supporting the social and community needs of

higher-needs residents; single residents, unless elderly, need not apply (NLMI, 1983, p.19). The transition from workforce housing to welfare housing, often termed 'residualisation', was driven by successive changes to the CSHA starting under the Whitlam Government in 1973. Both main political parties supported the move, though often for different reasons. For Labor, public support should be targeted to those most in need. For the Liberal party, public spending should be restrained, and private market housing solutions favoured.

The Housing Commission kept strict rules. At the Greenway flats in North Sydney opened in 1954 the early management was rather paternalistic: permission was required to have a bicycle on site, and the sight of washing hanging at a window or on a balcony would lead to a rebuke. Overnight visitors were strictly forbidden, and in a booklet published for the building's fiftieth anniversary the author notes that 'I have been told many a story of gentleman callers hiding in wardrobes when there was a knock on the door' (quoted in Shelter *ATH* 58, p.9).

A report in 1974 by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) highlighted how the Housing Commission was using the 'unsuitable domestic habits' clause. Applicants could be penalised for not cutting the grass, the tidiness of their house or a negative view from their neighbours on how the resident was dressed when the housing officer visited (Thatcher, 1979, p.11).

The positive side to the Housing Commission's approach, at least for government, was it enabled the business to be viable. Rental income was strong, and loans from the Commonwealth under the CSHA could be easily serviced. The negative side was that the Housing Commission's building program was doing little to reduce poverty. By the mid-1970s the Henderson inquiry estimated 72 per cent of Housing Commission residents earned incomes at least 20 per cent above the poverty line, leaving the greatest concentrations of poverty among private renters.

Renting a Housing Commission property carried stigma and brought disadvantages, even in the 1970s when most residents were working families. In 1975 Mrs Hoole, a Housing Commission tenant, observed of tenants housed in concentrated public housing estates 'some people feel they have been labelled for life as belonging to a certain socio-economic group. And their response to this is either hostile or passive, neither response being good to build community pride' (Henderson, 1975, p.165).

The built form of public housing had changed by the 1970s. Housing Commission homes were initially smaller estates of detached houses. Walk-

up flats started in the mid-1950s, and by the end of the decade some larger estates on the edge of the city were built, for example, 8,000 homes at Mount Druitt. During the 1960s the Housing Commission started addressing the problem of inner-city 'slums'. New high-rise, higher-density properties were built in more central locations in Sydney. This started with the 14-storey, 591-apartment Northcott Estate in Surry Hills in 1961, culminating in 1977 with the 29-storey Matavai and Turanga towers in Waterloo, housing 522 elderly residents. As described later in this book, these schemes were opposed by a combination of community activists, resident action groups and the Builders Labourers Federation – and, in time, Shelter.

1.2 The march of developers, expressways and the Commission

As Professor Henderson noted in his foreword to the definitive study on the topic in this period, poverty had been rediscovered as an issue in the 1960s (Henderson, 1975, p.viii). The debate was particularly focused on inner cities, with Sydney a major concern. Planners and politicians worked on ambitious schemes to both clear the 'slums' and unclog the city of the rising scourge of motor vehicle congestion.

Build homes for people, 1970s

Source: Courtesy of City of Sydney archives 066/066798. The image, taken by Geoff Beeche in the early 1970s, shows protests against changing Woolloomooloo from low-rent residential to office towers.

Neighbourhood clearance

Since the start of the twentieth century, an arc embracing Redfern, Newtown, Surry Hills, Camperdown, Paddington, Glebe and Balmain became more industrial in character and overtly working class. By the 1960s and into the 1970s these neighbourhoods were characterised by high levels of social disadvantage and a deterioration in their physical environments. An estimated 90,000 homes in the inner city were said by a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* to be in need of demolition (Glascott, 1966). For a decade or more these properties had been viewed by planners as ripe for renewal (Ruming et al., 2010).

The largest working-class area under threat from developers in the early 1970s was Woolloomooloo, home to maritime workers. It was a neighbourhood infamous for rowdy pubs, street fights and brothels, which developers wanted to replace with nine high-rise offices, three skyscraper hotels, an entertainment centre, a new stop on the Eastern Suburbs railway line, parking lots and – very much of its time – a proposed monorail. The scale of the project can be seen below: perhaps an early attempt at a Barangaroo-style extension to Sydney's business district.

The Rocks – now a celebrated heritage precinct – was also under threat from private developers. Back in 1900, an outbreak of bubonic plague was a prompt for the state government to acquire most 'slum' properties in the area. The Sydney Harbour Bridge bisected the community, and the remaining houses continued in public ownership until 1970 when the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority was established. Plans were hurriedly drawn to replace affordable rental housing in a close-knit community with 13 brutalist high-rise offices, hotels and apartment towers of between 30 and 50 storeys over a labyrinthine system of underground car parks.

The threat to traditional Sydney communities came from both the public as well as from the private sector. NSW's Housing Commission first started slum clearance with a project in Redfern in 1948. However, the task was great as '[t]he work of slum clearance has been left almost entirely to the over-burdened, under-financed Housing Commission …. The problem is an enormous one for the Commission' (Glascott, 1966).

In April 1972 the Housing Commission proposed resuming 11 hectares of land in Waterloo in a plan involving demolition of 500 existing terrace homes, to be replaced with 827 modern low-rise homes and six 30-storey tower blocks. Once gazetted as a housing area, the commission would be able to buy properties at current value, and no owner could make

Woolloomooloo nightmare, 1971
Source: Holland (1975). Premier Askin (left), Mr Shanahan from the development company (centre) and W. Brotherton, president of the Maritime Services Board, 16 October 1971. Askin is quoted as saying, 'As always when you are dealing with progress and development you get a few critics about.' He was right.
Photo courtesy of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

improvements without the commission's approval (*SMH*, 1972). As seen below, such wholesale change to a settled neighbourhood led to concerted opposition.

All roads lead to Glebe

By the 1960s, traffic volumes in Sydney had increased sharply. The focus of the influential NSW Department of Main Roads (1932–88) shifted from building new arterial roads to connecting expressways through central Sydney.

The Gladesville Bridge was intended as the next stage of the F3 Newcastle freeway that would plough through Drummoyne, Rozelle, in a tunnel under Leichhardt then through Ultimo to Druitt Street in Sydney. The F4 Western freeway was to be extended from Concord through Glebe to Ultimo. From Wollongong the F6 Southern freeway would be continued from Waterfall through Redfern and Camperdown to Ultimo. Finally, a new F7 Eastern freeway would be designated, joining the Cahill Expressway at Circular Quay and sweeping through Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst and Paddington to join the Bondi Junction bypass.

The new expressways would destroy and divide communities, replacing low-cost, mainly rental accommodation with new houses and apartments for wealthier residents. It was the Liberal government of Sir Robert Askin (1965–75) promoting the expressways, perhaps aware that lower-income Labor voters would be gentrified out of the inner-city 'slums'.

Marg Barry, one of Shelter's founders, became involved in the Coalition of Resident Action Groups (CRAG). At one meeting:

> 'We had a big map of proposed expressway developments for the city. It was on the floor and we were sitting round it, with our heads down looking at it. The penny suddenly dropped. What was it that all those areas had in common? It was housing. Housing! Low income housing. Working class housing. That's what they were doing. The expressways were going through housing, for example, Glebe and The Rocks were under development pressure and high-rise plans. They were going through terrace housing, tenanted housing' (quoted in *National Housing Action*, September 1985, p.27).

Funding for urban expressways was boosted by the 1969 Commonwealth Aid Roads Agreement whereby NSW's annual funding increased from under $40 million in 1965–66 to nearly $70 million in 1970–71 (Burke, 1977, p.23). In consequence, the Department of Main Roads had the funds to start acquiring homes in the path of Sydney expressways, starting with the F3 in Glebe (Ball, 1996). As many as 2,500 residents were under threat. Limited demolition took place, reinforcing a perception of dereliction and

Sydney expressway plans, 1971

Source: City of Sydney Planning Scheme Ordinance Map A1, 1971 (Courtesy of City of Sydney Archives), 16 July 1971. Only part of the map is shown

decay. Although the department smashed toilets and often roofs to make the homes uninhabitable, the vacant properties soon attracted squatters.

The push for expressways and large commercial and residential megaprojects in urban areas in the late 1960s and early 1970s has a parallel in the 2010s with controversial Sydney road schemes such as WestConnex and the 'renewal' of the Waterloo public housing estate funded by the sale of private apartments. These schemes tend to dislocate people from lower-income and/or social housing neighbourhoods, speed gentrification, and deliver little new affordable housing.

1.3 Residents and unions fight back

Grand plans by the Department of Main Roads, the Housing Commission and private developers did not go unchallenged. A wave of popular protest galvanised a new generation of urban and housing activists, drawn from across the social spectrum. Supported after 1972 by a progressive Commonwealth government led by Gough Whitlam, these campaigners formed the bedrock not just of Shelter but a wave of other community and advocacy groups.

Radical potential: The Green Bans

From the early 1970s 'Green Bans' were imposed by the NSW Builders Labourers Federation on building projects they considered environmentally or socially undesirable. The bans had varying aims, including protecting open spaces from development, preventing existing housing from demolition intended to make way for freeways or high-rise development, and preserving heritage buildings. The leading lights in the Green Bans were Jack Mundey, Joe Owens and Bob Pringle, all members of the Communist Party of Australia.

Many new road, residential and office projects threatened areas of low-cost housing. Jack Mundey was clear on the social focus of the Green Bans:

> [W]e wish to build for those aged people who gave their working lives to improve our country only to end up in some pent-up, squalid room in the city … Those of us who build must be more concerned with what we build. The environmental interest of three million people are at stake and cannot be left to developers and building employers whose main concern is making profit. Progressive unions, like ours, therefore have a very useful social role to play in the citizens' interest, and we intend to play it (Mundey, 1972).

The BLF campaign to 'Save the Loo', 1970s
Source: Courtesy of City of Sydney archives 066/066804. The Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) are shown opposing destruction of housing in Woolloomooloo.

The strength of the Green Ban movement, which halted 40 construction projects in the 1970s valued then at over $5 billion, was through unexpected alliances formed between the union and middle-class conservationists, resident action groups and the National Trust. After 1972 the Commonwealth also played a role, detailed in section 1.4 below.

In June 1971 the first Green Ban started when a group of 13 progressive, well-to-do women known as the 'Battlers for Kelly's Bush' called on the Builders Labourers Federation to preserve bushland. Developers AV Jennings were proposing luxury harbourside houses on open space on the Sydney harbour foreshore at leafy Hunters Hill. The campaign was successful, highlighting the considerable power yielded by the building unions at the time (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998).

The second ban was distinctly different, led by ordinary working people in The Rocks. Headed up by Nita McRae, a third-generation Rocks resident and mother, The Rocks Resident Action Group approached Jack Mundey and Bob Pringle and a Green Ban was put in place in November 1971. For this campaign the builders' union linked with the National Trust, who wanted to preserve the heritage buildings of The Rocks, and by January 1972 the union placed Green Bans on all 1,700 properties heritage-listed by the trust.

The area of The Rocks and Millers Point remains controversial today, as is discussed in Chapter 5. To accommodate 79 Housing Commission households that had been displaced by a scaled-down building scheme in The Rocks on Gloucester Street, Jack Mundey and Premier Wran met in 1975 and agreed to support a new building. The Sirius building, which opened in January 1981, was controversial (architecturally) at the time, and remains contested (architecturally, socially and financially) to this day.

Further Green Bans were put in place by the Builders Labourers Federation on the Housing Commission's slum clearance plans for Waterloo in February 1973, following calls from the South Sydney Residents Action Group. The commission fought back, unsuccessfully, claiming the resident action group was not representative of residents and that without new public housing there would be a further deterioration of housing affordability. It even threatened the union with legal action if the ban was not lifted (Ruming et al., 2010, p.453).

As Burgmann and Burgmann (2011) note, the NSW Builders Labourers Federation 'became the hub of radical activity in Sydney, and increasingly so as it widened its scope to include issues of concern to women, prisoners, Aborigines and homosexuals. For the union's supporters in the wider public, it became not only a rallying point but also a symbol of working-class radical potential.' Hence the union played a role in helping build and strengthen the evolving web of resident action and community groups in Sydney.

South Sydney Community Aid

Established in May 1967 by representatives of the Good Neighbourhood Council, local churches and aldermen of South Sydney Council, South Sydney Community Aid (SSCA) was one of the earliest grassroots community organisations. It was initially funded by the local council and from 1968 grants were received from the Commonwealth Department of Immigration. Therefore, as a funded community organisation, they were in the fortunate position by 1974–75 of receiving annual income of just under $60,000 and employing five full-time staff. The largest funding contributions were from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs ($27,000), the Department of Immigration ($10,000) and South Sydney Council ($6,000) (SSCA, 1975).

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, SSCA was fundamental in supporting Shelter's tenancy working group, which formed the foundation for the Tenants' Union of NSW. Early Shelter supporters Martin Mowbray, Robert Mowbray and Paul van Reyk all worked for SSCA in the early to mid-1970s.

Future Shelter board member Col James was an SSCA committee member from 1973–74, as well as being architect of their new premises in Redfern and project manager for the redevelopment of the Woolloomooloo estate (SSCA, 1974).

People power: Resident action groups

Earlier resident action groups were formed in Paddington (1964), Balmain (1965), Glebe (1969), Millers Point (1969) and Annandale (1970) to help protect the character of local neighbourhoods. These organisations mainly consisted of young, often tertiary-educated, socially aware people, with salaried jobs in large businesses or the public service.

Although the early resident action groups were generally led by newly arrived middle-class residents, longer-standing working-class local people began to participate more in the anti-expressway movement. Later resident action groups formed in The Rocks (1971) and Woolloomooloo (1972) had, as noted earlier, a more working-class membership base. They were often encouraged by middle-class and student activists to take up the campaign.

As Burgmann and Burgmann (1998) noted, 'the cross-class alliance operated not merely between residents and the union but also among resident groups … Mundey and most of the union's activists were also confident that action against the developers and the conservative State Government would radicalise residents from middle class areas. And in most cases he was right' (ibid., pp.56–57). Even the 'respectable' Glebe Society had a more activist sister organisation, the Glebe Anti-Expressway Action Group.

The final ingredient in the mix of resident activism was the role of the churches or, more particularly, dedicated clergy working in deprived inner-city suburbs. An example is Edmund Campion, the local parish priest attached to St Mary's Cathedral, who became the Woolloomooloo Resident Action Group's secretary. According to The Bulletin, Campion was their fieriest spokesman, leading the defence of 'the Loo' with the cry: 'Woolloomooloo will build a wall of flesh against the developers' bulldozers!' (McDonald, 1975).

In 1972 the Coalition of Resident Action Groups (CRAG) was founded by Murray Geddes as an umbrella organisation to help various action groups pool resources and co-ordinate their efforts. CRAG worked in parallel with the Builders Labourers Federation, each group benefitting from the other in their campaigns. Resident action groups broadened their focus beyond neighbourhood concerns to become involved in other

social issues such as low-cost housing, public transport, tenants' rights, and Aboriginal land rights. It was estimated that by 1974 there were more than 100 resident action groups operating across metropolitan Sydney (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998, p.56).

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development

To encourage a more decentralised approach to decision-making, and greater community involvement, the Whitlam Government's 1973 Australian Assistance Plan aimed to create Commonwealth-funded Regional Councils for Social Development. In search of this funding, in January 1974 Andrew Jakubowicz, who was chair of the Surry Hills Resident Action Group and a sociology academic at the University of NSW, brought 40 people together to consider establishing a regional council for the local government areas of Sydney, South Sydney and Leichhardt (ISRCSD, 2016).

The Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (ISRCSD) received $40,000 a year to run an office, and $36,000 to employ a social planner and three community development officers. One of the main issues they looked to address was that '[p]eople are being forced out of their houses by a variety of pressures – expressways, the University [of Sydney], developers, the Housing Commission, or, more importantly, increasing rents and costs' (ISRCSD, 1975, p.1). The first executive officer was Colin Menzies, followed by Marg Barry from 1977. By this stage the council had lost Commonwealth funding with the dismissal of the Labor government in November 1975 but received state funding from the incoming Labor government of Neville Wran from May 1976.

1.4 It's time: For the Whitlam government

By the time of the watershed 1972 Commonwealth election, the Liberal-Country party coalition had been in government for 23 years. After Sir Robert Menzies left office in 1966, there were a series of mishaps ranging from Harold Holt's ill-fated swim at Cheviot Beach in Victoria on 17 December 1967 to the election of Billy McMahon as prime minister in 1971, a man described by political commentator Laurie Oakes as 'devious, nasty, dishonest … the fact that he was a prime minister was a disgrace' (Dugdale, 2016).

From 1972 to 1975 the Whitlam government initiated ground-breaking changes. By all accounts it was an exciting time to live in Australia. In a pre-election speech at Blacktown in Sydney's west, Whitlam outlined his

vision: 'Our program has three great aims. These are: to promote equality, to involve the people of Australia in the decision-making process of our land, and to liberate the talents of the Australian people' (Whitlam, 1972). Another aspiration was to end 'this corrupting notion of a Government monopoly of knowledge and wisdom [that] has led to bad decisions and bad Government … Labor will trust the people' (ibid.). One way this translated into practical action was to support the growth of voluntary organisations, with Whitlam believing local people knew best what was needed in their neighbourhoods.

Poverty and housing roadmap: the Henderson report

In August 1972 the Commonwealth Liberal prime minister William McMahon established a Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, with Professor Ronald Henderson as chair. With Whitlam in power by the end of the year, change was in the air, and in March 1973 the inquiry's terms of reference were changed. An additional four commissioners were appointed, including Reverend Martin, who was given a specific brief to look at community services and social welfare (Henderson, 1975, p.325).

Sydney housing activists made important contributions to the inquiry. Greg Mills from ACOSS – a Shelter founder, and later chair from 1983–84 – gave evidence at the public hearings. Lisa Horowicz from the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) was commissioned to undertake special research on community aid centres, such as South Sydney Community Aid. Written submissions were presented by Glebe Resident Action Group, and by ACOSS on housing. It was therefore not a great surprise that the Henderson inquiry followed contemporary progressive thinking on both housing and the relationship between housing and poverty.

The final report, published in August 1975, called for both better co-ordination of welfare services and a less top-down approach: 'To give conscious priority to the poorest and most deprived will involve big changes in the conduct of social policy … it will demand cooperation between the Australian, state and local Governments and voluntary organisations' (ibid, p.303). Furthermore, 'To achieve the most effective translation of demands into services the resources of many volunteers and spontaneous groups in the local community must be harnessed and coordinated' (ibid., p.305).

An inquiry recommendation, which foreshadowed Commonwealth funding for crisis accommodation in the late 1970s and community housing in the 1980s, was that 'the Australian Government [should] provide funds to assist non-profit organisations to build and buy dwellings

(including rooming houses) for letting on a cost rent basis'. There were also two recommendations which, in time, would come to pass: 'The Australian Government [should] enter into discussions with State Governments with a view to providing the funds for the establishment of one pilot Housing Information and Advisory Service', and that Housing Commission tenants should 'participate in the management of their estates' (ibid., p.314).

While the Henderson report can be seen as progressive, and a catalyst for establishing community organisations such as Shelter, there were also ominous signs of how the housing system might change – and not necessarily for the best. It was highlighted that 'many more very poor families are renting privately than renting from housing authorities and that the great majority of Housing Commission tenants are not poor' (ibid., p.303). Henderson recommended public housing rents should rise to market levels, with rent concessions given through income support. By the 1980s rent assistance became the main way of supporting low-income households, with very little new social housing built. The debate over whether to charge market rents continues, for example, with inquiries by the Productivity Commission (2016) and the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART, 2017).

Figure 1: Public housing's building bonanza, 1970s

Source: Annual reports of the NSW Housing Commission and the NSW Department of Housing. Documents held at the State Library of NSW. Figures show gross number of properties developed or procured, before deducting sales to residents.

Figure 1 shows the impact of the Commonwealth's generous funding of public housing in the Whitlam ministry. In 1975–76 an additional 7,068 new properties were added to the NSW Housing Commission portfolio. Even after sales to tenants, the net increase was around 5,000 – a 6 per cent increase in public housing in a single year. New public housing construction fell under the Fraser government, then rose under Prime Minister Hawke until a peak in 1985–86, after which they continued to decline to below 3,000 each year in NSW by the mid-1990s.

Ending conscription, growing the universities

Among the Whitlam government's first acts after it came to power was to release the seven men who were in jail for resisting compulsory military service, which had been in place through a twice-yearly 'lottery of death' since 1964. Pending prosecutions for 350 other draft resisters were also dropped, conscription ended in December 1972 and Australia withdrew military advisers from Vietnam (Ireland, 2014). Since the first Vietnam moratorium protests in May 1970, the largest public demonstration in the country's history till that time, opposition had been growing to conscription – especially among university students and other young people as all 19-year-old men had to register for the ballot. Robert Mowbray, a Shelter founder interviewed for this book, mentions how the anti-Vietnam campaign helped hone his counter-culture social thinking.

Universities played a role in the anti-war campaign. The Youth Campaign Against Conscription, established in 1964, was largely made up of Sydney University students. Not only students but staff became radicalised and involved in the resident action groups in neighbourhoods where they lived surrounding Sydney University's campus. The first president of the Glebe Society was Professor Bernard Smith from Sydney University (Ball, 1996). The University of NSW (UNSW) also played a role, with Zula Nittim a good example of a community and housing activist building on their academic skills and role (see Box 1).

Sydney University's Faculty of Architecture helped forge a strong interest in radical housing approaches given the campus's location surrounded by proposed expressways, house squats, women's refuges and tenant action groups. Col James, later a Shelter stalwart and life member, used the faculty's I.B. Fell Research Centre as his personal fiefdom. At UNSW's School of Social Work, Robert Mowbray lectured in the mid-1980s on approaches to housing (Mowbray, 1984). Shelter supporters also became housing scholars, with doctorate theses by Mowbray (1996) on

Box 1: Shelter Hall of Fame: Zula Nittim, academic activist

Zula Nittim (1928–2017) was a co-founder of Shelter, director on the interim board (1977–78), director (1978–80, 1981–82, 1984–85), chair (1985–86) and editor (1986–87).

As a town planner, PhD graduate and lecturer at UNSW, Nittim had considerable skills that were employed in her role as a community activist during the Green Bans. For example, back in the early 1970s she was a co-convenor of the 'volunteer academics' that helped prepare the 'People's Plan' for The Rocks.

Her political interest stretched beyond housing, and she was a founder and leader of the Women's Electoral Lobby. Zula was also a gay rights activist and a founding member of CAMP Inc (Campaign Against Moral Persecution), attending the preliminary meeting in 1970.

Source: Photo from records held at Shelter's offices, undated.

'The nature of contemporary landlordism in NSW: Implications for tenant rights' and Julie Nyland (1997) on 'policy activists and the NSW housing reform movement'. Harvey Volke's PhD, underway while employed at Shelter, with Col James as associate supervisor, was awarded a posthumous Master of Philosophy (Volke, 1997).

Other Shelter volunteers, staff and board members in the late 1970s and 1980s benefitted from the Whitlam government removing university fees in January 1974. The policy remained in place until 1989, including under the Fraser government, and was eventually ended by the Labor Party under Hawke as costs had significantly escalated. While university attendance increased with the removal of fees, there is less certainty that the social mix widened. Many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds still didn't finish high school and would be unlikely to apply.

DURD: A new city vision

In 1969 Tom Uren was given shadow responsibility for housing and urban affairs by Gough Whitlam. Born in Balmain and MP for the inner-west Sydney seat of Reid, Uren was a radical thinker in Labor's left faction and keenly aware of the expressway, Housing Commission and development issues facing the working-class neighbourhoods surrounding Sydney CBD. He left school at 13 to become a professional boxer, was made a prisoner of war by the Japanese and worked on the Thai–Burma railway, and later became a worker at the Port Kembla steelworks.

When the Whitlam government was elected in 1972, Uren became minister for the Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD). This spearheaded the Commonwealth's first serious intervention in city and regional planning, an area previously the sole responsibility of the states. Tom Uren believed strongly in the government's strategy to decentralise power: 'local problems should be solved close to the people … much of my effort and the effort of the Labor Government, was directed to getting programs out to the grassroots levels of local Government and community groups where decisions could be made' (Uren, 1976).

On 30 September 1974, Sydney's anti-expressway campaign came to a head at Fig Street in Ultimo. Residents led by the Ultimo–Pyrmont Resident Action Group occupied eleven vacant homes and four shops to prevent their demolition for the planned North Western Expressway. Clashes with police ensued, making the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, with flares and a dead cat thrown at the authorities. There were 20 arrests (*SMH*, 1974).

Uren had made clear in 1972 his opposition to Sydney's proposed expressways and the negative impact of over-concentration of lower-income households without services implied by the NSW Housing Commission's ambitious estate master plans. In December 1973 Uren met with South Sydney Council and the NSW minister for housing and construction to find an alternative to the Housing Commission's tower block proposals for Waterloo. Later, in 1974, he intervened in the 'Battle of Fig Street' by withdrawing funding for urban arterial roads, halting further demolition work by Sir Robert Askin's Liberal government. The state Labor opposition, led by Neville Wran, pledged immediate opposition to new expressways, a policy enacted when elected to power in 1976.

There was a symbiotic relationship between DURD and Sydney activists, as explored by Ruming, Tice and Freestone: 'The capacity of local residents

(individuals or local resident groups) to access the Commonwealth Government (either senior DURD officials or Uren himself) was central in facilitating the DURD presence in [urban renewal] sites … DURD was viewed in these cases as a vehicle for local actors to challenge the State agencies' (Ruming et al., 2010, p.461). Green Bans and resident action did not necessarily lead to preservation of neighbourhoods but instead left sites vacant for alternative development schemes that the Whitlam government could fund.

In March 1974 the Commonwealth funded $26 million to acquire and refurbish the Bishopthorpe and St Phillip's estates in Glebe from the Church of England, with a total of 723 homes retained for low-income families. Later, in June 1975, an agreement was signed between DURD, the NSW Housing Commission and Sydney Council to aggregate 13 hectares of land for medium-density public housing in Woolloomooloo. Additional privately owned land in Glebe was resumed or bought with a $17 million Commonwealth grant, with a net result that 65 per cent of the Glebe neighbourhood was retained for low-cost rental housing.

In December 1975 DURD was abolished by the new Fraser Coalition government and spending on urban programs such as Glebe and Woolloomooloo halved. However, enthusiastic DURD staff continued to impact urban policy for many years, with many moving to state government planning departments or even, with the 'DURD boys' described below, to community organisations such as Shelter.

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The early 1970s were a period of great social change. Individuals increasingly spoke out against the status quo, and voluntary groups grew in number and confidence. Inner-city Sydney neighbourhoods, threatened by significant property demolition and community displacement, were a crucible for the emergence of a new generation of activists. Women's rights, gay liberation, social justice and Aboriginal empowerment were major themes. But increasingly housing rights came to the fore, and in time a group of activists coalesced into what we now know as Shelter. The next chapter charts the birth of the movement and the complex web of other mutually supportive voluntary organisations emerging at the same time as Shelter.

2 A Voluntary Organisation: Shelter 1974–84

Shelter, as this book refers to Shelter NSW, was not established 'top down' through government funding or encouragement. Nor was it a coming together of already established organisations looking for a common voice through setting up a peak body. Rather, Shelter started as an organic, grassroots voluntary collective that later found form and structure.

2.1 Born in 1974, but which Shelter?

On 16 November 1966 around a quarter of the British public gathered around their televisions. Perhaps expecting a light and entertaining program on the BBC, they had a rude awakening with a gritty drama documentary showing the full horror of homelessness. *Cathy Come Home*, directed by Ken Loach, paints a bleak picture of unscrupulous landlords, family breakdown, mental health challenges, uncaring social service staff and a lack of decent, affordable housing. Cathy's plight is blamed on her own shortcomings, not the failure of the housing system. The program closes with the young mother outside a railway station, screaming as her children are forcibly taken into care.

Two weeks after the screening of *Cathy*, Shelter launched in Britain. Co-founder Des Wilson had visited English and Scottish inner cities that summer, recording the statistics and residents' stories. He estimated three million families lived in slums or grossly overcrowded conditions, and 1.4 million houses were unfit for human habitation. The groundwork to establish Shelter had been completed by the time *Cathy* aired, but the program 'captured the zeitgeist of a nation waking up to the fact that the country was still in the grip of a housing crisis' (Shelter England, 2016).

The first reference to an Australian organisation called Shelter is in a note dated 16 May 1974 by a Sydney University–based housing activist, and later co-founder of the organisation, Mark Harris. He explained that

'Shelter grew from the visit of several people from Sydney concerned with public housing and co-operatives to Canberra, Adelaide and Melbourne. We saw the need to coordinate activities and form a national organization, to spread ideas and to make recommendations to Government etc.' (Harris, 1974). There was a coming together of 'self-help groups, handicapped people, resident groups, tenants' unions, welfare agencies and so on' (Harris, 1977). Mark Harris's use of the name 'Shelter' in Australia in 1974 most likely comes from reference to the British Shelter. A formal connection, however, has yet to be found.

Contribution of the COSSs

Just as Shelter was later to help the formation of other housing organisations, so too Shelter was supported in the early days by the wider not-for-profit network, particularly the Councils of Social Service (COSSs). The various national and state-based COSS bodies initially aimed to co-ordinate the work of different community service providers, later becoming peak bodies liaising between larger organisations in the welfare sector and state governments.

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) was established in 1935 by people 'drawn from the social ranks of the middle class and relatively well-off individuals who nonetheless felt a pressing need to improve the lot of those suffering through the effects of the Great Depression' (NCOSS, 2018). NCOSS was initially funded by a charitable trust, with state government grants received in 1937. Later both NCOSS and ACOSS received substantial funding under the Whitlam government's Australian Assistance Plan.

In 1951, the Councils of Social Service in NSW, South Australia and Queensland established the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) to co-ordinate between state peaks and have a voice on national issues. The structure between state-based and national peaks adopted by the COSSs would later be mirrored by the Shelter organisations. Both the COSSs and Shelter started in NSW, with other-state based operations and a national co-ordinating body following later. In the case of Shelters, however, the transition from NSW to a set of state and national organisations was achieved in under two years.

While both NCOSS and ACOSS were conveniently based in Sydney's central business district to allow contact from the city's housing activists, it was the latter organisation that had taken more of an interest in housing issues. An ACOSS research report published in July 1974 and submitted to the Henderson poverty inquiry highlighted the poor treatment of tenants

by both private landlords and the Housing Commission (Thatcher, 1979). Both ACOSS and NCOSS carried out policy research from the 1960s, using the final reports to influence government. It was an approach Shelter was later to follow.

As noted below, state COSSs played an important role in the formation of Shelters in each jurisdiction except Victoria and the Northern Territory. ACOSS was significant to the formation of both Shelter NSW and National Shelter. In NSW, even following Shelter's establishment, ACOSS continued to employ a housing policy officer. In July 1975 Kate Holland was writing to the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggesting: 'Low-interest finance should be allocated to community groups so that they can establish cost-rent co-operatives … [that] give members an opportunity to participate in housing management' (Holland, 1975, p.6). In the same month Kate Holland wrote a joint letter on housing funding with Cathi Moore, 'National Coordinator, Shelter', to *The Age* in Melbourne.

Shelter formed in NSW

Many organisations have a clear history, being established on a particular date in a specified location by a known group of people. Not so for Shelter, or National Shelter. Both organisations emerged gradually and informally, as befit collectives formed by activists keen for change. Rules and regulations could follow later, action was needed now! While what can be identified as 'Shelter' came into existence in 1974, it remains an interesting point – and contested by some authors on this topic – whether this was Shelter NSW, National Shelter or a hybrid. Formal organisational rules and separate legal existence took longer to come into place, with Shelter in NSW not incorporating as a co-operative until 1979.

Back in 1974, the approach seems to have been to simultaneously establish state-based Shelter organisations and a National Shelter. According to one of the Shelter founders, Anne Rein, there was a realisation right from the start that a national organisation was needed to make change happen. National housing issues were closely followed by the Sydney activists, as were changes happening overseas. It is likely the name 'Shelter' was based on the British organisation, though exactly how this happened and who was responsible remains unclear. Potentially the hope was for a link between the Australian and British Shelters, though this did not develop (Anne Rein, pers. comm., 2018).

Following the fact-finding trip by NSW housing advocates, a Sydney 'conference' was to be organised over a weekend in July 1974. ACOSS

was asked to 'act as the parent body for this, at least until July', with the Shelter operation in NSW functioning as a subcommittee of ACOSS's Housing and Urban and Regional Development committee (Harris, 1974). A steering group was led by ACOSS's Greg Mills as chair, a role building on Mills' housing knowledge shown through his submission to the Henderson inquiry into poverty. He was joined on the subcommittee by Kate Holland, who was at the time ACOSS policy officer but by 1975 had a redesignated title of housing policy officer. Other members included Marg Barry, Sydney resident activist, and Mark Harris and Anne Rein, University of Sydney activists (Moore, 1975, p.2). Rein became involved in housing through membership of the Australian Union of Students, and later involvement with resident action groups.

During the lead-up to the July 1974 conference there was a focus on establishing a national housing organisation to 'draw together all the different groups and organisations concerned with housing so that a concerted attack could be made on the problems, both through concrete action and the evolution of a coherent housing policy. This will require approaches to and the involvement of all levels of Government' (Moore, 1975). The aim was to receive funding from the Commonwealth Department of Housing for the July 1974 conference, in part to pay the fares of delegates wishing to attend from regional NSW and interstate (Harris, 1974).

It seems this national funding was not forthcoming, and the July 1974 conference had a NSW not a national focus. As the April 1975 edition of the *National Housing Action* newsletter reported, the meeting of 'people involved in various fields of housing was held to discuss the idea of setting up a housing organisation in NSW … Those present included people from tenancy groups, resident groups, people involved in emergency accommodation projects, special groups (the handicapped, single parents and the aged), service organisations and trade unions'.

The first newsletter, 1975

Source: Shelter newsletter 1. The earliest newsletter was written by Cathi Moore under her funded project that included a national road trip. Reference is made to a 'national housing organisation' that would 'draw together all the different groups and organizations [sic] concerned with housing'. Was the Shelter NSW organisation that dates from 1974 one of these 'different groups'?

Four NSW working groups were established, focusing on public housing, private sector tenancies, special needs tenants and co-operative housing. These groups met several times over the following months, contacting other NSW organisations and individuals who might be interested. Evidence for the earliest Shelter working party meetings is of the tenancy group, which met on 25 October and 8 November 1974 at the offices of South Sydney Community Aid (SSCA) (Mowbray, 1974). Robert Mowbray worked for SSCA and in mid-1974 his employer funded work on the influential Tenants' Rights Project detailed in Chapter 3. The tenancy group was also close to progressive officials in the Whitlam government: Cathi Moore, who would later be Shelter's first national co-ordinator, attended the October tenancy group meeting as a volunteer while still employed by DURD.

The Shelter working groups in NSW prepared papers for a larger meeting, and 'at the conference on 30th November [1974] it was decided unanimously that a state housing organisation should be formed' (ibid., p.4). This structure was in the form of a co-ordinating committee, that had representatives from all four working groups and tried to prevent overlaps in the activities of the groups (National Shelter, 1975, p.7).

The role of the both ACOSS and NCOSS during the birth of Shelter in 1974–75 is clear. Cathi Moore, the person engaged to help establish Shelter organisations in 1975, viewed 'COSSs as the common factor across the Shelters' (pers. comm., 2018). As the NSW contributor to the first national Shelter newsletter noted, 'Resources to date have largely been provided by the Council of Social Service of NSW', with NCOSS helping produce the first NSW newsletter, and their office and phone number acting as Shelter NSW's main contact point. Cathi Moore stated at the August 1975 Shelter national conference that 'it is very important to maintain close liaison with the Councils of Social Service and that they should form an integral part of the Shelter structure' (National Shelter, 1975, p.4)

Shelter across Australia: Cathi's road trip

While most aspects of housing policy were delivered by state governments, the Commonwealth had a key role in steering approaches through their funding power negotiated through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreements (CSHA), hence the need, identified from Shelter's early days, of establishing a national housing lobby organisation. This would allow for a concerted push to the Commonwealth, as '[t]he only voices that are heard at this level at present are those of the building industry, land developers, finance companies, banks and State housing authorities' (*National Housing*

Action, April 1975, p.2). Furthermore, with a sympathetic minister in Tom Uren at DURD from late 1972, the timing was good.

In late 1974 NSW housing activists approached ACOSS for help in applying for a Commonwealth grant to establish a national organisation. The bid was successful, and the Department of Housing and Construction provided $50,000 to cover costs until the end of August 1975. Of this funding, $2,000 was allocated to each state and territory to cover printing, event costs and administration. A further $10,000 was for the national co-ordinator's salary, travel and office overheads. Between $10,000 and $20,000 remained for a national conference in Canberra, mainly used to cover the transport costs of 10 participants from each state and territory (Moore, 1975). The intention was for ACOSS to manage the Commonwealth funding until National Shelter became incorporated (Cathi Moore, pers. comm., 2018).

In January 1975 Cathi Moore was appointed Shelter national co-ordinator to liaise between the groups established in the states and territories and help these groups build their capacity. Cathi had been working in DURD on the Commonwealth's acquisition of the Glebe estate for public housing as a recent university graduate. Her boss, John Wood, was a housing activist and knew Mark Harris and others who were working on a Shelter organisation in NSW (Cathi Moore, pers. comm., 2018). ACOSS appears to have continued to be a strong supporter of the initiative as Cathi based herself at its offices in Liverpool Street, Sydney. However, one of her main roles was to be 'Shelter's woman in Canberra' (Harris, 1977).

On the weekend of 9–10 August 1975, National Shelter held their first conference in Canberra. This is probably also the first recognisable housing conference in Australia. Other events held by Shelter to that date and called 'conferences' seem to have been more in the nature of round-table meetings. As has been the case with more recent national housing conferences, the 1975 event called for a national housing policy, and one that covered all housing issues and the planning system, not just social housing management. The author of the document that was perhaps the first housing activist call for a national policy was Bernie Coates, then working at SACOSS, but later a respected senior official at the NSW Department of Housing.

By mid-1975 the relationship of the Shelter 'family' had been established: 'a national co-ordinating committee with two representatives from each state and territory and from ACOSS, and that it meets as often as necessary but at least twice a year' (National Shelter, 1975, p.4). The
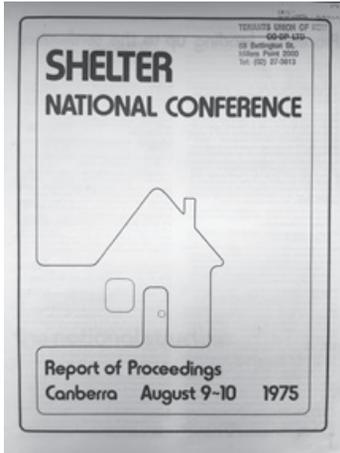
Australia's first national housing conference, 1975

Source: Tenants' Union of NSW, records held at the State Library of NSW. The credit for holding the first national housing conference was 'reclaimed' by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) in 1999, some quarter of a century later.

Whitlam government backed Shelter, and the Commonwealth minister for housing and construction said in his opening address to the conference that 'I would like to see the emerging "Shelter" organisation become an effective voice for those interested in a better housing policy' (ibid., p.4).

National Shelter, like Shelter in NSW, worked through a series of discussion groups. In 1975 these included housing co-operatives, emergency housing, public housing, special needs, economic factors and tenancy. Even at this early stage in National Shelter's development it was still able to make 59 recommendations on topics as wide-ranging as medium-density housing, women's refuges, home purchase and Aboriginal housing.

One issue with National Shelter's reliance on volunteers was the relatively limited focus of their early work. 'Networks in NSW and Victoria virtually carried National Shelter for most of the first 10 years of its life … The down side of this was that National Shelter tended to be directed by these states as well and many issues were left out. For instance, it was a long time before rural and remote housing problems were acknowledged' (Morgan-Thomas, 1994, p.27).

One remaining question is which organisation came first, Shelter NSW or National Shelter? ACOSS's subcommittee to push for a National Shelter was in place before July 1974, though NSW housing activists had met and started organising before May 1974 and held their first conference or formal meeting in July, then established working groups and began housing research before the second conference in November 1974. National Shelter's establishment can be more clearly dated from Moore's

appointment in January 1975, the first national conference held in August 1975 and the first co-ordinating committee meeting in October 1975. Moore's own view is 'the germ of the idea [for Shelter] came out of NSW. They kicked it off first. It later moved into the federal space' (Cathi Moore, pers. comm., 2018).

Community activism was a feature throughout Australia in the early 1970s, not just a feature of NSW. Eleri Morgan-Thomas described how personal bonds helped establish links between housing campaigners in different states before Shelter or National Shelter were founded (*National Housing Action*, September 1994). Robert Mowbray, a prime mover in the Tenants' Union of NSW and Shelter, made early contact with people such as Tony Dalton in Melbourne. Dalton later helped establish Shelter Victoria and was first editor of National Shelter's newsletter, and chair from 1981 to 1987. In December 1972 Marg Barry, a key founder of Shelter NSW, and others had visited Victoria and met with Brian Howe, then a Methodist minister. Howe was later a respected Commonwealth housing minister.

In Victoria, an initial meeting of housing activists was held on 6 November 1974, though 'there was considerable resistance by some to the idea of creating a formal integrating or umbrella organisation' (*National Housing Action*, April 1975, p.4). A later meeting in December supported a new organisation that would help the formation of housing consumer groups, and on 9 January 1975 at a meeting held at the North Melbourne Methodist Mission a Melbourne housing working group was formed. However, progress was slow in Victoria. By August 1975 working groups had been established on housing associations and emergency housing, but 'there is still no formal structure of Shelter in Melbourne, but what exists is a loose network of groups which come together to share information' (National Shelter, 1975, p.3).

In both South Australia and Queensland the relevant COSSs (SACOSS and QCOSS) were, as in NSW, instrumental in helping form state Shelter organisations. Both employed a part-time member of staff specifically for this purpose. The initial meeting to discuss Shelter SA was held in May 1975, with working groups established and a newsletter published. In Queensland, progress was slower as there were not many groups involved in housing matters, but by mid-1975 a decision had been made to establish a state steering committee to co-ordinate separate regional Shelter organisations.

Shelters in Tasmania and the ACT were also closely linked with the COSSs, but with no dedicated staff employed. Tasmania followed the regionalised Shelter approach seen in Queensland, with a steering group

co-ordinated by TasCOSS proposing a conference in September 1975. The ACT version of Shelter – for which ACTCOSS provided secretarial services – was as a co-ordinating role for the territory's housing advocacy groups, with each remaining autonomous. The only jurisdiction by August 1975 where no progress had been made was the Northern Territory where 'it is not the right time to develop Shelter' (National Shelter, 1975, p.7).

Cathi Moore's travels around Australia as Shelter's national co-ordinator eventually paid off. By November 1976 Shelter was operating in all eight states and territories, led by Julia Hayes (ACT), Mark Harris (NSW), Clara Pilkington (Northern Territory), Greg Smith (South Australia), Ann Hughes (Tasmania) and Jo Kinross (Victoria). Members of Shelter's national executive were Andy McCutcheon (chair), Andy Bush (vice chair), Cathi Moore (treasurer) and Tony Dalton (editor). There were working groups on information, housing policy, housing co-operatives, tenancy, emergency housing and rehabilitation. Finally, there were 17 affiliated entities, mainly working groups of the state-based Shelter organisations (*National Housing Action*, April 1975). Quite an achievement in less than two years.

Shelter's founding mothers and fathers

In May 1977 Shelter appointed an 'interim board' in advance of the organisation being registered as a co-operative in 1979 (Shelter newsletter 6). The volunteer 'officeholders' and committee members are shown in Table 1. These eleven women and seven men are the best record we have of the names of Shelter's founders, along with others who played a key role earlier 1974 to 1977 such as Cathi Moore and Greg Mills. From the start, Shelter was arranged around working groups specialising in particular housing issues. The groups' policy areas changed over the years, but this structure remained for two decades with each working group putting forward a director and an alternate director.

Shelter's founders share several characteristics. Many lived or worked in the inner-city areas that had been threatened with expressway construction, high-rise office and apartment development, and demolition by the Housing Commission. Some had been involved as activists opposing these developments. Typically, they worked in jobs such as community development officer and social worker that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s.

By the end of the 1970s at least nine inner-city organisations were heavily interlinked through the multiple participation of the same group of people as volunteers, staff or board members. The two oldest were

Table 1: NSW Shelter's founders, 1977

Role	Name	Job/organisation
Chair	Mark Harris	Lived in Alexandria. Later at UNSW.
Secretary	Beth Mitchell	Social worker and later Tenants' Union director; Lived in Annandale.
Treasurer	Mary Jones	Admin secretary. Lived in Roseville.
Editor	Greg Thompson	Housing officer, HIRS. Lived in Annandale. Later Ningana squatter.
Emergency accommodation	Bev Barnett	Community development officer. Lived in Enmore.
	Carolyn Holland	
Rural and regional	Simon Clough	DURD employee. Project officer at NCOSS and ISRCSD. Later Tenants' Union, mayor of Lismore.
	Sue Cochrane	
Public housing	Phillipa Broad	Project officer, Public Tenants' Union. Lived in Narraweena.
	Rhonda Harvey	Mount Druitt Tenants' Association. Lived in Mount Druitt.
Tenancy	Robert Mowbray	SSCA, later Tenants' Union. Lived in Redfern.
	Kate Holland	Housing policy officer, ACOSS.
Housing improvement	Dave Brown	
	Colin Menzies	Employee, ISRCSD.
Co-operatives	Marg Barry	Community development worker. Employee, ISRCSD. Director, SSCA. Member, CRAG. Lived in Waterloo (see Box 2).
	Viv Abrahams	Aboriginal rights activist.
Special needs	John Hall	Town planner.
	Zula Nittim	Town planner, CRAG member. UNSW lecturer. Lived in McMahons Point (see Box 1).
Aboriginal housing	(vacant)	

Source: Shelter newsletter 6. Cooperative annual returns. The second named member of each working group is an alternative director

both government-funded: the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS, established 1935), based at 381 Pitt Street, and the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS, 1951), based at 190 Cumberland Street, Redfern. They were joined by three funded activist organisations: South Sydney Community Aid (SSCA, 1968) at 118 Regent Street, Redfern; the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (ISRCSD, 1974), based at 84 Myrtle Street, Chippendale; and the Newtown Legal Centre. The final four Sydney-based organisations were in the Shelter 'family': Shelter,

**Box 2: Shelter Hall of Fame:
Marg Barry, school of social development**

Described by Harvey Volke in a 2001 Shelter newsletter as 'an inner-city icon', Barry (1934–2001) was one of a small group of community activists instrumental in Shelter's establishment in the mid-1970s (Shelter *ATH 43*). Her first involvement was with the Coalition of Resident Action Groups (CRAG) where, as noted in section 1.2, she drew the link between expressway construction and the destruction of low-cost working-class homes. Her own accommodation in Waterloo was threatened with demolition to make way for Housing Commission tower blocks. Barry was a strong fighter for the causes she believed in and played an important role in establishing both Shelter and National Shelter.

Barry started as a community development worker at the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (ISRCSD) from its formation in 1974, and she continued with ISRCSD as co-ordinator until 1999. In her thesis on 'policy activists and the NSW housing movement', Julie Nyland positions Barry as an 'architect of change', and a doctoral interviewee noted 'many of the [policy activists] that we're talking about now were students of Marg's' (Nyland, 1997, p.148).

Harvey Volke's view was that '[f]or those who did not know her well, Marg could be intimidating – but for those of us who survived the Marg Barry school of Social Development, life will never be the same again. If she was good at making enemies, she was even better at making loyal friends.

'We may well recall her baleful glare if we confronted her without having done our homework – but even more we'll remember her larger-than-life laughter, her wickedly accurate mimicking of the powerful and pretentious, and her loyalty and sensitivity when the chips were down and a friend was what we needed' (Shelter *ATH 43*, pp.4–5)

Picture source: Courtesy of Inner Sydney Voice. Also Shelter *ATH 43*, pp.4–5.

National Shelter, the Housing Information Referral Service (HIRS) and the Tenants' Union at 118 Regent Street, Redfern.

As an interviewee noted in research published in 1997: 'All of those organisations were really actively networked and involved. It was one of those things that people with different hats on would be going to different board arrangements … there was a network of people that worked really closely together and understood where people were coming from and what they were trying to do' (Nyland, 1997, p.148). At one stage ISRCSD, Shelter, the Tenants' Union and the HIRS were all in the same building at 106 Goulburn Street in Sydney. This further reinforced connection between people, helped groups organise direct action, and led to aligned housing policy positions:

> The network was created by the connections that formed, and then intensified, between people. People's sense of these connections, and of the network, were predominantly attached to the recognition of the shared normative framework that existed. This was composed of a consistent set of values, beliefs and ideas that provided the 'glue' (Nyland, 1997, p.152).

2.2 The political pendulum swings three times

The formation of Shelter and National Shelter in 1974–75 was during the time of both a conservative NSW state government and a dynamic and interventionist Commonwealth administration under Gough Whitlam. The Whitlam government established DURD, which fought back against expressways and redevelopment projects, funded the Elsie Refuge for Women and Children, and changed the direction and intent of the Henderson poverty inquiry. But times were changing.

Fraser's austerity and the threat of housing vouchers, 1975–83

With the dismissal of Gough Whitlam and the election of the Liberal Fraser government in December 1975, national politics became more challenging. During negotiations over the 1978 CSHA there was a concern that the agreement might be ended as part of the Commonwealth's drive for financial austerity. Encouragement for public housing tenants to purchase their home from the Housing Commission might be ended, and social housing rents raised to market levels. These proposals 'would force many low-income earners to contribute more towards the recovery than higher income groups' (Shelter newsletter 6, p.10). As a 1981 editorial in the NSW newsletter commented, 'It would be extraordinarily easy to fall

into a deep depression when one considers the adverse effects of stringent and totally unrealistic Federal Government cutbacks in a wide variety of service areas' (Shelter newsletter 17, p.3).

The Fraser government's $75,000 Housing Allowance Voucher Experiment (HAVE) was announced in the March 1977 budget. Housing minister Newman, writing in National Shelter's first newsletter, positioned the housing voucher pilot project as a variant on rental assistance, which at that stage was restricted to a small number of recipients. Vouchers would solve the problem of 'the people who are neither home owners or tenants of public housing. The Henderson poverty report shows that many of these families renting private accommodation are very poor' (*National Housing Action* 1, p.4).

Housing vouchers were opposed by the Shelter organisations. In 1977 National Shelter engaged an economist to write an article showing vouchers would act as a subsidy to landlords, would entrench private rental market failure, and would not address the biggest issue with the Housing Commission which was its dual role of developing housing and providing welfare: 'we must avoid following policy mistakes made abroad and promoted by those who do not understand the economics of housing policy and of public policy' (*National Housing Action* 1, pp.6–7).

Similarly, at state level, 'NSW Shelter has consistently argued that HAVE is an unnecessary and wasteful imposition and will achieve nothing significant in terms of housing. The belief that the housing problems of low income groups will be solved by charitable cash transfer schemes is foolish in the extreme' (Shelter newsletter 6, p.12). Shelter also wrote what was effectively their first 'briefing paper', although the term was not used. Carefully argued and well researched, the 39-page document was written by Colin Menzies and Greg Thompson with academic input on econometric modelling by Dr Patricia Apps (Shelter, 1977).

While a pilot housing voucher project was due to start in Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart, the scheme did not proceed beyond the drawing board and was abandoned in June 1978. The Commonwealth used the need for austerity during an economic downturn as an excuse to end the controversial experiment. For the Shelter organisations, the HAVE campaign was significant as it showed the strength of their pincer approach at both national and state levels. Technical research was also used to make reasoned arguments opposing policy change, a recurring feature across Shelter's four decades. While many were involved in opposing housing vouchers, Shelter played an important role and it could be seen as their first campaign victory.

Momentum from the HAVE campaign continued into 1979 with Shelter's call to 'fight the federal budget'. By the time of discussions over the 1981 CSHA, the Shelter organisations were well placed to mount a campaign. Public meetings were organised by state Shelters, with suggestions such as greater tenant participation raised: 'Many tenants are concerned that they have no control over the way that public housing is planned, provided, allocated and managed' (*National Housing Action* 9, p.16).

Both National Shelter and the state Shelters sent detailed submissions to the Commonwealth, making specific recommendations on homelessness, protection of private renters, problems faced by disadvantaged groups and issues with public housing. Foreshadowing the Hawke government's 1984 CSHA, Shelter called for specific funds to be set aside in CSHAs for housing co-operatives, local government projects, emergency housing, housing research and housing advisory services. There was also support for the formation of 'housing associations' that could be 'initiated and run by local Government, welfare and community groups with tenant participation' (ibid., p.17).

The Fraser government's 1981 CSHA notably tied public housing rents to those being charged in the private sector. This continued the residualisation approach, which had been boosted by Prime Minister Whiltlam's efforts to target assistance to those most in need. Shelter was one of the earliest voices making clear the fundamental shift in public housing, as noted in their June 1982 newsletter:

> Market rents represent a move away from a public housing approach whereby accommodation is provided at a reasonable price for all those who need it, to a welfare housing approach according to which only a minority of those in need will be housed and at a price they cannot afford (Shelter newsletter 21, p.4).

NSW Labor in power after 1976

In May 1976 Neville Wran was elected Labor premier of NSW. While the Commonwealth government remained unsupportive of progressive housing ideas, there was now greater chance to influence at state level. During 1976–77 Shelter representatives met twice with the NSW housing minister and 'the tone of both meetings has been largely positive and in particular Mr. Mulock has been especially accessible' (Shelter AR 1977, p.2).

