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HousingWORKS

The Journal of the Australasian Housing Institute – linking housing workers in Australia and New Zealand

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Cover image: Courtesy Hume Community Housing Association. AHI is grateful for the editorial services provided for this edition of *HousingWORKS* by Bakewood – www.bakewood.com.au

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Welcome to the December edition of HousingWORKS



Welcome to another bumper edition of *HousingWORKS* full of interesting news, views and information.

2016 – the year in review

What a year 2016 was for the housing sector! A year of fluctuating opportunities with large-scale stock transfer firmly back on the agenda in New Zealand, NSW and South Australia, contrasted by the cancellation of the Logan transfer in Queensland and relative inactivity in other jurisdictions. Housing may be quietly creeping back onto the Commonwealth political agenda, signalled in part by the establishment of the Council on Federal Financial Relations Affordable Housing Working Group. The housing sector will no doubt continue to advocate for a long-term national plan for housing.

From an AHI perspective, 2016 has been another busy year of activity, with some of the highlights including:

- A growing range of services and activities, with events conducted in every jurisdiction;
- AHI membership across New Zealand and Australia up by 20 percent;
- Several new Corporate Members and Corporate Sponsors;
- The first and highly successful Aboriginal Housing Masterclass conducted in September; and
- A new Strategic Plan developed to steer the future positioning and focus of the AHI.

What's in this edition?

As always, this edition serves a broad range of topics. Greg Budworth provides an international perspective with an article about the recent UN Habitat III Conference in Ecuador. Also, Ron Clewer, CEO of Rockford Housing Authority in the USA, gives us an international view of housing asset management.

There are updates from across Australia including Women's Housing Ltd, Link Housing, Hume Community Housing, and the transcript of a presentation about housing in Tasmania by the Minister for Human Services, the Hon. Jacqui Petrusma MP. Haleh Homei provides a very personal perspective of her role as CEO of Port Phillip Housing Association based on her experience of fleeing war-torn Iran as a child.

We feature two great articles regarding Indigenous housing: one in which Shane Hamilton speaks about the important leadership role and future directions of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, and Shona McCahon writes about a medium density village in the heart of Auckland that is designed to combine modern sustainable living practices with traditional Māori values and traditions.

Looking ahead

In 2017, your AHI will continue to promote excellence in the housing sector by recognising, connecting, inspiring and enabling housing professionals across New Zealand and



Australia. Two key upcoming events that you should put in the diary are:

- The AHI's Awards for Excellence in Social Housing – for which nominations close on 28th February – culminating in the Australasian Awards Dinner in Sydney in November 2017;
- The second Aboriginal Housing Masterclass to be held in May 2017, following the success of our first, and co-hosted again by the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office.

Looking forward to an exciting year ahead for housing professionals in New Zealand and Australia.

Andrew Davis
AHI President



Dear HousingWORKS...

Dear HousingWORKS,

I have an interesting anecdote, as well as a conundrum that I'm hoping readers of this journal may be able to help solve.

I live in St Kilda East in Victoria and, like many people in my area, I've used the services of a local handyman named Luke Mason. Luke has achieved a level of notoriety in the neighbourhood due to the wishing well that popped up in his front yard a couple of years back. It started as a basic wishing well that advertised that funds raised would go to the Sacred Heart Mission in St Kilda but it has grown into a fully blown neighbourhood attraction – quite a display – which you'll see from the images I've included.

While Luke is in the private rental market, he teetered on the precipice of homelessness, having gone through a debilitating period of depression, anxiety and PTSD following injuries he sustained when his home was invaded in December 2013. This difficult period in his life was the impetus for creating the wishing well, and also supporting the Sacred Heart Mission as he realised how close he was to needing the help of such a charity himself. He also created the wishing well as a place for reflection where others could think about their lives and about helping others.

Luke tells me people use his wishing well as a therapeutic device – they will

stop by it at night and some people have told him the wishing well has been their saving grace during tough times. There are enough curios in the wishing well that parents even use it to help teach their children how to spell, pointing out all the animals and bits and bobs. These are all added benefits that Luke didn't expect when he first built it.

Personally, Luke didn't anticipate the sense of joy and purpose the wishing well would give him. It's helped him significantly in managing his PTSD and it's become a project of immense satisfaction. To date, the wishing well has raised over \$12,000, which is an amazing achievement considering this is an informal donation system based on trust – the wishing well is open to the street and contains no security measures. Luke says that \$12,000 equates to 3,000 meals supplied by the Sacred Heart Mission.

Luke built the original wishing well for under \$200 and has relied on donations from others to add ornamentation and change the look of the wishing well across the seasons. However, as the wishing well has grown in size, so have the costs – in particular, the power costs for pumping the elaborate water feature on a 24-hour basis. Luke uses low-energy LED lighting to keep electricity costs at a minimum but it's difficult to get around the costs of the water pump, which means he's owing his power

company thousands of dollars and struggling to sustain his project.

Given Luke is such a heartwarming example of how one home can be used not only to create a sense of place for its occupant but also give to others who may not have a home, I was hoping the housing professionals who read *HousingWORKS* might have an idea of how Luke could get a sponsor to pay for the maintenance of the wishing well... Maybe an electricity/power sponsor? Or even a business that could help him cover the costs of the power supply?

Please visit Luke's Facebook page for more information – www.facebook.com/Sacredheartmissionwishingwell. If you have a suggestion of how to keep a valuable community service running, it would be great if you could message Luke on his Facebook page. He doesn't know this letter is being published but I'm sure he'd appreciate it if it results in a sponsor for his very special Sacred Heart Wishing Well.

Regards,
Anonymous



Email your Dear HousingWORKS letters and Vox Pop answers to admin@housinginstitute.org



“ If you were to run the government for a day, what strategy or policy would you implement to provide affordable housing? ”

Mark Singer
AHI Member

“Only a day? If policies/strategies are to stick for longer than 24 hours, we need a win-win approach, something that generates affordable housing funding. Whose funds? Not the pokie players scratching for a penny but the big fish gambling with our collective future – the fossil fuel lobby, climate deniers, Wall Street, casino owners, high net worth individuals – all looking for a fail-safe, bank-guaranteed bottom-line investment bonanza.”

“And the win-win strategy is – yes – Homelotto! Ho-melotto, Homel-otto, Homelot-to, omelette... whatever. How will it work? Modelled on the Sydney Opera House Lottery of the 1960s and 1970s, you guessed it, it’s a nationwide lottery offering a chance to wash untaxed earnings for BIG cash prizes at better odds than the gee-gees, or the ASX or the Virgin Islands. Remaining Homelotto revenue is distributed as ongoing capital funding for community housing organisations, federally legislated and administered by AHURI on evidence-based housing need. It’s a win-win, where big fish feel good about solving the affordable housing crisis for little fish, and await the win.”

“It’s tried and tested! With a reliable flow of funding, the CHO sector muscles up, is offered the entire national public housing stock at cut-rate prices, and then refits the portfolio with renewables. Talk about an Innovation Nation. Win-win-win and win! (with apologies to WH and Jobs Lotto).”

Dr Tony Gilmour,
Managing Director @ Housing
Action Network

“One day of power: so much to do in so little time! While the tax system needs a major overhaul, I’d start with inclusionary zoning. Every new residential development with more than 20 homes across Australia (and Auckland too, if my power spreads) should deliver 20 percent affordable housing: Half should be for social housing rental for very low income tenants, with ownership gifted to community housing providers. The other half would be sold to eligible first-time homebuyers earning less than the median household income in the areas where they live.”

“Prices should be set so buyers pay no more than 30 percent household income on mortgage payments, and might involve outright purchase or shared ownership. If purchasers sell within five years, half of any capital appreciation should be returned to government and used to establish community land trusts. A simple, consistent approach across the country would give certainty for developers. The costs would be absorbed by a drop in land prices for developable land.”

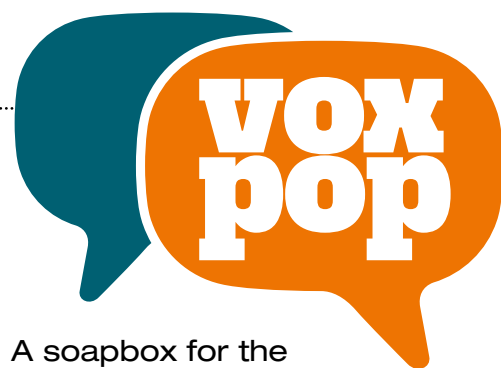
“Using the planning system to help deliver affordable housing is a tried and tested approach used effectively around the world. What the proposed scheme ensures is that benefits go to people who need affordable housing most.”

Scott Langford,
CEO @ SGCH Group

“This is a great topic. It reminds me of what three wishes you’d have if you rubbed a magic lamp and out came a genie! Unlike a magic genie, though, I am more optimistic that achieving affordable housing changes in Australia is attainable.”

“Having worked in the sector for over a decade and been involved in many policy discussions across this time, I know there is no silver bullet. There is no one change that can lead to substantive change because this is a complex area. So, given the opportunity, I would like to see true collaboration that has government at all levels working together to provide a coordinated and integrated approach pulling multiple levers to deliver more affordable housing.”

“In order for this to happen, it needs to be a partnership that considers people, communities, place making, zoning, planning, finance models, environment and infrastructure. We need a partnership approach to ensure Australia is providing affordable housing for key workers in key areas that supports a growing economy and sustainable communities.”



A soapbox for the
**AUSTRALASIAN
HOUSING
COMMUNITY**



NEWS, VIEWS AND MOVEMENTS FROM ACROSS THE AUSTRALASIAN HOUSING INDUSTRY

Email your news to admin@housinginstitute.org and specify 'News'

Link Housing wins Australian Customer Service Project of the Year

Link Housing became the first community housing provider in Australia to win the Customer Service Project of the Year Award for its Mystery Shopper Program at the Customer Services Institute's Australian Service Excellence Awards 2016.

The prestigious accolade was awarded in Melbourne on Wednesday 26th October, with Link Housing also making up the ranks of finalists for the Customer Service Organisation of the Year Award.

Andrew McNulty, Link Housing CEO, said, "This is an awesome initiative, which has generated training and jobs for tenants with a focus on improved customer service. This is the first project in Australia that utilises their own tenants to mystery shop the services of their housing provider."

Delivered in collaboration with NSW Department of Family and Community Services, the Mystery Shopper Program involved tenants assessing and reviewing the effectiveness of processes and customer satisfaction. The program has earned long-term employment for some tenants and motivated others towards further education.

Lance Carden, NSW FACS Director Customer Service and Business Improvement, said, "The collaboration between FACS, Link Housing and our tenants has been driven by a desire to create real tenant engagement and long-term service improvements."

Link Housing describes the drivers of its customer service strategy as: leadership, innovation and a customer-centric approach to all its services and operations. Earlier this year, Link Housing added another first to their tally, becoming the first community housing provider in Australia to be certified to the International Customer Service Standard ICSS: 2015-2020.

Link Housing is one of the oldest not-for-profit community housing providers in New South Wales, managing over 1,400 homes with over 2,500 customers across Northern and Metropolitan Sydney. Link works with clients along every step of the journey – from placing tenants into new homes through to managing sustainable tenancy outcomes.

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- For more information, contact Andrew McNulty on 0407 171 848 or andrew.mcnulty@linkhousing.org.au



(l-r) Michael Bolton, Michael Bacon, Kathleen Cain, Lance Carden, Rebecca Huntsman, Jennifer Khamis and Dr Sven Tuzovic

NEWS, VIEWS AND MOVEMENTS FROM ACROSS THE AUSTRALASIAN HOUSING INDUSTRY

Hume finishes 2016 on a high note – Western Sydney University Careers Expo

Hume Community Housing Association believes education is the key to choosing your destination, and attracting the right talent is imperative for the continued successful delivery of housing and support services to our customer base. For these reasons, Hume attended the Western Sydney University's Social Work and Community Welfare Expo held on Friday 7th October 2016.

The Expo is one of a few annual, discipline-specific career expos organised by the university to provide their students with an opportunity to meet with employers and gain insight into their chosen profession.

In keeping with Hume's values of being Champions of Change, Creators of Connectivity, Builders of Resilience and Determined to Succeed, Hume is committed to participating in and supporting the education and career development of people in our community. The Expo enabled Hume to meet with students, promote the community housing sector as a challenging and satisfying career path, discuss the opportunities within Hume as an organisation, promote Hume as a community housing employer and strengthen relationships with the university.

Anna Nguyen, Sarithya Tuy and Sririsy Vukovic acted as the representatives for Hume, speaking with students involved in a social work/community welfare/social science degree. A survey was also taken to gauge general awareness, resulting in 60 percent of students being aware of the community housing sector, which indicates that community housing has a great opportunity to further promote itself collectively to attract talent and raise awareness.

New developments

Hume is committed to designing and constructing developments to alleviate the increasing pressure on supply of affordable and social housing, with a development pipeline of social and affordable development projects totalling \$50 million. Hume is also proud to deliver additional social and affordable housing to the Western Sydney market where housing affordability is a growing concern and challenge.

Construction continues on the Hamilton Road development, which will provide the Fairfield LGA with an additional 60 affordable units. On 31st October, Hume completed a first design and construct development, providing 21 social housing units in Guildford. (see image, right). The development has been completed to a high standard within budget and approximately four weeks ahead of schedule.

Work is nearing completion on our Warwick Farm development, with a number of customers planning to move into the complex shortly (see image, right). Warwick Farm is a mixed development of social and affordable housing townhouses, one of which is built as adaptable living.

Community Cohesion

With the help of over 40 partners, customers and staff, Hume officially launched a Community Cohesion Strategy at Glenroy Cottage, Claymore on 3rd November 2016. Greg Warren MP presented local residents with their Certificate of Achievement for completing the Mental Health First Aid Officer training.

Hume's Community Cohesion Strategy has been developed to guide the achievement of vibrant, sustainable and cohesive communities. The strategy focuses on the customer's social, recreational and economic needs, building independence and choice.

Central to the Community Cohesion Strategy is Hume's focus on learning and employment. Hume links the attainment of education with the prospects and achievement of vocation, providing customers with pathways for employment, and enabling people to become financially stable and choose their own destination in alignment with NSW Government's Future Directions policy.

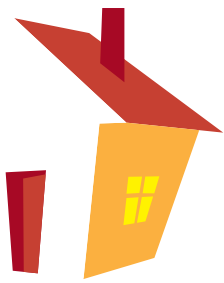
■ For more information, visit www.humecha.com.au



Guildford



Warwick Farm



UN Plan puts Housing Back on the National Agenda

> *Following his impassioned rallying cry with 'No National Report, No National Plan' in the March edition of HousingWORKS, Greg Budworth from Compass reports back from the United Nations Habitat III conference, held in Ecuador in October, with a far more positive outcome than expected.*

For almost a decade, successive Commonwealth governments have paid little attention to housing policy, preferring instead to devolve responsibility to the states where it has become increasingly politicised.

During this period, Commonwealth involvement has been limited to the provision of rent assistance and the funding of homelessness services. While these contributions are extremely valuable, what has been missing is national leadership in the form of an overarching strategy that sets a cohesive and bipartisan set of national, state and local goals that will ensure future generations are not locked out of the housing market and into a permanent state of rental stress.

A long-term national strategy will hold each party in power accountable for achieving that proportion of the plan applicable to the political cycles of their administration rather the tendency to promote election-winning policy.

Despite our enviable position as a prosperous and advanced economy, Australia is not immune from population and sustainability related challenges. Ten years ago, a United Nations special rapporteur visited Australia and reported we had failed to provide adequate housing for our population, primarily due to there being no national plan. There is still no national plan and, sadly, very little has changed over the past decade.

“ Despite our enviable position as a prosperous and advanced economy, Australia is not immune from population and sustainability related challenges. ”

In our major cities, population growth is placing significant pressure on housing affordability, transport infrastructure and human services and – beyond some politically contentious tinkering with the tax system – proposed solutions are thin on the ground. However, it seems all of that might be about to change, and the catalyst has come from an unexpected quarter: the United Nations Human Settlements Program. In October this year, a delegation from Compass Housing



(l-r) Mia Davidson from Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Compass Group Managing Director, Greg Budworth; and Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, Gillian Bird.

Services – with many others from universities, local government, state agencies and civil society organisations – attended the United Nations Habitat III conference in Ecuador where we were privileged to work alongside the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr Gillian Bird.

The Habitat program is the major vehicle of the UN Human Settlements Program. Conferences are held every 20 years, and result in national members adopting 20-year housing and human settlement plans. The outcome of the October 2016 conference was to seek the member-nations endorsement of the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The NUA aims to set global standards for sustainable urban development by placing adequate and affordable housing front and centre, and having the overarching vision of:

“... seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.” (Clause 11)

Over the course of the four-day conference, some 30,000 people from 167 countries took part in almost 1,000 events including eight plenary sessions, six high-level roundtable discussions, 157 exhibition booths, and over 460 networking and training events.

“ Over the course of the four-day conference some 30,000 people from 167 countries took part in almost 1,000 events. ”

In what was a momentous event for our organisation, Compass was granted the opportunity to make a presentation to the final plenary session where I took the opportunity to share Compass’ vision for a world in which all people have access to adequate and affordable housing, and are engaged in their communities. I also congratulated the Australian Government for their full and public endorsement of the NUA.

Most importantly, however, Habitat III concluded with the New Urban Agenda being officially endorsed by all member-states, including Australia, with it being sent to the UN General Assembly for adoption. It was a historic moment for housing policy development in this country and a welcome sign that housing is back on the national agenda.

So what does this mean for us as housing professionals? What exactly has the government agreed to adopt? To give you an idea, take this excerpt from the NUA, which commits Australia to the delivery of a coherent national approach to housing policy:

“We will foster the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. We will develop and implement housing policies at all levels, incorporating participatory planning, and applying the principle of subsidiarity, as appropriate, in order to ensure coherence among national, subnational and local development strategies, land policies and housing supply.” (Clause 105)

“ What does this mean for us as housing professionals? What exactly has the government agreed to adopt? ”

Or this one, which equates to a full endorsement of policies that recognise the links between housing and other social outcomes, and the importance of a housing-first approach to combating homelessness:

“We will support the development of housing policies that foster local integrated housing approaches by addressing the strong links between education, employment, housing and health... Furthermore, we commit ourselves to combating homelessness... through dedicated policies and targeted active inclusion strategies, such as comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable housing-first programmes.”

(Clause 108).

These are just two of more than a hundred such commitments contained within the NUA. It’s heady stuff. Endorsing so bold a vision is something for which the Australian Government deserves to be congratulated.

It’s now the role of the social housing sector, and civil society more broadly, to ensure the commitments Australia has made by endorsing the NUA do not become the victims of changing political fortunes – or become the playthings of special interests – but remain at the forefront of the national agenda.

