

Research Agenda

National Housing Research Program

Research Agenda 2010

**Australian Housing
and Urban Research Institute**

31 July 2009



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PURPOSE

AHURI's National Housing Research Program 2010 Annual Funding Round offers exciting opportunities for conducting housing and homelessness research in Australia. 2009 has seen the introduction of a new national policy framework, and major government investment in housing outcomes, both of which open up new avenues for research and contribution to policy development. Furthermore, the level of investment in research has increased significantly for this funding round by comparison with previous years.

AHURI recently funded a [review](#) of previous Research Agendas by a leading international academic, Professor Susan Smith. This National Housing Research Program Research Agenda 2010 (hereafter '*Research Agenda 2010*') is informed by that review. One result of this review is that this funding round offers researchers more scope for innovation in terms of devising research questions and selecting methodologies. The review is available on the AHURI website and offers excellent guidance on how researchers can approach the design of research proposals.

The *Research Agenda 2010* details the research funding priorities of AHURI's National Housing Research Program in 2010. Through the forthcoming funding round, AHURI is seeking to fund Essays and Investigative Panels as well as Research Projects.

The *Research Agenda 2010* differs from previous AHURI Research Agendas in a number of respects.

- First, the policy environment informing the *Research Agenda 2010* has changed significantly with the introduction of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), which seeks to advance a national framework for housing policy. The *Research Agenda 2010* reflects this, stressing the whole and integrated nature of the housing system and making links between the housing system and issues, such as homelessness.
- Second, the themes used to structure the Research Agenda in previous years were relevant to the previous Commonwealth State Housing Agreements but there is now a need to move beyond this framework. Instead, eight Strategic Research Issues which reflect the strategic interests of the NAHA reform agenda are identified. These issues are broad enough to permit a range of possible questions to be asked. The intent is to provide greater scope for the research community to explore innovative research questions, whilst maintaining a focus on those issues of strategic importance to the policy frameworks of government.
- Third, a short list of seven Priority Research Questions is provided as a way of signalling to the research community topics that are of immediate importance in light of the policy reforms taking place.
- Fourth, the *Research Agenda 2010* introduces two new vehicles for research – Essays and Investigative Panels - to join Research Projects. These new research vehicles offer an innovative approach to engaging policy makers, practitioners and the research community in the exchange of ideas. The design of these new Research Vehicles takes into account the requirement for a timely response to emerging policy issues.
- Finally, the *Research Agenda 2010* provides guidance to the researchers as to how to approach the research, including ways to identify current gaps in the evidence base in terms of the research contexts, and methods and data sets to apply.

These changes are outlined in more detail in the five sections that follow, alongside material that remains broadly consistent with previous funding rounds.

The *Research Agenda 2010* should be read in conjunction with the *Funding Guidelines for Applicants*, including the *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Indigenous Research*. Applicants should use the templates provided on the AHURI intranet at: http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research_agenda_funding/about_funding/

1 THE POLICY CONTEXT

National Affordable Housing Agreement

Housing policy in Australia is currently undergoing substantial reform. In January 2009 the Australian Government introduced a new national policy framework, the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). It has replaced the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) which has been the arrangement for coordinating social housing funding between the Australian Government and state and territory governments for over 60 years. It also replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) which has been the principal arrangement for support funding for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness between the Australian Government and state and territory governments for more than 20 years. The NAHA framework emphasises the importance of affordable housing in realising more equitable social outcomes. Alongside the NAHA, four National Partnership Agreements between the states and territories and the Australian Government set out strategies for achieving the outcomes that are articulated by the NAHA. These agreements target social housing, homelessness, remote Indigenous housing and nation building and jobs.

