

Final Report

On the margins? housing risk among caravan park residents

authored by

Ed Wensing, Darren Holloway, Martin Wood

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Any errors or omissions rest with the authors.

Ed Wensing, Darren Holloway, Martin Wood

UWS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAA Tourism The trading division of Australian Motoring Services Pty Ltd which is owned by Australia's State and Territory motoring associations (NRMA, RACV, RACQ, RACT, RAA, RAC, AANT)

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CALM	Dept of Conservation and Land Management (NSW)
CCIA	Caravan and Camping Industry Association
CURA	Centre for Urban Research and Action
CURF	Certified Unit Record File
DFaCS	Department of Family and Community Services (Commonwealth)
FAC	Family Action Centre (University of Newcastle)
GST	Goods and Services Tax
NDP	National Dissemination Project
NSW	New South Wales
Qld	Queensland
NT	Northern Territory
SA	South Australia
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
STA	Survey of Tourist Accommodation
Tas	Tasmania
UFP	Urban Frontiers Program, University of Western Sydney
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

A FEW WORDS ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

There is a wide diversity of terms associated with caravan park living¹. In the context of this study the following definitions have been used, unless otherwise indicated.

Cabin

An unregistered moveable dwelling that is provided for hire and complying with the requirements of State/Territory Building Acts for the appropriate class of residential dwelling.

Caravan

A vehicle which is, or was originally, fitted with wheels and is, or was originally built to be, capable of being towed by a motor vehicle and is, or was registrable as a caravan or mobile home under motor vehicle registration regulations. A caravan may also include a temporary or fixed/rigid annex with or without amenities for independent living.

Caravan park or tourist park

Any land or development used, or intended to be used, for the placement of caravans. The site may contain caravans, relocatable homes, mobile homes, cabins, camping areas and other forms of short or long stay accommodation where these are ancillary to the caravan park function. A site containing only manufactured homes or cabins is not, for the purposes of this study, considered to be a caravan park.

Long-stay or permanent resident

In relation to a caravan park, means any person who:

- considers that their primary place of residence is a caravan park; or
- has been continuously residing in any caravan park(s) for three or more months; or
- intends to continuously reside in any caravan park(s) for three or more months.

Long stay residents may also be referred to as permanent residents.

This definition does not include park managers, owners or employees and their households.

Manufactured home

A small dwelling constructed off site, and designed to be moved from one place to another with relative ease of disassembly and transportation. Also referred to as a relocatable home. They will generally have a living area, a bedroom, kitchen, toilet and bathroom facilities and maybe a laundry. It is not a registrable moveable dwelling.

Mobile home

Motorised home fitted or customised for use as a dwelling and capable of being registered as a motor vehicle under motor vehicle registration regulations. Includes camper vans, converted buses and similar vehicles.

Owner renters

Occupants of caravans or cabins in caravan parks who own their caravan or cabin and rent the site from the caravan park owner or operator.

Permanent site

A designated piece of land in a caravan park, the purpose of which is to hold a dwelling that is used as permanent accommodation.

Relocatable home

Includes manufactured homes and means a moveable dwelling that is not registrable as a caravan or mobile home under motor vehicle registration regulations.

¹ Sources: Purdon 1994, Greenhalgh *et al* 2001, Connor and Ferns 2002.

Renter renters

Occupants of caravans or cabins in caravan parks that rent both the caravan or cabin as well as the site

Residential Park

Any land or development used, or intended to be used, for the placement of manufactured homes. In some jurisdictions, residential parks will contain only manufactured homes, especially those built after 1993.

Site

A small area of land within a caravan park or residential park designed for the placement of movable dwellings. Sites may have power connected or be unpowered.

References throughout this paper to caravans include caravans as registrable vehicles, mobile homes, and cabins. The ABS advises that manufactured homes are counted in the “separate house” category of the Dwelling Structure variable in the Census. Whether manufactured homes or relocatable homes are included in the reference to caravans in this paper is not always specified. There is a difficult issue of definition here, especially in relation to the counting of sites or units in caravan parks by ABS and the tourism industry as discussed later in this report, which highlights the need for greater clarity in definition and data collection in this sector of the housing market.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the late 1970's and early 1980's through economic necessity or for other less apparent reasons, many people have turned to caravan parks as a form of permanent residence. It was not until the mid-1980's that there was some official recognition that people lived in caravans as a permanent housing solution and that many of these people experience particular difficulties, including a very real risk of homelessness.

Traditionally, caravan parks have been developed as short-term holiday accommodation. They were not equipped with a range of services or facilities to cope with long-term living. People living long-term in caravan parks have been described as living "at the margin" of Australian society brought about by poverty, legal restrictions, geographical and social isolation and sometimes cultural traditions. Many researchers and stakeholders believe that those forced to live permanently in caravans are living in marginal housing and should be considered 'homeless'.

Previous research has shown that youth, women, families and single men are the main social housing clients in caravan parks. Previous research also identified a range of issues that are placing increased pressure on the position of lower income and more marginalised households who are using this form of accommodation as their principal place of residence and that, cumulatively these pressures are leading to an increased risk of homelessness among this vulnerable group.

This report concerns the plight of long-term residents in caravan parks. Various sources of data have been analysed to examine the characteristics of people and households residing long-term in caravan parks and their standard of housing and amenity. The report also explores the risk factors, the pathways into and out of caravan parks, the policy supports and necessary interventions to prevent the spiral into a cycle of homelessness where they move constantly between various forms of marginal housing, albeit in boarding houses, hotels, tents, other caravan parks or on the street. The report also canvasses the various typologies that can be applied to caravan parks.

FINDINGS

Numbers of people living permanently in caravan parks

The estimated number of persons usually residing in caravan parks based on the 2001 ABS Census was approximately 61,463 persons, an increase of about 6,263 persons compared to the estimate based on the 1996 ABS Census. There are no other reliable estimates of the numbers of people or households that are living long-term or permanently in caravan parks either as a matter of lifestyle choice or as a last resort.

Number of caravan park establishments and their capacity

Despite some difficulties with unreliable continuity of data over the period since the late 1970's to the present, the number of short-term caravan park establishments increased between 1992 and 1997, whereas the number of long-term establishments decreased during this period.

Between 1992 and 1997 the capacity of short-term establishments increased in all jurisdictions except Tasmania and the NT. During this period the capacity of short-term parks across Australia increased by some 19,400 sites, whereas the capacity of long-term caravan parks decreased by approximately 19,400 sites.

From other data sources however, it has been possible to ascertain that there has been an increase in the overall number of caravan park establishments in Australia between 1987 and 2001, but slight reductions in the number of establishments in New South Wales and Queensland over the same period. Large parks continue to contribute to the overall increase in the capacity of caravan park establishments in Australia.

Characteristics of individuals and households living permanently in caravan parks

A number of findings about individuals and households can be drawn from the 1996 and 2001 ABS Census of Population and Housing. It is difficult to make a direct comparison between the results of the two Censuses because the Certified Unit Record File (CURF) for the 2001 Census will not be available until the end of 2003.

- In 2001, 23 per cent of individuals living in caravan parks were aged over 65 years, and another 19% were aged between 55 and 64 years.
- In 1996 nearly one-half of all households who reside in a caravan are single person households compared with 21 per cent of all households. The proportion of two family households living in caravan parks is 0.2 per cent. In 2001, 60 per cent of households in caravan parks are single person households. A further 6 per cent are also single parent families and the proportion of 'other family' living in caravan parks is 0.8 per cent.
- At the 1996 Census, some 11 per cent of households who reside in a caravan park had not changed their address in the five years prior to the Census. Whereas in 2001, some 38 per cent indicated they were at the same address five years earlier. (It is very difficult to compare these figures because the question was phrased differently in 2001 compared to 1996 and the returns also indicated a high no response rate in 1996.) However, the results do indicate that a large proportion of households in caravan parks spend at least 12 months in a caravan park and are not short-term occupants.
- In 1996 some 52 per cent of caravan dwellers earned under \$400 per week compared with 23 per cent of all households. Only 3 per cent of households in caravans earned over \$1,000 per week compared to 21 per cent of all households. In 2001, 62 per cent of households who reside in caravan parks earned less than \$500 per week. This is significantly higher than for Australia as a whole, where on average 29 per cent of households earned less than \$500 per week.
- In 2001, almost 10 per cent of individuals who lived in caravan parks were unemployed. Those in employment were in lower paying occupations, and 80 per cent of individuals in caravan parks had no recognised post-school qualifications.

- In 1996 just over one-half of households in caravans owned their dwelling outright. Approximately 15 per cent rented their dwelling from a private landlord, while only 0.3 per cent of caravans were rented from a public landlord. In 2001, 54 per cent of households who live in caravan parks own their dwelling outright (the Australian average is 40 per cent), approximately 30 per cent rented their dwelling from a private landlord (the Australian average is 21 per cent), only 0.1 per cent rented from a State/Territory housing authority, and only 0.3 per cent rent from a community/co-operative housing group (the Australian average for renting from a social landlord is 5 per cent).
- Nearly 41 per cent of those households in a caravan who rent privately were in rental stress (i.e. paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rent) compared with 27 per cent of all households.

Comparison of ABS data with AAA Tourism data

The study benefited enormously from access to AAA Tourism's national listing of caravan parks. While some allowances must be made for how the different data sets are collected and their purpose, the juxtaposition of the two data sets reveal some interesting observations:

Number of establishments:

- According to the ABS STA, in September 2001 there were 2,728 caravan park establishments in Australia.
- This compares with 2,275 listed on the AAA Tourism database in 2002. This means around 84 per cent of all caravan parks in Australia are listed on the AAA Tourism database and about 65 per cent of all caravan parks in Australia participate voluntarily in the AAA Tourism star rating system.

Capacity of caravan parks:

- According to the ABS STA, the total capacity of caravan parks in terms of the number of sites was 286,740 sites as at December 1997. From January 1998 only caravan parks with 40 or more powered sites are included in the STA. In 2001, the ABS STA estimates the capacity of all caravan parks at 268,619 sites.
- The total capacity of the parks listed with AAA Tourism in 2002 is 226,429 sites. This is about 79 per cent of the total number of sites when compared with the ABS STA data. It is significant to note that there are 552 parks with less than 40 sites in the AAA Tourism database which suggests that the ABS STA is not collecting data from a significant portion of the sector.

Number of permanent residents compared to permanent sites:

- The ABS 2001 Census identifies approximately 61,400 people residing in caravan parks excluding visitors and holidaymakers. For various reasons noted above, the Census is an under-enumeration of permanent residents in caravan parks.
- The AAA Tourism database identifies approximately 78,600 sites as permanent sites, for which the occupancy rate is unknown.

Characteristics of individuals/households in caravan parks and rating of caravan parks:

- According to the ABS 2001 Census, most individuals living in caravan parks are likely to be elderly, unemployed or retired or if in the workforce in lower paying occupations, have no post-school educational qualifications, have a high mobility rate and are predominantly Australian born and English speaking. According to the ABS 1996 and 2001 Census, most households in caravan parks are likely to be sole person households or couples with no children or sole parent household, have relatively low incomes, higher proportions of home ownership and rental than occurs in the wider community and higher rates of housing stress.
- Most caravan parks that participate in the AAA Tourism rating system are in the low to middle range of the star ratings with a relatively basic level of amenities. Only a very small proportion of permanent sites have self-contained facilities. There are a large proportion of caravan parks that do not participate in the rating scheme and it is reasonable to conclude

that if they did, most of them would not rate very highly. Interviews with various industry sources confirm this view.

It is reasonable to conclude therefore, that most people living permanently in caravan parks, either as a lifestyle choice or as a last resort and against their will, live in very basic conditions with minimal facilities and amenity compared to conventional forms of housing.

Local Government survey in three jurisdictions

The survey of Local Government in three jurisdictions revealed a high level of ambivalence by Local Government toward caravan parks, except in areas where there are large numbers of caravan park establishments. The survey revealed that the responsibility for monitoring and regulating caravan parks is divided between State/Territory and Local Governments in all jurisdictions. While Local Government has responsibility for the conventional land use planning and environmental health aspects in most jurisdictions, the State/Territory Governments retain overall responsibility for regulating the caravan park sector in other areas including affordability, tenants' rights and other consumer protection issues. Nobody at the local level has overall responsibility for the many issues associated with the operation of caravan parks. The current division of responsibility between levels of government is failing to adequately address the totality of the issues affecting residents in caravan parks and the industry.

The survey of local Councils in three jurisdictions identified a range of issues of concern to Local Government. The key issues of concern related to:

- Being able to finance the upgrading of parks as regulations change, particularly on older parks, the financing of upgrading infrastructure like access roads, and the increasing costs of providing facilities as clients' needs change.
- The financial viability of parks. Councils who suggested this as a problem generally stated that parks were only viable during peak periods, and that during off-peak periods the small numbers of persons using the park(s) made them increasingly unviable.
- The increasing lack of permanent sites. This included being not able to provide caravan parks, including cabin accommodation, as an alternative option for people in desperate need of accommodation, the increasing change to cabin style accommodation for early retirees and retirees generally, and the movement by some park operators towards full tourist parks.

A comparative assessment of conditions relating to caravan parks between 1993 and 2001 carried out by the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle shows many disparities in the approach to issues around caravan park residency continue to persist and that in some jurisdictions the situation had not changed markedly in the period 1993-2001.

Key issues raised in the focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews

Three distinctive sub-groups can be identified as using caravan parks. They are:

- People making a deliberate choice to live in a caravan park for reasons of lifestyle, including affordability and flexibility compared to other forms of housing. Within this sub-group there are a large proportion of retirees who own their dwelling but rent a site or rent both the caravan and the site. Many of them are on fixed incomes from superannuation or pensions and have been living in caravan parks for several years. They have made a choice, albeit a constrained choice depending on their circumstances at the time they made the decision to do so.
- Itinerant or seasonal workers in the construction industry, farming and fruit pickers or other lower paid jobs who chose to live long-term or permanently in caravan parks also as a lifestyle choice. They tend to be renter renters rather than owner renters so they can move with the availability of work, although, according to caravan park industry association sources, there are a significant number of construction workers that own their dwelling in the manufactured housing estates in and around Sydney. For this group, the caravan park is an affordable and flexible form of housing.
- People who move into a caravan park as a last resort because there is no other suitable alternative at a particular time in their lives. They are not there by choice. They may have

exhausted all other avenues or they simply do not have the means to gain access to housing in any of the mainstream sectors or they may already be on the public housing waiting list. They may have rent debts, they may not have money for a bond and rent in advance, they may have a range of personal crises in their lives and have complex support needs, and they may have been homeless previously. Many of them are unemployed or on sickness benefits or are no longer in the active workforce.

