

Research Agenda

Research agenda 2009

**Australian Housing
and Urban Research Institute**

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PURPOSE

Research agenda 2009 details the research funding priorities of AHURI in 2009. The research funding priorities for research projects are detailed Part B.

THE AHURI RESEARCH PROGRAM

The AHURI research program funds research in housing and urban policy research through a range of activities:

- National Research Ventures (NRVs)
- Research projects
- Research capacity building
- Research dissemination

NRVs typically comprise suites of projects that extend over 3 years and are designed to answer research questions that are complex and/or longitudinal in nature and require a long term funding commitment. NRVs are not funded via a competitive funding round but are developed collaboratively across the Institute through a process of negotiation with AHURI research centre directors. AHURI has completed three NRVs and a review of the national research ventures is currently being undertaken. AHURI therefore does not contemplate commencing another NRV in this funding year.

Research projects are the backbone of AHURI's research program and consume the largest single share of annual research funding. Research projects typically comprise single, less complex research questions. They are funded through an annual competitive funding round and by issuing research briefs throughout the year. Research projects may vary in length from a few weeks to a few years and range across discrete secondary data analysis to significant primary data collection exercises.

Research capacity building aims to develop the skills and resources of the housing and urban research community in Australia. Research capacity building is funded through the conduct of NRVs and research projects 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.

Research dissemination is central to AHURI's aim of providing an evidence base for policy development. Research dissemination is generally funded separately by AHURI. AHURI publishes reports from NRVs and research projects on the AHURI web site. Research and Policy Bulletins are also published by AHURI to summarise the key findings from completed research and to develop the implications of the research findings for policy development. Seminars and conferences are also supported by AHURI including the biennial National Housing Conference.

RESEARCH PROJECT FUNDING PRIORITIES

Research projects typically consider single and discrete research questions. They are funded through an annual competitive funding round and by issuing research briefs throughout the year. Research projects may vary in length from a few weeks to a few years and range across discrete secondary data analysis to significant primary data collection exercises. There are 24 research questions on priority topics.

Up to \$1.6 million is available in the 2009 funding round to fund research projects to be undertaken by AHURI research centres. AHURI funds small projects (\$50,000), medium projects (up to \$125,000) and large projects (up to \$250,000).

2008 research project funding application opening and closing dates

	<i>Opening</i>	<i>Closing</i>
Research project funding	Friday 1 August 2008	Friday 26 September 2008, 12 noon AEST

The key housing and urban policy issues to be examined by research projects through 2008 will relate to the following policy themes and research areas (the number of priority questions for each theme is provided in brackets):

1. Housing Assistance Programs
1.1. Housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes (1)
1.2. Housing assistance and shelter outcomes (2)
1.3. Housing management practice (1)
2. Housing Futures
2.1. The future environment for housing policy (3)
2.2. Ageing and housing (1)
3. Programme Integration and housing assistance (0)
4. Affordable Housing
4.1. The supply of affordable housing (2)
5. Urban Management and Infrastructure
5.1. Housing and sustainable urban development (2)
6. <i>Place holder only</i>
7. Indigenous Housing
7.1. Housing futures, needs and aspirations (0)
7.2. The housing system (1)
7.3. Housing and non-shelter outcomes (1)
7.4. Sustainability (2)
7.5. Homelessness – place house and home (1)
8. Homelessness and Marginal Housing (1)
9. The Housing System
9.1. Dynamics and drivers of supply and demand (5)
9.2. Housing, housing markets and non-shelter outcomes (1)
10. The Policy Horizon (0)

Project funding applications 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 projects as detailed in [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#). These documents provide guidance about the extent to which each research area is being addressed. Some research projects will be most appropriately funded once the findings from current projects are known.

Project funding applications should identify which research area their proposal primarily addresses. The **policy research aim** of each research area is quite distinctive and applicants must ensure that it is clear how their proposed project will contribute to addressing the policy research aim.

For each research area, a description of the policy issues to be investigated is provided. In each research area there is then a list of the research questions that AHURI seeks to answer in relation to such policy issues. Our aim is to invite research proposals that advance understanding of the identified policy issues and researchers are encouraged to be creative in designing research projects that will assist policy understanding and development. A single project may logically be able to address more than one of the listed research questions. Equally, not all aspects of a listed research question may be readily tackled by the one project – though clearly these are seen to be integrated issues.

Indigenous housing research

Research project funding priorities relating to Indigenous housing policy issues have been identified and are specified in section 7 *Indigenous housing*. This theme includes five research areas: (7.1) *Housing futures, needs and aspirations*; (7.2) *The housing system*; (7.3) *Housing and non-shelter outcomes*; (7.4) *Sustainability*; (7.5) *Homelessness – place, house, and home*.