One of the first initiatives of the Wran government was establishing the Rental Bond Board as a new statutory body in July 1977. Now tenants' rental bonds could be held by an independent organisation rather than by the

Technological change, 1977

Source: HCNSW, 1977. The 'Introduction of modern data entry equipment (pictured above) has streamlined the Commission's accounting procedures'. Shelter's first computer was not bought until a decade later, in 1988. New technology would in time allow better data analysis of social housing residents and properties. However, until the 1980s many systems and processes remained manual, which limited modern approaches to housing management.

landlord. Sums deposited with the board earned interest, and the surplus for 1978–79 was estimated to be $1.8 million. In April 1979 landlords and the Tenants' Union argued these funds should be used to support tenants hit during the economic downturn (Thatcher, 1979). In later years others would look to dip into the surpluses generated by invested bond deposits.

After a quick succession of housing ministers, in October 1978 Syd Einfeld was appointed minister of housing, co-operative societies and consumer affairs. As Shelter commented in their annual report, it was 'the first time in many years that the important aspects of housing policy of tenancy, financing and public housing have been brought together under the one Minister' (Shelter AR 1979, p.3). However, progress was disappointing with a 1981 editorial in the Shelter newsletter noting the NSW government 'in the housing arena, it has been particularly lax in providing innovative directions and policy interventions for overcoming the state housing crisis … Shelter believes that the State Government has not demonstrated the political will to tackle the hard housing issues' (Shelter newsletter 17, pp.3, 4).

Battlelines: Minister Terry Sheahan 'on trial', 1981

Frustrations with the NSW Labor government in general, and the housing minister Terry Sheahan in particular, led Shelter to launch a personal and powerful attack in 1981. This remains one of Shelter's most activist 'direct action' approaches to date. In comparison to the crusade against housing minister Joe Schipp in 1988–89, where Shelter was under direct threat of defunding action, the Sheahan 'NSW government on trial' campaign was on the basis of inaction by the minister. In July 1981 a campaign was launched against the state government to:

> indict the poor performance of the Wran Government on housing issues and, in particular, the role of the Housing Minister, Terry Sheahan, in this debacle. On June 6th [1981] the Minister was issued with a 'Notce to Quit' his portfolio, for his serious and persistent breaches of his agreement with NSW housing consumers' (Shelter newsletter 18, p.3).

The NSW newsletter's editorial was headed 'why the minister must go', with reasons including a 'farcical' 'housing policy revue', lack of innovation in recent 'housing initiatives', failure to reform the 'archaic' *Landlord and Tenant Act* and inaction on vacant properties. The minister was pointedly accused of failing to implement any of the major plans of the state Labor Party's housing platform. Given Shelter's year-long research project into crisis accommodation that helped in the formation of the Emergency Accommodation Task Force, there was particular anger that Minister
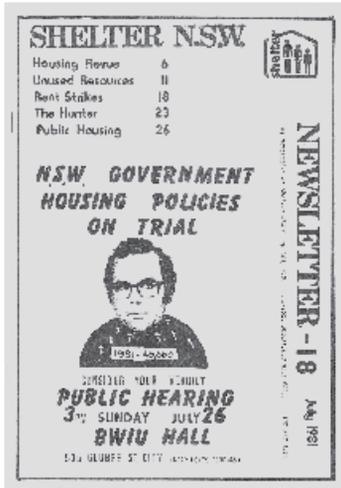
Shelter and the 1981 CSHA

Source: National Housing Action, 9. Both National Shelter and NSW Shelter lobbied governments on the CSHA negotiations, which typically took place every five years. As National Shelter noted in 1980, 'There has been little publicity surrounding the development of the new CSHA … the Commonwealth Government has done its best to dampen community participation in the discussion stages leading to this new Agreement' (ibid.). Shelter's role was to open the debate more widely, an objective it achieved with much success.

Sheahan had withdrawn a Cabinet paper that would have set up the Emergency Accommodation Unit.

A public rally was organised in July 1981 by Shelter to oppose the minister seeking an exemption from the *Anti-Discrimination Act* so the Housing Commission could continue to exclude single people from public housing, and a 'public hearing' of charges against the housing minister. Later there were calls for a tent city to push for additional affordable housing, co-ordinated by future Shelter executive officer Mary Perkins, who was then working at the Tenants' Union. In September a picket was organised outside the housing ministers' conference in Sydney.

Most noticeable about the 1981 ministerial 'trial' was its contrast to typical Shelter campaigning during its first decade. The newsletter lapsed from serious broadsheet to screaming tabloid, at least for one issue. Whether or not the campaign was responsible, the NSW government changed course. On 19 July, two days after Shelter's first anti-Sheahan rally, the minister announced an Emergency Accommodation Unit would be established to make use of vacant properties. Then, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 8 August 1981, Premier Wran ordered his housing minister to 'shut up' during a heated debate in the Labor caucus about a failing first-home-buyers' scheme. After this Sheahan became more engaged in his role as housing minister, approving the Ningana collective's use of their building. Finally he was replaced as minister by Frank Walker in February 1983, starting a period of significant housing reforms and a close working relationship between Shelter and the government.

Hawke in power at Canberra from 1983: Energising local councils

Bob Hawke's success in the March 1983 Commonwealth election led to sweeping changes in a wide range of social and economic policies. These were supported by extra funding through the new 1984 CSHA. As shown in Figure 1 above, the impact in the early years of more CSHA funding was to push the build rate of new public housing in NSW from around 2,000 new homes each year to over 4,000. A further structural change was establishing a new not-for-profit community housing sector, described in Chapter 3 below.

While the Whitlam government in the 1970s had pushed for greater community involvement in planning and social development, a defining feature of Prime Minister Hawke's era was a new housing focus for local government. Australian councils did not have the municipal housing legacy of Britain, New Zealand or many continental European countries,

though they often had several properties that might be used for worker housing or occasionally crisis accommodation.

New thinking on the use of these council properties, and the role of councils in affordable housing provision, came with the Waverley Community Housing Officer Project in April 1980. This two-year pilot project was jointly funded by the NSW Department of Youth and Community Services and the Housing Commission of NSW. Brian Elton – with a background in town planning and housing in London – was employed as a housing specialist to help Waverley Council establish a housing strategy, research local housing markets, lobby for greater low-cost housing supply, support community development and provide housing advice and assistance to the public. Waverley's housing strategy is thought by its author, Brian Elton, to be the first in Australia (pers. comm., 2018).

As a result of Brian Elton's efforts, council's existing holdings of 37 medium- and long-term dwellings and 215 emergency beds were targeted to people in housing need, rather than council employees. In 1982 the project was independently evaluated, with recommendations to extend at Waverley Council by another two years and spread the initiative to five more local authorities over the next year (Milligan and McAllister, 1982). Leichhardt Council followed Waverley's lead and advertised for a council housing officer in 1982, and in 1983 the NSW government launched the Local Government Housing Initiatives Program (LGHIP) to help councils employ community housing officers and develop housing strategies. In 1986–87 eight officers were employed, with state government covering half the cost (DoH, 1987).

The growth of councils' involvement in housing coincided with the launch of the Community Tenancy Scheme (CTS), described in section 3.3. Councils were included in the publicity around establishing CTS organisations, and initially around one third of the schemes (19) were to be sponsored by councils, though the number fell to six by 1985 (Milligan and HCNSW, 1985). Newcastle City Council, for example, had looked to establish a council-controlled CTS and it was only during subsequent discussions that a decision was made to form a community housing organisation, Newmacq, separate to council (Gilmour, 2015)

Later Brian Elton moved to state government, playing a key role in launching the NSW community housing sector. He was also later a member of the Housing Co-op Working Party, established by the NSW housing minister. The ideas from the Waverley project might well have influenced thinking for the 1984 CSHA, which resulted in the Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP). This program helped councils,

community groups and other non-government organisations provide low-cost housing, in part through councils employing community housing officers. Although the scheme was less generous and far-reaching than some had hoped, it established the principle of Commonwealth funds being tied to community housing projects. Between 1984 and 1992 the LGCHP received around 1.8 per cent of CSHA housing funds available.

2.3 Shelter comes of age

From the early meetings in 1974, Shelter soon built capacity and started engaging in many of the activities continued over the next four decades. Their progress is even more noteworthy as they continued for the best part of a decade to solely rely on volunteers.

Mark Harris, Shelter's first chair, identified the 'very difficult obstacles' the organisation faced in the 1970s. It 'must become an organisation with involvement outside large urban areas – as it has been largely up to now'. Until then, '[s]mall groups of people at National and State levels control much of the effective functioning of the organisation with little reference to or involvement of the broader membership in decision making', therefore 'Shelter must recognise and plan its role in developing leaders from consumer and community groups, not just recycle the same faces … [and] become yet another forum for housing and planning professionals and community and consumer leaders lost in the process' (ibid.). These problems would continue to bedevil Shelter up to the early 2000s.

As a voluntary organisation with very little income, Shelter could not afford office space during the 1970s and into the 1980s. Monthly meetings and annual general meetings were held during the 1970s at the offices of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development on the third floor of 106 Goulburn Street, Sydney.

In search of stable funding:
HIRS 1979, and Community Employment 1984

Indirect funding first came in May 1979. Following a submission from Shelter's Emergency Housing Group, Shelter was funded by the NSW government to operate the Housing Information and Referral Service (HIRS) as a three-year pilot program. HIRS was based on ideas developed by the Henderson inquiry into poverty, which took note of a submission from the I.B. Fell Research Centre at the University of Sydney, showing private rental applicants were at an 'immediate disadvantage in their

negotiations with real estate agents and private landlords. The report therefore recommended establishing a Housing Advisory and Information Service through a pilot project (Henderson, 1975, pp.175–6).

HIRS aimed to provide support for local agencies and community groups providing information and assistance on housing issues. One of the first tasks was to produce information leaflets on private tenancy, public tenancy and emergency accommodation. This was followed by running workshops and training programs for community groups.

Four staff selected by Shelter were funded to work three days per week on the project: Greg Thompson as development officer, Freda Backes as project officer, Diane Michel as information officer ('the pen behind the sword') and Phyllis Bouske 'runs the phones, the typewriter, the files' (Shelter, 1979a). Through the state government funding these roles, Shelter effectively had their first four (indirect) staff members. As acknowledged in the NSW newsletters: 'Most people are aware that many of Shelter NSW active members are also closely associated involved in the Housing and Information Referral Service' (Shelter newsletter 24, p.5). HIRS even had the same logo as Shelter, featuring a family group with two children and, according to a Shelter supporter and later government official, HIRS was 'a front for Shelter' (Annette Gallard, pers. comm., 2018).

Despite the close connection, HIRS funding did not pass through Shelter's bank account and a separate Shelter management committee was established in 1978 to be responsible for HIRS funds. By 1979 HIRS, with $11,500 in the bank, was considerably better financed than Shelter, with $230 (Shelter, 1979b). Fortunately for Shelter, HIRS funding continued beyond the initial three-year pilot project and was refunded in January 1982 through to June 1984, though with a 45 per cent reduction in revenues.

While Shelter's capacity had been built through the state government funding of their 'sister organisation' HIRS from May 1979, with the pilot project extended in January 1982, this was not a substitute for core, long-term funding direct to Shelter. In May 1984 Shelter received a grant of $60,988 from the Community Employment Program administered through the Office of Special Employment to cover the period to 24 May 1985.

The program funding allowed two full-time staff to be employed, Robert Mowbray as co-ordinator from 28 May 1984 and Trevor Close. The main task was to compile a NSW housing resources handbook listing crisis and low-cost housing in regional areas, complimenting the *Sydney Housing Directory* produced by HIRS in 1981. Funding also enabled Shelter's first

office to be established on the second floor of 62 Erskine Street, Sydney in late 1984, and for the organisation's filing to be brought up to date.

Read all about it: Shelter newsletters and research

Shelter's oldest retained newsletter, other than the one produced on its behalf by National Shelter, is from April 1977. Given this is newsletter number six, it seems likely newsletters started in 1976. In the 1970s the logos of Shelter and National Shelter were the same – what appears to be a family group living inside a house. Producing newsletters was, and remains, a key activity of Shelter. Later Shelter's newsletter was joined by the *HIRS Housing News Bulletin*, which by July 1982 had grown to a mammoth 50-page publication

In the late 1970s membership of Shelter cost just $2 ($10 in August 2018 prices), for which members received four newsletters per year. The annual subscription to Shelter National's newsletter, *National Housing Action*, cost $5 ($25 in today's prices) for two or three newsletters annually. The HIRS bulletin was available for $10 ($50 in today's prices). Therefore, by the early 1980s, housing activists were extremely well informed.

National Housing Action was the only way most housing advocates would be able to follow developments in different states and the Commonwealth. The first edition of the newsletter in November 1976 contained an interview with the Fraser government's housing minister, Kevin Newman. While the minister was controversial, especially for the promotion of housing vouchers, the reporting was balanced. Newman positioned Shelter as an organisation with 'a vital role in providing us with grass-roots problems, reactions and needs'.

National Shelter helped share knowledge of tactics and to bind the Shelter organisations into a more effective lobbying force both nationally and in particular jurisdictions. News of success with establishing an early housing co-operative in Victoria was covered in *National Housing Action*, helping spread knowledge of the model in other states. Advice was also given on squatting and lobbying tactics learned from the 'battle' to establish the Ningana Housing Collective in 1980–81, detailed in Chapter 3.

Tony Dalton was the main editor of *National Housing Action* in the 1970s and into the 1980s, and the journal retained a serious style with articles by leading housing academics such as Jim Kemeny (University of Birmingham), Chris Paris (Australian National University) and Terry Burke (Swinburne Institute). When Ken Smith, NSW Shelter's secretary, deputised as editor, the tone lightened. Smith referred to the National Shelter council

meeting in September 1980: 'All in all, a worthwhile meeting. If anybody is sufficiently masochistic to want to read the full minutes, they should contact the secretary' (*National Housing Action* 9, p.35).

David Owen, in his role as acting editor of *National Housing Action*, hinted in 1981 at the challenges in producing the journal: 'It is critical that housing activists begin to support this journal – it has been incredibly frustrating trying to get copy from people' (*National Housing Action* 10). The NSW newsletter also had problems, as noted in 1982: 'We have been concerned about how far we got in producing the longer newsletter. Editions have appeared 2/3 months late because we rely on voluntary labour for writing, typing, layout, collation and mailing' (Shelter newsletter 21, p.1).

Early Shelter NSW newsletters collated reports written by each of the working groups and were written in a lively and accessible style. In the late 1970s the groups included those looking at particular resident types – for example, 'special needs' groups, Aboriginal housing, the Tenants' Union and public housing. Special articles on housing for young people and mobile homes residents also appear. There were also two working groups looking at the broader, system-wide issues of housing policy and housing finance.

The NSW newsletter was aimed at 'housing activists', and by 1982 there were 500 subscribers. As the editor dryly admitted, 'we haven't yet tried to take over the *[Sydney Morning] Herald*, but we will shortly' (Shelter newsletter 22, p.1). Newsletters reflected the language of the time. Articles in December 1978 on 'black housing' and 'the handicapped' sound confronting by contemporary usage (Shelter newsletter 11). However, newsletter content was measured rather than polemic, relying on wit and sarcasm rather than diatribe.

Early newsletters were enlivened by cartoons. Some were hand-drawn, including by architect Paul Pholeros who later became very influential in Indigenous housing in Australia and internationally, and others likely copied from newspapers – as were articles by journalists. Intellectual property seems to have been less of a concern. Shelter founders Greg Thompson, Marg Barry and Beth Mitchell were the main editors during the 1970s, followed by Ken Smith in the early 1980s.

Shelter's first research project was initiated in mid-1977 when the organisation funded a regional housing study of the Illawarra. This seems to have been a desk-research project as '[n]o attempt was made to carry out "original" research' (*National Housing Action*, May 1978, pp.17–29). However, the report was widely circulated and used to lobby for statewide

An early newsletter, 1977
Source: Shelter newsletter 6.

housing policy co-ordination rather than the then split between eight ministers. The housing minister was said to lack any policy advice other than from the Housing Commission, which had a vested interest in public housing.

One little known legacy of the Whitlam government was the establishment of the Australian Housing Research Council (AHRC) in 1974. By 1979, around 40 projects had been sponsored covering topics including housing economics, data collection and construction technologies. In 1979 AHRC met with National Shelter to gain community input on research work to date: 'Shelter put forward the view that much of the past AHRC work had been concerned with very "academic" national and state issues … It was also suggested that "action research" projects could be supported, which would help in the actual establishment of pilot innovative housing projects.' Shelter also argued 'the Council should seek out the views of consumer organisations on its Research Program' (*National Housing Action* 7, May 1979, p.21). Shelter's lobbying was not successful on AHRC involving consumer organisations, though 'the Council decided that it would be more involved with Shelter and will seek our view wherever possible!'. Further discussion of the evolution of Australian housing research, based on foundations laid by the AHRC, is included in Chapter 4.

Shelter and the wider housing network

As a networked organisation, Shelter worked closely with other Sydney-based groups holding similar views. Joint seminars were held with NCOSS on HAVE housing vouchers and the CSHA, and a joint meeting with

National Shelter and the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development.

While many of Shelter's founders had an inner-city Sydney background, the organisation made efforts to be relevant across NSW. The inaugural Rural and Regional Housing Conference was held in October 1976. This was 'an attempt to get away from the Metropolitan Sydney emphasis and to secure the involvement of Shelter members from outside the Sydney area in issues more directly related to their problems and to their involvement in housing' (Shelter, 1984b, p.2). The subsequently issued discussion paper noted the issue with the centralisation of public housing resources, policy and decision-making in the state capital.

Some meetings were held in regional NSW. In 1977, for example, Shelter representatives met the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation to discuss regional housing needs and Shelter worked with Broken Hill council on housing problems in the city (Shelter newsletter 6). Shelter's first housing research report was a regional study on the Illawarra. This was said to 'serve as a valuable reminder to State and Commonwealth Governments that housing problems are not the sole prerogative of capital cities, and that policies must be developed which can apply just as well to smaller communities' (*National Housing Action*, May 1978, pp.17–19). In 1980 the NSW newsletter was a special edition on rural housing, which covered issues of caravan parks in Orange, homelessness in country areas and the housing affordability 'crisis' in Newcastle (Shelter newsletter 14). However, more than half the newsletter was still devoted to non-rural housing issues.

Like housing issues in regional areas, Aboriginal housing issues only gained slow traction in Shelter's early years. In 1977 a working group on Aboriginal housing was planned, but both director and alternative director roles remained unfilled. Information on Aboriginal housing issues was carried in the early NSW newsletters, though initially just copying information from other sources. A more campaigning stance started in 1978 when Shelter wrote to the NSW minister for Aboriginal affairs criticising the decision to stop funding the Aboriginal Housing Panel. There was also an article on 'ripping off the blacks', highlighting how a building company was delivering poor-quality homes for Aboriginal people while charging government-inflated prices (Shelter newsletter 11, pp.12–13).

On an Australia-wide basis, National Shelter faced challenges during the 1970s. The funding that had supported Cathi Moore's work establishing state-based Shelter organisations was not continued after the dismissal of

the Whitlam government in November 1975. Moore (1976) summarised the previous period as 'a grim year for all of us in terms of funding'. By March 1976 Shelter was active in NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT – but not in the Northern Territory, Queensland or Western Australia.

National housing conferences were held in August 1975 and March 1977, the latter organised jointly with the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development (*National Housing Action* 2). A one-day CSHA conference was held in Darlinghurst, Sydney in April 1980 with the theme 'the future of low-income housing in the 1980s'. This conference was addressed by the NSW housing minister, Terry Sheahan, who bemoaned cuts in Commonwealth funding of the CSHA (Shelter newsletter 14, p.17).

A further national housing conference took place in September 1982 at the Masonic Centre, Goulburn Street, Sydney. Entry costs for the two-day event were $40, or $20 for concession. With the regular entry equating to $200 in today's prices, the conference, which included 28 workshops, seems good value for money (Shelter newsletter 21, p.3). The event was co-sponsored by the Labor Party and the ACTU and was financially backed by other trade unions and housing and community organisations. One of the aims was for regional and local housing groups to 'broaden their networks with other housing groups working on related issues across Australia' (Shelter newsletter 20, p.29).

Shelter's first decade: An assessment

As a further sign of how Shelter had established itself in contemporary form during the first few years of operation, the emergency housing steering group was by 1977 undertaking research through detailed questionnaires to establish the need for emergency housing in metro and regional areas. Later, in the September newsletter, Canada's support for low-rent housing co-operatives supported by a national finance corporation was highlighted, and mention made that Shelter was looking to use this approach for a new co-operative in Ultimo (Shelter newsletter 7, p.16).

Hence even in the 1970s, when Shelter had no staff and relied on volunteers, it was already taking carefully considered positions on housing policy, basing suggestions on empirical research and best international practice, engaging in key debates and lobbying over the Commonwealth budgets and CSHA negotiations, and meeting ministers. Robert Mowbray described the nuanced approach to lobbying: 'activism was part of job, but

we needed to be clever about it … part of our job was to be creative' (pers. comm., 2018). Shelter claimed in 1977, perhaps a little optimistically, that '[t]he Federal Government has conceded to pressure from State Housing Authorities and State Shelters on its proposals for the new Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement' (Shelter newsletter 7, p.5).

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While Shelter had established a distinct position in the NSW housing network by the mid-1980s, it still relied heavily on volunteers. Basic tasks such as keeping in touch with members through newsletters and writing considered policy reports required proper resourcing in the form of paid staff. Chapter 4 continues the story of how this funding was sourced, and how receipt of public funds after 1984 impacted Shelter's ability to speak freely as the voice of housing activists. First, however, Chapter 3 looks at Shelter's important role in supporting the emergence and growth of the Tenants' Union, housing co-operatives and the community housing sector during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

3 Midwife to the Sector: Shelter Supporting the Housing Network

Chapter 2 highlighted that Shelter's growth was made possible by assistance from other housing and community change activist organisations such as ACOSS, NCOSS and National Shelter. In later years Shelter would act as the handmaid to a variety of sectors – such as housing co-operatives and community housing providers – as well as to new organisations, especially network support agencies and peak bodies. There is a good case to be made that this nurturing role has been Shelter's greatest achievement over the last four decades.

As noted in the NSW newsletter in 1982, Shelter has achieved 'such things as the establishment of the NSW Tenants' Union, the Housing Commission Tenants' Union, the Housing Information and Referral Service, and has been directly involved in pushing housing co-operatives in general and specific local co-ops in Alexandria, Chippendale and Leichhardt' (Shelter newsletter 22, p.21).

3.1 Birth and flight of the Tenants' Union

Tenant activism was not invented in the 1970s. The NSW Rent Payers' Association was active between 1910 and 1916. During the Great Depression there were confrontations between police and tenants in Bankstown, Newtown and Newcastle in what became known as the 'eviction riots' (Schneller, 2013, pp.7–8). However, co-ordinated statewide activity by tenants, and support for tenants, only really developed in the 1970s.

The Tenants' Union of Victoria was established in December 1974, and by the time of the National Shelter conference in August 1975 was operating

a tenant advice service in the inner city of Melbourne with plans to help develop local tenants' unions in regional areas. At this time Robert Mowbray at South Sydney Community Aid ran a tenants' rights service covering the South Sydney council area funded by the Social Welfare Commission.

South Sydney Community Aid and the Tenants' Rights Project

The role of South Sydney Community Aid (SSCA) as a community organisation established in the late 1960s is detailed in Chapter 1. By the early 1970s it was receiving public funds, enabling it to deliver services to clients and help build capacity for the voluntary community and housing sectors. Martin Mowbray was employed as a social worker by SSCA from May 1972 to February 1974, and from January to March 1974 Martin's cousin Robert Mowbray undertook fieldwork as part of his social work degree at the University of Sydney. With Robert's guidance, SSCA approved a Tenants' Rights Project in June 1974. The project was delivered by Robert Mowbray, Paul van Reyk (a final year social work student at the University of Sydney) and Rosemary Montgomery (a social work student at the University of NSW).

One of the main aims of the project was 'building a viable Tenants' Organisation' (SSCA, 1974, pp.10-11). A number of reports were produced and used to lobby politicians and voluntary organisations: 'The response to the reports was mixed … There was limited success in obtaining press coverage for the report' (SSCA, 1975, p.12). Positive outcomes were a booklet produced by the team that set out the rights of tenants, in seven languages, and the establishment in November 1974 of the Redfern and District Tenants' Association. In 1975 tenants' advice centres were set up in the council areas of South Sydney and Marrickville as demonstration projects. In June and July 1976 SSCA's Mowbray ran a series of tenants' rights workshops, directed at social welfare and related workers.

From April 1975 to May 1976 Mowbray was employed by SSCA as a tenants' rights officer, having previously worked as a volunteer (see Box 3). Funding for this role and the associated Tenants' Rights Project came from the Whitlam government's Social Welfare Commission ($9,385), World Christian Action ($1,700) and the Methodist church ($500), among others (SSCA, 1976).

Links between SSCA and Shelter were well established by 1975, and by 1976 it was noted in SSCA's annual report that '[t]he Tenants' Rights Project has been providing the back-up for the Tenancy Working Group of NSW Shelter in a wider campaign to improve the position of tenants. This

Box 3: Shelter Hall of Fame: Robert Mowbray, the outside agitator

Robert Mowbray has the longest record of supporting Shelter – uniquely through each of the last five decades. He was a co-founder of Shelter and director of the interim board (1977) as well as co-founder and longstanding staff member of the Tenants' Union. He was Shelter's first staff member (1983–84), housing worker (1986–87) and senior policy officer (2004–05 to 2006–07) and is still collating fact sheets for Shelter today.

To add to Mowbray's encyclopedic knowledge of housing in general and Shelter in particular, he completed a PhD in 1996 at the University of Sydney on 'The nature of contemporary landlordism in NSW: Implications for tenants' rights'.

His role has been as an activist, and by teaching at the UNSW has been able to carry forward the knowledge to the next generation. Mowbray has also been a regular contributor to Shelter publications and the newsletter, and in 2015 told a story about his role as an 'outside agitator':

The previous evening a neighbour had told a client in a country town that the landlord was coming first thing in the morning to demolish his dwelling. I sprang into action … At quarter to 8 in the morning the landlord arrived with a bulldozer, several trucks and two security guards carrying guns. I ordered them off the premises, warning them of a raft of laws they were about to breach. We called the police …The police report on the incident states that Mowbray 'appeared to inflame the situation insisting that police prevent action by [the landlord]'. This report then refers to Mr Mowbray as an 'outside agitator'. Justice Murphy in *Neal v The Queen*, High Court 1982, said of the defendant: 'If he is an agitator, he is in good company. Many of the great figures of history have been agitators, and human progress owes much to the efforts of these and many who are unknown' (Mowbray, 2016, p.15).

Source: Photo supplied by Robert Mowbray

has involved political lobbying, deputations with the Ministers …' (SSCA, 1976, p.29). SSRC's Tenants' Rights Project also helped promote the idea of a 'Shelter – Inner Sydney Housing Co-operative' as a rental co-operative for lower-income tenants in 1975 and 1976.

The Tenants' Union of NSW, founded 1976

From 1974 NSW tenancy issues had been co-ordinated by the tenancy working group of Shelter which received strong support from the Tenants' Rights Project of South Sydney Community Aid in Redfern, backed by Commonwealth funding. According to Mowbray, who was the key figure in the group at the time, the decision to incorporate in its own right as a separate organisation from Shelter was to attract funding for the development of a network of Tenants' Advice Services, and also to protect members from potentially being sued for criticising the practices of landlords and real estate agents (pers. comm., 2018).

The inaugural meeting of the Tenants' Union of NSW was held on 17 August 1976, and the organisation incorporated as a co-operative on 23 November, three years ahead of Shelter's incorporation in 1979. Likely the Tenants' Union name was borrowed from the earlier established Victorian organisation, and continuing a trend of name borrowing started by Shelter adopting their name from the British organisation. Initially the Tenants' Union office was in St Luke's Uniting Church in Redfern and they continued to rely heavily on the resources of SSCA, which was co-located. It also relied heavily on active members and social work students on placement, and was assisted by a few sympathetic lawyers. The union did not receive funding until 1980 when grants from the Commonwealth Legal Aid Commission and the NSW Department of Youth and Community Services were given to resource a network of Tenants' Advice Service agencies.

Both Shelter and the Tenants' Union continued to work closely together in the 1970s as well as during subsequent decades. The union was incorporated and funded before Shelter, with Shelter drawing more heavily on the resources of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development in these early years. Collaboration was through shared campaigns, including the need for a reform of tenancy legislation and against the defunding of both organisations in the late 1980s. In those first years, and to some extent through to today, the Tenants' Union was 'the private renting arm' of Shelter NSW (Robert Mowbray, pers. comm., 2018).

There is a long legacy of people being active in both Shelter and the Tenants' Union, and exchanges of staff were, and remain, regular

occurrences. The most recent example is Ned Cutcher's move from Tenants NSW (as the Tenants' Union is now branded) to Shelter in 2018. It was a normal (unwritten) practice for each organisation to nominate a director on the other organisation's board. For example, Mowbray of the Tenants' Union was a member of Shelter's management committee in 1977–78, and Terry Findlay a director of Shelter co-operative in 1978–79. Ned Cutcher was a Tenants NSW employee on Shelter's board before taking up his new staff role with Shelter in 2018.

The union worked on issues including the need for a comprehensive reform of tenancy law, establishment of a Rental Bond Board and a prohibition on tenant lockouts (achieved 1978). Tenancy issues remained covered in detail in Shelter's newsletters, spreading knowledge on tenancy issues across the broader housing activist network. By the 1980s the Tenants' Union shifted to broader issues than law reform, such as lobbying for housing policy and funding reform. It also started offering services for tenants, for example, a voluntary network of tenants' advisory services. When in time these were funded, this became the main source of revenue for the Tenants' Union.

Inner workings of the Tenants' Union

Potentially one benefit of splitting the Tenants' Union from Shelter would be to achieve greater tenant involvement as members of the organisation. According to Wendy Pearse, who worked for the union for two months at the start of 1977, this was not the case. While there were 50 tenant members of the Tenants' Union, only around 10 would attend monthly meetings. She concluded that '[w]hile the Tenants' Union is gradually moving towards achieving its concrete goals … [it is failing] to increase the capacity of service recipients' (Pearse, 1977, p.10).

During the Tenants' Union's early years it primarily supported one type of renters: those in the private rental market. This was by far the largest segment of the rental housing market and likely contained people living in the worst housing conditions and with least legal protection against the will of landlords. The Housing Commission Tenants' Association worked with public housing tenants, the Council Tenant's Union with City of Sydney Council tenants, and separate bodies representing tenants renting on the Glebe estate and from the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority. There were also various residents' advisory committees, and Aboriginal tenants' groups.

In 1978 when then housing minister Syd Einfeld was considering a change to NSW landlord and tenant legislation, Shelter helped co-ordinate a meeting on a Sunday at their offices of the various tenants' groups. At

that time, 'each tenants' group [was] fighting for its own issues: whether this is rents, lases, development, evictions, facilities … by joining together, we should be a able to support each other's issues, as well as fighting on common problems' (Shelter newsletter 11, p.17). Hence, even after the Tenants' Union was established, Shelter still played a wider role in bringing together disparate tenants' representatives.

3.2 Nurturing an activist housing sector

Beyond the prosaic details of housing policy, Shelter took an active and practical interest in promoting the establishment of new forms of community-based organisations. With housing co-operatives and refuges, and community housing providers (section 3.3), Shelter played a key role in the growth of new housing sectors. These helped break the binary tenure divide between Housing Commission rentals and private sector rentals and sales.

The vision for housing that comes clearly from the pages of the early Shelter newsletters is one of resident-led models. This built on the background of many Shelter founders in the resident action group movement, and the collectivist approach from the squatter movement. Some Shelter members were also influenced by Communist Party thinking and people such as Harvey Volke were members, at least for a few years (see Box 8). Shelter therefore tended to promote housing co-op and tenant-led community housing approaches.

Squatters and the pioneering women's refuge movement

The groundwork for the growth of community-based grassroots organisa-tions in the 1980s was laid by the earlier work of squatters and the women's
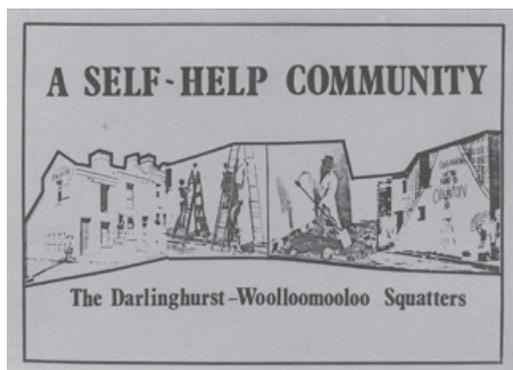
Darlinghurst-Woolloomooloo squatters, 1980s

Source: Vickas et al. (circa 1980)

refuge movement. Squatting vacant homes was widespread by the mid-1970s in properties resumed by NSW government agencies in advance of proposed expressways and Housing Commission projects. By the late 1970s an estimated 70 houses in Darlinghurst and Woolloomooloo were occupied by squatters, including properties acting as crisis accommodation and Elsie women's refuge. According to the report shown above, the residents were not 'radicals and bludgers' but more 'the people the public housing doesn't cater for', given the Housing Commission did not house singles (Vickas et al., circa 1980, p.5).

According to the *Self-Help Community* publication sponsored by Aquarius Youth Services – where Mary Perkins, a future executive officer of Shelter, was working – inner-city squats were new forms of 'self-help' communities. Squatters held regular meetings, shared duties and worked together on minor improvements: they acted as informal co-operatives. Furthermore, several squatters' groups were said to be considering transitioning to become formally constituted, registered housing co-operatives, if they were given security of tenure by the Department of Main Roads.

In March 1974 a group of Sydney Women's Liberation members, led by Anne Summers, squatted two Housing Commission properties in Westmoreland Street, Glebe. The homes had been left vacant as they were in the path of one of the new expressways proposed for the area. Elsie Women's Refuge Night Shelter, as it was then known, became Australia's first emergency refuge for women and children facing domestic violence. Such violence was not necessarily considered a crime, and women were not eligible for emergency housing as long as there was a matrimonial home – the Housing Commission would not house women and children without a husband (Gilchrist, 2015).

Initially the Elsie refuge, named after one of the houses squatted, had no income and relied on the work of volunteers and donations. In January 1975, following a visit by the Whitlam government's social services minister, Bill Hayden, the refuge received a one-off grant of $24,250 from the Commonwealth Department of Health.

By the late 1970s a number of women's and youth refuges providing short-term accommodation to highly vulnerable groups began to be funded by the NSW Department of Youth and Community Services (Shelter, 2002). As will be described below, from 1981 the emergency accommodation unit started making vacant public housing available for emergency accommodation. Finally, secure longer-term funding became

available under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program jointly funded by the states and the Commonwealth in 1985.

The women's refuge movement soon expanded, with early examples in urban, suburban and regional locations led by Bonnie Women's Refuge in Green Valley in 1974 then Manly-Warringah, Faith Cottage (Newcastle), Toukley (Central Coast), Jenny's Place (Newcastle), Albury and Armidale in 1976. By 2002, 55 refuges were members of the NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre (Germon, 2002).

Both Shelter and the women's refuge movement emerged at a similar time, and in similar locations in the inner-city areas of Sydney. There are connections with the rise of squatting as a way of properties being occupied, and eventually ownership formalised, for both women's refuges and housing co-operatives. However, in the early days the women's refuge movement was predominantly focused on domestic violence rather than affordable housing. Housing did not come into the refuge movement history until the early 1980s when the difficulties of getting women housed post-refuge were becoming apparent and the 'halfway house' and medium-term accommodation got off the ground. It was likely only at this stage that the women's movement people noticed Shelter's existence. Feminists from the early refuge movement such as Julie Nyland, who later became involved in Shelter, went on to make an important contribution to issues of women's housing.

Shelter did not play a direct role in supporting women's refuges, and no specific working group was established other than a broadly based Emergency Housing team. Perhaps Shelter considered the women's refuge movement was sufficiently organised that they did not need to assist, or perhaps resources were too tight in the period before public funding of the peak. Through their newsletter, Shelter did start a wider debate about gendered housing issues. In the December 1978 edition Jeanne Devine noted: 'Society has much to learn about the needs of women. This is the reason, I feel, that people do not hear so much about homeless women. Homeless men, yes!' (Shelter newsletter 11, p.4).

Developing the co-op model: Shelter's early role

Shelter took a keen interest in the housing co-operative model from its foundation. A co-operative housing working group was established by the NSW Shelter organisation in 1974, and this developed plans for a new 'Shelter co-operative' to be formed serving the council areas of Leichhardt, Marrickville, South Sydney, Sydney, Woollahra, Randwick, Waverley and Botany. Even at this early stage it was envisaged the Shelter co-operative would

help establish other co-ops, then when enough were formed an association could continue the role of building sector capacity (*National Housing Action* 1, p.3). At the August 1975 National Shelter conference Mark Harris reported the group had identified potential sites, drafted a constitution and sought finance from local and national government (National Shelter, 1975, p.9).

Continuing work to promote housing co-ops in the decade after 1974 included working with groups of tenants to try (unsuccessfully) to secure funding from the Commonwealth and NSW government to establish rental housing co-operatives, working with HIRS on a detailed library on housing co-ops, and planning NSW input to the first National Co-operative Housing Conference, held in Melbourne in June 1983 (Shelter, 1984b). One of the problems in the 1970s was that 'Governments at all levels are sceptical of the ability of community groups, local residents and tenants' groups to manage housing projects such as co-operatives. They prefer to trust established welfare agencies' (*National Housing Action* 8, p.26). Scepticism took time to overcome. In the case of the Ningana

The miracle housing co-op

Source: Drawing by Paul Pholeros in 1981 for the video Streetwise, courtesy of Karine Shellshear. The image illustrates a fantasy view of life in a housing co-operative, complete with out-of-control children. The 'killer play area' is probably a reference to a controversial play area proposed by the Housing Commission in Waterloo close to high-rise apartments. In the bottom corner, avaricious businessmen view the co-op as a prime development opportunity.

collective, described below, Shelter helped by undertaking research and forming a broad coalition in favour of housing co-ops.

While progress was made with the co-op movement in NSW, Victoria set the pace. The NSW newsletter and National Shelter newsletter regularly gave coverage of developments south of the border, helping transfer policy ideas around the country. The leading Victorian example was the Fitzroy Collingwood Rental Housing Association established in the mid-1970s. Houses to the value of $1 million (by May 1980) were purchased on the open market by the not-for-profit company and financed by loans from the Victorian Ministry of Housing.

Fitzroy Collingwood was not legally structured as a housing co-operative, though over half the directors had to be tenants. One director each was nominated by the Victorian Housing Commission and the councils of Fitzroy and Collingwood (*National Housing Action* 8, pp.19–22). As a tenant in the Rental Housing Association perceptively noted, the approach was 'an Alternative Housing scheme, not Welfare Houses' as the organisation was financially viable from the rents collected (at 20 per cent of income) as well as having tenant involvement in decision-making (ibid., p.23).

The battle for Ningana, 1978–81

The *SMH* revealed in July 1978 that a fully furnished 53-room building in Annandale had had no residents for four years and was owned by the state and Commonwealth governments. Purchased for $440,000 soon after building had been completed in 1971, the empty three-storey block had housed British migrants arriving under the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme – 'ten-pound Poms'. Leichhardt Council, Shelter and homelessness activists marshalled a campaign to retain the facility for social housing in

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Box 4: Better than a bus shelter:
The first-known press release, 1978

The [Ningana] units that the Housing Commission has rejected as unsuitable, and which will now be sold, are far better than the bus shelters and empty cars presently used by people requiring emergency accommodation, Greg Thompson, Editor of NSW Shelter, a housing consumers organisation, said today.

And they would provide cheaper, better quality accommodation than many tenants can find in the private rental sector, he added …

It appears ridiculous that the Government could buy the flats for short term migrant accommodation, and then refuse their use for emergency accommodation, he added.

Source: Shelter, 1978b.

Ningana protest, late 1970s to early 1980s
Source: Undated image supplied by Ningana Housing Collective

conflict with the state minister for housing's plans to sell it. The issue was further complicated by the Commonwealth's claim of co-ownership which the state disputed (Shelter newsletter 11, p.7).

Within three months of the *SMH* exposé, Shelter and Leichhardt Council supplied evidence of the need for local housing with a survey of local residents. The data showed two thirds of the people seeking accommodation in the area depended on benefits (65 per cent), more than a quarter had no source of income at all (27 per cent), and two thirds were single-person households (63 per cent). A high need for a housing option for low-income single people in the Leichhardt Council area had been demonstrated. Shelter's development of evidence-based advocacy was to become an effective strategy for many campaigns during its next four decades, forming coalitions with parties seeking the same social outcomes (in this case, the council), gathering robust evidence, and presenting the rational business case for effective proposals to government.

St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army declined state government offers to use the 53 rooms for crisis accommodation, and it took until October 1979 for the state government to accept a proposal for a locally based housing co-operative to be established to manage the property for

low-income tenants under Leichhardt Council auspices as signatory to a 'headlease' for the building (*National Housing Action* 8, pp.22–28).

The battle dragged on for 16 months while the 53 rooms remained unused, then on 28 February 1981, members of Ningana Housing Collective forced entry to the building and began providing low-income housing to people in need, which they continue to do to this day. Seven years of wasted opportunities had been ended, but housing minister Terry Sheahan quickly moved to evict the squatters, without success.

Lobbying and direct action proved effective, with the government agreeing in October 1981 to lease the building to the residents. By January 1982 the building accommodated 23 adults and five children (Shelter newsletter 20, p.25). Later, in May 1984, the Ningana Housing Collective advertised vacancies in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and recruited a professional bookkeeper in April 1985. It would continue to grow, providing smaller housing co-ops with financial aid as well as maintaining the building at no cost to the taxpayer.

Collaborating with Leichhardt Council had provided the early urban co-op movement with a degree of oversight and legitimacy that was critical to the successful outcome. At one stage it was planned for council to nominate two directors to Ningana's board, along with four directors from community service organisations. Unusually for a co-operative, only two member-directors were proposed. The Ningana story is important in the emergence of the NSW housing co-op sector, and a good example of the practical support Shelter gave to the growth and development of the sector.

Shelter and the NSW government's 'emergency accommodation'

The Wran Labor government faced growing activist and community group lobbying in the late 1970s to take action on the growing problems of homelessness and housing affordability for people not eligible to access public housing. In one of Shelter's earliest major research projects, published in March 1979 and led by Greg Thompson, Mark Harris and Bev Barnett, it was estimated that 1 per cent of the NSW population, or 50,000 people, sought emergency accommodation. The rate in inner Sydney was estimated to be 3.6 per cent, and 3.1 per cent in rural areas (Shelter, 1979c).

This substantial piece of research by Shelter was unfunded and relied on a network of dedicated volunteers across the state sending out postal questionnaires. The need for emergency accommodation was seen to be driven 30 per cent by rental market failure (rent increases, evictions), 39 per

cent by domestic issues (marital breakdown, domestic violence) and 32 per cent by 'transience issues' (moving between areas for work, people leaving prison or psychiatric institutions). The main two recommendations were clear: an emergency housing unit should be established, and 'Emergency Housing must be accepted as being a housing rather than a welfare issue' (ibid., p.27).

Did the research impact government decision-making? Shelter established an emergency housing working group from foundation in 1974, so had a long-term commitment and lobbying expertise in this area. Its research was the only analysis available at the time, and the 50,000 figure became widely quoted. Shelter could therefore take pride when in October 1979 the government set up an interdepartmental emergency accommodation task force, leading to the formation of the Emergency Accommodation Unit in April 1981. The unit was funded by $933,000 in 1980–81 together with surpluses generated by the Rental Bond Board (*National Housing Action* 11).

The unit's aim was to make better use of surplus government housing stock, which was often owned by various departments whose role was not related to housing such as the Department of Main Roads and the Maritime Services Board. Unfortunately, despite initial task force recommendations, the Emergency Accommodation Unit was established within the Housing Commission bureaucracy. While the focus was intended to be on crisis accommodation, the unit also supported provision of longer term housing, establishing 'essentially a de facto public housing initiative for those low-income people not formally recognised by the Housing Commission. In this context, the word "emergency" in the Unit's name was a misnomer from the beginning' (Wilkinson and Vickas, 1984, p.6).

During the unit's first two years of operation a total of 1,105 properties were made available to not-for-profit groups. Of the dwellings allocated in 1982–83, the main beneficiaries were youth housing (25 per cent), rehabilitation programs (20 per cent), crisis housing (17 per cent) and family refuges (16 per cent). Another 11 per cent of properties were made available to community housing groups (HCNSW, 1983).

In 1982 when four single women's refuges obtained surplus properties via the Emergency Accommodation Unit to establish transitional housing, and a grant of $50,000, they decided to establish a new organisation to accommodate single women – the Women's Housing Company. This new entity showed the potential of not-for-profit tenancy management organisations, predating the launch of the Community Tenancy Scheme

(CTS) in late 1982. Coming full circle, the Women's Housing Company itself benefitted from additional properties made available under the CTS.

Co-op housing comes of age

The NSW co-operative housing sector expanded during the 1980s, though it was often slow progress. For example, Alpha House originated as a grassroots organisation in 1982 when two artists established a loose collective to provide affordable accommodation in the inner city, together with studio space for artists. After an early battle with the City of Sydney, who threatened eviction from the original building they squatted, a housing co-op was formed and property bought by the state government then leased to Alpha. However, this was only after a series of lengthy battles, ombudsman's investigations, lobbying and design conflicts that finally ended in 1994 with the co-op gaining access to long-term property.

One of the problems in NSW was the lack of resourcing. Victoria successfully expanded their co-op sector when the state government established the Rental Housing Co-operative Advice Service in 1981 to help establish new co-ops. By May 1982 five new Victorian co-ops had been established with support from the Advice Service with a further five planned in 1982–83 (Shelter newsletter 21, p.9). NSW was four years behind when in 1985 $1.5 million was set aside to fund rental housing co-operatives under the Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP). Of this, Shelter was allocated $50,000 to employ a co-op development worker. Greg Thompson was employed in this role in October 1985 to collate information, give funding guidance and provide resourcing assistance to groups wanting to establish new rental co-operatives.

In 1985 a co-operative housing resource group was established with four members nominated by Shelter, and one each by the LGCHP advisory committee, the Housing Commission and the finance sector (Shelter newsletter 29, pp.6–7). John Nicolades was said to be 'one of its spiritual mentors and guiding lights' (Shelter newsletter 32, p.29). The group became responsible in 1986 for delivering the Co-operative Housing Resource Program contracted by state government, which aimed to 'develop a non-profit rental housing co-operative sector as a new form of democratic social ownership of housing' (See illustration below).

As shown in a 1988 funding agreement with the government, Shelter 'has responsibility for financial management, employment, advertising, selection of staff and job contracts' of the Co-operative Housing Resource Program 'until it becomes separately incorporated' (DoH, 1988b). Income

**Shelter and co-op
resourcing, 1986**
Source: Shelter, 1986a.

was significant, with revenues of $63,000 in 1986–87 for the co-op co-
ordination role equivalent to half of Shelter's grant income for other
activities (Shelter AR 1987). By 1989 the program's staff had risen from
one to three.

Establishing new housing co-ops was challenging, as noted in 1986:
'Progress is slow and not surprisingly frustrating for some potential co-op
tenants' (Shelter newsletter 35, p.15). Problems noted in 1988 included lack
of funding for the Co-operative Housing Resource Program, and 'there
has not been a steady political push for co-ops either, despite the critical
housing shortage' (Shelter newsletter 43, p.18). An independent review of
LGCHP in 1989 showed that of the 124 co-op dwellings funded under the
scheme, only 16 were in NSW – around one third of the total for Victoria
(Purdon Associates and National Shelter, 1989).

The Co-operative Housing Resource Program included a two-stage
assessment of potential new co-ops, a process often taking a year or more.
Generally, the organisations were first legally established as registered
associations, later re-registering as co-operatives. The first five housing
co-operatives funded by the NSW government for three years from
1985–86 under the program were Nitch (Wollongong, for families), Alpha
(Erskineville, for 36 single people), The Compound (Sydney, for single
people), Stucco (Sydney, for 40 Sydney University students, originally
established by Paul Pholeros and Col James in 1982 with support from the
university) and Extended Families (for families, in Petersham).

Co-ordination of the NSW housing co-operative sector changed in
June 1989 with the establishment and incorporation of the Association
to Resource Co-operative Housing (ARCH) to take over the activities
of the Co-operative Housing Resource Unit. ARCH was strongly linked
to Shelter, in part with Karine Shellshear – long-time Shelter board
member – as ARCH's leader through the organisation's existence. The two
organisations were also initially based in the same building – potentially

the same office – at 4 Goulburn Street, Sydney. ARCH was established as a separate organisation in order to be able to attract private loans from the St George Building Society that were used to part-fund new co-op properties.

ARCH, itself a co-operative, acted as a peak body, both helping establish new co-operatives and providing advocacy and capacity-building services to members. The enthusiasm people such as Karine Shellshear brought to the new organisation is shown through the perhaps slightly exaggerated claim that '[c]o-operative housing is the fastest growing form of community housing in Australia' (ARCH, 1989, p.1). ARCH subsequently played a vital role in sustaining the co-operative sector that had been nurtured by Shelter, building capacity and increasing professionalisation. Numbers of housing co-ops funded under LGCHP increased significantly from just three in 1989 to 50 in 1999 (Shelter *ATH 36*).

By the late 2000s the NSW government was investigating common equity structures based on Victorian approaches. In December 2009 ARCH was dissolved, and the remaining co-ops required to become part of a larger holding organisation, Common Equity NSW. This new organisation registered as a community housing provider and managed relationships with the government. Individual co-ops maintained a degree of control, for example, over asset management, though finances became the responsibility of Common Equity NSW.

Some co-op members opposed the transfer of their reserves, and a portion on ongoing rental income to Common Equity NSW. A few co-operatives merged or closed rather than accept the new structure. However, with the government as funder and asset holder backing the transition, many in the sector saw Common Equity NSW as the least worst option. In 2009 the acting chief executive of Common Equity NSW reflected in the Shelter newsletter:

> It's fair to say the sector had stagnated for some time; there was no growth in either housing numbers allocated to the established co-ops and no new co-ops formed for many years. And a number of co-ops had folded – for the most part because of ageing members and their inability to keep up the level of work required by the co-op model …

> If the housing co-op sector was to participate in the growth of community housing in New South Wales, the Government needed reassurance that the sector was well-run, financially sound, had transparent tenant selection methods, and had systems and processes to identify shortcomings and remedy them (Shelter *ATH 80*, p.5).

Missing from this newsletter article was mention of the key role in developing the housing co-op sector by their members, by Shelter and by ARCH. Co-ops had been Shelter's preferred model of non-government housing for many years, though by the 2010s rarely receive a mention. However, on a positive note, since 2009 Common Equity NSW has successfully become part of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing, grown its portfolio and kept many of the co-operative principles alive. Squaring the circle of Shelter's involvement with co-ops, and with a hint of irony, in 2015 Common Equity NSW was an unexpected beneficiary of the Millers Point controversy rather than a mainstream community housing provider (see section 5.3).

3.3 Community housing's birth and growth

One of the most important changes to the NSW housing system during Shelter's first decade was the birth and steady growth of the not-for-profit community housing sector. While Shelter was not necessarily the midwife, the organisation provided input and lobbying as the model expanded and was there on the picket lines when the sector was under attack from housing minister Joe Schipp in 1989 (see section 4.2). Importantly, many Shelter housing activists helped in the formation of early community housing organisations, including serving on their boards. Later key early Shelter figures would become community housing leaders, including John Nicolades (bridge housing), Deborah Georgiou (women's housing) and Adam Farrar (the NSW Federation of Housing Associations, now CHIA NSW).

Rebels with a cause: The NSW Community Tenancy Scheme

One of the earliest calls to develop a community housing sector was from the 1975 Henderson inquiry into poverty. It recommended 5 per cent of CSHA funds should 'be earmarked each year for advances to cost rent housing associations … These funds should be available to approved non-profit, local Government or ethnic associations to acquire or build dwellings to meet the needs of their members. By being given a number of seats on the board of management, tenants can participate in the running of their estates' (Henderson, 1975, p.166).

However, the community housing sector only developed with the arrival of serious money from the Commonwealth. Interestingly, this first came under a program intended to fund other activities. The Fraser Commonwealth government's March 1982 Mortgage and Rent Relief

Community Tenancy Scheme, 1982

Source: Document held in the Shelter archives at the State Library of NSW.

Scheme was intended to provide short-term financial assistance for renters or mortgage payers experiencing payment difficulties. Due to the flexibility on how it was administered, the wily NSW administration shaped the funding towards its own goals.

With the NSW Housing Commission seen by many in government as a bastion of conservatism, responsibility for the rental assistance part of the scheme passed to the Department of Youth and Community Services (YACS). First established in 1973, the department continued as YACS until the 1988 name change to the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

Through leadership by innovative policymakers such as Vivienne Milligan, Brian Elton and Lynden Esdaile, the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme morphed into something that 'was clearly not originally envisaged' (Milligan and HCNSW, 1985, p.2). As Milligan and Esdaile recalled:

'The things we got away with were extraordinary. We did exactly as we wanted … We were not very fond of the paternalistic, hierarchical, male, developer-led way that Government was run then. We all decided we were going to

change this. We were rebels looking for a cause … [Compared to the Housing Commission] we were alien in every respect, the way we worked, the fact that we were women and senior managers …' (quoted in Gilmour, 2015, p.13).