A wide range of risk factors make long-term caravan park residents vulnerable to homelessness. These include:

- failure to pay rents;
- personal and life circumstances including previous housing careers;
- park closures or changes in market sector;
- lack of security of tenure, including lack of written occupancy or tenancy agreements and often no appeal rights;
- park design and amenities;
- park rules and management styles.

More often than not it is a combination of several factors at any given time that are the cause of homelessness.

The current rate of closure or change in market sector that is occurring is resulting in an overall decline in the number of caravan sites available for permanent accommodation. Those most at risk include:

- residents who own their dwelling and rent the site. Owners of dwellings (often the elderly) face the loss of their only investment and face the prospect of homelessness, especially if the relocation of the caravan or cabin is greater than its capital value or unless they can find another park to relocate to and have the necessary upfront costs to do so; and
- residents who rent both the dwelling and the site. This often includes families and those with disabilities who may have failed to maintain tenancies in the private rental market. They face the loss of their housing of last resort.

Focus group participants confirmed that homelessness is particularly relative to their own experiences and perceptions of what constitutes adequate and appropriate housing for their current circumstances. Many of those who are in a caravan park as a last resort did not necessarily see themselves as being homeless without shelter, but saw it as a transitory arrangement while they got their lives together. They certainly expressed strong feelings of wanting something more permanent and did not see a caravan or any other type of dwelling in a caravan park providing that kind of housing.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A common theme emerging from the stakeholder interviews was that 'early intervention' was 'too late' for many residents already living in caravan parks. Housing advice workers in both New South Wales and South Australia, for example, described how many people living in caravan parks had literally fallen through the welfare net. From this perspective interventions should have occurred beforehand or structural issues in the overall supply of affordable housing remedied to make it unnecessary for people to meet their housing needs by living in a caravan park as a last resort.

A whole-of-government approach is required to improve data collection and monitoring of trends in the use of caravan parks for long-term or permanent housing. The research reveals that current data collection is unreliable in terms of drawing clear conclusions about the extent to which this is occurring, why it is occurring and in which regions/locations. More reliable monitoring and analysis is required to understand why caravan parks are closing or changing market sector and the effects this is having on long-term residents.

There is little doubt that caravan parks will continue to play a significant role in the housing market for both short and long-term purposes as a lifestyle choice as well as a stop-gap measure by individuals or households that may have no other choice. Despite the improvements shown that have been achieved over the last decade, there is still considerable room for improvement in the overall quality of life, security of tenure and access to services and facilities for caravan park residents.

A range of policies and actions are required by all spheres of government to meet the immediate needs of people living long-term in caravan parks, including those whose housing is threatened by park closures or change in market sector. These include:

- appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the patterns of use of caravan parks, the possibility of closure or change in market sector leading to a loss of permanent accommodation (State/Territory Governments can set the framework for monitoring with Local Government and the caravan park industry involved in collecting or providing information at regular intervals);
- improved security of tenure arrangements between residents of caravan parks and caravan park owners/operators, including written site lease agreements, especially in jurisdictions where this is not already a requirement (State/Territory Governments can improve the legislative provisions relating to security of tenure with greater enforcement carried out by appropriate State Government agencies. A self-enforcement or self monitoring regime by caravan park industry bodies will not work in this area and Local Government cannot undertake this function where they own and/or manage caravan parks);
- priority access to public or community housing for those in desperate need of housing because of eviction or park closure (Commonwealth/State/Territory Government public housing agencies, community housing providers and better coordination with SAAP agencies);
- better dissemination of information about the positives and negatives of living long-term in caravan parks or manufactured housing estates, including information about legal rights and responsibilities for all the parties involved (Commonwealth/State/Territory Governments, tenancy groups, and other housing providers, including the caravan park industry); and
- improved resourcing of advisory and support services (Commonwealth/State/Territory Governments with Local Government playing a provider role);
- consideration of compensation for forced relocations to cover the rehousing and/or relocation costs where such costs are not covered by the park owner's legal obligations (State/Territory Governments).

Interventions are required earlier so as to avoid the necessity of having to meet housing needs by living in a caravan park as a last resort. Current practices of using caravan parks as crisis accommodation or as exit routes from supported accommodation appear to be in response to

severe pressures in that sector. A wide range of policy responses are required involving all spheres of government, the community services sector and the private sector. These include:

- increased supply of public rental housing, especially in small rural and provincial towns and in metropolitan areas;
- increased supply of community housing;
- greater investment in low-cost private rental housing;
- Improvements in the network of crisis accommodation services, especially in rural and provincial centres;
- increased provision of suitable exit routes for people leaving crisis accommodation services; and
- enhanced access to a range of support services, either before they need to access a caravan park as a last resort or immediately after so the 'homeless career' path is severed.

The notion that caravan park dwellers are not permanent still pervades policy makers and program delivery agencies. A whole-of-government, whole-of-community response is required to ensure this sector of the housing market is properly recognised and serviced so as to reduce the need to resort to this kind of housing as a last resort and to reduce the risk of homelessness amongst those who actively choose this form of housing for reasons of lifestyle choice.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Questions

Caravan parks have traditionally been associated with providing short-term low cost holiday accommodation. Since the late 1970's and early 1980's they have been providing permanent housing for many people throughout Australia, and especially in northern New South Wales and southeastern Queensland. While the push for the development of 'residential trailer parks' in Australia as a form of affordable housing, similar to those in the United States, was originally rejected, the emergence of caravans and similar types of dwellings on caravan parks as a form of permanent housing has, according to Connor and Ferns (2002:3), been "a move based more on expediency rather than a thoroughly researched and thought-out policy direction".

Over the past two to three decades, caravan parks have increasingly become home to a diverse range of people and households, and the caravan parks they live in vary greatly from manufactured home estates with high quality amenities and services to caravan parks with the most basic of facilities providing crisis accommodation for people who are homeless and/or on waiting lists for public or community housing (Whittish 1999:14).

This study concerns one sector of the marginal housing sector: long-term residents in caravan parks and builds on the Positioning Paper for this research project (Wensing and Wood 2003). The primary aim of this study is to raise the level of understanding amongst housing policy analysts and practitioners in government and non-government organisations of the extent to which low-income residents in caravan parks are at risk of homelessness.

The Positioning Paper examined existing research and policy material and identified emergent issues and gaps in current knowledge.

Previous research has shown that youth, women (especially women with children escaping domestic violence), families, and single men are the main social housing clients in caravan parks (Whittish 1999). They are also amongst the main target groups for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) (Bisset *et al.* 1999). Previous research has also identified a range of issues that are placing increased pressure on the position of lower income and more marginalised households who use this form of accommodation. These pressures include:

- an overall decline in caravan parks and the numbers of caravans available for longer term occupancy (especially in some geographical areas);
- locational disadvantage associated with isolation from the usual range of community services and facilities;
- concentration of disadvantage and stigma associated with living permanently in a caravan park;
- declining affordability of home ownership and declining investment in the private rental sector;
- the long-term effects of asset loss associated with renting an on-site caravan,
- the impact of the introduction of the goods and services tax;
- insecurity of tenure; and
- the use of caravans as crisis accommodation by some housing or supported accommodation providers. (DFaCS 2000; Yates and Wulff 2000; Greenhalgh 2001 and others)

Cumulatively, these pressures are leading to an increased risk of homelessness among this vulnerable group.

The characteristics of people residing long-term in caravan parks have not previously been subject to close scrutiny. Nor have the geographical locations and social contexts of caravan parks been mapped and examined. Furthermore, no in-depth research has been conducted that explores the risk factors among vulnerable people housed in caravans.

The aims of this study are to:

1. develop a typology of caravan parks sorted by geographical location and resident population;
2. provide a profile of groups who are vulnerable to homelessness among caravan park dwellers,
3. identify the risk factors among groups likely to precipitate housing crisis;
4. analyse pathways into caravan parks and the incidence of incipient homelessness;
5. explore the potential pathways out of this form of marginal housing and the policy supports needed to effect this;
6. assess the benefit of early intervention among caravan park residents 'at risk' of homelessness; and
7. contribute to the development of current AHURI funded research at the UWS/UNSW AHURI Research Centre on predictors of housing vulnerability and incipient homelessness.

To address these questions the research involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to develop an in-depth picture of the risk factors and the types of people living permanently or long-term in caravan parks and that may be vulnerable to homelessness.

This study seeks to build on previous work on housing choices for caravan park residents (Purdon 1994 and Greenhalgh, *et al*, 2001), and focuses on three jurisdictions, NSW, SA and NT. These States/Territory were selected to obtain a reasonable coverage of the issues across the country. While the study team recognises that Queensland houses more people as permanent residents of caravan parks than any of the other States/Territories, it was not specifically selected for inclusion in this study because of the recent work undertaken by Greenhalgh (2001). This AHURI study also seeks to complement the work by Greenhalgh (*et al* 2001) and the Federal Government's 'Caravan Parks Pilot Family Crisis Child Care Program', the final report of which is yet to be released.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology for this research involved a number of different elements.

1.2.1 An analysis of existing data sources

Various data sources were accessed and analysed to provide background data on the number and composition of caravan parks, the characteristics of individuals and households living in caravan parks and the current status of the caravan park sector.

The first involved a desktop analysis of available data from ABS Census results from 1986 to 1996. This analysis provided statistics on the number of occupied/unoccupied caravans on Census night and the number of people who usually reside in a caravan.

The second involved an analysis of results from the ABS Survey of Tourist Accommodation to provide statistics on the number of caravan park establishments, their capacity and changes in these statistics between 1992 and 1997 (the limits of the available data).

The third involved an analysis of the 1996 Census results and in particular, the Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF). This analysis allowed a number of cross-tabulations to be produced on the social and economic characteristics of caravan park dwellers that is not possible from other data sources.

During the course of this research, the initial results from the 2001 ABS Census also became available which enabled us to obtain more recent statistics on the characteristics of individuals and households in caravan parks.

In order to supplement the data available from the ABS, we also analysed the latest SAAP National Data Collection to ascertain what the Data Collection may indicate in relation to the use of caravan parks as crisis accommodation. Unfortunately, the SAAP National Data Collection does not collect such information. However we were able to obtain some data on the 'before' and 'after' use of caravan parks by the users of SAAP services.

The ABS data, while useful in terms of the characteristics of individuals and households in caravan parks, does not reveal much about the actual conditions or level of on-site services and facilities available to caravan park dwellers. The only available sources for this kind of information are the caravan park industry associations or tourism bodies that provide information about the quality of tourist accommodation. We approached both bodies. The caravan park industry associations do not have a national association and do not collect data consistently in all States and Territories. AAA Tourism, the trading division of Australian Motoring Services Pty Ltd which is owned by Australia's State/Territory motoring associations, do conduct a rating scheme and publish a national directory of caravan and tourist parks in Australia. AAA Tourism agreed to make data from their national listing of caravan and tourist parks available for this research. An analysis of the AAA Tourism Database Listings enabled us to make some assessment of the amenity and level of services and facilities available to caravan park dwellers. It also enabled us to make some comparative observations between the ABS data and those available from the tourism industry about the caravan park sector of the housing market. As far as we are aware, this is the first time this has been done in Australia.

1.2.2 An audit of caravan parks in three jurisdictions

A postal survey of the 245 local Councils in three jurisdictions (NSW, SA and NT) was carried out. The survey asked nine questions seeking information about the number of caravan parks in the local government area; an estimate of the number of people living permanently in caravan parks; whether the local Council is aware that caravan parks in their area are being used as crisis accommodation and if so by which agencies; whether they know if caravan parks in their area are being used by itinerant workers; and what planning and other controls apply to caravan parks in their area and who sets and regulates those controls. A total of 106 responses were obtained (43 per cent).

1.2.3 Focus group discussions in three jurisdictions

Focus groups with caravan park residents identified as being in vulnerable housing situations were conducted in six sites in the three case study States/Territories, two in each jurisdiction. Two caravan parks with a known high proportion of long-term caravan park dwellers were selected in each of the three jurisdictions. Permission was then sought from the caravan park owner or operator to conduct a focus group of residents on-site. Four out of six agreed to allow the focus groups to be conducted on site. In two locations the focus group was not able to meet on site in the caravan park and an alternative venue nearby had to be found. This was because the caravan park owner/operator refused permission and/or because the residents expressed concerns about possible reprisals. Caravan park owners/operators were not invited to participate in the focus group.

Participants for the focus groups were recruited by a member of the research team knocking on doors and inviting the residents to participate in a focus group about their housing experiences. Residents were issued with a written invitation and an explanation of the purpose and scope of the research project. At each focus group, participants were invited to complete a written questionnaire, followed by a structured discussion around a set of pre-prepared questions about caravan park living, previous housing experiences and future housing expectations. Only a small number of participants completed the written questionnaire. Participants also received a small incentive payment for their time and effort.

1.2.4 Semi-structured stakeholder interviews

Semi-structured interviews with key contacts in the three case study States/Territories and key stakeholders in government, academia, the caravan park industry and community organisations. Over 40 structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders in the three case study jurisdictions, including tenancy advice workers, community representatives, State housing authority officers, SAAP agency workers, caravan playgroup workers, community representatives, park managers, and local planners. National and State-based housing and homelessness agencies such as Shelter, State and Federal Family and Community Services Department officers, caravan park industry association representatives, and academics with research interests in the areas of housing and crisis accommodation policies and programs were also interviewed. Further details of the stakeholder interviews are provided in Appendix 4.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The structure of this report reflects in part, the research methodology.

- The issues around a typology of caravan parks to shed light on the predominant purpose and users of caravan parks is discussed in Chapter 2.
- Chapter 3 examines the range of data sources analysed for this study.
- The results of the local government survey in three are presented in Chapter 4. The results of the survey of caravan parks conducted by the National Dissemination Program of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle in 1993 and 2001 are also discussed in Chapter 4.
- The results of the questionnaires completed by focus group participants are presented in Chapter 5.
- Chapter 6 presents the findings from the focus group discussions and the key stakeholder interviews.
- The conclusions and policy implications arising from this research are presented in Chapter 7.

2 TYPOLOGY OF CARAVAN PARKS

2.1 Introduction and Findings from the Key Stakeholder Interviews

One of the aims of this study is to develop a typology of caravan parks to shed light on the predominant purpose and users of caravan parks, the nature of permanent arrangements, type of resident found in caravan parks, the standard of facilities in caravan parks and their geographical variation. The only methods currently available for identifying caravan parks according to their standard of accommodation are the rating systems used by motoring or tourism promotion bodies. The tourist and caravan park industry associations have developed rating systems to assist tourists and travellers in the selection of their accommodation and are discussed further below. In the absence of any other typologies or approaches to classifying caravan parks, the data assembled by the tourism industry provides a valuable insight into caravan parks and their standards of amenity. This data is examined in the next Chapter.