This ongoing agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories integrates a range of policy initiatives that are intended to affect housing outcomes across tenure types and generate change in householders' social and economic participation. The reform program specified in the NAHA and associated partnership agreements will shape housing policy for the short and longer term, particularly in the areas of homelessness, Indigenous housing and social housing.¹ Governments have committed to: improving integration between the homelessness service system and mainstream services, reducing concentrations of disadvantage that exist in some social housing estates, improving access by Indigenous people to mainstream housing (including home ownership), enhancing the capacity and growth of the not-for-profit housing sector, and planning reforms for greater efficiency in the supply of housing.²

The National Partnership Agreement on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan (i.e., the stimulus package), together with the NAHA, has generated an unprecedented intensification of reform activity and government expenditure in the area of housing.

The aspirational objective of the NAHA is that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation. The parties to the agreement commit to achieving particular outcomes:

- Sustainable housing and social inclusion for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- People are able to rent housing that meets their needs;
- People can purchase affordable housing;

¹ See also the National Partnership Agreement on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan: Building Prosperity for the Future and Supporting Jobs Now, for policy direction in social housing construction and reform.

² Council of Australian Governments' meeting, 29 November 2008.
http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/attachments.cfm#attachmentc

- People have access to housing through an efficient and responsive housing market;
- Indigenous people have the same housing opportunities (in relation to homelessness services, housing rental, housing purchase and access to housing through an efficient and responsive housing market) as other Australians;
- Indigenous people have improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding particularly in remote areas and discrete communities.

National Partnership Agreements

The NAHA is supported by four National Partnership Agreements.

Social Housing – The agreement involves capital funding for social housing projects for construction of approximately 1,600-2,100 new dwellings nationally by 2009-10. The objectives are to:

- increase the supply of social housing through new construction;
- provide increased opportunities for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to gain secure long term accommodation; and
- develop options for reform that will: address supply shortfalls including through the possible creation of supply targets for states and territories based on work of the National Housing Supply Council, through City Wide Planning Authorities and or state planning mechanisms; and
- develop options for possible payment of Commonwealth funding assistance through a per dwelling subsidy such as Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).

Homelessness – The objective is that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion. The agreement is aimed at the following outcomes:

- fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough;
- fewer people will become homeless more than once;
- people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation; and
- people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services with improved access to sustainable housing.

Remote Indigenous Housing – The agreement will involve construction of up to 4,200 new houses and repairs to 4,800 houses. The objectives are to:

- significantly reduce severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities;
- increase the supply of new houses and improve the condition of existing houses in remote Indigenous communities; and
- ensure that rental houses are well maintained and managed in remote Indigenous communities.

Nation Building and Jobs Plan – as part of a wider \$42 billion stimulus plan, funding of \$6 billion is provided over the next three and a half years for the construction of new social housing with a further \$400 million over two years for repairs and maintenance to existing public housing dwellings. The specified objectives of the Social Housing Initiative are to:

- increase the supply of social housing through new construction and the refurbishment of existing stock that would otherwise be unavailable for occupancy;
- to provide increased opportunities for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to gain secure long term accommodation; and
- to stimulate the building and construction industry, both through funding additional dwellings and increasing expenditure on repairs and maintenance. This will help stimulate businesses which supply construction materials and help to retain jobs in the industry.

The agreed targets for the Social Housing Initiative are as follows:

- the upgrade of 2,500 existing social housing dwellings by 30 June 2010 that would otherwise have been unfit for occupation; and
- the construction of 20,000 new social housing dwellings, primarily for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, by 30 June 2012 including:
 - construction of 2,300 dwellings that are already in the development pipeline by 30 June 2010; and
 - construction of 15,000 dwellings by 30 December 2010.
- the new dwellings will provide around a 50 per cent reduction in the waiting time for people with high housing needs on public housing lists and a reduction in the number of low-income households paying more than half their income in rent.

Government departments responsible for delivering NAHA and NPAs

The NAHA outlines the roles and responsibilities of each level of government in delivering outcomes. The responsibility for the administration and delivery of services falls to the states and territories. Each jurisdiction is currently working in consultation with the Australian Government on developing implementation plans in order to bring the national reform agenda into effect. These major reforms in the national housing agenda have resulted in corresponding changes in the delivery of housing and human services. The NAHA and attendant NPAs foreshadow an unprecedented level of integration between housing and human services. This has resulted in significant restructuring of the relevant departments in many states and territories.