The Community Tenancy Scheme (CTS) was established by the NSW government in October 1982. Instead of subsidising tenants' incomes, it used public funding to increase the supply of affordable housing that would then be rented at reduced costs to eligible tenants. Much of the housing would be headleased from private landlords during the early years of the scheme. Additional housing generated would cater for:

> those people who had traditionally been excluded from, or who had poor access to public housing (for example single people, people of a non-English speaking background, some special needs groups such as chronically homeless people, independent living disabled people and previously institutionalised people (Milligan and HCNSW, 1985, p.47).

This goal was achieved. By June 1985, half the CTS residents were single adults, and 29 per cent were single parents with children. Around 20 per cent of residents had special needs, including a disability, been previously institutionalised or were former refugees (ibid, pp.48, 54). The new community housing organisations therefore provided much-needed diversity in the social housing sector. In terms of organisational structure, they would allow a different approach to that adopted by the Housing Commission. The aim was to 'manage stock at the local level through community-based organisations or local Government. To involve tenants in the management of individual schemes … [and] to establish community housing organisations with the potential to operate long term housing programmes' (ibid, p.4).

Tenant involvement was the second of two CTS guiding principles, an important differentiator as 'tenant participation has not been an active component of public housing policy in NSW' (ibid, p.47). Despite the transfer of the scheme to the Housing Commission in January 1984, these principles were largely maintained.

Shelter's mixed view on the Community Tenancy Scheme

Shelter had long called for greater tenant and community involvement in social housing, and new delivery models. During lobbying over the content of the next CSHA in 1980, Shelter called for the funding of 'community based, non-profit housing projects [with] seeding grants and

State administrative units to be part of program for developing housing co-operatives and associations' (Shelter newsletter 14, p.5). It is therefore a surprise that Shelter's reaction to the CTS was first muted, then mixed. The first reference to CTS in the NSW newsletter was in October 1984 when, after two years in operation, 'it seems appropriate that Shelter should examine the Scheme in order to determine a policy towards it' (Shelter newsletter 26, p.16).

Some Shelter members had serious concerns about the CTS, especially as a leasehold program with properties rented from private sector landlords. An insightful comment in the newsletter raised the concern 'as to whether [CTS] is a welfare or a co-operative housing program and in the risk that the energies of housing activists will be drained into housing management tasks away from raising overall policy issues – the problem of co-option' (ibid.). As will be discussed later in this book, the co-operative element in community housing became downplayed as the sector grew as an alternative to public housing for accommodating high-needs residents. And several prominent housing activists of the 1980s, such as John Nicolades, in time transferred their energies to housing management.

For the Tenants' Union of NSW, the CTS was best kept at arm's length. Its board in October 1984 resolved CTS organisations could not be Tenants' Union members, nor the union give advice to CTS organisations, as they were landlords and any such moves would 'clearly prejudice the Union's ability to act on behalf of the tenants of the scheme, especially in the event of a dispute between tenants and CTS management' (ibid., p.17).

Robert and Martin Mowbray, who both had strong connections with the Tenants' Union and Shelter, took the case against the CTS further. They argued that despite 'the principle of "maximising local participation", the location of actual decision making could hardly be more centralised', and that 'the CTS is dependent on the enlistment of voluntary labour and other resources that to Government is cheaper but is essentially on the state's terms'. To be effective the CTS needed considerably greater funding, more localised decision-making and 'elected committees at all levels, open decision making, full access to information etc.' (Mowbray and Mowbray, 1984).

Despite this evidence that some Shelter and Tenants' Union members were unsupportive of the CTS, by 1985 the position changed from one of complain to capture. In April Gary Moore, Shelter's secretary, called on members to write to Commonwealth politicians so the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme funding – which supported the CTS – would continue.

I think they're offering to carry the can, 1994

Source: *National Housing Action*, March 1994, p.15. The newsletter provided an outlet for those who questioned whether the government's newfound enthusiasm for the community housing sector was driven by cost saving or community empowerment.

Shelter's strategy was to 'retain CTS and develop it into an improved community housing programme' (Shelter, 1985d, p.2).

When the community housing sector was again expanding in the mid-1990s, further issues were raised by housing activists. Michael Darcy noted problems with the 'firm shared understanding that Community Housing, however that is defined is unequivocally "a good thing" … These calls [by activists to expand the sector] reflected a vision of community managed housing as a democratic, responsive and efficient, and dare I say "socialist" alternative to impersonal, inefficient, mass-produced public housing' (*National Housing Action*, March 1994, pp.14–15). Darcy questioned the extent of genuine community involvement in housing programs where the rules were so clearly proscribed by government and suggested the main motivation for government was cost saving.

Building community housing sector capacity

During the mid-1980s Shelter switched from an agnostic view of the sector to playing an important role in supporting the growth of the CTS. David Owen was employed by Shelter as a CTS program officer. A two-day CTS statewide workshop was held in March 1985, including on the first morning a separate session for tenants and one for housing workers.

The recently emerging NSW community housing organisations had little opportunity to share knowledge and build capacity. Therefore, as part of Shelter's 1985–86 funding agreement with the government, it was agreed to establish a community housing forum that would meet quarterly. This first forum was held on 29 August 1985 and attended by 40 people, 'bringing together community housing workers to discuss policy issues and exchange information on issues of mutual concern' (Shelter, 1985c). At this meeting 'it

was decided the forum would be for tenants and community sector workers only (i.e. non-Government people) … that the meetings would be informal, open to all interested people in the sector, and were never to be seen/used as a means of consultation by Government' (Shelter, 1986b).

The forum would 'travel' to various locations around NSW, with costs reimbursed by the government. Shelter co-ordinated the forum and circulated minutes, with local groups arranging a venue and providing the chairperson. In October 1985 the forum met in Harris Park, in February 1986 at Manly, in May in Wollongong, and in August and November in Katoomba. Representatives from HIRS, the Tenants' Union and NCOSS were present, along with CTS members. However, as noted by Gerry van Wyk, by 1987 'the Forum has increasingly failed to achieve [its] aims … instead, a small number of peak and service-based housing organisations … made up the majority of participants … Shelter was seen by many participants as the main beneficiary … [but] Shelter was seen by many to lack a mechanism to be accountable to the broad housing sector' (Shelter newsletter, 40, p.10).

Building on this early work by Shelter to help co-ordinate the community housing sector and more effectively lobby government, the Projects Association of Community Tenancy Schemes (PACTS) was established at a meeting held at NCOSS offices on 28 May 1986. CTSs could be members of this unfunded grouping, with other organisations such as Shelter associate members. Interestingly the second aim of PACTS was 'to encourage tenant management of CTS projects, by supporting the involvement of tenants in the management functions of CTS projects, and of PACTS' (PACTS, 1986). By April 1987 PACTS had 37 CTS members, issued a regular newsletter, and had arranged a one-day workshop.

Through the PACTS network, influenced strongly by CTSs in western and south-western Sydney, the idea of a properly resourced community housing peak body emerged. In 1991 funding was provided by the Western Sydney Housing Information and Resource Network and the Uniting Church to consult with the sector on a new peak body, which was then named the Australian Federation of Housing Associations. Not for the last time, tension arose between peak bodies. Who should be the peak body for NSW housing, the Australian Federation or Shelter? Farrar recalls:

'… certainly the perception from Shelter at the time was that this was a seriously ill-conceived idea – that what was being proposed didn't understand the role of bodies like Shelter. It was basically saying ''we want some kind of housing

peak", and Shelter's first reaction was to say, "That's lovely – we've actually got one, why don't you join us?' (quoted in Matka, 1999, p.13).

The view from some in the community housing sector was captured by a comment from Joan Ferguson that Shelter was 'a consumer organisation and a housing policy lobby group ... and l think it very odd that ... Shelter could ever think to represent landlords' (ibid., p,13). This shows how by the early 1990s the dominant form of not-for-profit housing provider was the CTS, not housing co-operatives. Many in the community housing sector now saw their organisations in a new light, more a set of 'third sector' organisations becoming alternative social housing landlords to public housing – it was these organisations that needed representing, not their tenants. Shelter's main drive to date had been to expand the co-op sector, and with housing co-operatives there was no divide between landlords and tenants as the co-op members carried out the roles of both landlords and tenants (Gilmour, 2012b).

By July 1993 the Australian Federation of Housing Associations had been incorporated, renamed the NSW Federation of Housing Associations, and was receiving NSW government funding. The Federation appointed its first officer, Joan Ferguson, who was later joined by Deborah Georgiou – who had worked for ARCH as well as having served as a Shelter director – and Wendy Rockwell, also from ARCH.

Over the next two decades the Federation and Shelter maintained an amicable if not always warm relationship, keeping a critical distance as befitted a landlord peak (the Federation) and a housing justice peak with a strong focus on the rights of tenants (Shelter). Yet with the community housing sector increasingly favoured by governments of both left and right, the Federation enjoyed better funding – both from public grants, to help build sector capacity, and from the landlord organisations themselves, who had deeper pockets than their tenants. As a result, the Federation (by 2018 known as the Community Housing Industry Association of NSW) expanded staff numbers, diversified into non-grant business activities including training and consultancy, and captured much of the NSW market for conferences, housing education, events and media presence.

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Shelter's involvement with the Tenants' Union, squatters, housing co-operatives and the emergence of the community housing sector are perhaps a reflection of how closely linked and networked the housing sector was in the 1970s and 1980s. Funded peak bodies were a trend from the mid-1980s onwards, and Shelter was a beneficiary as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Government dollars brought benefits (in terms of resources, and hence capacity) and drawbacks (in terms of greater steerage by government). Whatever the pros and cons, peak body funding helped structure the housing support sector, with each funding contract specifying the domains in which the organisation could operate. It would become increasingly difficult in the future for organisations such as Shelter to be a midwife to other emerging sectors unless government so directed. While Shelter has continued to push the boundaries of topics it becomes involved with, there is far less freedom than up to the mid-1980s.

4 Swings and Roundabouts: Shelter 1984–95

Shelter's second decade was one of good times and bad. Significant, stable state government funding was received for the first time, allowing full-time staff to be employed and Shelter's first office to be opened. As discussed in Chapter 3, the mid-1980s were a boom time for the growth of community housing and housing co-ops, and Shelter was an ideal organisation through which government channelled sector capacity building.

However, as has so often been the case for Shelter, the swings and roundabouts of politics meant the good times did not last long. The Greiner state Liberal government from 1988 to 1992, under housing minister Joe Schipp, launched a ferocious attack on the peak body and community housing sectors resulting in Shelter's defunding early in 1989. The organisation limped along until the money and enthusiasm nearly ran out, then found favour again under the Liberal government of John Fahey and new housing minister Robert Webster.

4.1 Shelter's golden years, 1984–91

The mid-1980s were described in the post-1988 state election Shelter newsletter as 'the golden years of housing' (Shelter *ATH* 5). They were also golden years for Shelter.

Peak body status and HITS funding

Shelter received their first direct funding from government through the Office of Special Employment from May 1984 to May 1985 to support two full-time staff. With the money running out in a few months' time, Shelter submitted two new proposals, one to the Department of Youth and Community Services (YACS) in August 1984, and another one to the minister of housing in In October 1984. The organisation was clearly hedging its bets. YACS declined the bid in February 1985 as it prioritised

funding to direct service providers, so only the Department of Housing proposal remained.

The October 1984 proposal to housing minister Frank Walker for $75,307 was to fund three full-time staff together and cover administrative expenses. Gary Moore in the application stated 'NSW Shelter is a state-wide organisation seeking funding to facilitate the development of networks of housing groups' (Shelter, 1984a). This must have eventually struck a chord with the minister's office as they wrote back to Shelter in April 1985 asking: 'What are the strategies Shelter has for become a State-wide peak housing organisation? What housing groups, consumers and organisations does Shelter propose to represent and how will Shelter obtain the consent of these organisations to represent them?' (Shelter, 1985b). This was the first known recorded mention of a peak body for housing.

No decision was to be made on Shelter's funding request until the government received a report from Mike Pelling who had been engaged as a consultant. Pelling was in later years to become business manager for Swinburne University's housing research team. In the meantime, Shelter was provided interim funding from June 1985 to mid-1986 so that staff could continue to be employed.

Unsurprisingly, Shelter was invited to tender in December 1985 for funding as a 'statewide (peak) housing organisation' (HCNSW, 1985). On 28 January 1986 Zula Nittim, Shelter's chair, received a letter from minister Frank Walker confirming their role as a 'statewide peak service' with three staff (Walker, 1986). In parallel, the Tenants' Union were funded with four staff 'developing and supporting tenancy services, providing policy advice, and consulting with Government and non-Government bodies' – though there is no mention of the Tenants' Union being a peak body. In return for funding, the Department of Housing required six-monthly progress reports and financial statements. While Shelter and the Tenants' Union had to operate 'at all times within the Housing Information and Tenancy Services Program Guidelines', there were no specific restrictions on policy positions or media statements (DoH, 1986a).

In March 1986 minister Frank Walker announced $1.3 million funding of the Housing Information and Tenancy Service (HITS) to help protect tenants against unfair landlords and allow them more easily to use the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, which was in the process of being established. HITS funding supported the Tenants' Advice and Housing Referral Services (TAHIRS) which operated from local shopfronts, with 10 in metro Sydney and 11 in regional areas to increase tenant awareness, improve access to

housing services and to provide advocacy and representation of tenants' interests. By 1989 the service was advising around 50,000 people per year on housing matters.

For better or for worse, the HITS program was the first centrally co-ordinated and consistently administered community-focused rental housing approach. Funding came not from taxpayers but from interest earned on tenants' bonds held by the Rental Bond Board. HITS funded both Shelter and the Tenants' Union and tied them into a new and more controlled relationship with the government. Finally, the Housing Information and Referral Service (HIRS), established by Shelter in 1979, would come under the HITS funding and monitoring umbrella. While this structure was logical and improved if not fully streamlined sector co-ordination, it also created an infrastructure that the incoming Liberal state government in 1988 were easily able to defund.

Shelter had auspiced HIRS since formation, with their sister organisation providing organisational capacity for Shelter at a time when they received no direct funds. The HIRS model, which supported tenants and community groups in inner-city Sydney, was effectively rolled out statewide under HITS. Another example of Shelter's strong influence in housing policy in the 1980s. Shelter's role in helping launch the HITS service was important, despite – or perhaps because of – having no direct role in providing housing advisory services. In October and November Shelter and the Tenants' Union co-ordinated a series of workshops that had been promoted by the HITS Training Taskforce (HITS, 1986). This task force consisted of Shelter, the Tenants' Union, HIRS and the departments of housing and consumer affairs.

By employing and training housing staff in both Sydney and across the state, HITS significantly built capacity in the housing sector, providing a pool of experienced people who would likely have moved into other agencies including the 'new look' Department of Housing and community housing providers. There were, however, some challenges with housing minister Frank Walker's radical new approach to non-government housing services. On 30 September, just prior to the new Residential Tenancy Tribunal's launch, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported hundreds of tenants had been evicted, replaced by those paying higher rents.

From January 1986 Shelter was funded as a peak body in an agreement with state government that established roles and responsibilities. This brought benefits in the form of solid income, full-time staff and the ability to afford decent offices and in time a computer system. However, no longer

could activists within the organisation run the type of vitriolic campaign mounted against housing minister Terry Sheahan in 1981 without the real threat of immediate defunding. Shelter had become a paid-up member of the NSW 'housing system'. In 1987 Harvey Volke posed:

the agonising and exceedingly difficult question of what is the relationship between Government and the community services industry. For its part, the community sees itself as being forced to do the Government's job on the cheap … Traditionally, what we … and I mean particularly the left have done is to set up the kind of operation that will appear to deserve Government support, fulfil the minimum obligations the Government requires of it, and then go about the real business of bringing about revolution …, sparking social change' (Shelter newsletter 39, p.7).

For Volke, the solution was to take the funding and use it to serve activist goals. This might have been possible in the early days of peak body agreements, though would grow increasingly challenging when funding agreements specified detailed 'deliverables' and 'key performance indicators'. When Ian Robertson joined the board in August 1986, his view was that Shelter needed to keep a critical distance from government and continue to speak out publicly on matters where it disagreed with housing policy:

I have been asking myself if everything in the garden is indeed rosy … A number of people have been concerned that Shelter NSW and other community groups are being consulted to death! … it has become incumbent upon lobby groups to reassess their direction and to break what has become the shackle of perceived obligation towards funding bodies. We must continue to rock the boat … The idealism and ideology must not be lost in the euphoria of at last seemingly gained acceptance by Government officials and politicians (Shelter newsletter 36, p.3)

In the next Shelter newsletter after Robertson's call for independence, director Simon Rosenberg acknowledged that the growth of the community and peak housing sectors, and their increasing professionalisation and normalisation as jobs rather than vocations, was moving away from the activism of the 1970s:

Where are the housing activists? … More funding and more workers does not necessarily mean activism. There is a danger that housing workers, in an unnecessarily professionalised field, are seeing themselves as welfare workers of a sort; on about 'helping people' rather than changing the system that causes

the problems … Developing sound progressive ideas is fine, but it can't be left to moulder in policy booklets. We have to fight to get it implemented (Shelter newsletter 37, p.13).

Both Ian Robertson and Simon Rosenberg were on the Shelter board, with Robertson as chair, during the period of housing minister Joe Schipp's defunding campaign in the late 1980s described in Chapter 4. Given their comments quoted above, this may explain their later robust and activist response to ministerial interference with Shelter.

Shelter in action

From 1974 Shelter had operated as a voluntary organisation with little funding. Meetings were held at NCOSS's offices, and additional work carried out mainly at directors' homes. With Shelter receiving significant grants from 1983–84, new options were possible. The organisation's first permanent office was in use by September 1985 located on the second floor of 62 Erskine Street in Sydney (Shelter, 1985a). Just over a year later in November 1985, Shelter was at a longer term office in room 67 on the third floor of the Trades Hall Building at 4 Goulburn Street, Sydney. The Trades Hall was built by union members and has a notable history as the office of Australia's first Labor prime minister, Jack Watson, and the site where Ben Chifley in 1949 gave his 'light on the hill' speech. In December 1994 Shelter had moved to new offices at suite 2 on the fourth floor of the Labour Council Building, 377 Sussex Street, Sydney.

By late 1986 Shelter had established itself and was funded by the government as the broad housing peak body, working across a wide range of housing issues which sometimes overlapped with the work of other organisations representing tenants' issues or youth accommodation. While Shelter claimed to act statewide, there was little activity outside Sydney. The newsletter in 1987 noted 'a common (and often valid) criticism made of peak organisations such as Shelter is that they are "city based"' (Shelter newsletter 41, p.10). Meanwhile, HIRS remained an unusual organisation as it focused on a geographical area (inner Sydney) rather than a sector, therefore had no problems being Sydney-centric.

After the separation of the Tenants' Union from Shelter, they benefitted from a more defined role than Shelter as the representative of tenants on tenancy issues, but not as a peak body. There was some overlap as the Tenants' Union tended to advocate for more public housing to redress problems in the housing market, which brought it into the same space as

Shelter. Relations between CTS organisations and Shelter had improved, and Shelter defined a 'community housing sector' embracing a wide number of organisations including CTS offices, housing co-operatives and Shelter, which was seen as a 'secondary housing organisation'. Staff exchanges helped break down barriers with both the new Shelter staff members joining in 1987 having 'graduated' through the CTS program, John Nicolades working for Canterbury CTS and Gerry van Wyk at the Inner West CTS as well as in helping establish PACTS (Shelter newsletter 40).

Shelter's new grant funding allowed an expansion of their conference program and diversification to cater for special interest groups. The New World: New Housing conference in Westmead was jointly run by the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and Shelter in May and July 1985. Funded by the Housing Commission, the aim was to 'encourage the involvement of ethnic communities in the planning, provision and management of housing'. It was noted that 'migrants do not have equity of access to public housing programs and are facing severe difficulties in the private rental market' (Shelter newsletter 31, p.24).

During the 1980s Shelter continued to support gender equality through discussing issues, without becoming involved in practically assisting the women's refuge or women's housing movement. The first National Women's Housing Conference took place in March 1985 in Adelaide, attended by 700 women. The second conference held in Sydney in 1987 had 1,500 delegates.

National Women's Housing Conference, 1987

Source: Shelter newsletter 39. While some contemporary commentators bemoan the number of housing conferences each year, diaries in the 1980s were even busier. It has been many years since there has been a dedicated housing conference for women, despite their position in the housing market not improving and potentially deteriorating further.

The theme was New Directions in Women's Housing and the event was supported by Shelter and National Shelter. Not everyone in government was so progressive. Shelter's secretary wrote to Michael Eyers in May 1986:

> Over the last several months, Shelter has received a number of pro-forma letters from the Department of Housing which have had as their opening address 'Dear Sir' … Aside from the fact that Shelter has both female and male employees, and the fact that the majority of its directors are women … we find it both presumptuous and offensive to receive letters addressed to men only (Shelter, 1986c).

The June 1988 Shelter newsletter had a focus on women's housing, with an article by Julie Nyland noting there had been a reaction against 'mainstreaming' all types of housing so that there could be a better understanding of the specific needs of, for example, women and people with a disability. The article focused on ways in which women are specifically impacted by housing policies and identify what their priorities should be.

By the late 1980s the rate of publications had increased. The first Shelter brief, issued in December 1987, was an analysis of the 1987/88 state budget. The second in February 1988 was on how to use the media and the third by Julie Nyland in June 1988 was a submission to the Ministerial Inquiry into Homelessness. Then all went quiet on issuing briefs until the next known one in September 1993 as a submission to the Industry Commission inquiry into public housing. The newsletters of the period started to cover broader topics, such as in 1987 when for the first time comments were made on planning issues and housing supply (Shelter newsletter 41). Finally, the newsletter started to reflect on international housing issues and innovations, with articles on developments in Britain, the United States and Scandinavia.

New directions for Labor's national housing policy

The Hawke government's approach to housing policy from 1983 had mixed benefits for the NSW housing system. For the first two years of the 1984 CSHA funding for public housing increased, with new housing supply of over 13,000 homes in 1984–85 and 12,000 in 1985–86. Enthusiasm subsequently waned, with NSW new public housing delivery below 10,000 in the two following years. There was no real effort to meet the election pledges of a 'right to housing, for 10 per cent of all housing to be provided by Government, and for public housing not become residualised' (Troy, 2012).

The 1984 CSHA in practice continued the approach of the Fraser government by targeting housing support by group (Aboriginal housing, crisis accommodation, community housing), and directing resources to those most in need, which moved the system from 'public' to 'welfare' housing. One example of targeting was the Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP), which allowed councils and community groups to support the provision of low-cost rental housing.

This CSHA initiative came into effect from July 1984, and in its first financial year LGCHP was funded by $2.48 million in NSW, or around one third of the amount allocated to the Mortgage Rent Relief Scheme that supported the CTSs. The LGCHP funding represented just 1.2 per cent of Commonwealth housing funds for the state (Shelter newsletter 26, p.8). Grants under the LGCHP allowed councils to employ community housing officers, building on the approach adopted by Waverley Council when they employed Brian Elton. There was also funding for housing need and other research projects, such as a study by Manly Council on boarding houses (Shelter newsletter 32).

Shelter was concerned about the Housing Commission's apparent early 'capture' of the LGCHP as it 'appears that the Commission is developing a position which will, in effect, forestall any real community control over the process of allocating funds' (ibid., p.11). Therefore, in November 1984 Shelter convened a meeting of community and housing groups, which resulted in establishing an agreed form for a joint advisory committee. John Nicolades of Shelter, then working with Canterbury CTS, nominated as the metropolitan representative on the proposed committee.

The advisory committee proposal was submitted to Col James, a housing activist who now co-ordinated LGCHP, Brian Elton who worked for the Housing Commission, and National Shelter founding staff member Cathi Moore, now employed by the Department of Housing and Construction. This is further evidence of how by the mid-1980s housing activists and supporters had 'captured the castle' of government. Not surprisingly there was a meeting of minds, and the advisory committee was established largely as Shelter had proposed (Shelter newsletter 27, pp.4–5). Of the LGCHP funding, it was hoped that $1.5 million over three years – 15 per cent of the total – would be earmarked for housing co-operatives for both employing development workers and capital purchases. As noted in section 3.2, a small amount of these funds were given to Shelter to employ a co-op development worker in October 1985.

Of the remaining NSW LGCHP funding, $8.3 million over three years was allocated based on housing need across the eight regions of the Department of Housing. Applications were accepted from either councils or community groups, though 'an attempt must be made to involve both parties'. Separate application rules applied to housing co-ops. Note that for all applications, '[p]rovisions should be made for effective tenant involvement in [the] management structure and scope should be allowed for moving towards tenant based management' (DoH, 1985).

In the early years across Australia, the uptake of LGCHP was modest as neither local government nor community housing providers had sufficient in-house housing skills to become fully-fledged housing providers. However, in NSW:

> Once other funding programs came in, the Community Tenancy Scheme organisations were well placed. With the Local Government and Community Housing Program, plus capital funding, the NSW community housing organisations were those that got the money. There were very few other organisations getting capital' (Vivienne Milligan, pers. comm., 2016).

Despite a pre-election call for more public housing, the Hawke government increased support for home ownership. The First Home Owners Assistance Scheme was introduced in October 1983, with an initial grant of between $2,000 and $5,000 based on passing an income test. For the five years to 1988–89 some 330,000 subsidies were paid, at a total cost to the Commonwealth of nearly $1.3 billion (Wilkinson, 2005, p.27).

Property investment as a national pastime started during the Hawke years. In 1985 capital gains tax was introduced, but the main home was exempted which led to over-investment in larger houses by the wealthy – the 'McMansions'. As Shelter noted, the approach 'results in a direction of resources away from those who can least afford their housing to those who find their housing very affordable' (*National Housing Action*, July 1989, p.5).

In July 1987 negative gearing was reintroduced, reversing its removal in July 1985 which had led to a co-ordinated storm of protest from the property industry. Rents were said to have risen without negative gearing, though the only evidence for this was in Sydney and Perth – not across the country. The return of negative gearing accompanied by a deregulated finance sector in 1983 providing competitively priced loans sparked a boom in secondary property investment. By 1993, the number of people using negative gearing to invest in rental properties had risen to 752,100 (Wilkinson, 2005, p.25).
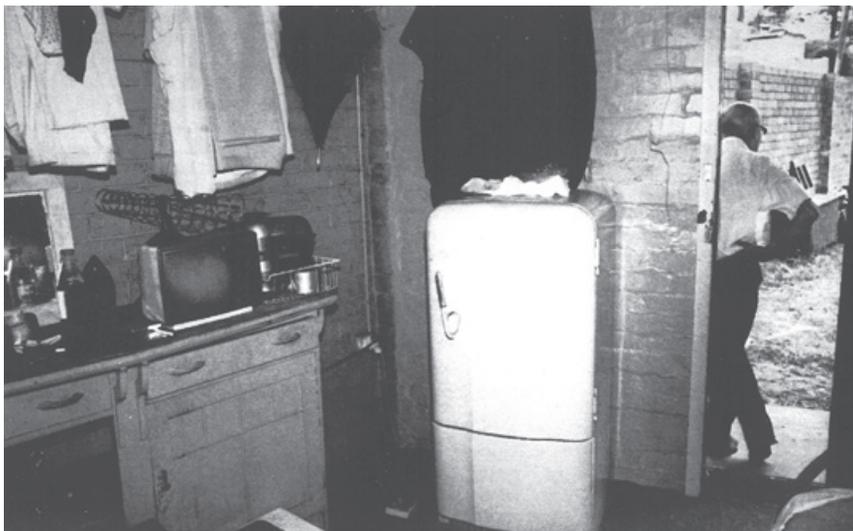
A room but definitely no view, 1990

Source: Shelter newsletter 46, p.9. The headline is from the newsletter and is a reference to the glamorous 1985 Merchant Ivory film Room with a View. Few newsletters were produced during the defunded period. As John Nicolades commented: 'Once again, Shelter NSW apologises for the delay in producing Issue no. 46. However, production is wholly dependent on the voluntary labour of its Board members'. The picture shows an inner-city boarding house where the resident pays $55 per week for a room 10 feet by 10 feet. There are no cooking facilities in the boarding house, and a shirt is hung over the fridge to cover a broken window. Poor housing conditions for low-cost renters continued into the 1990s, and continue to this day.

Shelter's criticisms of negative gearing span the decades. Nicolades wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1987 that '[t]he $175 million saved through the removal of negative gearing should become added to the Federal Housing Budget and used to construct more public housing stock, This will increase supply, and help some of the 54,000 households on the waiting list' (Shelter, 1987). In 1989 National Shelter warned negative gearing pushed up prices so as 'to crowd prospective first home buyers out of the market … The outcome for the private rental market is an increased availability of higher-priced rental stock and a reduction in low-priced rental stock' (*National Housing Action*, July 1989, p.7).

The final main change by the Commonwealth was the transformation of support for lower-income tenants. Rent assistance dates from 1958 but was initially restricted to widows and single pensioners. In 1983 the Hawke government extended this to all pensioners, then also to the

long-term unemployed in 1986. By the 1990s and the time of the Keating government there had been a significant increase in the number of people on low incomes who were renting private sector accommodation. Much of the growth in numbers of rent assistance recipients occurred between 1989–90 and 1993–94, at a time when the rates of rent assistance increased significantly. Hence by the late 1990s, rent assistance had become an increasingly important approach to supporting the housing needs of low-income Australians (Wilkinson, 2005).

Reforming the NSW public housing system

The NSW Housing Commission was notoriously focused on its role of procuring new dwellings. The key metric measured was cumulative numbers of dwellings constructed. For example, in 1973–74 the headline number was 114,000 public housing units built since 1945 despite the fact that due to sales only 71,000 remained available to rent (HCNSW, 1974). In this year the commission noted 'an extremely disappointing and disconcerting total of only 2,587 completions' (ibid., p.1), though in contemporary times in NSW this number would be seen as a considerable achievement.

As an independent agency, the Housing Commission was free to express their views and chose a delightfully robust phraseology compared to the more anodyne recent departmental documents. Little credence was given by those who opposed building large-scale public housing estates, which included most of the founders of Shelter in the 1970s:

> A situation exists where a small handful of local residents, aided and abetted by various people who can only be described as professional agitators, seek to prevent desirable projects quite acceptable to the many, through the willing agency of the Builders Labourers' Federation … The South Sydney Action Group has persistently campaigned to mislead its few supporters, and residents of Redfern-Waterloo (ibid., pp.8, 9).

The Housing Commission's 1973–74 annual report supported the idea of single tenure public housing projects: 'The notion of "social mix" has become a fashionable cliché in recent years, and has been widely used by vested interests and pressure groups whenever they considered themselves threatened by public housing projects' (p.11). The 1978–79 annual report made it clear the Housing Commission did not have a role in community building, especially with facilities built on their land which would minimise the supply of new housing: 'the Commission is strongly of the view that

Local Government bodies and other State Departments which are charged with responsibilities in social and community activities … should accept the responsibility in assisting welfare and community agencies to establish facilities where required' (p.13). As noted in the 1982–82 annual report, 'the Housing Commission believes it could not under existing circumstances recommend Government financial assistance towards the establishment of housing cooperatives for the selective rehabilitation of inner city areas' (p.10).

By the early 1980s the traditional views of the NSW Housing Commission were at odds with the vision of the Wran Labor government and housing minister Frank Walker (Box 6). During Walker's time as housing minister from 1983 to 1988, Shelter both fed ideas to the minister and received the benefit of funding support to advance its work. Change was brought about in the Housing Commission by appointing senior staff with backgrounds very different from the traditional employees of the Housing Commission. Many had strong housing policy and broad public policy backgrounds and were known to favour reform (Brian Elton, pers. comm., 2018).

Walker's greatest innovation came in January 1986 when the Housing Commission, with six independent members and a chief executive, was converted to the Department of Housing acting under the control of the housing minister (Box 5). The overriding aim was to achieve a unified administration of the housing portfolio so as to better achieve the objects of the Government's housing policy.

A longstanding criticism of the Housing Commission was that it only housed families and older single people. In June 1981 the Anti-Discrimination Board advised that the Housing Commission had applied for an exemption under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 so that it could continue rejecting applications from single women under 55 years and single men under 60. The commission claimed they were short of money, had a long waiting list and their properties were not suited to single people. Shelter, along with the Tenants' Union, Waverley and Leichhardt councils, HIRS, Aquarius Youth Services and other groups were soon on the case and prepared submissions. Their standpoint was that 'housing must be treated as a right, not as a privilege, and that all low and moderate income people must have access to public housing' (Shelter, 1981).

Once again, lobbying by the housing sector – orchestrated by Shelter – was successful in bending the minister's ear. By December 1983 Frank Walker had overruled the Housing Commission on eligibility settings, and the NSW Singles Housing Policy was introduced.

Box 5: Modernising public housing, 1986

Minister Frank Walker in a leaflet announcing the new Department of Housing:

The achievements of the State's housing authorities over the years have been considerable. However, it is now crucial that we modernise, reorganise and streamline housing administration in NSW to meet today's needs and challenges.

Good quality, affordable housing is a basic need of all people throughout NSW …

The creation of the Department of Housing is essential to provide a flexible, unified and efficient response to a variety of housing needs.

Source: DoH, 1986b.

Henceforth low-income single applicants in housing need who were over 16 and capable of living independently could apply for public housing. Allocation would be based on time served on the waiting list, and rents set at no more than 20 per cent of income. To smooth implementation the first meeting of the Singles Advisory Committee took place in January 1984, with Shelter an active participant.

A final aspect of public housing needing modernisation was the desirability of tenant participation. The Housing Commission was a hierarchical organisation, with no mechanisms for tenants to have a say in management issues. Shelter had a longstanding objective of increasing the role of residents in decision-making about their housing. While the 1978 CSHA had included aspirations for tenant participation, this was described in the Shelter newsletter (34, p.25) as a 'toothless tiger'. A 1983 Shelter policy paper called for 'a gradual transfer of decision-making power into the hands of tenants (both individually and collectively)' and amending leases to 'remove any paternalistic conditions and regarding how the tenant may use the premises (e.g. balconies shall be used for leisure not storage)' (Shelter, 1983).

In November 1984 a one-day conference co-hosted by Shelter on tenant participation was held in Darlinghurst, with the official opening by housing minister Frank Walker. In May 1985, 'as a result of some of the conference's recommendations a state-wide steering committee was established by the Housing Minister to advise on the development and implementation of a tenant participation policy and processes in the NSW Housing Commission' (Shelter newsletter 29, p.7).

Shelter's support for tenant participation finally paid dividends when in August 1985 the Department of Housing introduced a formal tenant participation policy, funded to the tune of half a million dollars. This involved a hierarchical structure of local tenants' associations, regional

public tenants councils and a NSW Public Tenants' Council. The NSW Council would have direct access to both the director of the Department of Housing and the housing minister. To help establish local tenant groups, regional tenant workers would be employed. The approach aimed to 'recognise tenants' rights as housing consumers by giving them a say in broad public housing issues and more specifically in decisions affecting their homes and communities' (SRTPTC, 1985).

4.2 The Schipp attack, and counter-defence

The battle between housing minister Joe Schipp and the non-government housing sector between 1988 and 1991 was a defining point in the reform of housing delivery in NSW. It marked the defeat of both a radical privatisation agenda and a return to what some people in government still saw as the 'good old days' of the Housing Commission. Instead, a mixed housing model with a prominent role for not-for-profit housing organisations supported by a web of peak bodies became the norm. For Shelter, the struggle with Schipp remains a defining organisational story.

A tense state election, 1988

For once in Australia the March 1988 state election featured housing as a major campaign issue. Both main parties promised public housing sales, an echo of British prime minister Margaret Thatcher's 'right to buy' policy from 1980. However, whereas Labor would sell to sitting tenants at market price and reinvest in new public housing, the Liberals would sell at a discount of up to $10,000 and use the money for home ownership or private rental assistance.

The Liberals also threatened not to implement the 1987 *Residential Tenancies Act*, which gave more protection to tenants. Finally, according to Shelter's *Around the House* newsletter, with community housing 'the Labor Government has chosen to rest on its laurels in regard to our sector, with no bundles of money or new programmes promised and the Libs seem confused as to why the sector exists' (Shelter *ATH 3*, p.4). According to Shelter, there was even less faith in the third party due to 'the unformed, ill-informed and contradictory position of the Democrats to nearly every housing issue' (ibid., p.2).

Housing advocates played a leading, vocal role in the election. The poster by People for Public Housing, which called for a tent city outside the Liberal party's campaign launch, was carried in the pre-election Shelter NSW newsletter. The next issue in 1988 carried the headline 'Election holocaust?' and 'the minutes of the Shelter board meeting held immediately post the election … read "we lost" … Are we about to witness the greatest devastation to the housing sector we could ever comprehend?' (Shelter *ATH 5*).

End of the 'golden age'

In March 1988, only weeks after the bunting had been taken down for the celebrations on Sydney Harbour marking two centuries of white settlement, twelve years of NSW Labor rule came to an end. Under

Coalition premiers Nick Greiner (1988–92) and John Fahey (1992–95), the nascent community sector would be thrown into turmoil. However, given the sector know what was in the Liberal party's manifesto, they had time to prepare for the battle ahead. Shelter convened meetings of housing groups, including the Tenants' Union, HIRS and PACTS, at the start of 1988 to better prepare the sector's response to further changes by the incoming government.

The Greiner government's new housing minister was Joe Schipp. One of his first moves was to appoint a ministerial inquiry into 'homelessness and the provision of affordable housing in the inner city of Sydney'. This would be led by Max Raine, of real estate agency Raine and Horne, along with an official from the Department of Housing and a boarding house owner. Shelter criticised the bias towards private rental experience and suggested community sector organisations be included as well (Shelter *ATH 6*). When the 'Raine report' was published in November 1988, Shelter described it as 'an orgy of private sector initiatives'. One of the unexpected proposals was for people to 'take in a boarder of your choice', with the minister answering media criticisms of the scheme 'that it worked in Wagga and Bathurst' (Shelter *ATH 10*). Shelter launched their own 'alternative report' the same month, complete with 63 detailed recommendations (Shelter, 1988c).

According to Nicolades, it was now 'payback time' (pers. comm., 2018). Minister Schipp cut staff in the Department of Housing with a particular focus on the Community Programs Unit, which reduced from 50 staff to just 13 by 1990. Several prominent figures saw the writing on the wall and
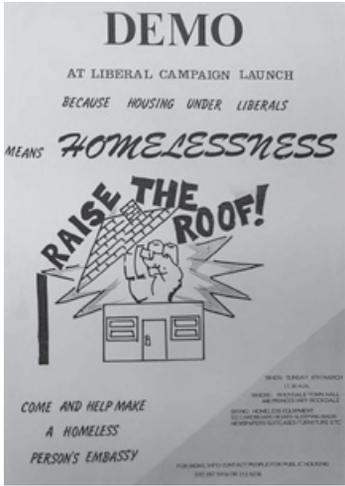
Demo at the Liberal campaign launch, 1988
Source: Shelter *ATH 3*.

March against Schipp, circa 1989
Source: Undated image from photo held at Shelter's office.

left the department, including Vivienne Milligan, Ken Smith and Brian
Elton (after the prominent housing activist had been moved to run a team
responsible for the department's computer systems). This exit of many
pioneering community housing advocates strengthened the hand of the
more traditional public housing staff in the department, many of whom
had viewed the growth of the not-for-profit sector with envy and alarm.

Replacing Michael Eyers as director of housing after the election was
Peter Dransfield, 'a former senior executive in the private sector [who] has
had 20 years' experience in the home building and development business
as well as a long-term involvement with the Housing Industry Association'
(DoH, 1988a). His deputy director was Richard Flint, a long-time member
of the Housing Commission 'old guard'. A 1993 NSW Ombudsman
Inquiry into the administration of the LGCHP described Flint's conduct
as 'completely reprehensible' and the stewardship of the Department
of Housing has created 'a mystifying bureaucratic maze [which] has
obstructed the approval and funding of [community] projects, in some
cases for years' (*SMH*, 1993b).

Under Schipp's direction, the Department of Housing underwent
a significant shift with a corporate purpose of 'maximising housing
opportunities for the people of NSW'. By 1991 the department's goals, in

order, were firstly to increase home ownership, secondly to increase land availability and thirdly to encourage a viable home-building industry. Providing public housing was lower down the list of priorities (DoH, 1992).

The community sector under attack

Although the Shelter newsletter in June 1988 stated '[i]ndications are that despite our sometimes overwhelming pessimism, the new Government may be more responsive to reasoned argument than expected', this was not to be the case (Shelter newsletter 43, p.2). On Friday, 2 December 1988, notice was given of the defunding of 23 of the 24 Housing Information and Tenancy Service (HITS) programs, the only one surviving being the one run by the Combined Pensioners Association. The 10 metropolitan and 11 regional TAHIRS offices helped people search for accommodation, including crisis accommodation, and assisted tenants with advice on evictions, rent increases and bond issues. Around 50,000 people were supported each year.

As part of the HITS funding, Shelter received funding for the Housing Information Referral Service (HIRS). This had provided tenant support services in the inner city of Sydney since 1979, such as protecting against unlawful evictions from boarding houses, as well as working with local councils on housing issues. HIRS was auspiced by Shelter but run as a sister organisation, with the funding helping support greater capacity across the Shelter 'group'. Three months would be given for the services to run down, with funding ended and responsibility for future services given to the government by 31 March 1989.

As a final blow, the core funding for Shelter and the Tenants' Union would also end at the end of March. Any funding unspent by this date was to be returned to the Department of Housing and Shelter's new computer system and other assets, as detailed in an ominously worded letter from the department, 'are to be the subject of discussions with you'.

In a classic policy of drip-feeding bad news to the media during the Christmas and New Year period, the government announced major changes to the Community Tenancy Scheme (CTS) on 19 December, and on 28 December announced the defunding of the Youth Accommodation Association, the peak body for youth homelessness. While the CTS was not abolished, it was to be made unviable. CTS rents would increase from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of household income, security of tenure would be abolished, staffing and administration funding cut by 50 per cent and all capital properties – that is, those owned by the government, other

Where have all the 'nice' people gone? 1989

Source: Shelter *ATH* 11. The article noted: 'The Minister also had a few words to say about the HITS campaign and the constant barrage of media he has received as a result, and made it quite clear he did not consider it a "nice" way to negotiate.'

than boarding houses or LGCHP funded – would have their tenancies transferred to the Department of Housing.

Schipp believed the work of the Tenants' Union, HIRS, HITS and Shelter duplicated the work of the department and could be done more cost-effectively in-house: 'the NSW Department of Housing will be offering comparable accessible service from all its 120 offices throughout the state. In selected key offices there will be full time officers appointed to offer advice, mediation and referral … the decision is in keeping with the overall aim of this Government to make the Department of Housing a "one-stop-shop" for all housing services in NSW' (Schipp, 1989).

While the peak body defunding could deliver a $2.4 million annual saving, it would not directly benefit public finances as the programs were funded from interest on tenants' bonds held by the Rental Bond Board. There was perhaps another reason for the defunding, as quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 5 December 1988: 'many housing workers believe Mr Schipp's action is a vindictive one, because of the campaign tenancy groups have been running against Liberal amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act'.

Defend and survive: With a little help from our friends

While the non-government housing sector anticipated cutbacks, closing down most of the tenancy and housing support network came as a shock. Wasting no time, on Saturday, 3 December, 200 people chanting 'abandon Schipp' marched through Surry Hills. This was not to be the last protest, nor would it be the only pun on the minister's name. The *Northern Daily Leader* on 10 February 1989 led the newspaper with 'Schipp sails into housing storm' and carried a picture of a protestor's placard reading 'Joe gives us the Schipps' at a protest in Tamworth.

Peak bodies organised a letter-writing campaign in February 1989. Correspondence to the minister has been found from NCOSS, SACOSS,

National Shelter and Shelter Victoria. NCOSS were particularly supportive in offering office space after Shelter was defunded and increasing their housing policy work. Adam Farrar, NCOSS's housing policy officer, joined the Shelter board. There was also considerable support from the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility. The Reverend Harry Herbert wrote to Joe Schipp on 8 February 1989 expressing disappointment that he was not willing to meet a delegation of three faith leaders.

Many members of CTSs and peak bodies were union members. The Public Services Association union called on their members not to support the transfer of responsibilities to Department of Housing staff and backed a march to parliament on 21 February. A picket was arranged from mid-December 1988 outside the minister's office, which faced Hyde Park, by the NSW Social Welfare Workers Union. The picket finally ended at the close of March 1989. It was enlivened by CTS and Women's Housing Program groups holding a combined tenants' picnic day, and there was an official unveiling of 'the world's largest Xmas card', which a Father Christmas figure tried to deliver to the minister. Over 18,000 people signed the petition, and 40,000 leaflets were distributed. Shelter believed:

> There is no support for Schipp and these policies and many people are appalled at his decision to abolish tenancy services. Especially when told that the services are paid for by the interest money on tenants bonds. The campaign to support the HITS services has been very successful, with significant media exposure right through December and January, with church organisations, Labor Council, traditional welfare agencies, NCOSS, independent MPs [Clover Moore] and Labor MPs giving consistent support (Shelter *ATH 11*).
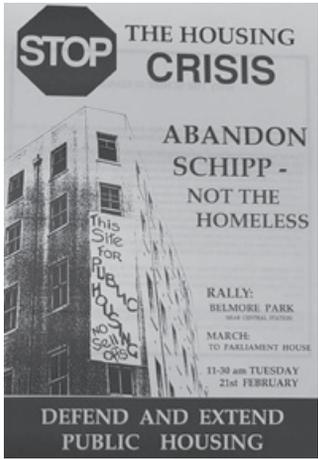
Abandon Schipp, 1989
Source: Shelter *ATH* 11, January 1989, p. 5.

The next rally was planned for 21 February, parliament's first sitting day. As the February 1989 Shelter newsletter noted, 'If the Minister for Housing was hoping that the community housing sector had faded quietly away over the Xmas break, he must have received a nasty shock … The Minister is clearly in for a rocky ride' (Shelter *ATH 12*, p.1).

By February 1989 the minster's firm approach seemed to be weakening, perhaps as a result of the protests and generally negative media coverage. The CTS sector was to be given an additional six weeks to argue their case, and current funding would continue largely unchanged to 30 June. The proposal to take back all capital properties was changed to one of negotiate on a case-by-case basis, and funding remained the same for CTS although they had to manage larger portfolios.

Three months later in April 1989 an amended *Residential Tenancies Act* was passed, with strong lobbying by the Tenants' Union and Shelter leading to concessions by the minister on periods of notice, rent in advance, lease costs and access. While concessions were made to the CTS sector, and reforms to the *Residential Tenancies Act* were implemented, there was to be no reprieve for Shelter.

4.3 Activist or peak? Shelter in transition, 1991–95

Despite a strong campaign by Shelter, the organisation was defunded at the end of March 1989 as housing minister Joe Schipp had wanted. Street protests stopped, staff lost their jobs, yet a dedicated band of Shelter activists led by John Nicolades as chair ensured the organisation continued.

On the smell of an oily rag: Shelter after the Schipp defunding

Initially, Shelter was optimistic it could continue the good fight, reverting back to the early days of being a voluntary organisation, as noted in the April 1989 newsletter:

> Despite losing all our funding we will still be acting on issues that deprive people of secure and affordable housing and calling for action on providing more public and community housing … The campaign to preserve Shelter's and HITS services funding produced strong public awareness and support and established working relationships with major welfare organisations, unions and churchs [sic]. These will be maintained and strengthened (Shelter *ATH 13*, p.2).

Like in the late 1970s and 1980s, Shelter would be voluntary organisation relying on the herculean input of board members and the wider web of

housing activists such as Robert Mowbray, Deborah Georgiou and Craig Johnston. There was some belt-tightening. Publications that has previously been sent for free with the benefit of grant funding would henceforth only be sent to paying members. The aim was to combine the previously separate Shelter and HIRS publications in to a single newsletter that would

Box 7: Shelter Hall of Fame: John Nicolades, holding the fort

There are few Shelter supporters who can match Nicolades' range of roles with the organisation, and only Chris Martin can match his five terms as chair. And Nicolades' role with Shelter is just part of a much broader career in the housing sector.

His roles at Shelter include as editor (1984–85), director (1986–87; 1995–96 to 1996–97), chair (1989–90 to 1994–95) and staff member (1985–86 to 1986–87). During the Schipp defunding period he worked for the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility (1989–99), and later as director of the Affordable Housing Service at NSW Department of Planning (1999–2002), director of the Centre for Affordable Housing (2002–03) and CEO of community housing provider Bridge Housing (from 2005).

Nicolades understood the big picture as well as the detail, so was in the right place at the right time to carry Shelter

through the period with no grant income. It is unlikely Shelter would have survived without his calm leadership and considered decision-making. Fortunately the generosity of Reverend Harry Herbert through the Uniting Church board allowed Nicolades to continue steering Shelter as part of the organisation's broader community objectives.

'[I]t should be said that John's dedication and drive have been crucial factors in keeping Shelter NSW going, and producing high quality policy during this period without funding. This allowed the credibility of Shelter to be maintained and was no doubt an important part of the context in which the decision to re-fund Shelter was made' (Shelter *ATH* 20, p.5).

Source: Undated image held at Shelter's office. Tanya Ritchie is carrying the 'raise the roof' banner, with John Nicolades in the back row carrying the coffin.

be circulated quarterly. However, during the period of defunding (April 1989 to December 1995) only four NSW newsletters were issued.

Shelter continued to be based at its existing offices at the Trades Hall Building on Goulburn Street, covering the rent through sharing space with the Youth Accommodation Association. While Shelter continued with what Nicolades described as a 'new lean and hungry look', the Tenants' Union also managed to survive as Legal Aid NSW continued to fund a legal project officer. Even HIRS continued, employing a worker until the end of the year to keep a focus on inner-city housing issues. Some of the Tenants' Advice and Housing Information Services survived, often with the support of local community organisations, though offering a far reduced level of service. As the Around the House newsletter noted wryly, 'there may be other vestiges floating around out there, and we apologise if we have missed them' (ibid., p.3).

Other organisations stepped in to keep the momentum on housing issues. NCOSS hosted a 'housing summit' in Sydney in May 1989 to address declining affordability and allowed Shelter to hold AGMs at their offices. The Uniting Church employed Nicolades throughout his time as Shelter chair, supported housing campaigns including in Pyrmont, and provided $11,000 grants to Shelter in 1994–95 (see Box 7). In Nicolades' last chair's report, he thanks the 'New South Wales Council of Social Service and the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility, both of whose support to Shelter NSW has been and will continue to be critical' (Shelter AR 1995, p.9). The housing network that had been built through adversity in the 1970s had endured, providing a buffer for Shelter and other housing organisations in the early 1990s.

With no grant income, Shelter reported trading losses in the five years from 1988–89 to 1992–93 totalling $75,000. As a result, Shelter's capital and reserves declined from a high of just under $100,000 in 1987–88 to a low of under $10,000 in 1992–93. The chair reported to the 1992 AGM that Shelter has been 'operating for the past four years on the smell of an oily rag and the voluntary labour and energy of a group of people who have a conviction that housing must be distributed fairly'.

Over time there were signs morale was wearing down, and administrative controls patchy. Compliance oversights occurred in 1989 when the correct documents were not submitted to the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, and in November 1990 the registrar wrote to Shelter complaining of a failure to lodge the June 1990 return. Membership numbers had been falling

Church, community and unions, 1990s
Source: Undated image held at Shelter's office. Second from left is Father John Usher, then director of Centrecare, a Catholic social services agency; third is Reverend Harry Herbert head of the then Board of Social Responsibility of the Uniting Church. Fifth from the left is John Nicolades, and seventh is David Annis Brown, formerly with the Youth Accommodation Association and later with NSW Social Welfare Workers Union (John Nicolades and Robert Mowbray, pers. comm., 2018).

from an all-time high of 241 in 1984–85 to a new low of 33 individuals and organisations in 1992–93. Member numbers only started rising in 1993–94 and by 1994–95 were up to 100.

Nicolades viewed housing minister Joe Schipp and his nominee as director-general of housing as forming 'what can arguably be seen as one of the most reactionary and short sighted administration of housing in NSW' (Shelter, 1992a). When he stepped down as Shelter's chair after a record five successive terms in November 1995, Nicolades understatedly described his time in the role as 'interesting' (AR 1995, p.6). His assessment of Shelter's strengths is instructive:

> It … is a reflection of the resilience of Shelter NSW, in being able to maintain itself as an unfunded organisation for four years and still manage to influence the policy agenda. Our analysis of the Department's Community Tenancy Scheme Review, the Olympic and Housing Report submission, and the Industry Commission Inquiry into Public Housing stand out (ibid.).

Politics comes full circle

In 1991 housing minister Joe Schipp launched two further initiatives aiming to unwind the policies of the previous state Labor government. The first initiative, a review of CTS, was launched by the public housing bureaucracy, never a great supporter of community housing. An internal report completed in March 1992 but not made public recommended the department should take back 500 'capital' properties owned by government and managed by the community sector. This would leave CTSs with the more modest role of running properties headleased from private landlords, and providing short-term accommodation for people on the waiting list (Matka, 1999, p.14).

The CTS review findings became public in June 1992 through a freedom of information request, one month before Joe Schipp resigned. Once this became known, Shelter funded – and jointly commissioned along with the Australian Federation of Housing Associations – a response to the proposal. The report was presented and discussed at a meeting between Shelter, the federation and the housing minister on 4 August 1992 (Shelter, 1992b). Whether as a result of the report and meeting or other reasons, CTSs were allowed to keep capital properties subject to negotiation.

Further change followed from an investigation launched in June 1991 into the Department of Housing's handling of the Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP). When the report by the NSW ombudsman was released in February 1993 it was highly critical of the department, and especially of the former director-general, Richard Flint (see section 3.2 above).