Caravans are generally regarded as a less permanent form of housing than detached housing or even manufactured homes. Caravans are made to be mobile, are constructed differently, have very different internal space and quality of fittings than standard dwellings. They generally require greater levels of ongoing maintenance, depreciate more quickly and are very vulnerable to storm damage. The level of amenity and access to basic facilities such as cooking, washing and bathroom and toilet facilities can vary enormously between and within caravan parks. The standard of accommodation in caravan parks varies enormously ranging from a rented caravan without annex and with a low standard of shared amenities to an owner occupied manufactured home costing upwards of \$10,000 in a well planned and maintained park environment (NDP, no date). All these factors ultimately impact on the lifestyle and well being of residents, especially if they are in this form of accommodation for a long period of time and not through their own choice or as a last resort.

The key stakeholder interviews did not reveal a consistent typology of caravan parks across the jurisdictions. While there were clear types such as 'predominantly permanent' or 'tourist only' there were also a range of other factors or conditions used to describe or categorise caravan parks as being either suitable or not suitable for long-term living. Descriptions of caravan parks mainly focussed on the nature of the residents rather than, for example, the geographical location of the park. Perhaps of more interest was the apparent hierarchy of status that emerged and the various factors which were thought to determine the status of a caravan park. There were common threads running through the views of stakeholders but clear differences are also evident between the three jurisdictions.

2.2 Several Variables for Assessment

Caravan parks vary across several dimensions. The following are some of the more obvious dimensions.

2.2.1 *Tourists v permanents*

This includes a continuum from 100 per cent tourist parks for short-term rentals only to 100 per cent permanent residential sites with considerable variation in the degrees of mix in-between. A distinction also needs to be made between sites with permanent residents and sites where the owners of caravans leave their caravan on site all year round and only use it for their annual holidays or on weekends or public holidays. These are termed in the caravan park industry as 'annuals' or 'weekenders'. These caravan park residents would not regard their caravan or cabin as their principal place of residence. Permanent residents are those who reside in a caravan for periods of longer than two to three months and who regard their caravan or cabin as their principal place of residence. The regulations that apply to the split between the number of tourist and permanent sites in any particular caravan park are set by State and/or Local Governments and vary between and within jurisdictions. There are also many other areas of conflict between providing holiday accommodation and permanent housing, including balancing the needs of holiday makers and permanent residents, the marginalisation of permanent residents during peak holiday seasons, security of tenure and the conflict inherent in the tenure, and the differences in servicing and living arrangements (Connor and Ferns 2002:4).

2.2.2 Nature of permanent arrangements

There is a continuum in the nature of long stay arrangements from 'owner renters' to 'renter renters' and includes people who are residents of caravan parks from a few weeks or months to several years. 'Owner renters' are those that own their own caravans or cabins and rent the site from the park owner or operator. 'Renter renters' are those that rent the caravan as well as the site. Most caravan parks will have a mix of on-site caravans and sites that are available to those who own their own vans. The nature and extent of permanent arrangements in caravan parks varies depending on a number of factors. These include the licensing or planning controls imposed by State and/or Local Governments regulating the number of sites that must be provided for tourists or as permanent sites, and on the degree of legislative protection available to the residents of caravan parks. These controls vary between and within the various jurisdictions and, according to caravan park industry associations, greatly influence the 'supply' of sites for permanent residency.

2.2.3 Geographical location

The geographical location of caravan parks varies enormously, depending on the region. In land use planning terms most caravan parks are regarded as temporary or marginal land uses. They are often located in the first instance, on river banks, on the periphery of existing towns, adjacent to major highways, on land that is regarded as marginal for standard urban development and often tend to be located in isolated locations away from basic services and facilities such as shops, schools, public telephone, post office and other local services and facilities. Caravan parks can also be located in idyllic but isolated locations masking the distance from local services and facilities such as shops, post office, child care facilities and other community services (Connor and Ferns 2002:5). Some have been 'swallowed' by urban development and the underlying value of the land has risen well beyond its value as a caravan park. Others have been deliberately located to meet the tourist demand for access to areas of natural beauty, such as beaches, river foreshores and adjacent to National Parks or conservation reserves. The caravan parks located on the coast or within reasonable proximity to other tourist destinations tend to cater less for permanent residents, and tourist parks are less likely to take in permanents during their peak seasons. In some areas of high tourist demand, caravan park operators often encourage permanent residents to move on so they can maximise their returns during peak seasons. Very few caravan parks are well located in terms of their accessibility to local services and facilities.

2.2.4 Luxury to derelict

There is also a continuum of caravan parks from the very successful park with a very high standard of facilities to the derelict and very poorly developed and maintained caravan park with considerable variation in between. Although the number of caravan parks at the luxury end of the scale are very small. The caravan and camping industry associations and the tourism industry impose a degree of self-regulation, but membership of these associations or participation in tourist rating schemes is voluntary. The better managed caravan parks with a high standard of facilities tend to cost more and therefore do not tend to cater for low income households in marginal housing circumstances. The less well managed and maintained parks that are most probably operating on very tight margins and don't have the capital to upgrade basic facilities are, according to caravan park industry association sources, more inclined to accept people who require long-term accommodation.

2.2.5 Well managed to poorly managed

The focus group discussions revealed a hierarchy of parks relating to satisfaction with park management ranging from 'well managed' to what residents termed as 'rough'. Some parks are extremely well managed with generally very good relations between residents and the park manager or owner. This includes some of the less expensive ones. Others, according to residents, tenants advocacy groups and industry sources, are very poorly managed with a litany of disputation between residents and park managers or owners. Park rules are often perceived by residents as draconian and owners and managers sometimes have a tendency to act like feudal landlords. Connor and Ferns (2002:5) describe caravan parks as having an "essentially medieval land tenure system" with park managers having unique power and responsibility acting

as “service and infrastructure provider, gate keeper and landlord. With the landlord usually living on the park, there is a greater potential for conflict and intimidation than is usually the case for standard tenancies”.

2.2.6 Perceptions by caravan park residents

Residents develop their own perceptions of living in caravan parks. For many people living in a caravan, a relocatable or manufactured home as their primary residence is a positive housing choice. The positive perception of this form of housing is directly related to the concept of choice, the quality of the amenities, the sense of community and the quality of the management of the park. The negative perceptions of living in a caravan, relocatable or manufactured home are attributable to a number of factors, including the lack of choice, isolation, lack of privacy, poor quality accommodation and/or amenities, a broad range of issues on the park such as noisy neighbours, and the quality of the management of the park (Whittish 1999:14).

2.2.7 Summary

This discussion of typologies reveals there is no single way of classifying caravan parks. There are several spectrums upon which they can be gauged and evaluated, depending on the purpose and the perspective. Comments from key stakeholders suggested that some of the above typologies are quite subjective or unreliable. For example, in NSW local Councils are required to register long and short-term sites in caravan parks and key stakeholders in NSW commented that local Councils had not been reminded of this requirement for at least the last two years. In other jurisdictions the split between long and short-term is not always clear because sites designated as short-term were often being used on a long-term or permanent basis. Without further empirical research to develop reliable and effective qualitative and quantitative measures for each of these methods of classification, the assessment is often very subjective based on personal knowledge or experiences.

However, one system of classification that provides a picture of what conditions and amenities are like in most caravan parks around Australia is the rating system developed for holiday makers, tourists and travellers. Although this data is collected for the purposes of marketing caravan parks as ideal holiday, tourist or traveller accommodation, the data collection also provides a reasonable picture of the conditions and amenities in caravan parks in a large proportion of caravan parks across Australia.

2.3 Rating Schemes

The only well-established and widely accepted method for classifying caravan parks from a consumer perspective are the classification systems used by the motoring associations or industry associations. These rating systems are used to promote caravans and caravan parks as an integral part of tourism and holiday experiences. From this perspective, caravan parks are, depending on their location, doing extremely well.

There are two rating schemes currently in use in Australia. One is an initiative of each of the State/Territory based motoring associations – AAA Tourism. AAA Tourism is a trading division of Australian Motoring Services Pty Ltd which is owned by Australia’s motoring organisations – NRMA, RACV, RACQ, RACT, RAA, RAC and AANT. The scheme operated by AAA Tourism is the only rating scheme that operates nationally.

The other rating system currently operating in Australia is an initiative of the State/Territory based Caravan and Camping Industry Associations (CCIA), but this system does not operate in all States/Territories. In NSW, the Caravan and Camping Industry Association of NSW has very recently developed the concept of ‘Eco-friendly Parks’ and the ‘Gumnut Awards’ in conjunction with the University of Western Sydney’s Environmental Management and Tourism Group (CCIA NSW 2003:10). Based on the David Bellamy Conservation Awards for caravan parks in the United Kingdom, The Gumnut Awards have been designed to reflect Australian conditions. The awards scheme is intended to be a progressive rating scheme for the Association’s members, recognising a demonstrated commitment to sustainable environmental and socially responsible management.

The Gumnut Awards program has only very recently been introduced and incorporates four important objectives. To:

- improve the physical and biological environment of parks;
- encourage socially responsible management;
- provide responsible environmental leadership within the community; and
- encourage improvement in sustainable economic, environmentally and socially responsible management, and to recognise members' achievements in these areas.

To obtain an Award, the caravan or tourist park operator will need to demonstrate that everyone is a winner, including park users, staff, the community, the environment and the business. The Awards are made in three categories – Bronze, Silver and Gold – and are valid for one year. Park operators who enrol in the program will conduct an audit of their park and surroundings, participate in workshops and undergo site inspections, depending on the Award level they are attempting to achieve. The Award may be used in their advertising but they must re-qualify every year. The UWS Environmental Management and Tourism Group has agreed to produce the training manuals, conduct the program's training workshops and to conduct the park site assessments. The Awards program is in its initial stages and the first awards under the program will be made in 2004.

AAA Tourism publishes Australia's most comprehensive range of accommodation and touring guides and manages the STAR rating program, providing an independent STAR rating for over 11,000 accommodation properties across Australia. The scheme has been in operation in Australia since the late 1950's. AAA Tourism claims their research shows that 70 per cent of travellers use the STAR ratings to assist them in their selection of accommodation. AAA Tourism also plays a strong role in representing the interests of the tourism industry, particularly the accommodation sector, to governments and other key parties.

The accommodation categories included in the AAA Tourism Tourist Park Guide for 2002-2003 include:

- Caravan Parks / Tourist Parks – These can vary from basic non-camping areas with pit-toilets to sophisticated tourist parks with communal or en-suite camping sites offering many varied facilities for tourists.
- Park Cabins – Semi-portable dwelling including a range of cooking facilities, refrigerator, table and chairs; cookery and cutlery may be provided. Heating and/or cooling may be available and some may have private shower and toilet.
- On-site Van – A caravan normally including limited cooking facilities and refrigerator. Table may convert to an extra bed. Usually with shared facilities. (AAA Tourism 2002a:19)

The scheme is reviewed regularly to keep pace with changes in the industry and consumer preferences. It was recently reviewed and now provides greater consistency across the assessment process, reflecting the common core elements that exist across all types of accommodation and recognising the industry specific characteristics within each category. New guidelines for assessment have also recently been published and can be accessed on the AAA Tourism website (www.aaatourism.com.au).

The STAR rating is allocated on the basis of achieving a specified number of points, and in addition, satisfying a list of essential items relevant to the specific star rating. Each property is regularly inspected by an independent assessor to ascertain the appropriate STAR rating and whether they retain their current rating. Essential items ensure that properties achieving the required level of points for a STAR rating actually provide those items. Particular rules and obligations apply in order to include the STAR rating in advertising and to maintain the rating (AAA Tourism 2002a). In assessing the parks and applying the ratings, AAA Tourism makes a clear distinction between caravan parks and tourist parks. This distinction is discussed below.

2.3.1 Rating Scheme for Caravan Parks

The AAA Tourism Star Rating Scheme for caravan parks relates to all aspects of the park only, primarily from a tourist's perspective (AAA Tourism 2000). According to AAA Tourism, tourist sites on caravan parks should be available for short-term occupation, and short-term is defined as a maximum of 90 days (or three months). Caravan parks listed on AAA Tourism's database

are reviewed every twelve to fifteen months. Assessors must see all sections of the property they assess. Small caravan parks in country areas receive the same attention as larger caravan parks in major cities or tourist resort areas. AAA Tourism states that all caravan parks are judged on their own merit irrespective of whether they are part of a larger chain or independently owned and operated.

A number of conditions apply in order for properties to be listed on the AAA Tourism Database Listings, including compliance with all Federal, State and Local Government regulations relating to building, fire, and occupational health and safety. The park operator must also comply with a requirement that management and staff must operate in an ethical and business like manner and provide conscientious attention to guest service. Rude, indifferent or poor service is unacceptable and properties that fall into this category will not be listed.

Some properties are listed on the AAA Tourism database only because of their location or convenience rather than their standard. Where they fail to meet minimum scores they will be listed as having 'limited facilities'. For example, there may be insufficient showers or toilets or the facilities are below standard, but the location warrants a listing because the property is in a remote location.

Similarly, all properties receiving a star rating must comply with certain minimum conditions, such as lockable doors on all toilet cubicles, showers must provide some privacy and the caretaker must call to the property every day.

Definitions of STAR ratings vary depending on the accommodation category.

TABLE 2.1: STAR Rating Definitions for Caravan Parks

AAA Tourism STAR Definitions	
Tourist/Caravan Park	
★	Basic – camping area/caravan park with basic facilities.
★★	Moderate – clean, reasonably well maintained caravan park.
★★★	Good – clean and well maintained, offering a good standard of amenities and facilities.
★★★★	Very Good – offering a high standard of appointments and amenities.
★★★★★	Excellent – benchmark property offering exceptional appointments.
★	The additional half STAR indicates establishments offering similar standard to the appropriate full STAR rating, but providing more facilities and features for the guest.

The following conditions must be satisfied in order to achieve the following STAR ratings:

- 3 STAR – Must have resident manager/on-site representative contactable 24 hours.
- 4 STAR – All areas of maintenance, appearance and cleanliness must score Good or above.
- 4 STAR PLUS – All areas of maintenance, appearance and cleanliness must score Very Good or above. Reception staffed 11 hours. A night bell or similar provided.
- 5 STAR – All areas of maintenance, appearance and cleanliness must score Outstanding. Reception staffed for at least 13 hours each day. A night bell or similar must be provided.