A key goal of the NAHA and related partnership agreements is an increased level of integration between housing and other human services. In recognition that housing contributes in an essential way to the wellbeing of individuals in society, the connections between housing and other human services is being strengthened in governments Australia-wide. The following chart captures the lead agencies in each state that are responsible for delivering on the outcomes set by the NAHA. It is by no means comprehensive; however it is indicative of the breadth of the NAHA reform agenda. The key groups that are identified by these lead agencies in the delivery of human services provide an indication of where research may contribute effectively to the development of evidence based policy. Research in these areas is strategically significant to the development and implementation of the objectives of the NAHA reform agenda, that is: providing assistance to people in securing affordable, safe and sustainable housing.

The importance of housing in realising social inclusion is reflected by the alignment of housing bodies with other human services in the organisational structure of many of

Australia's state and territory governments. In particular, housing services are establishing stronger links with aged care, disability, mental health, Indigenous affairs and family services divisions. Homelessness strategies are now incorporated within housing departments and branches in the majority of Australian states and territories. Those who are identified as especially at risk in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness include; rough sleepers; people experiencing homelessness more than once; people escaping violence especially women and children; children and young people including those subject to or exiting care and protection; Indigenous people; people exiting social housing, institutional care such as health, mental health, juvenile justice or adult prisons. The identification of these 'at risk' groups emphasises the need for coordination between human services. This is indicative of the focus of policy makers, and where researchers can contribute most effectively in the development of policy.

As can be seen in the table below, at a federal level housing and human services are united within the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). In Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT, housing branches/divisions fall within human services departments. In Queensland the delivery of housing services has been restructured in 2009, with a majority of these services falling within the Department of Communities. Tasmania has also undergone restructuring to align housing services more closely with other human services. In Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, housing is managed in 'stand alone' departments. In December 2008, the WA Department of Housing and Works was reorganised with housing becoming a 'stand alone' department and the building and 'works' activities relocated to the Department of Treasury and Finance. New South Wales is currently in the process of restructuring its housing department, and as a result no definitive organisational chart is currently available.

Jurisdiction	Lead Department/s	Key Groups/ Divisions - Branches/ Units (These are Groups/ Divisions of the lead agency that are affected by the NAHA reform agenda and the associated branches/ units.)			
Federal Government	Dept of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)	Housing - Office of Housing - Affordable Housing Programs - Homelessness Taskforce Social Housing Initiative - Social Housing Initiative Branch	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination - NT Emergency Response Operations Centre Indigenous Remote Services Delivery - Indigenous Housing Delivery - Indigenous Housing Policy	Families Women & Children Policy	Disability & Carers Mental Health Autism and Community Support
New South Wales	Housing New South Wales		Aboriginal Housing Office		
Victoria	Dept. of Human Services (DHS)	Housing and Community Building - Public Housing and Community Building - Services and Asset Management - Housing Sector Development		Children Youth and Families - Child Protection, Placement and Family Services Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services	Disability Services - Community and Individualised Support Mental Health and Drugs Division
Queensland	Dept. of Communities	Housing and Homelessness Services - Community and Public Housing - Remote Indigenous Housing and Homelessness - Office for Homelessness - Portfolio Management Strategic Policy and Evaluation - Integrated Human Services CEO committee	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships - Indigenous Programs and Partnerships Branch - Indigenous Policy and Performance Branch - Strong indigenous Communities CEO Committee	Child Safety Community and Youth Justice	Disability Services
South Australia	Dept. for Families	Housing S.A.		Families	Office for Disability and Client