In the year 2009 up to \$400,000 can be dedicated to Indigenous-specific housing policy research. However, to promote research relevant to Indigenous housing issues to be undertaken in all AHURI research projects, AHURI expects research project proposals to include a focus on Indigenous people wherever appropriate. Where it is not appropriate to include a focus on Indigenous people in a research project, the responsibility rests with applicants to explain in their application why this is not appropriate.

All research projects must adhere to appropriate principles and protocols as specified in the *Guidelines for applicants*. Research projects that include 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 of the project.

Applying for research project funding

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

An AHURI research centre director must submit all research project funding applications. 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 project funding applications. 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.

1 HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

1.1 Research area: housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes

Policy research aim

To understand the attributes of housing assistance which make a difference (positive and negative) to the economic and social participation and well-being outcomes of individuals, households and communities.

Policy context

Housing assistance interventions not only aim to meet housing needs, they also contribute to higher level outcomes, such as improved social and economic well being for individuals, families and communities.

Government is seeking to better appreciate how housing assistance interventions improve other aspects of people's lives. There is a need for government to more fully understand:

- The role that housing assistance plays in the lives of individuals, households and communities;
- Which attributes of housing assistance make a difference to the quality of people's lives, and;
- How to design housing assistance interventions that support communities in the ways that they most need assistance.

Where changes are made to housing assistance there are likely to be flow-on effects, not just for individuals, but also for the breadth of government programs that help to meet their needs such as employment, health and welfare programs. Given this, there is a need to understand the government-wide fiscal implications (monetary and other costs and benefits) of possible changes in housing assistance.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)) and must extend the work of [NRV1 Housing assistance and economic participation](#). NRV1 focuses upon education and employment outcomes in particular and will analyse the effects of different forms of housing assistance (e.g. public housing, rent assistance in the private rental market) as well as different aspects of housing assistance (e.g. affordability, security of tenure, location). While the primary focus of this research area is on the effect of housing assistance on economic and social participation outcomes, consideration needs to be given to the range of mediating factors (such as gender) and differential effects for different population groups such as young people, older households, Indigenous people, people from cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, people with disabilities and carers.

The new federal government has signalled a new policy agenda of promoting social inclusion. Housing research has not developed a full understanding of the links between aspects of housing and social inclusion. However, research by Stone and Hulse (2007) [50300] has related indicators of social cohesion to aspects of housing. Other research (Atkinson, 2008) [40500] has examined measurements of social mix as a variable in housing policy.

Q1: Given what is known about the links between housing and social cohesion, what are the implications of this for public policy that aims to contribute to social inclusion, and are existing programmes to do this effective?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded.

1.2 Research area: housing assistance and shelter outcomes

Policy research aim

To understand the effectiveness of current and future ways of delivering housing assistance that help secure different shelter outcomes (affordability, security, adequacy, appropriateness) for a range of population groups in different housing market settings (urban, regional, rural and remote).

Policy context

Government needs to fully understand the most effective ways that housing assistance can be delivered. Government requires assessments of how different forms of housing assistance meet the differing needs of a range of population groups, and an understanding of the shelter related effects of specific forms of government funded housing assistance. Government needs to know how housing assistance impacts on the housing market, in particular on rents and house prices.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)) and [NRV3 Housing affordability for lower-income Australians](#).

A key attribute of social housing in Australia is security of tenure. There has been ongoing concern by policy makers about maintaining access to social rental housing for those who have the highest needs. Public housing authorities in some jurisdictions (e.g. New South Wales) have introduced limited term tenure. Most Australian social housing providers support rent-to-buy schemes.

Q2: Why do social housing tenants with higher incomes continue to rent in social housing? What might policy makers do to assist pathways into other housing or other tenures?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

Previous research by Minnery et al (2003) [20033] found that in Queensland, demand for secure tenure in private rental was limited to groups such as sole parents and the aged (groups well represented in the social housing sector). Research by Burke, Neske and Ralston (2004) [50142] also found that those entering public housing are more likely to value security of tenure compared to those not on public housing waiting lists. There is scope to consider how both social and private rental sectors are regulated and managed overseas to provide for security of tenure, and the relevance of these practices to Australia.

Q3: How can effective international models of providing periods of secure tenure in rental housing be applied in the Australian context?

Budget: Large, medium and/or small projects may be funded.

1.3 Research area: housing management practice

Policy research aim

To understand the nature, costs and benefits of the range of different housing management models and practices.

Policy context

Where housing assistance continues to take the form of in-kind provision there is an overarching question about the nature of housing management practices. Housing management practices vary across states and territories, and vary between the public housing and community housing sectors. Differences are apparent, for example, in allocations policies, rent setting, stock transfers to housing associations, asset management practices, and sales policies. The role of the private sector is also of importance in the nexus between production and management of housing. As governments strive to promote the supply of affordable housing and explore the most effective ways of providing housing assistance as one part of a package of meeting complex needs, there is a need to understand the nature, costs and benefits of different types of housing management practice.

