

**INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS AND LOW-COST
RENTAL ACCOMMODATION**

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Date received: 30/03/2009

Reference: MWJ300309

30th March 2009

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear sir/madam

RE: NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into Homelessness and low cost accommodation

Council is pleased to provide this submission to the above inquiry. Council has to date not developed a Housing Study giving detailed consideration to issues of homelessness and access to affordable housing. The following information is provided from Council's Social Plan 2006-11, last updated in December 2008.

There are some key features of Lithgow that impact on homelessness:

Rail Terminus

Lithgow is the western end of the Sydney train network. For this reason, it is well recognised by the Police, Transit Police and local service providers that significant numbers of homeless young people use the night trains to Lithgow as a warm and relatively safe place to sleep.

Lithgow is also the point at which people travelling to western NSW generally disembark to connect with Countrylink bus services. Aboriginal people in particular are often stranded here overnight and longer, something that the local Police and Aboriginal community have had to respond to.

Lithgow Correctional Centre

Lithgow is home to a maximum security gaol for over 300 males. The Lithgow Social Plan has identified the need for short term accommodation for families who are visiting the gaol.

Crisis Accommodation

There is a women's and children's crisis accommodation service in Lithgow but no youth crisis centre. The nearest youth crisis accommodation centres are in Katoomba and Bathurst, each approximately 45 minutes away.

Housing Affordability

Although housing rental costs in Lithgow are relatively lower than Sydney, incomes in Lithgow are also low. The 2006 Census shows that unemployment rates in Lithgow (8.5%) are well above the NSW (5.9%) and Central West regional averages (6.3%). Incomes in Lithgow are also well below the NSW and Central West regional averages

Yours sincerely



Matthew Johnson
Manager Community and Culture