Premier Nick Greiner had brought an almost missionary zeal after his March 1988 landslide victory. With a Harvard MBA education, he wanted public services to be run with businesslike efficiency and set about corporatising government enterprises, deregulating and introducing performance-based management. Radical reform brought opposition, in the education and transport sectors as much as housing, and in the May 1991 state election he was returned as leader of a minority government. Following a damaging ruling by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, which he established, he resigned and was replaced by John Fahey as premier in June 1992.

Minister Schipp's demise was sealed by the problems with HomeFund, which had been established in 1986 by Premier Wran to help lower-income households raise funds to buy property. Unfortunately, the scheme

has been impacted by both high interest rates and a drive by the Greiner government to encourage public housing tenants to buy their homes, so many HomeFund loans had become unviable. In July 1992 Schipp was moved by Premier Fahey to become minister of sport, replaced as housing minister by Robert Webster, who Mowbray described as 'the best Housing Minister we had' (pers. comm., 2018). Webster valued Shelter's independent spirit as, according to Mary Perkins, he didn't want 'tailored advice' (pers. comm., 2018). In May 1993, with the HomeFund debacle still haunting him, Schipp was sacked as minister. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'he was disappointed that NSW Liberals were more becoming more "wet and left wing"' (*SMH*, 1993a).

The change of minister followed an earlier shift in leadership at the Department of Housing. Schipp's private sector appointment as housing minister, Peter Dransfield, was moved from his role as director of housing. As Shelter's chair noted at the 1992 AGM:

> It is ironic that a year ago Shelter was out in the cold and the Department dealt with us grudgingly, if at all, but more recently, with a change of Minister and new Director [General of Housing] it has been positively embraced by the Department of Housing. It is falling over itself to consult with us and ensure that we are represented on the committees which have been established (Shelter, 1992a).

Six days after his appointment in July 1992, incoming housing minister Robert Webster launched a review by John Mant into the workings of the Department of Housing. This was initially prompted by concerns over cost overruns in housing projects. Input to the Mant's review was provided by both Shelter and the Tenants' Union. Shelter believed that the Department of Housing 'has become an organisation unto itself. It exhibited, until recently, an unwillingness to consult with our sector on a variety of issues, and where consultation did occur it was under pressure' (Shelter, 1992c, p.9).

The choice of the leader of the Department of Housing review was significant. John Mant, a solicitor and town planner, has worked with Tom Uren at DURD in the early 1973. He later described his thinking that 'tenants in public housing got what suited the Authority to give them – in community housing get what they go out and organise for themselves – if you're about tenant power that to me sounds about right' (Shelter, 1995b). Mant would continue his support for community organisations, including with housing co-ops when he served as director of Common Equity NSW.

The Mant report of November 1992 was powerful, partly because of the blunt way it described current issues. He noted 'public housing has become purely a welfare function' (Mant, 1992, p.6). His radical call for a level playing field in funds allocation between public and community led to a major shift, with community housing being seen for the first time as an alternative social housing provider to the public sector. His acerbic view was that the Department of Housing 'has not been a success … In my view the Department is still the New South Wales Housing Commission with a number of functions tacked on' (ibid., p.5), and '[i]t is a central theme of this report that the focus of the Department has been on the production of new housing rather than the management of assets' (ibid., p.32).

Keen to move on from the problems of HomeFund and criticisms of the Department of Housing, the Fahey government – 'wet and left wing', according to Schipp – took Mant's recommendations on board. It was one the biggest shifts in housing policy by the same political party in power that NSW was to see. The cultural shift towards a progressive public housing agency co-existing with a growing community housing sector had the support of housing minister Robert Webster, with Gabrielle Kibble as acting housing director and Jennifer Westacott as head of the implementation group. In 1994 a Ministry of Housing, Planning and Urban Affairs was established, to provide what Mant had been advocating: policy advice independent of the main social housing provider. Supporting this were long-term housing advocates such as Vivienne Milligan who, by 1995, was appointed director of the Office of Housing Policy.

In good news for Shelter from Robert Webster, in July 1993 Shelter received $33,506 funding from the Department of Housing to employ Louise Redmond as project worker, along with a part-time administrative assistant, to prepare a strategic plan and funding submission. The resulting application process and ongoing negotiations led to Shelter being fully refunded in February 1995 by just under $200,000 under housing minister Robert Webster. Funding was initially for one year, then would be independently reviewed and continued subject to government agreeing to Shelter's strategic plan.

Webster's positive approach to developing an autonomous and independent community housing sector was continued by the incoming Labor government in April 1995 under Bob Carr when very little changed on housing policy. Nicolades commented that this indicated 'at the State Government level the convergence on housing policy matters by both the Liberal and Labor parties. Although they may want us to believe differently

at least at the State level differences on housing are at the margins' (Shelter AR 1995, p.6).

National housing strategy, diverging housing research

The Commonwealth was also becoming more supportive of the not-for-profit housing sector, as well as setting the pathways towards a national housing strategy. Much of the credit was due to Brian Howe, Commonwealth housing minister from June 1991 to March 1994. Howe's background was as a religious minister in the Methodist and then Uniting Church, later becoming a leading left-wing minister in the Hawke government.

The National Housing Strategy was a two-year process started by Brian Howe in November 1990 as potentially the biggest shake-up of the housing system since the launch of the CSHA in 1945. During much of the time of the review, Shelter was unfunded, which placed a limit on what could be achieved: as Shelter's chair noted, 'It is unfortunate NSW lacks a funded housing peak at a time when there is considerable activity around housing issues – particularly the National Housing Strategy' (Shelter newsletter 47, p.3).

When finally published, the strategy was comprehensive in looking across the housing system at all forms of accommodation, and very supportive of further growth of the community housing sector. The 1992–93 budget confirmed maintenance of CSHA expenditure on public housing, which would fund an increase in stock from 370,000 homes in 1992 to 400,000 in 1996. The community housing sector was set to increase to 25,000 dwellings by 2000. As a result, the National Shelter newsletter was able to assess that 'a reasonably stable consensus about public housing has finally reached a hiatus in the 1990s after nearly 20 years of vigorous debate about its role' (*National Housing Action*, August 1994, p.34).

In August 1993 the Community Housing Program, which incorporated the earlier LGCHP program, was established to 'create an expanded, more viable community housing sector which is capable of meeting specific client needs' (DoH, 1993, p.36). Was the national and NSW backing of community housing good news for Shelter? While the sector fulfilled many of Shelter's founding goals of great involvement by local people, the fast-growing community housing providers would be in danger of placing business viability over social innovation. The housing co-op model was becoming increasingly marginalised, not seen as a 'growth model'. And with the founding of what would become the NSW Federation of Housing Associations in 1993, in time Shelter became one of a number of peaks speaking on behalf of the non-government housing sector.

One unexpected impact for Shelter from the National Housing Strategy was the launch in June 1993 of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) led by Professor Mike Berry as interim executive director, with Shelter supporter Tony Dalton on the interim management team. AHURI funding was through a complex arrangement between the Commonwealth and state governments, and selected university research centres. The organisation aimed to establish a national network of research and researchers, but it also took away part of the need for activities currently undertaken by the Shelter organisations, especially National Shelter.

Founding AHURI created a split between action-based research, often carried out by people with masters and doctoral qualifications but working as consultants for peak bodies, and the work of professional full-time university-based academics. Shelter had made – and continues to make – good use of consultants such as Dr Robert Mowbray, Dr Julie Nyland, Dr Judith Stubbs, Dr Gary Cox and Dr Tony Gilmour. These researchers can be commissioned on topics that might not align with government objectives such as tenant participation and criticisms of developer-led public housing estate renewal.

In contrast to Shelter's research agenda, AHURI's was set by Commonwealth and state governments and reflected the political priorities of the time, such as increasing business efficiency or favouring one part of the housing system. Some researchers such as Dr Vivienne Milligan came to housing policy through working as 'insiders' in the public sector, rather than as 'outsider' housing activists. Increasingly Shelter and AHURI plotted separate housing research paths. Of the two seminal AHURI papers

Which way to go on national strategy, 1992
Source: Shelter newsletter 47, 48. Brian Howe's 1992 National Housing Strategy was one of the rare times the Commonwealth protposed a co-ordinated way forwards for housing.

on community housing led by Vivienne Milligan, there were only three mentions of Shelter research or seminars in first and two in the second (Milligan et al., 2004; Milligan et al., 2009). This is despite the wealth of material Shelter has produced over the years.

In November 1999 AHURI, working closely with Housing NSW, organised what they describe on their website as 'the inaugural National Housing Conference' in Sydney. This is despite the earliest event of this type having been delivered by Shelter in 1982. The event took place over two days with what would become a familiar format of a keynote speech by a high-profile British housing figure and a conference dinner, in the first year hosted by Macquarie Bank. The quota of professors and doctors was low in comparison to later years, and National Shelter's Eleri Morgan-Thomas was on a panel discussion and there was input in another session by Shelter stalwart Adam Farrar. However, community groups and tenant representatives were thin on the ground, unlike with the earlier events run by National Shelter before defunding.

Subsequent AHURI national housing conferences were held in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2017. By 2017 the conference had become a mega-event with activities over four days, corporate sponsors and closer links to the AHURI research agenda, which itself was strongly shaped by government. Shelter participants included Patti Chugg from Shelter Tasmania, Alice Clark from Shelter SA, Leoni Crayden from Q Shelter and Adrian Pisarski from National Shelter. The presence of participants from across the Shelter family showed the benefits in having a national network, though the absence of a presenter from Shelter in NSW was telling. The last time the NSW Shelter executive officer was involved at the AHURI conference was in Sydney in 2008 as a panel member.

AHURI's move to run the National Housing Conference, and during the mid-2010s to also run one-day events and seminars, took away potential fee-earning activities for Shelter and National Shelter. While there were benefits in having more housing research produced, the market for housing information intensified and has become one where AHURI (annual revenues $5.2 million, 2016–17) is often better placed and resourced that Shelter (annual revenues $0.7 million, 2016–17).

Battling the gentrty: Shelter and City West

Shelter's birth in 1974 had been against the backdrop of (over) development plans for The Rocks, Woolloomooloo, Glebe and Waterloo. By the early 1980s the next area under threat was Pyrmont. A 1981 Shelter newsletter

detailed plans for a $50 million development of 686 homes on a 3.4-hectare site to be sold to the private market. The City of Sydney backed these proposals, which would 'virtually eliminate low income earners from residence in the area' (Shelter newsletter 19, p.16). As a sign that the legacy of residents' action groups of the 1970s had not been forgotten, Pyrmont Residents Defence Group led opposition to the development.

In October 1990 the Greiner government launched one the largest urban renewal projects in the country, focusing on Pyrmont, Ultimo, White Bay, Glebe Island and parts of Redfern. As Shelter's chair noted:

> [the] worrying aspect is the absence of any social impact study to examine the low income residents' future housing and human services needs. Indeed, it is disturbing that in a plan which will result in a population increase of 30,000 households no provision has been made for public housing, even though the areas has a high proportion of private renters and the public housing waiting list stands at 11,000 households (Shelter newsletter 46).

John Nicolades, in his position as community services manager at the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility, worked with the Pyrmont Ultimo community through the Harris Centre, the neighbourhood centre operated by the Uniting Church, and pushed for affordable housing to be included in the City West project. He and other community members attended Premier Greiner's press conference and handed out leaflets at the start asking where the affordable housing was in the project, which then was the first question asked by the media. This was quickly followed up by a letter to the premier from Reverend Harry Herbert, head of the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility, seeking a more formal commitment from the premier (John Nicolades, pers. comm., 2018).

In December 1991 the Hawke Commonwealth government launched an ambitious new program to improve the quality of urban living. The Building Better Cities program received national funding of over $800 million between 1991 and 1996, with projects in 26 areas based on a competitive tender (Neilson, 2008). Behind the plan was Brian Howe, minister for health, housing and community services. Of the $278 million allocated to NSW under Building Better Cities, a key project was high-density affordable housing at Ultimo-Pyrmont in central Sydney in a project now known as City West that:

> provides an opportunity to ensure that development does not simply result in the displacement of those on low incomes and exacerbate the growing divisions

between those who can afford to live in the inner city in close proximity to sought after amenities while low income households are pushed further out to the urban fringes with little access to services (ibid., p.8).

In a March 1992 submission to the City West Regional Environmental Study, Nicolades writing on behalf of the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility stated that at least 2,000 affordable homes should be built and retained as long-term rental housing against the government's target of 700. The favoured option was to create a new not-for-profit housing management organisation, with a board consisting of 'Government representatives, a major City West developer, and community service and housing organisations with an active involvement in Pyrmont/Ultimo'. It was suggested the organisation could be jointly sponsored by the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility and the Catholic Church (UCBSR, 1992, p.6).

City West Housing was established by the NSW government in November 1994 as a special purpose not-for-profit organisation to help deliver 600 units of affordable housing as part of the redevelopment of Pyrmont and Ultimo. When the company was established the NSW community housing sector only had around 6,000 properties and most organisations were tenancy managers, not developers, and therefore lacked the necessary skills to meet the government's goals. Hence a new organisation was needed.

The new community housing provider, City West Housing, aimed to provide affordable rental accommodation for very low to moderate income households to help ensure that such households could continue to be part of the area when it was renewed and gentrified. Funding was through capital grants from the Commonwealth's Building Better Cities program, and from state government via developers' levies and proceeds of state government land sales in the area.

City West has two ordinary shareholders, the NSW minister for housing and the NSW Treasurer, and reports to state government through NSW Treasury using the same approach as state-owned corporations. An 'arm's length' relationship with government was achieved through redeemable preference shareholders which as at June 2018 included Shelter, the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility, Churches Community Housing, the Australian Chinese Community Association, City of Sydney Council, Lend Lease, Star City casino, St George Bank, Australand and Mirvac.

The organisation's articles of association, which set out the purpose and activities of the organisation, could only be changed if 75 per cent

Pyrmont before City West, 1988
Source: Courtesy of City of Sydney archives 065/065207. The photo is of housing at the corner of Point Street and Scott Street, Pyrmont. The squatters in the vacant homes were due to be evicted.

of preference shareholders and all ordinary shareholders agree (City West Housing, 1994). Preference shareholders appointed City West's directors, and in a circular process the directors decided on the preference shareholders. The NSW government through its ordinary shareholding decided on strategy, with preference shareholders allowed input to strategy but not the right of veto.

According to Shelter's 1994–95 annual report, the board agreed to become a preference shareholder only during City West Housing's development phase, on the assumption their share would then pass to a tenant representative. During the mid-1990s the community housing provider held consultations with tenants about participation, developed a Tenant Participation Policy, and appointed a tenant as a director. Because of progress with tenant participation, Shelter relinquished their preference share in December 1997. Later, in May 2002 and at the request of the City West Housing board, Shelter resumed their preference shareholding. According to a Shelter board minute in November 2001 this was because 'Shelter NSW has policy expertise that could complement the tenant's role'.

Developments since City West
City West Housing's Zetland project which houses very low, low and moderate income households. *Source*: City West Housing.

In 2017 Shelter had started to question their role as a preference shareholder. A paper to the board discussed a dilemma posed by the ambiguous nature of the organisation – somewhere between a government enterprise and community housing organisation. If City West Housing was seen as a government arm's-length entity, does their shareholding inhibit Shelter from questioning government policy? If City West Housing was seen as a community housing provider, how can Shelter remain an independent supporter and critic of not-for-profit landlords? The position is further complicated as City West Housing is an associate member of Shelter. And given the limited influence of preference shareholders, are there any real benefits? At the time of publication the Shelter board had not come to a conclusion, and Shelter as a peak body continues to have an unusual direct stake in the affordable housing sector.

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The second decade for Shelter drove home the twin realities of public funding: the need to tread a fine line between activism and meekness, and the tying in of funding to the political cycle – and in some cases the personality and interests of housing ministers. It must also have become clear that Shelter's environment was set by the changing politics at both state and Commonwealth level, and the two cycles were rarely in synch. This was to be a feature of the next decade with the long period of Labor rule in NSW under Bob Carr and Liberal national governance under Prime Minister John Howard, as discussed in Chapter 6. First, Chapter 5 looks at ongoing themes for Shelter across the decades: lobbying approaches, shown by case studies of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, and the long-running disputes over the future of low-cost housing in Millers Point in Sydney. Finally, Chapter 5 looks at how Shelter professionalised as an organisation and tailored its strategy to changing times.

5 Maturing the Organisation: Politics, Persuasion and Capacity

Shelter's challenging role as lobbyist has been to try to keep housing issues facing low- and moderate-income households on the political agenda over the long term. This has been achieved to an extent, though there have been significant changes in the way the organisation gets the message across. In part the change has been through new technologies becoming available, though there have also been shifts over time as to how much 'direct action' is considered appropriate. In this chapter these changes are illustrated with two case studies, on homelessness and the Olympics (section 5.2) and the battle for Millers Point (section 5.3).

5.1 Shelter's lobbying strategies

What is the right balance for a peak body between working with and through the system, or confronting the system head-on with picket lines and protests? With a constant fear of defunding, Shelter has had to choose its battlefields carefully, and move to a more nuanced and sophisticated ways of communicating with government and the housing ministry.

Housing crisis: Same same but different

From reading Shelter's archive records there is a sense that there always has been a housing crisis, and probably always will be one. As a housing advocacy organisation, Shelter's rationale is to find problems with the housing system and suggest changes. And with a complex interplay between the Commonwealth that controls welfare payments, tax and much social housing funding, and the states that set planning controls and run and co-fund social housing, consistent and successful housing policies are hard to achieve. With between 90 and 95 per cent of NSW housing in the private sector during the half century, and bipartisan support for the efficiency of

market forces, government intervention has been limited. It has also been sporadic. The Commonwealth has rarely had a housing policy, and recently often no housing minister. NSW has sometimes had a social housing strategy, but never a comprehensive approach across the entire housing continuum.

Summarising the housing market over National Shelter's first two decades, the organisation noted in 1994 'how little has really changed for low income consumers, and those otherwise disadvantaged in our housing system. Issues of affordability, accessibility, appropriateness and security remain the vital concerns of housing advocates' (*National Housing Action*, March 1994, p.3). These four issues remain central to low-income households to the present day. The main change is that with the long-term trend starting in the 1990s of house prices rising much faster than incomes, middle-income households are impacted as well as those on lower incomes. Shelter reflected this fact in the early 2000s by moving to become housing advocates for both low- and moderate-income housing consumers.

The continuing nature of problems in the housing market can be seen from a 1979 National Shelter article on 'Housing inaction and crisis':

> Australia continues to be confronted with a number of severe housing problems – it has reached the proportion of a crisis for the growing number of people in the community who can no longer gain housing justice … Access to home ownership it seems is rapidly becoming a thing of the past … Against the background of deteriorating home ownership, initiatives to assist the private and public sector rental markets should be a priority. Unfortunately they have received no additional assistance. State Housing Authority applications for rental accommodation remain at a high level… In Sydney, a Financial Review survey showed that in some suburbs 'rents have increased by up to 20 per cent in the last twelve months' … the hardships faced by an increasing proportion of the Australian population demands immediate action and there is no alternative but to increase public investment in the housing sector (*National Housing Action*, May 1979, p.3).

Little therefore has changed in 40 years, including the unwillingness of governments to financially support housing and treat it as a strategic asset rather than an unwelcome expense. Of course, prices are at different levels. A Shelter newsletter illustration shows the shocking rise in price of a Paddington-style terrace to as much as $60,000. The median price for such a property was nearer $2.25 million in 2018.

When looked at in finer detail, the 'housing crisis' of the 2010s does show some differences to earlier periods. First, there is a greater understanding
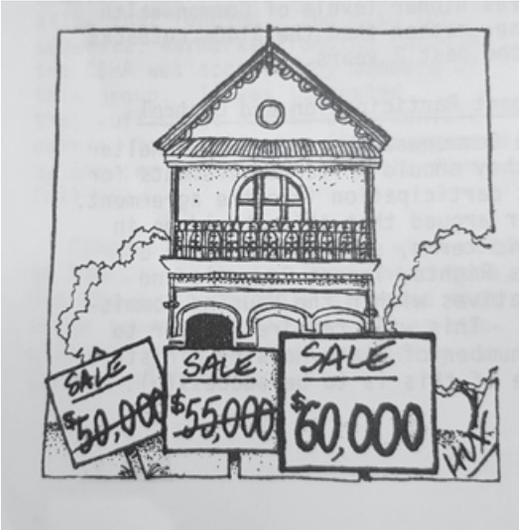
House prices out of control, 1980

Source: Shelter newsletter 15. Sydney's property market has been out of control for some time, though long gone are the days when an inner-city Federation terrace can be bought for $60,000.

that not everyone has an equal chance in the housing market. Particular disadvantage is faced by people with Aboriginal identity, those with a disability, women, young people and migrants. Shelter has brought these issues to the forefront of housing debates through publications and lobbying. Second, there is a more nuanaced understanding of the housing continuum. People who do not have secure tenure – living in caravans, boarding houses and couch-surfing – are now classed as homeless. There is wider acknowledgement that the problem is not only the lack of properties available to buy and rent accross a range of price points but also the difficulty of moving between tenures. People's 'housing careers' have been shown by AHURI research to be non-linear, with many people falling out of home ownership, and circulating into and out of homelessness.

No part of the housing system is or has been working well. Home ownership rates are falling, and there are fewer opprtunities for lower-income families to enter the market despite an easing of borrowing restrictions and lower interest rates over past decades. There remains a longstanding belief in the superiority of property ownership, though Shelter begged to differ in 1982: 'most agree that there is a housing crisis – except of course for Mr Howard and Treasury. But the "solution" for the crisis continues to centre around propping up that Great Australian Nightmare – Home Ownership' (Shelter newsletter 20, p.3). Compared to the 1970s there is a considerable increase in people owning more than one
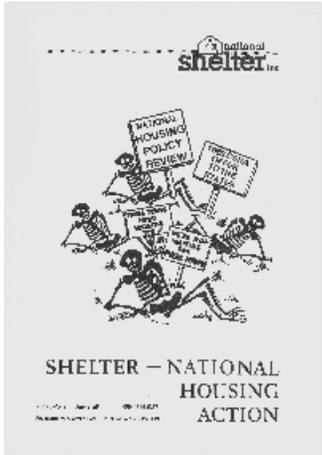
Still waiting for public housing, 1989
Source: *National Shelter News*, July 1989.
National and state governments over the years
have tended to promise much and deliver little.

home and holding properties for investment purposes due to generous tax treatment. However, the subsequent increase in the supply of private rental housing has not resulted in it becoming more affordable. As noted by Shelter as early as 1982: 'during the last decade the private rental market in Sydney has broken down. There has been a dramatic increase in business investment and speculation and a rapid escalation in real estate values and rents … For most people on middle, low or fixed incomes rents have increased faster than their incomes' (Shelter newsletter 20, pp.5–6).

Social housing supply has failed to match demand. In the 1970s and early 1980s more public housing was built, but part was sold to residents. In later years the social housing stock flatlined and was restricted to applicants with high and complex needs. As a result, a National Shelter newsletter in 1989 used skeletons as a metaphor for how long applicants languish on the social housing waiting list. NSW waiting times were long in the 1980s, as now: 'isn't it a joke that, whilst the housing crisis worsens, 45,000 families are waiting for up to 8 years for public housing, and the majority don't even bother putting their names down; Ministers and Departments have never, and still cannot quite see where the need lies' (Shelter newsletter 20, p.9).

A Shelter editorial from Ken Smith in July 1982 brought home how the substantial housing market problems were impacting people's lives: 'no one can doubt that housing consumers, and especially those reliant on low and moderate incomes, are experiencing a housing crisis of mammoth proportions. We seem to be in an economic depression with the 60s and 70s talk of relative poverty being replaced by regular accounts of more and more people in what the theorists call absolute poverty i.e. where people

are actually doing without food, and this combined with poor housing, has led to an increasing occurrence of "depression", sicknesses like tuberculosis, rickets and so on' (Shelter newsletter 22, p.3).

The politics of housing

Shelter has had to navigate regular changes in government at both Commonwealth and state level. As a state peak, Shelter's lobbying position has been most influenced by the party in power in NSW government. There have been 21 NSW housing ministers to establish a relationship with over four decades, along with changes in directors of housing and shadow housing ministers. This need to keep in contact and build relationships with an array of people can be seen from comments in Shelter's 1988–89 annual report: 'earlier this year we took time to establish good lines of communication with the new incumbents both in the government and opposition camps. A number of board members and staff met with Dr Andrew Refshauge, the new Minister for Housing and also with Mr Brad Hazzard, the Shadow Minister for Housing. We have maintained effective and fruitful liaison with the Department of Housing, which has undergone significant structural changes this year' (Shelter AR 1999).

The greatest period of personnel changes was from 2003 to 2011 when there were six NSW Labor housing ministers. For many administrations the housing portfolio was not considered an especially important one, and it was given to junior Cabinet members to gain experience. The longest serving ministers are shown in Table 2, and often these are the people who have had most impact on the housing sector and with whom it has been possible to build closer links.

Table 2: Longstanding NSW housing ministers

Minister	Party	Years	Decade/s
Frank Walker	Labor	5.1	1980s
Joe Schipp	Liberal	4.2	1980s, 1990s
Pru Goward	Liberal	4.4	2010s
Craig Knowles	Labor	4.0	1990s
Andrew Refshauge	Labor	4.0	1990s, 2000s
Terry Sheahan	Labor	2.9	1980s
Robert Webster	Liberal	2.8	1990s

Source: Parliament of NSW (2017). For part of Pru Goward's tenure, the role did not include the designation housing or social housing. Data as at April 2018.

In Shelter's mythology, reflected in documents and through interviews for this book, there have been popular and unpopular housing ministers, as well as departmental heads of the housing bureaucracy. Interestingly, ministers rated highly (and lowly) by Shelter include those from both the Labor and Liberal parties. Volke wrote in 1987 that: 'it's probably still true that Labor Governments are marginally better than conservative Governments, and that left-wing (whatever it might mean) ministers are rather better than right-wing ministers … Trouble is, it's not always clear who the bastards are. And, dare I say it: all too often the bastards is us' (Shelter newsletter, 39, p.7).

Labor was often in power in NSW in the three decades to 2011, and at times Shelter's relationship with the left of politics was strong. For example, in 1982 the National Housing Conference was jointly hosted by the Labor Party, ACTU and National Shelter. This did not prevent Shelter from speaking out, and housing activists appeared particularly disappointed when Labor state governments failed to live up to expectations. In a 1982 editorial in the Shelter newsletter, 'not all the blame [for the housing crisis] can or should be directed at the nasty capitalists in Canberra. The Labor Government in NSW hasn't actually been what you'd call innovative in tackling various housing issues … they too have shown that their priorities centre around the prospective home owner' (Shelter newsletter 20, p.3).

Labor Commonwealth governments have also come in for criticism. National Shelter took aim at the Hawke government in 1984, being 'bitterly disappointed that the public housing sector has lost out badly in the federal budget discussions … the federal Government has renegaded on its election commitment to double public housing stock over the next 10 years' (Shelter newsletter 26, p.6). Adrian Pisarski, writing in 2014, mused 'it is convenient for our sector to think we have a natural partner in Labor administrations and whilst the Rudd and Gillard Governments did some extremely good things in housing (such as NRAS, the social housing initiative, the Road Home and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness) they failed to promote their successes adequately and didn't put in place the permanent legacy we know is required' (Shelter *ATH* 96, p.24).

Commonwealth housing policy impacts on NSW, usually through CSHA and later NAHA negotiations and subsequent funding. Often Shelter aligned their policy position with the state government against the Commonwealth, for example, when Malcolm Fraser and John Howard were prime minister. The role was reversed under prime ministers

Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke when Shelter was more in tune with Commonwealth government thinking. However, the Commonwealth has had a diminishing role in housing matters, except under the Hawke and Rudd/Gillard governments. Foreshadowing later moves by the Howard Commonwealth government, in May 1982 Malcolm Fraser abolished the role of minister of housing, splitting the functions between the Department of Social Security and the Department of Business and Current Affairs. Shelter's view was that this showed the 'strategy of removing housing from the Federal political agenda' (Shelter newsletter 21, p.5).

Shelter in the lobby

Shelter's involvement with housing policy dates from the establishment of the organisation, and influencing policy was one of the reasons they were established. The earliest surviving Shelter newsletter in 1977 commented on the recent Commonwealth budget and mentioned a submission would be made to the Commonwealth Committee of Inquiry into Housing Costs (Shelter newsletter 7, pp.1–4). In 1978 Shelter's Special Needs Working Group prepared a submission calling on state government to introduce a boarding house licensing system.

Ministers early on appreciated the benefits of Shelter and National Shelter's informed, thoughtful input into housing policy, especially when there were few other organisations able to provide this. In 1976, when Shelter organisations had been in existence for less than two years, the Fraser government's housing minister Kevin Newman saw Shelter's importance. Disadvantaged groups 'should have access [to government] and this access is probably best gained through organisations such as Shelter, the Regional Councils for Social Development and other organisations such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence. These organisations have a vital role in providing us with grassroots problems, reactions and needs' (*National Housing Action* 1, p.4).

In 1980 the first housing campaign involving several peak bodies and activists was launched. The Inner Sydney Housing Crisis Campaign was resourced by Shelter's sister organisation the Housing Information and Referral Service (HIRS) and brought together a broad coalition of people concerned about Sydney's housing problems to put pressure on all levels of government. This was a 'campaign strategy that successfully linked a considerable number of people and led to a considerable level of paranoia within the NSW Department of Housing' (*National Housing Action* 8, p.29). The campaign gave tenant groups confidence that others faced the

same issues. Publicity generated was often through local newspapers such as the *Newtown Guardian*, which Shelter supporter Harvey Volke edited.

Shelter's first co-ordinated, multi-issue lobbying was the Housing Campaign 1981. This memorably brought 'housing crisis public meetings, the eviction and trial of [minister] Terry Sheahan, [a] tent city and so forth' (Shelter newsletter 19, p.21). Beyond attention-grabbing events, Shelter also produced a seven-page manifesto for that year's state election. This included radical proposals for ending public housing being used as welfare housing, the Housing Commission board being entirely elected by tenants, caravan residents having tenancy rights, halting strata titling, and public housing to be inherited by family members when a tenant died. Private market rent controls should be introduced, though 'the days of private landlordism are numbered … [as this was] an ailing and inferior tenure form'. The final election call was for state government to provide financial and technical support for non-profit housing co-operatives, 'the third sector of housing provision' (ibid., p.H).

The concerted media attack on housing minister Terry Sheahan in 1981 marked the high point in Shelter's confrontational approach on housing matters that had been a staple of activist campaigns in the 1970s. A 1983 Shelter newsletter described the organisation's relationship with NSW government and its agencies at that time as being:

> characterised by words such as 'cool', 'antagonistic', 'un-cooperative', 'distrustful' and just plain 'hostile'. It could be argued that an important component of Shelter was/is that of 'shit stirrer' where anything that upsets bureaucrats or politicians automatically has to be right (Shelter newsletter 24, p.4).

The Shelter board debated matters, preparing a discussion paper in 1983 stating this 'cavalier attitude must be abandoned' and relations with government should be 'regularised'. Henceforth Shelter would keep government better informed, identify public officials favourable to their objectives and 'formalise a system whereby information was cleared/classified/restricted for use by the various parties' (ibid.).

Looking back the following decade, leading housing advocate and Shelter stalwart Harvey Volke saw the early 1980s as they key period when Shelter's lobbying techniques changed (see Box 8). 'After that point, where we'd been activists shouting from the barricades saying "do something", from then on the emphasis changed so we're in a position that rather than shouting from the barricades we could get into serious negotiations. We often got involved in housing management. Large numbers of people

Box 8: Shelter Hall of Fame: Harvey Volke, comrade and wit

Volke (1939–2005) was, according to Karine Shellshear a 'maverick, comrade, people person, sometimes outcast, bastion of humanity, man of language and symbols' (Various, 2005). He served the organisation as both a director (1980–85, 1989–98 and 1999–01) and policy officer (2001–05). Other work experiences were with the Housing Information and Referral Service, National Shelter, the Tenants' Union, South Sydney Community Aid and the Housing Commission.

Volke's drive was for social justice, and in search of this he both joined and left the Baptist Church as a minister, the Communist Party and the Labor Party. He was originally a journalist, and from the 1970s was the influential editor of the *Newtown Guardian*, which took an increasing interest in housing matters.

Benefitting from the Whitlam government's free university education, he studied for a BA in modern history and political science at Macquarie University, then later an MA in modern history at UNSW. At the time of his death he was working on a PhD reviewing the history of low-income housing reform. The University of Sydney awarded him a posthumous MPhil. Ever topical, one of Volke's doctoral case studies was The Rocks and Millers Point.

According to Karine Shellshear, five years after Harvey's death, 'we still hear the raucous laughter and forever provocative spirit of mind demanding that we "speak up for deaf bastards" like him. More importantly, Harvey demands we speak up for every poor bastard – those that are marginalised, ostracised, discriminated against and treated unfairly' (Shelter *ATH* 80, p.17).

'Harvey lived the ambivalent life of a non-conformist – a rambunctious yet gentle-hearted person with a passionate temperament and a seemingly gruff exterior. He recognised the power of symbolic language in particular – the capacity for words to provoke and arouse' (Shelter AR 1995, p.13)

Source: Photo from records held at Shelter's offices, undated.
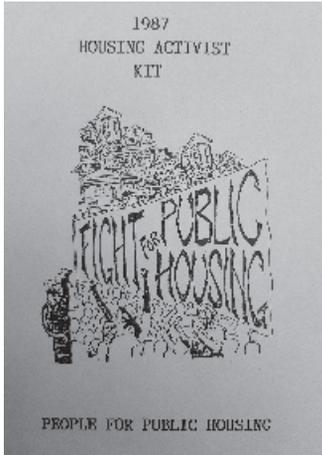
Housing activist kit, 1987
Source: PPH, 1987

started going in to the Department of Housing – I did that as well – in terms of trying to put into effect the social programs we'd always believed in … with at that time the support of the housing minister and some parts of the bureaucracy' (Shelter, 1995a).

By the second half of the 1980s Shelter was less directly activist on housing matters. However, Shelter and NCOSS supported the work of People for Public Housing, a grassroots group that organised demonstrations in Sydney and Canberra in 1986. Simon Rosenberg, who served on Shelter's board in 1988–89 and 1990–91, was the NSW contact point for the group in the 1987 *Housing Activist Kit* with his address as 'c/o Shelter NSW'. John Nicolades was pictured at a 'Raise the roof' campaign by People for Public Housing. The kit gave helpful guidance on boycotts, pickets, sit-ins, jamming switchboards, demonstrations and marches. Advice was given that '[i]n the case of expected confrontation, try to ensure the presence of lawyers, media and photographers. This aids the provision of legal advice as they can be called on as "respectable witnesses"' (PPH, 1987, p.53). By 1987 People for Public Housing had raised enough money to employ a worker co-ordinating regionally based education and resourcing campaigns.

In the 1980s and 1990s Shelter prepared housing policy positions at state and Commonwealth elections, though by the start of the 2000s the latter were co-ordinated by National Shelter but publicised in NSW by Shelter through their newsletter and website. In some state elections demographic data was analysed for individual constituencies showing the impact of housing

policies in local neighbourhoods, a good way to interest the local media and politicians. In1988 Shelter co-ordinated a statewide campaign involving 400 housing organisations to raise the profile of housing issues with candidates in the upcoming Commonwealth elections. The campaign was launched by Julian Disney, president of ACOSS, and all major parties attended a meeting at Parramatta Town Hall on 17 February (Shelter, 1988b).

Campaigns co-ordinated between Shelter and other organisations continued in the 2000s to be a regular approach used by Shelter to raise housing issues. However, these were increasingly led by other groups, with Shelter just one of a number of supporters. An example of the increasing sophistication of the approach was the Every Kid campaign in the run-up to the 2006 NSW state election, arguing a child's wellbeing and life opportunities should not be determined by their immediate circumstances. This was a joint initiative of NCOSS, Shelter NSW, UnitingCare Burnside and others.

With Commonwealth issues, National Shelter takes the lead. In Chapter 7, the Affordable Housing Summit Group is discussed, highlighting that during the mid-2000s a successful cross-sector coalition was formed that positively impacted the incoming housing policies of the Rudd Labor government. By 2011 the Australians for Affordable Housing joint peak and industry group initiative was at a new level of sophistication in terms of directly mobilising the public, including using social media. The initiative was formed through a coalition of over 60 national and state housing, welfare and community sector organisations formed to highlight the problem of housing affordability in Australia.

Modern campaigns, 2011 and 2016
Source: www.housingstressed.org.au

The Australians for Affordable Housing approach was built on for the 2016 Commonwealth election Vote Home campaign by a coalition of National Shelter, Homelessness Australia, the Community Housing Industry Association and ACOSS. The campaign's five priorities were growth in social housing, a national homelessness strategy, reforming the tax treatment of rental housing, increasing CRA and addressing the shortfall in housing for people with disabilities (Shelter *ATH* 105, pp.6–8). Campaign materials were distributed through both national and state-based organisations including Shelter. There was a strong social media campaign using the hashtag #endthehousingcrisis, a dedicated website housingstressed.org.au, and an e-petition through Change.org.

Managing the media

The first known newspaper reference to Shelter is an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 April 1980 headed 'Sydney faces big housing shortage' (Shelter newsletter 14). In Shelter's first decade its approach to the media was unfocused, and little appeared in newspapers other than the occasional letter to the editor. Professionalisation increased when Shelter's second brief in February 1988 chose a topic other than housing policy: how to use the media. This brief contained guidance on writing letters to the editor, holding press conferences ('start on time'), radio interviews ('be theatrical') and television appearances ('wear light colourful clothes') (Shelter Brief no.2, February 1988). Later that year a housing election kit was produced for the state elections which included sections on running the campaign and questions to ask candidates. Postcards were also included in the kit to send to the premier, and campaign posters could be supplied on request (Shelter, 1988a).

It was only by the end of the 1990s that Shelter was regularly asked by newspapers for an opinion on housing matters: 'one emerging trend deserves special note. In the past year, our reports, press releases, and analysis of housing and homelessness issues have been increasingly picked up by the media, state opposition parties and the cross-benchers' (Shelter AR 1999, p.9).

Newsletters were the mainstay of Shelter's communication approach from the 1970s. With funding granted by housing minister Frank Walker, in 1986 both Shelter and the Housing Information and Tenancy Service (HITS) became major statewide newsletter publishers. A new Shelter newsletter named *Around the House* was launched in 1987 and intended to be a snappier version of the existing *Housing News and Information*
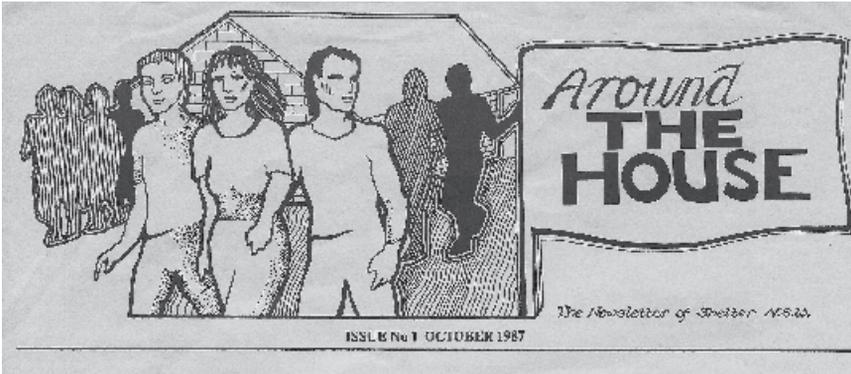
First edition of Around the House newsletter, 1987

The newsletter reported: 'The Shelter AGM was held on 28 September. In a successful attempt to make it more exciting than the average AGM, it was held at Sydney's Balmain Loft coffee shop. The 40 people who attended were wined and dined, as well as being entertained by the cabaret duo of Jennie Tomorrow and Lara Caruso and the acapella group, The Skirts. The keynote speaker was Jack Mundey. As well as the entertainment, the business side of the AGM was also successful'.
Source: ATH 1

journal, which would carry fuller articles each quarter. The latter journal limped on until 1992, though few editions were issued after Shelter was defunded. In addition to Shelter publications, HITS also published a 'local' bulletin dealing with Sydney issues, which was circulated statewide. Finally, National Shelter continued to distribute their newsletter across the nation.

Relatively generous grant funding during the second half of the 1990s allowed Shelter to take advantage of the latest technology, albeit catching up with other peak bodies and community organisations. The newsletter was supplemented by 17 'fax bulletins' distributed to 150 recipients in 1996–97, in a precursor to group emails. It was announced Shelter was building web pages as 'a key benefit of going online for Shelter NSW is the possibility of improving links with regions outside the metropolitan area' (Shelter *ATH* 23). By 1997 the website was up and running, and over time would become a key resource window to access the burgeoning number of briefs, submission and policy positions.

Shelter's Facebook page was launched in 2010, the main website revamped and relaunched in 2012, their Twitter account activated in 2013. As at April 2018 Shelter had 1,572 followers on Facebook and 1,269 on Twitter. Their Twitter followers were less than the 2,023 for National Shelter though still a good number compared to the CHIA NSW's 1,344
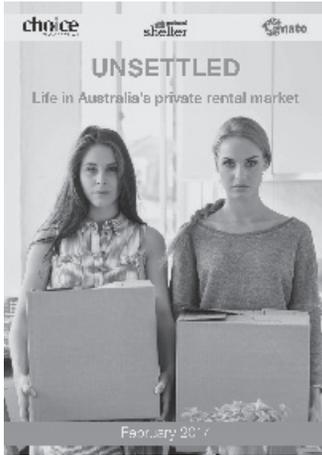
Unsettled life in Australia's private rental market, 2017
Source: Choice (2017).

and CHIA's 833 followers. However, Shelter has been eclipsed by National Shelter in terms of recent media attention. Starting in 2015, National Shelter, Community Sector Banking and SGS Economics and Planning prepared and released twice a year the Rental Affordability Index. This is a useful tool for researchers as well as good way of raising issues of housing affordability with local politicians and media.

In a further partnership with consumer group Choice, National Shelter and the National Association of Tenant Organisations carried out the first national survey of tenants, revealing renters have little security, live in poor quality homes, face discrimination based on their income, age and parental status, and are fearful of reprisal if they request repairs and maintenance. *Unsettled: Life in Australia's private rental market*, published February 2017, became the top-trending story that day, reaching an audience of over 5.7 million, and #RentInOz was the top-trending Australian hashtag on Twitter.

5.2 The Olympics: A hard race for the disadvantaged

Shelter has a long history of questioning the impact of mega development projects (such as at Woolloomooloo and The Rocks in the 1970s) and spectacle events and associated infrastructure (expos, sporting events, and most recently the 2018 proposals for new stadia in Sydney) on housing and homelessness. A report was circulated through the Shelter network in 1985 about the loss of low-income rental housing in the lead-up to the America's Cup in Fremantle (*National Housing Action*, November 1985,

p.19). National Shelter saw Expo 88 as promoting gentrification, loss of boarding houses and a 'cleaning up of the area' of 'the suburbs of West End and South Brisbane that had a reputation of being a haunt of "bums and winos"' (*National Housing Action*, March 1988, p.8).

On 24 September 1993 Sydney was named host city for the 2000 summer Olympic Games. Though generally greeted with widespread enthusiasm and local pride, housing activists built on earlier Shelter experience to start questioning the impacts. Two months later in November 1993, Shelter noted their 'particular concern is housing, accommodation and urban development issues … there is now sufficient evidence from other landmark events in Australia – the America's Cup bid in Fremantle, Expo 88 in Brisbane and the Bi-Centennial celebrations in Sydney that show such events have serious adverse effects on low to moderate income families renting privately' (Shelter *ATH*, November 1993, p.3). The impact in Sydney would be felt around Homebush Bay, but also in Pyrmont-Ultimo and Darling Harbour, which were sites for the media village and some sporting events.

Given that Shelter was not funded in the early 1990s, the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility provided $3,000 to fund research and publication in September 1994 of *The Olympics and Housing: A study of six international events and analysis of potential impacts of the Sydney 2000 Olympics*. The report was prepared at the University of Western Sydney by a team including Gary Cox, Michael Darcy and Michael Bounds. It highlighted the potential for accelerated gentrification, adverse consequences for private renters in Sydney, the need for protection of boarders and lodgers, the loss of low-cost stock and the need for greater provision of emergency accommodation. *The Olympics and Housing* publication became one of the highest profile of any through Shelter's history and helped shape the Olympic housing debate – in which Shelter played an important role – for the remainder of the decade. Shelter's January 1996 newsletter somewhat immodestly described the publication as 'ground-breaking'.

The NSW Liberal government commissioned Keys Young to prepare a social impact assessment of the Olympic Games in 1994, with Shelter presenting its Olympics and housing report as a submission. Housing and accommodation issues emerged as the principal issues from the consultation. While the social impact assessment was thought by Shelter to have some good elements, it was ignored by the incoming state Labor government in April 1995 who blamed their predecessors for cost overruns, delays in building Olympic facilities and poor planning.

Box 9: Reverend Harry Herbert, evangelism in action

Harry Herbert was appointed general manager of the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility in 1986, the church's arm promoting community service, social justice and pastoral care. Herbert was, according to the 2011-12 Uniting Care annual report, driven by a:

Determination to act, without fear or favour, to improve the lot of those most at disadvantage [which] has seen Harry advocate on issues ranging from same sex marriage and adoption, problem gambling, cost of living, electricity prices, the GST, decriminalising prostitution and homelessness to name a few … Rev. Harry Herbert has combined courage, cunning and intellect to shape one of the largest community service and social justice advocacy organisations in the country.

The Board of Social Responsibility has been an important supporter of Shelter through the decades, particularly the 1990s when the organisation was defunded. John Nicolades was employed by the board during this period and allowed to use some of his time at work, and office facilities, to keep Shelter afloat.

Harry Herbert took a close interest in housing and homelessness issues, funding a tenants advice service at the time of the Schipp defunding. He also supported Shelter financially, providing $11,000 in grants to Shelter in 1994–95, and through lobbying over the impact of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Herbert had pushed during Sydney's bidding for the Olympics for social impacts to be considered as part of the bid, though government disagreed.

As Nicolades reflected, 'churches in coalition with unions and progressive political parties have played a major role in mobilising people from the Vietnam moratorium onwards, pushing for social justice in line with the Christian faith' (John Nicolades, pers. comm., 2018).

Source: Image from Uniting Care NSW. ACT annual report 2011/12, usage authorised by Reverend Herbert. Photograph thought to date from the 1990s. The person behind Reverend Herbert is Father Bill Challenor.

Going for gold with the Olympic housing campaign

By January 1996, lobbying from Shelter, NCOSS and the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility led to the Sydney Olympic Co-ordinating Committee calling for a meeting on housing issues with these groups. Later, a Social Impact Management Advisory Committee was formed, chaired by Reverend Harry Herbert of the Uniting Church board (see Box 9), comprising Shelter, NCOSS, the Tenants' Union and other community sector and government organisations to monitor and make recommendations to government. The committee made representations about legislative protection for boarders and lodgers, greater protection for private renters, protection of low-income stock, and the need for more emergency accommodation.

The Olympics looked like turning into 'a hard race for tenants' (Shelter *ATH* 26, p.9). No specific provision was planned for the likely increase in the homeless population, the Olympic Village had no affordable housing legacy and event ticket prices were beyond the reach of lower-income households. Evidence from the previous Olympic games in Atlanta in 1996 had been of the loss of 2,000 beds in cheap rooming houses and the loss of low-cost housing. This news was conveyed to Sydney activists through the visit by Anita Beaty, the head of the Atlanta taskforce on homelessness (Blunden, 2007). As the *Olympics and Housing* publication noted, 'previous mega events have had winners and losers – unfortunately low-income tenants are often among the losers' (quoted in Shelter *ATH* 26, p.9).

Despite committees being established, the government still took no action and, as Shelter noted, 'the general tone was frustration with the failure to move from studies and monitoring to action on several key recommendations, including those in the housing area' (Shelter AR 1997, p.11). Jane Cornwall of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre was 'disappointed with the role that the Social Impacts Advisory Committee has been able to play. We thought that by being appointed and being brought into existence that we would be listened to. Certainly we do not expect to be followed all the time, but we feel we have been frustrated in that role … It certainly feels like tokenism' (Parliament of NSW, 1999, p.9).

To address growing public anxiety, the government eventually commissioned a report by Robyn Kennedy and Gary Cox, co-author of the earlier Shelter study, entitled *The 2000 Olympics and the Residential Tenancy Market*. Published in February 1998, the report found that there could be 'some exacerbation of existing upward pressures on rent levels and house prices' and, therefore, recommended a number of changes such as

considering an emergency capping of private sector rents. Unfortunately, the minister for fair trading did not support any legislative changes, so the report was sidelined. As NCOSS director Gary Moore commented, 'significantly and unacceptably, the Government has chosen not to include the legislative reforms in its action agenda' (*SMH*, 1998).

Lack of progress on protecting tenants' rights led to setting up Rentwatchers in May 1997. This was promoted by the Redfern Legal Centre, Shelter and the Tenants' Union. Beth Mitchell, a principal mover in establishing Shelter, was working at the Redfern Legal Centre at the time and a key mover behind the new campaign. Rentwatchers would chart increased rental prices in areas impacted by the Olympics and monitor the availability of low-cost housing. A series of protest activities around key events were planned, starting with a demonstration outside the Olympics conference in Parramatta in November 1997.

Shelter's executive officer Rod Plant considered homelessness and the Olympics to be a major priority for the organisation, and it was a key item in his work plan (Blunden, 2007). However, the picture was clouded by the existence of three peak bodies in NSW responsible for general, youth and women's homelessness issues. Although unfunded at this time, the homelessness peaks were well networked and had influence. Shelter, or perhaps their executive officer, seems to have become more involved in homelessness issues than in the past, sometimes taking a lead with government and the media. The organisation was assisted by stronger funding than the homelessness peaks that allowed the commissioning of influential reports.

Along with involvement in the Social Impact Management Advisory Committee, and the 1994 report *The Olympics and Housing* and lobbying government, in September 1999 Shelter published *Ready...Set...Go!: One year to go – It's time for action on housing and homelessness for the 2000 Olympics*, written by Gary Cox. This added to the growing literature on the impact of an event such as the Olympics on housing and homelessness. In August 1998 Shelter organised the Homelessness: The Unfinished Agenda conference with Sydney City Mission. Shelter's chair noted how the event raised the profile of homelessness in the media and within government. Shelter and Sydney City Mission continued this work by establishing and funding the Non-Government Task Force on Homelessness.

In March 1999 the task force convened a memorial service at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, for people who died homeless in NSW. Shelter identified over 100 people who had died homeless in previous years and made

name plaques for each, which participants in the service brought forward after a period of reflection (Rod Plant, pers. comm., 2018). The service celebrated the lives of those lost to homelessness and was attended by around 150 people including the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities commissioner and Premier Bob Carr. This event was inspired by the work of the Atlanta Homelessness Task Force, suggested during a visit by Anita Beaty (see below), and was planned to become an annual event.

Using more direct action approaches, a building on Broadway in Sydney's centre was squatted by the Sydney Housing Action Collective at the time of the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 to highlight the potential crisis for Sydney's homeless. This action was supported by Shelter, the Tenants' Union, NCOSS, Rentwatchers, the CFMEU, the Redfern Legal Centre, the NSW Greens, South Sydney City Council, the UTS Community Law Centre, and the I.B. Fell Housing Research Centre led by Col James at the University of Sydney. The occupation of the abandoned building led to Australand agreeing a temporary 'caretaker lease' (Shelter *ATH* 75, p.8).

The Homelessness Protocol and count

At the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, 9,000 homeless people were wrongfully arrested to project a 'tidy' image of the host city for the international media. Shelter had earlier made contact with the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, which had led opposition to this forced removal of homeless people. Shelter and Sydney City Mission organised a two-day conference in Sydney in August 1998, inviting Atlanta housing activist Anita Beaty to speak (Horin, 1998).

Based on advice from the Social Impact Management Advisory Committee, the NSW government in 1999 developed a homelessness protocol for the Olympics. This was used by the police, security guards and City of Sydney officials, but only at Olympic live sites and in the city centre during the course of the Games. The protocol advised: 'If you encounter a person who is or appears to be homeless, you are advised to leave the person alone unless they: request assistance, appear to be distressed or in need of assistance, or are behaving in a manner that threatens their safety or the safety and security of people around them.'

Shelter predicted that during the Olympics 'the crowding of the city, increased competition for low cost accommodation and flushing out of homeless people from traditional sleep-outs such as Belmore Park, that will be turned into 24 hour Olympic live sites, will all mean homeless people will be more visible and more vulnerable to violence and harassment during

the Games' (Shelter *ATH* 40, p.1). When the Games were taking place, Redfern Legal Centre opened a 24-hour hotline to provide information for homeless people asked by the police to move on. However, the hotline was quiet during the Games with only a dozen calls received. Wallet-sized cards were provided to at-risk people, and the police, ministers and the premier were warned volunteers would monitor the situation on the streets.

Shelter along with NCOSS, the Tenants' Union and 50 volunteers conducted surveys of homeless people each Tuesday night before, during and after the Games. The results suggested that legally permitted police actions such as identity checks were used more during the event, and Shelter approached the NSW ombudsman to convene a weekly task force meeting on implementation of the homelessness protocol. Meeting on a Thursday, the raw information from interviews on the preceding Tuesday night became the key driving force for immediate follow-up action. By the end of the Olympics, official behaviour was said to have changed so much that virtually no street-level complaints were being raised in the final weeks of the surveys (Rod Plant, pers. comm., 2018).