2.3.2 Rating Scheme for Tourist Parks

The AAA Tourism STAR Rating Scheme for tourist accommodation is divided into 'Core' and 'Industry Specific' elements (AAA Tourism 2002b:3). The core elements relate to key areas and are typical to all forms of accommodation, for example, bathrooms, bedrooms, cleaning and maintenance. The industry specific elements recognise sector differences and form the basis for the category descriptors of accommodation. For example, tourist park accommodation.

Park accommodation must signify a property offering guests a self contained sole occupancy unit consisting of one or more bedrooms/suite, dining area with cooking facilities – minimum microwave, hot plate, saucepans, crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils. The accommodation

must be located within a Tourist Park and, if listed on the AAA Tourism database must comply with a number of conditions, including compliance with all Federal, State and Local Government regulations relating to building, fire, health and safety. The park operator must also comply with a requirement that management and staff must operate in an ethical and business like manner and provide conscientious attention to guest service. The rating may be suspended where services to guests is poor or unacceptable

TABLE 2.2: STAR Rating Definitions for Tourist Parks

Park Accommodation – Park Cabins & Cabins	
★	Basic – clean, reasonably well maintained unit offering basic requirements.
★★	Average – clean, reasonably well maintained unit offering good accommodation.
★★★	Good – clean and well maintained offering a high degree of comfort.
★★★★	Very Good – offering a high standard of accommodation and amenities.
★★★★★	Excellent – offering an exceptionally high standard of accommodation and facilities.
★	The additional half STAR indicates establishments offering similar standard to the appropriate full STAR rating, but providing more facilities and features for the guest.

TABLE 2.3: Essential items for particular STAR ratings for Park Accommodation

Essential Items	5	4.5	4	3.5
Score outstanding for maintenance/cleaning/appearance	★			
Score very good for appearance/cleaning/maintenance		★	★	
Dishwasher	★			
Towels and linen supplied – all beds	★			
Towels and linen supplied – main bed only		★		
Entertainment system – CD/DVD	★			
Ensuite to master bedroom	★			
Internal bathroom		★	★	
External private bathroom				★
Air-conditioning – heating and cooling	★			
Comprehensive range of toiletries	★			

2.4 Summary

In terms of developing a typology of caravan parks, the above analysis reveals that it is very difficult to settle on a typology that encompasses all facets of a caravan park from a long-term resident's perspective. There is a range of factors to take into consideration and each of these factors varies from park to park and between jurisdictions. In making any assessment of caravan park living, it is very important that all the variables identified above are included in that assessment.

The rating systems developed and applied by the tourism and caravan park industry associations provide the best assessment of the conditions and level of amenities in caravan parks. The Caravan and Camping Industry Association's Gumnut Awards Program in NSW has the potential to provide a good measure of a park's performance over time in a number of areas as they progress from Bronze to Gold Awards, provided they choose to participate and remain in the Program. The STAR rating system operated by AAA Tourism, which also operates voluntarily, is the only nationally operating rating system and its database, analysed in the next chapter following the analysis of ABS data, provides some interesting insights into living conditions in most of the caravan parks throughout Australia.

The caravan park sector is highly segmented. It is used as permanent, temporary and crisis accommodation depending on the income and personal circumstances of the resident. There are also marked differences in a range of variables including the nature of permanent

arrangements, their location, the standard of accommodation, level of amenities, management style, and the perceptions of park residents.

3 THE RISE & FALL OF CARAVAN PARKS? WHAT THE OFFICIAL STATISTICS REVEAL

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines several data sets, including several from the ABS, the AAA Tourism's national database of caravan park listings throughout Australia, and the SAAP National Data Collection. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a statistical analysis of the caravan park sector of the housing market and the characteristics of its longer-term residents.

Over the last 20 years there have been several attempts to estimate the number of caravan parks, the capacity of caravan parks, the tenure of households residing in caravans, and the socio-economic circumstances of individuals living in caravan parks. Most of this information has relied on two sources – the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data and the ABS Survey of Tourist Accommodation (STA). However, the specific definitions used by different data sources and definitional changes over time have made the job of better understanding the nature of the caravan park sector increasingly difficult. Combined with the limited amount of published information about support services used by individuals who reside in caravan parks, detailed information about this sector in Australia has been limited.

To try and obtain a better understanding of the number of, and persons living in, caravans, and the characteristics of persons residing in the caravan park sector, the following four ABS data sets have been examined:

- the ABS quinquennial Census of Population and Housing;
- the ABS Survey of Tourist Accommodation (STA);
- the ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF); and
- the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

AAA Tourism publishes a national directory of caravan park establishments each year and conducts the only national assessment of facilities and amenities in caravan parks, albeit from a tourist's perspective. AAA Tourism kindly made available their database and an analysis of the database is included later in this chapter.

A comparison of data from ABS and AAA Tourism is made toward the end of this chapter and some interesting conclusions are drawn from this comparison.

The SAAP National Data Collection is also examined and a small data set from this collection is analysed.

3.2 ABS Quinquennial Census of Population and Housing

3.2.1 Problems with Census data

The results obtained from the Census regarding persons residing in caravans and the number of caravan dwellings should be viewed with caution as there are a number of problems with the ABS Census data.

Firstly, the data used to estimate the number of households who reside in a caravan at the Census comes from the 'caravan, cabin and houseboat' category. While the significant majority of households in this category live in a caravan there are still a number of cabins and houseboats that are included in the data. Of course, the proportion of cabins and houseboats included in the numbers emanating from this category will depend on the physical location of the areas being studied.

Secondly, evidence suggests that some caravan park dwellers do not admit, when filling out the Census, that they live in a caravan park (Purdon Associates 1993), particularly those who believe that they are only residing in a caravan for a short period. This may also be the case for individuals who are residing in a caravan while temporarily absent from their original place of

residence (e.g. seasonal workers). Census figures may therefore under-enumerate the true extent of caravan dwellers.

A further problem with Census data, raised by Connor and Ferns (2002), is that caravan park managers are used as Census collectors. The information the Census collects may well be inaccurate because the residents are aware that the park owner or manager has access to the information. Many residents may not be aware they could ask for a privacy envelope, and even if they were aware, often the power relationship between the owner/manager and the residents is such that they may not have the courage to ask for an envelope (Connor 2003, *personal communication*). Connor and Ferns continue by suggesting that some park managers may under-estimate the number of permanent residents if the park manager has rented out more permanent sites than their entitlement under Council regulations allows.

Fourthly, manufactured homes, which have increased rapidly in numbers in recent years in some jurisdictions, may not be counted as being in a caravan park if they are owned outright (Connor and Ferns 2002). In the 2001 Census those individuals who ticked 'home owner' were directed to a later question in the Census form and therefore did not have to fill in the section relating to rent or site fees.

Fifthly, the Census does not distinguish between a caravan *per se* and those with a temporary or permanent annex, which may or may not include private facilities.

The Victorian Homelessness Strategy (2002) also criticised the current categorisation of homelessness used by the ABS. According to the Strategy the ABS fails to count two key groups: those living in caravan parks due to having no other form of accommodation (as opposed to holiday makers), and those who are at risk of homelessness.

Despite these concerns, it is important to examine the Census data as it is still the best source of information regarding the caravan park sector, particularly in trying to better understand the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals and households who reside in caravans. Furthermore, due to changes in the Survey of Tourist Accommodation (STA) in 1997, the Census provides a longer time series than other sources of information. The tables below present information on caravans² based on Census information.

3.2.2 Analysis of Quinquennial Census Data

Table 3.1 shows that there has been an increase of 1,079 occupied caravans between the 1986 and 2001 Censuses across Australia. There have been absolute increases in Qld, SA, WA and NT, but decreases in NSW, VIC, Tas and ACT. The largest absolute increase was in WA (1,510) and the largest absolute decrease was in Vic (2,069).

At the 2001 Census, caravans made up only 1.5 per cent of all occupied private dwellings across Australia. This ranged from 9.4 per cent in NT to 0.3 per cent in the ACT. The largest percentage increase was in NT (23.7 per cent) and the largest decrease in Tas (-29.9 per cent), although both of these changes are from relatively low bases. All States, however, showed a percentage point decrease between 1986 and 2001 in occupied caravans suggesting that this sector is decreasing in size relative to other dwelling types.

² Although the Census data on caravan dwellings refers to the category 'caravans, cabins and houseboats', in this paper all references to this category will be referred to as just 'caravans' or 'caravan dwellings' when analysing the 1996 Census data. This includes the 1996 CURF data analysed below.

TABLE 3.1: Caravans Occupied on Census Night 1986 to 2001

	Occupied Private Dwellings										
STATE	1986	%	1991	%	1996	%	2001	%	Absolute Change 1986 to 2001	Percentage Change 1986 to 2001	Percentage Point Change 1986 to 2001
NSW	27,257	1.5%	31,031	1.6%	26,835	1.2%	26,094	1.2%	-1163	-4.3%	-0.3%
VIC	11,899	0.9%	10,929	0.7%	9,121	0.6%	9,830	0.6%	-2069	-17.4%	-0.3%
QLD	32,235	3.7%	37,328	3.7%	34,051	2.9%	34,199	2.8%	1964	6.1%	-0.9%
SA	4,150	0.9%	4,569	0.9%	3,905	0.7%	4,433	0.8%	283	6.8%	-0.1%
WA	12,122	2.6%	12,445	2.3%	12,326	2.0%	13,632	2.2%	1510	12.5%	-0.4%
TAS	1,186	0.8%	1,075	0.7%	945	0.5%	831	0.5%	-355	-29.9%	-0.3%
NT	4,373	10.3%	5,850	11.6%	5,175	9.0%	5,411	9.4%	1038	23.7%	-0.9%
ACT	414	0.5%	424	0.5%	263	0.2%	285	0.3%	-129	-31.2%	-0.3%
TOTAL	93,636	1.8%	103,651	1.8%	92,621	1.4%	94,715	1.5%	1079	1.2%	-0.3%

Source: ABS, CDATA96 and CDATA2001

TABLE 3.2: Number of Occupied and Unoccupied Caravans, 1986 to 1996

State	Caravans 1986 (occupied)	Caravans 1986 (unocc'd)	Total 1986	Caravans 1991 (occupied)	Caravans 1991 (unocc'd)	Total 1991	Caravans 1996 (occupied)	Caravans 1996 (unocc'd)	Total 1996	Absolute Change 1986 to 1996	Percentage Change 1986 to 1996	Percentage Point Change 1986 to 1996
NSW	27,257	1,662	28,919	31,031	1,811	32,842	26,835	1,667	27,126	-1793	-6.2%	-0.3%
VIC	11,899	883	12,782	10,929	667	11,596	9,121	706	9,820	-2962	-23.2%	-0.3%
QLD	32,235	885	33,120	37,328	1,335	38,663	34,051	1,312	35,357	2237	6.8%	-0.8%
SA	4,150	647	4,797	4,569	646	5,215	3,905	721	4,591	-206	-4.3%	-0.2%
WA	12,122	245	12,367	12,445	381	12,826	12,326	271	12,369	2	0.0%	-0.6%
TAS	1,186	659	1,845	1,075	459	1,534	945	625	1,570	-275	-14.9%	-0.3%
NT	4,373	131	4,504	5,850	104	5,954	5,175	136	5,298	794	17.6%	-1.0%
ACT	414	7	421	424	0	424	263	4	267	-154	-36.6%	-0.3%
TOTAL	93,636	5,119	98,755	103,651	5,403	109,054	92,621	5,442	96,398	-2357	-2.4%	-0.3%

Table 3.2 presents the data for both occupied and unoccupied caravans at each of the Censuses between 1986 and 1996. The numbers of unoccupied caravans was similar at the Censuses between 1986 and 1996. The only exception was in QLD where there was an approximate 50 per cent increase in unoccupied caravans between 1996 and 1986. Data on unoccupied caravans was not collected at the 2001 Census.

At the 1996 Census approximately 168,100 persons were enumerated in a caravan (ABS CDATA96). Of these individuals 90,117 were classified as usually residing in a caravan (Table 3.3). However, of these 90,117 persons, 34,904 were visitors. Thus, excluding visitors, 55,213 individuals in Australia were regarded as usually residing in a caravan in 1996. NSW and QLD had the largest proportion of individuals who usually reside in a caravan. Whereas, TAS and the ACT had the lowest number of persons who usually reside in a caravan.

TABLE 3.3: The Number of Persons Who Usually Reside in a Caravan by State, 1996

	Number of Persons Who Usually Reside in a Caravan	Visitors Only	Number of Persons Who Usually Reside in a Caravan (excl visitors)
NSW	26,245	7,031	19,214
VIC	8,923	1,801	7,122
QLD	33,243	14,925	18,318
SA	3,774	1,452	2,322
WA	11,889	6,429	5,460
TAS	908	188	720
NT	4,875	3,057	1,818
ACT	260	21	239
Total	90,117	34,904	55,213

(Source: ABS, CDATA96)

3.3 ABS Survey of Tourist Accommodation (STA)

The ABS has been running a survey that examines in detail tourist accommodation establishments across Australia since 1975. Short-term caravan parks were not included until 1977 and long-term caravan parks were added in 1986. The results of this survey have been published in *Tourist Accommodation* reports produced quarterly. Results from this survey have also been published in *Tourism Indicator* reports produced quarterly. Between the end of 1992 and 1997 the number and capacity of caravan park establishments have been published in *Tourist Accommodation* reports. Before 1992, definitional changes meant that some data is not comparable with data after 1992. Generally speaking, it has only been feasible to compare the total number of establishments across this time period.

In 1997 the STA went through a major restructure. From January 1998 only the information regarding caravan parks with 40 or more powered sites has been published in the *Tourist Accommodation* reports. Detailed information regarding *all* caravan parks after 1997 has been limited to sporadic information contained in the *Tourism Indicator* reports. Furthermore, this has been limited to State or metropolitan — non-metropolitan level analysis. Any level of analysis below this level has been limited.

Despite these problems, the data that can be collated from this survey is useful for examining the differences over time in the numbers and capacity of short and long-term caravan parks. This is important as some commentators have suggested that longer-term residents are being excluded from parks that are increasingly catering for short-term holiday makers (Greenhalgh *et al* 2001; Lovejoy and Secomb 2001; Connor and Ferns 2002).

Table 3.4 shows that across Australia there has been a slight increase in the number of caravan park establishments based on the STA. However, there have been slight decreases in the number of establishments in NSW/ACT and QLD. All other States and Territories have had an increase in the number of caravan park establishments between 1987 and 2001.