Access to adequate and affordable housing is a fundamental human right. While the challenges for Australia are not as acute as in the developing world, we are still a long way from delivering that basic human right to all members of our society. The endorsement of the New Urban Agenda, however, is an enormous step in the right direction and there is now cause for optimism that this issue will finally get the attention it deserves.

■ For more information on this matter, contact Greg Budworth on 02 4920 2600 or email reception@compasshousing.org



Greg Budworth has been the Group Managing Director of Compass Housing Services since 2004. He is currently the Chair of the External Relations Committee of the International Housing Partnership and Co-Chair of the United Nations Partner Constituent Group for Civil Society. He has served in various governance roles for PowerHousing Australia, NSW Federation of Housing Associations and Australasian Housing Institute, as well as other homelessness and human service organisations.

Greg has a Masters in Business from Newcastle University and other tertiary qualifications in business management, project management, workplace safety and workplace training. He is completing a Doctorate in Business Administration.

A word from the **HON. JACQUIE PETRUSMA MP**



> *Following is a transcript of the speech from the AHI Luncheon in Hobart on Wednesday 2nd November by the Hon. Jacquie Petrusma MP, Tasmanian Minister for Human Services and Minister for Women.*

TASMANIAN VISION

Today, I'd like to talk to you briefly about Tasmania's housing vision. As we all here today know, people need access to affordable, safe and secure housing so they can feel included and connected, and be part of a community – so they can participate in social and economic activities.

We're fortunate in Tasmania that many people can afford a home. Tasmania has been one of the most affordable places to live in Australia, home ownership rates have been consistently high and rents affordable. However, over recent years several troubling trends have emerged:

- Home ownership rates have started to decline for the first time;
- Rents have increased and more people need rental housing than there are properties available;
- Housing stress levels have increased and, while still relatively low compared with other states, homelessness rates have also increased. Therefore, too many Tasmanians are now unable to access affordable homes; and
- We have increasing rates and incidents of family violence and family breakdown, which is placing further pressure on families and stretching services – especially our crisis services.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

When this government was elected, we committed to delivering an Affordable Housing Strategy because we recognised the central importance of housing in contributing to a flourishing community and economy.

In September last year, we delivered the Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 and the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2015-2019. The Strategy addresses the entire housing spectrum from home ownership to affordable rental, public and community housing, and crisis accommodation.

The Strategy and Action Plan are all about:

- Increasing the availability and accessibility of affordable appropriate homes;
- Addressing the need for targeted services; and
- Better homelessness responses.

The Strategy sets out the opportunities for innovative partnerships between government, community and the private sectors. Over the first four years alone, it will deliver housing for an additional 1,600 vulnerable Tasmanian households including over 900 new homes.

The Strategy sets out the vision that will drive the state's future housing reform agenda for the next decade. Importantly, it's an integrated strategy linked to other key government infrastructure investment and job creation strategies.

Based on industry benchmarks, building these additional new homes will create up to 550 full-time equivalent jobs and increase economic activity by \$235 million over the next four

years. In this year's budget, we provided \$60 million over three years to support implementation of the Strategy. This was in addition to upfront investment of \$13.5 million when the Strategy was first announced, and is on top of Housing Tasmania's capital spend.

The Strategy, therefore, gives the financial commitment, as well as the clear direction and certainty, for our important sector partners looking to invest in housing, whether in the private or community sector.

I know Peter White, Chief Executive Housing & Disability Reform, Department of Health & Human Services, will soon be speaking specifically about some of the key projects under our first Affordable Housing Action Plan so I won't speak about all of our 27 initiatives and actions. But I do want to commend Peter and his team for the large body of work they have put into developing the Affordable Housing Action Plan and Affordable Housing Strategy, as Housing Tasmania, alongside the government, is committed to continuing to improve housing and support outcomes for Tasmanians.

We're also committed to further reform to achieve these improvements. This means building on the success of Housing Connect, the very effective front door to housing and homelessness support services. It also means building on the success of the Better Housing Futures initiative where the Tasmanian Government transferred the tenancy and property management to nationally registered community housing providers.

As new supply of social housing is an immediate priority, research and consultation in developing our Affordable Housing Strategy showed title transfer should be considered to increase the overall supply of social housing. In response to this, the Community Housing Stock Leverage Program has been developed. This pilot program offers the chance to accelerate the supply of new social housing targeted at priority applicants on the Housing Register. It will build on the existing contractual requirements under Better Housing Futures to increase affordable housing supply, and the pilot will be monitored carefully to ensure that all supply targets are met.

We're also joining up our human services system so vulnerable Tasmanians get the support they need, when they need it, as we know that people on the Housing Register, if they need a home, usually need other services as well. In the meantime, we are continuing to work with our federal colleagues on funding arrangements for our housing and homelessness services and on forgiving Tasmania's housing debt.

In closing, I'd like to thank the Australasian Housing Institute for hosting this event today, and I look forward to working with the Institute on our shared interest in social housing and affordable housing policy issues. Thank you.

- *For more information about the Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 and Affordable Housing Action Plan 2015-2019, visit http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/housing/key_projects_for_2014-15/tasmanian_affordable_housing_strategy*

NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS TO GUIDE THE FUTURE OF **ABORIGINAL HOUSING**



> *The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) is taking a leadership role in strengthening a national conversation on issues of housing and homelessness. This article for HousingWORKS, inspired by the AHI and AHO's Master Class, hopes to keep such discussions on the table.*

In September 2016, the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) co-hosted the first Aboriginal Housing Master Class. The event was an opportunity to bring various players from the sector together to share information, highlight national learnings and address some of the big issues facing communities and agencies.

It was a timely discussion given the NSW Government's release of its discussion paper 'Foundations for Change – Homelessness in NSW', which once again highlighted the high numbers of Aboriginal Australians experiencing homelessness, along with a range of other housing related issues. Importantly, the focus question of the Master Class was: "How do we combine the experience of mainstream housing and Aboriginal housing to learn from each other and collaborate to better address Aboriginal housing issues and support sustainability?"

“ Although our role is to address and respond to Aboriginal housing needs in NSW, we are acutely aware this is a national issue that deserves further national collaboration. ”

According to AHO Chief Executive Shane Hamilton, "It is very important to consider how the sector is shaping the future in a way that both reflects and meets the needs of Aboriginal people, and how some of these learnings and perspectives may enhance and positively influence the issue at a broader level. We also have to remember that a lot of mainstream providers are working with Aboriginal people."

"Although our role is to address and respond to Aboriginal housing needs in NSW, we are acutely aware this is a national issue that deserves further national collaboration."

Shane also highlights the importance of the Master Class, particularly given the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) ends in 2018: "We know that each state is in a different place with that agreement so the conversation about Aboriginal housing is absolutely one that spans Australia-wide. As a sector, we need to start talking about where the real pressure points are going to be beyond 2018 and put our heads together to think about what a new agreement might focus on, from our point of view, should another one be developed. From that, we can also start to consider how a new agreement might translate into policy and outcomes at a state level."

The Master Class was an exciting opportunity to take a strengths-based approach and reflect on what has worked well in the sector and what it can keep building. It was a time to look

at what the sector could do differently and how it may need to change to respond to emerging issues.

"There is a great opportunity for us to share ideas and existing stories as a platform to talk about real solutions for future housing options for Aboriginal people," says Shane.

“ Historically the system has been set up to de-incentivise people to enter employment. ”

The AHO was keen to learn from some of the positive initiatives being delivered in other states, such as many of the successful transitional housing programs in WA, but was also excited to share information around some of its own key initiatives and learnings. For example, one of the most successful programs currently being offered by the AHO is the Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) program, which connects people who need to relocate from regional areas to metropolitan areas to take advantage of work or study options.

"In the AHO's view, this is an important program because historically the system has been set up to de-incentivise people to enter employment," admits Shane. "We want to challenge that idea and provide wraparound support for someone who might need housing assistance to take up an opportunity. In the long run, this will support both individual and community resilience. This is not unique to NSW and could be applied in other states."

“ AHO held a Festival of Energy in the regional NSW city of Dubbo, an area where many people are experiencing extreme energy hardship. ”



AHO Chief Executive, Shane Hamilton





Entertainment at the Festival of Energy was provided by Lewis Burns

"Another area of focus was innovation, and how new and creative ways of thinking can improve the sector as a whole at the national level. For example, in September 2016, the AHO held a Festival of Energy in the regional NSW city of Dubbo, an area where many people are experiencing extreme energy hardship. The festival came about as a way to support tenants in managing their energy use and minimising their household energy costs. Key service providers were brought together – including those from the non-government sector – to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for tenants and their families to learn more about what they can do proactively within their own households.

"This festival is a great way to get the community engaged and deliver important messages in an exciting way," explains Shane. "Although we have only delivered one festival so far, and in a NSW regional city, it could very well be a template for other communities where energy costs are a key concern and, potentially, a barrier to sustainable tenancy."

These kinds of initiatives are part of the AHO's push to bring a more holistic lens to the issue of housing and directly linking it to other social outcomes. It is something the AHO sees as key to the longer term sustainability of the sector.

“ In many cases, big national agreements can be seen to be imposing things on our communities and developing systems and structures for us. ”



AHO staff at the Festival of Energy

"This is a philosophy that underpins much of our work," says Shane. "Through the delivery of many of our programs, we link housing quite directly to the support of employment and study opportunities, to the transition from out-of-home care to independent living, and to the transition from the justice system to community life. We believe this could be a good platform for the broader sector to build on as well."

One of the key issues the AHO wanted to raise with national counterparts was that of stronger community engagement around the type of housing systems that are actually needed: "In many cases, big national agreements can be seen to be imposing things on our communities and developing systems

and structures for us. We don't want to be in a situation where time and dollars drive a program and its outcomes – we want the drivers to be innovation and community need. This means we need to look at how we can better collaborate and co-design with our communities.”

Shane says, should a new agreement, or any kind of national partnership be developed, he wants to see innovation at its core as it can't simply be a one-size-fits-all model. The AHO believes that forums like the Aboriginal Housing Master Class are a great opportunity for this kind of innovation to flourish.

“With the NPARIH agreement ending in 2018, we need to start having these conversations *now* so that we can better understand the level of need to plan for – and start working on – providing *new* solutions for people as they transition through the housing continuum,” Shane comments. “We need to have a system that is responsive to those needs at every point on someone's journey – not just solutions that are stuck and focused at one end of the spectrum.”

He also argues, if you think about the broader closing-the-gap agenda – and look to health challenges, mental health, education and employment – all of those things have a theme, and that theme is housing support: “If we start to create plans and identify aspirations that link these things together, it will only put us all in a stronger position.”

Importantly, the AHO believes future planning and development around housing should be made more transparent. In a response to the NSW Discussion Paper, the AHO argues that we need stronger plans and targets centred around community needs and aspirations.

“We believe this will not only drive greater accountability across the sector, it also better articulates our broader vision to addressing homelessness to our communities,” says Shane. “It helps to build that trust and transparency around what we are trying to achieve. It's not just a way to hold ourselves accountable; it's a way for our communities to hold us to account.”

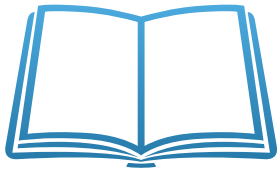
Looking beyond 2018, the AHO says this kind of collaboration and transparency will help to build positive solutions that can be amplified across various states and territories: “Beyond 2018, we know there will still be a lot of un-met need and there's a challenge in making sure that programs are available along the continuum. We will also still face the challenge of making sure programs and services are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people and their families. But I think there's a lot more we can do to support mainstream providers who are connecting with our Aboriginal communities.”

The AHO hopes to continue to deliver master classes and similar events to ensure Aboriginal housing has a voice and a recognised place in the broader housing sector: “We do need our own platform to inform policy going forward. We need clear access and choice in housing options and we need to support our community *in housing* as well,” concludes Shane.

“By coming together as a national community, we can hopefully influence policy in a positive way and keep community need at the centre of decision-making.”



ERA tenants and IPROWD graduates Cheryl-Leigh Partridge (left), Aliesha Prince and Jazmin Mary Brown (right)



BOOK REVIEW

Alan Morris' *The Australian Dream: Housing experiences of older Australians*

> Reviewed by Francis Brazil, AHI Board Member.

In writing the *Australian Dream: Housing experiences of older Australians*, Alan Morris – a research professor in the Institute for Public Policy and Governance at the University of Technology Sydney – has brought the subject of tenure and wellbeing for seniors in our community into the contemporary age with an intertwining of political and scholarly publication analysis of the field.

His study examines J. Kemeny's argument around whether older housing renters and homeowners can live a decent life on an age pension (8). At the commencement of the book, he sets himself a significant task to do this in "an accessible manner" (vi), and his early conclusion that those having to pay private rent are in the worst situation may seem an obvious outcome; however, he explores significant avenues around purchasing power, health, socialising and mobility to build a comprehensive picture.

Morris uses empirical data and conclusions by comparing the relevant tenure cohorts of elderly private and public community housing renters to outright homeowners over a ten-year period of 2005 to 2015. Although the timeline may be comparability problematic in a constantly changing market, it also creates an opportunity to see what difference those very changes have made to the outcomes for older Australians.

Morris starts by setting the scene around an increasing population of 65 and over, and where there is a societal bias to those receiving the aged pension and, what he sees as, an incorrect assumption, stigmatisation of ageing and being aged. In Chapter Two, he gives a detailed and succinct recount of the history of the tenures and how we have got to where we are today. This builds the picture of a declining social housing stock and the disappearing option of homeownership leaving a significant older population exposed to the mercy of the private rental sector.

In Chapter Three, Morris begins to explore individuals' experiences of the affordability of their tenure. He firstly builds an argument around housing cost in relationship to ownership of a home. As Australia is traditionally a high homeownership society, a related smaller pension and less resources toward cheaper rental options is the norm. He intrinsically links high rent and wellbeing with comparisons to public renters and homeowners that can only be described as in a heart-wrenching manner.

Morris continues this theme across Chapter Four with the stark reality of the cost of keeping a roof over one's head versus the affordability of essentials, such as food. He again emphasises the meagre income of private renters, compared to public and home ownership, with private renters clearly receiving the poor end of the deal.

With those of us reading this from a community or government background – especially providing accommodation for older Australians – we will be comforted to know that a good, albeit frugal, existence is possible. It should also be a spur



to cater for those who do not live in social housing to change government policy, as well as push organisational goals to get better.

In Chapter Five, Morris explores the conditions of each tenure, and both the loyalty and attachment to place and housing. It is uncomfortable reading and hard to imagine some of the conditions in private – particular boarding and pub – accommodation, as well as

challenges in bigger public estates. He touches on some of the societal discrimination against public housing played out through older renters, which belies their situation. It is both a poignant reminder of inbuilt teleological perceptions of the nature of tenure, as well as the need for sensitivity around older people and those who gate-keep the stock (well worth the read for anyone in allocations).

In Chapters Six and Seven, Morris looks at the struggles with keeping a social life and dealing with health issues. At this point in the book, he compares the stories of two sets of renters and the particular problems they face around security of tenure, and whether their property can be taken away from them.

As an overall read, I recommend this book as a rich source of social history around housing and life experiences of how Australians live. It is both useful holistically for its broad research approach, as well as examining this particular age group and their tenures. It also starkly outlines the problems of a society that relies on self-welfare through ownership, with only a small portion rescued through social housing while others languish in unsafe and unfunded Victorian conditions.

Alan Morris' book is an important source of information for policymakers about the outcome of housing decisions and how this could be done better for the future. He finishes with a crescendo of data, tying together important theoretical and empirical studies to prove his point, while also reiterating the argument for the 'right' to decent housing. It is a fitting end to a book that is emotionally heavy, bringing real life experience to the subject, while also clearly defining an important theoretical, legal and moral obligation on the Australian people and legislators to right the problem.



Francis Brazil has been involved in housing for over 20 years in both Australia and the UK, and now works for one of the largest community housing providers in NSW. He is an AHI Member, Certified Housing Professional, NSW Branch Member and the NSW Director on the AHI Board.

Francis has a Housing Degree from Middlesex University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Housing from Southbank University. He is currently studying Political Economy at Sydney University.



The impact of Housing and Key Critical Life Events

> *Dr Andrea Sharam, Liss Ralston and Dr Sharon Parkinson from Swinburne University of Technology conducted critical research into the wealth holdings of men and women at midlife (40 to 64 years of age) and recent retirees to gauge the impact of some key life events in shaping wealth. Following is a summary of their findings*

Approaching retirement – and retirement itself – can be a stressful and insecure time if the resources are not available for achieving, at a minimum, a modest lifestyle. This study evaluates the degree to which households are financially secure for retirement and, in particular, the impacts of partnering and divorce/separation on this security. Such critical events may have major effects on obtaining and remaining in home ownership and, accordingly, maintaining a modest lifestyle and avoiding housing problems.

The Study

Using a range of research methods, the report presents:

- An analysis of the income and asset test applied in the assessment for eligibility for the age pension and the relationship of the associated income levels to the retirement standards of the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia. This, in turn, has enabled an assessment of the capacity of households in different income and tenure circumstances to avoid problematic housing circumstances;
- A conceptual understanding of critical life events as they relate to housing circumstances. This is drawn from a review of a wide range of literature;
- An outline of the demographics of wealth and associated risk for midlife households. This is based on a cross-sectional analysis of the ABS Survey of Income and Housing (SIH), and compares the wealth of households in 2003 to 2004 and in 2013 to 2014:
 - Three age cohorts are examined in detail: 45 to 49 year-olds, 55 to 59 year-olds and 65 to 69 year-olds representing early midlife, late midlife and recent retirees respectively. The wealth of those 70 years and over is also examined.

- Of these age cohorts, lone-person male, lone-person female and couple-only households are considered in depth, permitting interrogation of gender effects and the risk effects of forming different household types. This raises the question of whether economies of consumption are available in being part of a larger household.
- Wealth is viewed in relation to tenure status with four tenure types scrutinised: owners who own or are purchasing their home and who do not own any other property; owner/owners who own or are purchasing their home and who own or are purchasing other property; private renters who do not own any property; and renter/owners or private renters who own or who are purchasing property other than the rental home in which they live.
- The types of wealth examined are owner-occupied housing, other property, superannuation and other wealth;
- An examination of the wealth of single parents as a separate entity, given the vulnerable position of many single parents, using the Survey of Income and Housing;
- The impact on tenure of relationship status change is examined using the Household, Income Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) longitudinal survey data, and;
- In-depth qualitative interviews with divorcees who owned or who had been purchasing a home with their former partner and who, in 2015, were between five and 10 years out from their separation. Most were living in Victoria but not all.

Key Findings

- Over 171,000 older people in Australia are experiencing housing insecurity and impoverishment in retirement, and this number will increase. Overwhelmingly, these are lone-person households living in private rental. A lone-person renter paying market rent on a one-bedroom dwelling in Melbourne will have, after housing costs, an income of \$9,635 per annum and \$10,540 per annum for a couple.
- Retired lone-person and couple-only renters have little wealth and women tend to be somewhat poorer than men. The median net total wealth for single female private renters in 2013 was \$14,025 and \$18,900 for single males (Fig. 1).