Shelter thought the protocol appeared to have been followed: 'housing organisations' vigilance may have paid off. The State Government decided not to go in Jackboots n-all style of Atlanta … the use the carrot rather than the stick' (Shelter *ATH* 41, p.3). Shelter thought the surveys represented the biggest direct study of homeless people ever undertaken in Australia, and the starting of the process of annual counts of homeless people in the City of Sydney that have continued since. The Australian Bureau of Statistics were also said to have consulted Shelter on how to incorporate a count of the street homeless into the 2002 census (Rod Plant, pers. comm., 2018).

According to the author of a book on the social impact of the Sydney Olympics, the campaign over homelessness was 'very effective' (Lenskyj, 2002, p.214), and for another researcher 'the Homelessness Protocol was probably the best "best practice" of all to come out of the Olympic Games' (Blunden, 2007, p.22). The protocol has become a lasting benefit brought by the Sydney Olympics, continuing to be used in NSW through the 2003 *Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places*, and widely copied by other countries. Shelter's role was centre stage during the 1990s in the Olympic debates, and the organisation maintained their nerve while pushing a not always popular position. Government failed to make significant plans around housing and gentrification though came good at the eleventh hour with the protocol, which fits well the contemporary push for 'legacy' after major sporting events.

5.3 The recurring battle for Millers Point

The neighbourhoods of Millers Point and The Rocks, on the southern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge and surrounded by what were once major docks, have long held a connection with Shelter. These were areas of working-class housing threated with redevelopment in the 1970s, a crucible of the Green Ban movement and the rise of housing activism that would help give birth to Shelter. Forty years later the area was the scene of Shelter's most recent clash with state government, and one that tested the effectiveness of the organisation's collaborative approach with the housing minister.

At the start of the twentieth century the state government intervened in The Rocks and Millers Point, areas synonymous with plague, poverty, beer and brothels. The docks were later expanded and housing demolished to

Industrial Millers Point, 1937

Source: Courtesy City of Sydney archives 005/005993. Aerial view of Millers Point – in the foreground – on 25 August 1937, with Walsh Bay the area just below the Harbour Bridge and The Rocks on the far side of the bridge approach road.
The Maritime Services Board owned homes on the high ground above the docks, mainly to the right of the picture.

Targets for gentrification, 2016

Source: FACS, 2016.
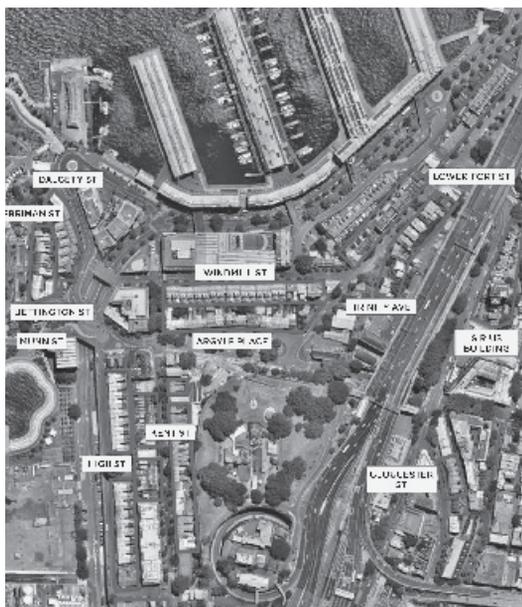
build the Harbour Bridge. Most homes in the area were built and managed by the Maritime Services Board, a government agency, to house dock workers. Tenancies tended to be passed down through families, contributing towards the creation of a strong and cohesive working-class community.

As discussed in Chapter 1, The Rocks was one of the key areas of conflict between the community and property developers in the early 1970s. The second Green Ban in NSW was imposed by the Builders Labourers Federation on the area in November 1971 over a substantial office and hotel scheme. Ordinary working-class residents were joined by the National Trust and unions to successfully oppose the scheme. This legacy of imposed top-down change, and community resistance, influenced later conflicts in both The Rocks and the adjacent Millers Point suburb.

Millers Point residents' lives started changing from 1985 when the Maritime Services Board handed over management of the housing stock to the NSW Department of Housing. Commercial dock activity was shifting from Darling Harbour to Port Botany, and Sydney – and its wealthier residents – began to fully appreciate harbourside living and leisure. The public housing estate comprised both dock workers' housing and the Sirius building, which opened in 1980. Sirius provided 79 apartments to house public tenants relocated due to expected commercial development in The

Rocks before the Green Bans halted the scheme progressing further. Over time, as properties became 'mainstreamed' into the public housing system, incoming new tenants were often those with high and complex needs, and the dynamics of the community began to change.

State government has long appreciated the financial value of their properties at The Rocks and Millers Point. In 1989 housing minister Joe Schipp proposed to sell several shops with six low-income flats above in Argyle Place, Kent Street and Argyle Street to raise $10 million. Shelter's view was 'Millers Point residents are the latest victims of the Greiner Government's assault on inner city public housing. The sale confirms that Schipp intends to clear the inner-city of low income residents if they stand in the way of profiteering developers' (Shelter *ATH* 13, p.1). Continuing the theme of later disputes over Millers Point, the sale was also unanimously opposed by City of Sydney councillors and the minister said funds raised would be used to provide extra public housing elsewhere.

Further pressure on the local community came in 1998 with plans to redevelop the Walsh Bay wharves into an upmarket area. Later, in 2009, the Barangaroo scheme promised to create a major extension to Sydney's central business district complete with expensive apartments and a controversial new casino. Land values accelerated, developers questioned whether premium-priced could be sold with public housing neighbours, and the government faced a high bill to restore heritage-listed housing in poor condition.

Following the Liberal government's Millers Point intervention in 1989, it was Labor's turn in 2006. The premier, Morris Iemma, announced the Department of Housing would redevelop a series of sites for public housing across Sydney's inner west with a $50 million investment. This would be funded in part from the sale of 99-year leases on 16 heritage properties in Millers Point expected to raise $12 million. The department stated they could not justify the costs of restoring the heritage properties to acceptable living standards, though for Shelter this was the preferred approach (Shelter *ATH* 67, p.15). The homes were sold, and a further 20 vacant properties traded in 2010. What is noteworthy is that the sell-off, although controversial, did not involve displacing existing tenants.

Building a fairer social housing system?

In March 2014 housing minister Pru Goward announced there would be 293 public housing sales at Millers Point and The Rocks. Residents, many of whom were longstanding locals, with twelve households having lived in the same property for at least five generations, were to be moved from the

area. They would be offered alternative housing at unspecified locations, and the funds raised from sales would be used to build new social housing on the edge of metropolitan Sydney. According to the minister's media release on 19 March, the sales were due to 'the high cost of maintenance, significant investment required to improve properties to an acceptable standard, and high potential sale values'. Furthermore, 'the community expects us to invest in a sustainable social housing system which supports disadvantaged people across the whole state. Our ability to do that is severely limited if we sink millions of dollars into a small number of properties.'

Consultants produced a report in August 2014 recommending maintaining some social housing in the area where stock had low maintenance costs and replacing all lost social housing stock, preferably within the inner-city area. The government should also consider the area's social mix in a broader precinct planning exercise, and only offer long leases to the market on properties that are suitable for sale. This would provide less upfront benefit in terms of cash raised, but better long-term benefits in terms of social mix, reducing concentrations of disadvantage (SGS Economics and Planning, 2014). The advice was not followed, and the government pressed on with the full sale of the estate.

Shelter's reaction to the 19 March announcement was swift and decisive. A clearly unimpressed Adam Farrar, Shelter's senior policy officer, wrote in a special edition of *Around the House* newsletter produced just days after the announcement that 'this is the first time that a public housing community has been dismantled and the tenants moved away, solely to realise the value of the property' (Shelter *ATH*, March 2014, p.1). Farrar also criticised 'the complete lack of transparency of public housing funding and expenditure in NSW' (ibid., p.3), and later criticised the minister's approach as it 'explicitly rejects using the [sale] funds to maintain, let alone increase the number of public housing dwellings; instead opting for forms of support that would include private rental assistance' (Shelter *ATH* 96, p.2). Furthermore:

> What is not acceptable is to exclude poorer people from the best located parts of our cities. And it is not acceptable to take people from their homes, rather than look for a genuinely sustainable alternative (Shelter *ATH*, March 2014, p.3).

Despite strong feelings, Farrar's view was that on Millers Point, 'Shelter played a straight bat … we were very even-handed, no surprises for government' (Adam Farrar, pers. comm., 2018). A letter was sent to Pru Goward on 20 March, and the newsletter publicised the 'save Millers

Millers Point people power, 2014
Source: Shelter *ATH* 97, June 2014, p.24.

Point' website – and for the first time in nearly two decades the tone of the newsletter changed from technical to fiery.

Shelter called a meeting of other housing peaks and attended a public meeting on 22 March led by the three existing local activist groups working through an organisation called the Millers Point Community Defence Group. One member of the group was the Millers Point, Dawes Point, The Rocks and Walsh Bay Resident Action Group. They were joined by Jack Mundey, Sydney's lord mayor Clover Moore, the Inner Sydney Council for Regional Development and the Millers Point Public Housing Tenants Group. Hence the organisations and in some cases the people who led housing activism in the 1970s had maintained their networks and continued to campaign for social justice four decades later.

New broom, new approach

Change came in April 2015 when the more pragmatic Brad Hazzard replaced Pru Goward as Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) minister, with the additional resurrected title of minister for social housing. This was the time of the Social Housing Forum led by ex-premiers Nick Greiner and Morris Iemma, and a shift in approaches to social housing that culminated in the February 2016 Future Directions strategy (see section 7.2). Unlike Pru Goward, Hazzard met with Millers

Point residents a few weeks after his appointment and hinted at a more flexible approach. The first change was in May 2015 when the minister reached agreement with Common Equity NSW to relocate The Compound housing co-operative from Millers Point to the inner west of Sydney at a cost of $4 million, with additional funds for the organisation to build 13 new social housing units in Fairfield for seniors.

In January 2015 a separate bank account was established to manage the proceeds of Millers Point sales, which allowed tracking of revenue received and outlays on new homes. Using a transparent approach not often seen by government departments, details would be published in FACS's annual financial statements. In the period to June 2017, total Millers Point receipts were $125 million, from which $13 million had been spent bringing the properties to a suitable condition for sale and $103 million spent on acquiring new properties (FACS, 2017). As at February 2018, a total of 839 units had been procured and 320 units under construction. Of the completions, the locations with most new properties were Canterbury-Bankstown (191), Sutherland (93), Georges River (84), Liverpool (84) and Fairfield (80). Only 20 new properties had been delivered in the City of Sydney. The total sale proceeds are eventually expected to be $500 million, which will be invested in an estimated 1,500 additional public housing homes.

Minister Brad Hazzard further changed his predecessor's approach when in November 2015 he agreed to renovate some existing properties in Millers Point and create 28 apartments to accommodate Millers Point residents who had refused to move. By this stage most residents had already moved out, though it was an important concession.

Shelter asked Professor Alan Morris of the University of Technology to write the report *A Contemporary Forced Urban Removal: The displacement of public housing residents from Millers Point, Dawes Point and the Sirius building by the NSW government* (Shelter Brief 58). Published in September 2016, the research involved interviewing 19 residents, some of who moved and some resisted. Morris noted that 'despite sometimes positive responses to the relocation officers, overall the process was generally experienced as brutal, causing tremendous stress and distress. While some are happy with their move and most welcomed the better-quality homes … the overwhelming experience reported by the Millers Point residents who have moved is of loss, isolation and loneliness' (ibid., p.4).

Shelter convened a half-day seminar of learnings from tenant experiences of large-scale relocations of public housing tenants in October 2016, pitting Professor Morris against Paul Vevers of FACS. Vevers noted public officials

had dealt sensitively with tenants, with some offered eight or more housing options (Vevers, 2016). There were said to be many examples where friends and people who support each other were located close together either in the same block, or sometimes a street away, and in locations where they had connections. Paul Vevers reflected the level of resourcing of the Millers Point relocations has been higher than normal and that had brought benefits, and it was the first use of a choice-based letting system that offered tenants greater control over their destination property.

Current Shelter staff view the battle for Millers Point as being one of the organisation's least successful campaigns: 'one we lost' according to Mary Perkins (pers. comm., 2018). While it is true the vast majority of residents were displaced, with some harrowing stories of frail, elderly people evicted from their community, the state government's policy moderated in 2015. While the ministerial change was crucial, it came against a backdrop of strong campaigning by resident action groups, legendary housing activists and peak bodies – including Shelter. The media campaign was well co-ordinated, and a strong political alliance forged between Labor, the Greens and independent MPs, including the influential Reverend Fred Nile.

Because of community and political campaigns, although the government's policy was largely unchanged, implementation was transformed. Residents were listened to, significant efforts made to offer acceptable alternative accommodation and a clear and open record provided of where the sale proceeds were spent. The extra social housing supply provided some justification to government's claim they were building a 'fairer social housing system', though at the cost of individual pain for many residents and the final gentrification of one of Sydney's last remaining cohesive working-class communities. Shelter's collaborative working relationship with government meant the lines of communication remained open during Millers Point discussions, though as a publicly funded peak body they were unable to mount a full-frontal attack on the policy. The positive outcomes are that the government will not be able to sell current social housing without a carefully constructed rationale, and relocation policies might continue the later Millers Point approach of favouring the carrot over the stick.

5.4 Building Shelter's capacity

The long journey from an unfunded voluntary group of activists to a professional, well-resourced peak body required several transformations along the way.

Shelter's role and purpose

Throughout Shelter's existence it has been challenging to describe what the organisation aims to achieve. In part, and as shown later in this book, this is due to a subtle repositioning of organisational objectives. The clearest early statement is from the first edition of National Shelter's newsletter:

> Shelter is an organisation active at the State and National levels in focussing the voices of community groups, representing consumers of housing, on major housing policy issues. Through participation in Shelter consumers of housing especially those on low incomes are attempting, perhaps for the first time, to change housing policy and the way it is currently developed (*National Housing Action*, 1, p.2).

Importantly, Shelter was positioned as a 'consumer-based housing organisation' that was tenure blind. It would support low-income earners living in Housing Commission properties, the private rental market and entry-level home ownership. Perhaps in these early days there was a hope by some in Shelter of mass-membership by housing consumers of the state Shelters. Yet, in the first specific objective outlined in the newsletter by editor Tony Dalton, the focus was on 'people active in efforts to improve present inequitable housing policies'. In the same newsletter, Mark Harris from Shelter NSW saw the organisation as 'rooted in the community: representing community and disadvantaged groups' (Harris, 1977). So from the early days, Shelter worked more with housing campaigners than directly with consumers, with activists (later joined by academics and professional experts) representing the views of consumers rather than the consumers having their own direct voice.

Shelter's business objectives were defined by their constitutional rules adopted on incorporation in 1979 as a registered co-operative (see Box 10). Rules of this type were needed for legal reasons but didn't necessarily reflect the detailed reality of the activities undertaken by the organisation on a day-to-day basis. The first time Shelter's objectives were more widely publicised was in the 1994–95 annual report where they were included verbatim (except clause ix). From this date the objectives were always stated at the start of each annual report, with changes made in 1998–99

Box 10: Shelter's 'objectives', 1979

The objects of the society shall be:

i) To promote the interests of housing consumers, especially those in need.

ii) To promote discussion on, develop proposals for, and seek implementation of housing policies and programs as they affect part, or all, of NSW

iii) To work in co-operation with National Shelter and Shelter organisations in other states.

iv) ~~To reflect in the societies activities the interest and aims of consumers and community groups~~ [deleted 1998–99].

v) To inform, assist and co-operate with ~~organisations concerned with housing issues and all levels of govt~~ [deleted 1998–99, replaced with 'bodies concerned with housing equity issues'].

vi) To be involved in all relevant aspects of housing, environment and social development.

vii) To represent the interests of members and housing consumers to all levels of Government.

viii) To strive for:
- A just and equitable distribution of, and access to, housing resources in NSW
- Community and consumer involvement, participation and representation in planning and implementing housing policies
- An integrated approach to housing and human settlements including consideration of necessary facilities amenities, opportunities and community supports.

ix) In furtherance of the above objectives:
a) To take over funds and liabilities of the present unincorporated body Shelter NSW
b) To compile, print and publish any newspapers, periodicals, books, leaflets and other materials
c) To arrange, provide or assist in holding conferences, exhibitions, meetings as is necessary
d) To devise plans and allocate grants for services.
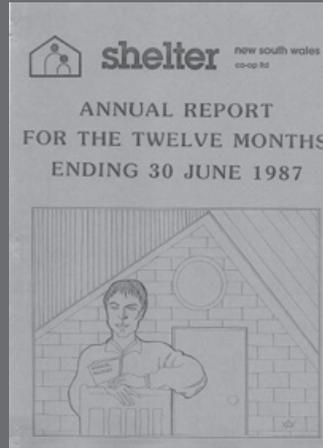
Source: Shelter 1979d. The image is of the Shelter annual report, 1987.

shelter new south wales co-op ltd

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS
ENDING 30 JUNE 1987

when a shift was made away from being seen as representing the interests of community groups, shown as deletions in Box 10.

At the October 1982 annual general meeting, Shelter members decided it was time for a review of activities. In contrast to the 1976 National Shelter aims to focus 'the voices of community groups, representing consumers of housing, on major housing policy issues', the suggestion in a 1983 discussion paper was that Shelter NSW 'should be primarily concerned with the development of sound and equitable housing policies in NSW'. This was to be through 'bringing together various community housing groups which share a commitment to the non-profit housing sector' with Shelter tasked with the '[d]evelopment of a state-wide focus' (Shelter newsletter 24, p.3). This was a notable change from a focus on all housing tenures for low-income households. It was also an implicit acknowledgement Shelter had remained Sydney-centric. By 2001–02 Shelter had adopted more fashionable management speak in their annual reports complete with seven 'vision statements', and in 2002–03 adopted five 'key result areas' (a socially just housing system; secure and affordable housing; a sustainable social housing system; a secure private rental system; sustainable communities). Interestingly, none of the vision statements or key result areas referred to 'housing consumers' atlthough their activity statement in 2000–01 stated they advocated 'on behalf of low income housing consumers' (Shelter AR 2001).

During the mid-2000s Shelter worked on different 'purpose' statements which replaced the earlier 'objectives'. Those adopted from 2007–08 are shown in Box 11, and these continue to the most recent annual report in 2016–17. There were subtle changes of emphasis along the way. The other shift over time has been from 'disadvantaged people' to 'affordable housing'. In 2008–09 the focus moved from the more general 'housing interest' to a more specific 'access to accommodation', and in 2010–11 the social net was widened from 'low income' to 'low and moderate income'. This latter change was explained:

> In recent years Shelter NSW has broadened its policy advocacy to include issues relevant to moderate income households, not just to very-low income and low income households … Partly this has been in response to trends in house prices that have denied access to homeownership for many people … Partly this is a recognition of the 'squeeze' that the private rental market is under, with low vacancy rates. Partly this is a recognition of the interconnectedness of various housing submarkets and that a 'one size fits all' approach is not suitable (Shelter *ATH* 82, p.3).

Box 11: Shelter's 'purpose and role', 2007–08 to date

Purpose

Shelter NSW's mission is to work for a fair and just housing system in New South Wales. We promote the …

… [housing interests of low-income and disadvantaged people in NSW] **2007–08 to 2008–09**

… [access of people on low incomes to housing that is affordable, safe, secure and appropriate to their needs] **2009–10**

… [access of people on low to moderate incomes to housing that is affordable, safe, secure and appropriate to their needs] **2010–11 to date**
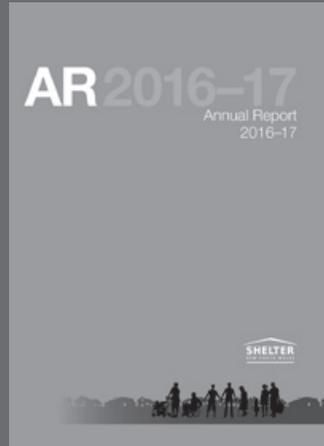
Our role is to:

• advocate for systemic change;
• provide community education.

In undertaking these roles, we use a number of strategies:

• research;
• policy development;
• providing educational products on key housing issues;
• networking and partnering with non-profit and non-Government organisations, the private sector and consumer organisations;
• promoting a coordinated response from within the non-Government sector where appropriate.

In working towards a fair and just housing system, we are committed to:

• building the capacity of non-profit housing and housing-related services;
• working with housing consumer organisations and activists.

Source: Shelter AR 2017.

What's in the wording? Given Shelter's genesis over more than four decades, it would be unusual if the organisation's purpose had not changed. However, there is a definite transformation from promoting the interests of 'housing consumers' in the period to 2001 to working 'for a fair and just housing system' in later years. The current wording probably better

reflects Shelter's holistic role across both housing consumers (residents) and housing producers (landlords). In the early years the focus was on working with National Shelter and other community groups, whereas in recent times the list of partners has broadened beyond not-for-profits to include the private sector.

The broad purpose and role of the organisation needed to be translated into more practical guidance steering day-to-day activities. By 2013 strategic simplification had reduce the five key results areas to just two: advocacy and education:

> Our systemic advocacy takes the form of projects in the form of research (including consultation and policy development), participation in Governmental processes, writing submissions, and liaison and lobbying around a number of priority policy areas. This year, we focused on three areas: financing housing assistance; responsive housing assistance; and liveable built environments (Shelter AR 2013, p.12).

Shelter's second 2013 key results area was education, where their community education program work would focus on building the capacity of non-government organisations to better understand the housing system so they could more productively address their clients' housing issues. Sitting behind the two key results areas was a third goal, to improve organisational efficiency including 'enhancing the capacity of our information technology systems (especially contact management) and communication technology' (ibid., p.3).

The next three-year plan prepared in 2015 added another objective, so they now covered 'systemic advocacy, research, community and non-government organisation (NGO) education and build[ing] Shelter's organisational capacity and sustainability'. Including 'research' was a logical reflection of much of the day-to-day work Shelter undertook at the time. Finally, Shelter's approach would span all sectors so as to 'build and maintain strategic alliances, work in partnership with others, and demonstrate the leadership required to build the linkages and engage all parties – Government, non-Government and private sector' (Shelter, 2015, p.2).

Shelter's positioning as a peak body has been, and continues to be, hard to define. Most social service peak bodies act as a collective voice for organisations providing services, whereas advocates for groups of individuals are usually in form of unions (e.g. Tenants' Union) or 'groups' (e.g. resident action group). In the 2017 annual report Shelter are described as both 'the state's peak advocate for housing justice uniting the voices of

low-income households and non-profit organisations working on their behalf' (Shelter AR 2017, p.6), and according to the board chair as 'a housing policy peak' (ibid., p.8). Perhaps Craig Johnston's characterisation of Shelter as a 'think tank' is nearer the mark, though not one with the same independent funding as many others (Craig Johnston, pers. comm., 2018).

Modernising Shelter's structure

In the early years after foundation in 1974, Shelter operated as in unincorporated organisation. Copies of the initial rules of Shelter have not survived, though it is likely a formal arrangement was in place as procedures such as accepting membership, appointing a chair, secretary, treasurer and editor, and holding annual general meetings (AGMs) were carried out as though Shelter was incorporated.

Incorporating Shelter would help applications for grant funding, allow the organisation to act as a 'legal person' and minimise members' liability. As the *NSW Associations Incorporation Act 1984* was some years in the future, the remaining alternative for Shelter in the 1970s was to incorporate under the *NSW Co-operation Act 1923*. On 4 October 1977 at a special meeting, Shelter members voted to form a co-operative, but the process would take another year and a half to complete (Shelter newsletter 6). Finally, on 23 March 1979, Shelter NSW Co-operative Limited was incorporated. This was celebrated by an 'incorporation party' held at Shelter's office, with the invite reading 'come along … bring something to drink … bring your housing issues … and have FUN' (Shelter newsletter 12, p.1). The relative mix between alcohol, housing issues and fun has not been recorded for posterity.

Membership of the newly formed Shelter co-operative cost $1 per share, for which members could vote at AGMs and special general meetings though not receive newsletters. In 1979 the annual subscription to the NSW newsletter increased from $2 to $5. Newsletter recipients did not need to be members.

Office bearers (before incorporation) and directors (after) were nominated by Shelter members who would then take a vote. The 1979 rules of Shelter NSW Co-operative gave equal voting rights to individual and organisational members, and members elected the 'office holders' (the chair, secretary, treasurer and editor) who held this role in addition to being Shelter directors. Each working group nominated a director and an alternate director to the board, so these elections were not open to all Shelter members. Office holders were limited to holding their role in a

maximum of two out of three years, and directors could not serve for more than three out of every four years.

The earliest surviving Shelter AGM report is from April 1977. At this date there were 38 member organisations compared to 75 in June 2017 (Shelter AR 2017). The two groups featuring on the member list in both 1977 and 40 years later are the Tenants' Union of NSW and the Inner Sydney Council for Social Development (now Inner Sydney Voice). The 1977 list was dominated by regional councils for social development and community aid providers, while 20 Shelter members in 2017 are community housing providers. The number of individual members fell from 63 in 1977 to 50 in 2017, and Robert Mowbray wins the prize for Shelter's longest-standing individual member.

Despite the healthy numbers of members, and 600 people on their mailing list, it would be hard to describe Shelter in the 1970s as a mass movement (Shelter, 1978a). Thirty people attended the May 1977 AGM and only 10 were at the AGM 1978. The 18 'interim board' members, elected in May 1977, were the engine of the organisation, undertaking all organisational activities in their spare time – or in time they could take away from regular paid employment. Occasionally, as in 1977–78, social work and other students assisted one of the Shelter committees for a couple of months (Shelter AR 1978). This close group would likely be the people attending regular monthly committee meetings, a feature of both before and after incorporation as a co-op in 1979.

When first established in the mid-1970s, Shelter operated as an information organisation. In 1979 Shelter became incorporated as a co-operative, and the rules put in place at that time were not changed in any material way until 1996 when the limits on the maximum consecutive terms of office holders and directors were ended. This change would 'have retrospective effect from the date of registration and any act done in pursuance of these rules shall be deemed as if the rules had been in force at the date of the 1996 Annual General Meeting' (Shelter, 1996, p.29). This was to cover the situation where officer holders, such as chair John Nicolades and other directors, might have overlooked following rules in the past during the difficult period of defunding. The other major change in 1996 was to remove the nomination right of directors by working groups. In future all directors would be elected by the votes of all members attending the AGM.

The 1996 rule change led to a protracted discussion on whether Shelter should remain a co-operative, register as a company limited by guarantee, or become an incorporated association under the *Associations*

Incorporation Act 1984. Eventually the latter option was chosen and on 19 June 1998 the organisation changed its name to Shelter NSW Inc. One of the reasons was NCOSS had advised members over several years that an association structure gave better protection from liability for board members than remaining as a registered co-operative.

The new constitution specified there would only be three director office holders (chair, secretary and treasurer) with between four and ten additional directors. The initial February 1998 constitution was further amended in October 1998 so that directors only need stand for re-election every two years, officer holders could be in their role for no more than four consecutive years, and directors in their role for no more than six consecutive years. However, a clause was included such that 'these provisions shall not apply where less than the minimum number of nominations for directors have been received' (Shelter, 1998). Given there were sometimes fewer nominations than board positions available, the rules on consecutive years' service did not always apply.

Reviewing the directors during the 2000s, at the start board members included Nick Warren of the Tenants' Union, Kate Lee of NCOSS and Eleri Morgan-Thomas of the Federation. A decade later in 2010 directors

The serious side of Shelter, AGM 2006

Source: Photo held by Shelter. Recognisable faces in the audience include Karine Shellshear (front, centre) and Sue Cripps (second row back, middle).

included Grant Arbuthnot of the Tenants' Union, Warren Gardiner of NCOSS, Sue Cripps of Homelessness NSW and Andrew Meehan, a former Federation staff member. Board membership was through a vote of members, not by organisational nomination or selection based on individual skills. However, through the crossover in Shelter members who are also directors and staff of other housing sector organisations, there has tended to be de facto set of organisations that are nearly always represented on Shelter's board. Shelter's aim with its constitutional rules was to strike a balance between preserving the organisation's knowledge by encouraging board membership over several years and refreshing the board with new blood. Overall this objective has been achieved.

Having directors and office holders directly elected by members continued the co-operative and activist ethos of the organisation's early years. One example is the 1998 board nominations where 15 people were nominated for nine positions with the top applicant receiving 24 member votes and the lowest just 6. Subsequent contested votes by members were held in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2015 and 2016. By the 2010s this 'democratic' approach has become less common, for example, with most larger community housing providers having shifted from members directly electing directors to a system where the current board agrees the appointment of incoming directors. New members have to be approved by the board, to prevent an influx of new members 'capturing the castle', though in practice Shelter has never been flooded by member applications and there are no known examples of nominations being rejected. Not all members vote in board elections, though the process became easier when postal ballots were introduced.

An August 1995 analysis of 114 Shelter members who completed a survey showed that just over half came from the central Sydney region. Around 43 per cent of members were housing providers (split between crisis accommodation organisations and community housing providers), whereas only 5 per cent were public housing tenants. There were no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander members (Shelter, 1995c). Membership numbers reached 186 in 1997–98, a new high: 'Our analysis is that we have now effectively reached something like a saturation point … we feel that most of those organisations with a strong enough interest in wider housing issues have either joined or chosen not to' (Shelter AR 1998, p.8).

In June 2011 Shelter was down to 100 organisational and 48 individual members. Membership decline posed a dilemma: 'given that Shelter NSW is not a peak as such, it relies heavily upon its membership for its credibility

as a community advocate. Does it feel confident that 148 members give it an entitlement to speak for the community?' (Shelter, 2012b, p.12). By June 2017 Shelter's membership was down to 74 organisations and 50 individuals. Organisational membership has declined in recent years due to reduced numbers of funded service provider organisations, while individual membership numbers have been more stable. Currently the biggest categories of organisational members are community housing providers (23 per cent) followed by community development organisations (17 per cent), welfare organisations (13 per cent) and homelessness organisations (8 per cent). The organisation's view is that 'Shelter is a small organization with a big agenda. Members are crucial to our work but our work does not depend solely on members' (Shelter, 2017d).

Perhaps by virtue of the type of people drawn to be members of staff or directors of Shelter, plenty of time has been taken over the years reviewing the working of the organisation. Further minor administrative constitutional changes took place in 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2011. The final amendments were in 2012 when the board was limited to a maximum of nine directors, including office holders, and elections would be staggered so that around half the directors would be up for re-election each year (Shelter, 2012a).

Dollars and people

Shelter's early finances were modest. Reports submitted to the NSW Registrar of Co-operative Societies show annual income between 1978–79 and 1982–83 to be in the range $2,000 to $3,000 per year. By contrast, when direct grant funding was first received in 1984–85, income rose considerably to nearly $70,000 annually. In the four years up to 1982–83 when public grant funding was first received, some two thirds of Shelter's total income – or $6,845 – came from National Shelter. This enabled Shelter to make a modest surplus each year after paying high costs for newsletter printing and postage, and also travelling expenses.

Like Shelter's objectives, their finances have fluctuated over time. The columns in Figure 2 (below) show the two periods when Shelter did not receive government grants: in the formation phase to 1983, then the Schipp defunded era from 1990 to 1993. Adjusting for inflation, shown by the dotted line, which is at 2017 prices, it is striking that income received with the support of housing minister Frank Walker in the mid-1980s was similar at one point to the income that has been received over the last eight years.

After funding was restored in 1993, income trends changed. Revenues steadily increased under the state Liberal government until 1996, then they

Figure 2: Shelter's fluctuating income, 1978–2017
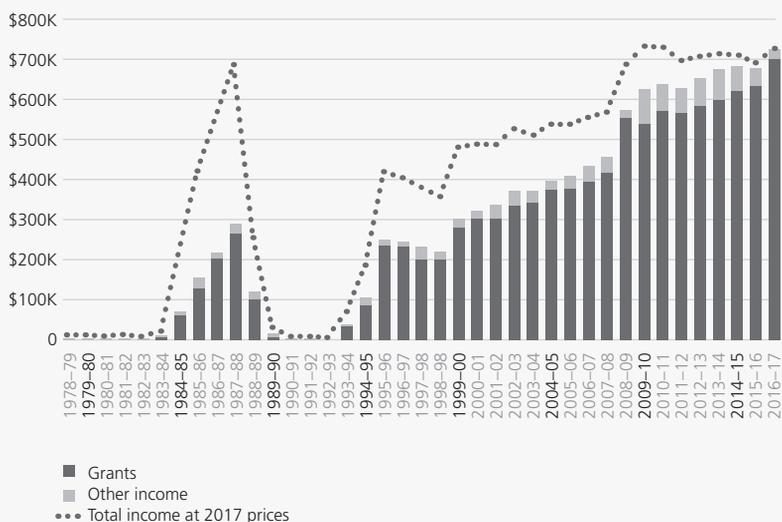
Source: Annual reports. The coloured columns show income each year, with government grants (in dark shading) and other sources of income (in light shading). The dotted line shows annual income at 2017 prices, adjusted using CPI/ABS data.

fell in absolute and real terms under Bob Carr's Labor state government during the late 1990s. Funding was significantly increased in 1999 and 2008, allowing additional staff members to be employed. While income in real terms has increased most years from 1999, since 2009 it has been stable or moderately declining in real terms.

Sources of income other than government grants have rarely been significant in years when Shelter was publicly funded. Non-grant income peaked at 17 per cent in 1994–95 (when $11,000 consulting income was received for community consultation on behalf of National Shelter for the CSHA) and 13 per cent in 2009–10 (when both the 2009 and 2010 conference were captured in the same financial year, totalling $58,000). Although a membership organisation, membership fees have never been a major source of revenue. Grant income has risen faster than membership, so the proportion of member fees as a percentage of total income was low at 2.7 per cent in 1996–97 though even lower 20 years later at 1.5 per cent in 2016–17.

In the early to mid-2010s, conference and seminar income was the second largest source of funds after grants, ranging between $21,000 and $27,000. The annual one-day conference was a feature in the diary until the last one, which was held in April 2015 on the subject of Housing Wellbeing and the City. The event was attended by 119 people, though hindered by the minister's non-participation, and the conference venue being flooded (Shelter AR 2015, p.7).

Figure 3 shows Shelter's 'bottom line' strong under the Walker ministry in the mid-1980s, then equally strongly loss-making during the Schipp defunding when reserves were spent to keep the organisation in surplus. Shelter generally made surpluses except for the period 1988 to 2002. This covered both the time of the defunding but also most of the first decade of the Carr Labor government. Since 2004 consistent surpluses have been made, though the amount of the surplus has varied.

Shelter, along with the majority of peak bodies and all other state and territory Shelter organisations, is heavily dependent on public grants. This carries the risk of falling out of favour with government and losing the

Figure 3: Surpluses and deficits, 1978–2017
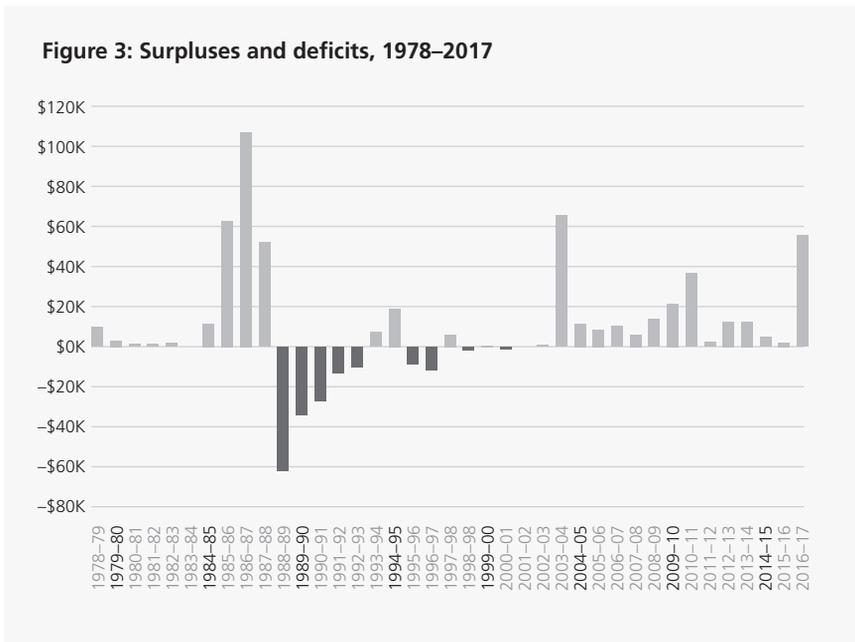
Source: Annual reports. The columns show annual surpluses (in light shading) and deficits (in dark shading) at 2017 prices, adjusted using CPI data from the ABS.

Table 3: Longstanding Shelter staff

Name	Role	Years	Decades
Mary Perkins	Executive officer (EO)	16.0	2000s, 2010s
Craig Johnston	Principal policy officer	15.0	2000s, 2010s
Flora Armaghanian	Office manager	12.0	1990s, 2000s
Yana Myronenko	Office manager	9.5	2000s, 2010s
Paula Rix	Senior policy officer	8.0	2000s, 2010s
Rod Plant	Executive officer	6.0	1990s
Katie Florance	Policy officer	5.5	2000s, 2010s
Will Roden	Policy liaison, acting EO	5.5	1990s
Robert Mowbray	3 terms, latterly policy officer	c.4.0	1980s, 2000s
Adam Farrar	Senior Policy Officer	4.0	2010s
Harvey Volke	Policy liaison officer	3.5	2000s
Hazel Blundell	Policy liaison officer	3.5	2000s

Source: Shelter annual reports. Full-time staff only. Rounded to nearest half year.

grant, as the Schipp defunding episode illustrated. Over the decades Shelter has tried to fundraise and seek grants from non-government sources. The 2001–02 annual report stated Shelter had begun to investigate ways of raising a proportion of their own funds, and diversifying funding sources. Progress was limited, possibly because the organisation does not have deductible gift recipient tax status. While small – but welcome at the time – grants were made by the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility (see Box 9), philanthropic funding has been far less significant for Shelter than National Shelter.

There has been considerable continuity amongst the key housing activists who have powered Shelter's growth and development since 1974. A total of 35 staff have been employed in the period to April 2018, with the longstanding staff members shown in Table 3. Greatest staff continuity has been during the 2010s when Mary Perkins led a close-knit team including Craig Johnston, Flora Armaghanian, Paula Rix, Katie Florance and Yana Myronenko. There was also a stable team in the second half of the 1990s with Rod Plant and Will Roden. Before Shelter's refunding in 1995 their finances were less steady and staff movements higher. During this period, continuity – and work input – was often provided by directors.

Since foundation in 1974, Shelter has engaged 145 directors. This might sound like a large number but is modest given the organisation has been in existence for 44 years and 15 people are double-counted as they served

Table 4: Longstanding Shelter directors

OFFICE HOLDERS

Name	Role	Terms	Decades
Lucy Burgmann	Treasurer	7	2000s, 2010s
Harvey Volke	Editor	6	1990s, 2000s
Adam Farrar	Treasurer	5	1980s–2000s
John Nicolades	Chair	5	1980s, 1990s
Chris Martin	Chair	5	2000s
Harvey Volke	Secretary	5	1980s, 1990s
Sue Cripps	Secretary	4	2000s
Julie Hourigan Ruse	Chair	4	2010s
Andrew Meehan	Chair	3	2000s
Beth Mitchell	Secretary	3	1970s
Annette O'Neill	Chair	3	2000s, 2010s
Dean Price	Treasurer	3	2000s
Ian Robertson	Chair	3	1980s, 1990s
Janet Ryan	Editor	3	1990s, 2000s
Karine Shellshear	Secretary	3	2000s

BOARD MEMBERS

Name	Role	Terms	Decades
Harvey Volke	Secretary/editor/director	16	1980s–2000s
Adam Farrar	Chair/treasurer/director	13	1980s–2000s
Garry Mallard	Director	13	2000s, 2010s
Karine Shellshear	Treasurer/secretary/director	11	1990s, 2000s
Sue Cripps	Chair/secretary/director	11	2000s, 2010s
John Nicolades	Chair/editor/director	10	1980s, 1990s
Lucy Burgmann	Chair/treasurer/director	9	2000s, 2010s
Warren Gardiner	Treasurer/secretary/director	8	1970s–2010s
Bill Randolph	Director	8	2000s, 2010s
Phillip French	Chair/treasurer/director	7	1990s, 2000s
Chris Martin	Chair/director	7	2000s
Zula Nittim	Chair/editor/director	7	1970s, 1980s
Joyce Stevens	Director	7	1990s, 2000s
Judy Stubbs	Director	7	2000s
Phillipa Broad	Director	6	1970s, 1980s
Michael Darcy	Director	6	2000s
Julie Hourigan Ruse	Chair/director	6	2000s, 2010s
Digby Hughes	Secretary/director	6	2010s
Maureen Kingshott	Director	6	2000s
Dean Price	Treasurer/secretary/director	6	2000s, 2010s
Greg Thompson	Chair/editor/treasurer/director	6	1970s, 1980s
Karen Walsh	Chair/secretary/director	6	2010s
Nick Warren	Secretary/director	6	1990s, 2000s
Craig Johnston	Director	5	1980s, 1990s
Andrew Meehan	Chair/director	5	2000s
Annette O'Neill	Chair/director	5	2000s, 2010s
David Ramsay	Chair/director	5	1990s
Lesley Wyatt	Secretary/director	5	1990s

Source: Shelter annual reports. A 'term' is all or part of a financial year. Office holders (chair, treasurer, secretary and editor) are also board directors, though with added responsibilities. Office holders included if served for 3 terms or more, and board members for 5 terms or more. If the same number of terms have been served, names are arranged alphabetically

as both director and member of staff at different times so were a source of continuity. From Table 4, the longest serving office holders – that is, directors who also served in the role of chair, treasurer, secretary or editor – were John Nicolades and Chris Martin (who served similar times as chair), Harvey Volke (both as secretary and editor) and Dean Price (treasurer). In 1996 Shelter's constitution was amended to end the limit on consecutive terms served as office holder, though in the subsequent periods there has been a higher rotation of office holders than when the rule was still in place.

By far the longest standing director has been Harvey Volke, rightly seen as a father figure for the organisation (see Box 8). Social housing tenant and activist Gary Mallard and co-op pioneer and community advocate Karine Shellshear have also served long periods on the board. Volke, Mallard and Shellshear have been plain-speaking, passionate housing advocates with a radical view of changing the housing system, therefore while the governance of Shelter has professionalised over the years, the organisation has continued to be led by people with the same background as Shelter's original founders in the 1970s.

The Shelter family

In the mid-1970s it was envisaged there would be a Shelter organisation in each state and territory, and a National Shelter organisation 'owned' and co-ordinated by the individual states' organisations and focusing on Commonwealth policies. This is much as the Shelter family has remained over four decades, with the only missing jigsaw piece caused by the defunding of Shelter Victoria in 1994. However, while the architecture has remained consistent, the relationship between the component parts has ebbed and flowed due to both funding issues and the prominent role played by charismatic, driven leaders.

By the 1980s National Shelter operated as a federation of state Shelters, headed by a national council that met two or three times a year and comprised one delegate from each of the state Shelters. These meetings are described in a 1985 article: 'Masochism reached new heights when representatives from each State organisation met for the first National Shelter Council Meeting to be held in a year in Canberra recently. Because National Shelter Council meets so infrequently (brass being in shorter supply than enthusiasm) the Canberra meeting opened with a packed agenda which spanned the entire weekend' (Shelter newsletter 29, p.7).

In the 1970s and early 1980s National Shelter had a volunteer executive team of chair, secretary and treasurer. The most developed state Shelters

We are (Shelter) family, 2013
Source: Photo taken at National Shelter Council meeting in March 2013.
Image held at Shelter's office.

during this time were in NSW and Victoria, and the two organisations sustained National Shelter through convening national council meetings and producing the national newsletter and policy submissions. Proper Commonwealth funding for National Shelter was only received in 1985, allowing Rae Porter to be appointed national co-ordinator after a gap of 10 years without anyone filling this role. The journal *National Housing Action*, which had disappeared a few years before, was revived by National Shelter in 1985. By 1989 Commonwealth funding allowed National Shelter to employ three staff and help further build state-based organisations (*National Housing Action*, July 1989).

In 1993 the *National Shelter Strategic Plan 1993–98* was issued, stating: 'National Shelter is a federation of State and Territory Shelter organisations. As such, its viability is strongly linked to the capacity of these organisations' (National Shelter, 1993, p.4). As at October 1993 only four Shelters were receiving grant funding: Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia. National Shelter was funded by the Commonwealth with three full-time and two part-time staff and an income of $306,000 in 1993–94, of which $301,000 was grants.

A key organisational story in the Shelter family is defunding. As shown in Table 5, all state and territory Shelters rely for the vast majority of their income on grant funding. When the relationship between the peak and government breaks down – as happened with Shelter Victoria – or the minister takes a particular dislike to a peak – as seen with Joe Schipp and Shelter NSW – the organisation will struggle to survive. Shelter NSW continued in the early 1990s without funding, as did Shelter Victoria in the late 1990s, though the former organisation was close to failure and the latter stopped providing services around 1999. If a Shelter organisation survives a defunding, its activities will be severely curtailed. Shelter NSW only survived in the early 1990s due a strong support network including the Uniting Church, NCOSS and volunteer activists.

Defunding and threats to defund are a regular event for all peak organisations. National peaks have fared worst, especially with the Howard and later the Abbott governments signalling a move away from the Commonwealth co-ordinating social service activities across the country. National Shelter has therefore been more in the firing line than state Shelters and has a long story of defunding and refunding. Perhaps as a result, of all members of the Shelter family it has been the most entrepreneurial in sourcing other types of income. Sometimes National Shelter financially supported state Shelters, other times the roles were reversed. National Shelter's strength has been to find fee-for-service activities, philanthropic donations and seek government grant funding in areas not directly housing focused and from both state and Commonwealth governments.

National Shelter received limited funds in the mid-1970s, which helped establish and support state and territory Shelters, though was only awarded proper grant funding in 1985. After a couple of attempts, including court action, the Howard government finally defunded National Shelter in July 1997 using the reasoning that it duplicated the role of ACOSS. According to commentary in Shelter's annual report, this was 'a blatant attempt to silence a dissenting voice to the Commonwealth reform proposals' (Shelter AR 1997, p.4). Shelter NSW took on the role of convenor for National Shelter, and in later years other Shelters assisted. Fortunately, National Shelter received philanthropic income via a grant from the Cavill and Scully Foundation in both 1997–98 and 1998–99, then in a higher sum of $50,000 in 1999–2000. This allowed it to employ a project officer for nine months during the year.

During the mid-2000s, National Shelter was a member of the National Housing Alliance, which was one of the partners to the National Summit

Table 5: Shelter's family members, 2017

Jurisdiction	Staff	Income 2016–17	% grant income	Main activities
ACT	1	$ 143,000	89%	Housing peak body, carries out advocacy and research
NSW	5	$ 725,000	96%	Housing peak body, advocates for systemic change and provides community education
National	1	$ 144,000	17%	Influencing government policy and action, and raising public awareness about housing issues
NT	4	$ 710,000	94%	Housing, homelessness and Aboriginal housing peak body
Queensland	7	$ 1,182,000	77%	Building capacity of community housing and homelessness organisations
SA	3			Housing and homelessness peak body, undertaking advocacy and stakeholder engagement
Tasmania	3.5	$ 460,000	93%	Peak for housing, community housing and homelessness; advocacy, and funded for training
Victoria	n/a	n/a	n/a	Defunded December 1994, continued as a voluntary organisation until c.1999
WA	9	$ 833,000	92%	Social and affordable housing and homelessness peak body

Source: Various websites and annual reports.

on Housing Affordability along with the Housing Industry Association, ACOSS and the ACTU. The alliance provided strong input to the housing policies of the incoming Rudd government in 2007, and in 2009 National Shelter was rewarded by being refunded. The swings and roundabouts continued with National Shelter funded by the Commonwealth in July 2013 for three years, with $150,000 a year allowing Adrian Pisarski to be employed as executive officer, the first full-time person in this role for 18 years. Pisarski has previously acted as chair for the last eight years. The good times did not last, and National Shelter was defunded again in July 2015.

Over the decades, state and territory Shelters have diverged. Shelter Queensland retained a regional structure in the 1990s with strong branches, and the Northern Territory at one stage had Shelters in both Alice Springs and Darwin. Most have been continuously funded by their respective governments, in contrast to Shelter NSW. Both Q Shelter (Queensland) and Shelter WA receive more income than Shelter NSW, though Shelters

in Tasmania and the ACT also act in a role similar to the Community Housing Industry Association of NSW through assisting community housing providers, and in some cases homelessness service providers and Aboriginal organisations. Shelter in NSW has remained truer to the original thinking in the mid-1970s by still acting as a major housing policy resource and remaining at arm's length from social housing landlords and service providers.

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Shelter's lobbying approach over the decades has become increasingly sophisticated though continues to be multi-pronged, encompassing commissioning research papers, behind-the scenes high-level meetings, use of the media, public meetings and spreading the word through the housing network. There has also been continuity in many of the battlegrounds: mega developments in the inner city including road projects, public housing renewal or relocation and the impact of city-imaging projects such as the Olympics. In the case of Millers Point and The Rocks, the cycle has been repeated across different decades. The next chapter continues the Shelter narrative from the mid-1990s, when the Shipp defunding had been reversed and the organisation could enjoy a period of relative calm – before the next storm.

6 A Modernised Peak Body: Shelter 1995–2005

Times looked good for Shelter entering their third decade. Funding had been restored as a parting gift from the outgoing NSW Liberal government, both main political parties recognising Shelter as a continuing part of the state's housing support landscape. With the 'best ever' Sydney Olympics only a few years away, what could possibly go wrong? Three factors came into play. First, the national political environment shifted with a retreat from housing policy by the Commonwealth Liberals in 1996, a bipartisan trend continued since except for a few years under Kevin Rudd. Second, tightened CSHA funding forced (or encouraged) NSW Labor to take a 'tough love' approach to public housing tenants. Third, Shelter went through an existential crisis in the late 1990s. It took the steadying hand of incoming executive officer Mary Perkins to pull Shelter back from the brink.

6.1 The new political reality, 1995–2000

Shelter's decadte from 1995 to 2005 was dominated to an unusual extent by just two very different men, Bob Carr and John Howard. Both had ambitions for Commonwealth politics, though Bob Carr made his mark first in NSW government as longstanding premier from 1995 to 2005. Neither placed housing as their greatest priority, yet both would lead administrations promoting new and often controversial approaches to the housing system.

Labor's long run in NSW: Business as usual

There was a feeling within Shelter that Labor in power in NSW was a return to the good times. Refunding was seen as 'the acknowledgment that the Government recognises Shelter as a key voice for housing justice which

should be listened to' (Shelter AR 1996, p.4). The organisation was the lead agency for the not-for-profit sector in the discussions over the Green Paper on housing policy, seen as 'the most comprehensive approach to housing policy that any state Government has taken for many years' (ibid.). The reality was more limited, with Craig Knowles appointed minister for urban affairs and planning, and minister for housing in April 1995. Shelter noted 'one of our concerns is that we are hearing plenty about the first part of the title, but there hasn't been much public focus on the Housing side of the portfolio' (Shelter *ATH*, 18, p.5).

Labor's long stay in power in NSW from 1995 could have provided an opportunity to transform the housing system. In practice, however, with limited CSHA funding and a quick succession of housing ministers (and later of premiers), social housing received scant attention. The government's approach to public housing could be described as one of 'managed decline', with a gradual withering of housing numbers, and a tightening of controls over tenants that would have normally been a hallmark of a party of the right. The ray of light was the growth of the community housing sector. However, with no significant new capital funding there was little change in the total social housing numbers. Effectively the NSW government promoted what has been described as a 'moving the deckchairs strategy' in transfers from public to community housing (Shelter, 2002, p.5).

Under the Carr government, the community housing sector was forecast to grow rapidly. In 1996 the state's third community housing strategy proposed the sector increase properties under management from 5,271 in mid-1995 to 13,326 by June 1999 (DUAP, 1996). In 1996 the Office of Community Housing was established under the Department of Urban and Affairs and Urban Planning, separate from public housing until reincorporation back into the Department of Housing in April 1999. By the start of the new millennium the community housing sector had become an established and accepted part of the NSW housing system. By way of confirmation, the NSW Parliamentary *Report on Community Housing*, published in December 2003, found 'the evidence to this inquiry was overwhelmingly supportive of community housing' (Parliament of NSW, 2003, p.xi).

Shelter's support for tenant empowerment in public and community housing was expressed many times in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Labor government's July 1996 public housing tenant participation policy was not well received by Shelter due to concern about losing the regional public tenant panels: 'Shelter strongly supports the regional tenants

councils as an effective way for tenants to be involved in decision making by the Department, and as a resourcing body for local tenants groups' (Shelter *ATH* 22, p.2). The Department of Housing and those running community housing providers appeared to prioritise sector growth, with tenant participation left to the discretion of individual organisations. Only a limited number of housing providers introduced progressive tenant-focused policies before 2010. However, during the following decade tenant engagement and participation was the norm not the exception for community housing providers, though with no statutory push (as had been the case in Britain), progress was slow and not uniform.

Shelter decided to join the Tenant and Community Initiatives Program State Advisory Committee, established in December 1996 as part of the new government approach, despite Shelter's reservations about their approach. Their involvement in various committees and meetings appeared to bring some benefits as in December 2000 the NSW housing minister announced his vision for the future of tenant participation, including a budget increase from $1 million to $1.22 million in 2001–02 incorporated many of the changes recommended by the committee. The funding included resources for specific projects that allowed tenants to participate, and $100,000 for training and skills development. Shelter had pushed for the creation of an independent, statewide organisation to provide information, advice and training to all stakeholders in tenant participation. The government's approach was more limited, with a focus on tenant events and activities rather than empowerment through a direct role in decision-making.