	and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Housing Services</i> - <i>Affordable Home Products</i> - <i>Special Programs i.e. homelessness</i> - <i>Community Development</i> <p>Strategic and Policy Intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>APY Housing Project</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Child Protection Services</i> - <i>Crisis Care</i> - <i>Foster Care</i> - <i>Post Care Services</i> <p>Office for The Ageing</p>	<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Supported Residential Facilities</i> <p>Domiciliary Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Equipment Provision and Home Modification</i> <p>Disability Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Accommodation</i> - <i>Community Transition</i>
Tasmania	Dept. of Health and Human Services	<p>Housing Tasmania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reform Implementation</i> <p>(Strategies: Public/Private Rental/Home Ownership Assistance; Community Sector Housing/ Supported Accommodation Assistance)</p>		<p>Disability, Youth, Child and Family Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reform Implementation</i> - <i>Office for the Community Sector</i> 	<p>Disability, Youth, Child and Family Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reform Implementation</i> - <i>Office for the Community Sector</i>
Western Australia	Dept. of Housing	<p>Housing Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Public Housing</i> - <i>Housing Service Delivery</i> <p>Housing Stimulus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Housing Construction from Government Funding Package</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Community Housing</i> - <i>Home Ownership</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Community Housing</i>
Northern Territory	Dept. of Local Government and Housing	<p>Housing and Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Housing Services</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Indigenous Housing</i> - <i>Remote Housing Reform</i> - <i>Strategic Indigenous Housing Infrastructure Program</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Financial Management and Home Ownership</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Housing Policy and Special Needs Support</i>

ACT	Dept. Disability, Housing and Community Services	Housing and Community Services <i>- Housing ACT</i> <i>- Asset Management</i>	<i>- Multicultural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs</i>		
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Closing the Gap

Equality of access for Indigenous Australians to housing services and opportunities cuts across each area of future policy activity under the NAHA. Ambitious targets have been set by the Australian Government for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians living in urban, rural and remote areas. This includes closing the gap in the areas of housing, health, education and employment outcomes. The six targets are listed below:

1. Close the life expectancy gap within a generation
2. Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
3. Ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities within five years
4. Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade
5. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020, and
6. Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

Housing is seen as an important component in contributing to achieving these targets and so there is scope for future research to analyse the impacts of housing interventions upon these targets. The AHURI evidence base relating to housing for Indigenous Australians should be expanded through the adoption of a whole-of-housing system approach. Issues for future research could focus on identifying housing interventions in the areas of social housing, private rental, home ownership and models of land tenure in remote communities that generate improvements in health, education and economic participation for Indigenous Australians. How housing relates to non-housing interventions will also be of critical importance.

New governance frameworks will be introduced by the time AHURI research is underway. AHURI researchers should become familiar with these frameworks to properly contextualise their research.

Climate Change Policies

The Australian Government is also seeking to implement the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). The introduction of the Scheme has been deferred until after international Climate Change negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009. The Australian Government has set a target of reducing Carbon Pollution by 5 to 15 per cent on 2000 levels. This reduction target may be increased to as high as 25 per cent if a suitable international agreement is forged. A number of housing related initiatives have already been introduced as part of the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, including funding of solar panels for hot water and house insulation. The wider introduction of the CPRS and the emissions trading regime may involve further more significant implications for consumers of housing. This opens up scope for innovative housing research.

Housing and Human Rights

Australia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified December 1975) which states that every person has the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes the right to adequate housing

(ICESCR, article 11). The new focus of the NAHA on improving social and economic outcomes for all Australians through the provision of housing, and emphasis upon the integration of housing services with other social services reflects the renewed emphasis on Human Rights in homelessness policy frameworks. There is scope for Australian research to build on approaches developed overseas using a rights based analytical approach.³

³ see for example Bratt, R., Stone, M. and Hartman, C. (2006) *A Right to Housing: Foundation for a New Social Agenda*, Temple University Press.

2 STRATEGIC RESEARCH ISSUES

Below are eight Strategic Research Issues that derive from the new policy environment for housing. Research responding to these strategic issues will advance national housing policy development. Applications for funding are invited in response to these Strategic Research Issues. Keeping in mind the policy context outlined in the previous section, applicants are requested to:

- design a research question addressing a Strategic Research Issue, or aspect thereof;
- articulate the policy relevance of the research question they are proposing, and;
- specify the potential contribution to policy development of undertaking the research.