Research questions

AHURI has two projects (50347 and 50366) underway in this research area.

There is increased interest in public-private-community partnerships in the wake of the Kensington and Bonnyrigg projects and following the introduction of the new National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS). As the first phase of the NRAS is rolled out, there is scope to examine the ways in which different players are being drawn together and what barriers have been encountered to effective collaboration.

Q4: What are the barriers to the development of public-private-community partnerships for affordable housing, and what are the strategies to overcome these?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

2 HOUSING FUTURES

2.1 Research area: the future environment for housing policy

Policy research aim

To understand future scenarios for housing assistance delivery, housing policy and broader public policy in a context of population ageing and socio-economic change.

Policy context

Changes in the demographic, economic, social and institutional environments present a continuing challenge for housing policy. A crucial component of government planning and policy development around housing assistance delivery involves understanding what is likely to occur in the future in terms of need and demand for housing assistance. Housing policy also must adapt to developments in other policy areas. This process of adaptation is easier and more successful when housing policy makers can anticipate rather than respond to a changed environment. A view of the future environment is a valuable, if not essential, input for policy development. This is particularly the case with housing policy where housing has lifetime impacts and today's bricks and mortar decisions have a major impact on the scope and demands of the policy response in future years.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)) and [NRV2 21st century housing careers and Australia's housing future](#).

There is policy concern that many in the baby-boomer cohort will reach older age without sufficient assets to enable retirement and this might place high demands upon the social housing system. In particular there has been concern that women in this age group might be disadvantaged given their poor access to compulsory superannuation, and concern that divorce and separation would reduce assets available in later age. There would be benefit in examining how countries that have faced similar challenges have managed these circumstances to see if there are policy lessons for Australia.

Q5: How have other countries responded to the housing needs of pre-retired (55-65 year olds) and post retired (65 plus) aged persons without significant assets?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

The needs of tertiary students in the housing market have been an issue for both tertiary institutions concerned to provide well located accommodation near to campuses, and governments who are concerned for the needs of a low income group (see for example the Student Housing program in South Australia). The influx of a large number of overseas students has increased demands for appropriate housing, but may also serve to displace other low income households from certain localities.

Q6: What impact are tertiary students having on the displacement of other household groups in capital and regional city housing markets?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

Hall and Berry (2004, 2007) have shown that increased targeting to welfare clients in public housing has undermined the financial sustainability of public housing. At a time when a new national affordable housing agreement is being negotiated, there is a need to reconsider the past and future roles of public housing in Australia.

Q7: In the Australian housing system, what role(s) has public housing played in the past, what has driven changes in these roles, and what role(s) should it play in the future?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded.

2.2 Research area: ageing and housing

Policy research aim

To understand the implications of demographic ageing and the housing needs, aspirations and preferences of older population cohorts for the housing market, the housing stock, and housing assistance measures.

Policy context

The ageing of the Australian population is one of the most significant policy challenges of the 21st century (see the Treasurer's *Australian Intergenerational Report 2007*). As the population ages there will be a decrease in the ratio of working to non-working persons and an increase in the demand for pensions, health care, housing assistance and other social services. The nature of people's decisions concerning housing, retirement and personal savings and their consequent need for income and other forms of support during retirement will be an important component of the future policy environment. Such decisions will affect the extent of the financial load on those in the labour force and the magnitude of the income tax required to assist both the old and the young.

As the population ages, more care will need to be provided to older people in their own homes, particularly in a context of deinstitutionalisation. Where older people live has implications for their access to services and for those who care for them. Therefore, planning for transportation, community and health services in conjunction with housing development and housing assistance is essential. In this context it is important to understand the structural dimensions of population ageing and the demands it will place upon the housing system. Additionally, the housing intentions and actual housing outcomes of older cohort will have important ramifications for the generations that follow.

Research questions

AHURI has seven projects ([20287](#), [20288](#), [60313](#), [30315](#), [50318](#), [20335](#) and [70392](#)) underway in this research area with one of them newly commencing in 2007.

The ageing of the population will generate increased demand for housing that is appropriate for older people, especially those that are single. Private sector organisations have been established to meet the housing needs of those entering older age. Previous AHURI research (Manicaros and Stimson, 1999 AHURI working paper) has looked at attitudes and outcomes for those living in retirement villages, but little is known about how well the needs of those with low levels of resources or low incomes are met by this segment of the market.

Q8: How are housing and care needs of low to moderate income older Australians being met in the age-specific housing market?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

3 PROGRAM INTEGRATION AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE

3.1 Research area: housing assistance linkages

Policy research aim

To understand how to integrate housing assistance with other government assistance programs, to improve overall outcomes.