To resolve problems of an ageing public housing stock, with dwellings often the wrong size and in the wrong location and concentrated in larger single-tenure housing estates, the Department of Housing introduced new policies and programs in the 2000s. Some aimed at policing behaviour such as acceptable behaviour orders and renewable tenancies (see section 7.1). Others focused on building and strengthening communities. The most important driver was to make savings given Commonwealth budget cuts and lower rental income given public housing was residualised. The policies developed as a result were estate redevelopment, including property sales, stock transfer to community housing and public private partnerships (PPPs). As Mary Perkins noted, 'many of these policies and programs are controversial, invoking very mixed reactions' (Shelter AR 2004, p.8).

Shelter NSW is back!!!

The above phrase was the triumphant headline on the first page of the April 1995 Shelter newsletter (Shelter *ATH* 16). With grants of $192,000 secured for calendar year 1995, three new staff were employed led by Rod Plant as executive officer. Behind the scenes, Shelter had to produce satisfactory quarterly reports for the Office of Housing Policy, and there was to be a review after one year to decide if funding would continue. The independent evaluation, carried out by Keys Young, was positive and interim funding was granted from January to June 1996 to bring the funding cycle to a financial year basis.

After several personnel changes, Shelter's entered a period of stable staffing. Will Roden joined as field liaison officer in July 1996, having previously worked as Riverwood Community Centre's project worker. Like many of Shelters founders in the 1970s he had a degree in social work, from the University of Sydney. Flora Armaghanian also joined Shelter as office manager the same month as Will Roden. Together with Rod Plant the three continued as a team until 2001. As the executive officer noted in the 1999 annual report: 'We had our third consecutive year with no staff changes. It sounds like a broken record to keep saying how important

Meet the Shelter team, 1995

Source: Undated photo c1995 of Ros Bragg, Heidi Nelson and Rod Plant (back left is possibly Larysa Anton) from records held at Shelter's office.

this is to the success of the organisation, but it remains even truer today' (Shelter AR 1999, p.7).

Shelter stalwart Julie Nyland led a discussion of board functioning at Shelter's November 1995 board meeting and undertook a major internal business review at the start of 1996. Recommendations were for a greater focus by the organisation on a more limited number of core activities, and a greater role for directors in taking a watching brief on the interaction between housing and wider community issues – but less involvement in day-to-day operational matters. This marked an important cultural shift away from how Shelter operated when it was defunded, when the directors had to provide day-to-day managerial and administrative input.

Stable funding allowed Shelter to re-establish its position in the housing sector. At the Community Housing State Conference in 1995, funded by the Office of Housing Policy, Shelter co-ordinated a visual history project showing the development of the sector over the last three decades. A hot-ticket seminar on microeconomic reform and public housing was delivered in May 1995. During Rod Plant's leadership in the late 1990s, Shelter's basic architecture of events, publications and role in the sector became established in a format recognisable to the present day.

The Shelter newsletter was restarted, with six publications during 1995 as against only five produced over the previous five years when there was no grant funding. The July 1996 *Around the House* newsletter had a new look and a redesigned logo, though there was an apology for not achieving the ambitious target of a newsletter each month together with a quarterly journal due to lower staff numbers with the government grant lower than budgeted. The quarterly journal was therefore dropped, and the newsletter published every two months supplemented by occasional issues papers (Shelter *ATH* 23, p.2). During 1996–97 Shelter produced five newsletters, three briefing paper including a report on community consultations for the housing Green Paper, and a submission to the Commonwealth Senate inquiry into housing assistance.

It was during the late 1990s that Shelter's pattern of relationships with the NSW government began to shift from campaigning publicly on high-profile issues to working co-operatively within the system with the state minister and the department. Paradoxically though, during this period Shelter remained in conflict with the Commonwealth government over threats to CSHA funding.

The transformation in NSW government relations was partly encouraged by an increasing number of groups, forums and committees set up by the

state government to which Shelter was invited. By the start of the 2000s Shelter attended the Housing Assistance Plan Advisory Committee, the Housing Advisory Group, the Housing Appeals Committee Implementation Reference Group, the Foyer Model Steering Committee, the Housing Register Reform Reference Group, the Tenant and Community Initiatives Program State Advisory Committee, the Nomination and Allocations Reference Group, the Interim Homelessness Council and the Olympics Social Impacts Advisory Committee (Shelter AR 2000).

The Labor government's web of social policy committees was complex, bureaucratic and opaque, and did not necessarily result in action being taken – housing and homelessness issues during the Olympics are a good example (see section 5.3). Involvement in committees as an 'insider' made it harder to express opinions as an 'outsider', breaking the Shelter tradition going back to the 1970s and 1980s. For example, while Shelter and other community sector representatives opposed changes to rent policy in 1999–2000 that resulted in public housing rents increasing to 25 per cent of income, they were unable to influence the decision that had already been made by the government. However, the difficulty of taking a more confrontational approach was later highlighted in the Woolloomooloo incident in November 2000, described below, where Rod Plant discovered the 'insider' and 'outsider' roles do not easily mix.

During the late 1990s new housing policy issues emerged. In July 1996 the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning established a Task Force in Affordable Housing, which looked at the numbers of lower-income people in housing stress, paying more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs. The task force recommended setting affordable housing targets, using the planning system through inclusionary zoning and establishing an investment intermediary. The issue of affordable housing was now on the government's agenda, and Shelter started to research and discuss affordable housing issues from this period. Unfortunately, the task force's main recommendations and the 1999 Green Paper on planning reform were also weak on mechanisms to provide affordable housing. However, in 1999 the state's planning legislation – the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* – was amended to include affordable housing as an objective and allowed planning legislation to be used to provide new and maintain existing affordable accommodation (Shelter *ATH* 36, p.2).

While the decade was a busy time for the Shelter team, the connections built with other agencies since the organisation's foundation served them well. Links with the Tenants' Union remained strong, through board

connections and topics featured in the newsletter. Shelter members remained well informed through, for example, Chris Martin, the Tenants' Union's policy officer, who wrote an article appearing on the front page of *Around the House* on the reform of the *Residential Tenancies Act* (Shelter *ATH* 79, p.1). During 1999–2000 Shelter received grants from the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility, a link forged by John Nicolades, and from the Ningana Housing Collective that Shelter had played a role in helping establish. As the executive officer summarised in 1999: 'The mounting challenges of the policy environment seemed to make Shelter stronger. With so much going on, the sector seems to network better and be able to campaign more strongly' (Shelter AR 1999, p.7).

Shelter's performance during this period, and the way it worked with state government, must have been well received. From July 1999 Shelter's income was increased by 50 per cent by housing minister Andrew Refshauge, who also attended their AGM in October 1999. Extra funds allowed them to raise salaries to 'an acceptable level' plus employ a second policy and liaison officer, Myra Hechanova. Given a longstanding issue faced by Shelter in providing services outside metro Sydney, 'It is envisaged that the additional funding will also make it possible for Shelter to become more active in rural and regional areas. We are now able to encourage rural and regional people to nominate for board positions by providing monies towards travel costs' (Shelter AR 1999, p.4). Unfortunately, management issues discussed below came in the way of implementing of a truly cross-state peak body approach.

The Howard government: Not in the housing business

In 1996 the Liberals were returned to power in Canberra after an absence of 13 years. The election was won on a mandate of restoring the nation's finances by reducing public spending and allowing the states more control over their spending, with the Commonwealth adopting a less interventionist approach in policy details. With a landslide victory, the Coalition parties between them won 94 seats, reducing Labor to only 49. Change was coming, and social housing would not escape. Prime Minister Howard already had a reputation as a critic of public housing, so negative changes were expected. As a first move, the incoming government abolished the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development. In a move that would be followed in the 2010s in NSW, housing was moved to the Department of Social Services and seen as a welfare activity. More alarmingly, the entire approach to housing changed.

At a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in June 1996 it was agreed that in future the Commonwealth would provide direct rental assistance for all tenants, with state governments responsible for public and community housing based on rents set at market levels. This was an approach that returned to haunt the housing sector, with similar proposals by Prime Minister Tony Abbott in 2014 for reform of the federation.

The Howard government's 1996 proposal to dismantle the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and ration housing assistance to people receiving social security benefits was met with strong opposition, with Shelter at the forefront. Shelter saw the proposals as 'the most fundamental change to public, community housing and assistance for private renters for 50 years … fatally flawed' (Shelter AR 1996, p.4). 'A growing number of public meetings, numerous phone calls of concern and the distribution of over 9,000 campaign brochures across NSW prove that there is a groundswell of opposition to the Commonwealth's proposed "housing reforms"' (Shelter *ATH* 24, p.3). A Coalition to Save Public and Community Housing was established, with a campaign launch in July 1996 in Sydney with a keynote speech from Reverend Harry Herbert. National Shelter launched a nationwide campaign against the government, though this brought an explicit threat of defunding:

> On Friday September 6 [1996], executive members of National Shelter were called in to the office of the Commonwealth Social Security Minister, Senator Jocelyn Newman. A staff member expressed strong concern about the National Shelter campaign, coupling this with threats to the funding of National Shelter, which is due for renewal before the end of September. Chairperson of National Shelter, Eleri Morgan-Thomas, flew back to the Homelessness Conference, which she had addressed earlier. The Conference was gravely concerned at these explicit threats to the independence of the national peak organisation (Shelter *ATH* 24).

The well-orchestrated campaign brought results, with the more radical proposals to stop directly funding public and community housing abandoned, and it was agreed the CSHA would continue. According to comments in the annual report:

> Shelter has played a key role in co-ordinating the expressions of concern which have been mobilised by local tenant groups, local Government and housing workers across the state. This campaign has gathered a momentum that no-one could have predicted (Shelter AR 1996, p.4).

Howard's RIP to public housing, 1987
Source: unpublished photo held at Shelter's office
In the 1987 Liberal opposition leader proposed significant budget savings, including to the CSHA. While the election saw the Labor Government returned, the confrontational tone of the relationship between Howard and housing activists had been established.

The Shelter newsletter noted 'media speculation, apparently well informed, suggests we won't see the proposals in their current form again because the campaign succeeded in making "senior Government figures" realise that the political cost is too high' (Shelter *ATH* 26, p.1). However, by way of caution Eleri Morgan-Thomas warned in 1997 that the campaign had only 'slowed the housing reform process'. She noted that 'it is crucial to use the time we now have to change tack in our campaigning and focus on developing alternative models for housing reform' (Shelter *ATH* 24, p.4). Ironically, National Shelter had 'won the battle but lost the war' as later in the year the Howard government succeeded in removing the organisation's funding.

Without an alternative vision for how the social system could be made sustainable without considerable injection of capital, the choice would remain between which of the two parties would be elected to implement the cutbacks. It was only by the mid-2000s through National Shelter's work with the National Community Housing Forum that an alternative vision was developed, leading the new housing policy of the Rudd government.

Figure 4: Peak public housing, 1997
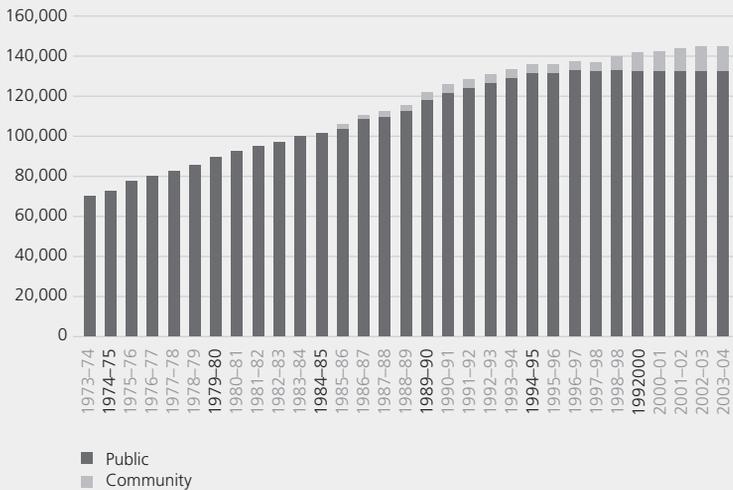
Despite the success of the 1996 campaign to retain the CSHA, Commonwealth funding for housing was still cut in absolute terms through what was euphemistically described as an 'efficiency dividend'. This was a cut of 1 per cent in CSHA funds each year, at a time when the public housing system had been starved of cash for several years. In many ways this was a brilliant tactical move by the Howard government. The social housing system would be allowed to slowly wither, but it would be the state governments who would have to impose the cuts and therefore be the main target for criticism. Shelter's leaders saw through this: 'make no mistake, the debate that is commencing now is a fight to save the social housing system from those forces that have already started trying to bleed it to death. Shelter, and all its constituent members and organisations, must remain at the forefront of this debate' (Shelter AR 1999, p.9).

Figure 4 shows how the steady net growth of NSW social housing continued from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s then ended. These numbers are net of public housing sales, and by the 1990s show the greater role played by the community housing sector. The highest recorded figure for public

housing was recorded in June 1997 at 133,714 properties under management. Social housing growth after this date came through more properties for the community housing sector, though total numbers remained steady from the mid-2000s until the Nation Building Program from 2009 (see section 7.1).

The Commonwealth still refused to confirm public housing funding beyond June 1999. ACOSS, Shelter and housing tenants were involved in a demonstration outside a building in Sydney where the housing ministers were meeting. Shelter mounted a full-scale campaign behind the slogan 'Don't Let Australia Become the Homeless Country' in mid-1997, with a fundraising drive raising $19,000. A Save our Public Housing rally was held in the Sydney Domain in November 1996, attended by an estimated 1,500 people.

Ominously, housing ministers at a COAG meeting in February 1997 had decided to 'undertake a complete examination of pricing, eligibility and tenure policies as a matter of urgency' (quoted in Shelter *ATH* 27, p.1). This came into reality in April 2000 when the Department of Housing increased public housing rents to help make up the shortfall in Commonwealth funds under the CSHA.

There was a silver lining to the clouds as the Commonwealth's social housing approach was strongly opposed by the NSW Labor government. Shelter, National Shelter and the NSW government were on the same side, helping forge a deep relationship that endured throughout the 2000s. Also, the leadership in the NSW Department of Housing was well disposed, with Jennifer Westacott deputy director general up to May 2000. According to Shelter at the time of her departure, 'Jennifer's understanding of the social housing system, her passion to improve client service, her brilliant ideas and her personable manner will be missed' (Shelter *ATH* 39). Fortunately, she was followed by Annette Gallard, a former Shelter director.

6.2 Highs and lows, 2000–05

The times when Shelter has faced its greatest challenges have been those that bring the greatest clarity about what role the organisation should fulfil, why it is an important component of the housing network, and how it should operate. The period between 2000 and 2001 was one of those times.

Leadership dilemmas: What type of organisation are we?

The six years at the end of the last century were a period of stability for Shelter, at least on the surface. Behind the scenes, management issues

and lack of shared vision between the executive officer and board were simmering. Was Shelter resilient enough to weather the upcoming storm?

The Shelter staff team under Rod Plant underwent several personnel changes from 1995. In the first 14 months as a refunded organisation, all core staff other than the executive officer resigned, including two consecutive field liaison officers. A 1996 review by the Shelter board confirmed that although they were happy with Plant's policy and advocacy work, there were issues with management style and team-building ability.

Further tensions between the board and executive officer emerged in a dispute with the NSW Federation of Housing Associations in May 1998, who were seeking Shelter's support over an amendment to the *Residential Tenancies Act* which would give greater protection for women to stay in the family home after their partner had to leave as perpetrator of domestic violence. Plant had sought input on this issue from a men's discussion group, and in light of the group's input and his personal views he adopted a position of opposing domestic violence issues being addressed in the Act. The Federation, led by Morgan-Thomas, sent a letter of complaint, and the Shelter board sided with the Federation over Rod Plant (Eleri Morgan-Thomas, pers. comm., 2018).

There was also a dispute between the executive officer and the NSW and ACT Association of Homeless Persons Services in December 2000. In both cases Plant took the role of housing advocate, giving what he later described as being his 'personal' – though controversial and outspoken – views on domestic violence and homelessness to two peak bodies. Both organisations wrote a letter of complaint to the chair. Subsequently the Shelter board sought a more formal and measured approach by the executive officer, insisting they were consulted before particular policy positions were taken.

Internal issues came to a head in the year 2000. As detailed in Chapter 5, Shelter played a role in the first annual memorial at St Mary's Cathedral for people who had died while being homeless on the street. While identifying the names of the deceased, it became apparent many were unsolved murder cases and the Shelter's executive officer personally engaged with NSW detectives investigating four cases that appeared to be the work of a serial killer.

On 15 November, Shelter's executive officer went to Tom Uren Place in Woolloomooloo in the early hours of the morning to visit homeless men who were holding a vigil at the site where a homeless man was kicked and stabbed two days previously. Rod Plant became concerned as none of the

witnesses to the attack had been offered counselling or support, and people he spoke to claimed the police had subsequently done nothing for their safety (Rod Plant, pers, comm., 2018).

Plant started ringing various people around 6am, including other Shelter staff, board members, politicians and the media, alerting them to what he considered to be a crisis requiring immediate attention. He told ABC news:

> To shame our politicians, to say this has gone on long enough, we can't just leave these people at risk of being murdered, and getting sick on our streets, that we as a society have to sit up and say it's time to do something about this. I've been working for two years with the families of three people who were bashed to death in their sleeping bags' (ABC News Online, 2000)

The approach was said by Plant to have been positive, resulting in uniformed police conducting drive-throughs of the area each night, and a guarantee they would not be looking for minor offences by the homeless. Plant's actions were a continuation of his drive to highlight problems with homelessness, especially in the run-up to the Sydney Olympics, eventually resulting in the homelessness protocol (see Chapter 5). While the Olympics was a one-off time when Shelter was heavily involved in homelessness issues, both Plant and Shelter's policy and liaison officer Myra Hechanova were in favour of Shelter taking a continuing active role in the homelessness debate, and the executive officer had been following up with work on a homelessness code of conduct and campaigning for more resources for the sector.

Shelter's board had mixed views about how much the organisation should be involved with homelessness issues, with the matter discussed at the November 2000 board meeting. There were several other peak organisations and service providers playing a role in this area, and some board members considered Shelter's principal focus should be reforming social housing. There was support on the board for the view that Shelter needed to play a strategic arm's-length role in homelessness, with Shelter's legitimacy in this area through linking with other agencies rather than doing the work themselves.

The Woolloomooloo incident led to the Shelter board intervening more formally, supporting the executive officer to take extended paid leave. In part this would help him work through a difficult family situation, though hopefully also diffuse tensions. Staff member Will Roden was elevated to acting executive officer in December 2000, with Shelter chair Peter Mott taking more responsibility for leadership. Plant returned to work in

February 2001, though by March ceased working for Shelter and there was a flurry of legal correspondence between both sides before an agreeable settlement was reached. Roden again became acting executive officer, with the final piece in the jigsaw being Mary Perkins's appointment as executive officer in August 2001.

With the benefit of nearly two decades passing since these unfortunate events, and having spoken to several people involved, the story remains difficult and contested. According to Karine Shellshear, 'Rod Plant was striving for Shelter to address social justice issues, but it wasn't going to happen. He was banging his head against a wall … Government wanted them as an enabler not an adversary. They didn't pay us to be their adversary' (Karine Shellshear, pers. comm., 2018). For whatever reason, the relationship between the executive officer and the board was not ideal in the late 1990s, and subsequently deteriorated further. There seem to have been problems on both sides, with both management style and communications. Only the lawyers won.

In retrospect, Plant was acting as a passionate housing advocate – including speaking on his own account as well as on behalf of the organisation – on the Woolloomooloo homelessness issue in a way that would have been typical of a Shelter leader during the 1970s and 1980s. However, by the dawn of the new millennium, the board – and state government as peak body funder – sought a more cautious, 'with the grain' approach avoiding head-on confrontation. Perhaps also Plant's crusade on homelessness issues was not the strategic direction or style the board favoured, preferring a broader policy approach across crisis accommodation, social housing and private rentals. While Shelter would be forthright with government and public agencies on housing issues after 2001, there was no incident matching the Woolloomooloo homelessness crusade.

The internal management issues of 2000 and 2001 were kept under wraps. There was no media coverage, and in the annual report the chair only referred obliquely to 'a challenging transitional year', and the acting executive officer to 'a year of change and rebuilding' (Shelter AR 2001, pp.4, 7). This was exquiste understatement for a period witenessing a clash between the board and executive officer resulting in the departure of the latter, a breakdown in government relationship and a failure to secure ongoing funding.

The Mary Perkins Doctrine

While not a term ever used by Shelter, the Mary Perkins Doctrine might be used as shorthand for how Shelter needed to work in future with the government. Henceforth the peak body would need to be calm, professional and measured – no media surprises, no Woolloomooloo homelessness incidents. Funder and funded organisation would engage in co-operative dialogue, which, in time, both sides discovered worked best for them both.

In July 2001 Mary Perkins became Shelter's second executive officer. It was in the most difficult of circumstances, needing a cool head and clear vision to bring the organisation back on track. Shelter had been notified the Friday before she arrived they were going to be defunded and on Monday morning one staff member said to another, 'Have you told her yet?' As she noted later, her role was to 'clean up the mess' (Mary Perkins, pers. comm., 2018).

Rod Plant and Myra Hechanova left Shelter earlier in 2001 and Will Roden went on a year's leave from October. It was to be Mary Perkins, trusted Shelter grandee Harvey Volke who returned to the staff team in June, long-time Shelter supporter Craig Johnston and new recruit Hazel Blunden who would guide Shelter through their biggest challenge since the organisation was defunded by housing minister Joe Schipp in 1988–89.

The June 2001 board minutes make mention of a new funding sub-mission for budget year 2001–02, but by July this was still being considered by the Department of Housing, so Shelter had neither funding nor agreement for money in the future. The tensions between Rod Plant and the board must have been known to government officials, and ministers were likely infuriated by the negative media coverage from the Woolloomooloo homelessness incident. Did Shelter deserve to remain a funded peak body?

In September the new executive officer arranged meetings with Michael Choueifate from the minister's office, deputy director-general of the Department of Housing Annette Gallard, director-general Andrew Cappie-Wood and then finally with the minister. As Mary Perkins observed in an understated way in her report to the September 2001 board meeting:

> It is apparent that the relationship between Shelter, the Minister's office and sections of the Department have been somewhat strained. Our discussions have gone a long way to resolving the issues … However, it is fair to say that during the next year Shelter is probably on probation. If we are to be a successful advocacy body we need to spend some time carefully rebuilding some of these relationships.

Box 12: Shelter Hall of Fame: Mary Perkins, steadying the tiller

Mary Perkins holds the record for Shelter's longest continuous service as executive officer (2001–17), as well as being the longest serving member of staff in any job position. This is a major achievement, and in marked contrast to the often quick succession of NSW housing ministers and premiers. When she took the leadership role at Shelter in 2001, continuity and a 'steady hand' was precisely what the organisation needed.

In earlier decades Mary Perkins was heavily involved with the Tenants' Union, and in this role served as a Shelter director (1982–85). Her skills and passion for housing were built during her time with the Aquarius Youth Service in Darlinghurst in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Her other roles have included with the Housing Commission, Redfern Legal Centre, NCOSS and ACOSS.

Like many prominent Shelter figures, Mary Perkins had a social work background and became an avid collector of degrees. She holds an MA from the Department of Social Work, Social Policy and Sociology at the University of Sydney, and a BA (majors in history and politics) and Diploma of Education from Macquarie University.

[M]ost people don't get the opportunity to work for organisations where their personal interests and values line up so well … Shelter's fortunes have waxed and waned over the years but it has endured with and without Government funding as an organisation able to speak for the punter/consumer/resident citizen. During my time here I'm pleased to have been able to contribute to this work.

Source: Photo from records held at Shelter offices of Mary Perkins's leaving party, 2016: arguably it doesn't capture her as she was quietly spoken, but adamant and persistent in the need for a transformation of the housing system. Quotation from Mary Perkins, Shelter AR 2017, p.11

In such as delicate situation when Shelter's survival was under threat, previous hopes for a three-year funding package and a grant increase ended. The minutes of the September 2001 board meeting included the comment: 'Mary noted that the incoming board has to take our relationship with the Minister very seriously. We need to keep building our relationship here.' The Shelter strategic plan was redrafted, incorporating the Department of Housing's view that Shelter must do visible work around community housing so that they become seen as the peak body working on housing issues across all tenure forms.

Shelter was, as described later by Mary Perkins, a 'little bit lucky' as she had previous contact with the minister which helped establish a good working relationship, and the department were keen for Shelter to continue (pers. comm., 2018). In return for funding until the end of December 2001, the department kept Shelter on a tight leash. The new strategic plan formed part of the contract between the department and Shelter, with the organisation having to report achievements against the plan and unable to spend grant monies on activity not specified in the plan. Any changes to plan had to be negotiated with the department.

Mary Perkins had a thorough and collaborative approach to her role. Karine Shellshear saw that 'Mary was more astute, more careful [than in Shelter's past]. She appealed to government officials' intelligence, gave them insights, rather than beating them with a club. She's played a long, patient role' (pers. comm., 2018). As recorded in the November 2001 board minutes, the approach was beginning to bring results:

> The Minister accepted an apology from Shelter NSW and the relationship has improved significantly. However the threat of defunding may mean that Shelter has to rebuild trust with the Minister's office and may be slightly more restrained until the relationship improves.
>
> It was asked if Shelter's ability to speak freely had been compromised by the threat of defunding.
>
> Mary said that Shelter may have to do things in different or smarter ways – and the board will have to make judgements as things happen
>
> Phillip added that there were no substantial policy issues were at stake. Many housing peaks seem to be under pressure at the moment (Shelter, 1995c).

Shelter's funding was finally agreed by the government at the start of 2002 when it was placed on a six-month rolling funding contract. Regular reports had to be submitted, and meetings with both the director-general of housing and the housing minister scheduled three times a year. These

meetings continued throughout the term of the state Labor administration to 2011 and represent the closest, most trusted working relationship with state government either before or after that period. By the time of Shelter's 2001–02 annual report Mary Perkins was able to concede that 'the last year has been fun' – perhaps with a sense of irony.

This close relationship with the state government was demonstrated with Shelter working jointly with the Department of Housing opposing the Liberal Commonwealth government's proposed funding cutbacks in 2002. The department paid Shelter $22,000 for CSHA community consultations aimed at showing the importance of maintaining a viable public housing system. In 2004 Shelter worked with the department in further consultation over new products such as renewable tenancies, bonds and tenancy guarantees. This was despite the fact that Shelter continued to oppose policies such as renewable tenancies and bonds.

Shelter's cosy relationship with the state government was in sharp contrast to the past. Long gone were the open, public conflicts with Labour minister Terry Sheahan in 1981 and Liberal minister Joe Schipp in 1988–89, or the protest marches and rallies. Chair Phillip French noted in 2002 that Shelter's focus was now on 'constructive dialogue' with government. This shift in approach, which this book calls the Mary Perkins Doctrine, was about:

> re-engaging with Government at the State level … and building a relationship capable of supporting policy critique that will be respected and listened to. While policy change can be achieved by other means, it is clearly desirable that our policy contributions are actively sought and considered through cooperative dialogue, rather than through conflict (Shelter AR 2002, p.4).

The key points from the Mary Perkins Doctrine are the need to have a good relationship with government so policy criticisms would not be taken personally, and to replace 'conflict' with 'co-operative dialogue'. The approach was echoed in a paper prepared for the May 2017 board meeting 15 years later, which followed fears of conflict between Shelter and the NSW government over the Millers Point evictions:

> We must remember that in many cases, it is entirely right and proper that Shelter be the voice raising concerns and asking questions about Government decisions and policy direction. This allows us to pose alternatives and to hold decision makers to account. By doing so we can also give voice to those who are marginalised in the discussion and whose views are often not heard.

It is because of our reputation that we are often approached by the media to comment on issues. This can create some issues for Shelter …

Such risks are or can be managed in the following ways: Shelter adopts a 'no surprises' approach to critiquing Government policy and decisions – so Government know what we think before we go public. We maintain regular dialogue across Government (political and agencies) and other NGOs to build understanding of our positions, concerns and approaches (Shelter, 2017c, p.1).

The Mary Perkins Doctrine continued in place for many years. Wording included in the minutes of the May 2017 board paper outlines that Shelter's approach to government was 'deliberately creating and maintaining a good relationship with FACS to give us the ability to upset them on occasion and not damage the relationship; build alliances on contentious issues.' In a nutshell this encapsulates not just how Shelter needed to work with Governments, but how all contemporary peak bodies need to mediate the fine line between speaking out and being defunded or being captured by the bureaucracy. It is a hard line to tread.

Rebuilding the business

While Mary Perkins's main task as executive officer from 2001 was to rebuild Shelter's fractured relationship with the government, it was also important to professionalise the organisation. New internal procedures were implemented on travel policy, delegations, staff entitlements and conditions relating to staff taking unpaid leave. The 2001–02 annual report was transformed into a businesslike document themed around seven vision statements, in contrast the rather dated and staid annual reports of the past.

In the early 2000s the inter-peak collaboration seen in the Olympics housing and homelessness campaigns continued. Mary Perkins was appointed to the ACOSS board in 2004, acting as the pivot point between Shelter, ACOSS and NCOSS. Shelter contributed to the NCOSS pre-budget submission to the NSW government that year, and Shelter's social and affordable housing policy positions were adopted and advocated by NCOSS. Under Mary Perkins's leadership Shelter liaised more regularly than in the past with the three community housing peaks, with staff from the federation (now CHIA NSW) and the Association to Resource Co-operative Housing (ARCH) represented on Shelter's board. As Mary Perkins noted, 'It would be true to say that harmonious working relations have developed' (Shelter AR 2002, p.16). There was also a good

relationship with the homelessness peaks, perhaps in contrast to pre-2001 when Shelter played a more active and interventionist role around homelessness. However, reflecting recently, Craig Johnston saw Shelter's relative disengagement from homelessness issues in this period until Katie Florance – a homelessness worker – joined Shelter in 2007 as something that might have been seen as odd given the ongoing importance of homelessness (pers. comm., 2018).

Planning reform became an important policy focus for Shelter during this period, marking a distinct move from its strong focus on lower-income housing. However, the change was foreshadowed by interventions around affordable housing schemes in Ultimo-Pyrmont and Green Square in inner Sydney and by engagement with local government workers in inner and western Sydney. Johnston, as Shelter principal policy officer, was instrumental in this, building on his knowledge as a former City of Sydney councillor involved with housing and planning issues. He also believed Shelter had to engage with the dominant free-market ideology of state and Commonwealth governments, and engage in policy debate using the terminology of economics (Craig Johnston, pers. comm., 2018).

NSW legislation in May 2002 adopted new definitions of housing need, based on 'very low income' households as those earning less than 50 per cent of median household incomes in the Sydney metro area, 'low income' between 50 per cent and 80 per cent, and 'moderate income' between 80 per cent and 120 per cent. This change had mixed impacts. On the one hand, state government support could now cover many residents in the private rental market, broadening the focus of housing reform beyond social housing. On the other hand, households with annual incomes of $100,000 might be subsidised – a form of middle-class welfare. As will be noted in the next section, around this time Shelter changed their strategy so they would represent the interests of both low- and moderate-income residents.

Shelter took a prominent role in urging the state government to develop a strong and effective State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) on affordable housing. At Shelter's suggestion, in April 2004 an Affordable Housing Network was established to share information and co-ordinate lobbying, with members spanning local government, community sector agencies and affordable housing developers. Later, in 2005, Shelter even met with the avowedly private sector Housing Industry Association to identify common issues. However, these moves produced only modest results.

Johnston acknowledged that 'advocates of the planning system as a place to promote affordable housing have to be an optimistic bunch' (Shelter *ATH* 103, p.19). In 2011 Professor Bill Randolph was more damning: 'we've had a decade where planning has, rightly or wrongly, increasingly become synonymous with meeting the needs of the development industry' (Shelter *ATH* 85, pp.7-8).

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Shelter's third decade, to 2005, was as challenging as their second. While defunding was only threatened in 2001, and not delivered as in 1989, at the start of the millennium the organisation faced the triple issues of management/board fission, contestation over the heart and soul of what Shelter was for, and a drip-feed of public funding. The new management team, with board support, stabilised the ship, but tensions remained between the activist- and research-focused tendencies within the Shelter movement. As will be seen in Chapter 7, Shelter since 2005 has had to navigate a course in an increasingly polarised environment, with deep divides between (and sometimes within) political parties, and between state and Commonwealth governments. The housing debate has also broadened beyond a traditional focus on social housing into more nuanced topics of housing affordability, affordable housing delivery, use of the planning system and complex financial and risk-sharing structures.

7 Changing with the Times: Shelter since 2005

During the last decade Shelter has had to adapt to the realities an Australian housing system with structural problems resulting in poor affordability for low- and moderate-income households, a shrinking level of home ownership and a social housing system where the main approach is 'managed decline'. Despite the Rudd–Gillard national initiatives from 2008, not much has changed, with the Commonwealth remaining in full retreat from housing policy. For Shelter, the struggle has been – and remains – to keep housing on the political agenda, and to persevere backing sensible housing initiatives such as inclusionary planning that might one day, with luck, be implemented.

7.1 Labor makes the running, in different directions, 2005–11

The state government's age of equipoise under Premier Carr came to an abrupt end in August 2005 when he left state politics to write his memoirs and, in time, briefly rise to the national and international stage as Commonwealth foreign minister. His successors, Morris Iemma, Nathan Rees and Kristina Keneally, with their five housing ministers over six years, presided over an increasingly divided and dysfunctional government that lost power in 2011. Their controversial policies still further reinforced the unsustainability of the NSW social housing system, unlike the Rudd Commonwealth government, which from 2007 was genuinely progressive on housing though still failed to address underlying structural problems.

One change by Shelter during this period was to increase their educational role on how the housing system works, as the unsustainability and structural malaise of the NSW housing system was not well known. As Mary Perkins commented, 'It is clear to me that within the general community and among workers in many community agencies, there is not

a clear understanding of the crisis within our social housing system. Many people seriously believe that Housing NSW has property that it is simply not allocating to their family, friends or clients' (Shelter AR 2008, p.10).

Tough love from NSW Labor

As is regularly the case in NSW governance, the greatest changes in housing policy took place midway through the same party's time in power. Labor's volte-face was the 2005 Reshaping Public Housing strategy, which marked the high point of residualising social housing so it was only accessible to the very needy. Their approach to housing tenants could charitably be called 'tough love', though it is unlikely it felt like this for the vast majority of public housing tenants complying with their tenancy agreements.

The history of the tightening NSW public tenancy regulations goes back several years, with a perceived shift during 1991–92 when evictions rose sharply (Shelter newsletter, 47). Signs of bigger change ahead came in February 2002 when the NSW Labor government announced a Future Directions in Social Housing program, a title later borrowed by a Liberal government in 2015. While there were positive features in Future Directions that moved the department to focus on community renewal not just bricks-and-mortar issues, Shelter and others were concerned about the planned introduction of rental bonds and fixed-term tenancies for all new public housing tenants. Bonds could present serious problems of affordability for new tenants, and for tenants seeking transfers, while fixed-term tenancies threaten the historic security of tenure enjoyed by public as distinct from private tenants.

The state Labor government's 'tough love' approach started in June 2004 in the run-up to the Commonwealth election. Legislation was rushed

The continuing adventures of John Howard public tenant, 2004
Source: Shelter *ATH* 58, pp.13, 14, 15. The occasionally dry and serious Shelter newsletter brilliantly parodies both the prime minister and the draconian regime he would have to endure in Kirribilli as a 'public tenant'.

through parliament aimed at taking drastic action on anti-social behaviour by public housing tenants by introducing acceptable behaviour agreements for deemed troublemakers. Shelter's view was summarised in the August 2004 newsletter with a headline to an article by Volke: 'NSW govt guilty of anti-social behaviour' (Shelter *ATH* 59, p.14). The organisation became a lead agency opposing the 'draconian' (to use Shelter's terms in the annual report) legislative amendments. Yet later, despite Shelter's opposition to the policy, they helped government evaluate the acceptable behaviour agreement trials in Newcastle and Wagga.

A bigger change was the October 2005 Reshaping Public Housing initiatives. Rents would increase to 30 per cent of income for tenants whose household incomes were classed as 'moderate', and tenants' continuing public housing eligibility would be regularly reviewed, with tenancies terminated where household incomes exceeded certain limits. Eligibility requirements covered both income and housing need, and new public housing tenants would not enjoy housing for life but sign reviewable two-, five- or ten-year leases. Tenants would also have to pay water rates. These changes further rationed public housing to the neediest, and locked out groups such as low-income workers who traditionally had some access to public housing. According to the state government, the need to restrict public housing to very high needs applicants was as a result of federal government cuts, and 'there are real limits to the number of additional homes that can be made available in the public housing system' (DoH, 2005, p.1).

The 2005 Reshaping Public Housing policy was unpopular with Shelter. Mary Perkins noted that 'we fear this will add to the concentration of disadvantage in public housing estates, contribute to the churning of people between the public and private markets, further marginalise and stigmatise tenants of public housing and increase after-housing poverty' (Shelter AR 2005, p.23). However, there was a realisation that the severity of the policy would depend on how it was implemented so, over time, 'concern has not abated but has eased somewhat in the light of further discussions with the department and with ministerial staff where we were given guarantees that the process would be focused on providing support in order to prevent evictions' (Shelter AR 2006, p.20).

The collaborative-not-confrontational Mary Perkins Doctrine approach to managing government relations remained intact. Despite their reservations about the Reshaping policy, and having prepared a robustly worded independent submission, Shelter became a member of the Department of Housing's Reshaping Public Housing Reference Group in

2005. Perhaps it was better to be 'inside the tent', influencing how policy was implemented, though Shelter's leaders must also have been mindful of avoiding the organisation's defunding by being directly confrontational.

One of the consequences of the Reshaping strategy was that more low-income households had to look for housing in the private market. While Shelter continued after 2005 to call for increases – or at least of reversal of funding cuts – in public housing, there was a growing realisation that other housing policy approaches were needed. Shelter therefore started to further develop advocacy for supply-side solutions in the private rental and ownership markets, including using the planning system to deliver affordable housing.

NSW Labor remained conscious of media comment and poll ratings. In April 2008 housing minister Matt Brown was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 3 April 2008: 'If people are driving around in fancy BMWs and wanting a Department of Housing home, they are looking at the wrong type of home' (quoted in Shelter *ATH* 73, p.18). Six days later a tenant fraud amendment to the Housing Act 2001 had been rushed through parliament to give additional powers to jail tenants who misrepresent their incomes.

The state government continued supporting the growth of the community housing sector. In December 2007 a dedicated Planning for the Future strategy was issued, focused solely on the community housing sector rather than covering all social housing. The aim was to increase the sector's housing stock by 17,000 over the next decade, which ostensibly fitted with Shelter's objective of delivering social housing through community-based organisations. The government's approach was not to expand small neighbourhood-focused community providers or co-operatives but rather to support 'selected high-performing organisations to take on a larger-scale housing development role and to be equipped to borrow funds from the private sector' (Housing NSW, 2007, p.3). By the mid-2000s the government took positive steps to encourage sector consolidation, with the number of NSW community housing providers falling from 43 in 2002 to 30 in 2009 (Adam Farrar, pers. comm., 2014).

Potential challenges for public housing tenants arose from the 2007 community housing strategy as it aimed at 'channelling a greater proportion of new housing supply through community housing, and continuing to transfer stock from public housing to community housing management' (Housing NSW, 2007, p.2). In the early years of community housing, organisations were either subsidised to headlease homes from private landlords or new (untenanted) properties were acquired by the Department of Housing and passed to community housing providers to manage. From the mid-1990s, and accelerating from the mid-2000s, 'tenanted transfers' occurred where groups of public housing tenants were encouraged to move to a community housing provider as landlord. This
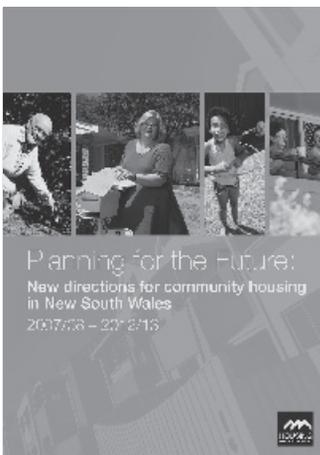
Planning for what type of community sector future? 2007

Source: .Housing NSW, 2007. From 2007 there was a growing focus in NSW on competition between community housing providers for new projects and a favouring of larger, high-capacity providers. This policy started under Labor and accelerated under the Liberals after 2011.

was a particular feature in NSW, accounting for 80 per cent of the tenanted transfers in Australia between 1995 and 2012 (Pawson et al., 2013).

Historically with tenanted transfers, NSW public housing tenants were given the right to remain with the state government as a landlord (this has ended only recently with the Social Housing Management Transfer (SHMT) program of 2018–20). Allowing tenants a 'free choice' as to whether they signed their lease over to a community housing provider or remained public housing tenants led to community housing organisations improving their services by expanding tenant participation, community development and 'customer' focus. However, as a 2001 Shelter brief, *Tenants' Choice or Hobson's Choice* by Michael Darcy and Jill Stringfellow, noted:

> [L]ittle consideration was given to the role that affected tenants should play in the transfer process. Tenants only had one decision to make: whether to transfer their tenancy or to be re-housed. All other decisions made throughout the process were outside the influence of tenants. Despite the fact that many of the tenants involved had occupied their dwellings for many years, their tenure over it was effectively held ransom to the Department of Housing's wider policy objectives.

Shelter's approach to the growing role of community housing providers was to not question the basic policy. Long gone were the days in the 1980s when several Shelter founders questioned the growth of the 'housing association' model, complained the government was looking to provide social housing on the cheap, and only supported not-for-profit housing organisations if they were housing co-operatives. The view by the 2000s was more positive, with Craig Johnston, writing in the Shelter newsletter in 2006, supporting title transfer from public housing, arguing this was 'the single most important issue for the growth of the community housing sector'. He went on to comment that 'while the public housing sector has its problems, we should not be pessimistic about the possibility of a healthier social system' (Shelter *ATH* 64, p.4).

With transfers from public housing, Shelter's position was established in 1999 after a tenant workshop: tenanted stock transfer should be completely voluntary and one of the outcomes needs to be greater engagement with and participation by tenants. Shelter worked with the government to draft a Tenant Participation Compact in 2003 to address the fact that after nearly two decades of government-sponsored tenant participation programs, nothing was formally enshrined in departmental policy (Shelter, 2003).

The government's initial approach to social housing redevelopment was a step in the right direction. In 2001 the Department of Housing launched their Community Renewal Program. In May 2002 the Minto renewal project was announced and Shelter participated in the Macarthur Housing Coalition, providing input into the redevelopment and helping ensure tenants' views and concerns were taken into consideration. Minto tenant engagement was a learning process for both the department and Shelter, with indications consultation needed to be started as early as possible on projects. With the Bonnyrigg estate renewal announced in November 2004, a consultant engaged on the project noted that 'unlike in previous projects the major strategy in Bonnyrigg has been to engage the community as much as possible in the development of the project' (Shelter *ATH* 64, p.5). Mary Perkins's view was less optimistic: 'the key decision-making is top-down, i.e. the Government/department decide and the community/tenants respond' (Shelter AR 2007 p.10).

Shelter worked with Bonnyrigg residents during the renewal process, for example, organising meetings in 2006–07 between Department of Housing staff and tenants from the Campbelltown estates on redevelopment concerns, with over 70 tenants attending. Shelter also gave direct input to the *Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project: Guidelines for re-housing tenants* document and contributed to the work of the Living Communities Consultative Committee. The reason Shelter was involved was partly to see whether redevelopments created better housing and tenant outcomes. Researcher Jon Eastgate noted in the Shelter newsletter that renewal skills were growing, and that while with Minto 'its early years can be seen as a case study in how not to do consultation … At the opposite end of the scale, the Bonnyrigg renewal project has been described as "best practice" in consultation, with deliberate and careful efforts to prepare residents for the consultation and help them gain the skills they needed to participate' (Shelter *ATH* 96, p.18).

A significant Shelter contribution during the 2000s was its briefs on estate renewal, mixed communities, community engagement over transfers, best practice in tenant participation and tenant surveys to uncover the 'lived reality' of estate renewal and transfers. Research papers were summarised in the newsletter, and topics addressed through workshops, seminars and as themes for the one-day annual conferences. In 2002–03, for example, Shelter held seminars on Social Mix in Our Cities and Renewing the Estate, with active participation from the minister's office, the Department of Housing and tenants.

Shelter's position was to move beyond basic information sharing and participation to push for tenants and government to jointly partner on projects. This was summarised in 2004: 'Tenants should be involved in the process from the beginning, and consultation and participation processes should be ongoing and should involve direct engagement in the master plan and feeding of ideas to architects, planners and Departmental staff. Indeed, ideally tenants should be engaged in the policy, planning and oversight processes from the beginning' (Shelter *ATH* 57, p.5). Unfortunately, while government's approach to tenant involvement in transfers and estate renewal had improved during the first half of the 2000s, later schemes – and state government's framing of community housing regulation in 2005 – placed less emphasis on tenant engagement and participation.

Shelter at work: Research, advocacy and events

Professionalising Shelter publications was another example of executive officer Mary Perkins's leadership. Shelter's *Around the House* newsletter developed in style and sophistication during the 2000s. It also became published on a regular basis, four times a year from 2004. This was a marked contrast to previous decades when newsletter production had veered between feast and famine, depending on funding cuts, staff turnover or 'being busy'. Johnston brought more discipline to production dates, though Shelter staff were still fully occupied, working at times long hours. For example, 2010–11 had been 'incredibly busy for Shelter NSW' according to their executive officer (Shelter AR, p.9).

Table 6: Shelter's prodigious output

| 1998–99	2008–09
5 newsletters	4 newsletters
2 Shelter briefs	6 Shelter briefs
8 fax/e-bulletins	11 e-bulletins
1 conference	2 conferences
1 workshop	1 workshop
1 submission	6 submissions
	2 training events
	6 conference presentations
	5 other briefing papers
	2 housing fact sheets
3 staff	5 staff

Source: Shelter ARs 1999 and 2009.

Serious newsletter articles became the norm, and there was less of the chatty, familiar and often amusing style of past decades. From the early 2000s Shelter newsletters were more likely to carry information articles than editorial comment. The December 2011 edition, for example, carried articles on land use planning, smoke dangers, children living in apartments, privacy in multi-unit dwellings, the Housing Appeals Committee and proposals to change tenancy legislation. Only the latter article by Robert Mowbray included a critique (Shelter *ATH* 87). Despite their more technical content, Shelter's newsletter continued keeping the housing sector informed of a wide range of initiatives. It also contained high-level summaries of the detailed Shelter briefs in a more digestible form for busy housing officers.

By the mid-2000s, principally fuelled by Johnston's prodigious writing rate, Shelter had become a significant housing policy factory with an output unlikely matched by other housing peaks. As Table 6 shows, the number of events and documents increased significantly during the decade, much faster than the growth in Shelter staff numbers.

A longstanding feature of Shelter's output and research has been the Shelter briefs. The first was prepared in December 1987, analysing the state budget, and the most recent brief, number 61, issued in August 2017, on *Equitable Density: The place for low income and disadvantaged households in a dense city*. Shelter briefs became a key component of the organisation's work from the mid-1990s, and generally between three and five were produced each year from this period. In the early years briefs were written by Shelter staff members, often John Nicolades or Will Roden in the 1990s, then Craig Johnston from the 2000s and later Katie Florance and Paula Rix. Several of the early briefs are policy submissions, not original research, though this approach changed by 2000 with a move to briefs featuring empirical research and housing policy analyses.

As the numbering system was not always consistent, and not all early briefs have been kept, the best guess is that the first Shelter brief subcontracted to an external consultant was Gary Cox's January 1998 brief (number 12) on retaining low-cost housing. Such consultants often had a PhD, with regular features by Dr Gary Cox, Dr Tony Gilmour and Dr Robert Mowbray. Other consultants had technical or sector knowledge such as Emilio Ferrer, who modelled the ability of community housing providers to increase housing supply in *Leveraging Affordable Rental Housing for Sustainability and Growth* (Shelter Brief no. 45, December
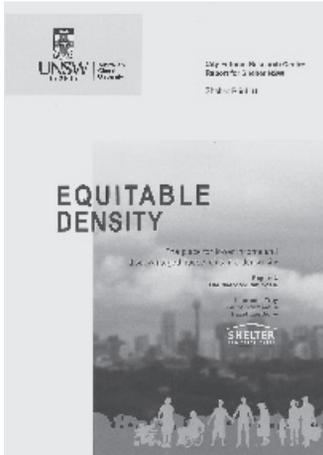
How brief is a Shelter brief?

Source: Shelter Brief no. 61, July 2017. The Shelter briefs did not necessarily live up to their name. One influential paper by City Futures UNSW researchers Hazel Easthope and Sarah Judd ran to 78 pages, 32,000 words and 186 bibliographical references (Shelter Brief no. 42, June 2010).

2010). Paul van Reyk and Jon Eastgate, housing activists and consultants, have also been regular authors of briefs.

The most memorable and influential briefs were those not focused on housing policy. A good example is commissioning research into little explored areas and finding unexpected results, such as Shelter's 2004 joint paper with ACOSS on Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), which found half of CRA recipients still paid more than 30 per cent of their incomes in rent, and one in ten paid more than 50 per cent. This research was widely quoted in the media and in housing policy discussions.

Some publications opened new areas of policy that helped set the debate going forward, for example, Johnston's *Housing Policy and Social Mix: An explanatory paper* (Shelter Brief no. 18, January 2002), or Chris Elenor's *Provisions for Adaptable Housing by Local Government in NSW* (Shelter Brief no. 30, October 2006). Peter Phibbs and Nicole Gurrans' *Demographia Housing Affordability Surveys: An assessment of the methodology* demolished the credibility of a widely circulated annual international housing affordability survey (Shelter Brief no. 35, October 2008). The other great contribution of the briefs has been gathering tenant input to help frame housing reforms. Jon Eastgate, Paula Rix and Craig Johnston's *View from the Estates: Tenants' views of the impact of changes in eligibility and allocation policies on public housing estates* was based on five tenant focus groups in five locations (Brief no.47, June 2011).

Other Shelter publications were submissions in response to an increasing number of public agencies asking for input to policy proposals. Organisations include the Productivity Commission; the NSW departments

Box 13: Shelter Hall of Fame: Craig Johnston, man of letters

Johnston's background was as a freelance social policy analyst. He has also been a mover and shaker in the gay liberation movement since 1972, described as 'one of this country's most important gay activists'. His skill building and networks were formed in the inner city of Sydney, similar to many of Shelter's founders.

He was involved from Shelter's early years as a member and through his role at NCOSS as a deputy director. Johnston's first article appeared in the Shelter newsletter in 1987 on Unhousing the NSW Liberals, analysing their election manifesto (Shelter newsletter 41). This piece, like so many, was balanced and polite, despite the tsunami soon to be released when Premier Greiner assumed office.

Johnston was Shelter's longest serving policy officer, with 14 years continuous service between 2002 and 2016. His skill – and passion – was analysing public documents and

assessing data trends so the government could be held to account. The many and detailed documents, and reviews of state and Commonwealth budgets, have helped support and further Shelter's advocacy.

Craig pioneered the early community education work of Shelter which was designed to enable public tenants, resident groups and community organisations to better understand the housing policy issues and advocate more strongly for their needs, their community's needs or their clients needs … He is hard working and generous, willing to assist colleagues and share in order to make the whole work and has a fine sense of humour' (Shelter *ATH* 108).

Source for image: Australia Fair event, 2007. Image held by Shelter. Further background information from a review of Johnston's 1999 book, *A Sydney Gaze: The making of gay liberation*, by Graham Willet, <www.freelibrary.com> (accessed 17 April 2018).

of housing, planning and others; the NSW ombudsman; and committees of the lower and upper houses of both NSW and Commonwealth parliaments. Shelter sometimes sought direct consumer input through these submissions, for example, for the 2002 NSW Legislative Council Review into Community Housing, Shelter surveyed community housing tenants. In 2003 consultations took place in Sydney, Liverpool, Wagga, Orange, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Wollongong and Newcastle for Shelter's discussion document for the 2003 CSHA. At times Shelter's submissions would be on topics not directly related to housing, such as planning reform, tax, welfare payments, homelessness services, fair trading provisions and so on. A useful role for Shelter was to show how the different areas of government activity worked together to impact the housing market, for example, the impact of planning, welfare benefits and taxation settings on housing affordability. Shelter also provided tenant and community consultation services for state and Commonwealth government on new housing initiatives. An example was over the 2001 National Housing Strategy, where Shelter conducted NSW community consultations between March and June 2001 to determine what the community sector saw as housing issues and priorities. Eleven consultation sessions involving about 400 people were held. A paper of the results was published in December 2001 and distributed to participants, the minister, departmental officials and the Shelter membership. By the next decade this type of project was more often contracted out to consultancy firms.

Consultations were initiated in the 2000s by Shelter to establish their own policy positions and better understand NSW housing conditions.


The busy events diary, 2005–12

Source: Documents held at Shelter's office.

Most Shelter members were based in the Sydney metropolitan region, and events nearly always took place in Sydney. Throughout Shelter's history the organisation has faced an uphill struggle to better connect with regional and remote parts of the state. Normally the approach was to cover regional news items in the newsletter, though this has not been done consistently. In 2016, after a five-year gap, Shelter carried out a statewide consultation to connect with regional service providers and members and understand key housing issues in different areas. The process involved 17 sessions and input from 173 people. Local variations in housing problems were apparent. In certain areas, seasonal events and tourism have significant impact, with lower-cost accommodation filled preferentially with tourists at the expense of locals.