Diverse research activities are sought on the following Strategic Research Issues. The potential outputs of these activities could include Essays, Investigative Panels and/or Research Projects (see Section 4b Research Vehicles):

1. Housing and related systems that prevent homelessness and promote well-being and stable housing outcomes.
2. Housing choice in a social/affordable housing system with diverse providers and increased supply.
3. Housing and neighbourhoods that generate social inclusion, economic opportunities and well being.
4. Housing opportunities for Indigenous communities that support improved amenity, well being and economic sustainability.
5. Structures within the housing system, including finance, support services, and tenure arrangements that enable households to access housing as their needs change over time.
6. Efficient land and housing markets that meet demand (affordably and appropriately), enable labour market and other mobility, and support productivity gains in the economy.
7. Understanding and responding to the impact of systemic shifts (e.g. global financial crisis, social transitions, environmental change) upon structures within the housing system and housing outcomes.
8. Understanding and responding to the effects of non-housing policies and programs upon housing outcomes and well being (e.g. health, education, land use planning, aged care, labour market programs, tax, carbon pollution reduction, water use).

3 PRIORITY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Seven Priority Research Questions arising from the new policy environment for housing in Australia are listed below. The purpose in specifying a short-list of Priority Research Questions is to signal to the research community that this is research that AHURI intends to undertake in 2010.

1. Little is known about the relationship between housing and health in Australia. AHURI researched this partially in a systematic review [Project 80188]. More rigorous work has been done in New Zealand (see for example work by researchers at University of Otago. See <http://www.uow.otago.ac.nz/academic/dph/research/housing/crowding.html>)

Q: What are the health impacts of housing and housing assistance? How do dwelling tenure, location and other dimensions of housing impact on health?

2. Not much is known about the differential outcomes of activities by various funding bodies responsible for responding to homelessness - from transitional housing to supported arrangements in public, community and private rental accommodation.

Q: What are the short and long term outcomes secured by different forms of homelessness response?

3. Research by Flatau et al. (2008) [80306] examined the costs and benefits of preventing homelessness. There is need to replicate and extend this work to states and territories beyond Western Australia.

Q: What are the whole of government budgetary costs and benefits of not preventing homelessness including, for example, in relation to health, crisis accommodation, policing, criminal justice and housing assistance?

4. AHURI has funded research analysing the policy frameworks for housing affordability put in place overseas (Milligan and Lawson [60323], and Gurrin [60322]). However there is a need to measure the outcomes of such programmes in these countries and analyse how overseas policies might be adapted successfully to Australia. Such an analysis would need to take into account the influence of the Global Financial Crisis on the viability and likely success of affordability policies

Q: How have improvements in housing affordability outcomes for low to moderate income households in other countries been achieved by housing policies and programmes and how can these gains be achieved in the Australian context?

5. Australian governments have sought to undo the effects of policies of the past which concentrated people with complex needs in certain locations. One of the strategies to improve the 'social mix' has been to reduce the proportion of social housing in neighbourhoods through housing renewal schemes.

Q: As concentrations of social housing tenants are altered through policies directed at changing social mix of neighbourhoods, what are the outcomes for the people and the neighbourhoods affected over time?

6. AHURI has already researched the links between housing assistance and various non-shelter outcomes such as employment, education and health [[60008](#), [80188](#), [NRV1](#)]. Similar research addressing employment and education goals for Indigenous Australians that recognises the aims of the 'Closing the Gap' initiative is required.

Q: How is the provision of adequate housing linked to the educational and employment outcomes of Indigenous Australians?

7. The 'boom-bust' cycle prevalent in the construction sector over many years has been known to create particular issues around the supply of labour to that part of the sector. However, not much is known about the broader labour force relating to housing (including service industries supporting the supply and management of housing).

Q: What are the dimensions of the housing sector labour force (from construction through to tenancy management), how have those dimensions changed over time and what role, if any, can policy makers play in ensuring that the sector is well equipped to supply the future needs of Australia's housing system?