TABLE 3.4: Number of Caravan Park Establishments by State, 1987-2001

	NSW/ ACT	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	AUST
Dec-87	829	583	630	197	284	70	56	2,649
Dec-88	821	589	636	197	291	70	56	2,660
Dec-89	808	583	625	197	294	70	57	2,634
Dec-90	820	593	635	206	297	69	67	2,687
Dec-91	818	599	629	210	303	68	71	2,698
Dec-92	802	591	625	211	307	67	79	2,682
Dec-93	803	601	629	211	312	68	80	2,704
Dec-94	798	600	631	215	315	75	82	2,716
Dec-95	797	600	631	214	316	72	78	2,708
Dec-96	797	596	626	215	319	73	75	2,701
Dec-97	793	595	614	215	318	73	77	2,685
Dec-99	793	574	599	208	319	71	79	2,643
Sept -01	815	593	620	220	322	74	84	2,728
Change 87-01	-14	10	-10	23	38	4	28	79
% Change 87-01	-1.7%	1.7%	-1.6%	11.7%	13.4%	5.7%	50.0%	3.0%

(Source: ABS, Tourist Accommodation, Cat No. 8635.0; ABS, Tourism Indicators, June Qtr 2000 and Sept Qtr 2001, Cat No. 8634.0.)

TABLE 3.5: The Total Capacity of Caravan Park Establishments by State, 1987- 1997

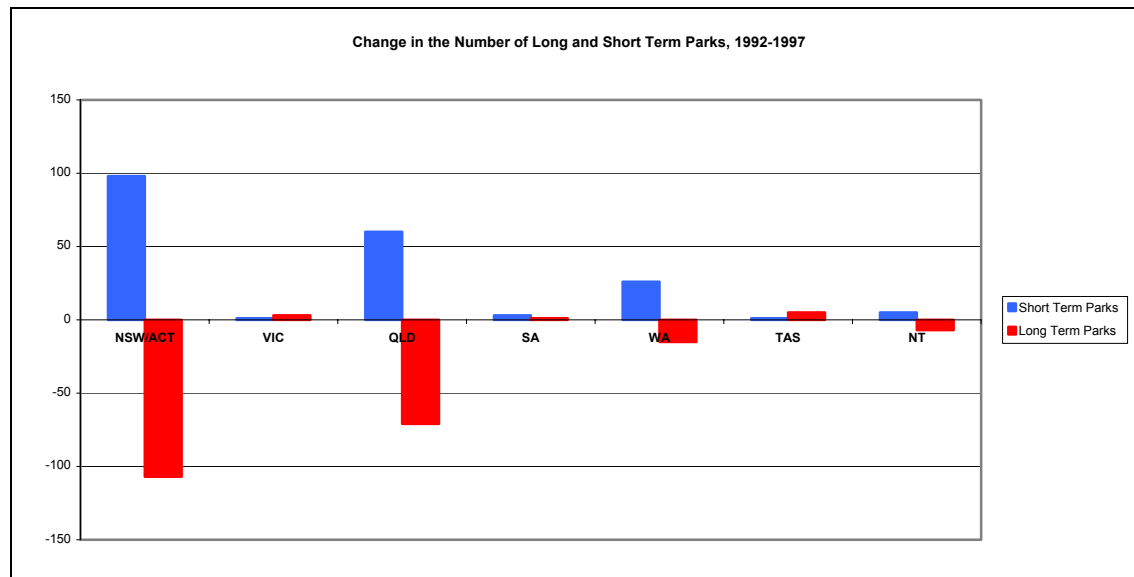
	NSW/ ACT	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	AUST
Dec-87	97,639	66,604	54,074	22,053	23,747	5,803	8,396	278,316
Dec-88	96,705	66,695	54,709	22,267	25,449	5,967	8,786	280,578
Dec-89	95,809	67,119	53,319	22,610	26,315	6,043	9,443	280,658
Dec-90	97,151	66,584	54,582	23,877	27,361	6,340	9,660	285,555
Dec-91	95,653	67,169	55,102	24,385	27,838	6,291	10,753	287,191
Dec-92	96,126	66,086	55,222	24,307	28,130	6,436	10,427	286,734
Dec-93	97,076	67,177	55,682	24,448	28,592	6,425	8,900	288,300
Dec-94	96,246	67,213	54,832	24,341	29,625	6,953	9,209	288,419
Dec-95	95,968	67,710	54,905	24,406	30,063	6,440	8,972	288,464
Dec-96	95,497	67,285	55,360	24,470	30,105	6,500	8,631	287,848
Dec-97	95,504	66,514	54,524	24,383	30,026	6,477	9,312	286,740
Change 87-97	-2,135	-90	450	2,330	6,279	674	916	8,424
% Change 87-97	-2.19%	-0.14%	0.83%	10.57%	26.44%	11.61%	10.91%	3.03%

(Source: ABS, Tourist Accommodation, Cat No. 8635.0)

Due to a restructure of the STA in 1997, it is difficult to compare the capacity of caravan park establishments over time at the State level. In trying to 'unpack' the changing capacity of caravan park establishments over time a number of data sources have been used. Prior to 1997 data was collected from all caravan parks. From January 1998 only caravan parks with 40 or more powered site are included in the STA.

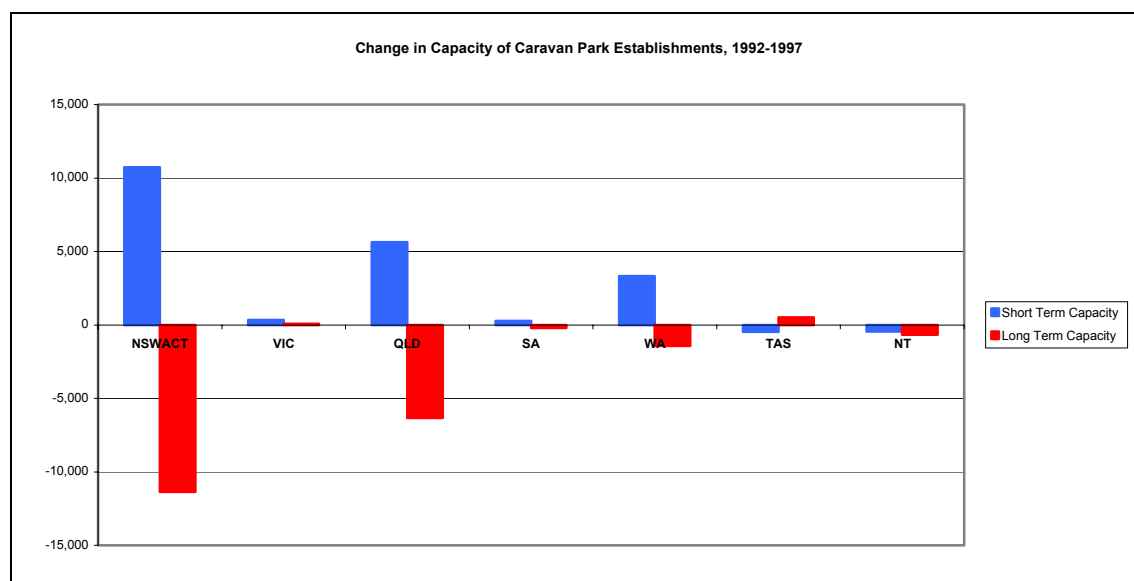
At the end of 1997 the STA estimated that the capacity of caravan park establishments across Australia was just under 287,000 sites, up from approximately 278,000 sites in 1987 (Table 3.5). Except for NSW/ACT and QLD all states had an increase in total caravan capacity between 1987 and 1997. Between 1987 and 1997 NSW had the largest decline in capacity (2,135 sites) while WA had the largest increase (6,279 sites).

FIGURE 3.1: Changes in the Number of Long Term and Short Term Caravan Parks, 1992-1997



(Source: ABS, Tourist Accommodation, Cat No. 8635.0)

FIGURE 3.2: Changes in the Total Capacity of Caravan Park Establishments, 1992-1997



(Source: ABS, Tourist Accommodation, Cat No. 8635.0)

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the change in the number of caravan park establishments between December 1992 and December 1997, and the change in total capacity of these establishments during this period for both short and long-term guests. The ABS regards anyone staying continuously for two (2) months or more as a long-term guest. The number of short-term caravan park establishments increased between 1992 and 1997, whereas the number of long-term establishments decreased during this period. Between 1992 and 1997, though, the capacity of short-term establishments increased in NSW/ACT, QLD, VIC, SA and WA but declined in TAS and NT. During this period the total capacity of short-term parks across Australia increased by some 19,400 sites. Moreover, between 1992 and 1997 the total capacity of long-term caravan parks increased in VIC and TAS, and decreased in all other States and

Territories. Interestingly, the capacity of long-term caravan parks during this period decreased by approximately 19,400 sites, so that between 1992 and 1997 the STA estimated that the total capacity of all caravan parks across Australia had only increased by 6 sites³. Unfortunately, the available data does not enable a spatial analysis below State/Territory level to ascertain where the changes are taking place and as far as we are aware, no such data is being collected at the present time with the exception of NSW.

Since 1997 the restructure of the STA has meant that information about caravan parks is limited. However, Table 3.6 shows that between 1999 and 2001⁴ there was an increase in the number of caravan park establishments across Australia. Importantly though, this increase was mainly due to the increasing number of smaller parks (i.e. parks with less than 40 sites).

This, however, masks the contribution of larger caravan parks to the total number of sites around Australia. As Table 3.7 shows the total capacity of larger caravan parks (i.e. with 40 or more sites) has made a significant contribution to the increase in total capacity observed in caravan parks around Australia. It is important to note though, that the increases observed in Table 3.7 are powered sites and cabins. There is no information available on unpowered sites in smaller establishments (i.e. with less than 40 sites). This makes it extremely difficult to estimate the total capacity of caravan parks in Australia.

³ These increases and decreases in the number of sites in caravan parks Australia-wide are based on State/Territory figures and do not provide a spatial analysis of exactly where the increases and decreases are occurring. So for example, while parks may have closed in metropolitan Sydney or Brisbane, new parks were opening elsewhere compensating for the loss of sites. The fact that the increases and decreases over the period 1992-1997 nationally are similar, is purely coincidental.

⁴ ABS advised in early August 2003 that for the September quarter 2001 issue of *Tourism Indicators, Australia*, the data labelled 'powered sites' included unpowered sites as well. Because it is not possible to determine whether the data included all unpowered sites or only some, the data for caravan park capacity for September 2001 may not be accurate.

TABLE 3.6: The Number of Caravan Park Establishments, 1999 to 2001

	December 1999			September 2001			Absolute Change Dec 1999 to Sept 01			Percentage Change Dec 1999 to Sept 01		
State	Less than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total	Less than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total	Less than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total	Less than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total
NSW	218	571	789	239	572	811	21	1	22	9.6%	0.2%	2.8%
VIC	146	428	574	167	426	593	21	-2	19	14.4%	-0.5%	3.3%
QLD	234	365	599	250	370	620	16	5	21	6.8%	1.4%	3.5%
SA	56	152	208	69	151	220	13	-1	12	23.2%	-0.7%	5.8%
WA	103	216	319	113	209	322	10	-7	3	9.7%	-3.2%	0.9%
TAS	27	44	71	30	44	74	3	0	3	11.1%	0.0%	4.2%
NT	32	47	79	34	50	84	2	3	5	6.3%	6.4%	6.3%
ACT	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	816	1,827	2,643	902	1,826	2,728	86	-1	85	10.5%	-0.1%	3.2%

(Source: ABS, Tourism Indicators, 8634.0, June 2000, September 2001)

TABLE 3.7: The Number of Powered Sites and Cabins in Caravan Parks, 1999 to 2001

	December 1999			September 2001			Absolute Change Dec 1999 to Sept 01			Percentage Change Dec 1999 to Sept 01		
State	Less Than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total	Less Than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total	Less Than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total	Less Than 40 Powered Sites	40 or more Powered Sites	Total
NSW	5,287	70,335	75,622	5,830	83,635	89,465	543	13,300	13,843	10.3%	18.9%	18.3%
VIC	3,720	47,163	50,883	4,333	58,678	63,011	613	11,515	12,128	16.5%	24.4%	23.8%
QLD	5,710	35,416	41,126	6,035	43,061	49,096	325	7,645	7,970	5.7%	21.6%	19.4%
SA	1,358	15,788	17,146	1,695	20,397	22,092	337	4,609	4,946	24.8%	29.2%	28.8%
WA	2,223	23,133	25,356	2,468	26,269	28,737	245	3,136	3,381	11.0%	13.6%	13.3%
TAS	586	4,288	4,874	682	5,431	6,113	96	1,143	1,239	16.4%	26.7%	25.4%
NT	742	5,075	5,817	811	8,280	9,091	69	3,205	3,274	9.3%	63.2%	56.3%
ACT	0	617	617	0	1,014	1,014	0	397	397	0.0%	64.3%	64.3%
TOTAL	19,626	201,815	221,441	21,854	246,765	268,619	2,228	44,950	47,178	11.4%	22.3%	21.3%

(Source: ABS, Tourism Indicators, 8634.0, June 2000, September 2001)

3.4 ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing CURF

The 1996 ABS Census CURF (Confidentialised Unit Record File) is a data file containing the individual records of some 178,000 households (1 per cent of the population). The advantage of using a CURF, despite some of the concerns already raised about the Census, is that it allows a range of cross-tabulations to be produced. These cross-tabulations allow the social and economic characteristics of caravan park dwellers to be collated that is otherwise not possible from other available data sets.

Table A1.1 in Appendix 1 presents a number of socio-economic variables for households who live in caravans compared to other households in Australia.

In 1996, approximately 52 per cent of households in caravans earned under \$400 per week compared with 23 per cent of all households across Australia. Similarly, only 3 per cent of households in caravans earned over \$1,000 per week in 1996 compared to 21 per cent of all households.

One of the main findings from Table 1.1 is the large proportion of single person households who reside in caravans. Some 50 per cent of all households in caravans in Australia in 1996 were single person households. Across Australia, in 1996, only 19 per cent of households were single persons. Not surprisingly, 36 per cent of households in caravans were one family households compared with 60 per cent of all households across Australia. The proportion of two family households living in caravans is very small (0.2 per cent or 100 households), and the proportion of group households living in caravans is also small (2.9 per cent or 1,800 households).