Policy context

Changes in government policy in non-housing areas have had a significant impact on the management of social housing and its tenants. For example, deinstitutionalisation in the mental health sector has led to increased demand for housing support for people with varying kinds of mental illness. Other groups with significant health and complex or related problems are also increasingly accommodated in social housing. These people require particular forms of support that require close integration between housing and other service providers.

Within government the complexity of these and other housing and social issues has been recognised by the need for 'joined-up solutions to joined-up problems'. One strategic response has been the creation of departments that integrate housing assistance with other human services. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), within which the function of housing assistance sits at the Commonwealth level, has the broader objective of improving capacities and well-being of individuals, families and communities. At the State government level housing assistance functions are being co-located with other human service functions and to varying degrees integrated with the delivery of such services.

Research questions

AHURI has no projects underway in this research area.

The Green paper on homelessness considered the role of new approaches to tackling the problem of homelessness. Some new approaches (e.g. Common Ground in the United States) have sought to provide integrated support services close to the housing (often in large residential developments).

Q9: What are the benefits and risks of locating support services close to housing for low income and disadvantaged people (e.g. Homeless and SAAP recipients)?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded

4 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

4.1 Research area: the supply of affordable housing

Policy research aim

To understand how governments use housing assistance and other policy levers to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Policy context

From the mid 1940s to the mid 1980s Australia's housing market and housing policy settings were characterised by growing home ownership and reasonable levels of housing affordability. Numerous economic and social benefits associated with these housing outcomes underpinned these housing policy settings. The benefits were recognised to include: poverty alleviation, asset appreciation for households, reduced retirement pension outlays for government, better housing standards and health benefits for workers, and the foundations for neighbourhood attachment and social cohesion.

These economic and social benefits are less obvious today due to changes in the nature of the labour market, the volatility of housing market booms and slumps, and policy changes since the mid 1980s. As a result there has been an erosion of housing affordability, limited government or private sector investment in lower cost housing stock, falling home ownership rates amongst younger households, and increased numbers of homeless people.

Housing affordability is also shaped by policy settings beyond housing portfolios – taxation and urban planning being key. For example, metropolitan planning policies have sought to increase housing densities within metropolitan areas to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and enhance environmental sustainability, and the cost of available, serviced land at the urban fringe has increased.

Government needs to understand the range of factors shaping the supply of affordable housing and what policy responses across housing, planning, taxation and other portfolios might effectively improve affordable housing outcomes, in the context of working towards, and implementing, a new National Affordable Housing Agreement.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)).

O'Connor and Healy (2002) [50024] found that there was a high degree of self containment, with households generally dwelling in the same LGA as their work. Yates, Randolph and Holloway (2006) [60279] showed a high degree of self containment for three chosen occupations, including those on low incomes such as hospitality workers. There is an opportunity to consider 2006 Census data and to see if there has been a change in those patterns over the course of the housing boom.

Q10: Where do those on low incomes live in relation to their work, what has driven recent patterns, and how could governments improve matching of the location of affordable housing with the needs of low income workers?

Budget: Medium and/or small projects may be funded.

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is responsible for allocating housing to defence personnel and their families. The organisation acts as a property manager and head lessee for properties owned privately. There is potential for the practices adopted by this organisation to provide useful lessons to the affordable housing sector including in areas of governance, property management and tenant transfers, and interface with private investors and finance.

Q11: What are the lessons of the Defence Housing Australia (DHA) model for affordable housing provision?

Budget: Medium and/or small projects may be funded.

5 URBAN MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1 Research area: sustainability – housing and urban development

Policy research aim

To understand how infrastructure, land and environmental resource pressures associated with urban management impact upon local housing markets and environmentally sustainable housing outcomes.

Policy context

Australia is a highly urbanised country. This context has considerable implications for housing policy making and housing assistance delivery.

There is a need to understand the impact of housing assistance measures within an environmentally sustainable urban development context. For example, how might it be possible for public housing provision to embrace environmentally sound principles of building and design whilst not undermining the urgent need to house people? Moreover, how do program-specific concerns about sustainable housing assistance become integrated with sustainability of other aspects of urban development such as land-use planning, availability of water for an increasing population and transport systems? What demands will the current generation of metropolitan strategies place upon the overall housing system and upon forms of housing assistance?

The Australian cultural preference for a detached dwelling and large garden is renowned, and has indeed been supported by housing policy measures over time. Yet, the size and form of our cities intensifies negative environmental outcomes, due to reliance on private transport and long work and recreational trips. The commuting patterns associated with low-density environments also impact negatively upon the quality of social relations in neighbourhoods, and there are high levels of social isolation and loneliness in outer suburban developments, particularly for women who are not participating in the paid workforce.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)).