4 HOW AHURI FUNDS RESEARCH

4.1 Funding mechanisms

AHURI commissions research activities in a number of ways:

- First is the Annual Funding Round driven by the publication of the *Research Agenda 2010* which calls for research funding proposals.
- Second, are the ‘research briefs’ which are used to commence particular research activities that have emerged as critical issues between the funding rounds.
- Finally, AHURI also funds research via research capacity building activities, primarily through top-up scholarships to post-graduate students, but also via a post doctoral fellowship offered every year across the Research Centres.

Details about these mechanisms are provided in more detail below.

Funding Round

Up to \$2.0 million is available to AHURI’s National Housing Research Program in 2010 to fund research undertaken by AHURI Research Centres.

Of this amount, in the year 2010 \$400,000 will be dedicated to Indigenous-specific housing policy research.

Table 1: 2010 research funding application opening and closing dates

	Opening	Closing
Research funding	Friday 31 July 2009	Friday 25 September 2009, 12 noon AEST

Applications for funding must not duplicate existing research from AHURI or elsewhere. It is therefore vital that all applicants familiarise themselves with the findings, aims and foci of completed and current research as detailed in AHURI *Research Review 2000-2009*. These documents provide guidance about the extent to which each research area is being addressed in existing research. Some research will be most appropriately funded once the finding from current research is available.

Funding applications should identify which Priority Research Question or Strategic Research Issue the proposal primarily addresses. The policy context that informs each research area is quite distinctive and applicants must ensure that it is clear how the proposed research will contribute to addressing policy objectives.

All research proposals must be submitted using the AHURI funding application pro-forma. This pro-forma is used for automatic data entry.

An AHURI Research Centre Director must submit all applications for funding. A submission form signed by an AHURI Research Centre Director must accompany each application. Details of all AHURI Research Centre Directors can be found on the AHURI website.

Strict word limits apply to all research proposals. Any application that does not fall within these word limits will not be accepted for consideration. For further details about how to apply for AHURI research funds see the Guidelines for Applicants, also available on the AHURI website.

Indigenous housing research

Research funding priorities relating to Indigenous housing policy issues have been identified and are specified in Strategic Research Issue 4, but Indigenous related research should not be limited to this issue. To promote research relevant to Indigenous housing issues to be undertaken in all AHURI research, AHURI expects research proposals to include a focus on Indigenous people wherever appropriate. Where it is not appropriate to include a focus on Indigenous people in research, the responsibility rests with applicants to explain in their application why this is not appropriate.

All research must adhere to appropriate principles and protocols as specified in the Guidelines for Applicants. Research that includes a focus on Indigenous housing issues must adhere to appropriate research ethics as specified in *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Indigenous Research*. These principles and protocols apply to all stages of the research - including development of the proposal, assessment of the proposal, conduct of the research, and dissemination of the research findings. An important element is the need for consultation with Indigenous people at key stages throughout the research process.

Research Briefs

Where the funding round has not been successful in eliciting appropriate research proposals to meet Priority Research Questions, the AHURI Ltd Board may choose to approve issuing a research brief. Research briefs might also be issued to respond to emerging issues of policy relevance. Research Centres would be encouraged to submit applications to the AHURI National Office within a defined period of time (usually around 4 weeks) to answer the brief. Applications are assessed within AHURI National Office but would still need to conform to the relevant requirements provided under the Guidelines for Applicants. Briefs might be sought on any of the research vehicles listed below.

Research Capacity Building

Research capacity building aims to develop the skills and resources of the housing researchers involved in AHURI research in Australia. Research capacity building is funded through the conduct of all AHURI National Housing Research Program research as well as by discrete activities such as the AHURI postgraduate top-up scholarship program, post-doctoral fellowships, and the annual postgraduate symposium. Guidelines for post graduate top up scholarships and post-doctoral fellowships are issued separately from this document, but are released at the same time as the Research Agenda and are available on the AHURI website. All research done through Research Capacity Building generally needs to conform to the Strategic Research Issues in *Research Agenda 2010*.