During the early 2000s Shelter expanded its program of conferences, seminars and events. These brought together academics and researchers, housing policymakers and officers, community workers and activists to hear presentations and have conversations that they would not otherwise have in their respective spheres of activity. Such events took a time to work efficiently. With a one-day Shelter conference in May 2002 the date was too close to the Federation's conference on community housing that took place the following week. While the two organisations discussed ways of preventing this happening again, the date of the Shelter seminar couldn't be changed since the venue was booked and the minister had confirmed. Shelter agreed to promote the Federation's conference and took part in presentations.

A continuing annual event was the one-day Shelter conference. These focused on specific themes so were more like masterclasses than the omnibus events organised by AHURI or the NSW peak body for community housing. For example, in November 2002 a one-day event was held at the University of Sydney in partnership between Shelter, the I.B. Fell Housing Research Centre led by Col James and the University of Western Sydney's Urban Frontiers Program. Seventy people attended, with a theme of Social Mix in Our Cities (Shelter AR 2003, p.23).

The level of sophistication increased, with the June 2012 Explorations in Non-Profit Housing conference attracting sponsorship from City West Housing, St George Community Housing and UnitingCare. By this date conference attendances could be as high as 190 people. Shelter's conferences remained relatively low-key and affordable to attend compared to offerings from AHURI, the Federation (now CHIA NSW) or a growing number of private sector conference organisers. Perhaps as a result of the
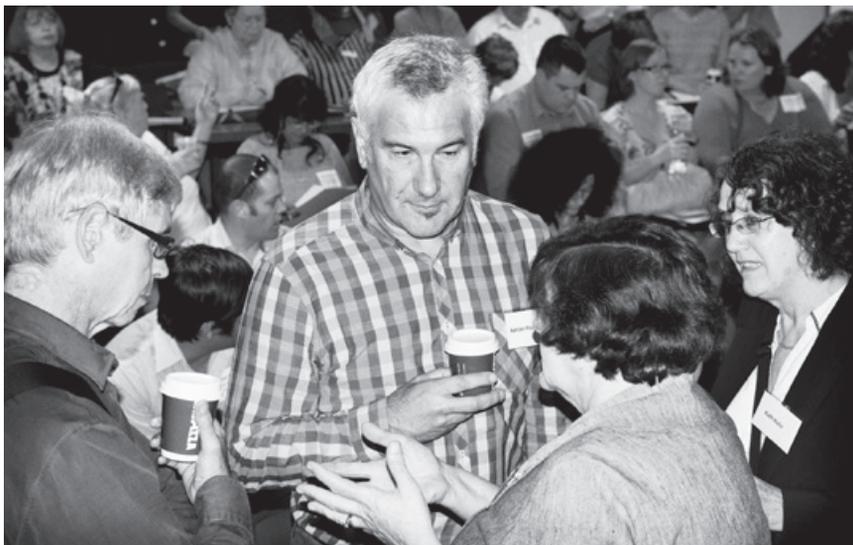
What's the rent seminar, 2012
Source: Shelter *ATH* 88, p.7. In the image: Adam Farrar, Adrian Pisarski (chair, National Shelter), and professors Vivienne Milligan and Kath Hulse. The seminar was held jointly in February 2012 with the Tenants' Union, attracting 97 delegates.

competition, or the staff time needed to run a conference, the last Shelter one-day conference took place in 2015, with the 2016 event cancelled.

In the 2000s Shelter events became more closely linked to current housing issues and often had a dissemination focus. A seminar was hosted in May 2002 to discuss issues arising from the 'Financing Affordable Housing: A third way' paper produced by the Affordable Housing National Research Consortium. Well over 100 people attended the seminar, opened by the deputy premier and housing minister Dr Andrew Refshauge. In November 2007 a one-day conference was held on a topic rising in importance in the run-up to the Commonwealth election: Climate Change – How Does it Affect Low-Income Households?

Shelter has been involved informally in housing information and education from the 1970s. This became more tailored in the 2000s for social housing tenants in areas destined for estate renewal or management transfers. For example, a specific program for Bonnyrigg residents was delivered in 2005. Into the 2010s Shelter more formally acknowledged their information role in the revised strategy. The first lecture series on Housing Economics for Non-Economists started in March 2010, usually led by

charismatic Professor Peter Phibbs, and has now become a regular feature. From 2014 a new seminar on How the Housing System Works started, directed particularly to people working in community organisations helping low-income people with housing needs as well as for tenants, activists and students.

Rudd's revolution, and Shelter's contribution

Commonwealth funding had been tight under the Howard government to 2007, and there was little interest in housing policy with – tellingly – the role of housing minister abolished. This all changed with the election of Prime Minister Rudd, a man with a vision for greater national leadership and intervention on the key issues facing the country. One of these challenges was the lack of affordable housing, especially in capital cities. The debate broadened from concern about accommodating very low income and special needs groups to a 'generation rent' unable to access the fabled Australian dream of home ownership.

In the years leading to the November 2007 Commonwealth election, National Shelter worked hard to influence the opposition party's policies. By the 2004 Commonwealth election, Labor had committed to appointing a national housing minister and implementing a national housing strategy if elected to power, both policy positions advocated by National Shelter. As the Shelter newsletter proudly reflected, 'the ALP has listened to what we and others have been saying, so this can be seen as a positive step towards bringing housing's importance up a notch' (Shelter *ATH* 59, p.14). Labor also committed in 2004 to deliver an additional 11,000 social housing homes, a number below the figure Shelter looked for, so 'while the ALP's response delivers some of what Shelter would like to see, there are quite a few gaps that need filling, especially in the tax area' (ibid., p.4).

Between 2004 and 2007 National Shelter began rebuilding relationships with all political parties, and with private sector and union partners. Adrian Pisarski of National Shelter helped host the National Affordable Housing Summit in 2004, which was also backed by a broad alliance of the Housing Industry Association, the Australian Local Government Association, ACOSS, National Shelter, the ACTU and the Community Housing Federation of Australia (CHFA). The ongoing cross-sector National Affordable Summit Group was chaired by Professor Julian Disney (Shelter *ATH* 93, p.7). Later, in July 2006, a Canberra National Forum on Housing Affordability attended by National Shelter and representatives of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors released a proposal for a National

Affordable Rental Initiative (NARI) designed to provide incentives for long-term investment in affordable housing. This would later be known as NRAS.

For the first time in recent memory, housing affordability became a key campaign issue in the November 2008 election. National Shelter along with the Summit Group pushed a raft of policies on housing issues, and in Shelter's view 'a substantial part of the policy platform put forward was taken on by the Australian Labor Party. In particular the National Rental Affordability Scheme [NRAS], the elevation of housing to a ministerial portfolio and a commitment to address homelessness were welcome initiatives by the federal Labor Party' (Shelter AR 2008, p.7).

With Labor winning the 2007 election, significant changes were quickly implemented under the leadership of Commonwealth housing minister Tanya Plibersek. With the benefit of hindsight, the rate of change was probably too fast. Symbolic of the new government's approach, the narrow and technocratic CSHA gave way to a more comprehensive National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). This was accompanied by several National Partnership Agreements between the states and Commonwealth, including on homelessness. These promised more funding, though – in theory if not practice – greater oversight of where the money was spent.

NRAS was launched in July 2008, promising delivery of 50,000 new affordable homes across Australia in a $5 billion subsidy scheme. However, it was Prime Minister Rudd's efforts to address the global financial crisis that led to perhaps the greatest funding of the social housing sector since the decades after the Second World War. The Social Housing Initiative of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan from February 2009 provided a $1.8 billion investment in NSW alone for 6,000 new social housing properties. Most were intended to have asset ownership and management rights transferred to community housing providers to leverage further portfolio growth in the future.

Shelter's executive officer wrote in September 2009: 'Shelter NSW, like many others, welcomed this expenditure as long overdue and noted that this was the sort of commitment needed on an ongoing basis rather than as a one-off emergency measure' (Shelter *ATH* 78, p.1). She later noted Commonwealth Labor had introduced a 'suite of potential positive changes in our housing system … The election of the Rudd Labor Government created new opportunities for Shelter to further its objectives' (Shelter AR 2009, p.9).

Tanya Plibersek addresses Shelter's conference, 2009
Source: Shelter *ATH* 78, p.25: 'The Commonwealth minister announced funding of $200,000 over two years for National Shelter (the national housing peak has been unfunded since 1996).'

By the late 2000s the Labor Commonwealth government was more progressive on housing issues than the Labor state government. For example, with NRAS, which needed co-funding between the two levels of government, Johnston noted in 2009 'the inadequate funding of NSW participation in the current round (round 3) of the scheme highlights the half-hearted position of the state Government' (Shelter *ATH* 79, p.5). Johnston noted wryly in the same article that 'sending a recommendation to the Department of Planning is like dropping a penny into a bottomless well. It can join the pile of unimplemented actions.' Initiatives such as the state government's 2009 State Environmental Planning Policy (affordable rental housing) were relatively weak and fell far short of a compulsory inclusionary planning approach which could have taken benefit from the unprecedented increase in Sydney property prices. Instead of benefitting lower-income residents, it was developers and property investors who gained most from the NSW government's housing policies.

In 2008 Mary Perkins's view, even with the Commonwealth initiatives, was 'the glass is only half full; the supply of housing affordable to low and moderate income households remains grossly inadequate. In our

Kevin Rudd's Christmas, 2009
Source: Images held at Shelter office. Like many in the housing sector, Shelter was hoping for a bumper year of funding in 2010.

campaigning during this year National Shelter and others argued that there was need for a long-term commitment to increasing the stock of public and non-profit housing by an additional 30,000 dwellings by 2012 … With the financial sustainability of the social housing sector unaddressed, the risk is that another round of reforms will lead to even tighter rationing' (Shelter *ATH* 75, p.7).

As shown above, in the early years of the Commonwealth Labor government Kevin Rudd was seen as a benign Santa figure, bringing gifts for the housing sector. By 2013, after a series of policy problems and leadership spills, views were different: 'reflecting on the past six years of Rudd and Gillard has seen real highs and lows. Heroic spending mixed with confused directions … Five ministers in six years is not a recipe for sustained policy improvement and structural reform' (Shelter *ATH* 93, p.9).

7.2 Shelter since 2011: Surviving in a changing world

By the time of the March 2011 state election, Labor had been in power for 16 years. Their premiers and housing ministers came and went in quick succession after Bob Carr's resignation. The electorate were ready for a change, but in which direction?

NSW Liberal's housing version I: A new age of uncertainty

The voters sensed it was time for a change. NCOSS launched its 2011 campaign – 'Vote 1: Fairness in NSW' – a year out from the election so it could better inform the parties' policy formation. Shelter's state election campaign was branded Access Choice Liveability and aimed to

focus on a limited number of practical solutions to housing issues. These included a call for shared equity, landlord tax incentives to rent properties to tenants at lower rents, increased subsidies to private renters at risk of homelessness, greater funding for Housing NSW, more resourcing for Aboriginal community housing providers, greater public housing tenant participation, the use of the planning system for mandatory 10 per cent accessible housing in new projects and a better design of higher density housing developments.

In comparison to previous decades, Shelters housing policy suggestions were moderate, unlikely to rock the boat of either major party. There were no calls for thousands of new social housing dwellings, with the focus on calling for an increased Housing NSW budget 'to enable the agency to avoid asset-stripping to maintain its operations' (Shelter *ATH* 84, p.5). By contrast, during the 2011 election the Federation (now known as CHIA NSW) called for transfers from public housing so the community housing sector could reach 35 per cent of social housing, for asset transfers on all currently managed properties and a limited government rent guarantee to allow more bank borrowing.

The 2011 election was a resounding Liberal victory, with Labor suffering a two-party swing of 16 percentage points, the largest against a sitting government in Australia since the Second World War. Housing activists expected changes, though the government under Premier O'Farrell was not expected to make fundamental changes. Before the election Shelter director Adam Farrar had written that the growth of the community housing sector was 'one area of policy where we believe there is bipartisan support' (Shelter *ATH* 84, p.6). This was one of the few times where Farrar's normally razor-sharp instincts were wrong.

After the election the social housing business was split, with tenancy management – which had been rebranded Housing NSW in 2008 – remaining in the Department of Human Services (later renamed the Department of Family and Community Services, FACS), and assets were transferred to the Land and Housing Corporation in the Department of Finance and Services. There were two ministers responsible, yet neither took the title of housing minister. In a further chair-shifting exercise, in August 2013 the assets part of the business returned to FACS though was run as a separate entity. As Farrar later commented: 'it is very hard to deliver effective, let alone innovative, housing services while public housing services are buried in a mega-department like FACS; and while the majority of the assets are tightly controlled by a part of the system

Box 14: Shelter Hall of Fame: Adam Farrar, long-distance rider

Farrar has become a familiar lycra-clad figure in Shelter's office, with his prized racing cycle. His career demonstrates both a lifelong dedication to housing activism and the extremely close links between NSW housing peak bodies and support agencies. Through people like Farrar moving from one organisation to another, either through staff transfers or cross-organisational board experience, knowledge is passed on and the sector's 'corporate memory' retained.

Back in the 1970s Farrar had briefly been a voluntary child carer at Elsie Women's Refuge. During a period as a journalist and publications officer at ACOSS, he wrote articles about topics such as squatting. He was appointed to the housing role at NCOSS in 1988 (later deputy director) then moved back to ACOSS.

His connection with Shelter has been as treasurer (1986–87 to 1993–94), chair (1995–96), director (1994–95, 1996–97, 2003–04, 2011–12 and 2012–13) and at the time of writing principal policy officer. In his 'spare time' he worked for ACOSS (1992–95), was executive director of the National Community Housing Forum (1996–2003), executive director of the NSW Federation of Housing Associations (2003–12) and vice-president of NCOSS (2014–present).

Farrar is a living encyclopedia of housing sector knowledge, with a near-unparalleled set of lived experiences across his varied career as well as a razor-sharp knowledge of facts and figures. Like Mary Perkins, his deep passion is concealed by a calm, smooth exterior. He is the archetype of a person to work in a peak body, and a formidable – though always charming – adversary if crossed.

Source: Image of Shelter's November 2006 AGM, from photo held at Shelter office. Farrar is standing, Lesley Garton is second from the left, acting as returning officer, and Rod Plant third from the left. Extra material from Shelter *ATH* 26, p.2 and personal communication.

not responsible for delivering services for tenants' (Shelter *ATH* 110, p.15). FACS minister Pru Goward penned an article in the first Shelter newsletter after the election that sounded positive about the role of social housing and in a tone little different to the previous Labor government:

> I consider housing an essential service. It is one of the keys to social inclusion – to increased individual and community capacity, to social and economic participation, to environmental sustainability and to helping people reach their full potential …
>
> There is also increasing evidence that housing strengthens investment made in a range of other areas, reduces Government expenditure on human services and within the justice system and, more importantly, leads to good outcomes for individual and family wellbeing …
>
> There is a growing role for the community housing sector. The not-for-profit social housing sector is becoming increasingly sophisticated and is well placed to play a greater part in working with Government to manage the complexities of providing 'safety net housing' with their extensive community networks and strong relationships with a variety of other non-Government service and support providers (Shelter *ATH* 85, pp.1, 10).

In a further positive sign of a good relationship between Shelter and the government, Pru Goward also spoke at Shelter's Welcome Home conference in June 2011. However, the days of regular meetings with the minister ended when Labor lost power, and most ministerial communication was through formal letters. Fortunately, Mike Allen remained head of Housing NSW and was able to keep the dialogue open between Shelter and what remained of the housing ministry after partial dismemberment. Shelter's chair commented that 'our strong and positive relationship with Mike Allen, Chief Executive of Housing NSW, continues and we thank him for his unfaltering support' (Shelter AR 2012, p.7). Mike Allen's view is:

> As CEO I had a very strong and valued working relationship with Shelter, especially having worked with Mary [Perkins] and Craig [Johnston] particularly in earlier positions I had held. The relationship was characterised by mutual trust and professional collegiality. We didn't always agree but respected each other's opinions and positions. I was also comfortable to seek Mary/Shelter's advice on a range of issues, formally and informally. The capacity to speak confidentially and frankly, I think, was something we both valued and benefitted from.
>
> Shelter was great source of policy views and ideas, and was always an excellent sounding board and voice for the views of housing customers and the sector generally. They played a key role on a number of [departmental committees] and working groups (Mike Allen, pers. comm., 2018).

A problem the state Liberal government inherited was the dire financial position of the social housing 'business'. In a damning 2013 report, Housing NSW was declared 'not financially sustainable long-term' and criticised for 'the absence of a clear direction' (NSW Auditor-General, 2013, p.3). The initial response was to take an increasingly punitive approach to public housing tenants. In January 2013 an undeclared occupant amnesty over a two-month period led to 4,000 reports from tenants, neighbours and anonymous callers. Public housing tenancy succession rules were tightened in March 2013. In future only 'priority need' adult children and others could takeover a tenancy from a parent. NSW followed a controversial and contentious English housing initiative by introducing a 'bedroom tax' scheme in June 2013, with single people charged $20 per week and couples $30 per week if their property has vacant bedrooms and they refuse two alternative housing offers.

Shelter and other community groups made representations and expressed their concern that these changes did not take account of the circumstances of some of the most vulnerable groups of social housing applicants and residents. However, following the Mary Perkins Doctrine (see section 6.2) of 'co-operative dialogue', Shelter took part in Housing NSW sessions discussing change implementation. History repeated itself with Labor's 2005 Reshaping Public Housing approach echoed in 2013 by a Liberal government, and both times Shelter was involved in the implementation hoping to ameliorate the worst aspects.

Two other problems emerged under the Mark-1 Liberal de facto social housing policy (as no document had been issued). First, as discussed in section 5.3, a scorched-earth approach was taken to Millers Point public housing tenants – all of whom would be displaced – and the proceeds of selling expensive prime real estate would be reinvested in an unspecified area within government. Second, community housing providers would not automatically receive title of properties transferred to their management under the Nation Building program as had been intimated. The incoming government started with a sceptical view on the community housing model as it was associated with Labor. Instead, new contracts were drawn up requiring housing providers to put a business case and demonstrate the number of additional housing units they could produce through leveraging bank debt. Much of the title transfer process, also known as 'vesting', was delayed until 2014.

The Commonwealth in retreat

In September 2013 a Coalition government under Prime Minister Tony Abbott was elected. The partial retreat of the Commonwealth from housing policy – which began under Prime Minister Julia Gillard and during the second Rudd administration – accelerated with the Coalition in power (Gilmour and Milligan, 2012). In November 2013 the National Housing Supply Council was abolished in a move not only opposed by Shelter but by the Property Council, Real Estate Institute of Australia and the Housing Industry Association.

The new Commonwealth government did not appoint a housing minister, and social housing responsibilities passed as far as possible to the states. No new NRAS incentives were issued after May 2014, and national peak bodies such as the Community Housing Federation of Australia (CHFA), Homelessness Australia and National Shelter had an unwelcome yuletide present when their future funding was terminated just a few days before Christmas 2014.

Both the Commonwealth and NSW governments located their legacy social housing departments in social welfare ministries and retained strict limits on applicant eligibility. As Mary Perkins noted in 2014, 'we are concerned about our Governments' (at both State and Commonwealth levels) increasingly narrow vision for our social housing system … In our view, the constant process of redefining who's in need in order to ever more tightly ration social housing fails to address the underlying issue – the growing undersupply of housing affordable for and accessible to very large numbers of low and moderate-income households' (Shelter AR 2014, p.12).

The 'efficiency dividend' cuts under the last Liberal Commonwealth government were not repeated. As Adam Farrar noted: 'It will be important to continue to urge the Government not to repeat the reduction of Commonwealth funding for state social housing programs that we saw over the life of the Howard Government. Once again, the fact that these haven't already been targeted in the search for savings is some comfort' (Shelter *ATH* 94, pp.6–7). However, NAHA funding fell in real terms and there were no national schemes proposed to increase social and affordable housing supply. The only glimmer of hope has been the proposed launch of aggregated bond finance for affordable housing by the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation scheduled for mid-2018.

NSW Liberals' housing version II:
More promising Future Directions

For the first three years after the Liberal's 2011 election victory Shelter and the NSW housing sector came into conflict over the tightening of public housing rules and regulations, forced relocation of longstanding tenants from Millers Point (section 5.3) and the reluctance to transfer ownership of Nation Building properties to community housing providers. There was also uncertainty given the absence of a social housing strategy. In July 2013 the auditor-general recommended a NSW social housing policy be released by December 2013. As commentators were still waiting for a policy by September 2014, Shelter's newsletter considerately included a crossword puzzle to help pass the time (Shelter *ATH* 98, p.24).

Significant change happened when a harsh and hesitant first period of Liberal state government housing policy (Mark I) morphed into a more progressive, holistic approach (Mark II). There was a new social housing minister, Brad Hazzard, appointed in April 2015, new money and a softening of attitudes – for example, an amelioration of the earlier harsher approaches to Millers Point tenants. A clear symbol of the change in mood brought by Brad Hazzard was the holding of a social housing forum held in May 2015, led by ex-premiers Nick Greiner (Liberal) and Morris Iemma (Labor). At an event of pure theatre, Nick Greiner memorably described NSW public housing as 'crap', then went on to say 'this is an area where something bloody well ought to happen'. Morris Iemma complained as premier he had been 'up against hesitant Government agencies that were risk-averse, not wanting to reform and not making it a priority' (*SMH*, 2015). According to Brad Hazzard his objective was to get 'more social and affordable housing on the ground as soon as possible – this should not be about politics, this should be about delivering to the community' (Shelter *ATH* 101, p.3).

A *Future Directions in Social Housing* discussion paper was eventually issued in November 2014 with Farrar writing in the Shelter newsletter that he considered the proposed three pillars framework – of more social housing, better opportunities to leave social housing, and a better social housing experience – a 'mixed bag'. He identified a noticeable gap in private rental market failings: 'If we force people into a private rental market today that manifestly does not work for them, the only solutions will again be overcrowding and in too many cases, going without meals' (Shelter *ATH* 99, p.19).

    In the consultation period, Shelter played a particularly active role supporting the housing sector and activists express their views and helping to clarify some of the issues at stake. Shelter held three sector forums, in addition to the extensive process of government consultation through 25 open public consultation sessions, 45 district consultations with tenants and stakeholders, 12 central stakeholder forums and six roundtables with key policy stakeholders. Shelter's submission to the discussion paper was positive about the government's acknowledgement that many tenants would stay in the social housing system long term, and that social housing providers should give more opportunities for tenants and communities. However, Shelter questioned private rental as a suitable destination for many public housing tenants and made clear that 'the future of the social housing system depends as much on what Government does to fix the private rental market as it is within social housing' (Shelter *ATH* 100, p.12).

    Several of Shelter and the sector's views were incorporated into the final version of the *Future Directions* paper, which was launched by the state government in January 2016. For example, there was over $1 billion funding placed into a sovereign-wealth-style Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) that would generate income for new social and affordable housing supply. Changes were proposed to improve the working of the private rental market for low-income households through greater support to sustain tenancies. Public input through consultation on the *Future Directions* discussion paper had, according to Farrar, led to 'a sea change in the Government discussion of social housing' (Shelter *ATH* 101, p.7). There was now broader thinking beyond just social housing, and less focus on the ability to and benefits of transitioning out of social housing for many people. Crucial points that had previously been rejected by government were now being heard.

    Shelter's Mary Perkins was quoted in the *SMH* saying that social housing minister Brad Hazzard deserved credit for being the 'first housing minister in a long time to take this seriously' with plans at least to turn around the loss of public housing stock (*SMH*, 2016). For the first time in many years – apart from the Nation Building economic stimulus – the NSW strategy allowed the supply of social housing to grow with an additional 6,000 social and affordable homes under Communities Plus, and potentially as many as 10,000 extra under SAHF. Farrar, writing in the newsletter, commented that 'Shelter welcomes this and congratulates the Government on the turnaround … a strength of the policy is that it brings together growth,
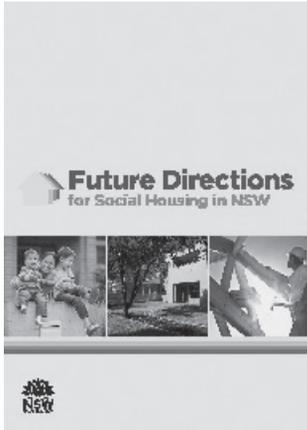
A housing strategy at last, 2016
The three main initiatives of the strategy are the Communities Plus program for social housing estate renewal, the Social Housing Management Transfers (SHMT) from public to community housing and the $1 billion Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF). Image © State of New South Wales through Department of Family and Community Services.

good management and the creation of new opportunities for tenants' (Shelter *ATH* 104, p.6). Wendy Hayhurst of the NSW community housing peak body noted that '*Future Directions* is chapter one of a potentially great story' (Shelter *ATH* 104, p.18).

The key innovations of the *Future Directions* paper are described in the illustration above. Other initiatives included aiming to increase by 5 per cent the number of successful transitions out of social housing. This would be from the 'opportunity group' tenants who could be supported to become more independent, potentially through employment and training opportunities. There would be also greater use of social impact investments, and more use of outcomes measurement. New private rental assistance products such as rental brokerage services and rental bond support products would be introduced to ease the move to the private rental sector.

Shelter's criticisms of *Future Directions* included the lack of inclusionary zoning, the need for an overall affordable housing strategy to encompass private rentals and a call for a detailed implementation plan, annual targets and an evaluation. There was also disagreement on whether the 'opportunity group' could realistically be expected to exit social housing without more financial support, and opposition to the principle of public asset sales in Communities Plus (see below). Shelter's approach was often pragmatic, and where direct opposition had not been successful they would work closely with government, the housing sector and tenants to smooth implementation of initiatives with which they might not agree in principle.

The Communities Plus program involved social housing estate renewal through knockdown, rebuilding at higher densities, moving to mixed

tenure neighbourhoods and selling some properties to market purchasers to cross-subsidise. Importantly, in some cases social housing dwellings onsite would increase in number and relocated residents would be offered to return to the same area. The first 'large' renewal project was announced in May 2017 at Ivanhoe, Sydney, with the delivery of around 3,000 to 3,500 new homes which included up to 1000 social and 128 affordable units to be managed by community housing provider Mission Australia Housing. Johnston commented in the Shelter newsletter that 'unlike some other estate redevelopment initiatives of recent years, however, we have not been dosed with "break-up the dysfunctional estates" rhetoric. The case for the initiative has been cast around a need to grow the supply of social-housing dwellings' (Shelter *ATH* 103, p.19).

Shelter, the Tenants' Union and the City Futures Research Centre at UNSW agreed to partner in a project to develop 'A Compact for Renewal' for Communities Plus and other urban renewal projects, based on

Working with tenants on their Future Direction, 2017

Source: Event organised in Coffs Harbour by Shelter, May 2017, to engage tenants on Social Housing Management Transfers. Community housing tenants Dolores Close and Peter Harris, from the North Coast Community Housing Tenant Council, and Sue Dalmay, a tenant with Tenancy Links in Coffs Harbour, described what tit is like moving over from public housing, and how landlord services compare. Image held at Shelter office.

principles established in an earlier compact in 2003. During 2016, Shelter held social housing tenant focus groups across eight Sydney estates that experienced renewal over the last ten years. The compact was intended to become an agreement between the NSW Land and Housing Corporation, developers and tenants about how social housing urban renewal would be conducted. The five guiding principles should be: respect for tenants, acknowledgement that renewal has damaging and disruptive impacts, acknowledgement that impacts should be mitigated and minimised, a commitment made to real engagement, and tenants should receive a fair share of the benefits from renewal (Shelter, 2017b). During the second stage of the project Shelter presented these findings to renewal agencies in NSW, including government and community sector agencies, seeking their feedback and agreement. Shelter also held focus groups during 2016–17 with tenants at Airds, Bonnyrigg, Minto, Riverwood, Redfern, Waterloo and Telopea along with a Vietnamese-speaking session at Bonnyrigg for those who might be impacted by Communities Plus projects.

Public housing tenants who attended a forum in December 2016 on Millers Point evictions told Shelter they wanted more chances to talk with other tenants from different areas about issues of concern to them. 'Tenants told us loudly and clearly that they hadn't been asked or consulted about these decisions before they were made' (Shelter *ATH* 109, p.25). In response, Shelter and the Tenants' Union agreed to run forums on the Social Housing Management Transfers (SHMT) with three held in Sydney and one in Coffs Harbour. The SHMT, announced in October 2016, was for whole of area tenancy and asset management outsourcing of 14,000 homes across four FACS districts in nine individual packages, plus a further 800 transfers of homes 'missed' during early voluntary transfers. The transfers represented the biggest growth in the community housing sector anywhere in Australia since the sector emerged in the 1980s.

A final positive development under the Mark II NSW Liberal government was the March 2017 release of the IPART review of social and affordable rents. The inquiry, to which Shelter made a submission, had the potential to undermine the social housing system by moving to market-based rents. Fortunately, as Farrar noted, the inquiry supported security of tenure, not fixed-term leases, with the government fully funding the gap between the income currently received by social housing providers and the real 'efficient cost' of providing social housing. Hence IPART 'independently reaffirms the basic principles of good social housing provision, because it has made a fundamental recommendation for making the enterprise viable … It's all

too rare that such inquiries seriously provide a way forward. Let's hope it doesn't stay on the shelf.' (Shelter *ATH* 109, p.3).

Shelter in a crowded peak market

While defunding national peak bodies had become something of a sport under the Howard and Abbott Commonwealth governments, NSW had seen little change to the peak body architecture. ARCH had been transformed in 2009 into a community housing provider, Common Equity NSW, and Homelessness NSW formed in 2004. The other housing peaks remained in place. In a paper presented to the February 2013 Shelter board meeting on 'management future directions,' Mary Perkins noted 'there are rumours that Government funding to the current number of peaks is in question, and as a result some NGOs [non-government organisations] are feeling tetchy and more inclined to mind their patches and compete at the possible expense of collaboration'.

In some areas NCOSS's work could overlap with Shelter's, but they generally worked collaboratively. There was also a limited overlap with the three homelessness peaks, the NSW Federation of Housing Associations (now CHIA NSW) and the Tenants' Union. Mary Perkins's concern was whether 'the roles and responsibilities of each of these organisations [is] clear to Government and the public generally'. At the February 2013 board meeting it was agreed by consensus that Shelter would start direct conversations with several peaks about collaborative working, starting with Homelessness NSW.

In 2014 Shelter took the lead in bringing all the NSW housing and homelessness peaks together for regular discussions on how to better work together. A document describing roles and areas of responsibility was developed and discussed with Housing NSW, and a 'Club HH' was formed by NCOSS, Shelter, the Tenants' Union, CHIA NSW, Homelessness NSW, Domestic Violence NSW and Yfoundations. This was part of a 'process intended to strengthen their advocacy, believing that there is strength in diversity and that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts' (Shelter, 2014). While some of the organisations had memoranda of understanding (MoU) with each other, the Club HH leaders thought that while MoUs could be useful defining areas of responsibility and roles, they do not always facilitate collaboration and co-operation.

Unfortunately, the Club HH inter-peak collaborative nearly broke down over the third component of the Future Directions strategy, the $1 billion Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF), with the surprise

announcement in March 2015 of a 'historic agreement' between the NSW government, NCOSS and Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (IPA) for SAHF.

Despite friction between NCOSS and Shelter in 2015 over the SAHF announcement, Mary Perkins sought to continue dialogue. The Shelter board noted in October 2016 that Club HH had continued to meet but had evolved from the more formal alliance originally envisioned to more of an information-sharing network able to take opportunities and solve problems as they arose. The relationship between the peak bodies has stabilised and there is an overall shared aim to increase the supply of social and affordable housing. Largely through the peak body funding structure set by the NSW government there is a complex web of peaks, and the occasional 'turf war' is to be expected.

In recent years a more crowded market has developed for affordable housing conferences and events, with competing products delivered by Shelter, CHIA NSW, AHURI, PowerHousing Australia and private companies. The issue of private conference providers was discussed at a forum of non-government agencies in February 2013: 'Shelter NSW, like many other NGOs, views the provision of topical and accessible conferences as a vital means of resourcing and developing our sector' (Shelter *ATH* 92, p.14). Therefore, Shelter opposed the high registration fees charged by private operators that exclude many community organisations and individuals from participating. Shelter event pricing aimed to keep fees at levels allowing low-income individuals to participate.

Around the (modernised) house, 2017
Source: Shelter *ATH* 109.

New leader, new direction?

Shelter under Mary Perkins continued a steady, consistent approach, though there started to be greater use of information and communications technology. The last hard copy version of *Around the House* appeared in June 2016 with a move to an online journal format. By December the publication had been radically redesigned.

In terms of housing policy, after 2011 Shelter's focus shifted, with less discussion on issues facing private rental tenants and more on the use of the planning system to deliver additional affordable housing and protect existing low-cost accommodation. Tenancy matters had stabilised after the Residential Tenancies Act 1987, and with legislative changes proposed in 2009 the Tenants' Union's view was that 'most of the changes that the draft Bill would make to the current law are improvements' (Shelter *ATH* 79, p.1). When the final legislation became clear in 2010, Ned Cutcher of the Tenants' Union noted that 'almost all of the included reforms have come after years of lobbying by advocacy groups such as the Tenants' Union of NSW' (Shelter *ATH* 82, p.7). One missing protection for private rental tenants was greater security of tenure, in particular preventing landlords terminating a tenancy without giving a reason. Shelter joined the Tenants' Union's co-ordinated Make Renting Fair campaign in 2017, continuing the partnership stretching back forty years.

In the first half of 2017 Shelter went through their first major staff change since the start of the new millennium. Mary Perkins and Craig Johnston retired, breaking their longstanding business partnership which dated back to 2001. The pair had steered Shelter through difficult times, especially in the early years when continued state government funding was still in question. The Mary Perkins Doctrine of constructive dialogue and a no-surprises relationship between Shelter and government seemed to have become firmly entrenched.

Incoming chief executive officer Karen Walsh recruited a largely new team, though Adam Farrar provided continuity and institutional knowledge of both Shelter and the wider housing sector. In a sign of a more direct lobbying approach on an issue not associated with Shelter's housing work, in December 2017 Shelter took the lead along with Homelessness NSW, The Tenants' Union, Churches Housing, NCOSS and Yfoundations to object to a proposed $2 billion spend on new sports stadia. The letter to Premier Berejiklian stated that 'there is nothing more important than a secure home and $2 billion can make a profound difference to the lives of

many. We urge the Government to invest the $2 billion of public money towards housing and support for the most vulnerable in our community' (Shelter, 2017a). Echoing the persistent and direct lobbying of Shelter stalwarts from the past – Beth Mitchell, Zula Nittim, Col James, Harvey Volke, Garry Mallard, John Nicolades and Robert Mowbray – we may be seeing the return to a more frank and open form of dialogue with government.

8 Champions of Change: Shelter Past, Present and Future

What are the major trends across Shelter NSW's long and eventful history? How successful has the organisation been in achieving its goals, and how have these goals evolved over time? Is Shelter maintaining relevance in a market crowded with peak bodies and industry associations?

A history of continuity, or of change?

While much has changed through Shelter's four decades in terms of their operating environment and the organisations that form the NSW housing system, the most striking observation is similarities between Shelter in 1974 and 2018. Shelter has had a similar number of staff and members over the years and retained a 'direct democracy' approach with members voting for directors. It also undertakes similar activities such as housing research, employs policy specialists, sends newsletters to members and supporters, arranges events, influences housing policy and lobbies ministers. While the technology has transformed, with a move away from postage stamps and fax machines, the messaging has changed less.

Shelter's positioning as an advocate for housing consumers, and as an informal housing policy 'think tank' (to use Craig Johnston's term, pers. comm., 2018), using carefully considered research and coalition building to influence government policy has remained steady. Unlike most interstate Shelters, National Shelter and Shelter in the United Kingdom, the NSW organisation has not diversified into other activities, such as acting as a community housing peak body or undertaking fee-for-service work. NSW is arguably the state that has a Shelter organisation in the 2010s most similar to those of the 1970s and 1980s. This continuity is perhaps less due to conservatism on the part of Shelter's leaders and more to the institutional setting in NSW, where state governments viewed housing and

homelessness policy through different lenses until relatively recently (Eleri Morgan-Thomas, pers. comm., 2018).

The ways of influencing politicians and policymakers are different in the 2010s to the 1970s. In the early days union power was brought to bear through Green Bans, picket lines, protest marches and letter-writing campaigns. More recently community groups have influenced the political process through targeted research reports, media releases, social media updates and lobbying policy influencers. Shelter has moved with the times, though occasionally relatively slowly and conservatively in areas such as media and communications. There are signs this is changing, with the new Shelter team in place from 2017 innovating around the use of social media and the CEO raising housing issues through television and radio appearances and speaking at events appealing to a wider audience.

Shelter's move away from direct action to more focused lobbying has not been as significant as might first appear. Despite some of the anecdotes told by 'elders' of the organisation, Shelter was never a solely radical, confrontational peak body. In the 1970s Shelter was often viewed as the 'respectable' wing of the housing activist movement and even at this stage produced considered, researched policy papers. These reports became more numerous and lengthy in the 2000s but have an earlier ancestry.

More direct housing action has usually been delivered through arm's-length bodies such as People for Public Housing (1990s) and the Millers Point Community Defence Group (2010s), though many Shelter members and staff have played an active role in these parallel organisations. The highest profile situations where Shelter was involved in public campaigns, including protest meetings and rallies against the NSW housing minister Terry Sheahan (1981), NSW housing minister Joe Schipp (1988), Prime Minister John Howard (1996) and NSW housing minister Pru Goward (2014), were led by alliances of activists and like-minded peak and community organisations, not by Shelter acting in isolation. One exception was Rod Plant's Woolloomooloo homelessness protest (2000), though it remains contested between people spoken to in researching this book as to whether he was acting individually or on behalf of the organisation.

Relationship with government: Antagonistic or 'no surprises'?

One important change that took place in Shelter's relationship with government was what in this book has been referred to as the Mary Perkins Doctrine. This can be summarised as adopting a more co-operative 'win-win' approach. Although most clearly expressed during the formative

years of Mary Perkins's time as executive officer in the early 2000s, the antecedents of the doctrine emerged in the second half of the 1990s or potentially earlier. The Mary Perkins Doctrine was grounded at a time when a further round of defunding seemed likely, and both government and Shelter wanted no repeat of the Woolloomooloo incident.

Shelter's post-2001 transition to a 'no surprises' approach with the state government accords with the research of doctoral candidate Maree Stanley on Queensland Shelter. Both organisations became 'insiders' under state Labor governments in this period, in contrast to the 'outsider' roles both before and after. The researcher's conclusions align with NSW:

> Over the last four decades the identity, structure and purpose of interest groups in Queensland has shifted. Adversarial relationships characterised by public protest and pressure for change, have often been replaced by public consultation, policy networks and requests for comment on government-proposed policy reform. 'Pressure group' has largely faded from the vernacular, replaced with the more benign 'interest group' as governments have become more inclusive. An appetite for evidence-based policy has contributed to the inclusion of non-state actors in policy discussion, as has the increasing reliance on the community sector to deliver social goods and services, albeit often with state or federal government funding (Stanley, 2015).

Back in 1983 a Shelter newsletter described the organisation's relationship with the NSW government at the time as 'characterised by words such as "cool", "antagonistic", "un-cooperative", "distrustful" and just plain "hostile"' (Shelter newsletter 24, p.4). Contrast this with a paper prepared for the May 2017 board: 'Shelter adopts a "no surprises" approach to critiquing Government policy and decisions – so Government knows what we think before we go public. We maintain regular dialogue across Government (political and agencies) and other NGOs to build understanding of our positions, concerns and approaches' (Shelter, 2017c, p.1).

Shelter's transformation to a less confrontational approach to government was parallel to changes made by other lobbying organisations such as Queensland Shelter, and impacted by the transition to receiving contractual public funding and becoming 'peak bodies'. Furthermore, with an ever-shortening media cycle governments are even more worried about negative publicity and are prepared to use the threat of peak-body defunding as a form of control. It is no idle threat given the fate of Shelter and a wide range of NSW community agencies in 1989, Shelter Victoria (1994), National Shelter (1997), Shelter NSW (threatened 2001), and Homelessness Australia, National Shelter and CHFA (2015).

Another driver for a more collaborative peak body–government relationship is that it is effective. Shelter developed a cosier 'insider' relationship with the Labor state government in the 2000s and had had some success in ameliorating the impact of some of more contentious policy proposals. This tactic is not universally supported within Shelter, and the 'battle for Millers Point' from 2014 led to soul-searching about how far Shelter could and should publicly oppose a policy it strongly disagreed with.

Mary Perkins noted in 2017 that 'Shelter's fortunes have waxed and waned over the years but it has endured with and without Government funding as an organisation able to speak for the punter/consumer/resident citizen' (Shelter AR 2017, p.10). The conventional story told about Shelter's history by several longstanding staff members in the organisation is that it operated as a non-grant-funded peak body between 1974 and 1984, and from 1989 to 1995. This suggests Shelter ran as a voluntary organisation for one third of its existence.

The reality is more complex. Funding for the Housing Information and Referral Service (HIRS) was received in 1979 and this became a 'sister' organisation to Shelter, with HIRS staff spending at least some of their time on Shelter work. During the early 1980s Shelter was subsidised by National Shelter. With the later defunded period, grants were received in 1993 to allow preparation of a business case for proper funding, and Shelter survived by John Nicolades spending part of his time on Shelter matters while employed by the Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility. Therefore, although the threat of defunding was always present, there was seldom a time when Shelter did not receive at least some form of income or in-kind support.

Mary Perkins's 2017 quote, given above, about Shelter speaking for 'the punter/consumer/resident citizen' has raised issues throughout Shelter's history. Initially the organisation saw itself becoming a mass movement, with housing residents joining as members. This did not happen, and membership recruitment campaigns had little impact, perhaps as a result of 'housing consumers' not self-identifying as a separate group with shared concerns. As a result, Shelter needed to speak on behalf of housing consumers based on assessment made by their housing professional staff, members and directors. This was not necessarily a problem, with peak bodies such as Volunteering NSW, the Council for Intellectual Disabilities and CREATE – the national peak body for young people in out-of-home care – in a similar position.

Policy analysis and network power

One area where Shelter has played an important role is bringing new housing issues into the public arena. For example, the plight of caravan park residents, or the impact of high-profile events such as the Olympic Games on homelessness and the availability of low-cost housing. There is a quick turnaround between Shelter identifying an issue and delivering a research paper. Compared to university research centres, with complex and slow ethics procedures, Shelter and its network of experts and consultants can work at lightning speed. However, one of Shelter's differentiating characteristics from other research centres is its ability to quickly and effectively disseminate research and let a wide range of interested parties understand the issue and Shelter's proposed solutions. This was seen most clearly in the publication of a special edition of the Shelter newsletter just days after the government announcement in March 2014 of the sale of social housing at Millers Point.

Shelter's network is critical to its success. Strong links between organisations have been formed over many years, one of the benefits of Shelter continuing with a relatively consistent role in the NSW housing sector for over four decades. With some peak bodies Shelter's links are even deeper, with NCOSS instrumental in establishing Shelter, the Tenants' Union formed by Shelter, and National Shelter and Shelter formed at the same time. Shelter benefits by not being aligned exclusively with residents or with landlords and is therefore better placed to form broad alliances when it is pushing housing policy changes. The organisation is also agnostic on tenure, supporting residents in public housing, community housing, private rental and crisis accommodation. CHIA NSW, the Housing Industry Association and Homelessness NSW all have more narrowly defined constituencies.

While organisational networks are important, so are people. Shelter has seen many prominent housing activists work as staff members, and at other times as directors: Ros Bragg, Joy Connor, Kerry Dent, Adam Farrar, Craig Johnston, Kenzie Messen, John Nicolades, Robert Mowbray, Mary Perkins, Paula Rix, Greg Thompson, Gerry van Wyk, Harvey Volke, Nick Warren and Karen Walsh. This internal exchange of people between executive and non-executive positions has helped Shelter retain a strong institutional memory and been important in building the skills of new generations of housing activists.

Many prominent Shelter figures have had prominent careers in other parts of the sector, for example, in community and co-operative housing (Deborah Georgiou, John Nicolades, Karine Shellshear and Karen Walsh), the NSW peak body for community housing (Adam Farrar and Lucy Burgmann), NCOSS (Mary Perkins, Adam Farrar, Craig Johnston, Gary Moore and Warren Gardiner), the Tenants' Union (Robert Mowbray Digby Hughes and Ned Cutcher), public housing (Harvey Volke, Eleri Morgan-Thomas and Mary Perkins), academia (Zula Nittim, Col James, Bill Randolph, Michael Darcy and Ben Spies-Butcher), homelessness (Sue Cripps, Gary Moore and Michael Coffey) and housing consultancy (Will Roden, Judy Stubbs, Jane Bradfield and Julie Nyland). Throughout Shelter's history there have been people working in the housing and peak body sectors who have been Shelter board members. Especially strong links have been with the Tenants' Union and NCOSS. This makes forming a coalition to lobby on housing issues more straightforward.

A consumer-led housing system?

There are a number of areas where Shelter has pushed unsuccessfully for a different set of policies to be followed. For many years Shelter favoured the housing co-op model as giving the greatest involvement for tenants. Until the mid-1980s Shelter was agnostic or antagonistic to community housing, though changed its approach when it became clear they were swimming against the tide, and with community housing increasingly seen as 'less bad' than public housing. Shelter's support of housing co-ops is probably linked to the collectivist approach of many of their founders and the values of the 1970s. Shelter was also established as a co-operative and retains to this day the direct election of directors by members, while many larger community housing and community service providers have ended this more open approach.

Housing co-ops expanded in the 1990s, after a slow start the previous decade when NSW was behind Victoria and South Australia in taking advantage of the Local Government and Community Housing Program. However, NSW co-op resident numbers remained well below those of community housing, and by the late 1990s the co-ops were converted en masse into a new type of hybrid community housing provider, and all future social housing growth would be of the more business-savvy housing associations. Community housing tenant empowerment arguably peaked in the 1980s and 1990s when Community Tenancy Schemes often had a majority of tenant directors. In later years corporate governance models

were often adopted by community housing providers, and the forms of 'tenant participation' common by the 2010s seldom gave residents control over significant decisions.

Shelter had more success pushing for public housing tenant participation. They lobbied housing minister Frank Walker, and in 1985 a participation policy was introduced. Shelter helped with implementation and training, and in the 1990s defended the structures when the Labor government tried to remove regional tenant committees. In the 2000s, Shelter acted as a close confidant of the state Labor government, helping elevate tenant involvement in housing estate renewal from disappointing levels on the Minto project (2002) to their apotheosis with Bonnyrigg (2004). In the campaign opposing Millers Point public housing sales (2014–17), Shelter campaigned for a more tenant-centric approach, and this was to some extent delivered by housing minister Brad Hazzard, although the housing sales policy was implemented.

Growing the network, competing in the network

The 'architecture' of NSW housing organisations and peak bodies was largely in place by the mid-1990s. Before then, the network was more complicated. In the 1970s there were many small, usually voluntary organisations with a singular focus – resident action groups, for example. A few peak and community organisations received funding, allowing staff to be employed – NCOSS (est. 1937), Sydney-based ACOSS (est.1951) and the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (est. 1974). Shelter joined the scene in 1974 as a voluntary organisation. Compared to the residents' groups it had broader housing aspirations, but it contrasted to the funded bodies focused just on housing and not a wider range of community services.

While Shelter owes its existence to NCOSS, most of the other peak bodies existing by the mid-2000s were either established by or shaped by Shelter. The Tenants' Union was a spin-off from a Shelter working group in 1976. From 1984 Shelter auspiced the Co-operative Housing Resource Group which later transformed into ARCH, the peak body for housing co-operatives. In 1985 Shelter co-ordinated the Community Housing Forum which later morphed into the Projects Association of Community Tenancy Schemes, itself laying the foundation for the establishment of the NSW Federation of Housing Associations in 1992 (renamed as CHIA NSW in 2018). Finally, Shelter worked with NCOSS and some of the larger agencies such as Sydney City Mission, the Salvation Army and Wesley Mission in

helping support homelessness service delivery organisations in the period before government funded the three peak bodies in 2004 (Sue Cripps pers. comm., 2018). One of these, Homelessness NSW – formerly the NSW and ACT Association of Homeless Persons Services – was funded in May 2004 and led by Sue Cripps ,who has been subsequently a longstanding Shelter director and chair.

Shelter was funded for these sector capacity building roles by government as it was one of the few organisations that had the means to undertake the task at the time. It also supported the establishment of City West Housing in 1994 and retains a preference shareholding. By laying the foundations of the contemporary housing system and organisational network, Shelter played a crucial role and – in part – was able to shape the new organisations in a way that better supported their vision of consumer-led housing services.

In a good example of unintended consequences, over time these new peak organisations grew in scale and capacity and started undertaking policy, advocacy, research and forums on broader housing issues, rather than specific sector concerns. Shelter now competes in a crowded market, with organisations such as NCOSS, NSW CHIA and Homelessness NSW where there is a potential overlap in some activity areas. To help reduce these overlaps and improve sector co-ordination, Shelter took the lead in establishing a Housing and Homelessness Club (Club HH) in 2015. Shelter has a less clearly defined peak-body constituency than organisations such as CHIA NSW (community housing providers) and NCOSS (community service agencies), therefore it needs to work hard to retain its role as the linchpin in the NSW housing network. However, one benefit for Shelter is that the organisation is less beholden to narrow interests and is able to take a broader view on housing policies.

Shelter is – and has always been – a networked organisation whose strength comes by forming alliances and coalitions. Inter-organisational links continue to be through shared beliefs, staff transfers, shared members, and cross-directorships. Working relationships between Shelter and other peak bodies have generally been good – or in some case excellent – and when they have been less than ideal it has often been Shelter who has taken action (such as helping establish Club HH). While part of a network, Shelter has not lost their distinct identity and ability to provide differentiated products and services. No other organisation in NSW has Shelter's level of skills in detailed housing policy analysis and action-based housing research that can be delivered far quicker than at university-based research centres.

Working behind the scenes

Many of Shelter's greatest achievements are seldom visible. Through providing considered input to government policy writers both at meetings and through submissions, Shelter can influence the final policy document. This happened with the Future Directions NSW social housing strategy in 2015–16, where government thinking moved beyond a narrow focus on just social housing, and the financial benefits to government of people transitioning out of social housing, to practical ways to ease the move from social rental to private rental. Shelter has a degree of freedom in setting their research agenda and deciding which government inquiries to make submissions to. The organisation has therefore built knowledge on topics not directly housing related such as planning reform, tax, welfare support, homelessness, fair trading provisions and so on. Shelter is well placed to demonstrate how the different areas of government activity impact the housing market, for example, the impact of planning, welfare benefits and taxation settings on housing affordability.

Where Shelter has not been able to change policies, such as with the 2005 Reshaping Public Housing policy, the organisation has made an important contribution through their ability to curb the excesses of more radical housing policies. Occasionally new initiatives have been proposed then abandoned after a campaign by Shelter and others – housing vouchers (HAVE) by the Fraser government in 1977 were shelved the following year. More often, the outline policy is introduced but it is in a less damaging format. In 1988 housing minister Terry Sheahan proposed a major limitation on community housing providers by returning capital properties to government and changing rent and allocation settings. Again, after a campaign involving Shelter and community housing organisations, the return of capital properties proposal was abandoned, and the sector survived.

More recently Shelter, National Shelter and other community groups opposed the Howard government's proposed end of the CSHA in 1996 – the result was CSHA continued and there would not be a move to market rents for social housing, though funding was cut as originally planned. In 2014 proposals for Millers Point tenants to be moved to any location and no record kept of where the sale proceeds were spent was replaced, after considerable community opposition, by a new approach in 2015 where tenants would have up to eight choices of properties to move to, and sale proceeds would be carefully tracked to ensure new social housing was built.

Whether it was Shelter, other organisations or the collective work of a coalition of organisations that brought about moderations of housing policies is impossible to say. However, Shelter played its part and was – at least from the 1970s to the start of the 2010s – the organisation most likely to build and lead the broader coalitions. In addition, Shelter has since the 1970s had the greatest capacity of all NSW peak bodies for housing policy analysis and report writing. Often a well-timed, well-written, practical report has made the difference to government thinking. Shelter was able to bring these skills to the Olympic homelessness debate with reports in 1994 and 1999 that put the issues firmly in the public arena and – eventually – resulted in the homelessness protocol in 2000. This was probably the single greatest impact of a Shelter report – coupled with campaigning – on public policy, evidenced by how widely the protocol has been later followed in Australia and overseas.

Through many years' experience, Shelter realised by the 2000s that however problematic a housing policy might seem, the devil was in the implementation detail. Often policies sound punitive, perhaps to give the right tone for a ministerial press release. However, the Housing Department might choose to implement in a more relaxed way. A good example is the punitive public housing policies seen in the 2005 Reshaping Public Housing policy. Despite Shelter's concerns about this policy, and their strongly worded independent submission, they agreed to be a member of the Reshaping Public Housing Reference Group. This made them 'insiders', more able to understand the policy impact and argue for changes in implementation approaches. Although all new tenancies shifted to fixed-term leases after 2005, few if any tenants have not had their lease renewed on expiry.

Shelter has always had three relationships with the NSW public housing agency to maintain: with the minister, with the departmental head, and with senior staff. At times Shelter has been more attuned to the latter two groups than the minister. In the 1980s under housing minister Frank Walker, a housing advocate in his own right, several prominent housing activists and Shelter supporters such as Brian Elton, Harvey Volke and Mary Perkins became 'insiders' by taking jobs at the Housing Department. Later examples of Shelter luminaries moving to the public housing agency include Annette Gallard, John Nicolades, Will Roden and Eleri Morgan-Thomas. Hence there has been permeability between the government and peak body (and not-for-profit) sectors, helping reduce if not completely eliminate a 'them and us' attitude.