An examination of the mobility of households who reside in caravans provided some unusual findings. Some 55 per cent of households in caravans in 1996 had been there for at least 12 months. Of those households who resided in a caravan at the 1996 Census only 29 per cent had moved into their caravan in the 12 months prior to the Census. This suggests a large proportion of the caravan park population are not shorter term residents. However, in the five years prior to the 1996 Census only 11 per cent of households in caravans had not changed their address. Conversely, approximately 31 per cent of households in caravans in 1996 had moved there within the last five years. This latter data, however, should be viewed with caution as over half of all households did not state whether they had moved or not in the five years prior to the 1996 Census. Most households who resided in a caravan at the 1996 Census only stated their housing history of the previous 12 months.

In 1996 the majority of households who lived in a caravan owned their caravan outright. Of those households who lived in a caravan in 1996 in Australia, 52 per cent owned their caravan outright compared to 35 per cent of all households who were outright owners. This suggests the presence of a significant proportion of older, retired person residing in caravans. Approximately, 15 per cent of households in caravans rented from a private landlord, which was similar to all other households, where 17 per cent were renting privately. In 1996 it is estimated that only 0.3 per cent of caravans were rented from a social landlord, which was significantly lower than the national average of 5 per cent.

Of those households who were renting their caravan in 1996 in Australia, nearly 41 per cent were in rental stress (i.e. paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rental payments) compared with 27 per cent of all households renting privately. Furthermore, even though there were a small number of households purchasing their caravan, some 27 per cent were in mortgage stress (i.e. paying more than 30 per cent of their income on mortgage repayments) compared to 17 per cent of all households purchasing their dwelling.

3.5 ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing

Unfortunately, comparison between the results of the 1996 and 2001 Censuses CURF was not possible because the CURF for the 2001 Census was not available before the completion of this research project.

The Tables in Appendix 2 are specialised cross-tabulations produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for this project from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing. The cross-tabulations are for individuals and households who reside in caravan parks, manufactured home estates, and caravans in 'other' locations (this generally refers to caravans on someone else's property). The tables *exclude* individuals who were enumerated in a caravan on Census night, but also recorded on their Census form that they lived elsewhere. That is, they were just visiting on Census night. In essence, the tables try to encapsulate those living permanently in a caravan or manufactured home. Unfortunately,

the tables do *not* include persons who usually reside in a caravan but were enumerated in another dwelling on Census night. The number of these individuals, though, is thought to be minimal.

As the focus of this report is on individuals and households in caravan parks the following analyses concentrate on this particular dwelling type.

3.5.1 Characteristics of Individuals in Caravan Parks

In 2001, it is estimated that there are 61,463 individuals who reside in caravan parks in Australia. This is of course, a slight under-enumeration as the data does not include individuals who usually reside in a caravan park, but were elsewhere on Census night 2001. Nevertheless, Tables A2.1 (numbers) and A2.2 (percentages) in Appendix 2 represent the majority of individuals who are estimated to usually reside in caravan parks, and provide a valuable insight into the socio-economic characteristics of these individuals.

The majority of individuals who live in caravan parks are elderly. In 2001, 23 per cent were aged over 65 years, which is much higher, in fact nearly double, the Australian average of 12 per cent. Another 19 per cent were aged between 55 and 64 years. Conversely, only 9 per cent of individuals in caravan parks in Australia in 2001 were under the age of 14. This is much lower than the Australian average of 21 per cent.

The predominant elderly population in caravan parks in Australia is also reflected by the fact that 51 per cent of individuals in caravan parks in Australia are not in the labour force. However, despite a significant ageing population in caravan parks in Australia, there are also two other significant populations that reside in caravan parks.

In 2001, 9.9 per cent of individuals who lived in caravan parks in Australia were unemployed. The unemployment rate in caravan parks was much higher in 2001 than the Australian average of 4.4 per cent.

The other significant population that resides in caravan parks in Australia are lower paid employed persons. In 2001, 30 per cent of individuals who live in caravan parks were employed. However, these individuals were persons in lower paying occupations. Some 25 per cent of these individuals were labourers and related workers, 19 per cent were intermediate production and transport workers, 17 per cent were tradespersons, and 10 per cent were intermediate clerical, sales and service workers. In 2001, only 2.5 per cent of individuals in caravan parks were managers and administrators, compared with the Australian average of 9 per cent. Furthermore, 80 per cent of individuals in caravan parks in Australia in 2001 had no recognised post-school qualification.

While the tables in Appendix 2 suggest that there are three distinct sub-groupings of individuals who live in caravan parks in Australia they do have some common socio-economic characteristics. In particular is their high mobility. Similar to the findings from the focus group analysis (Chapter 4), the large majority of individuals in caravan parks are quite mobile. Only 38 per cent of individuals on caravan parks in Australia were recorded at the same address 5 years earlier, which was much lower than the Australian average of 52 per cent.

Similarly, the majority of residents in caravan parks in Australia are Australian born residents. In 2001, 70 per cent of individuals in caravan parks in Australia were born in Australia. A further 11 per cent were born in North West Europe, which was predominantly made up of individuals from the UK and Ireland.

3.5.2 Characteristics of Households in Caravan Parks

Tables A2.3 (numbers) and A2.4 (percentages) in Appendix 2 presents selected socio-economic characteristics of the households in caravan parks, manufactured home estates and other caravans as at the 2001 Census.

Also linking the three sub-groupings of individuals in caravan parks is their low income status. While there are older persons not in the labour force and employed persons in parks they have relatively low incomes. In 2001, 51 per cent of households who reside in caravan parks in Australia earned less than \$400 per week. Furthermore, 11 per cent earned between \$400 and \$499 per week. Thus, 62 per cent earned less than \$500 per week. This is significantly higher than for Australia as a whole, where on average 29 per cent of households earn less than \$500 per week.

This lower economic status is also reinforced by the fact that around 60 per cent of households in caravan parks are lone person households. A further 6 per cent are also single parent families. The low proportion of children in caravan parks is also evident, as only 6.4 per cent of households on parks are couples with children. Some 25 per cent of households are couples without children. 'Other family' comprises only 0.8 per cent of households in caravans, and group households comprise 3.1 per cent of households in caravan parks.

The notion that sub-groupings of individuals and households exist in caravan parks is reflected in the tenure of dwellings on parks. In 2001, 54 per cent of households who live in caravan parks in Australia own their dwelling outright. This is actually much higher than the Australian average of 40 per cent. On the other hand, 30 per cent of households were renting their dwelling from a private landlord. This is also higher than for Australia as a whole, where on average, 21 per cent rent privately. Furthermore, only 0.1 per cent of households on parks rent from a State/Territory Housing Authority, and only 0.3 per cent rent from a community/cooperative housing group.

3.6 Summary of ABS Data

The preceding analysis of ABS data has attempted to improve our understanding of the caravan park sector in Australia by analysing the number and capacity of caravan park establishments, and the characteristics of individuals and households residing in this sector of the housing market. The data presented in this chapter has analysed the trends and current situation of residents in caravan parks / tourist parks across the States and Territories and for Australia as a whole. In essence, this chapter has not reflected on the changes that are occurring within regions as noted by other commentators (e.g. Greenhalgh *et al*, 2001).

Nevertheless, four data sources were examined to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the caravan park sector in Australia.

Data from the ABS quinquennial Censuses suggested that there has been only a minor increase in the number of occupied caravan dwellings across Australia in the last 15 years. Some States showed a slight increase in the number of occupied caravan dwellings while others showed a slight decrease. When unoccupied caravan dwellings were taken into account the Census results suggested a fluctuating number of caravan dwellings between 1986 and 1996. Interestingly though, the relatively little change in caravan dwellings, suggested by the Census, saw the proportion of caravans decrease overall relative to other dwelling types. Data from the 1996 Census showed that approximately 55,200 persons, excluding visitors, usually reside in caravans across Australia. The same data analysis from the 2001 Census showed that approximately 61,463 persons, excluding visitors, usually reside in caravan parks. An increase of some 6,263 persons between 1996 and 2001. However, the 61,463 is, for a range of reasons, believed to be an under enumeration.

The Survey of Tourist Accommodation (STA) conducted by the ABS showed a slight increase in the number of caravan park establishments across Australia between 1987 (2,649) and 2001 (2,728). Due to a restructuring of the STA in 1997 estimating the changes in total capacity of caravan park establishments has been difficult. Between 1987 and 1997 the STA also showed a slight increase (3 per cent) in the total capacity of caravan parks across Australia. According to the 'new' STA, between 1999 and 2001 there has been a 21 per cent increase in the number of powered sites and cabins on caravan parks across Australia. However, the change in unpowered sites over this period has been difficult to ascertain.

Importantly, the STA showed that between 1992 and 1997 there was an increase in the number of short-term caravan parks and a decrease in the number of long-term caravan parks. Since 1997 information on short and long-term parks has been limited to establishments with 40 or more sites. Between 1999 and 2001 the STA has categorised caravan parks into small parks (i.e. with less than 40 sites) and large parks (i.e. with 40 or more sites). During this period the total increase in the number of caravan park establishments across Australia has been solely due to the increase in small parks. However, this masks the contribution that large parks have made to the total capacity of caravan parks in Australia. Between 1999 and 2001, despite the increase in small parks, large parks have contributed to 95 per cent of the increase in total capacity of caravan park establishments in Australia.

Analysis of the 1996 ABS Census of Population and Housing CURF revealed some distinct socio-economic characteristics of households who reside in caravans. Some 52 per cent of caravan dwellers earned under \$400 per week in 1996 compared with 23 per cent of all households. Only 3 per cent of households in caravans earned over \$1,000 per week, compared to 21 per cent of all households. Nearly one-half of all households who reside in a caravan are single person households compared with 21 per cent of all households. Interestingly, in 1996 just over one-half of households in caravans owned their dwelling outright. Approximately 15 per cent rented privately, while only 0.3 per cent of caravans were rented from a public landlord. Some 55 per cent of households who reside in a caravan had been there for at least 12 months at the 1996 Census. Importantly, though, nearly 41 per cent of those households in a caravan who rent privately were in rental stress (i.e. paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rent) compared with 27 per cent of all households.

The specialised cross-tabulations of the 2001 ABS Census of Population and Housing provide a valuable overview of individuals and households who usually reside in caravan parks in Australia. In particular, these data and data from the 1996 Census presented above confirm that there are a number of population sub-groups that reside in caravan parks in Australia. There are a large proportion of older residents in caravan parks, however, there is also an above average proportion of unemployed persons, and a significant proportion of employed persons. What is common across the sub-groups is their low levels of income, high mobility, and lack of post-school qualifications. On the other hand, there are large numbers of households in caravan parks who own their dwelling, whereas there are also significant numbers that rent privately. Furthermore, a large proportion of persons in caravan parks in Australia are single or lone person households, and there are very few children and families living in caravan parks.

The four ABS data sources provide a picture of the dynamics of the caravan park sector in Australia. However, as a number of other commentators have already noted (e.g. Greenhalgh *et al*, 2001; Connor and Ferns, 2002), there is a considerable lack of detailed information about caravans and the characteristics of individuals and households who reside in this sector of the housing market. The lack of congruence over time of the STA and the problems associated with the Census data make it very difficult to examine trends and the current situation in the caravan park sector. The STA is not designed to provide information on people living permanently in caravan parks, since they are not tourists. If households and individuals in this sector of the housing market are becoming marginalised then we need better and more reliable information about households who live in caravans.

This analysis of the available data from ABS reveals there is an urgent need to improve the scope and reliability of ABS data on people living permanently in caravan parks.

3.7 AAA Tourism Listing Database

At the present time there are 2,275 caravan parks and/or tourist parks on the AAA Tourism national database of listings with a total of 226,429 sites. Seventy-eight (78) per cent participate in the rating scheme and twenty-two (22) per cent don't participate (Table 3.13). The States with the highest participation rates are New South Wales (87 per cent) and Victoria (81 per cent). Northern Territory has the lowest participation rate (57 per cent).

TABLE 3.8: AAA Tourism Listings 2002-2003 for Caravan Parks and Tourist Parks

STATE	Total	AAA Participants	%	AAA Non-participants	%
ACT	3	2	66%	1	33%
NSW	622	540	87%	82	18%
NT	70	40	57%	30	43%
QLD	486	373	77%	113	23%
SA	220	169	77%	51	23%
TAS	62	49	79%	13	21%
VIC	510	412	81%	98	19%
WA	302	180	63%	113	37%
TOTAL	2,275	1,774	78%	501	22%

Table 3.9 shows the number of caravan parks/tourist parks in each star rating by State and Territory and nationally. Nationally, approximately 48 per cent of caravan parks/tourist parks are in the 3 and 3.5 star rating. Approximately 12 per cent each are in the 2.5 star rating or 4 star rating. There are very few parks in the top star ratings, and only small proportions of parks in the lower star ratings from 1 to 2. Approximately 10 per cent of parks are not rated and appear in the table as 'list only', 'not recorded', 'rating under review' or 'yet to be rated'.

Table 3.10 shows the number of caravan parks/tourist parks by the number of sites per park. Twenty four (24) percent of caravan parks/tourist parks have less than 40 sites per park. Forty one (41) per cent of caravan parks/tourist parks have between 41 and 100 sites per park, and 18 percent of caravan parks/tourist parks having more than 150 sites per park.

TABLE 3.9: AAA Tourism Caravan Parks/Tourist Parks – Star Rating by State/Territory

Star Rating	ACT		NSW		NT		QLD		SA		TAS		VIC		WA		AUSTRALIA	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1			12	2%	2	2.7%	6	1.2%	10	4.5%			10	1.9%			40	1.7%
1.5			23	3.6%	6	8.3%	18	3.7%	12	5.4%			8	1.6%	2	0.7%	69	3.0%
2			44	7%	7	9.7%	42	8.7%	19	8.6%	7	11.2%	40	8%	6	2%	165	7.2%
2.5	1	33.3%	78	12.5%	8	11.2%	68	14%	34	15.4%	4	6.4%	57	11.1%	17	5.7%	267	11.7%
3	1	33.3%	142	23%	11	15.3%	139	28.7%	46	21%	19	31%	130	25.3%	53	17.8%	541	23.8%
3.5	1	33.3%	174	28%	9	12.5%	100	20.7%	47	21.3%	22	35.5%	130	25.3%	58	19.5%	541	23.8%
4			75	12%	8	11%	53	11%	20	9%	6	9.6%	74	14.4%	41	13.8%	277	12.2%
4.5			21	3%	1	1.5%	22	4.5%	4	1.8%	1	1.6%	38	7.4%	15	5%	102	4.5%
5			4	0.8%			1	0.2%					3	0.6%	3	1%	11	0.5%
LO			37	6%	15	21%	17	3.5%	16	7.2%	2	3.2%	14	2.7%	35	11.7%	136	6%
NR					3	4.1%	6	1.2%	2	1%			3	0.5%	36	12.1%	50	2.2%
RUR			7	1%			6	1.2%	2	1%			4	0.8%			19	0.8%
YTBR			6	1%	2	2.7%	6	1.2%	8	3.6%	1	1.6%	2	0.3%	32	10.7%	57	2.5%
TOTAL	3	100%	623	100%	72	100%	484	100%	220	100%	62	100%	513	100%	298	100%	2,275	100%

LO = List Only. NR = Not Recorded. RUR = Rating Under Review. YTBR = Yet To Be Rated.