4.2 Research Vehicles

Research Agenda 2010 introduces two new vehicles for research: Essays and Investigative Panels. These are intended to promote innovative thinking and problem solving, engagement between researchers and policy makers, and importantly to enable research outputs to be completed in shorter timeframes. Research Projects are typically centred around one or two key research questions and typically involve primary methods of data collection.

As part of the forthcoming funding round, applications for Essays, Investigative Panels and Research Projects will be accepted⁴:

→ **Essays**

The aim of the Essay is to compose a logical argument directed at emerging policy issues. Essays are designed to foster debate around the conceptual or practical issues underpinning the future development of policy. Essays are intended to focus on a particular policy-research issue and bring together secondary evidence, innovative thinking and debate. Where suitable, the AHURI National Office may engage suitable discussants from the research and policy communities and other experts in the field. Discussants may be asked to provide a written commentary on the original Essay, and to participate in an AHURI Research Seminar with the author(s). The responses would be published alongside the original Essay on the website, along with a short response from the original author.

→ **Investigative Panels**

Investigative Panels are designed to bring about direct engagement between experts from the research and policy communities (and potentially practitioners from industry and community sectors) to interrogate a specific policy or practice question. The Investigative Panel process will draw on the experience and expertise of the members of the Investigative Panel, who will meet several times to discuss a research question of immediate practical relevance to policy development. Researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the form that reports take, and in proposing outputs that may be generated by this process.

→ **Research Projects**

A Research Project involves the conduct of research on a contained research topic. Research Projects may vary in scale, and can range across discrete secondary data analysis to major primary data collection exercises. AHURI encourages innovation in the publishable outputs that result from Research Projects, and these are expected to vary in accordance with what is suitable to each Project.

⁴ National Research Ventures (NRVs), which involve a co-ordinated program of research activities over three years, are developed through a separate process from the annual funding round and so are not outlined or sought in this Research Agenda.

5 RESEARCH APPROACHES

5.1 Contexts

AHURI has recently funded a [review](#) of previous Research Agenda by a leading international academic, Professor Susan Smith (University of Durham). The approaches to research outlined below have been informed by this review.

Rather than relying on themes to guide the agenda, we would encourage researchers to see how their research fits into a broad framework for understanding housing and homelessness research. This framework will assist AHURI in categorising all its housing and homelessness research, (regardless of the precise policy instruments involved) by linking it to wider environmental, social and economic processes. It can capture how housing issues may impact (or be impacted by) environmental, welfare and economic outcomes (see Table 2 below). The framework also encourages the researcher to consider the context at which the impact might be felt – at the individual or household level, or at a community, institution or national level. For example, the impact of mortgage defaults might be felt very acutely amongst those households affected, but may also (as we have seen in the United States) impact on the macro-economy at a national (or even international) level.

Table 2: A pallet of ‘clusters and contexts’

		Research clusters		
		Environmental change	Welfare transitions	Economic shifts and shocks
Research contexts	Systemic	Whole of housing system (changing pattern of risks and rewards)		
	Individuals, households and properties	e.g. Technologies and practices of domestic energy and water use	e.g. Housing for health; housing wealth and wellbeing	e.g. Enhancing financial capability; assessing financial risk
	Communities, cultures	e.g. Monitoring environmental risks; measuring resilience	e.g. Creating and sustaining care-full or therapeutic housing environments	e.g. Paths of neighbourhood change
	Neighbourhoods and Institutions			
	Nation/states	e.g. The production /construction of environmentally sustainable housing	e.g. Synergies between housing and social policy	e.g. Housing and the macro-economy

Source: Adapted from Smith, S (2009) AHURI Research Agenda: Looking Forward, March.