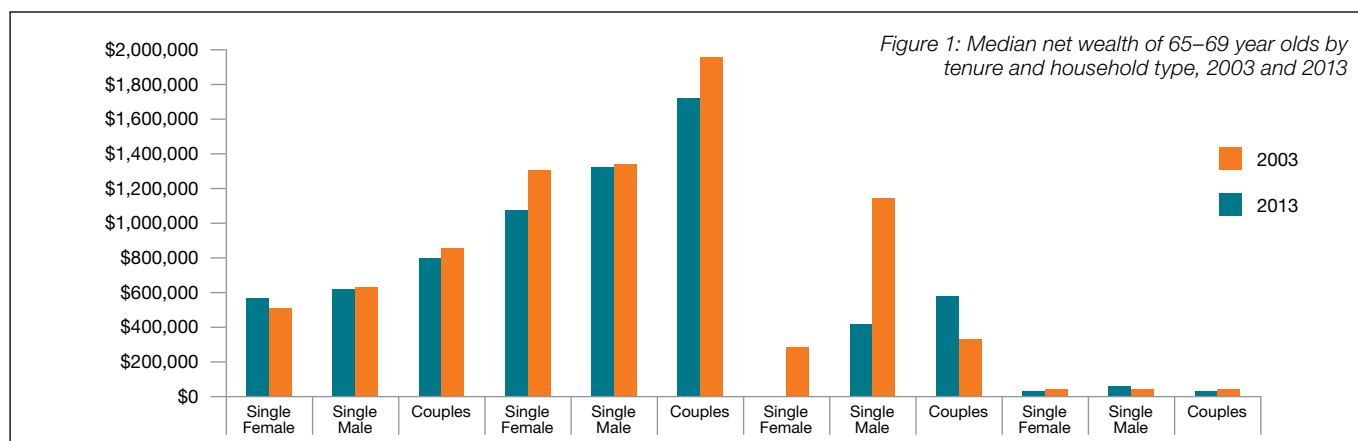
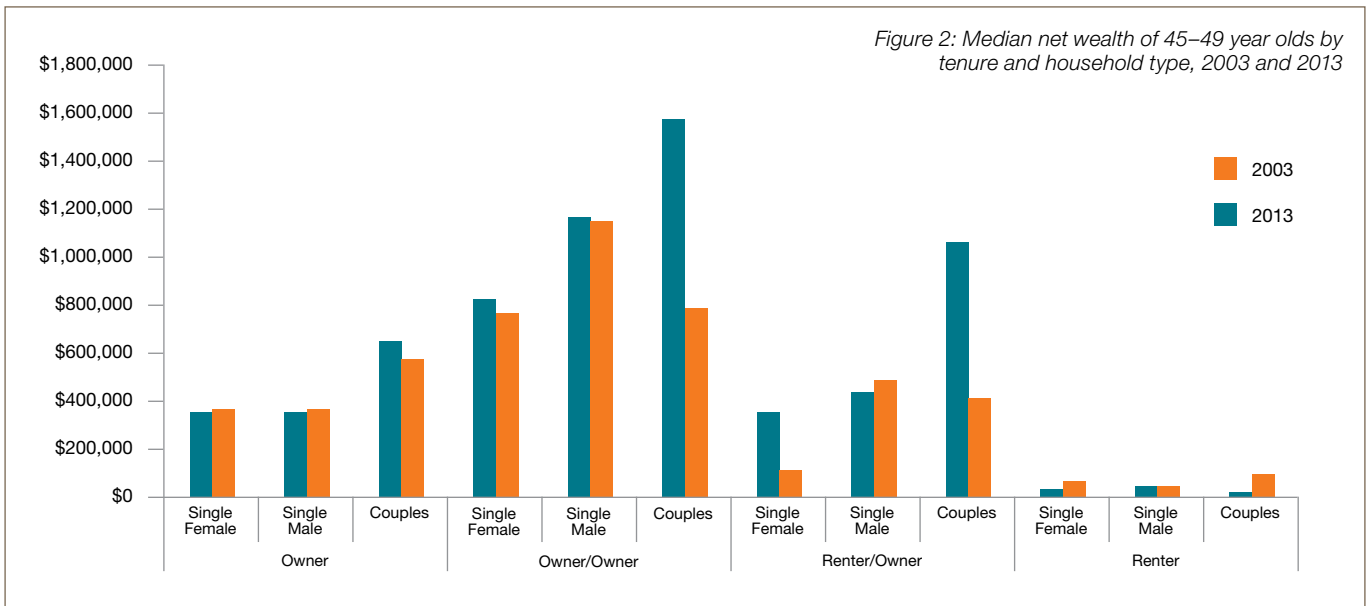


Figure 2: Median net wealth of 45–49 year olds by tenure and household type, 2003 and 2013



- Nationally, there are close to 426,000 individuals over the age of 50 years living alone or with a partner in private rental. ABS population projections for moderate growth suggest there will be 606,340 over 50 year-old renters in 2030 and, in 2050, 832,319. If growth is at the higher end of projection, it could mean over 900,000 individuals over 50 years of age in private rental (Figure 3).
- A large number of Australians are unable to accumulate savings for retirement. Lone-person or couple-only households living in private rental at the age of 45 to 49 years are likely to be private renters in retirement. Renters at early midlife have more savings than renters who are retired but what they have is still grossly inadequate (Figure 2).
- While community concern has focused on the unprecedented number of older women requiring housing assistance, between the ages of 50 and 70 years, there are twice as many males as females. Over 70 years of age, the reverse is true.
- Older private renters have managed rental increases by moving to low cost markets in urban fringe and regional areas or by trading down in size and quality of property. In Victoria, retired renters are concentrated in Geelong and Mornington Peninsula.
- Men and women have distinctly gendered pathways into rental poverty in older age. For women, it is the cost of care and the gender wage gap. For men, it reflects low educational attainment, low income and disability. The housing market itself is a source of impoverishment for both genders.
- Critical life events, such as marital breakdown and redundancy, which disrupt the normal routines of life – and, often, household income – can have major impacts on wealth and, in many cases, on the ability to hang on to home ownership. This is particularly the case for women. Men, however, who move from couple to single relationship status are more likely to also move from outright ownership or purchasing to private rental.
- Home-owners who owned investment property in 2013 were far more highly leveraged on their investment properties than

their counterparts were in 2003, reflecting a shift in household wealth accumulation strategies following the introduction of capital gains concessions in 1998. Conversely, the amount of equity in the owner-occupied housing of these households at late midlife (55 to 64 years) increased considerably, suggesting capital gains made on investment properties are invested in their homes.

Recommendations

Policy recommendations are broadly of two types: general ones that would assist low to moderate income households, including midlife and retiree households; and those that are specific to the latter group because of some distinctive attributes of the examined cohorts, e.g. inability to increase income in later life, limited wealth or the experience of critical life events, which more commonly occur when one is older.

General

- There needs to be substantial community investment and an appropriate regulatory environment for affordable housing in order to provide opportunities for midlife households who may be ineligible for social housing but cannot afford full market price housing. This will involve substantial community investment in social housing to house:
 - Current and future aged pensioners who are non-home-owners and who experience financial stress; and
 - Younger low income or otherwise disadvantaged persons.
- Social housing eligibility should be widened in order to cater for a broader range of incomes in order to prevent the loss of wealth associated with being a private renter and the potential for retirees to exhaust their resources before end of life.
- Renters should be able to enjoy some of the security that people have through home-ownership. This could be achieved primarily by providing for security of tenure in residential tenancies legislation. Further support could include:
 - Institutional investment in rental housing;
 - Age-specific private rental supplements in addition to existing rental assistance; and
 - An NRAS-type program targeted to age pensioners.

4. Taxation provisions should be modified in order to dampen housing price inflation and encourage growth of more affordable housing stock. This should include:
 - Removing the capital gains concession; and
 - Targeting negative gearing to new supply only.
5. Consideration should be given to reinstating death duties or an inheritance tax for wealth levels above a certain amount, and at a very moderate rate to minimise political resistance. The funds from such a scheme should be hypothecated to an affordable housing program for designated client groups (i.e. different to social housing).

Cohort-specific recommendations

6. Housing assistance should be diversified with new products aimed at short-to-medium term support for home purchasers who experience adverse critical life events. These could include:
 - Mortgage housing assistance;
 - Stamp duty exemptions for eligible persons re-entering home-ownership; and
 - Home advice and repair programs.
7. The development of a greater range of housing products could provide appropriate housing opportunities for midlife and retiree households who have little to moderate wealth. These could include:
 - Equity land trusts;
 - Shared equity housing;
 - Reverse annuity mortgages;
 - A new generation of ‘caravan’ parks providing permanent, prefabricated housing;
 - Support for deliberative developers; and
 - Support for the creation of a smart housing market.

Other

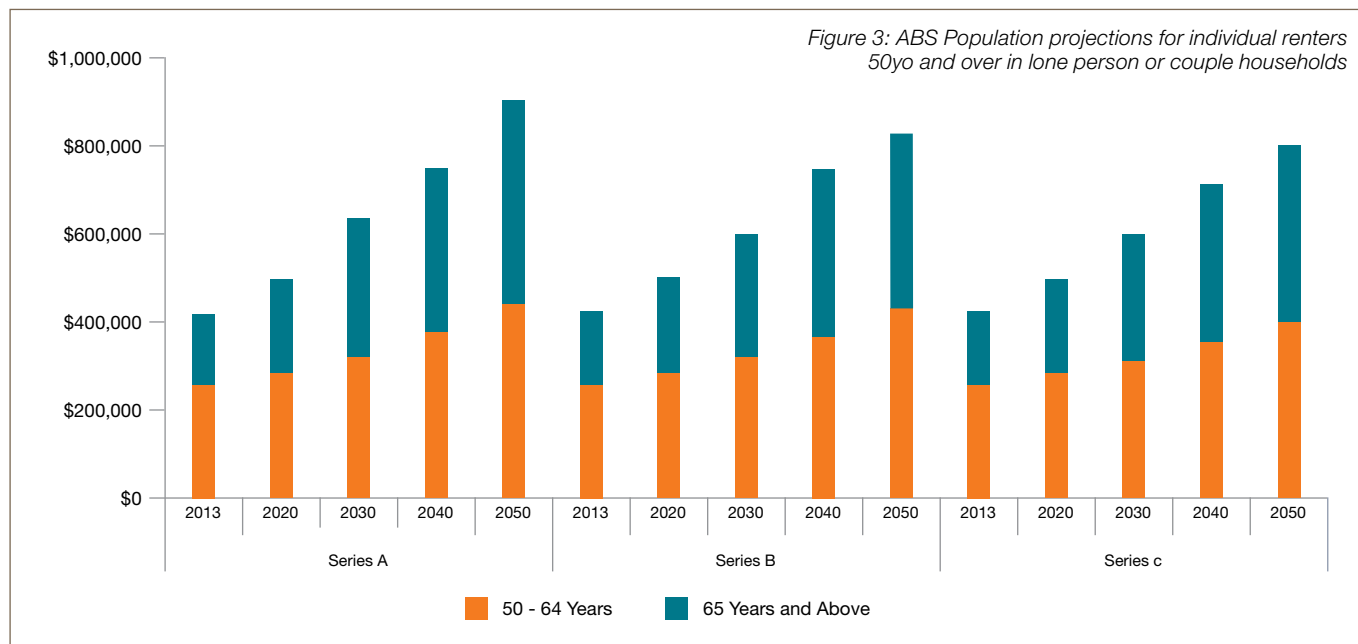
Given the weaknesses and gaps identified in this study, the collection of statistical data on migrants and people of non-English speaking background needs to be expanded.

- *The full report can be downloaded from: <http://apo.org.au/resource/security-retirement-impact-housing-and-key-critical-life-events>.*

Dr Andrea Sharam is a Research Fellow at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research. She has a Graduate Diploma in Urban Planning and Policy. Between 2004 and 2008, Andrea was a councillor at the Moreland City Council where she sat on the Urban Planning Committee and held the position of Councillor Responsible for Affordable Housing. She is the immediate past Chair of Women’s Information Support and Housing in the North (WISHIN) – a special homelessness service for single women and their children.

Liss Ralston is a statistician at Swinburne Institute for Social Research. She has extensive experience in working with a broad range of ABS data, Valuer-General’s property data, Centrelink data, local council rates data and other data sets, as well as human demography data (such as the Census). Liss produces the quarterly Rental Report for the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. She co-manages Swinburne’s Housing in Victoria website.

Dr Sharon Parkinson joined the Swinburne Institute for Social Research in 2015. Her research is informed by a combined background in public health and the social sciences, and much of her recent focus has been on the theoretical, practical and policy implications of insecurity and exclusion in work and housing. Sharon has particular expertise in longitudinal research that combines statistical modelling and qualitative biographical methods, as well as program evaluation and action research.



identifying and responding to domestic and family violence: a **TOOLKIT** for community housing providers

> *NSW Federation of Housing (otherwise known as the 'Federation') presents some alarming facts around domestic violence, and puts forward a soon-to-be-released Toolkit specifically designed to assist community housing providers in handling domestic and family violence matters.*

Home can be a dangerous place. The place where women in Australia are most likely to experience physical or sexual violence is in their home at the hands of a male, current or former partner.

Fifteen percent of Australian women have experienced domestic and family violence (ABS, 2012) and 30 to 50 percent of women and children who stay in a refuge do so more than once. Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey of 2012 found 25 percent of women have never told anyone about violence by a current partner, and 39 percent of women have never sought advice or support in connection with a current partner's violence (Dr Angela Spinney, 2016).

“ Fifteen percent of Australian women have experienced domestic and family violence. ”

All community housing providers (CHPs) want to provide a sensitive and effective response to any tenants and their dependents who experience domestic and family violence (DFV). The sector already works collaboratively with specialist services and government agencies to achieve the best outcomes for those affected. That said, there is always scope for us to reflect on practice, learn from others and use this knowledge to build on what is done now.

After an extraordinarily thought-provoking session back at the 2015 Community Housing Conference where Dr Angela Spinney from the University of Swinburne challenged us all about how we responded to those experiencing DFV, a number of CHPs asked the Federation to do some work on the subject.

“ Tenants or household members that experience DFV have a right to expect the sector will respond quickly and professionally. ”

So, a Toolkit has been the result.

The Toolkit aims to build CHPs' understanding and capacity to respond effectively to applicants, tenants and household members who experience DFV, and forms part of the NSW Community Housing Industry Development Strategy funded by NSW Family and Community Services.

Tenants or household members that experience DFV have a right to expect the sector will respond quickly and professionally, as well as with the experience and knowledge to understand the full range of options available. Accordingly, the

Federation's Toolkit is not about the role of specialist services but about the role of the mainstream.

As a frontline service with employees and contractors interacting with tenants on a regular basis, CHPs have a real opportunity to make a significant difference if they offer well-designed and evidenced practices and approaches to identifying and then responding to DFV. These practices need to assist victims to either remain safely in their own home or relocate to a safe environment. Critical to this is the need to ensure the response is tailored to the individual or household.

“ The Toolkit contains components that have been designed for CHPs to customise and fit within their organisation's practice and the particular characteristics of the communities in which they operate. ”

The Toolkit in detail

The Federation has worked with CHPs in NSW to develop the Strengthening Practice in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence: A Toolkit for Community Housing Providers. The aim of the Toolkit is to build on the existing positive practice in both community housing and specialist homelessness services, and complement, support and enhance these services with best practice approaches from across the globe.

The Toolkit includes resources to assist providers to identify and respond to DFV. It will build capacity but does not replace the need for staff to learn the actual skills through DFV training so they can use the Toolkit with confidence. It also does not replace the need for management and governing bodies to lead and monitor the implementation of best practice.

The Toolkit contains components that have been designed for CHPs to customise and fit within their organisation's practice and the particular characteristics of the communities in which they operate.

Toolkit contents include:

1. **A policy** that identifies and responds to DFV to frame the early intervention response embedded throughout the Toolkit and to guide practice across CHPs.
2. **A series of pathways** that provide guidance to CHP employees concerning possible responses to DFV. The pathways focus on building collaborative relationships with DFV support services, as well as ensuring CHPs recognise the important role they play (what we wanted to avoid was any perception that a CHP simply needs to make a referral).
3. **Guidance tools and checklists** to support CHPs to develop consistent service delivery practice across CHPs.
4. **A suggested tenant and applicant resource** on DFV for all tenants as part of their lease sign-up. This resource describes the response that can be expected from CHPs and provides a range of useful resources that can be customised by providers.

The aim of including this resource in the lease sign-up kit is to ensure all tenants are aware of the role of CHPs and what assistance is out there for those experiencing DFV or who come to experience it. It sends out a message that CHPs see responding to DFV as a critically important part of their service, and having such information minimises the risks to victims, as all tenants are given a copy.

5. **A tenant and applicant resource** on men's behaviour change services is included as part of the lease sign-up. It provides information on these programs, and encourages individuals to seek support to address issues they may have around their behaviour and attitudes.
6. **Four case studies** to provide examples of how housing professionals might work with different tenant groups.
7. **A resource for employers** to guide their support of staff working with people experiencing DFV.
8. **An information resource** that provides an overview of DFV, its symptoms, some mythbusting and a precis of the current laws that govern DFV, both federally and in NSW.

This resource also includes some suggested questions that community housing staff can ask tenants and household members to determine if they are experiencing DFV and if they are safe. This is in response to the NSW Australia Health's pilot study (2004) that showed that 97% of women felt ok or relieved to be asked about violence (Dr Angela Spinney, 2016).

9. **A copy of the Duluth Model Power and Control and Equality Wheels** that provide a framework to understand relationship dynamics that underpin DFV.
10. **A summary of current DFV policy initiatives**, which is essentially a snapshot of all the best development work happening across NSW.
11. **A toolbox talk** that can be used as part of staff induction and staff development sessions.

This Toolkit will support CHPs to strengthen and develop their practice as part of a coordinated multi-agency and integrated response to DFV. Its use will be reviewed and periodically updated by the Federation in liaison with our members and the partners in its development.

A strategy is currently being developed to support the Toolkit implementation across the community housing sector in 2017. More news will be forthcoming.

References:

- The Federation would like to acknowledge the work of Peabody (Gudrun Burnet) and Gentoo (Kelly Henderson) and the wider national work of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) that has significantly informed the development of the Toolkit.
- Dr Angela Spinney, How can we ensure building affordable homes reduces homelessness for those who experience domestic and family violence?, Affordable Housing Conference presentation, 2016 .

■ *If you would like further information about Strengthening Practice in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence: A Toolkit for Community Housing Providers, contact nswfha@communityhousing.org.au*



The NSW Federation of Housing Associations

(the Federation) is the industry peak body for community housing providers (CHPs) in NSW.