Current research by AHURI is looking at the attitudes and behaviours of households in relation to water, energy consumption and treatment of waste (project [20550](#)). A key issue relates to who (housing consumer, owner or manager) will be responsible for paying the additional costs associated with improving the environmental sustainability of housing. If the costs of compliance are priced in through market mechanisms, some consumers (especially those in social housing or private rental) will be worse placed than others to contribute, and may require public subsidy.

Q12: As a consequence of the introduction of environmental sustainability initiatives (e.g. carbon trading system, water pricing) what are the issues that will need to be addressed by housing providers and consumers?

Budget: Medium and/or small projects may be funded.

The costs of carbon pricing and supply constraints emerging from peak oil pose potential challenges for the design of Australian cities, and in particular the means by which commuters in car dependent suburbs are able to cope with their location. To the extent that current housing policies utilise market mechanisms to ration supply according to demand based on price, the transition to pricing in carbon and other costs might be expected to affect this market, with winners and losers.

Q13: What are the transport costs to consumers of residential locations with long distances and or times from major amenities (employment, education, health, shopping centres) and what are the implications of these costs for housing and urban policy?

Budget: Large, medium and/or small projects may be funded.

7 INDIGENOUS HOUSING

Since the previous research agenda there have been a number of significant changes in the approach to Indigenous housing policy.

Much of the indigenous housing policy agenda, like that of other areas of housing policy, involves collaboration between states and territory and the Australian governments, and will be taken forward through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) processes. Accordingly, there will be an increased focus on outputs and outcomes with a commitment from the Australian Government to provide incentive payments to drive reforms.

Themes of importance to the Australian Government include mobility, short term accommodation, homeownership, overcrowding, early childhood development, and economic development.

In accordance with Recommendation 51 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, it is expected that research on Indigenous housing issues will critically reflect upon its research methods. As discussed on page 5, all research must adhere to the AHURI's *Ethical principles and guidelines for Indigenous research*.

It should be noted that the recent AHURI Final Report, *An audit and review of local and international Indigenous housing research* (project [20282](#)), recommended that future research include study of Torres Strait Islanders, Indigenous people in non-remote locations and Indigenous people in remote locations other than the Northern Territory.

7.1 Research area: housing futures, needs and aspirations

Policy research aim

To understand how housing need is shaped by subjective aspirations and preferences and by trends in family and household formation, labour market participation and residential mobility.

Policy context

Surveys and censuses over the past decade have shown that Indigenous households are about twice as likely as other Australian households to require housing assistance. The data also show that Indigenous people experience high rates of housing poverty and homelessness, and are more likely to live in overcrowded housing, as evident by the second report prepared by the Productivity Commission on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. However, it is known that the impact and extent of Indigenous housing need vary considerably, depending on the location and circumstances of the people.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to develop a multi-measure approach to determining the housing need of Indigenous households. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has developed the Indigenous Housing Needs 2005: A Multi-measure Needs Model. The report presents data on the five endorsed dimensions of need: homelessness, overcrowding, affordability, dwelling conditions and connection to essential services. It also assesses the feasibility of including an additional three dimensions in the model: appropriateness of housing, security of tenure and emerging housing needs.

To fully understand the measurement of Indigenous housing need, we must also understand the context that shapes it. Housing need is, at one level, shaped by subjective aspirations and preferences and, at another level, by trends in family and

household formation, labour market participation and residential mobility. In contrast to the population at large, the Indigenous population is young and growing, which places particular pressures upon housing policy and housing assistance.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)). There are no research questions in this sub-theme.

7.2 Research area: the housing system

Policy research aim

To understand the dynamic interrelationships between the different tenures, their associated forms of housing assistance and their role and function in the overall housing system.

Policy context

Indigenous housing policy and housing assistance cannot be planned in isolation from other elements of the housing system. Indigenous people live in a wide variety of housing tenure circumstances and receive a variety of forms of housing assistance. The extent to which the market (through private rental and home ownership) does not provide housing for Indigenous people will, in turn, have an impact upon the levels of demand for housing assistance.

To understand the capacity of the housing system to meet the needs of Indigenous people we need to know more about the nature of Indigenous housing need and demand and also about the capacity of the housing system's supply-side to respond to these needs. Policy makers require a detailed understanding of how the various elements within the housing system are changing so that decisions about housing assistance policy making are informed by this broader systemic view.

The dynamic nature of housing supply and demand, the housing system, sits within a broader context of economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and demographic change. There is a need to have a linked understanding of how the nature of change in the housing system is affected by changes in labour markets, family and community life, cultural values and aspirations and environmental sustainability.

Research questions

AHURI has two projects ([80316](#) and [80372](#)) underway in this research area.