5.2 Methods

AHURI also wishes to support use of innovative methods in its research. There is scope to undertake a range of methods provided they are appropriate to the research question, and utilise different types of data. In specifying the methods in their applications, researchers should show a clear appreciation for both data sources, methods (see Table 3 below), as well as measurement models. Research that utilises innovative or mixed methods is encouraged. For example, a Research Project might involve quantitative analysis of longitudinal data and qualitative analysis of housing and household biographies to get a fuller longitudinal picture of what is happening over time. Alternatively researchers might devise a data set capable of doing both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Table 3: A matrix of methods

		Approaches		
		Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods
Data resources	Literature and data review methodologies	Systematic or structured review	Snowballing (key works/ bundling/ scoping) and meta-analysis	Limited examples as yet, but wide scope
	Scenario building	Modelling	Expert (and lay) deliberation of alternative futures	Straightforward combination
	Interventions and experiments	Variant of randomised control trial using 'natural' experiments	Case study comparisons	A variety of experimental designs and participatory methods
	Original analyses of cross-sectional data	Secondary use of existing survey resources; new household surveys (whole instruments or new questions)	Semi-structured and open-ended interviews, focus groups, group interviews, home and neighbourhood tours, ethnographic studies	New data resource? A combined qualitative database (individual projects, plus core, perhaps drawn in a sift from a major survey)
	Original analyses of longitudinal data	Panel/ cohort survey analysis	House biographies Housing pathways	

Source: Smith, S (2009) AHURI Research Agenda: Looking Forward, March.

5.3 Engagement and Dissemination

Research dissemination is central to AHURI's aim of providing an evidence base for policy development. Research dissemination is generally organised by AHURI National Office, though it is included in the budget for individual research endeavours. AHURI's published research outputs (Positioning Papers, Final Reports, Research Papers and Research and Policy Bulletins) are published on the AHURI website. Research and Policy Bulletins are also published by AHURI in hard copy, and

distributed to policy makers to provide summaries of the key findings from completed research and to indicate the potential implications of the research findings for policy development. AHURI Research Seminars and conferences such as the biennial National Housing Conference are also supported by AHURI.

There are a number of engagement strategies that AHURI uses to ensure that research is policy relevant and that the value of research findings for policy development is fully explored:

- User Group Meetings: are meetings between policy makers and research team leaders at different stages of the research process. Meetings offer policy makers the opportunity to provide feedback (comments, criticisms or questions) about the research, but also provide opportunities for researchers to be brought up to date about recent policy developments or potentially to arrange further collaborations (e.g. around data sources or other input to the research).
- AHURI Policy Roundtables: are face-to-face meetings between a small number of (usually senior) policy makers and research team leaders in a Roundtable format. Roundtables usually take place near the end of the research process and are aimed at providing a short summary of key research findings followed by a facilitated discussion around the findings of the research and their implications for policy.
- AHURI Research Seminars: involve face-to-face presentations of the results of research by the research team leader to a large number of attendees. Typically the audience would comprise public servants responsible for housing policy at both senior and junior levels, but it may also include staff from non-government organisations or members of the general public. AHURI Research Seminars are facilitated by the AHURI National Office staff and typically involve discussants from relevant housing policy areas.
- Conferences: are face-to-face presentations of the results of research by the research team leader to a number of attendees at an AHURI or other housing or social policy related conference. The audience would comprise a range of interested parties including policy makers responsible for social welfare policy.

More information:

Applications for funding through the AHURI National Housing Research Program Annual Funding round are invited from participant researchers in each of the seven AHURI Research Centres. For further information about applying for the research funding, please contact the AHURI National Office (03 9660 2300 or information@ahuri.edu.au) or please contact the relevant Research Centre Director:

- Professor Andrew Jones, AHURI Queensland Research Centre (University of Queensland)
- Professor Gavin Wood, AHURI RMIT Research Centre (RMIT University)
- Associate Professor Keith Jacobs, AHURI Southern Research Centre (Flinders University and University of Tasmania)
- Associate Professor Kath Hulse, AHURI Swinburne-Monash Research Centre (Swinburne University and Monash University)
- Dr Nicole Gurrán, AHURI Sydney Research Centre (Sydney University)
- Dr Simon Pinnegar, AHURI UNSW-UWS Research Centre (University of New South Wales and University of Western Sydney)

→ Professor Fiona McKenzie AHURI Western Research Centre (Curtin University and Murdoch University)

For contact details for each of these Research Centre Directors, please go to http://www.ahuri.edu.au/about/research_centres/

AHURI Research Centres

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