CHPs are viable, ethically run businesses driven by strong social missions and values. In 2015, CHPs managed 38,000 tenancies across New South Wales and owned \$1.7 billion worth of community housing assets.

The Federation provides advice to members, government and potential partners on the best ways to expand the industry's activities, and meet the highest standards of service to tenants, applicants and communities.

For more information about the Federation, visit www.communityhousing.org.au

The partners leading the Toolkit project include:

- NSW Federation of Housing Associations
- Domestic Violence NSW
- Homelessness NSW
- NSW Family and Community Services

Six CHPs enthusiastically engaged in a pilot of the Toolkit over a two-and-a-half-month period. These included:

- Evolve Housing
- Bridge Housing
- Women's Housing Company
- Compass Housing Services
- Homes North Community Housing
- The Housing Trust

Below are some comments from the pilot providers:

"Our techno used [the Home Safety Assessment Checklist] to assess a potential property for a transfer tenant. [They] established that the property met many of the requirements."

"The pathways are great documents... I referenced it for a way forward in a tricky [situation] and, honestly, must say we got a great outcome [with] a tenant remaining in her home and removing the perpetrator when we stepped through the process."

"[The Toolkit will] enable teams to recognise, respond and refer victims of DFV to appropriate support."

"We are using the Toolkit to inform our DFV policy, procedure and training resource that fits our organisational values and structures."

"[The Toolkit] increased collaboration between DFV services and CHPs."

"I think the Toolkit is certainly enough to raise awareness across the business."



OUR MOB NEEDS YOU!

Are you passionate about making a difference to Aboriginal families and communities?

Then we'd like to hear from you.

Family & Community Services Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) has launched Our Mob Needs You, a site dedicated to you, and anyone you know who'd like to work at the AHO.

Hear first hand what it's like to work at the AHO from some of our staff.

“

“Being able to assist Aboriginal families get into long-term accommodation and then linking them with the appropriate support services to assist in maintaining long-term tenancies is by far my greatest career highlight to date.” **Adam Murray**



“I've developed my career at the AHO because I'm determined to help achieve better outcomes for our mob. I believe that a better life starts with a sustainable place that you can call home.”

Hayley Inglis.



”

We are changing the way we do things to better support our housing providers, clients and the Aboriginal community. We want enthusiastic and energetic people to register your interest in joining the AHO.

Interested in working for the AHO? Register your interest now at www.ourmobneedsyou.com.au and we'll update you on available vacancies.



Family & Community Services
Aboriginal Housing Office

FIRE SAFETY VERSUS SECURITY

> *Anton Botha from Wellington City Council considers the fine line between fire safety and security, and asks the questions: "Will it be your life or will it be your property? Where do we draw the line? What is the balance between safety and security?"*

In changing times where more and more people are losing their jobs and becoming homeless, the social housing sector is struggling to keep up. Crime is rising and home invasions occur daily.

Our natural inclination is to protect our property, turning to better and more intelligent security systems. We are now investing in burglar bars for our windows, deadlocks on our doors and, to top it off, full CEPTED security doors. Some insurance companies provide incentives for installing these types of security systems and, sometimes, even make it a requirement before offering cover. But, in fortressing our properties to greater and greater extent, we must think about the balance between safeguarding assets and the occupants' ability to escape in a fire situation.

A deadlock on a door is exactly what it means – if you cannot open the lock when there is a fire, you may die.

Think back to the times when you have lost your keys. You probably searched for an average of 10 to 15 minutes before you found them. Imagine waking up in the middle of the night to the sound of cracking glass. It is pitch black. Your house is full of smoke and you struggle to breathe. You can see the flames growing. You start to panic – "We need to get out, we need to get out!" You wake the children and get to the door but you have no keys for the deadlock. Now try to imagine finding your keys under these circumstances.

In a fire investigation I conducted where tenants perished, their bodies were found by the front and back door, overcome by smoke and unable to escape. Their situation was likely to be very similar to the scenario above.

When your circumstances require you to put deadlocks on doors, and install security doors and/or burglar bars on your windows, you have some options: Replace your entry doors with solid wooden doors. Provide a high security lock from the outside and a thumb-turn lock on the inside. This type of door setup is accepted by most insurance companies as it takes significant force to break through a solid wooden door to gain entry, yet easy to escape if an emergency arises. If this is not an option and you have to install security doors with deadlocks, you need to make sure you provide the keys to these doors in case of a fire.

Cut an extra key for each entry door and place them inside a container that is mounted on a low level within a two metre distance of each door (in case the occupants don't have access to the main entry door). The key in this container must not be used to open the door on a regular basis, as it may be misplaced or not returned to your container. Use it as an emergency only key. The container must also be easy to open and every member of the household must know its location.

Do not rely on old habits of hanging your keys on a hook, or placing them in a bowl, as someone else in the household may use or move your keys without your knowledge.

Fire alarms save lives

A fire alarm is your early warning system – you don't stand a chance if you are not alerted to the fire as early as possible. Most commonly available for home installations are two types of fire alarms, namely battery operated fire alarms or hard-wired fire alarms that can be connected to your security alarm system. The alarm will wake you and, if wired to a monitored system, will alert the fire brigade as soon as detection occurs.

Battery operated fire alarms have the tendency to beep, or seemingly go off for no reason, when the battery starts to run low. The common mistake people make is disabling the fire alarm before they purchase a replacement battery. Then they forget to buy the battery and the fire alarm never goes back into service. If a fire alarm starts to beep, leave it on the ceiling until you purchase the replacement battery or let the beep remind you to buy one.

If you are renting a property and your smoke alarm starts to beep, you need to log an urgent job with your landlord to replace the batteries. If you don't have a smoke alarm in your rental property, speak to your landlord immediately and insist on the installation of smoke alarms – it's your right.

A few tips if you are going away for the summer holidays:

- Check and test your smoke alarms (don't just assume they are working);
- Unplug all your electrical devices, multi-boxes and air fresheners/insect repellents from the wall sockets;
- Close all the room doors – even a small house fire can cause a lot of smoke damage;
- If you rent your property as a holiday home and have a deadlock on your door, make sure visitors know about the escape key; and
- If you know your neighbours, let them know your whereabouts over the holidays, as well as information about how to get hold of you in case of an emergency.

Fire safety is a consideration we must all keep at the forefront of our minds. Whether as the managers of properties or as the occupants, fire treats us as one and the same. And, while property can be replaced, lives never can.

■ **For more information, contact your local fire service**



Anton Botha spent 16 years working in emergency management for City of Tshwane Emergency Management Services in South Africa, which included 13 years as a fire safety officer. In 2008, he worked for Housing New Zealand Corporation as a housing access manager and an income related rent specialist. He then joined Wellington City Council in 2010, initially as a tenancy manager, and then as an allocations advisor since 2011.

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND: The importance of Safety Audits for Properties



> *Amador Garcia from Safety First expounds on the invisible dangers that we might not be seeing in our properties, and the startling consequences of not paying attention.*

After returning home at the end of a long day, you should expect that, when you close the door behind you, you enter a safe and secure space for you and your family. Recent tragedies, however, have highlighted the importance of implementing preventative measures to protect homes from the hidden – sometimes invisible – dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, faulty electrical wiring and non-functioning smoke detectors.

“ This colourless, odourless and highly poisonous gas rendered all occupants unconscious in their bed and, tragically, the two boys never woke up. ”

During the night of 30th May 2010, Tyler and Chase Robinson became unsettled and crawled into their mother’s bed to sleep. What the three did not know at the time was a faulty gas wall heater was leaking lethal carbon monoxide into the bedroom. This colourless, odourless and highly poisonous gas rendered all occupants unconscious in their bed and, tragically, the two boys never woke up.

Similarly, in Queensland, Mrs Harris asked her nine year-old daughter Nicole to turn off an outside water tap, which supplied



A crack in a heater revealed alarmingly high carbon monoxide levels escaping into the living space of this home

a garden sprinkler – a seemingly innocent request that we’ve all heard time and time again. Nicole, who had bare feet and stood on wet grass, was electrocuted. She suffered severe brain damage from the incident and was consequently left in a vegetative state.

In the Harris’ case, it was found the electrocution occurred due to the combination of faulty electrical wiring, which existed at the time the premises had been let, as well as defective repair to an electric stove conducted by a contractor engaged by the landlord.

The Residential Tenancies Act clearly states that rented accommodation is maintained in ‘good repair’ yet, incredibly, thousands of homes are tenanted and have never had their gas appliances, electrical system or smoke detectors inspected for safety and compliance. In effect, these properties have failed to undergo a ‘roadworthy’ and, sadly, this has resulted in tragic circumstances. Furthermore, unless the industry adopts a proactive approach, such preventable incidents are sure to continue.

Having performing hundreds of property inspections using only licensed gas plumbers and electricians, I’ve personally come across a number of instances that, once rectified, have prevented injury to the tenant and damage to the property. Safety First’s three key areas of focus are:

1. Preventing carbon monoxide poisoning and fires caused by gas appliances;
2. Preventing electric shock and fires caused by faulty electrical wiring and appliances; and
3. Preventing tragedy by ensuring functioning smoke detectors.

The general rule that can be applied to all properties is ‘if it hasn’t been checked, assume it’s unsafe’. No longer can the landlord or property/tenancy manager claim ignorance if a tragedy occurs. In fact, there is a shared liability that we all must shoulder.

The first step in the process is to understand why, in such safety-conscious and – dare we say it – litigious times are properties tenanted without some form of certification that the property has been inspected and tested for safety? The answers are many but quite simple.

“ The general rule that can be applied to all properties is ‘if it hasn’t been checked, assume it’s unsafe.’ ”

Educating the housing industry – including industry groups, estate agents, property and body corporate managers and, importantly, property investors – is the key to shifting the culture in this area. With the conversations I’ve had, I’m yet to speak to anyone who disagrees that it is in everyone’s interest to provide the mandatory duty of care when it comes to leasing properties. Despite this awareness, though, the relevant parties still choose to run the gauntlet hoping an incident of the types



An 'old-school' style switchboard with DIY circuit breakers. This particular switchboard had a solar installation installed and yet preventative safety measures were not taken to upgrade it to today's safety standards



Here is an example of the damage rodents can do to electrical wiring, exposing conductors, which can lead to fire or electric shock

already described won't happen. But, as we all know, hope is not a strategy.

The dynamic between the agent/property manager and the property owner is an interesting one and probably the most challenging obstacle to overcome in terms of shifting culture. Property investors entrust the manager to act on their behalf, which is why, in the private rental market, they pay a weekly management fee.

Like all good businesses, we try to maintain the satisfaction of our clients and, in the short term, this might centre on saving the property investor as much money as possible; however, this is a very dangerous strategy and a false economy that does not have either the property owner or the tenant's best interests at heart. Saving a few bucks at the expense of tenant safety is a very short-sighted, misinformed and hazardous approach.

A proactive agent with an understanding of the Residential Tenancies Act – and one that communicates the benefits of regular power, gas and smoke inspections – is a property investor's greatest asset.

“ Saving a few bucks at the expense of tenant safety is a very short-sighted, misinformed and hazardous approach. ”

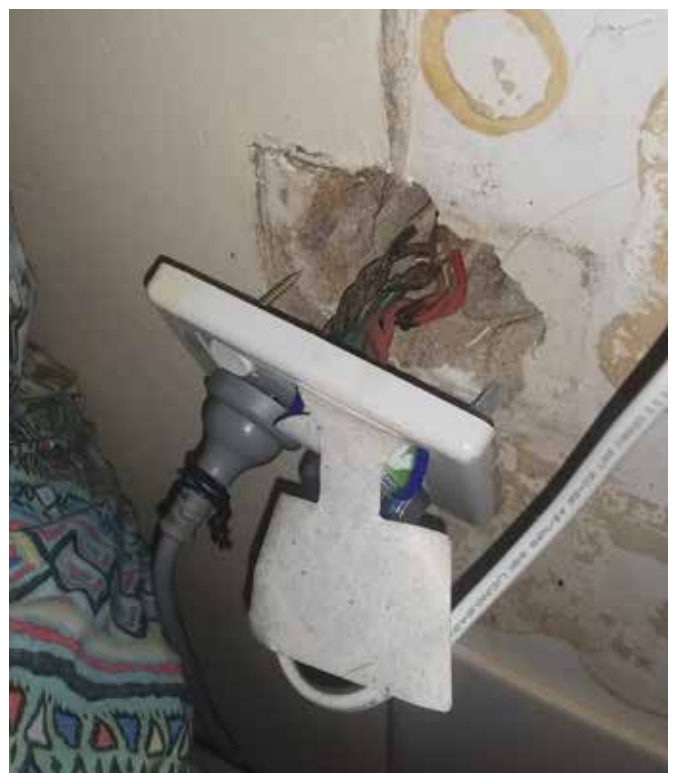
Abiding by the Residential Tenancies Act:

1. Will avoid causing injury or death within their property;
2. Will avoid damage to their property;
3. Prevent avoidable litigation action;
4. Will protect their Investment; and
5. Fulfil an investor's legal obligation.

When the property investor comes to terms with the points mentioned above – and joins forces with a knowledgeable and ethical manager – we have seen almost 100 percent conversion rates of our safety audit compliance program within some agencies and organisations.

Property managers shoulder much of the responsibility and

are the primary point of contact between the owner and/or agency and the tenant. A key task of a property manager's responsibility is to perform routine property inspections, and they are unqualified to assess the safety performance of power, gas and smoke infrastructure – only licensed electricians and plumbers are qualified to satisfactorily perform such tasks. It is neglectful to expect a property manager to assume responsibility for something that is outside their area of expertise.



This powerpoint was located in the laundry of a rental property. The tenant was regularly exposed to electrocution, as it was the only powerpoint servicing a particular area of the home. To repair this outlet took five minutes yet, left unattended, it may well have cost a life.



This hazard was identified during an electrical audit – an electric hot water service with its protective cover removed. The service was located in a cupboard where children's sports goods were stored, exposing them to the risk of electric shock

A property management report is generally a visual report with a series of photographs and comments but this is simply inadequate, as not all hazards can be identified visually. Both electricity and gas are commonly referred to as 'the silent killers' – you can't see or hear them, and they only reveal themselves when it's too late.

Here are a few instances Safety First has encountered across the course of performing safety compliance audits that may escape the eyes of property managers:

- Rewirable fuses do not protect the occupant from electric shock. In fact, they increase the risk of fire and encourage tenants to use tools in switchboards, exposing them to risk when trying to restore power.
- Electrical fires are caused by loose connections and overloading circuits. Older homes were designed to cater for the electrical demand at the time they were built. Today's 'power-hungry' homes often exceed the original capacity.
- Live cables are commonly hidden in roof cavities and have been responsible for multiple fatalities during the home insulation debacle.
- Many people know that smoke detectors require regular battery changes but they are unaware that smoke detectors also have a 10-year expiry date.
- Dangerous levels of carbon monoxide gas emitted from appliances can only be measured with the appropriate devices. In one rental property Safety First attended, the tenant had been complaining of feeling constantly tired and dizzy, which was traced to the heater (see image p.23).
- Birds and other critters may choose to make their homes in gas flues. This has the potential to back-up gases in the room where the appliance is located and significantly increase carbon monoxide in the home.

While this information may seem overwhelming, the great news is there are specialist companies that partner with the industry to perform the required power, smoke and gas audits to ensure properties are safe. The Residential Tenancies Act is also currently under review and government organisations – such



Here's a great example of what not to do in a rental property – a switchboard located in a child's room reachable from the bed. No tools were required to remove the fuses that then exposed live copper terminals

as Energy Safe Victoria (in the state of Victoria) and association leaders Master Electricians Australia – have made submissions to address the shortcomings within the Act.

When we, as an industry, have a culture of putting safety first above all else, the wheels will be in motion to ensure the tragedies of Nicole Harris, and Chase and Tyler Robinson, never happen again. Everyone has a right to feel safe in their own home. The actions of the industry will determine if this is to be the case for all tenanted homes.

■ **For more information about property safety audits, visit www.safetyfirstelectrical.com.au**



Amador Garcia started his career in electrical safety with an apprenticeship at Toyota Australia. He attributes this intensive 'trial by fire' introduction to the electrical industry as equipping him with the necessary analytical skills to find even the stealthiest of faults.

Since the age of 21, Amador has been self-employed as an electrical contractor where he has worked closely with numerous contractors and a plethora of real estate agents for more than 20 years. Such experience prompted him to start his company, Safety First.

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A Hand Up for Jodi

Jodi* knows what it's like to struggle. With an intellectual disability and a small child with a disability, she was only just coping in her home. When Jodi experienced violence at the hands of her former partner, she neglected her payments and fell into rent arrears.



Under Bridge Housing's innovative Hand Up program, she is now "repaying" her debt by attending parenting courses, life skills support and financial counselling. In just six months she has cut her debt by \$5,000 to almost zero.

*real name withheld

Saving tenancies and helping people get their lives back on track is a focus of our work at Bridge Housing.

KĀINGA TUATAHI:

An urban village shaped by Māori traditional values

> A 30-house medium-density village recently built at Ōrākei in Auckland, New Zealand, is an innovative example of urban papakāinga development, as Shona McCahon reports.

Papakāinga means ‘a nurturing place to return to’ and is the name for housing on Māori ancestral land. The land is usually in multiple ownership and has traditionally been in rural areas at a low density so the village at Ōrākei, in the heart of Auckland city, is something of a groundbreaker. The development is designed according to best practice medium-density housing design principles (see p.28) and incorporates Māori values to meet contemporary Māori housing needs.

The *papakāinga* development, called Kāinga Tuatahi (First Home), is an important step for the Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei *hapū* (kinship group); providing a way for their people to purchase an affordable, safe and healthy home on their ancestral lands. This is especially significant considering they were historically dispossessed of – and displaced from – their tribal lands despite being signatories to the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi partnership agreement between Māori and the British Crown.

In 1976, when the Crown moved to sell off and develop the last 60 acres of uncommitted land on the Ōrākei headland, also known as Bastion Point, a group of the Ōrākei *hapū* protested by occupying the land for 500 days. Eventually, through a claim with the Waitangi Tribunal over the loss of the 700-acre block at Ōrākei, the Crown acknowledged it had failed to keep its part of the Treaty agreement. Compensation was paid, title of the remaining land was returned to Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and the rest of the land managed jointly with Auckland Council.

Following the return of its ancestral land, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei sought to house more of its people on the land and, at the same time, encourage modern sustainable living that aligns more closely with the traditions of their *mana whenua*

(territorial rights and relationship to the tribal land). Ultimately, Kāinga Tuatahi will be part of a much larger, tight-knit and *hapū*-based community, centred on the *marae* (meeting ground). It will be relatively densely populated, with a diverse range of good quality housing options, and a focus on community and sustainability.