During Mike Allen's long tenure as chief executive of Housing NSW, he was open to discussions with Shelter and concerned about the impact some of the more controversial housing policies introduced by both political parties. Shelter's role in working closely with the government department responsible for social housing (currently FACS Housing) is a considerable strength that brings mutual benefit. Over the years Shelter has employed staff such as Craig Johnston who have a deep and detailed knowledge of the finer details of housing policy implementation. With the reduction in numbers of public sector housing and policy employees, high staff turnover and shifting departmental structures, Shelter has become vital as a keeper of institutional memory.

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Shelter's 1999–2000 annual report commented that it, 'like all community sector organisations, faces an ongoing challenge to retain a loud collective voice, remain vibrant and relevant to our members, know where we are heading and ensure the people who make decisions are informed of and act on our housing vision'. Shelter has largely met these challenges, survived fluctuations in politics and policy, and retained a respected place in the NSW housing network.

There will be challenges in the future, but Shelter can gain strength through continuing to work collaboratively, not just with current partners – activists, governments, academics, not-for-profits and peak bodies – but also more diverse consumer groups and organisations, including those in the private sector. Greater use of contemporary technology and social media will be important, but the focus should remain on clarity and consistency of message. What is the message? That reform is still needed to bring housing justice and security to all. Shelter can build on their considerable achievements through the past decades and knowledge of the NSW housing system, remaining champions of change.

Abbreviations and Glossary

ACOSS
Australian Council of Social Service (1951–present). The national peak body for community service organisations.

ACT
Australian Capital Territory.

ACTU
Australian Council of Trades Unions (1927–present). The peak body for trade unions.

ACTCOSS
ACT Council of Social Service (1963–present). The peak body for ACT community service organisations.

affordability (housing)
Rented or purchased accommodation that can be paid for out of the incomes of people living in the housing without placing pressure on their finances. There are no agreed definitions of the term, though it often refers to housing that is affordable for low- and moderate-income groups.

'affordable housing'
Models of housing provision where the rent is set at affordable levels or at a discount to market rents.

AGM
Annual general meeting.

AHRC
Australian Housing Research Council (1974–93). Housing and building construction research organisation, superseded by AHURI.

AHURI
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (1993–present). Research funding organisation focusing mainly on housing issues.

ARCH
Association to Resource Co-operative Housing (1989–2009). Peak body for NSW housing co-operatives.

BA
Bachelor of Arts degree.

bond
A form of debt, generally funded by investors. Aggregated bonds are where the borrowings of a number of borrowers are mixed within a single bond instruments to spread investor risk. See NHFIC.

CEO
Chief executive officer.

CHIA NSW
Community Housing Industry Association of NSW (2018–present), the peak body for NSW community housing. Formerly known as the NSW Federation of Housing Associations.

COAG
Council of Australian Governments, the peak intergovernmental forum.

community housing
Social housing managed and/or owned by not-for-profit organisations.

Communities Plus
NSW public housing renewal scheme. Launched 2016.

co-operative
An organisation formed by people with a common interest, where the members of the co-operative are its owners and decision makers.

COSS
Council of Social Services. A peak body for community service organisations. See ACOSS, ACTCOSS, NCOSS, SACOSS.

CRA
Commonwealth Rent Assistance. A payment to lower-income households in private or community housing to minimise the chances of the households being in housing stress.

CRAG
Coalition of Resident Action Groups (established 1972). Umbrella organisation allowing Sydney resident action groups to share knowledge and resources, and co-ordinate protests.

CSHA
Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (1945–2003). Documented housing finance and policy arrangements between the Commonwealth government and states and territories.

CTS
Community Tenancy Scheme (1982). An early funding scheme for NSW community housing providers.

DUAP
NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (1995–2001).

DURD
Commonwealth Department of Urban and Regional Development (1973–75). Led by minister Tom Uren, the department intervened in urban areas and established regional growth centres.

FACS
NSW Department of Family and Community Services (1988–present). Government department responsible for welfare services.

Federation
NSW Federation of Housing Associations (1992–2018). The peak body for NSW community housing providers. Renamed CHIA NSW in June 2018.

Future Directions
Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW (2016). The state's most recent housing discussion paper and strategy.

gentrification
Wealthier residents moving into traditional working-class neighbourhoods, often displacing the original residents to other locations.

HAVE
Housing Allowance Voucher Experiment (1977–78). Proposal by the Fraser Commonwealth government to issue a voucher to lower-income renters that could be used towards the cost of private rental accommodation.

HIRS
Housing Information and Referral Service (1979–89). A sister organisation co-ordinated by Shelter that provided support for local agencies and community groups on housing issues.

HITS
Housing Information and Tenancy Service (1986–89). Assisted community-based housing services to increase tenant awareness, improve access to housing services and to provide advocacy and representation of tenants' interests through TAHIRS (see below) and funding for Shelter and the Tenants' Union.

housing stress
A situation where residents are paying what is considered to be too high a proportion of household income on housing-related costs. Generally this is where housing costs exceed 30 per cent of income, and often the impact is measured on the poorest 40 per cent of households (the 30/40 rule).

housing voucher
A subsidy made available to renters who cannot afford private market rents. The voucher can be 'spent' with a private landlord.

ibid.
The same source as mentioned in the previous reference.

IPA
Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. An independent public policy think tank and executive network of public and private infrastructure providers, focused on social and economic infrastructure.

ISRCSD
Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (1974–present). A funded community organisation supporting community development in inner-city Sydney. Now known as Inner Sydney Voice.

LGCHP
Local Government and Community Housing Program (1984–93). First source of Commonwealth funding for community housing and housing co-operatives.

LGHIP
Local Government Housing Initiatives Program (started 1983). NSW initiative to help councils employ community housing officers and develop housing strategies.

MA
Master of Arts degree.

MoU
Memorandum of understanding. A non-legally-binding agreement between two or more organisations.

NAHA
National Affordable Housing Agreement (2009–mid-2018). Successor to the CSHA, covering a broader range of social and affordable housing policy and finance issues between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. Replaced by the NHHA from July 2018.

NCHF
National Community Housing Forum (1996–2006). Research, advocacy and coalition building body to develop strategic vision of future of the community housing sector.

NHHA
National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (from mid-2018). Successor to NAHA, includes both social housing and homelessness funding.

NHFIC
National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (2018–present). A Commonwealth agency established to issue aggregated bonds to part-fund affordable housing.

National Housing Action
Newsletter of National Shelter, including an unnumbered initial edition called *Housing Action National Newsletter*. See Note on Sources.

negative gearing
The ability of property investors to offset expenses – especially interest on borrowings – on second and subsequent houses against personal income tax.

NCOSS
Council of Social Services of NSW (1937–present). The peak body for NSW community service organisations.

NRAS
National Rental Affordability Scheme (2008–14). A subsidy for constructing new affordable housing rented at below market rates to eligible tenants.

PACTS
Projects Association of Community Tenancy Scheme (1986–91). Peak body for community housing. Forerunner to the Australian Federation of Housing Associations, which was renamed the NSW Federation of Housing Associations in 1992.

peak body
An organisation representing the interests of organisations or individuals in the same sector, typically in negotiations with Government and other stakeholders

pers. comm.
Personal communication. An abbreviation used in this book to indicate information sourced from an individual interviewed for this project. See Note on Sources.

PPP
Public–private partnership. Contractual agreement between government and often a consortium of private sector – and occasionally not-for-profit –organisations to provide a product or service over a fixed number of years (often 20 or more) in return for an annual fee or collection of income (such as road tolls).

public housing
Social housing owned and managed by the public sector.

QCOSS
Queensland Council of Social Service (1959–present). The peak body for Queensland community service organisations.

residualisation
Allocation of social housing to tenants with high, complex or multiple needs, not to the wider population of lower-income applicants.

SACOSS
South Australian Council of Social Service (1946–present). The peak body for South Australian community service organisations.

SAHF
Social and Affordable Housing Fund (2017–present). $1.1 billion NSW government investment fund, the revenue used to purchase new social and affordable housing services, open to tender for community housing providers and developers from late 2016.

SEPP
State Environmental Planning Policy. Significant planning instruments issued and periodically amended by the NSW government, since 1980 under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* 1979. Note in particular SEPP 10 on retention of low-cost rental accommodation (July 1984) and the affordable rental housing SEPP introduced (June 2009).

Shelter
Shelter NSW.

Shelter AR
Shelter annual report, showing year of publication (e.g. Shelter AR 1986 is the July 1985–June 1986 annual report). See Note on Sources.

Shelter *ATH*
Shelter *Around the House* newsletter (1987–present), with issue number. See Note on Sources.

Shelter Brief
Shelter briefing report, with issue number. See Note on Sources.

Shelter newsletter
Shelter NSW Newsletter, later *Shelter Housing News and Information* (1976–92), with issue number. Superseded by *Around the House*, though some overlap in publication dates. See Note on Sources.

SHMT
Social Housing Managing Transfer. Large-scale transfer of asset and tenancy management from public housing to community housing, part of the 2016 Future Directions strategy.

SMH
Sydney Morning Herald

social housing
Rental housing provided to eligible applicants with rents generally set at a maximum percentage of household income. Properties are managed either by public or community housing organisations.

SSCA
South Sydney Community Aid (1967–present). An organisation providing community support in Redfern, Waterloo and the surrounding areas of Sydney to people who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

TAHIRS
Tenants' Advice and Housing Referral Service. Funded through HITS to provide 21 shopfronts offering housing advice.

TasCOSS
Tasmanian Council of Social Service (1961–present). The peak body for Tasmanian community service organisations.

Tenants' Union
Tenants' Union of NSW, the peak body for tenants.

YACS
NSW Department of Youth and Community Services (1973–88). Government department responsible for welfare services. Replaced by FACS.

Timeline

Selected dates are included below. The third and fourth columns show the political party in power at the Commonwealth (C) and NSW (N) government level. Dark tone represents Labor (Lab), and light tone shows the Liberal–National Coalition (Lib).

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1965			Robert Askin, NSW premier, Lib (May)		
1966			Harold Holt, PM, Lib (Jan)	4th Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) (Sep) *Cathy Come Home*, Britain (Nov)	Shelter founded in Britain (Dec)
1967			John McEwen, PM, Lib (Dec)	South Sydney Community Aid (SSCA) established (May)	
1968			John Gorton, PM, Lib (Jan)	Legislation reduces numbers of protected tenancies (Dec)	
1969				Glebe Resident Action Group established	
1970				Mass protests against Vietnam war conscription (May)	
1971			William McMahon PM, Lib (Dec)	First Green Ban, Kelly's Bush (Jun) Second Green Ban, The Rocks (Nov)	
1972			Gough Whitlam, PM, Lab (Dec)	Green Ban on all National Trust listed properties (Jan) Henderson inquiry into poverty established (Aug) Vietnam war conscription ends (Dec) Coalition of Resident Action Groups (CRAG) formed	

▮ Labor (Lab)
▮ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1973				Commonwealth Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) established (Jan) Woolloomooloo Green Ban (Feb) New terms of reference for Henderson inquiry (Mar) 5th CSHA (Jul) Laurence McGinty, NSW minister for housing, Lib (Dec) Commonwealth minister Tom Uren urges NSW government to stop Waterloo tower blocks (Dec)	
1974				University fees abolished (Jan) First meeting of group that became the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (Jan) Glebe estate transferred to the Commonwealth (Mar) Elsie Women's Refuge Night Shelter founded (Mar) SSCA approve a Tenants' Rights Project (Jun) Fig Street expressway protests (Sep) Tenants' Union of Victoria founded (Dec)	First mention of 'Shelter' in Australia, in a note by Mark Harris (May) First meeting in Sydney of what would become Shelter NSW (Jul) Sydney conference agrees to establish Shelter in NSW (Nov) Victorian housing activists meet but oppose establishing a Shelter organisation (Nov)
1975			Tom Lewis, NSW premier, Lib (Jan) PM Gough Whitlam dismissed (Nov) Malcolm Fraser, PM, Lab (Nov)	Commonwealth funding for Elsie Women's Refuge (Jan) Agreement on public housing at Woolloomooloo (Jun) Henderson report into poverty (Aug) DURD abolished (Dec)	Cathi Moore appointed Shelter national co-ordinator (Jan) Melbourne Housing Working group meets, a forerunner of Shelter Victoria (Jan) Initial meeting to discuss Shelter SA (May) First National Shelter conference held in Canberra (Aug) Victorian Shelter working groups meet (Aug) First National Shelter co-ordinating committee meeting (Oct)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1976			Eric Willis, NSW premier, Lib (Jan)	Ian Griffith, NSW minister for housing, Lib (Jan)	First NSW Shelter newsletter, no copies known to remain (Jun)
			Neville Wran, NSW premier, Lab (May)	Laurie Ferguson, NSW Minister for Housing, Lab (May) Tenants' Union incorporated as a co-operative (Nov)	Shelter/ISRCSD conference on housing rehabilitation (Jul) First meeting of the newly formed Tenants' Union of NSW (Aug) Inaugural Shelter Rural and Regional Housing Conference (Oct) First edition of National Shelter's publication *National Housing Action* (Nov)
1977				Ronald Mulock, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Feb) Housing Allowance Voucher Experiment (HAVE) announced by Commonwealth (Mar) Fitzroy Collingwood Rental Housing Association, Victoria (Jun) NSW Rental Bond Board (Jul)	Second National Housing Conference, jointly with National Shelter and the Commonwealth Ministry of Housing (Mar) Earliest known surviving copy of Shelter newsletter (Apr) Shelter's first policy paper, on housing vouchers (Mar) Interim Shelter 'board' (May) Shelter's Emergency Housing conference (Oct) Shelter members vote to be incorporated as a co-op (Oct) Shelter's first research project, the Illawarra study, published
1978				HAVE proposal abandoned (Jun) 6th CSHA (Jul) Vacant building Ningana highlighted by a newspaper report (Jul) Syd Einfeld, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Oct)	First known Shelter press release, on Ningana (Jul) Shelter survey on housing demand for Ningana (Oct)

■ Labor (Lab)

■ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

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Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1979				NSW Emergency Accommodation Task Force (Oct) Ningana co-op plans agreed by minister (Nov)	Shelter becomes a co-op (Mar) Shelter publication estimates 50,000 in need of emergency accommodation (Mar) Shelter conference in Darlinghurst addressed by NSW housing minister (Apr) Funding for the Housing Information and Referral Service, HIRS (May)
1980				Terence Sheahan, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Feb) Community Housing Officer Project, Waverley (Apr)	
1981				Sirius building opens (Jan) Squatters take-over Ningana (Feb) NSW Emergency Accommodation Unit (Apr) NSW Housing Commission seeks permission to continue to refuse to house non-pensioner singles (Jun) 7th CSHA (Jul) Minister agrees to lease Ningana to resident squatters (Oct)	NSW Government On Trial campaign against housing minister Terry Sheahan (Jul)
1982				Commonwealth's Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme (Mar) Fraser government abolishes role of housing minister (May) Community Tenancy Scheme, CTS, established (Oct) Women's Housing Company established	HIRS refunded (Jan) National housing conference, Sydney (Sep) Shelter reviews activities and campaigning stance (Oct)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1983			Bob Hawke, PM, Lab (Mar)	Frank Walker, NSW minister for housing and YACS, Lab (Feb) First National Co-operative Housing Conference, Melbourne (Jun) First Home Owners Assistance Scheme (Oct) Singles housing policy (Dec) Rent assistance extended to all pensioners	
1984				CTS co-ordination passed to NSW Housing Commission (Jan) 8th CSHA (Jul) Local Government and Community Housing Program, LGCHP (Jul) SEPP 10 on retention of low-cost rental accommodation (Jul) Tenant participation conference (Nov) Glebe housing estate passes from Commonwealth to NSW government (Dec)	First direct Shelter funding under the Community Employment Program (May) First Shelter staff employed: Robert Mowbray and Trevor Close (May) LGCHP advisory committee steered by Shelter (Nov) First Shelter office: 62 Erskine Street, Sydney CBD, near Wynyard (Sep) Shelter auspice the Co-operative Housing Resource Group
1985				First national women's housing conference, Adelaide (Mar) New World: New Housing conference in Westmead run by Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and Shelter (May and Jul) Negative gearing abolished for investment properties (Jul) Department of Housing tenant participation policy (Aug)	Suzanne Pierce employed (Feb) Minister Walker makes first reference to a statewide housing peak body (Apr) Shelter move to their second office at Room 67, Trades Hall Building, 4 Goulburn Street, Sydney (Nov) National Shelter's second national co-ordinator appointed (May) Shelter auspices the Community Housing Forum (Aug) Greg Thompson employed by Shelter as co-op development worker using LGCHP funds (Oct)

■ Labor (Lab)
■ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

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Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1986			Barrie Unsworth, NSW premier, Lab (Mar)	NSW Department of Housing (DoH) replaces Housing Commission (Jan) NSW branch of People for Public Housing formed (Feb) Housing Information and Tenancy Service (HITS) announced (Mar) Projects Association of the Community Tenancy Scheme, PACTS established (May) Residential Tenancies Tribunal (Oct) Second national women's housing conference, Sydney (Oct) Rent assistance extended to the unemployed	Shelter advised they will be funded as a peak body (Jan) Some tenancies at Millers Point transfer from Maritime Services Board to Department of Housing (Jan)
1987				Women's housing conference, Sydney (May) Negative gearing reintroduced (Jul)	John Nicolades employed as policy and research officer and Gerry van Wyk as field and development worker (Feb) Suzanne Pierce and Robert Mowbray resign (Feb) First edition of *Around the House* newsletter (Oct) First Shelter brief, an analysis of the 1987/88 state budget (Dec)
1988			Nick Greiner, NSW premier, Lib (Mar)	NSW Women's Housing Strategy (Feb) Jo Schipp, NSW minister for housing, Lib (Mar) Michael Eyers, director of housing at the DoH, has contract terminated after the election. Replaced by Richard Flint (Mar) 'Raine report' of homelessness and affordable housing published (Nov) Changes to CTS proposed, returning capital properties to DoH (Dec) Defunding of Youth Accommodation Association announced (Dec) YACS becomes FACS (Oct)	Second Shelter brief on how to use the media (Feb) Shelter's first computer (Apr) First Shelter briefing paper produced by a subcontracted consultant, Julie Nyland (Jun) National Shelter conference, Wollongong (Nov) Minister Schipp announces Shelter, HIRS and HITS to be defunded (Dec) Protest marches and rallies against housing cuts (Dec) Picket line outside Schipp's office (Dec 1988 to March 1989)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1989				CTS changes moderated, with capital properties not automatically resumed by government (Feb) National Housing Conference, Canberra (Mar) NCOSS housing summit (Apr) Association to Resource Co-operative Housing (ARCH) (Jun) 9th CSHA (Jul) Amended *NSW Residential Tenancies Act* 1987 comes into force (Oct)	Rally outside Parliament against housing cuts (Feb) Letter-writing campaign to housing minister Joe Schipp (Feb) Shelter, HIRS and HITS funding ends (Mar) John Nicolades and Gerry van Wyk leave Shelter, Julie Nyland employed part time (Mar)
1990				Plans announced by government for urban renewal of Pyrmont and surrounding areas (Oct) National Housing Strategy process launched (Nov)	
1991			Paul Keating, PM, Lab (Dec)	Peter Dransfield leaves as director of housing, DoH (Jan) Brian Howe appointed Commonwealth minister for housing (Jun) NSW ombudsman launches investigation into government handing of LGCHP (Jun) Building Better Cities program launched by government (Dec) Australian Federation of Housing Associations established, superseding PACTS	Joint Shelter/NCOSS seminar on the National Housing Strategy (Mar)
1992			John Fahey, NSW premier, Lib (Jun)	Internal DoH report on CTS completed (Mar) Robert Webster, NSW minister for housing, Lib (Jul) Mant review commissioned (Jul) Review of HomeFund commissioned (Aug) First Mant report published (Nov)	Paper funded by Shelter recommends CTS continues in current form (Jul)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1993				Ombudsman's report issued on handling of LGCHP (Feb) Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) established (Jun) Second Mant report, focusing on DoH customer service (Jun) Australian Federation of Housing Associations renamed the NSW Federation of Housing Associations, and funded (Jul) Community Housing Program expands, replacing LGCHP (Aug) Sydney awarded the 2000 Olympics (Sep)	Shelter funded for a staff member to prepare a grant application (Jul) National Shelter's strategic plan 1993–98 launched (Oct)
1994				Brian Howe ends role as Commonwealth housing minister (Mar) First community housing conference, Sydney (Nov)	Influential Shelter publication *The Olympics and Housing* (Sep) City West Housing established, Shelter a shareholder (Jun) Shelter move to their third office: Suite 2, 4th Floor, Labour Council Building, 377–383 Sussex Street, Sydney (Dec) Shelter Victoria defunded (Dec)
1995				NSW Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program (Jan) Release of social impact assessment for the Sydney Olympics (Feb) Craig Knowles, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Apr) Community housing tenants receive long-term rental security (Apr) Second NSW community housing conference, Sydney (Nov) NSW housing policy Green Paper (Dec)	Shelter refunded by the Liberal state government (Feb) New staff members employed: Rod Plant as executive officer, Vanessa Whittington as field liaison officer and Heidi Nelson as administration manager (Feb) Vanessa Whittington resigns (May) Ros Bragg employed as field liaison officer and Larysa Anton as administration worker (Jun). Shelter staff numbers increase to four.
		N	Bob Carr, NSW premier, Lab (Apr)		

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1996			John Howard, PM, Lib (Mar)	Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development abolished (Apr) 10th CSHA (Jul) New NSW public housing tenant participation approach (Jul) NSW Community Housing Strategy (Jul) Task force on affordable housing established by DUAP (Jul) Coalition to Save Public and Community Housing launched in Sydney (Jul) Senate inquiry into housing assistance launched (Nov) Tenant and Community Initiatives Program State Advisory Committee (Dec) Establishment of the Office of Community Housing (Dec) 'Save our public housing rally', Sydney (Nov) National Community Housing Forum established	Office of Housing Policy review of Shelter finds the objectives of their Strategic Plan has been broadly met. Funding extended for six months (Jan) Ros Bragg resigns (Feb) Heidi Wilson resigns (Mar) Will Roden employed as field liaison officer, Flora Armaghanian as office manager (Jul) Shelter website under preparation (Jul) Amended Shelter constitution ends limits on serving consecutive terms as office holder, and opens all board positions to member votes (Nov)
1997					Shelter a co-founder of Rentwatchers (May) National Shelter defunded (Jul) Shelter relinquishes shareholding in City West (Dec)
1998				Publication of *The 2000 Olympics and the Residential Tenancy Market* (Feb)	First formal Shelter brief subcontracted to a consultant, Gary Cox (Jan). Shelter conference on low-income housing (May) Shelter registered as an incorporated association (Jun) Shelter organise Homelessness: The Unfinished Agenda conference (Aug)

Labor (Lab)

Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
1999				Andrew Refshauge, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Apr) Office of Community Housing integrated into DoH (Apr) Housing Advisory Group established by DoH (May) 11th CSHA (Jul) Investment properties allowed 50 per cent capital gains tax deduction (Sep) 'Inaugural national housing conference' organised by AHURI in Sydney (Nov)	Shelter workshop on public housing estate renewal (Mar) Peak Shelter membership, 190 people and organisations (Jun) Shelter funding increases by 50 per cent (Jul)
2000				Sydney Olympics (Sep)	Myra Hechanova employed as policy and liaison officer, increasing staff numbers from three to four (May) Homelessness incident involving Rod Plant at Tom Uren Square, Sydney (Nov) Issue between Shelter EO and the Association of Homeless Persons Services (Dec) Rod Plant takes paid special leave, with Will Roden appointed acting executive officer (Dec)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2001				HomeFund loan scheme compensation agreed (Mar)	Rod Plant resumes role as executive officer (Feb)
				Inquiry into community housing launched (Sep)	Will Roden reappointed acting executive officer (Mar)
				National housing conference, Brisbane (Oct)	Consultations run by Shelter on the National Housing Strategy (Mar–May)
					Myra Hechanova resigns (May)
					Shelter again take a shareholding in City West (May)
					Will Roden ends role as acting executive officer, moving to policy and liaison officer (Jun)
					Harvey Volke employed as policy and liaison officer (Jun)
					Mary Perkins employed as executive officer (Jul)
					Craig Johnston employed part time (Sep)
					Will Roden on 12 months' leave (Oct)
					Hazel Blunden employed as policy and liaison officer (Oct)
					Report on National Housing Strategy consultations (Dec)
2002				Minto community renewal project announced (May)	MoU between Shelter and the homelessness peaks (Apr)
				NSW government provides definitions of very low, low and moderate income households in planning legislation (May)	Shelter hosts seminar on financing affordable housing (May)
				Government abandons plans for redevelopment of public housing at Erskineville (Nov)	Will Roden resigns (Oct)
				Fixed-term tenancies for new public housing tenants (Aug)	

▮ Labor (Lab)
▮ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

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Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2003				12th CSHA (Jul) Carl Scully, NSW Minister for Housing, Lab (Apr) Centre for Affordable Housing established (Jul) Inquiry into community housing results published (Dec)	Craig Johnston employed as policy and liaison officer for three days a week, increasing staff numbers from four to five (Feb) Adam Farrar appointed executive director of the Federation (Apr) Shelter hosts a one-day estate renewal seminar (Jun)
2004				Homelessness NSW funded, after 20 years as an unfunded organisation (May) New controls on anti-social behaviour in public housing (Jun) National Affordable Housing Summit (Jun) Bonnyrigg renewal announced (Nov) Media leak of plans to redevelop public housing in Redfern-Waterloo (Nov)	Affordable Housing Network, auspiced by Shelter (Apr) Joint conference with NCOSS on the future needs of Sydney (Nov)
2005			Morris Iemma, NSW premier, Lab (Aug)	Joe Tripodi, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Feb) Cherie Burton, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Aug) Reshaping Public Housing policy announced (Apr) Inquiry into the allocation of public housing (Nov)	Death of Harvey Volke (Jan) Hazel Blunden resigns (Feb) Jay O'Connor employed as senior policy officer (May) Robert Mowbray appointed senior policy officer (Jun) Shelter help Centre for Affordable Housing plan an affordable housing conference (Jun) Shelter celebrates 30 years, during their 31st year (Nov)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2006				Mike Allen appointed director general of DoH (Feb) Most initiatives of Reshaping Public Housing policy implemented (Jul) National forum on housing affordability, Canberra, proposes a precursor to NRAS (Jul) National Community Housing Forum defunded (Jul) Draft community housing strategy released (Aug) NSW Federation community housing conference, Newcastle, 280 delegates (Aug) Proposal for public housing sales at Millers Point to fund new social housing in the inner west (Nov)	Shelter guidelines on consulting residents about regeneration of public housing estates (Dec)
2007			Kevin Rudd, PM, Lab (Dec)	Matt Brown, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Apr) Fixed-term public housing leases introduced (Oct) Legislation allowing registration of NSW community housing providers (Oct) Tanya Plibersek, Commonwealth minister for housing (Dec) Planning the Future strategy for NSW community housing (Dec)	Housing Australia Fair conference with NCOSS, the Federation, Tenants' Union, ARCH, the AHI and UnitingCare Burnside (Oct) Shelter conference on impact of climate change on low-income households (Nov) Katie Florance employed as research and publications officer (Nov) Paula Rix employed as senior policy officer, education and outreach (Nov)

▮ Labor (Lab)

▯ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2008			Nathan Rees, NSW premier, Lab (Sep)	Department of Housing granted additional powers to jail prosecute who misrepresent their income (Apr) DoH becomes Housing NSW (Jun) National Rental Affordability Scheme, NRAS, launched (Jul) David Borger, NSW minister for housing, Lab (Sep) National homelessness White Paper aims to halve homelessness by 2020 (Dec)	Flora Armaghanian resigns (Apr) Sumi Krishnamoorthy employed as office administrator (Apr–Sep) Shelter conference on Shape of Public Housing (Jun) Yana Myronenko employed as office administrator (Sep) Shelter participate in Melbourne seminar on impact of climate change on low-income households (Dec)
2009			Kristina Keneally, NSW premier, Lab (Dec)	NAHA replaces CSHA (Jan) Social Housing Initiative under Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (Feb) New Affordable housing SEPP created from SEPP 10 on affordable rental housing (Jun) NSW homelessness action plan (Aug) NSW Legislative Council report on low-cost rental accommodation published (Sep) ARCH superseded by Common Equity NSW (Dec)	Shelter conference addressed by Commonwealth housing minister Tanya Plibersek (Jul) Announcement National Shelter to be refunded for two years (Jul)
2010			Julia Gillard, PM, Lab (Jun)	Housing Pathways, a single social housing waiting list (Apr) Henry review into taxation published (May) Francesco Terenzini, NSW minister for housing, Lab (May) *Residential Tenancies Act* (Nov)	Shelter's first training course on 'housing economics for non-economists' (Mar) Shelter conference on Best Practice in Redevelopment and Regeneration of Public Housing Estates (Jun) Shelter's Facebook page activated (Dec)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2011					Minister Goward speaks at Shelter conference, Sydney (Jun)
			Barry O'Farrell, NSW premier, Lib (Mar)	Pru Goward, NSW minister for FACS, Lib (Apr) Scaling back of provisions under the affordable rental housing SEPP (May) Housing assets transferred to Department of Finance and Services (Jul) Australians for Affordable Housing launched (Sep)	
2012				Tasmanian government proposes large-scale transfer from public to community housing (Jan) Publication of detailed public waiting list data (Mar) Public housing applicants must keep in touch with contact details or their applications will be closed (May) Rentstart bonds for people leaving public housing for private rentals now through a loan not a grant (May) Going Home Staying Home homelessness reforms announced (Jul) Logan stock transfer announced in Queensland of proposed 4,800 tenancies to transfer to community housing (Aug)	Shelter and Tenants' Union seminar What's the Rent (Feb) Revamped Shelter website launched (Apr) Shelter one-day conference on Explorations in Non-Profit Housing (Jun) Shelter board limited to nine directors, half re-elected each year (Nov)

■ Labor (Lab)
■ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2013			Kevin Rudd, PM, Lab (Jun) Tony Abbott, PM, Lab (Sep)	NSW undeclared public housing tenants amnesty signals tougher approach by government (Jan) Landcom becomes UrbanGrowth NSW (Jan) NSW public housing succession rules tightened (Mar) First large-scale transfers to community housing take place in Tasmania (Mar) NSW public housing 'bedroom tax' (Jun) Auditor-General's report on Making the Best Use of Public Housing (Jul) Defeat of planning reform in NSW parliament (Nov) National Housing Supply Council abolished (Nov)	Katie Florance resigns (Apr) Housing at the Crossroads Shelter conference, 193 attend including housing minister Pru Goward (Apr) Adam Farrar employed as senior policy officer, research and publications (Jul) Adrian Pisarski steps down as National Shelter chair (Jul), later becoming executive officer in Jan 2014 Shelter's Twitter account started (Aug)
2014			Mike Baird, NSW premier, Lib (Jan)	Gabrielle Upton, NSW minister for FACS, Lib (Apr) Future NRAS incentives cancelled by Commonwealth (May) Mike Allen retires as head of FACS Housing (Jun) Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing reports (Sep) Discussion paper on NSW social housing policy (Nov) Homelessness Australia and National Shelter defunded (Dec) Commonwealth issues paper on reform of the federation, housing and homelessness (Dec)	Millers Point public housing sales announced (Mar) Special edition of *Around the House* newsletter on Millers Point (Mar) Millers Point sales start (Jul) SGS report on Millers Point (Aug) Shelter lecture series on New Urban Issues (Oct)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2015			Malcolm Turnbull, PM, Lab (Sep)	Memorandum of understanding between NSW government, NCOSS and IPA for a $1 billion social and affordable housing fund (Mar) Brad Hazzard, NSW minister for FACS and social housing, Lib (Apr) Social Housing Forum held, led by ex-premiers Nick Greiner and Morris Iemma (May) Community Housing Federation of Australia (CHFA) defunded (Jun) Discussion paper *Foundations for Change: Homelessness in NSW* (Sep) Public housing tenants antisocial behaviour legislation (Oct) Communities Plus industry briefing (Nov) Plans for major redevelopment of Waterloo-Redfern announced (Dec)	Dedicated bank account established for Millers Point sale proceeds (Jan) Possibilities and Realities: Private Rental Housing as a Solution conference attended by minister Gabrielle Upton. Last full one-day Shelter conference (Apr) Shelter board adopts the 2015–18 strategic plan (May) Housing minister Brad Hazzard meets Millers Point tenants (May) Agreement to relocate The Compound housing co-op from Millers Point to the inner west (May) National Shelter defunded (Jul) Government agree to renovate some existing Millers Point housing (Nov) National Shelter with Community Sector Banking and SGS issue first Rental Affordability Index (Nov)
2016				Commonwealth Affordable Housing Working Group (Jan) Future Directions in Social Housing policy announced (Jan) Results of first round of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) announced (May) Greater Sydney Commission announces new planning approach to include affordable rental housing targets (Oct)	Paula Rix retires (Mar) Heritage listing of Sirius building rejected (Jul) Sarah Wilson employed as project officer, engagement and outreach (Aug) Last hard copy version of *Around the House* (Jun). Moves to online journal format Seminar of learnings from tenant experience of large-scale relocations of public housing tenants (Oct) Launch of redesigned *Around the House* newsletter (Dec) Shelter forum for Millers Point tenants (Dec)

■ Labor (Lab)

■ Liberal–National Coalition (Lib)

Year	C	N	Politics	Housing and related	Shelter
2017			Gladys Berejiklian, NSW premier, Lib (Jan)	Pru Goward, NSW minister for FACS and social housing, Lib, with Anthony Roberts as minister for housing (Jan) Tender for NSW Social Housing Management Transfers (Mar) Release of IPART review of social and affordable rents (Mar) National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, NHFIC, to be formed to issue housing bonds (May) Ivanhoe Communities Plus renewal winning tender announced (May)	National Shelter, Choice and National Association of Tenant Organisations publish *Unsettled: Life in Australia's private rental market* (Feb) Craig Johnston retires (May) Shelter forums for tenants impacted by Social Housing Management Transfers (May) Adam Farrar changes role to principal policy officer (Jun) 'A Compact for Renewal' initial paper issued and draft agreement consulted with FACS (Jun) Taking Stock, Housing Policy in NSW conference postponed (Jun) Mary Perkins retires (Jun) Karen Walsh employed as CEO (Aug) Agnes Yi employed as senior policy officer, publications and communications (Nov)
2018				NHHA legislation enacted by Commonwealth (Mar)	Shelter move to their fourth office at 10 Mallet Street, Camperdown (Jan) Ned Cutcher employed as senior policy officer (Mar) NSW Federation of Housing Associations renamed as the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) NSW (Jun)

Additional sources: Political data from Parliament of NSW, 2017.

Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements

| Ref | Year | Ministry | Themes | Annual funding | | Public housing as % new builds |
				As agreed at the time	At Dec 17 prices	
1	1945	Chifley	Loan funds for construction of new rental dwellings, 50% to go to ex-defence force staff. *Built 96,100 – sold 6,400 – net gain 89,600*	$14.5 m (48–49)	$444 m	20%
2	1956	Menzies	30% of CSHA funding to help fund home purchase. Remainder to new rental dwellings where states had power to set terms. Tenants able to buy their homes on favourable terms. *Built 65,900 – sold 35,000 – net gain 30,900*	$32.2 m (56–57)	$514 m	20%
3	1961	Menzies	Continued policy of public housing sales. *Built 66,700 – sold 29,000 – net gain 37,700*	$51.7 m (61–62)	$760 m	20%
4	1966	Holt	No assistance for slum clearance. *Built 68,600 – sold 28,000 – net gain 40,400*	$128 m (66–67)	$1,706 m	20%
5	1973	Whitlam	Higher funding, but homes targeted at lower income families. Commonwealth attempted to limit public housing sales, but largely ineffective as states opposed. Stock sales limited to 30% annual additions of dwellings. *Built 43,200 – sold 22,300 – net gain 20,900*	$385 m (74–75)	$2,927 m	13%
6	1978	Fraser	Cuts in funding, and further shift to making public housing for those on pensions, unemployment benefits or disability payments. Wealthier tenants moved towards paying market rents. Sales of public housing to be at full market levels. States to match Commonwealth financial contribution. Earmarked funding starts for certain groups. *Built 22,800*	$316 m (78–79)	$1,598 m	8%

| Ref | Year | Ministry | Themes | Annual funding | | Public housing as % new builds |
				As agreed at the time	At Dec 17 prices	
7	1981	Fraser	Major cuts in funding. More funding earmarked for specific groups, such as crisis housing. Public housing rents tied to changes in those charged in the private market. *Built 11,100*	$146 m (81–82)	$549 m	8%
8	1984	Hawke	More funding leads to increased rate of house building, but also more sales. Growth in use of rent assistance for low-income households not in public housing. Earmarked funds for Local Government and Community Housing Program. *Built 46,101*	$495 m (84–85)	$1,512 m	5.5%
9	1989	Hawke	Commonwealth assistance now through grants not loans.	$793 m (89–90)	$1,621 m	4%
10	1996	Howard	Funds cut. Eligibility to be based more on need rather than preserving security of tenure. States have more say on how they could spend the money.	$731 m (96–97)	$1,232 m	2%
11	1999	Howard	Attempts to increase accountability and reporting mechanisms.	$763 m (99–00)	$1,240 m	2%
12	2003	Howard	Funding reduced.	$725 m (03–04)	$1,024 m	1.5%

Source: Various, including Wilkinson (2005) and Troy (2012).
Figures are for money lent by the Commonwealth to the states.
Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Sydney from ABS, publication 6401.0, December 2017 data (accessed 27 February 2018). Index taken for December for each calculation.
CPI data series starts 1948, hence CSHA data from that year used in 1945 CSHA.

Note on Sources

Archival material

The principal historic records for Shelter are held at the State Library of NSW indexed in the names of Shelter, National Shelter, the Tenants' Union of NSW, NCOSS and ACOSS. The main unsorted and non-indexed papers are:

- Shelter records 1977–96, ref. 985710. Total of 23 boxes.
- Tenants' Union 1968–86, ref. MLMSS 5099; 1975–94, ref. 147225; 1976–95, ref. MLMSS 8436. Total of 93 boxes.

The State Library holds a digitised version of Shelter's 1995 'Oral history of community housing in NSW' (ref. MLOH 236, 417). This includes audio recordings of interviews with Col James, Mick Mundine, Denny Hall, Harvey Volke, Mary Perkins, Rebecca Owen, Karine Shellshear, Zula Nittim, Adam Farrar, Joan Ferguson, John Nicolades, John Mant and Vivienne Milligan. A video of 'Community housing past, present and future: A visual oral history of milestones in community housing 1970–1995' is held at Shelter's office.

Shelter holds sundry paper records at their office. Electronic records have been retained from as early as 1994, though become more comprehensive from the late 1990s.

From the various data sources, it has been possible to assemble a relatively comprehensive newsletter series. These publications sometimes changed names, and the numbering system is sometimes inconsistent in the early years:

- Shelter newsletters, *Shelter NSW Newsletter* and later *Shelter Housing News and Information*, from number 1 (1976) to number 49 (1992), missing numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10. Newsletter series 85 per cent complete.
- Shelter *Around the House* publication, from number 1 (1987) to number 15 (1990) then from number 16 (1993) to number 110 (2017), missing numbers 2, 4 and 7. Series 97 per cent complete.

Note: both the above publications are usually referred to in the text as 'NSW newsletter', with citations as follows: Shelter newsletters as (Shelter newsletter 1), and Shelter *Around the House* newsletters as (Shelter *ATH* 1), where the number refers to the edition.

- *National Housing Action*. 27 copies identified, 1975 to 1995. Later copies exist but were not consulted for this research. In this book the items are referred to in the text as *National Housing Action*, with citations giving the date of the publication instead of the newsletter number.

A full set of annual reports and accounts was obtained from Shelter's paper and electronic records for the period from 1995–96 to the present. Earlier records between 1976–77 and 1994–95 are incomplete, often with the annual report missing. Additional information was sourced from the Annual Return for Co-operative Societies held in Shelter's office, which contain financial data, member numbers and director names.

Newspaper database searches are a useful source of information prior to the 1990s when Shelter's records are more comprehensive. The main sources have been Factiva, accessed through the State Library of NSW, and *newspapers.com*. Another useful documentary source is the annual reports of the NSW Housing Commission, the NSW Department of Housing and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services from the 1940s to date, held at the State Library of NSW.

Interviews

Additional insights have been gained from personal interviews or email communication with key people in Shelter's history, listed below. These contacts took place between December 2017 and June 2018. Where information in this book is based on these communications, the draft text has been shown to interviewees for verification. Such items are marked in the book as 'personal communication', abbreviated to 'pers. comm.'. Positions served on the Shelter board are marked as the following officeholders *chair, treasurer, secretary* and *editor* – or as *director* when the person was not also an office holder.

- **Mike Allen.** Chief executive of Housing NSW, 2006–14.

- **Jane Bradfield.** Worked in housing minister Frank Walker's office as policy advisor, and in the Department of Housing including managing the Women's Housing Unit. Jane was involved in the design and implementation of the Women's Housing Program in 1984, and later

became a housing consultant, forming the Bradfield Nyland Group consulting with Julie Nyland.

- **Simon Clough.** DURD employee in 1970s, and project officer at NCOSS and ISRCSD. Director of interim Shelter board, 1977. Later mayor of Lismore Council.

- **Sue Cripps.** Housing NSW staff member (2002–04), inaugural CEO, Homelessness NSW (2004–11). Shelter director, treasurer and secretary (2004–05 to 2010–11). Catholic Community Services (2011–13), CEO SC Consulting Group (2013–present), Shelter director (2013–14 to 2015–16) chair (2016–17).

- **Tony Dalton.** Co-founder Shelter Victoria, co-founder National Shelter, chair of National Shelter (1981–88) and more recently AHURI researcher and RMIT University professor.

- **Brian Elton.** Waverley Council housing officer in early 1980s, state government official in the 1980s promoting CTS and other initiatives. Founder of Elton Consulting in 1989.

- **Adam Farrar.** Shelter treasurer (1986–87 to 1993–94), chair (1995–96), director (1994–95, 1996–97, 2003–04, 2011–12 to 2012–13) and senior policy officer (2013–14 to present). Worked at NCOSS as a policy officer, then deputy director (1988–2001), ACOSS (1992–95), executive director of National Community Housing Forum (1996–2003) and executive director of NSW Federation of Housing Associations (2003–12). Vice president of NCOSS (2014–present). See Box 15.

- **Annette Gallard.** Deputy director-general of NSW Housing in 1990s, retired 2011.

- **Craig Johnston.** Shelter director (1986–87 to 1987–89 and 1990–91 to 1992–92). Part-time staff member from 2001, policy and liaison officer from 2003 then principal policy officer to 2017. Policy and liaison offer, principal policy officer (2002–03 to 2016–17. See Box 14.

- **Garry Mallard.** Tenant and housing advocate. Shelter director (2003–04 to 2009–10; 2011–12 to date). Founder, National Tenant Support Network.

- **Vivienne Milligan.** NSW government official (1980s), co-founder of the CTS (1982) and executive director of the NSW government Office of Housing Policy (1992–99). Later she was associate professor at

UNSW (2008–16) and co-author of the major AHURI publications on community housing.

- **Beth Mitchell.** Community activist. Director of interim Shelter board and secretary (1977–78 to 1979–80).

- **Cathi Moore.** First person engaged by National Shelter, to help establish national network (1975), Cathi later held senior roles with the former Commonwealth Department of Administrative Services, as director of ACT Shelter and ACTCOSS. She is currently a director of CHC Affordable Housing, a community housing provider.

- **Eleri Morgan-Thomas.** Queensland Shelter executive officer, then chairperson of National Shelter (1992–96). Shelter director (1997–98 to 2000-01), executive director of NSW Federation of Housing Associations (1998–2002), Mission Australia (2006–12), director, Women's Housing Company (2005–13), FACS executive director (2013–present).

- **Robert Mowbray.** Co-founder of Shelter and director of interim board (1977). Co-founder and longstanding staff member, Tenants' Union. First Shelter staff member (1983–84), housing worker (1986–87) and senior policy officer (2004–05 to 2006–07). See Box 3.

- **John Nicolades.** Shelter editor (1984–85), director (1986–87; 1995–96 to 1996–97), chair (1989–90 to 1994–95) and staff member (1985–86 to 1986–87). Uniting Church Board of Social Responsibility (1989–99), as director affordable housing service at NSW Department of Planning (1999–2002), director of Centre for Affordable Housing (2002–03 and CEO of Bridge Housing (2005–present). See Box 8.

- **Julie Nyland.** Worked in a women's refuge and a women's special purpose CTS. Along with Jane Bradfield, was involved in the design and implementation of the Women's Housing Program established 1984. Part-time Shelter staff member,1989. Julie later became a housing consultant, forming the Bradfield Nyland Group consulting with Jane Bradfield.

- **Mary Perkins.** Worked at Aquarius Youth Service in the late 1970s and early 1980s, later the Tenants' Union, as co-ordinator of Redfern Legal Service and deputy director of NCOSS. Shelter director (1982–83 to 1985–86) and executive officer (2001–17). See Box 13.

- **Suzanne Pierce.** Founding Shelter staff member (1985–86 to 1986–87).

- **Adrian Pisarski.** Shelter executive member (1999–00 to 2001–02). CEO, Youth Accommodations Association (1999–2002), executive officer Queensland Shelter (2002–14) and executive officer National Shelter (2014–present).

- **Anne Rein.** Founding Shelter activist while a Sydney University student (1973–74). Later worked at SACOSS, and a deputy director-general at NSW Premier's Department (1994–96) before pursuing a corporate career.

- **Will Roden.** Shelter's field liaison officer (1996–2001), acting executive officer (January then March–June 2001) and policy and liaison officer (2001). Latterly he has worked for Housing NSW and NSW Land and Housing Corporation (2010–16) and Elton Consulting (2016–present)

- **Kevin Sandall.** Government official at NSW Housing Commission and Department of Housing in the 1980s.

- **Karine Shellshear.** Shelter director (1992–93 to 1994–95; 1996–97), treasurer (1995–96; 2003–04 to 2006–07) and secretary (2001–02 to 2002–03). She was founder and executive director of ARCH (1989–2009), later a director of Community Housing Limited, a community housing provider (2008–present).

- **Karen Walsh.** Shelter director (2011–12 to 2012–13), secretary (2013–14 to 2014–15), chair (2015–16 to 2016–17) and CEO (August 2017–present). Karen worked in NSW government as a director in Aboriginal, public and community housing strategic policy roles (2004–10), then as general manager at community housing provider SGCH (2010–16).

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Acknowledgements

References

For abbreviations used in this reference list, see Abbreviations and Glossary list.

The sources used for this research are cited in the text of this book with detailed references included in the list below. Exceptions are citations included directly in the text for brevity: Shelter annual reports (*Shelter AR*), Shelter newsletters (*Shelter newsletter*), Shelter *Around the House* newsletters (*Shelter ATH*), Shelter briefing reports (*Shelter Brief*) and National Shelter newsletters (*National Housing Action*). These in-text citations have the newsletter number, with the exception of *National Housing Action*, which uses the issue date as the numbering system is inconsistent.

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About the author

Dr Tony Gilmour is an affordable housing consultant and researcher, with a passion for helping not-for profit housing, homelessness and disability support organisations deliver high-quality services. In 2012 he founded and is now president of the Housing Action Network, a leading international housing consultancy firm delivering services across all Australian jurisdictions, New Zealand and Britain. In 2016 Tony built on his experience as a former housing association tenant when he ran Junction Housing, a large South Australian community housing provider that was the fastest growing in the country.

Tony originally trained as a historian, earning a BA and MA from the University of Cambridge. His later two-decade career in banking spanned Britain and Australia, and he gained an MBA from the University of Manchester. Tony's 2009 PhD at the University of Sydney reviewed approaches to building community housing capacity in Australia, Britain and the United States through networks of peak bodies and knowledge transfer by consultants. His AHURI-sponsored thesis was co-supervised by Vivienne Milligan, and his office was next door to Col James who introduced him to the Aboriginal Housing Company.

Tony joined Elton Consulting in 2010, working with Brian Elton, and later authored a briefing paper and newsletter articles for Shelter, and one of the first reviews of the Australian co-operative sector (Gilmour, 2009; Gilmour, 2012a, 2012b). He was president of the Australasian Housing Institute 2011–13, and is a regular contributor to housing conferences as a presenter and erstwhile entertainer.

He has co-authored AHURI reports as well as publishing internationally on developing the community housing sector, public housing estate renewal

and financing affording housing. Tony is co-author with Hal Pawson and David Mullins of *After Council Housing: Britain's new social landlords* (2010), editor of and contributor to *Dialogues in Urban Planning* (2008), and sole author of *Sustaining Heritage: Giving the past a future* (2007) and *Navigating Change: A history of Compass Housing* (2015).

Col James and Mick Mundine
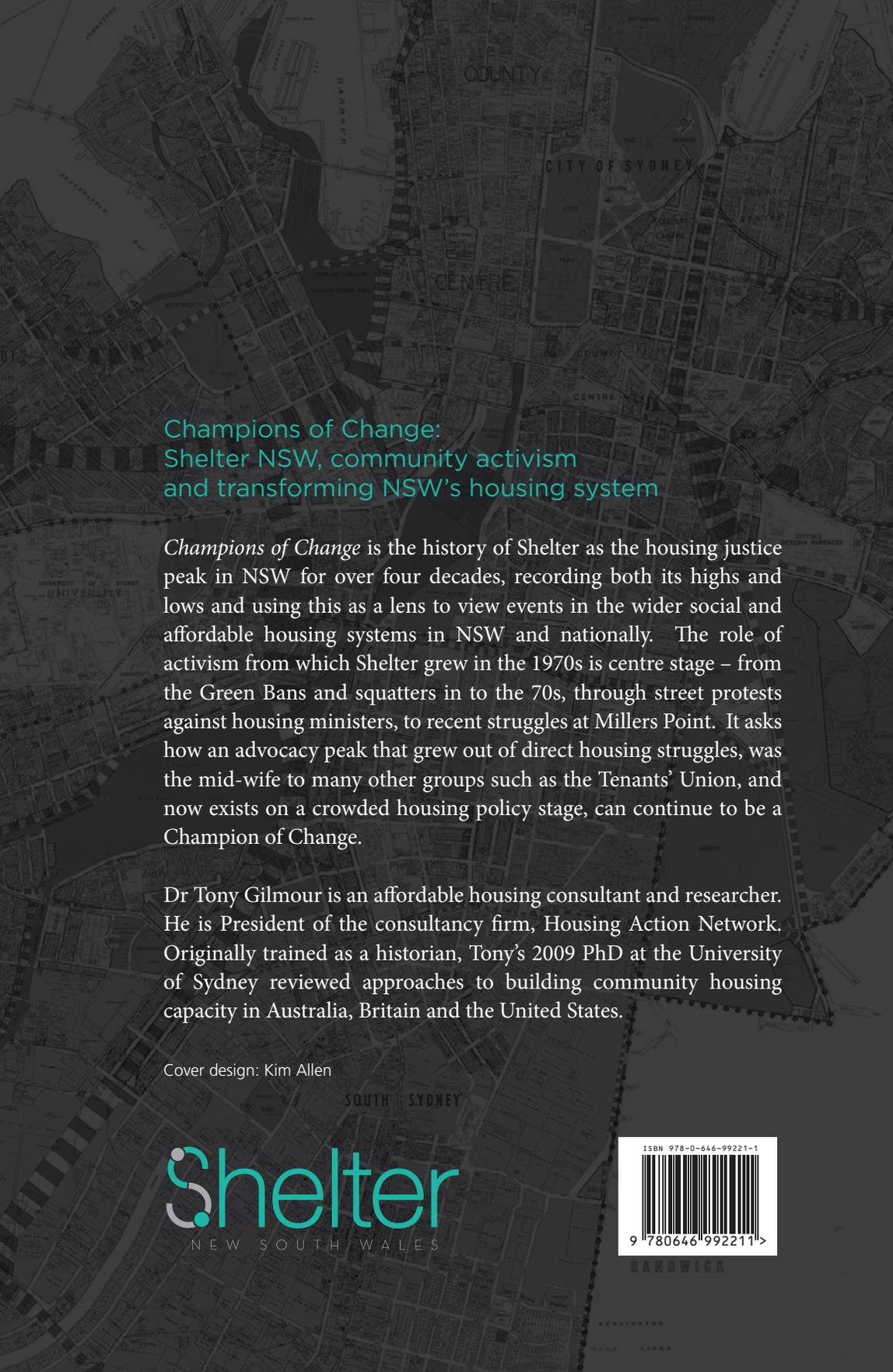
Champions of Change:
Shelter NSW, community activism
and transforming NSW's housing system

Champions of Change is the history of Shelter as the housing justice peak in NSW for over four decades, recording both its highs and lows and using this as a lens to view events in the wider social and affordable housing systems in NSW and nationally. The role of activism from which Shelter grew in the 1970s is centre stage – from the Green Bans and squatters in to the 70s, through street protests against housing ministers, to recent struggles at Millers Point. It asks how an advocacy peak that grew out of direct housing struggles, was the mid-wife to many other groups such as the Tenants' Union, and now exists on a crowded housing policy stage, can continue to be a Champion of Change.

Dr Tony Gilmour is an affordable housing consultant and researcher. He is President of the consultancy firm, Housing Action Network. Originally trained as a historian, Tony's 2009 PhD at the University of Sydney reviewed approaches to building community housing capacity in Australia, Britain and the United States.

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