TABLE 3.10: AAA Tourism Caravan Parks/Tourist Parks by Size Range

Sites per Property	ACT		NSW		NT		QLD		SA		TAS		VIC		WA		AUSTRALIA	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
< 40			109	17.5%	15	21.4%	163	33.1%	59	26.8%	13	22.8%	85	16.5	98	33.3%	552	24%
41-100	1	33%	234	37.6%	33	47.1%	211	42.9%	91	41.4%	27	47.4%	237	46%	103	35%	930	41%
101-150	1	33%	126	20.2%	7	10%	62	12.6%	30	13.6%	10	17.5%	105	20.4%	52	17.7%	394	17%
151-200			65	10.4%	8	11%	35	7.1%	21	9.5%	5	8.8%	36	6.7%	30	10.2%	198	9%
201-250			34	5.5%	0	0	10	2%	9	4.1%	2	3.5%	26	5%	8	2.7%	88	4%
251-300			18	2.9%	2	2.8%	3	0.6%	8	27.5%	0	0	6	1.2%	2	0.7%	39	2%
301-350			13	2.1%	1	1.4%	3	0.6%	0	0	0	0	4	0.8%	0	0	22	1%
> 350	1	33%	23	3.7%	4	5.7%	5	1%	2	0.9%	0	0	16	3.1%	1	0.3%	52	2%
TOTAL	3	100%	622	100%	70	100%	492	100%	220	100%	57	100%	515	100%	294	100%	2,275	100%

The listing for most of the parks in AAA Tourism's guide to caravan parks / tourist parks also includes the number of sites within a park that are for tourists and how many are for permanents (Table 3.11). 'Permanents' in this context means sites occupied by permanent residents. Sixty-five (65) percent of these are for tourists and thirty-five (35) per cent are for permanents. That is, some 78,636 caravan park sites are occupied by permanent residents nationally. In the ACT it is around 52%, in NSW around 50 per cent, in Vic around 33 per cent, in WA around 26 per cent, in Qld around 30 per cent, in SA and Tas around 20 per cent each, and in the NT only around 5 per cent of sites are occupied by permanent residents. It is important to point out that the numbers of sites occupied by permanent residents are much larger in the more populous States.

TABLE 3.11: AAA Tourism Caravan Parks/Tourist Parks – Sites for Tourists and Permanents

STATE	Total No. of Sites	Sites available for Tourists		Sites for Permanents	
		No.	%	No.	%
ACT	687	332	48%	355	52%
NSW	73,309	37,000	50.5%	36,309	49.5%
NT	7,682	7,318	95%	364	5%
QLD	40,233	28,169	70%	12,064	30%
SA	20,365	16,015	79%	4,350	21%
TAS	4,813	3,831	79.6%	982	20.4%
VIC	55,599	37,433	67%	18,166	33%
WA	23,502	17,456	74%	6,046	26%
TOTAL	226,190	147,554	65%	78,636	35%

The total number of sites with self-contained facilities, nationally, is 5,835 (Table 3.12). This is approximately 2.5 per cent of the total number of sites available in caravan parks on the AAA Tourism database of listings. Nationally, seventy-five (75) per cent (4,359) of these sites with self-contained facilities are for tourists and twenty-five (25) per cent (1,476) are available for permanents.

TABLE 3.12: AAA Tourism Caravan Parks/Tourist Parks – Sites with Self-Contained Facilities

STATE	Total No. of Sites with SC facilities	Sites available for Tourists		Sites for Permanents	
		No.	%	No.	%
ACT					
NSW	1,317	970	74%	347	26%
NT	288	231	81%	55	19%
QLD	1,129	912	81%	217	19%
SA	430	372	86.5%	58	13.5%
TAS	77	77	100%	0	0
VIC	1,718	1,057	61.5%	661	38.5%
WA	876	740	84.5%	136	15.5%
TOTAL	5,835	4,359	75%	1,476	25%

The total number of caravan parks / tourist parks that have separate cabin/park cabin sections within the park are 1,517 or sixty-seven (67) per cent of the total listed with AAA Tourism. A break up of these figures by State and Territory was not readily available.

3.8 Summary of AAA Tourism Data

Trend data over time was not available because AAA Tourism has only been in operation for three years and insufficient time has elapsed since the database was first compiled to reveal any significant trends.

However, the above figures indicate that the caravan park / tourist park sector is large, providing over quarter of a million accommodation units of varying kinds, primarily for tourists and holiday makers, but also for a significant number of people who choose to make this kind of accommodation their permanent home. While the data available from AAA Tourism is not able to provide any information about the residents or consumers of caravan parks / tourist parks, the data does reveal some interesting facts about caravan parks / tourist parks.

In particular:

- Almost eighty per cent (80 per cent) of caravan parks in Australia participate in the AAA Tourism rating system, although there is some variation on this proportion in some jurisdictions. For example, in the NT and WA around forty per cent (40 per cent) of caravan parks do not participate in the rating system.
- Around twelve per cent (12 per cent) of caravan parks have star ratings of between 1, 1.5 and 2 star ratings.
- Almost sixty per cent (60 per cent) of caravan parks are in the 2.5, 3 and 3.5 star ratings.
- Most caravan parks have between 41-100 sites (41 per cent). Twenty-four per cent (24 per cent) of caravan parks have less than 40 sites, seventeen per cent (17 per cent) have between 101-150 sites. In some jurisdictions the proportion of parks with less than 40 sites is much greater than the national figure. For example, in WA and Qld it is around thirty-three per cent (33 per cent).
- Of the total number of sites on caravan parks listed with AAA Tourism, 35 per cent are occupied by permanent residents. That is, around 78,636 sites. However, there are significant differences between the States and Territories. In the ACT and NSW around 50 per cent of sites are occupied by permanent residents, while in Vic and Qld it is around 30 per cent, and in SA and Tas it is around 20 per cent.
- Only two and a half per cent (2.5 per cent) of the total number of sites available have self-contained facilities, of which seventy-five per cent (75 per cent or 4,325) are for tourists and twenty-five per cent (25 per cent or 1,476) are for permanents.
- Around sixty-seven per cent (67 per cent) of the total number of parks listed with AAA Tourism have cabins in their caravan parks, signifying a shift away from the conventional caravan on wheels and registrable vehicle to something more permanent.

3.9 Comparison of ABS data with AAA Tourism data

Any comparison between ABS data and the data available from the AAA Tourism needs to be mindful of how the data is collected and for what purpose. The methods employed and the purposes could not be more diverse. However, the juxtaposition of information from the two sources reveals some interesting observations.

3.9.1 Number of establishments:

- According to the ABS STA, in 2001 there were 2,728 caravan park establishments in Australia.
- This compares with 2,275 listed on the AAA Tourism database in 2002. This means around 84 per cent of all caravan parks in Australia are listed on the AAA Tourism database and about 65 per cent of all caravan parks in Australia participate voluntarily in the AAA Tourism star rating system.

3.9.2 Capacity of caravan parks:

- According to the ABS STA, the total capacity of caravan parks in terms of the number of sites was 286,740 sites as at December 1997. From January 1998 only caravan parks with 40 or more powered sites are included. In 2001, the ABS STA estimates the capacity of all caravan parks at 268,619 sites.
- The total capacity of the parks listed with AAA Tourism in 2002 is 226,429 sites. This is about 79 per cent of the total number of sites when compared with the ABS STA data. It is significant to note that there are 552 parks with less than 40 sites in the AAA Tourism database which suggests that the ABS STA is not collecting data from a significant portion of the sector.

3.9.3 Number of permanent residents compared to permanent sites:

- The ABS 2001 Census identifies approximately 61,400 people residing in caravan parks excluding visitors and holiday makers. For various reasons noted above, the Census is an under-enumeration of permanent residents in caravan parks.
- The AAA Tourism database identifies approximately 78,600 sites as permanent sites, for which the occupancy rate is unknown.

3.9.4 Characteristics of individuals/households in caravan parks and rating of caravan parks:

- According to the ABS 2001 Census, most individuals living in caravan parks are likely to be elderly, unemployed or retired or if in the workforce in lower paying occupations, have no post-school educational qualifications, have a high mobility rate and are predominantly Australian born and English speaking. According to the ABS 1996 and 2001 Census, most households in caravan parks are likely to be sole person households or couples with no children or sole parent household, have relatively low incomes, higher proportions of home ownership and rental than occurs in the wider community and higher rates of housing stress.
- Most caravan parks that participate in the AAA Tourism rating system are in the low to middle range of the star ratings with a relatively basic level of amenities. Only a very small proportion of permanent sites have self-contained facilities. There are a large proportion of caravan parks that do not participate in the rating scheme and it is reasonable to conclude that if they did, most of them would not rate very highly. Interviews with various industry sources confirm this view.

While some allowances have to be made for the differences in the data sources and how they are collected, it is reasonable to conclude that most people living permanently in caravan parks, either as a lifestyle choice or as a last resort and against their will, live in very basic conditions with minimal facilities and amenity compared to conventional forms of housing. The implications for people living permanently in caravan parks with particular or complex needs are potentially serious.

3.10 SAAP National Data Collection

The SAAP National Data Collection has been providing annual information on the provision of assistance through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) since 1996-97.

While the overall data collection provides a good picture of who is accessing SAAP services, there is only one particular data set from the most recent National Data Collection that is of relevance to this study of caravan park residents.

The Client Collection component of the SAAP National Data Collection for 2001-02 records the type of accommodation clients were in 'before' they accessed a SAAP service and 'after'. In general, the National Data Collection shows that the most common types of accommodation before support was provided were also the most commonly used type of accommodation after support was provided through a SAAP service.

Table 8.2 in the National Data Collection shows the type of accommodation immediately 'before' and 'after' a support period⁵, by State and Territory and Australia where 100 percent equals the total number of SAAP clients within a particular jurisdiction spread over the different types of accommodation. The types of accommodation range from SAAP or other emergency housing; Living rent-free in a house/flat; Private rental; Public or community housing; Rooming house/hostel/hotel/caravan; Boarding in a private home; Own home; Living in a car/tent/park/street/squat; Institutional; and Other. The category for those living in 'Rooming house/hostel/hotel/caravan park' is not further disaggregated.

Table 3.13 is an extract from Table 8.2 of the National Data Collection Report for Australia (AIHW 2002:49) and shows the entries for those living in a 'Rooming house/hostel/hotel/caravan' 'before' and 'after' a support period. The way to read the table is to compare the 'before' and 'after' figures within a particular jurisdiction. While there was an overall reduction in the number of people living in this category 'after' a support period compared with before, the proportion in this category increased from 7.9 per cent to 8.2 per cent. The proportions 'after' a support period increased compared to 'before' a support period in Victoria and Queensland but there were reductions in all other jurisdictions.

TABLE 3.13: SAAP National Data Collection SAAP closed support periods: Type of accommodation immediately 'before' and 'after' a support period by State and Territory, Australia 2001-02 (per cent)

Type of Accommodation	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Total %	Total No.
Before Support										
Rooming house/ hostel/hotel/ Caravan park	7.1	8.8	9.0	7.3	6.8	6.1	2.6	9.0	7.9	8,000
After Support										
Rooming house/ hostel/hotel/ Caravan park	6.8	10.2	10.2	6.1	5.7	6.3	2.0	7.5	8.2	6,200

Source: AIHW 2002:49

Unfortunately, the SAAP National Data Collection does not provide any further analysis of clients accessing SAAP services from caravan parks or the extent to which SAAP agencies are using caravan parks as exit paths or as overflow from SAAP crisis accommodation places. This is one area where there is an urgent need for improved monitoring and data collection.

According to Chamberlain (1999:5), the 1998 National Evaluation of SAAP found that around 4 per cent of SAAP clients were renting a caravan after support in SAAP accommodation and that almost all of these people were unemployed and had not moved on to 'independent living'. Based on comments made by several stakeholders in the stakeholder interviews, there is little to indicate that the situation has improved since that time.

⁵ A *support period* commences when a client begins to receive support and/or supported accommodation from a SAAP agency. The support period is considered to finish when the client ends the relationship with the agency; or the agency ends the relationship with the client. If it is not clear whether the agency or the client has ended the relationship, the support period is assumed to have ended if no assistance has been provided to the client for a period of 1 month. In such a case, the date the support period ended is 1 month after the last contact with the client.

3.11 Conclusions

This chapter has examined several data sources including several ABS data sets, the AAA Tourism database and relevant data from the SAAP National Data Collection.

Several conclusions have been drawn from the above analysis in terms of characteristics of caravan parks, the socio-economic characteristics of residents, and the level of amenities and living conditions for long-term residents in caravan parks. Some conclusions can also be drawn about the data sets themselves. For example, the lack of data from the SAAP National Data Collection on the use of caravan parks as exit points from other crisis accommodation services or as overflow from crisis accommodation agencies is of concern.

While caravans make up the largest proportion of dwellings in caravan parks, but are not the only dwelling counted in caravan parks. Manufactured homes are counted in the “separate house” category of the Dwelling Structure variable in the Census. In 2001 there were over 10,000 dwellings, other than caravans, counted in caravan parks. This represents around 10 per cent of all dwellings counted in caravan parks, and is around 1,000 more dwellings than counted in 1996. Of these 10,000 dwellings, there were over 4,000 dwellings in the category of “improvised home, tent, sleepers out”, 4,000 in the category of “not stated”, and over 1,500 dwellings in the “separate house” category. Also in 2001, around 9,000 people were counted as “usually resident” in non-caravan dwellings. This represents around 13 per cent of caravan park “usual residents”. Of the dwellings counted as a caravan, over 2,400 of those did contain occupants, but the special collector was unable to obtain a form. There were also over 5,000 people counted in caravan parks who reported they had no usual address on Census night⁶.

There is an urgent need for better and more in-depth data on what is actually happening in this sector over the longer term. Especially in terms of the housing careers of people who use caravan parks as their primary place of residence for any length of time beyond the usual holiday stay. What are the ‘before’ and ‘after’ housing circumstances of people using caravan parks for crisis housing? How long do people live in caravan parks? The inability to detect what is happening to residents in caravan parks between the Censuses is an area where more work is urgently required.