“ Over more than 10 years, the *hapū* has committed considerable resources and energy to defining its housing aspirations and finding ways to achieve them. ”

Over more than 10 years, the *hapū* has committed considerable resources and energy to defining its housing aspirations and finding ways to achieve them. Groundbreaking models of collaboration and design have been fundamental to this process, including a joint management agreement with Auckland Council and specific provisions in the Auckland Unitary Plan, which was recently made operative. The provisions include a special Māori Purposes Zone and Ōrākei Precinct plan overlay that allow for a mix of *papakāinga* housing types and densities, and community facilities. Moreover, the Government has approved the, Kāinga Tuatahi project to be developed as a Special Housing Area under the Auckland Council’s housing accord with central government to fast-track affordable housing development.

Environmental consultants Boffa Miskell, with Bossley Architects, worked with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei to develop the Ōrākei, Papakāinga Masterplan and Ōrākei Precinct Design Guidelines, with the, Kāinga Tuatahi project being the first housing project to be delivered under these two framework documents. Boffa Miskell has been working with Stevens



A community garden and orchard encourage healthy eating, sustainability and rangitiratanga (resilience) – adjacent to housing units with private outdoor spaces



Communal grassed areas allow for activities and community gatherings, here overlooked by housing units with individual access to private outdoor space overlooking the park. Pedestrian and cycle links are woven throughout to promote he oranga (wellbeing) and rangitiratanga (resilience)

Lawson Architects on the, Kāinga Tuatahi project, providing urban and landscape design input.

Boffa Miskell landscape architect, Jonathan Broekhuysen, says the starting point was to work closely with *hapū* representatives to understand the values intrinsic to the *papakāinga* vision, which encompass concepts of community, identity, wellbeing and sustainability. From those values, a series of design principles (right) followed that have guided the design process.

“There is a lot to be learnt from Māori design principles with respect to housing in general, and medium-density housing in particular, where many traditional aspects of Māori housing are especially relevant,” says Jonathan. “It has been very interesting to see how closely the *hapū*’s values align with best practice principles for medium-density housing. For instance, a sense of privacy is important, yet so too is having places to come together as a community.”

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei has chosen medium-density housing because they have limited land available for *kāinga* (home) but also because it will help affordability and support Auckland Council’s ‘compact city’ concept. Not only will the community be compact, it will also include low impact, sustainable design features, such as solar panels, walking and cycling connections, community gardens and water-sensitive design aspects.

“This is very much an *iwi* (kinship)-led and owned project, with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei continuing its highly focused, hands-on approach during both the design and building phases,” Jonathan explains. “The masterplan and design guidelines have facilitated a comprehensive and considered approach to the future of their landholding, which we think will not only exemplify modern Māori design but also become a model for good medium-density housing in Auckland.”



Swales and permeable paving treat stormwater run-off on-site, promoting *kaitiakitanga* (sustainable management) of water resources.



Shona McCahon is a freelance writer, oral historian and former landscape architect, with particular interests in resource and environmental management, conservation and New Zealand history. She is based in Wellington, New Zealand, where she consults to a range of local government, private sector and non-government organisations

Design Principles:

Kotohitanga

Community

Create a collaborative community environment unique to Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei in Tāmaki Makaurau.



Wairuatanga

Spiritual connections

Promote connection to significant landmarks, cultural features and heritage sites.



Kaitiakitanga

Sustainable management

Promote solutions that protect and enhance natural, cultural and heritage values.



Matauranga

Traditional knowledge and identity

Ensure Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei *matauranga* is promoted through design and environmental enhancement.



Manaakitanga

Welcoming and hosting

Ensure design options support the notion of *Manaakitanga* – hosting of *manuhiri* (visitors).



Whanaungatanga

Relationships

Promote a cultural sense of place, a location that promotes and supports interaction and engagement between tribal members and visitors.



Rangitiratanga

Resilience

Design options should promote group and individual self-sufficiency, and the tribal design heritage.



He Oranga

Wellbeing

Ensure the wellbeing of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei is promoted and protected.



Ko te Mauri

Ecosystem enhancement and linkages

Create environments that support ecosystems and surrounding natural habitats, and provide for ecological enhancement and linkages/corridors – transect from coastal to upland habitat.



About Boffa Miskell

Boffa Miskell is a New Zealand-owned environmental consultancy, established in 1972, which brings together over 150 professional staff with expertise in planning, ecology, urban design, cultural advisory, landscape architecture, sustainability and digital environmental services.

The company has a reputation for innovation and excellence in integrated development and design, and has been associated with a significant number of projects that have led changes in shaping New Zealand’s landscape.

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THE LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM – Best Practice approaches supporting ex-prisoners to access stable housing

> Based on a recent South Australian (SA) research project, Dr Tony Gilmour from Housing Action Network, identifies practical ways to better coordinate housing and support.

We currently spend lots of money circulating people between homelessness and prison, then back again. Around half the prison population has been in jail before. One fifth are homeless before incarceration, and a slightly higher percentage exit into homelessness. This merry-go-round is bad for individuals, communities and taxpayers.

Homelessness and re-offending

Providing housing and support for ex-prisoners is a classic 'wicked problem'. It involves complex departmental and organisational relationships spanning correctional services, social housing and homelessness support. It is also a topic where the media debate focuses on keeping 'dangerous' people in prison and stopping exiting prisoners 'jumping the queue'.

Consistent research findings in Australia and overseas identify offending and imprisonment as both a symptom of – and a pathway to – homelessness. Homeless people, including those in correctional facilities, are much more likely than the general population to experience mental health problems, and drug and alcohol misuse. As Professor Baldry from the University of NSW has noted, it is very difficult to disentangle criminal behaviour, homelessness, poverty, and mental and cognitive impairment.

“ Releasing ex-prisoners into an environment with the same unresolved housing and social problems they faced before sentencing can lead to reoffending. ”

Formerly homeless people exiting the correctional services system are more likely to experience unemployment, lower incomes, discrimination and housing difficulties. A large minority of people being released from prison do not have suitable housing following prison, and pre-release information and support in securing accommodation is often inadequate.

Without proper support, releasing ex-prisoners into an environment with the same unresolved housing and social problems they faced before sentencing can lead to reoffending. This creates a cycle of imprisonment and release.

The booming prison sector

Figure 1 shows the imprisonment rate per 100,000 adults across Australia. The national trend has been a consistent increase, from a rate of 147.2 in 2002-03 to 198.5 in 2014-15. This amounts to a 29 percent rise in imprisonment over the last 12 years.

Levels of imprisonment continue to vary between jurisdictions, with the Northern Territory (NT) a clear outlier with rates in 2014-15 of 885 per 100,000 population (or 4.6 times the national average). Of the other jurisdictions, Western Australia (WA) has been consistently high (271 in 2014-15) and the ACT consistently low (113 in 2014-15).

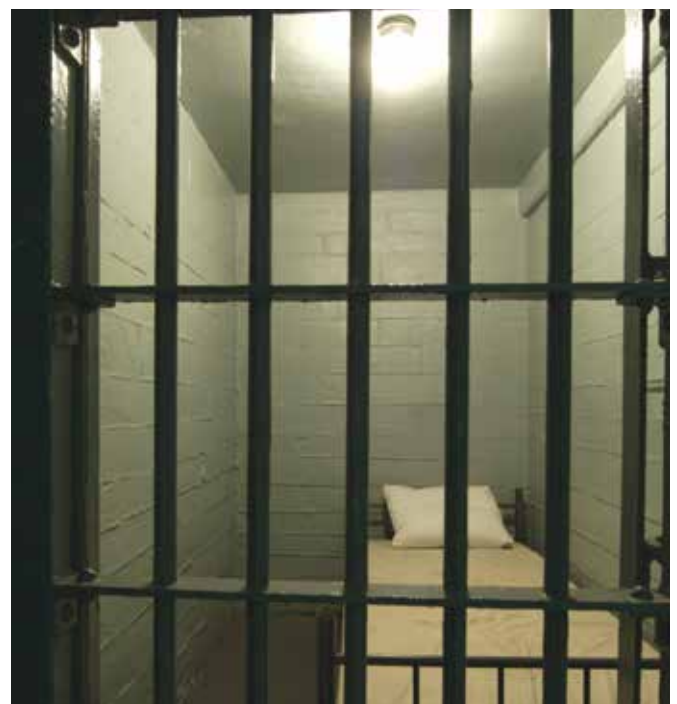
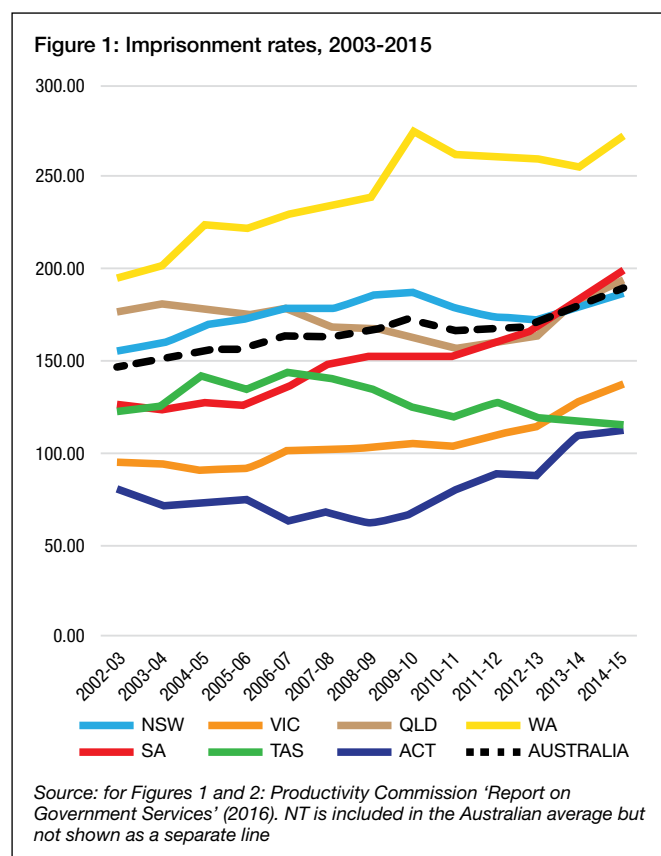
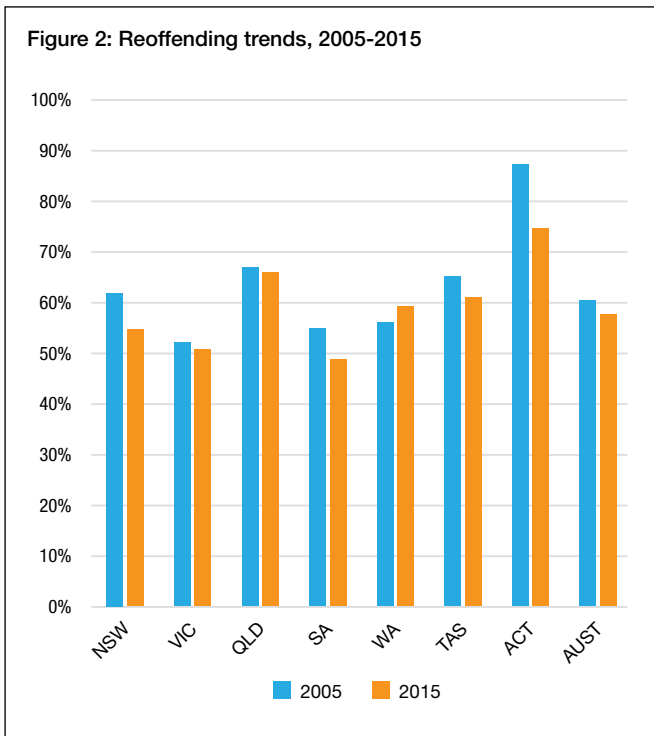


Figure 2: Reoffending trends, 2005-2015



Of all jurisdictions, South Australia (SA) has seen the greatest change over the last 12 years. The state has moved from fourth position to second position in terms of imprisonment levels, which equates to a 58.4 percent increase. This is the highest rise of any jurisdiction other than NT, ahead of Victoria (+44.3 percent) and the ACT (+41.6 percent).

Note: the SA imprisonment rate of 198.5 per 100,000 population is an average. For Indigenous people, the rate is 2,473 and for, non-Indigenous, 149. The rate also varies according to gender, with a rate of 379 for males and 25 for females per 100,000.

Many current prisoners have previously been incarcerated. Figure 2 shows reoffending rates vary considerably in 2015, from a high of 75 percent in the ACT in 2015 to the lowest figure of any jurisdiction with 47 percent in SA. Rates of reoffending have fallen between 2005 and 2015 in all jurisdictions except WA. The decrease in SA was third highest nationally, and two and a half times the rate of decrease across Australia.

Research project

In June 2016, the Community Council Housing Council of SA (CHCSA) commissioned Tony Gilmour and John Stott of the Housing Action Network to find options for community housing providers to provide secure, sustainable accommodation for people exiting the justice and prison system, and for people on remand. A brief environmental scan of the national and international research literature was undertaken; however, the project's main focus was to build a practical understanding of what works best in delivering effective housing and support options.

We interviewed and held focus groups with 26 individuals spanning community housing, correctional services and prisoner support agencies. These ranged from ministers and departmental chief executives through to managers of frontline staff. Key issues were discussed at a Forum held in

Adelaide on 8th September 2016, sponsored by the Hon. Peter Malinauskas, Minister for Correctional Services.

SA innovations

The state has a respected set of approaches to housing ex-prisoners, arguably leading Australia – though a cynic might say there is little competition.

The jewel in the crown is the Integrated Housing Exits Program (IHEP), established in 2003 to accommodate 60 adult ex-prisoners and 20 young people exiting detention. Initially, housing was sourced from Housing SA's general portfolio, though later, as part of the 2009 Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, new properties were transferred. Currently, 60 percent of the adult IHEP properties are managed by community housing providers.

IHEP is a 'housing first' program run in partnership between social housing providers, the Department of Correctional Services and the Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of SA (OARS). The OARS' origins lie in the Prisoners Association established 1887. Currently, the organisation provides a number of programs for ex-offenders including drug, alcohol and gambling support, as well as state-wide specialised support for clients exiting prison who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Support is directly linked to IHEPS and other accommodation where social housing landlords provide tenancy and asset management.

“ The SA approach works well in part due to a well-designed, integrated approach between correctional services, social housing, public housing and prisoner support agencies. ”

Initial findings: coordination brings results

The SA approach works well in part due to a well-designed, integrated approach between correctional services, social housing, public housing and prisoner support agencies.

Our research found several ways schemes such as IHEPS could be enhanced, though, even as it stands, the program is arguably ahead of other approaches in Australia. SA Correctional Services is especially progressive under a new minister who has pledged to reduce re-offending by 10 percent by 2020. A bail hostel is currently under construction, and there is even talk of additional social housing supply for ex-prisoners.

In terms of support, OARS and their equivalent organisation working with young people (SYC) provide services closely linked with housing and homelessness programs. They do this on a coordinated basis across the state, rather than an ad hoc arrangement centred on particular prisons, which is the model in some other jurisdictions. OARS is an example of a contemporary not-for-profit organisation operating at scale but retaining a clear focus on a specific homelessness group.

There are more philanthropic-driven SA organisations, such as faith-based Second Chances, which provides support for prisoners, their families and children. Volunteers visit prisoners while incarcerated, offering assistance with practical matters such as property storage and banking, as well as emotional support, friendship and mentoring. The organisation's work

helps prisoners in the transition back to the community, maintaining and rebuilding links with their families. Work with prisoners' children helps families reunite and reduces the chance this vulnerable group will themselves enter the criminal justice system.

Although Second Chances is independent of the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) system, around 60 percent of their income came from grants. This is again an example of SA Government using public funding wisely in a coordinated and directed way.

Future directions

Helping prisoners access stable accommodation, and sustain their tenancies, is the key way to break the recycling between homelessness and imprisonment. To achieve this, there needs to be an appropriate supply of dedicated affordable housing, the existence of strong ex-prisoner support agencies, and an integrated approach to managing the transition from prison back to mainstream society. People need contact and support within prison, careful management of the transition from prison, and on-going support after release – often for a number of years.

To achieve positive outcomes for ex-prisoners, careful coordination is needed between government departments, housing providers (both public and community) and support agencies (funded and voluntary). However, with current changes in human service delivery, a coordinated approach is becoming more challenging.

“ When funding is scarce, governments may bow to media pressure – ex-prisoners are often seen as one of the least ‘deserving’ disadvantaged groups in society. ”

A greater share of social housing is moving to a multiplicity of community housing providers, and they are expected to run as lean, efficient social businesses. There is also greater funding

contestability between SHS providers, coupled with uncertainty over longer term Commonwealth support for homelessness services. When funding is scarce, governments may bow to media pressure – ex-prisoners are often seen as one of the least ‘deserving’ disadvantaged groups in society.

Many aspects of the current human service reforms are positive. The community housing sector can leverage their enhanced funding model compared to state housing authorities to raise debt, and use proven development capacity to deliver new housing options, including for ex-prisoners. All the community housing providers we spoke to for the project wanted to continue supporting this group of higher needs residents, though there were also strong calls for better risk-sharing between community housing providers and government agencies.

Keeping people in prison is expensive at a cost of around \$100,000 each year, though supporting people long-term in homelessness is even more costly – millions of dollars over a lifetime. Only properly-funded, coordinated and integrated approaches to supporting ex-offenders in the housing market can help end the current merry-go-round between incarceration and homelessness.

■ To obtain a copy of the final project report, contact Carmel Rosier: carmel.rosier@chcsa.org.au



Dr Tony Gilmour is Founder and Managing Director of the Housing Action Network (www.housingaction.net.au), a leading Australasian social and affordable housing consultancy. Additional research for this project was undertaken by John Stott, a Network Associate.