The experiences of Indigenous people in the private rental market are not well understood, especially in relation to indigenous people in urban areas. Given the high rates of mobility amongst Indigenous people, their youthful age profile, and the potential for discrimination against them, there are concerns about how well Indigenous people are able to effectively use the private rental market. A review of secondary material focused on Victoria (Memmott and Long, 2008 [20435] as yet unpublished but available on request) is a starting point for this study.

Q14: How do the housing experiences of Indigenous people who are private renters (especially in urban areas) compare with the experiences of non-Indigenous private renters?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

7.3 Research area: housing and non-shelter outcomes

Policy research aim

To understand how housing policy and housing assistance might be designed to assist the development of better environmental health, education and employment outcomes for Indigenous people.

Policy context

A central aim of housing policy for Indigenous people is to provide better housing and better housing-related infrastructure so that environmental health outcomes for Indigenous people might improve.

The quantity and standard of housing provided to Indigenous people is often very poor, as highlighted in the second report prepared by the Productivity Commission on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. Education and labour force participation levels, while improving, still remain below that of other Australians therefore there is a continued need to understand how housing policy and housing assistance might be designed to assist the development of better education and employment outcomes for Indigenous people.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)).

Indigenous housing is currently in a state of reorganisation, with many urban based Indigenous community housing organisations being reintegrated with mainstream social housing organisations. There is a need to understand the impediments and benefits of integration between such organisations from governance, organisational and efficiency perspectives.

Q15: Which elements of the indigenous housing and mainstream social housing delivery systems could benefit from integration, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of this integration?

Budget: Large, medium and/or small projects may be funded.

7.4 Research area: sustainability

Policy research aim

To understand the longer-term economic, social, environmental and cultural outcomes of current housing policies and programs.

Policy context

The housing needs of Indigenous people are in many ways urgent and complex. This context shapes decisions about the design of housing assistance measures, the implementation of housing management programs and the design of the housing stock and associated infrastructure. The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) in the Northern Territory is an example of a program which is seeking to leverage investment in housing to achieve broader employment and sustainability objectives. Effective policy-making would benefit from an assessment of the longer-term consequences of current policies and programs in this area on economic, social, environmental and cultural outcomes for Indigenous people.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)).

Housing organisations responsible for provision of housing to indigenous people around Australia may be seeking a number of outcomes, including affordable, secure and sustainable housing, financial sustainability, and improvements in local Indigenous community capacity. The costs of providing and maintaining social housing in remote Indigenous communities is relatively high, apparently due to the costs of transporting materials and labour to such locations, and simply accessing the required labour skills. Of particular interest is the role expenditures on housing construction and dwelling maintenance can play in developing the skills and employment of Indigenous people in the local area.

Q16: What are the outcomes for housing providers and their tenants of different asset management practices (relating to procurement, construction and dwelling maintenance) in Australia? What practices maximise housing outcomes, over time, for Indigenous people in remote areas? For housing providers, what are the financial viability implications of these different practices?

Budget: Large, medium and/or small projects may be funded.

7.5 Research area: homelessness – place, house and home

Policy research aim

To understand the ‘place, house and home’ needs of Indigenous peoples and how to address these needs through housing and other service responses that secure sustainable solutions and support stable life conditions.

Policy context

Indigenous ‘homelessness’ needs to be understood and defined quite differently from non-Indigenous homelessness. The distinctions between ‘public’ and ‘private’ places that underpin mainstream definitions of homelessness are less easily drawn when

analysing Indigenous experiences, though this also differs across urban, regional and remote settings.

The way Indigenous 'homelessness' is defined or categorised influences the types of response strategies that are implemented by Indigenous organisations, both government and non-government and these responses may or may not be primarily about housing and accommodation.

Government needs to understand the differing home, house and place needs of Indigenous peoples in different locations and how housing assistance can link with other service agencies to provide sustainable solutions that meet the needs of Indigenous peoples.

Research questions

AHURI has two projects ([80368](#) and [80526](#)) underway in this research area, one of which commenced in 2008.

The Australian Government funds Aboriginal Hostels Limited to assist Indigenous people in their temporary housing needs around Australia. These services are especially directed to those moving from one part of the country to another. There is potential to analyse the benefits in terms of more secure and appropriate housing, accessing health services, linking with community and employment, especially in comparison with alternative arrangements such as couch surfing and homelessness.

Q17: How do designated temporary accommodation services (e.g. hostels) facilitate and or support the movement of Indigenous people into regional and urban areas to participate in economic, social and health-related activities?

Budget: Large, medium and/or small projects may be funded.

8 HOMELESSNESS AND MARGINAL HOUSING

8.1 Research area: homelessness and marginal housing

Policy research aim

To understand how to prevent homelessness, how to address the needs of those in housing crisis or at immediate risk of homelessness, and how to assist the homeless to secure sustainable housing solutions as a basis for supporting stable life conditions.