VALUING social housing



> *The question of how we value the broad social benefits of providing safe and secure housing to those in need of assistance is important for making the case for more investment in social housing. Dr Judy Kraatz from Cities Research Centre at Griffith University gives us a progress report on recent research endeavouring to provide a framework for making this case.*

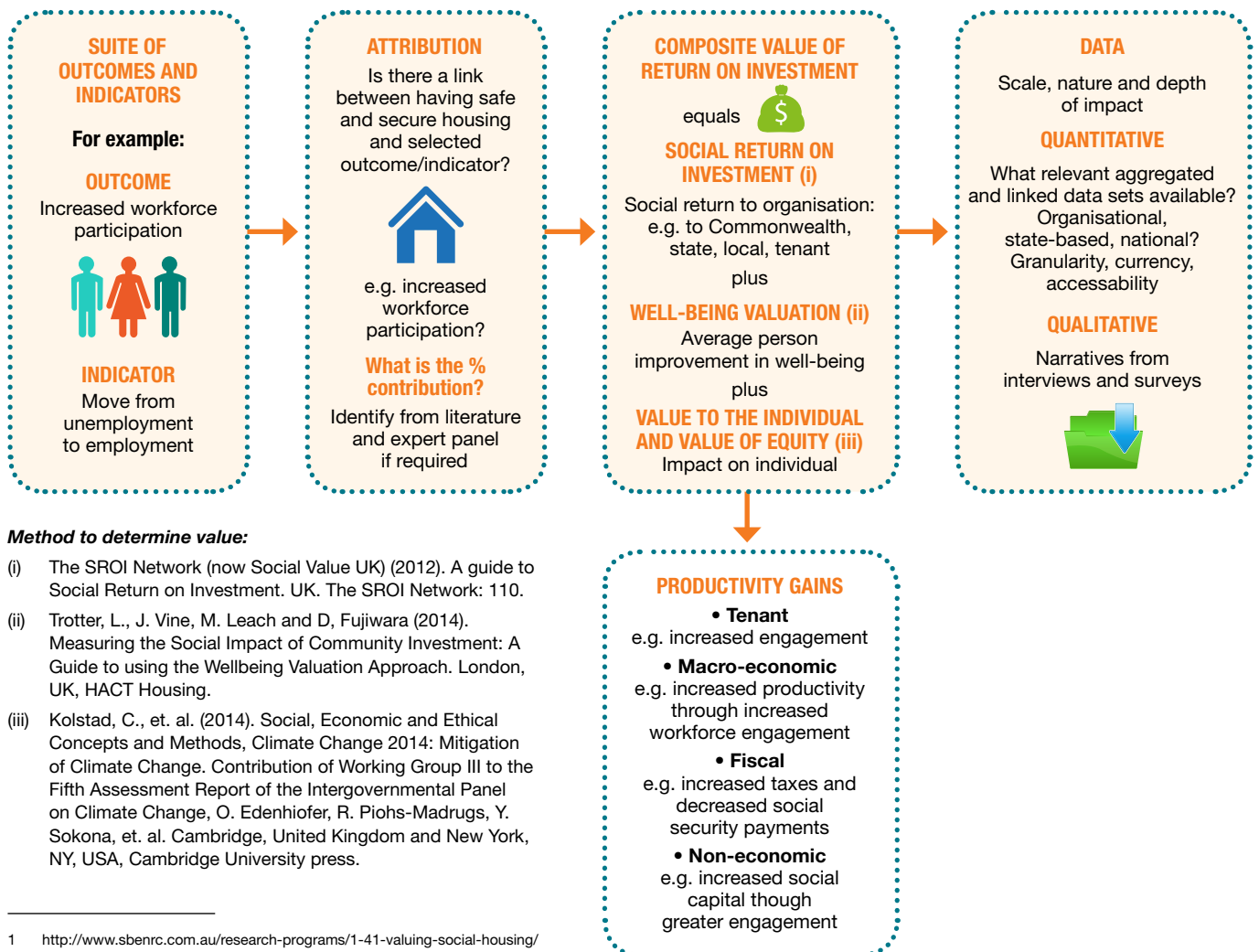
'Valuing Social Housing'¹ is a collaborative project with the Sustainable Built Environment National Research Centre (SBEnc)² and partners Western Australian Housing Authority, Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works, NSW Land and Housing Corporation, the National Affordable Housing Consortium (Qld), Griffith University and Curtin University. This project continues foundation research reported on last year, 'Rethinking Social Housing',³ which developed an overarching conceptual framework linking access to safe and secure housing to improved productivity.⁴

Three key elements for such a framework have been identified.

- **Attribution** – what evidence exists that safe and secure housing leads to, for example, better engagement with education?

Significant evidence has been found in literature across outcomes and indicators identified in previous research in the nine domains of community, economy, education, employment, environment, health and wellbeing, housing, social and urban amenity. Once a link has been found, and a percentage attribution established, this can be used to help identify the return on investment.

“ ... what evidence exists that safe and secure housing leads to, for example, better engagement with education? ”



1 <http://www.sbenrc.com.au/research-programs/1-41-valuing-social-housing/>
2 www.sbenrc.com.au
3 <http://www.sbenrc.com.au/research-programs/1-31-rethinking-social-housing-effective-efficient-equitable-e3/>
4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMcOMujJw48>

- **Composite return on investment** – how do we measure these broader benefits, both in dollars and in intangible benefits, of providing safe and secure housing?

It is proposed that a single method does not capture the complex nature of the value returned to the individual and to society.

“ How do we measure these broader benefits, both in dollars and in intangible benefits, of providing safe and secure housing? ”

Three elements are proposed to address this complexity:

1. Social return on investment (SROI) can be used to provide a ratio of impact to dollars input and/or an aggregated dollar return on investment for defined benefits to society, which may accrue from the provision of social housing;
2. Measuring wellbeing could be used to address the impact on an average person’s wellbeing of the broader non-housing benefits of access to safe and secure housing, and placing a dollar value on these; and
3. Individual narratives can be used to understand the value to the individual of both the housing and non-housing benefits of safe and secure housing, and potentially the value of equity to society. The value a person places on a given amenity such as a home (or a job) varies dependent on their life situation. Comparing, understanding and aggregating the value different people place on such social infrastructure can lead to understanding the broader value to society of providing more equitable access to such resources.

- **Data** – what data is available to help us understand the extent of the benefits?

Numerous national, state, local and organisational datasets are available but issues of accessibility, consistency, collection methods, suitability, cost-effectiveness, reliability and granularity arise. To address some of these issues and explore options for taking advantage of new approaches to data, a roundtable is being convened to share experiences and discuss opportunities.

The research team consisting of myself, Giles Thomson (Curtin University Sustainable Policy Unit) and Heather Shearer (Cities Research Centre, Griffith University) is currently bringing these elements together to better inform the current debate in Australia regarding the broader benefits of providing social housing. Our industry partners and Associate Professor Judy Yates (Project Steering Group Chairperson) are also providing critical strategic direction and guidance.

■ *The final report on this project will be available at our website in April 2017: <http://www.sbenrc.com.au/research-programs/1-41-valuing-social-housing/>*



Dr Judy Kraatz is a Senior Research Fellow with the Cities Research Centre at Griffith University. Her research addresses issues of corporate and social responsibility in the delivery of urban and social infrastructure, focusing on meta-research and evaluation frameworks to better leverage research to achieve practical outcomes for both the urban environment and its residents. Current research is focusing on the need for an efficient, effective and equitable social housing sector in Australia.



THE AUSTRALASIAN HOUSING INSTITUTE and the
ABORIGINAL HOUSING OFFICE NSW present the
**ABORIGINAL HOUSING
Master Class**
Supporting a sustainable housing sector for Aboriginal people
• 16-17 May 2017, Sydney



After the tremendous success of the first Master Class event in 2016, we are delighted to announce that the second event of the Aboriginal Master Class series will be held on **16-17 May 2017 in Sydney**. The intent of this Master Class event is to provide an opportunity for senior housing professionals whose primary focus is housing Aboriginal people and leaders from emerging Aboriginal housing to share results and generate ideas to work toward resolving existing Aboriginal housing issues and act on future Aboriginal housing needs. The format of the Master Class will combine relevant case studies, discussions and workshops around different aspects of Aboriginal Housing, such as tenancy and property management, economic development and employment.

An Ultra Early Bird discount closes on the 31st of January 2017
AHI Members register at only \$1,295

The rate includes 2 nights accommodation, meals and networking events during the Master Class





ASSET MANAGEMENT —

Recognising and implementing the essentials

> *Continuing with the HousingWORKS theme of Asset Management from our June edition, Ron Clewer from Rockford Housing Authority weighs in on the debate from a U.S. perspective.*

The United States public housing program was established in 1937 to provide decent and safe rental housing for low income families. Currently, there are approximately 1.2 million public housing units administered by over 3,100 local public housing agencies (PHAs). Similar to Australian public/social housing, populations served are primarily low income residents whose source of income derives from government pensions, subsidies and payments – and they are most often senior and disabled residents.

“ In 1998, U.S. Congress established a new Operating Fund Program for its public housing program. ”

To eliminate potential confusion, the term public housing is similar to that of social housing and, for the most part, these terms are interchangeable. Public/social housing is subsidised so that it is affordable for low income residents. The term ‘affordable housing’, while applicable to public/social housing platforms, generally references the affordability over any housing platform including market-rate, unsubsidised housing models. Public and social housing government subsidies maintain affordability for those who would otherwise struggle to access housing.

In 1998, U.S. Congress established a new Operating Fund Program for its public housing program. As part of the conversion, Congress directed the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to work with Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design to conduct a study of the costs of operating a well-run public housing program. Now known as the Harvard Cost Study, the 2003 document provided two major recommendations:

- 1) Set allowable expense levels based on a statistical model of operating costs in HUD’s multi-family housing programs; and
- 2) Public housing needs to adopt an asset management platform.

HUD issued the final rule in 2005, effectively requiring a majority of PHAs to convert portfolios to the asset management platform, including the new funding formula.

Under the new Operating Fund formula, each public housing project is assigned a model-generated Project Expense Level (PEL). The PEL represents the estimated cost to operate each project, exclusive of property taxes and utilities. Additionally, all PHAs of 250 or more units converted to asset management, adopting principles consistent with the traditional operations of the private multi-family management industry.

HUD established five key elements of its asset management

program: project-based funding, budgeting, accounting, management and oversight, and performance assessment. Along with the transition came a requirement that PHAs charge a reasonable management fee to projects and programs to cover centralised costs.

The goals of asset management were to (24 CFR 990.255, 2005):

- Improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of managing public housing assets;
- Better preserve and protect each asset;
- Provide appropriate mechanisms for monitoring performance at the property level; and
- Facilitate future investment and reinvestment in public housing by public and private sector entities.

The management platform bears great resemblance to the Australian one, and other public body models of asset management implementation for public and social housing structures. Given the similarity, how can public and social housing agencies provide greater value to the people and communities these developments serve, while also preserving and improving the quality of the asset over time? Moving from good practice asset management principles to best practice principles is essential.

Having served as an asset and portfolio manager for over 13 years in a private real estate development company, and now with more than five years in public asset management, I have compared and contrasted the similarities and differences between the private and public programs. My experience tells me the following statement from an Australian author is also applicable to the U.S. public housing sector:

“There is growing awareness of strategic and corporate asset management models within the Australian social housing sector but a general lack of understanding of terms and difficulty in seeing past immediate technical issues toward implementation of the newer strategic approaches.” (Russell Kenley, 2010)

While implementation of the HUD asset management model transitioned 10 years ago, the goals of the model have not been achieved by all PHAs and many properties still languish. Beyond my personal speculation, we only need to look at key reports to see the transition has not yet produced the desired results:

“The nation’s stock of public housing is deteriorating and shrinking and is in need of basic maintenance and modernisation. This slow death-by-attrition wastes valuable federal housing assets and risks the loss of both high quality and deteriorating units alike.” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2013)

“Additionally, total capital needs of public housing exceed \$26 billion or \$23,365 per unit.” (Abt Associates Inc., 2010)

“Despite the distress that deferred maintenance is causing for residents across the country, it’s become a politically toxic conversation to suggest meeting the capital needs [maintenance, repair, renovation or modernization] of local

housing authorities through direct federal appropriations.”
(Stephens, 2014)

Perhaps necessity can again be the mother of invention?

Much of the challenge in the U.S. transformation has been driven by the lack of real estate development and asset management capacity in the industry. The National Association for Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), as well as other industry associations, has developed quality training platforms and certifications to bring this level of capacity and professionalism to the industry. And, while these efforts are producing greater capacity, the ‘conditions and tools’ available to PHA agencies are just starting to catch up, more broadly, to those in the privately held and managed real estate industry.

“ Much of the challenge in the U.S. transformation has been driven by the lack of real estate development and asset management capacity in the industry. ”

It is essential to transition fully to private sector asset management principles with access to the tools associated with private real estate development and investment structures. Integrated asset management strategies that are responsive and plan for maintenance and repairs, and minimise waste and inefficiency, will help to achieve greater net operating income (NOI), a term generally referred to as ‘cashflow’ in the public models.

Cashflow in the private asset management platforms refers to NOI less debt service. Since debt service is not a traditional component of U.S. public housing model, an understanding of the value of leverage, or debt, can help to fill shortfalls in capital planning and deferred maintenance. This is one of the key principles under the recently authorised HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. RAD allows public housing agencies to leverage public and private debt, and equity, in order to reinvest in the public housing stock (and it is the focus of the article by Alexis Stephens cited earlier). RAD alone, however, is not the full solution.

A succinct focus on key performance indicators (KPIs) for real estate performance is essential. The ability to drill into these indicators helps asset, property, facility and maintenance managers better understand operations and drive efficiencies. A well-planned strategy in this area can deliver up to a 20 percent savings on some operational costs, as well as assist in compliance (Archibus, Inc., 2014). Over time, some KPIs have become necessary constants in the quest to identify, compare and contrast information to drive data-based decision-making. These KPIs traditionally include unit occupancy, unit around turn-time, work order completion, line item expenditures and NOI or cashflow; however, more specific data analysis can prove to be real game-changers.

Sophisticated organisations understand there are many other areas of real estate performance that affects profitability and value and, therefore, must be measured so they can be managed. These measures are specific by property type but, once tracked, they can be compared against property history and similar building types. Suffice to say, the comparison has to extend across similar property types to include those in and outside of the public sector.

As an example, tracking energy consumption data against not just HUD public housing and multifamily properties but also against private sector properties of similar structure can help identify innovative ways to reduce consumption and costs identified by large KPI variances.

KPIs must also extend beyond the physical structure to help monitor the performance of people, tenants and staff alike. Payment patterns, chargeback data and employee productivity and churn rates are important indicators that drive cost recovery and performance improvement.

KPIs can seemingly be unlimited in number. A review of the most commonly used measures reveals that organisations have utilised six different types of performance measures:

- 1) Cost;
- 2) Space efficiency;
- 3) Satisfaction;
- 4) CREM (Corporate Real Estate Management) unit efficiency;
- 5) Financial performance; and
- 6) Portfolio return (Gibler, 2006).

On-demand, web based personalised dashboards and scorecards have advanced over the past decade. These tools are critical for those who work to optimise asset performance, mitigate risk and develop or transform organisational culture.

One last critical item: partnerships. The real value proposition in any asset management relationship is in how management and the property itself relates to, serves and respects its people. A desire to serve clients, team and community must be inherent in any asset management model. Strong personal relationships across all levels of operations must exist for the partnership known as ‘asset management’ to be truly successful and mutually beneficial.

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Ron Clewer is CEO of Rockford Housing Authority and serves on the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), International Research and Global Exchange Sub-committee (IRGE). This subcommittee oversees research projects and works with NAHRO to disseminate the results of that research to the membership. With nearly 20 years of experience in both private and public real estate development and management, Ron brings a balanced perspective to implementing transformational change in asset performance

safety, affordability and style:

New Developments for **Women's Housing Ltd** provide homes anyone would desire

> *Alicia Brown, marketing adviser to architects ClarkeHopkinsClarke, explains how housing that is affordable and safe can also be easy on the eye.*

Stone kitchen benchtops and continuous timber-look flooring unite contemporary open-plan kitchen, dining and living areas, all of which open onto a secluded terrace... This might sound more like an alluring real estate advertisement than affordable housing designed for women in need but, that's the point, or so say the architects of a new social housing project.

A recent project in Newport, Melbourne, by architects ClarkeHopkinsClarke for Women's Housing Ltd, will deliver affordable, long-term housing to women who may have experienced family violence or homelessness. All tenants in the development will come from the public housing waiting list, with rent set at a maximum 75 percent of the market price or 30 percent of the household's income.

“ All tenants in the development will come from the public housing waiting list, with rent set at a maximum 75 percent of the market price or 30 percent of the household's income. ”

The architectural design of the 20 new apartments prioritises the safety of tenants while ensuring the dwellings have the look and feel of a traditional home typical to the area. Beyond this, architect Jessie McCudden says every effort has been made to use the same kind of design processes as ClarkeHopkinsClarke would apply to any of its private developments.

“We've designed a building just as we would any of our other apartment buildings,” says Jessie. “And that's something we've carried through from the Bayswater project.”

At Bayswater, ClarkeHopkinsClarke previously created 28 apartments for Women's Housing Ltd, a project that won the Affordable Housing category at the 2012 UDIA Victoria Awards for Excellence. In Newport, the architects are working with Buildcorp Commercial to create six one-bedroom and 14 two-bedroom apartments to be completed mid to late 2017. The project is being funded by a \$5.5 million grant from the Victorian Property Fund for Women's Housing Ltd to build the new homes.

“ The project is being funded by a \$5.5 million grant from the Victorian Property Fund for Women's Housing Ltd. ”

Through the use of complementary forms and materials, the three-storey building is designed to read as two double-storey townhouses, with the third floor recessed and concealed in a roof-like form.

“The design responds to the emerging neighbourhood character through pitching roof forms and a material palette that reflects the construction materials of neighbouring houses,” says architect Toby Lauchlan, partner at ClarkeHopkinsClarke.

“The goal is to make it look like any other apartment building,” Jessie adds. “We don't want to draw any attention to it unnecessarily. The idea is that residents can come and go, and anyone on the street would think it's just a regular home.”

Safety features are discreetly embedded in the design so a high security fence is hidden behind landscaping, with a low ornamental fence curbside. All residences are accessed through secure swipe-card entrances.

Women's Housing Ltd CEO Judy Line says it is important to provide comfortable, welcoming and secure housing to women in need: “When we look at our completed housing





developments, we want to be able to say, 'That's a place I'd like to live'. These are well-designed, affordable and sustainable properties of a standard that anyone would be happy to live in."

Design considerations make the residences as attractive as possible, as with any development. The apartments will include on-grade car parking, terraces for each residence and stone benchtops in an open kitchen and living configuration. Jessie says, "We've tried to choose materials that we feel reflect contemporary design."

The generosity of Buildcorp – who ClarkeHopkinsClarke have worked closely with from the beginning of the project, as well as at Bayswater – made possible some of the more luxurious features such as the kitchen benches. Buildcorp's advice in the documentation stage also informed key decision-making around materials, cost and durability. Low maintenance finishes – including block work, render and metal cladding – were selected, with some of these contributing to environmentally sustainable design factors, such as a high thermal mass, so that residents will benefit from lower ongoing heating costs.

“ Many of our residents are escaping domestic violence but our services are not only for those who have experienced violence. ”

A key element in the design is for accessibility and aging in place. Judy Line says older women are an increasingly vulnerable segment of their service provision.

"Many of our residents are escaping domestic violence but our services are not only for those who have experienced violence," says Judy. "There are also many women who have worked in lower income jobs most of their lives but who can't compete in this overheated rental market. Other women may have been in businesses with their partners and then the business goes broke, and they find themselves separated and with no financial safety net whatsoever."

"These are women who have never needed to rely on the welfare sector in their lives," Judy continues. "For women over 55, it's almost impossible for them, as single women, to pay the rents being asked for on the open market."

Designed to support aging in place, the ground floor apartments all provide step-free access to their terraces and have flat floors throughout. There are also a number of adaptable apartments, which can be converted in the future for people with disability or mobility requirements.

Margaret, an elderly resident of Women's Housing's Bayswater development, had been married for 55 years before bereavement forced her into the rental market. Unfortunately, she found she could not keep pace with her landlord's constant rent increases.

No longer able to drive, she says the accessibility and affordability of her new apartment, along with its proximity to public transport including bus and train routes, has put her back in control of her life: "I get all the help that I possibly need."

Hopefully, more women like Margaret will benefit from Women's Housing's future projects, including the Newport development. Of course, in a country where over 45,000 women are homeless on any given night – and one in three will experience partner violence during their lifetimes – projects such as these remain an urgent priority.



Alicia Brown is a marketing consultant who has specialised in working in the built environment sector for the past 12 years. She is passionate about helping people to understand why good design matters. ementing transformational change in asset performance.

COMPETITION AND USER CHOICE: the impact on community housing providers

> *Alison Kimber from ak advisory predicts more competition in the Australian community housing sector, and offers advice so that housing organisations are not caught on the back-foot.*

In an environment of increasing demand for services and tight budgets, the Australian Government has indicated a desire to increase competition, contestability and user choice in human services to improve efficiency and outcomes. Reform is already underway in a number of areas, notably:

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);
- Home-based aged care;
- Mental health services; and
- Early childhood education and care.

The Productivity Commission has been asked by the Treasurer to report on Australia's human services. The focus is on innovative ways to improve outcomes by introducing the principles of competition and informed user choice while maintaining or improving quality of service.

In its *Preliminary Findings Report* released for consultation feedback in September 2016, the Productivity Commission indicated it considers social housing and grant-based family and community services to be two prime areas for reform. Its *Study Report* was released in December 2016 and the Final Report is scheduled for October 2017.

If the Productivity Commission does confirm its preliminary view and recommends competition reform for the social housing sector and grant-based family and community services, it will have wide-reaching impacts on the existing players in the community housing sector, as well as related support agencies. The full extent of the impacts won't be known until the final report is released late in 2017; however, it can be reasonably predicted that well-prepared organisations will be in the best position to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the changes and avoid most of the pitfalls.

“ ... the Productivity Commission indicated it considers social housing and grant-based family and community services to be two prime areas for reform. ”

The experience of disability support providers with the introduction of the NDIS has shown organisations need to undertake a lot of work to adapt to the change in their underlying revenue, from block funding to payments made from individual funding packages. Similar considerations will apply in community housing, whatever the actual details of the policy change.

Those organisations that prepare early will have lower unit costs of delivery and be in a better position to attract new clients in a consumer choice environment. Following are some key things to think about in moving to a more competitive environment:



“ Those organisations that prepare early will have lower unit costs of delivery and be in a better position to attract new clients in a consumer choice environment. ”

Governance and strategic planning

It should go without saying that providers need to have good governance and strategic planning processes in place to meet the requirements of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. In an increasingly competitive environment, they will need to be flexible and innovative in order to respond as the details of new opportunities emerge. It will also be vital to reduce overhead costs, enact a sound workforce development strategy to meet the change in skills needed, and have a good understanding of the underlying cost structure and ‘profitability’ of their business.

Profitability

‘Profit’ sounds like an anomaly in a not-for-profit business. But while providers are very much motivated by their mission, community housing providers do need to make a profit (or surplus, if you prefer) to be able to fund asset growth and be sustainable in the long-term. If profit or surplus does not exceed inflation, the organisation is going backwards in real terms.

“ ‘Profit’ sounds like an anomaly in a not-for-profit business. But while providers are very much motivated by their mission, community housing providers do need to make a profit... ”

In the Australian Institute of Company Directors 2016 NFP Governance and Performance Study, 64 percent of directors said their organisation had made a profit in the last three years. That's something to think about. An understanding of your cost of service delivery is absolutely vital when entering a competitive environment. Many organisations have failed by expanding rapidly without knowing that they were making a loss by increasing business volumes.

Skills and acumen

You need to consider, do you have the right skills in place at all levels? Board, management and frontline staff skills may need refreshing, or even a larger overhaul, to operate effectively in the new environment.

“ In an increasingly competitive environment, providers need to reduce costly and error-prone manual processes. ”

People at the frontline of customer experience have an impact on business attraction and retention, and also need to understand the dangers of 'over-servicing' in a fee-based service environment. Providers need strong governance at the board level with the right mix of skills and commercial acumen, along with the traditional mission focus and a genuine concern for the tenants or customers. Management will need strong change management skills to steer their organisations through significant reform while retaining staff morale and performance.

IT and business processes

Do you have the right IT systems and business processes? In an increasingly competitive environment, providers need to reduce costly and error-prone manual processes. More up-to-date technology can also enable providers to offer tenants a

better service experience. For example, knowing the location of your maintenance staff through mobile devices allows you to inform tenants if there is a delay in responding to a call-out.

“ Will you provide a low cost/ high volume product or a slightly more expensive niche product, or something else? What extra services can you offer as part of a package to attract new customers? ”

Marketing and industry positioning

Marketing to potential tenants is not something that has concerned providers to date – demand for affordable housing far exceeds supply. But, if the future changes to the provision of affordable housing are similar to those of the NDIS and aged care packages – and allow meaningful user choice – providers need to think about how they will position themselves in a very different operating environment.

Will you provide a low cost/ high volume product or a slightly more expensive niche product, or something else? What extra services can you offer as part of a package to attract new customers?

Providers will have to incur costs to adapt their service delivery and business systems to the new environment. Of course, boards will want to see the actual detail of the change before making any major investment. But, by starting to get your housing organisation in order – right now – in relation to the skills and governance you will need, thinking about your marketing niche and understanding your business cost structure, you're making good business sense.

■ For more information, contact Alison Kimber on 0401 998 679 or alison@akadvisory.com.au



Alison Kimber is principal of ak advisory and consults to not-for-profit organisations and governments to help them deliver sustainable, high quality affordable and social housing outcomes. She is also a non-executive director on not-for-profit and local government boards.

As Director, Community Partnerships and Growth in Housing SA – and later Renewal SA – she led significant reform of the community housing sector in South Australia, including the transfer of 1,100 tenanted public housing properties to community housing providers in 2015 and the introduction of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing.

> *Anthony Nolan from Kennedy Associates Architects runs through the issues that still need to be addressed around bricks & mortar proposed for construction under the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) model of the NDIS.*

There are still more questions than answers about the types of housing that will be built under the new Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) model of the NDIS but the scheme opens up new opportunities that should provide more choice for eligible participants.

An increase in the number of people who will be eligible for SDA (as compared to the previous funding model) will stimulate demand and supply, with the federal government committing up to \$700 million in funding annually for the next 10 years. While the SDA Pricing Policy outlines the financial framework, including incentives for developers above market rates, this new housing sector still faces several key challenges.

Firstly, the SDA model provides a welcome shift away from the recent five-bed group home typology to include apartments, villas, duplexes, townhouses and small-scale shared houses but it doesn't provide a clear roadmap for their planning, design or delivery.

Secondly, while the key lynchpin of the NDIS (the separation of care and accommodation services) enables participants to choose housing options that are not tied to care packages for the first time, there is still little information available about how to make that happen.

“ How can eligible participants find and partner with SDA developers to access appropriate housing? ”

So, how can eligible participants find and partner with SDA developers to access appropriate housing? To date, the NDIA has focused on completing participant care plans and enrolling existing housing into the scheme but the development of new housing is likely to emerge as an important issue in 2017. As the transition to full scheme continues, the Agency (NDIA) will help participants to identify local housing developers, and will also post details of registered SDA developers on its website.

In effect, the broad scope of the NDIS means that anyone can become a registered SDA provider: participants themselves, family members, groups and organisations. However, existing community housing providers are best placed to take on this challenging role, thanks to their track record of managing housing portfolios, encompassing large-scale property management and working with specialist clients.

There are also private sector operators eyeing this new housing market segment but for-profit developers will find it a tough market to crack, at least initially, because the return on investment is low at the outset.

Ethical investors and superannuation funds are also potential



*This project by Kennedy Associates features six dwellings, including two fully accessible single-storey units, two double-storey units and two 'Fonzie' flats above the rear garages. It was designed to house people with a disability and their extended family and/or carers
Photo by Ben Guthrie*

SDA developers, and they may be spurred on by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's (AHURI) recent calls for new incentives for affordable housing. In a report titled 'Subsidised affordable rental housing: lessons from Australia and overseas'¹, AHURI called for "a new program to deliver a supply of subsidised affordable rental housing... to build on the investment momentum generated by the National Rental Affordability Scheme", which was discontinued in 2014.

But, even if additional incentives materialise, SDA developers face many hurdles as they seek to carve a path through building code regulations, the SDA Pricing Policy and local planning rules. A little-publicised challenge revolves around the issue of guaranteed tenure (or regular income for investors) and its intersection with the National Construction Code (NCC).

“ SDA developers face many hurdles as they seek to carve a path through building code regulations, the SDA Pricing Policy and local planning rules. ”

The Pricing Policy states, "SDA properties have an alternative use and can be either sold or rented to the broader residential market" but, under the NCC, SDA housing is likely to be classified as Class 1b or Class 3 (both of which require stricter fire safety standards and accessibility provisions than regular housing).

Speaking as an architect with experience in this sector, it is easier and more cost-effective to incorporate these NCC requirements at planning and design stage, instead of trying to retrofit existing buildings. What that means in practical terms is that general market housing is likely to require fire safety



Liverpool suburb diagram – Courtesy of SMITH & TZANNES Architecture & Urban Planning from The Missing Middle Design Guide

upgrades before being enrolled into the SDA and, conversely, developers of SDA housing are unlikely to return properties to the broader residential market, given their initial investment in Class 1b and Class 3 fire safety and accessibility provisions. In NSW at least, there are several other positive changes mooted that could facilitate the development of new SDA housing. The Greater Sydney Commission recently outlined plans to mandate the inclusion of affordable housing in all new developments where land is rezoned for higher density residential use² and the state government recently released a draft planning guide called *The Missing Middle*³. It aims to increase density in inner and middle-ring suburbs with new medium-density housing, which ties in with the stated goal of the NDIS to move away from building stranded assets – such as five-bed houses on the periphery of cities – where residents are isolated from services and effectively trapped. Combined with the SDA provisions, NSW’s inclusionary zoning scheme and *The Missing Middle* could promote the construction of new SDA housing – particularly low-rise medium-density options – in already established neighbourhoods.

“ The location of suitable housing is paramount for people with a disability. ”

The location of suitable housing is paramount for people with a disability, according to Wendy Lovelace, an architect who has MS and who is Convener of Queensland Action for Universal Housing Design. “For me personally, it’s all about being able to maintain some independence and choice, by being able to easily access public transport (or your own transport) to go places,” she said. “I’d also like to have a place where friends and family feel comfortable visiting, somewhere that is homelike and inviting for others.”

Although Wendy expects to qualify for SDA funding, her home city of Brisbane is one of the last cities in Queensland to undergo full transition to NDIS so any improvements are still some way off.

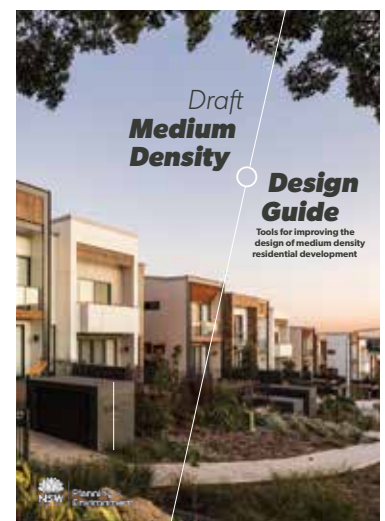
“There are some groups, such as MS Queensland, that have projects on the drawing board but organisations are understandably reticent to make the large investment required when SDA is still a moving target,” she says.

“From an architecture perspective, I’d like designers to take on SDA as a challenge, rather than focus on its restrictions,” she adds. “I’d encourage architects to be innovative rather than seeing themselves as being curtailed. Over the next decade, we will see some good stuff happen but it’s not going to happen quickly. Then, as people gain confidence after seeing what others are doing, they will join in.”

Wendy says she hopes, “[the] SDA will proceed in the right direction and that funding will be spent wisely, to make spaces and places that are easily accessible and pleasurable for everyone to enjoy.”

“ From an architecture perspective, I’d like designers to take on SDA as a challenge, rather than focus on its restrictions. ”

In summary, even though it’s early days for this new housing model, it’s becoming clear that SDA housing doesn’t need to be markedly different from other housing types – especially because universal housing design principles are being adopted more widely – but compliance with the various regulatory frameworks will require careful thought and management.



Cover shot of The Missing Middle. Photo by Frasers Property, Cox Architecture and Tom Ferguson Photography



Housing densities – Courtesy of NSW Department of Planning and Environment

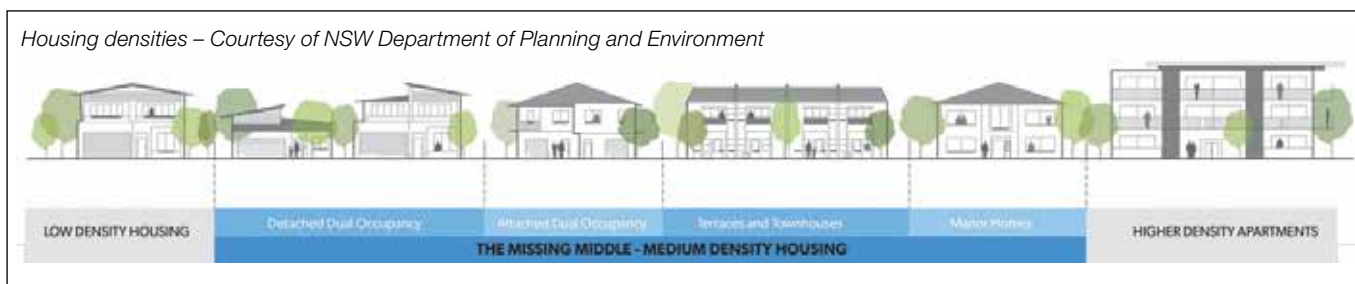


TABLE 1: ANNUAL BASE PRICE PER PARTICIPANT FOR NEW BUILDS, EXCLUDING REASONABLE RENT CONTRIBUTION (\$2016/17)

Building type / design category	Basic	Improved Livability		Fully Accessible		Robust			High Physical Support		Innovation
		No OOA	With OOA	No OOA	With OOA	No OOA	With OOA	+1 Room	No OOA	With OOA	
Apartment, 1 bedroom, 1 resident	na	\$33,784	\$39,415	\$47,884	\$55,865	na	na	na	\$72,353	\$84,412	Funded as trials and/or new design categories added over time.
Apartment, 2 bedrooms, 1 resident	na	\$40,222	\$46,926	\$58,139	\$67,829	na	na	na	\$90,026	\$105,030	
Apartment, 3 bedrooms, 2 residents	na	\$20,996	\$24,496	\$32,882	\$38,362	na	na	na	\$55,050	\$64,225	
Villa, 1 bedrooms, 1 resident	na	\$23,794	\$26,316	\$32,522	\$35,699	\$38,805	\$42,756	na	\$49,660	\$53,841	
Duplex / Townhouse, 2 residents	na	\$14,893	\$16,077	\$20,116	\$21,659	\$24,317	\$26,222	+\$1,602	\$31,847	\$33,858	
Duplex / Townhouse, 3 residents	na	\$12,164	\$12,970	\$16,968	\$18,000	\$20,931	\$22,200	+\$1,068	\$27,930	\$29,269	
House, 2 residents	na	\$21,749	\$22,934	\$26,992	\$28,535	\$31,727	\$33,632	+\$1,602	\$39,305	\$41,316	
House, 3 residents	na	\$17,094	\$17,997	\$22,445	\$23,601	\$26,656	\$28,059	+\$1,180	\$36,880	\$38,500	
Group home, 4 residents	na	\$15,064	\$15,742	\$19,926	\$20,808	\$23,900	\$24,963	+\$894	\$33,135	\$34,355	
Group home, 5 residents	na	\$12,730	\$13,285	\$17,424	\$18,123	\$20,974	\$21,814	+\$706	\$29,551	\$30,512	

OOA On-site overnight assistance
+1 Room Additional breakout room

Location

All prices must be multiplied by the location factor relevant to the property's location – see Appendix 2 for location factors.

Allowance

Fire Sprinkler Allowance (+1.2% for apartments and +1.9% for other building types)

NDIS Price Guide – Specialist Disability Accommodation, Version release date: 7 July 2016

Initially, it will probably be difficult for SDA developers to achieve the necessary economies of scale, but as the market matures, increasing levels of stability should provide better returns for investors and therefore more choice for participants, especially those who wish to live with partners or extended family.

“ We can take inspiration from the Summer Foundation’s pilot sites at Barwon in Victoria and Newcastle in NSW, and the Evolve projects in western Sydney. ”

Even at this early stage, we can take inspiration from the Summer Foundation’s pilot sites at Barwon in Victoria and Newcastle in NSW, and the Evolve projects in western Sydney, which demonstrate there is capacity within the SDA model for great innovation. The scheme is likely to positively impact the lives of participants. As an attendee at an NDIS Housing Symposium said, “With better housing choices, you can plan your life.”

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2. Jacob Saulwick, ‘Revealed: Lucy Turnbull’s affordable housing plan for Sydney’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 October 2016. <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/revealed-lucy-turnbulls-affordable-housing-plan-for-sydney-20161027-gsbxyd.html>
3. *Draft Medium Density Design Guide*, Department of Planning and Environment, NSW, October 2016. Anthony Nolan contributed to the development of this draft via the consultative working group. http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Housing/~/_media/B31COE2610F04D95AE0F4149A82DC513.ashx



Anthony Nolan is an architect with over 20 years’ experience in the design and documentation of a wide range of projects. In recent years, Anthony has pursued an interest in social sustainability through his leading role in the provision of specialist accommodation for people with a disability – for government, non-government and private clients.

a career in housing

> *Are the best housing workers those who've experienced housing hardship themselves? Haleh Homaei acts as a compelling example of how someone can rise from a young immigrant to CEO. She talks with HousingWORKS about her 25 years as a housing professional, stemming from a childhood of the most extreme trauma.*

There is an undeniable and, sadly, hard-earned authenticity to Haleh's passion for social justice and community housing. As CEO of Port Phillip Housing Association in Melbourne, Haleh can identify with the issues that plague her clients, due largely to a unique and somewhat terrifying firsthand perspective that she experienced as a child and teenager growing up in Iran.

“ I have a different level of understanding of the clients we're trying to help. ”

Having survived the Islamic Revolution that swept her former homeland in 1978, Haleh and her family's luck – for lack of a better word – ran out during the long and devastating Iran-Iraq War that took place from 1980 to 1988.