Policy context

Homelessness has been a growing problem in Australia for many years with serious consequences for those affected by it. As recognised by the Australian Government in the Green Paper *Which Way Home: A New Approach to Homelessness*, demand on existing services is increasing and becoming more complex as the homeless population undergoes change. The factors driving change in the profile of homeless people include:

- Increased family breakdown;
- The deinstitutionalisation of people with mental illness, physical and intellectual disabilities;
- An increase in women and children fleeing domestic violence;
- A decrease in rooming house and low-cost accommodation options;
- Shifts in patterns of substance abuse and the availability of illicit drugs; and
- Changes to the structure and nature of the labour market.

The homeless population today has increasing numbers of single women, families and young people. However, single adult males remain a significant group amongst the homeless population and Indigenous Australians are over represented within the homelessness population.

Considerable research has been undertaken upon the risk factors associated with homelessness and upon enumerating the homeless, but there remain significant knowledge gaps. The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data collections may be of value for much of the research in this area.

There are a range of forms of marginal housing (including caravan parks, boarding houses, couch surfing). A previous AHURI study (Wensing, Holloway and Wood, 2003) showed that caravan parks meet the needs of three different groups: itinerant workers, retirees and some of the homeless population. To the extent that this form of accommodation plays an important role in housing the 'hidden homeless', it is useful to understand what aspects of this form of housing are valued or not valued by this group. This could include the physical forms of the marginal housing, location and the underlying land tenure arrangements. An understanding of the propensity to move into other tenure forms would be of benefit to policy makers.

Q18: What are the features of various types of marginal housing that are valued or not valued by those occupying this form of housing?

Budget: Large, medium and/or small projects may be funded.

9 THE HOUSING SYSTEM

9.1 Research area: the dynamics and drivers of supply and demand

Policy research aim

To understand the dynamics of the housing system in Australia in particular the interrelationship between the different tenures and their role and function in the overall housing system; and the impacts of different forms of housing assistance upon the balance of supply and demand across different tenures.

Policy context

Supply, demand and regulation in the overall housing system fundamentally affect and are affected by the cost of housing assistance. Policy makers require a detailed understanding of how the various elements within the housing system inter-relate and change so that decisions about housing assistance policy are informed by a broader systemic view.

In relation to the demand for particular tenures, for example, we might surmise that any factors reducing either the ability or the willingness of households to enter or remain in home ownership will put increased pressure on the private rental market. To the extent that lower income households are affected by these trends, the cost of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) would then increase correspondingly. Without an appropriate supply response in the private rental sector, the demand for social housing would be likely to increase. If this increased demand cannot be met then its impact would be felt in the homeless services sector. It is clear that the interrelationships between the different tenures is complex and varies over time and by location.

This research area seeks to develop a contemporary understanding of the dynamic interrelationships between the different tenures and their role and function in the overall housing system. This information is required to understand the system-wide impacts of the various forms of housing assistance and to what extent they support the balancing of supply and demand across the tenures.

A range of supply-side factors also shapes the price of housing. The costs of land, building materials, labour, finance, exchange, and government regulation, all impact upon the eventual price of housing, and thus on housing affordability and therefore on the demand and need for housing assistance. Each of these cost items in the supply chain is part of a broader industry. For example, mortgage finance is simply one part of the very large financial services industry. Such industries are themselves undergoing significant change and restructuring that will impact upon the housing system and the demand for housing assistance.

There is also an important geography to the dynamics and drivers of housing supply and demand. The behaviour and performance of housing markets in rural and remote areas is likely to be quite different from those in cities and regional centres. There is considerable spatial unevenness in population, employment and housing circumstances. If some communities are experiencing decline, others, even in the same region, can be experiencing growth. The latter are often coastal communities or inland centres with particular lifestyle advantages, buoyed by a population that has sought early retirement and/or is disaffected with urban living. Some regional centres are experiencing growth linked to highly casualised primary production and processing, however, housing investment does not always follow employment

opportunities. Therefore housing policy issues facing non-metropolitan Australia have their own particular dynamic as population size and geographic distance combine to create quite particular housing policy and service delivery issues.

Research questions

AHURI has six projects ([20280](#), [50382](#), [30396](#) [80370](#), [50502](#), [40503](#)) underway in this research area with two of them newly commencing in 2008. Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [AHURI research review 2000-2008](#)).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that over the period of the recent housing boom, the increase in house prices was not followed by commensurate increases in rents until prices reached a plateau. The conventional view is that rents have increased more recently because investors needed additional return in terms of rental yield in the absence of capital gain. An empirical study examining the relationship between these variables would be useful to validate the substance of this view for different (geographic / price) segments of the market, and to assess whether there are any lessons in this for policy makers.

Q19: How has the relationship between house prices and rents in Australia changed over time and what are the implications of this for public policy?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded.