“Practically overnight, we lost our house and everything we had,” explains Haleh. “So we had to start all over again from nothing in another city. Living it [the refugee experience], I guess, helped me a lot too, and I have a different level of understanding of the clients we're trying to help. To basically go from having everything to nothing, I think... it can't get as real as that in any other way or shape.”

As it was for scores of Iranian families, the '70s and '80s were a tumultuous period in a proud history for Iran, as one of the Middle East's oldest nation-states. The turbulent events would cast an indelible and lasting shadow on Haleh, inspiring a life dedicated to fighting for social and economic justice.

“I was 10 years old when the revolution happened,” she says. “I went to school there and I lived all my younger age there. My experiences growing up are behind how I feel and what I wanted to do because I had firsthand experience of the deprivations and difficulties that people can experience. I left Iran in the middle of the Iran-Iraq War so I basically lived all the hardship a situation like that causes – the homelessness it creates. It's probably from that background and living in that threatening environment – through a revolution, through a war and everything – that influences your view of the world.”

“ I left Iran in the middle of the Iran-Iraq War so I basically lived all the hardship a situation like that causes. ”

“When I see a family on the street – when I see women with children who are homeless or single people who are homeless – I'm reminded how important it is to get a roof over your head, and have a chance to start your life again,” Haleh continues.



“Without that, the longer you're homeless and on the street, the harder it is to get your life back together.”

“Once you have been given a safe place to pull yourself together, then there [is the possibility] to get back on track. That's why I've always believed that housing and having a safe roof over your head is important. When you feel safe, you sleep better. You don't run up and down the stairs 10 times a night because there's a red alarm and another bomb attack. That feeling of not having to be anxious about whether I'll wake up tomorrow morning. 'Am I going to have another day? Am I going to see my family again?' All of that is not an issue if you have a safe place to live.”

“ That feeling of not having to be anxious about whether I'll wake up tomorrow morning. 'Am I going to have another day? Am I going to see my family again?' All of that is not an issue if you have a safe place to live. ”

Not surprisingly, upon her arrival in Australia, Haleh was driven to forge a career in the social and community advocacy sector: “I knew one way or the other I was going to work in a sector where I could actually be involved in social issues and matters. When I migrated to Australia, the first job I got was with the Office of Housing and it was, sort of, a secondment – backfilling for someone – but I really liked what we were doing. I was working with a really disadvantaged community, and being able to actually help them and support people through difficult situations was really attractive to me. So I decided to stay.”

Through all of the ups and downs that come with working in the community housing sector, Haleh's persistence is still

a powerful motivating factor that colours her working hours: “Every day is different. You’ve got good days and you’ve got bad days.”

“I like to remember what Hillary Clinton said when she conceded to Donald Trump that really stuck with me,” says Haleh. “She talked about how you’ve got successes and you’ve got setbacks, but, never stop believing that fighting for what’s right is worth it. And that really resonated with me. You try different projects, different programs. Governments come and go, and policies change. Something that was really successful today can become irrelevant tomorrow. Housing is sexy one day and then tomorrow morning it’s off the agenda, you don’t hear anything.”

“ You’ve got successes and you’ve got setbacks, but, never stop believing that fighting for what’s right is worth it. ”

“When we’re successful as housing people or winning a tender, it is quite rewarding,” admits Haleh. “It’s joyous to know you can do your job, you can deliver. Meeting the amazing people who work in this sector, it’s really rewarding and they are really an incredible bunch of people. Everyone is so dedicated and they go out of their way to help. That’s really heartwarming.”

“I guess, at the end of the day, this is where I choose to be, and I believe in housing as a human right, as something that everybody is entitled to receive,” she continues. “It’s not a luxury – it’s an entitlement and, while I have that belief, that motivates me. Yes, you do have setbacks, you do have to adjust and adapt but, if you keep the viewpoint that you’re doing this because there are people you need to lobby for – and there are still people sleeping on the street – then you keep going and you find another way around it. This has been, basically, my journey but I’m sure it’s also the journey of others in the social and community housing industry.”

Away from the rigours of work, Haleh puts staying fit right up there on the must-do list – “I practice Bikram yoga, which is quite challenging but I like it because I feel like it gets all of the stress out of my body. It is challenging in a good way” – but she is also a self-confessed political news junkie, which explains her aforementioned quoting of Hillary Clinton.

“I’m mad about international politics and I do read a lot. The U.S. elections and Donald Trump’s win back in November drove me bananas [she laughs]. I guess that was the same as everybody else but, yeah, I follow international politics and I’m really keen to keep on top of what’s happening around the world.”

When it comes to her legacy, Haleh takes a moment to think about how she would most likely be remembered by colleagues past and present. Other than being considered a perfectionist – she confesses to having been called ‘Sheldon’ at one organisation as a nod to her namesake’s character on the popular television comedy, *The Big Bang Theory* – she thinks her passion for what she does is likely to proceed her.

“I’d also like to think I’d be recognised for my leadership attributes,” muses Haleh. “My staff always praise me for leadership, and I really believe leadership is about bringing out the best in people and providing them with guidance. Leadership is a unique thing – you either have it or you don’t. I hope I do have it but I’m also conscious of that and I’m working towards being a good leader all the time. Being passionate and being a good leader, and being experienced and having a lot of knowledge, are the main things that come to mind.”

“ Leadership is a unique thing – you either have it or you don’t. ”

“I think the hope we have is in the next generation,” says Haleh, philosophically, in concluding her interview with *HousingWORKS*. “Whatever we do, if we can do better for the next generation we have had a win.”



PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING AWARDS

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Look who's new at the AHI:

Corporate Member

Name of Organisation: *Hume Community Housing Association*

Chief Operating Officer: *Nicola Lemon*

Joined AHI: *2015*

Describe the vision of Hume Community Housing:

"Our vision is to create vibrant, sustainable and cohesive communities through the delivery of outstanding homes and equitable services."

Summary of services provided:

"We provide homes, tenancy and property management services – it's the foundation of what we do but that's really just the beginning. We build our own properties. We've got 130 properties currently in the pipeline. We have significant customer, community and employee capacity-building programs. We've got a team dedicated to providing community development and connection services we provide homelessness services through various rapid rehousing models with person-centred, one-on-one case management and support. And then, of course, we offer links to our partners who provide dedicated support management to a broad range of people. We've got training and employment programs and linkages with partners, and we also offer a suite of services to private investors, community organisations and developers on a fee-for-service basis."

Defining features of organisation:

"The way we view our customers – our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We've been using the term 'customer' at Hume for the past eight or nine years because we believe it recognises the role of tenants, applicants and community members in directing services, influencing policies and having a genuine role in determining our practice. We think it shows respect and engenders our frontline workers with an ethos of customer choice. It shifts the view from 'our

customers are desperate and need our services' to 'we want our customers to choose and desire our services'."

"The team also does a really good job of making sure we are commercially savvy – that's really important. We see ourselves as efficiently run with a profit-for-purpose approach but we do that without straying from a commitment to our vision and values. That's a balance that can be difficult to strike but we think we've got it right."

Current programs:

"This year, we won a NSW Federation of Community Housing Highly Commended award, in the Best Partnership Award category for a partnership program we're running called Mental Health Biz. The program trains our customers and staff in mental health first aid, and it's had a really positive impact because not only have a high number of our customers come in and trained and qualified as mental health first-aiders, our staff – and not just frontline staff – have also trained as mental health first-aiders so it's really raised awareness across the organisation."

"Tenants, as well as some of our community stakeholders, came in and did the training then they went back into the community and became advocates for people with mental health issues. We've seen less complaints about anti-social behavior as a result, and a greater understanding in our communities around some of the mental health challenges that people might be facing."

Achievements of organisation this year:

"We've got a number of development projects completed or nearing completion. In November, we completed a development that I'm particularly proud of – 14 townhouses for women that are on a 'Women at Risk' visa. The women who qualify to be on this visa have suffered kidnap, rape or trauma. The communities we operate in receive the highest



The team from Hume Community Housing Association



number of new entrants on this visa, so we identified a high-need. We are also providing homes in the same project for key working women, with a similar background, who will act as mentors for the new entrants. The project had been a long time in its inception and, in fact, we were unable to secure federal funds specifically for this project. However, through sheer determination to help those most in need, we found a way to deliver this project.”

“Also, there’s our most recent employee opinion survey, conducted by an external company, which was completed by 100 percent of the team – which in itself is remarkable – and then we had an engagement rate of 87 percent overall. One of the things we break down is how committed our team is to the vision and values of our organisation, and 100 percent of them said they were 100 percent committed. It’s an outstanding result. A lot of the team face some really difficult challenges doing this job, and working in this sector isn’t easy but it’s also exceptionally rewarding, and I’m just really pleased to have a team that are that committed to what we’re trying to do.”

Comment on the current state of housing:

“We’re operating in NSW and there are 60,000 households on the waiting list. The average wait for a three-bedroom property in Liverpool, which is one of the areas that we operate in, is 10

years. There are some positive things in NSW currently – the Future Directions policy is positive. The management transfer of properties to the community housing sector is being embraced, so that could be really positive. The discussion on inclusionary zoning is occurring. I think, in our state, we’re in a very fortunate position. However, I don’t think either of the initiatives are in a form that go quite far enough to resolve the affordable housing crisis that this country faces.”



Why did you become a Corporate Member of the AHI?

“I’m from the U.K. and one of the striking differences between the Australian community housing sector and the British sector is a lack of supply of talent. We find recruiting the right talent difficult, and I really believe that organisations like the AHI should be strengthening the capacity of our sector by building capability and capacity in our future leaders.”

■ www.humecha.com.au

Advertising in HousingWORKS

HousingWORKS is the premier journal on social housing matters in Australia and New Zealand. It provides relevant and topical information to those working in the social housing sector – in the government, community and academic sectors.

HousingWORKS is distributed to all AHI members as part of their membership benefits, to subscribed readers and to select social housing agencies and organisations. The current circulation of the magazine is 800 throughout Australia and New Zealand.

HousingWORKS is published four times each year.

Advertising Schedule for 2017

Mono + Spot (PMS 3155)	Size/Format	Casual	x4
Size: 210 X 297mm	Full Page	\$850	\$1900*
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Back Cover	Full Page only	\$1600	\$3900

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Look who's new at the AHI:

Certified Housing Professional

- > **Name:** Jo Leckie
- > **Occupation:** Housing Services Manager, Rockingham Forest Housing, Northamptonshire, UK
- > **Certification Level:** Level 3
- > **Residence:** Melbourne, Victoria (as of January 2017)
- > **Years in Housing:** 24

Why did you seek accreditation?

"I'm moving to Australia in January 2017 because my husband's got a job in Melbourne. I came across the AHI and its accreditation program and I thought, 'What a wonderful opportunity for me' because it demonstrates my continuous learning and development, and my desire to stay relevant in terms of social housing while shopping around my CV. Having evidence of ongoing development is a huge incentive – to make time to invest in myself professionally – otherwise it's just really easy to get on with the day job. You can become quite blinkered. You're only thinking about yourself and your own organisation, and you're not necessarily thinking about the bigger picture."

What does a day in your life look like? Do you have a routine?

"I'm quite senior in terms of the role I've had at Rockingham Forest. Because we're a smaller organisation, the housing services manager role is quite a senior strategic position and it wears many hats. I'm not only strategic but I'm also operational so, although I always forward-plan, it's actually a miracle if any day turns out how it should be. I would say, if I did have anything that's a routine, it's spending some time at the beginning of the day catching up with my team, making sure I know where they're at."

How do you think you can personally contribute to the housing industry as a CHP?

"Coming from the UK, I think I've got a wealth of experience that I'm really excited to share. There's a homeless situation across Australia – a lack of affordable housing – and that's something we've been dealing with in the UK for a long time. Managing people and place in mixed tenure housing developments is also something we've been doing in the UK for a while so I'm really looking forward to being able to share my experience in respect of that."

What is your secret housing 'weapon'?

"Ha! You have to have quite a lot of 'ammunition in your belt' when you're a housing professional. The first thing I think of is my ears – because it's not only about listening to customers but *hearing* what the customer is saying. I call tenants 'customers' because they are service users and it's customer-first for me. A lot of people, when they talk about customer-first, they're talking about listening to what the customer wants but it's also about listening to what the customer wants and looking at that practically in a commercial way.

In order to succeed and remain viable, you've got to have business sense, as well as remembering your core purpose."



How do you think the housing industry compares to other industries in recognising its professionals?

"In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Housing does a pretty good job in terms of recognising its professionals. If you're going to be a professional, or call yourself a professional, you've got to remain current. If you're a doctor or a nurse or a lawyer, you have to be able to prove your current knowledge. For example, my sister's a midwife and she has to sit various tests throughout the year to keep her qualifications and to be able to practice so I think it's vital that if you want to call yourself a professional that you can evidence your 'professionalism'. I'm also a member of the CIPD in the UK and continuous professional development is core to that membership as well."

What do you hope this accreditation will mean to you and others in the future?

"I'm hoping that being a CHP will help prove my commitment to work in the profession and my desire to keep my knowledge up-to-date. I saw a really good quote recently from Frank Zappa who said, 'A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it's not open.' If your mind is open you remain creative and forward-thinking. I'm also hoping that it's going to give me the opportunity to network and share with like-minded people, and take advantage of the AHI's housing seminars and conferences. I'd be sitting in the UK reading about these things thinking, 'Oh god, I wish I was there!'. I'm really looking forward to taking part in things."

What five things would you take to a desert island and why?

"I love this question! If I was to be on a desert island, you know what I'd take with me? I'd take Bear Grylls. He'd take care of all my survival needs – you know, that boring whole 'survival thing' which I'm not very good at. I wouldn't have to worry about lighting fires, finding fresh water, any of that – he could do that! Of course, I have to take my husband because it wouldn't be a home without him, would it? I'm quite a social being, and I'd need to be able to hear other people's voices, so I think I'd take a wind-up radio because I couldn't imagine my life without music or current affairs or news, and just general background chatter. Finally, I'd take a journal and a pen so I could make a note of my thoughts and experiences. You could take a book with you but you'd soon read that, wouldn't you? If you take a journal and a pen, then you could create your own stories instead. That would suit me down to the ground."

■ For more information about becoming a Certified Housing Professional, visit www.housinginstitute.org/CHP



AHI member



- > **Name:** Chris Johnstone
- > **Title:** Manager, Tawanui Community Housing Trust (TCHT)
- > **Joined AHI:** 2016
- > **Residence:** Tauranga, New Zealand
- > **Years in housing:** 12

Current project or activity:

“Tawanui Community Housing Trust is a very small registered community housing trust established about 12 years ago. TCHT delivers various programmes – Healthy Homes, Friendly Landlord and a housing facilitation service. We are also in the final stages of the 14-unit build. Certainly, the tenants have been very happy knowing they’re going into new homes by Christmas.”

What made you choose a housing career?

“I started working in the Northern Territory with young people – it became evident there were a lot of young people who needed housing. After a few years of working in medium-term housing, I got a housing job with the council and it became, sort of, an evolution, really, and an area of great interest to me. I have a view that stable, appropriate housing is fundamental to wellbeing of individuals, families and the community.”

“Back in those days when I concentrated on working with young people, housing was – and still is, actually – so expensive. For most of us, even those who have jobs, housing can be transitional. It was quite hard even many years ago to get into a good flat in Darwin. The difference affordable housing made to my own stability and everything else was huge. It was the significant impact that stable housing can have on people’s lives that really pushed me to make this my career.”

What are you particularly proud of having accomplished?

“At TCHT, it’s been quite hard work to get it up to where it is. The Trust has just chipped away, although we’ve been quite resilient and persistent. Let’s just say you need quite a bit of tenacity to keep going sometimes. As a very small, emerging community housing organisation, it’s very challenging. Even though we’re really tiny – I mean, we have 150 properties – we’ve made quite a bit of headway in a really challenging environment.”

What makes you motivated or inspired in your career?

“Sometimes, I don’t really have much to do with the housing being allocated but, as it happens, I was involved in the allocations for 14 new units that we’re opening. It was a good reminder of how important it was for people, and how at-risk they were otherwise in their lives – things like having falls because their place wasn’t really suitable for them, being too cold, and not being able to afford a place to live and ending up couch-surfing. For them, it was like the biggest Christmas

present to have a home. It was just a reminder of how important stable and affordable housing is for people, and how much they value it.”

What attributes make a great housing or advocacy worker?

“Tenacity is really important – the ability to climb over the barriers and just keep going – and, also, to be adaptable because, in the last 10 years in New Zealand, our external environment has been in a state of constant change. Being able to adapt to the change but also not let the external environment cause you to lose focus despite what’s going around – a good housing worker needs that. Be switched on and mindful of what’s happening but don’t necessarily lose focus.”

What are the biggest challenges facing housing professionals today?

“I think it’s the lack of certainty in the external environment. We have an evolution of policies in terms of housing policies, and they change, and then there’s a different focus and a different emphasis with a change of government and change in government thinking. So, that’s a continual challenge.”

“We’ve found it quite difficult as an emerging organisation to establish traction in terms of limited access to capital. We didn’t start with an asset base, which means – particularly now that capital grants are no longer available – it’s tough for us. Along with that, in some ways, there just keeps on getting more housing pressure as time goes on, and it’s worse in Auckland. We have a specific housing need in this area and there’s under-supply issues, as well as significant affordability issues.”

What do you believe are the future directions for the housing profession?

“It’s hard to say given what is happening with government policy; however, I would like [the housing profession] to be recognised as a specialist, creditable, professional industry, rather than loosely part of a broader charity and not-for-profit sector ‘doing good works’. I would also like the profession or sector to be able to offer professional pathways, and ongoing support and coaching for housing workers who may have little contact with others doing similar work.”

What do you hope to achieve from your AHI membership?

“I really like the opportunity for professional development, and of being able to keep abreast of what’s happening in terms of the latest thinking. The main value for me is connecting with other people actively involved in housing.”





Australasian Housing Institute

Supporting housing professionals

MEMBERSHIP

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Membership of the Australasian Housing Institute is open to anyone working in the social housing sector, in either a paid or unpaid capacity, or who has an interest in the social housing sector.

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One of the keys to achieving a skilled, knowledgeable and flexible workforce is to empower individuals with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to be confident in their ability to do their job well and to help them develop their career. By becoming an AHI Corporate Member, you signal that your organisation fosters the personal and professional development of staff by investing in them.

The AHI can play an important role in helping housing and human service businesses and organisations improve the productivity of their workforce and promote housing and human service work as a worthwhile career in an increasingly competitive labour market. The AHI has established Corporate Membership to assist in partnering with businesses and organisations that are committed to positive career development principles and objectives. Corporate Membership gives you access to the networks and resources of the AHI.

Corporate Membership is open to any non-government housing or human service business or organisation, with a commitment to supporting the career development of their employees. Corporate Membership is also open to local government organisations active in the housing sector.

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Membership enquiries can be made to the AHI's office.

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