Recent research by Wulff and Reynolds (2007) [[50264](#)] showed the heterogeneity of regional and rural housing markets, and the apparent low supply of rental housing in rural areas. Previous research by Beer (AHURI working paper 9, 1997) also found that there were supply impediments in non-metropolitan private rental markets. There is a need to undertake an analysis to understand the drivers of supply and demand of affordable (especially rental) housing in non-metropolitan areas.

Q20: How do the drivers of supply and demand for housing in regional and rural centres affect the supply of affordable housing?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded.

Previous AHURI research by Milligan (2005) [[60191](#)] has shown the importance of a clear policy framework and government incentives to the development of a not for profit affordable housing sector. Regulation remains in its infancy, but has begun in places such as Victoria with the creation of Housing Associations. Even so, many large welfare agencies remain absent from entry to this sector. There is scope to analyse the impacts thus far of these regulatory frameworks and examine the implications for a national framework.

Q21: What has been the effectiveness and responsiveness of not for profit housing provider regulatory systems from the perspective of different stakeholders, and what are the implications for implementation and further development of a national regulatory framework?

Budget: Medium and small projects may be funded.

There is a policy concern about poor housing affordability, increasing house sizes and falling household sizes. The tenure mix and availability of low cost housing in new neighbourhoods will have implications for the social dimensions of these suburbs.

Q22: What sorts of housing (in terms of tenure and dwelling type, price points) are being provided in new release areas under different policy and market settings?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded.

The housing sector labour force comprises workers in a range of roles from construction through to tenancy and asset management and in both private and public sectors. The residential construction sector is currently experiencing skilled (and unskilled) labour shortages. However not much is known about the way this labour force has changed over time, the demographic dimensions of the workforce, the degree to which occupations are professionalised and involve technology, and how well the sector is presently equipped to supply the demands of the next decades.

Q23: What are the dimensions of the housing sector labour force, how has it 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?

Budget: Medium or small projects may be funded.

9.2 Research area: housing, housing markets and non-shelter outcomes

Policy research aim

To understand how housing (tenure, type, price, location, density) and housing markets make a difference (positive and negative) to the non-shelter outcomes of households, communities, economies and societies and the implications of these for housing policy.

Policy context

Shelter is widely regarded as one of the essentials of life. Affordable, appropriate, and adequate housing is argued to be essential for people's good health and provides a stable base for family life.

At another level, 'good' housing underpins an array of broader social and economic benefits. By strengthening neighbourhood attachment through home ownership, it has long been thought, housing contributes to social cohesion. Similarly, as housing is the most important asset behind household wealth, the continuing healthy performance of housing markets underpins the consumption of goods and services in the economy at large.

Research area 1.1 Housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes (see above) seeks to understand how housing assistance interventions improve peoples' lives. Yet, there are aspects of housing distinct from direct housing assistance interventions (for example, dwelling type, dwelling density, control over the physical fabric of the home, asset appreciation, and location) that may also contribute to higher-level outcomes for individuals and households.

Additionally, whereas research area 1.1 focuses upon the links between housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes, this research area is also concerned with the performance of housing markets and various macro-level non-shelter outcomes.

There is a need for government to more fully understand the relationships between these aspects of housing and a range of non-shelter outcomes for individuals and households so that it can design housing assistance interventions that build upon these positive links. Government also needs to understand the consequences of poor or inadequate housing in terms of undesirable social and economic outcomes, as well as the consequences of rising and falling housing markets for the economy at large. The role of housing, housing markets and the housing system in macro-level social and economic outcomes can provide important rationales for government interventions and/or non-intervention in these markets.

Research questions

Projects in this research area must build upon completed and current projects (see [*AHURI research review 2000-2008*](#)).

Recently completed AHURI research by Lawson and Milligan (2007) has documented trends in housing policy reform in a range of countries, including in relation to policies for affordable housing. Further research is sought on the measurable outcomes of particular affordable housing initiatives overseas, such as the Austrian convertible bond scheme and the Swiss pension scheme. It is anticipated that this will require the participation of housing experts in the selected countries as members of the research team.

Q24: How have improvements in housing affordability outcomes for low to moderate income households been achieved by housing policies and programmes in other countries and how can these gains be achieved in the Australian context?

Budget: Large, medium or small projects may be funded.

10 THE POLICY HORIZON

Policy research aim

To understand key concepts that provide the foundations of housing studies and their relationship to housing policy-making and housing program implementation.

Policy context

This research area aims to identify the issues 'at the policy horizon'. Research projects in this research area are not guided by today's research agenda, but aim to shape the research agenda of tomorrow. Of a conceptual orientation, this research area explores the foundations of housing studies.

Research questions

AHURI has two projects ([20381](#) and [50361](#)) underway in this research area. There are no priority questions in 2009.

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