The next chapter analyses the results of the survey of Local Government in three jurisdictions that was undertaken as part of this study.

⁶ Source: ABS *personal communication July 2003*.

4 ANALYSIS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY OF CARAVAN PARKS IN THREE JURISDICTIONS

4.1 Introduction

As part of this project a questionnaire was sent to 245 local councils in New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA) and the Northern Territory (NT)⁷ in order to better understand the issues facing caravan parks at a more localised level than is possible from other data and information sources.

On completion of the survey, 75 responses were obtained from NSW (a 44 per cent response rate), 28 from SA (a 42 per cent response rate), and 3 from NT (a 43 per cent response rate). Thus, 106 responses from our initial mail-out of 245 were returned, a response rate of 43 per cent.

There are considerable differences between the three jurisdictions on the extent to which local Councils have some responsibility for monitoring or regulating caravan parks. In some areas the extent of responsibility is the same, where as in other areas it is very different.

For example, in all three jurisdictions local Councils have responsibility for administering and enforcing environmental and public health and building regulations. Regular inspections for compliance with public health and compliance with building regulations for any building or construction works are carried out by local Councils in all three jurisdictions and apply equally to caravan parks as they do to any other person or business in the community. Responsibility for tenancy matters is administered by State government agencies and not by local Councils. Where local Councils own or operate the caravan park they are required to comply with fair trading laws and tenants' rights in the same way as a private operator is required to. In NSW up to a third of all caravan parks are owned by or in trust to local Councils. In many cases therefore, local Councils have absolutely no idea what is going on in caravan parks in their area in terms of who comes and goes, unless they happen to own or operate one in their area. In most cases the only way Councils become aware of issues affecting caravan parks in their area is if issues are brought to their attention by the owners/operators, residents or by adjoining landholders or residents.

In the area of planning and development controls, the level of responsibility of local Councils varies between the jurisdictions. In NSW and SA the State Governments set the broader planning controls regarding layout, design and setbacks, but the number of caravan parks and their capacity are usually determined by the local Councils. In NSW the State Government usually determines the number of permanent and tourist sites that are permitted in any particular local government area. In the NT, local Councils have no responsibility for land use planning and development, it all rests with the NT Government.

These factors need to be taken into consideration when considering the results of the survey.

4.2 Location of Respondents

Of the 106 responses received from the initial mail-out of the survey, about 64 were received from non-metropolitan councils (Table 4.1). Only 36 responses were from metropolitan councils. However, 58 per cent of all metropolitan councils in the three case study areas, and only 38 per cent of non-metropolitan councils in the case study areas responded to the survey.

⁷ The survey was not distributed to all local Councils in the NT. There are only eight conventional local government councils in the NT. Throughout the remainder of the NT there are several community government Councils and those local councils do not have an 'area' responsibility similar to conventional local government councils in the NT and elsewhere in Australia. Local Government in the NT also does not have land use planning responsibilities.

TABLE 4.1: Number and Proportion of Responses by State/Territory

	Metro Councils			Non-Metro Councils			Total	Total Response Rate
	No.	%	% of Total	No.	%	% of Total		
NSW	27	61%	36%	48	38%	64%	75	44%
SA	9	47%	32%	19	40%	68%	28	42%
NT	2	67%	67%	1	25%	33%	3	43%
Total	38	58%	36%	68	38%	64%	106	43%

Of the 106 councils that responded to the survey, 24 of these councils have no caravan parks in their local government area. Thus, only 82 councils who responded to the survey have caravan parks in their local government area.

4.3 Size of Parks

Of the 82 councils that responded to the survey and had caravan parks in their area, there were large differences in the number of parks within each local government area. In total there are 519 parks in the 82 council areas. Within these 519 parks there are estimated to be 59,287 sites (excluding tent sites), with approximately 60 per cent for tourist accommodation and the other 40 per cent for permanent accommodation. This compares with 35 per cent of sites for permanent occupation in the AAA Tourism database.

However, the total number of sites and the mix of accommodation on these parks (i.e. the number of permanent and tourist sites) is only an approximation. This is because some councils have no knowledge of the number of sites on the parks, particularly if they are privately owned caravan parks. The councils with limited knowledge of the number and size of parks in their local government area also tended to be the councils with a small number of parks. Councils, particularly those in coastal areas and/or with large numbers of parks seemed to have a better understanding of the nature of caravan parks in their area.

As Table 4.2 shows, only 13 (16 per cent) of all the councils who responded to our survey have more than 500 sites in their local government area, whereas 56 (68 per cent) have less than 500 sites. In fact, there are on average 723 sites per local government area. However, only 11 (13 per cent) of the councils who responded to the survey have more than 723 sites. Therefore, the councils that have a large number of sites in their area have significantly more sites than other council areas forcing the average number of sites up. For example, eight councils on the NSW east coast have between them 55 per cent of the total number of sites recorded from this survey.

TABLE 4.2: The Number of Sites on Caravan Parks

	Number of Sites	Percentage of Total
Less than 50	15	18.3%
50 to 100	10	12.2%
101 to 200	16	19.5%
201 to 500	15	18.3%
501 to 1,000	3	3.7%
1,001 to 5,000	8	9.8%
5,001 or more	2	2.4%
Don't Know	11	13.4%
Not Stated	2	2.4%
Total	82	100.0%

Table 4.2 above shows that approximately 30 per cent of establishments have less than 100 sites per establishment, where as the AAA Tourism database reveals that approximately 65 per cent of parks have less than 100 sites and the proportions in each of the three case study jurisdictions are even higher. For example, in NSW the proportion is approximately 55 per cent, in SA the proportion is approximately 67 per cent and in the NT the proportion is approximately 68 per cent. This suggests that the responses to the Local Government survey are skewed towards areas where there are a high number of caravan park establishments per Local Government Area.

What these figures also suggest is that where there are high numbers of caravan park establishments, the local Councils are better informed and more concerned about what is happening in relation to this sector of the market. These Councils tend to know a bit more about the circumstances and the issues confronting the sector and their local community.

4.4 Itinerant and Seasonal Workers

Of the 82 councils with caravan parks in their local government area, 31 (38 per cent) stated that caravan parks in their area were used by itinerant or seasonal workers. Of these councils, 29 (94 per cent) were located in non-metropolitan areas in the three case study jurisdictions.

4.5 Caravans as Crisis Accommodation

Councils were asked if they know whether caravan parks in their area are being used as crisis accommodation and if so, by which agencies and how many different parks they used in their local government area.

Table 4.3 shows some 21 (26 per cent) councils stated that caravan parks in their local government area were used for crisis accommodation. Interestingly though, the councils across the three case study States/Territory contended that at least 22 organisations used caravan parks for crisis accommodation services. The majority of these organisations were locally based. The organisations that were mentioned most frequently were South Australian Housing Trust, Family and Youth Services, Church Groups and NSW Department of Community Services. The majority of agencies used one or two parks in a particular local government area for crisis accommodation and very few agencies used more than two parks in a particular area.

TABLE 4.3: Organisations that use caravan parks as crisis accommodation and the number of parks they use

Agency Name	Number of Parks Used by Agencies					
	1	2	3	4	Don't Know	Not Stated
Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET)	0	0	0	0	1	5
St Vincent De Paul	3	0	0	1	1	5
SAHT	4	6	0	0	0	0
Dept of Housing NSW	1	0	0	0	2	0
RivSkills	3	1	0	0	0	0
Crisis Care	5	1	0	0	0	0
Church Groups	7	1	0	1	0	0
Family and Youth Services (FAYS)	3	5	0	0	0	0
Burnside	3	1	1	0	0	0
Doorways	3	1	1	0	0	0

Agency Name	Number of Parks Used by Agencies					
	1	2	3	4	Don't Know	Not Stated
Dept of Community Services NSW	5	1	1	0	0	0
Sturt House	3	1	1	0	0	0
Salvation Army	3	1	1	0	2	0
Upper Hunter Crisis Accommodation Service	0	1	0	0	0	0
Byron Place Community Centre	1	2	0	0	0	0
Other	1	2	0	0	2	0
Police	0	4	0	0	0	0
Council	0	4	0	0	0	0
Samaritans	0	0	0	0	0	5
Young Parents Network	0	0	0	0	0	5
Family Support	0	0	0	0	0	5
South East Emergency Services	2	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Know	0	1	0	0	1	0
Not Stated	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	17	10	1	1	7	6

4.6 Planning and Development Controls

The planning and development controls listed by councils that apply to caravan parks in their area varied between the States/Territories and their geographical location. Most councils had listed planning and development Acts that apply to their jurisdictions, and most had listed regulations in the Local Government Act. However, depending on the geographical location of the councils, other policies and controls also applied. Several of the responses from councils in NSW were in coastal areas where coastal protection policies apply. Councils with caravan parks in National Parks also had Crown Land regulations that applied to them. One council stated that a NSW government policy on the protection of koala habitats applied to a park in their area.

Very few councils have local policies in place that explicitly covered caravan parks in their local government area. Of those councils that did have local policies the most common policies related to flood management. A few Councils have established local community precinct committees that provided feedback to council on problems that had developed, or were developing, on parks in their area.

4.7 Issues on Caravan Parks

There is a wide range of issues on caravan parks throughout the three case study jurisdictions. The highest response from councils was that there are no issues on parks in their area. Further examination revealed that these local government areas were not necessarily from predominantly tourist areas. However, the most common statement from these Councils was that 'there have been no reports to Council of problems on our parks'. This is not surprising given the limited range of matters over which Councils have direct responsibility for in relation to the regulation of caravan parks.

Table 4.4 shows the issues self-identified by Councils that responded to the survey. The number of issues raised is greater than the number of responses received from Councils

because several Councils responded by identifying more than one issue. For those councils who did have issues or concerns with parks in their area, the most common problems were:

- Being able to finance the upgrading of parks as regulations change, particularly on older parks, the financing of upgrading infrastructure like access roads, and the increasing costs of providing facilities as clients' needs change.
- The financial viability of parks. Councils who suggested this as a problem generally stated that parks were only viable during peak periods, and that during off-peak periods the small numbers of persons using the park(s) made them increasingly unviable.
- The decreasing number of permanent sites. This included being not able to provide caravan parks, including cabin accommodation, as an alternative option for people in desperate need of accommodation, the increasing change to cabin style accommodation for early retirees and retirees generally, and the movement by some park operators towards full tourist parks.

TABLE 4.4: Issues on Caravan Parks

	NSW	SA	NT	Total
Not stated/Don't know	11	6	1	17
No issues	9	6	0	15
Upgrading parks with new infrastructure or to comply with new regulations	8	6	0	14
Financial viability of parks in off-peak periods	7	2	1	10
Lack of permanent sites/more balanced development	6	3	0	9
Crime/safety and security issues	3	3	0	6
Development pressures	3	2	0	5
Increasing number of short-term accommodation	4	1	0	5
Flooding	5	0	0	5
Fire safety issues	4	0	0	4
Upgrading of Parks for health reasons	3	1	0	4
Other	4	0	0	4
Tenancy issues	3	0	0	3
Still being able to offer affordable accommodation in the area for tourists	3	0	0	3
Overcrowding during peak periods	3	0	0	3
Lack of support for crisis/special needs clients	0	2	0	2
Management issues	2	0	0	2
Image of parks	2	1	0	2
Public liability/insurance issues	1	1	0	2
Conflicts between permanent residents and tourists	0	1	0	1
General social issues	1	0	0	1

	NSW	SA	NT	Total
Pets	0	1	0	1
Erosion	0	1	0	1
Planning policies	1	0	0	1
Total	83	37	2	122

4.8 Audit of Caravan Parks

The methodology for this project also included an audit of caravan parks in three jurisdictions. The intention was to collect information from databases held in each of the three case study States/Territory agencies responsible for regulating the caravan park industry and to analyse that data. In particular, the number of establishments, their geographic location, the nature of composition of the parks in terms of dwelling types and whether they are used for short or long-term accommodation, and any other characteristics. We found that only Planning NSW maintained any kind of register or database of caravan park establishments in their jurisdiction. SA and NT do not keep any such records of caravan park establishments.

The database held by Planning NSW reveals that there are 961 caravan park establishments in NSW as at April 2003, yielding a total of 85,535 sites (excluding camp sites) (See Table 4.5 below). Long-term figures were unavailable. This compares with 815 caravan park establishments in NSW according to the 2001 ABS STA. However, the ABS STA does not include establishments with less than 40 sites. The AAA Tourism Database Listing lists 622 establishments and only 540 of these participate in the STAR rating scheme, or about 56% of the total number of establishments in NSW.

TABLE 4.5: Characteristics of Sites in Caravan Park Establishments in NSW

Characteristic	No.	%
Long term sites	26,169	26.4%
Short term sites	55,265	55.8%
Camp sites	13,571	13.7%
Moveable dwelling	974	1.0%
Dwelling site	3,127	3.1%
Total No. of Sites	99,106	100%

In undertaking this research we found that the National Dissemination Program of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle had undertaken a survey in 1993 and repeated the same survey in 2001 (FAC 2002). A summary of the results of the survey were included in the Positioning Paper (Wensing and Wood 2003:24-32). For ease of reference, the tables summarising the results of the survey are included in this report at Appendix 3.

The following observations can be drawn from the comparison of responses:

- In 1993 it was not legal to live permanently in a caravan park in any jurisdiction in Australia. In 2001 it is legal to live permanently in caravan parks in all jurisdictions. However, on the basis of comments made by focus group residents and stakeholders whether this is in fact the case in practice in some jurisdictions is questionable.
- Some of the agencies with some responsibility for regulating caravan parks have little or no idea of what percentage of people in their jurisdiction live in caravan parks or manufactured housing estates. Those that do know rely on ABS data.
- The situation in relation to the development of standards for regulating the caravan park industry between 1993 and 2001 is various. There have been some improvements in some jurisdictions in some areas while in other areas there have been no improvements.

- Between 1993 and 2001 there have been some significant improvements in extent of the legislative protection and security of tenure available to caravan park residents. However, in the NT, SA, Tas and the ACT there have been no improvements in this area.
- In most jurisdictions there continue to be no caravan parks operating as retirement villages.
- Between 1993 and 2001 there have been considerable changes in the agencies of government with responsibility for regulating the caravan park industry in all jurisdictions.
- In response to the question about the adequacy of existing legislation, most responses from each of the jurisdictions indicate an attitude of ambivalence about the need for further reforms to improve tenants' rights.

This comparative assessment shows there are still disparities in the approach to issues around caravan park residency and that in some jurisdictions the situation had not changed markedly in the period 1993-2001.

4.9 Conclusions

The high level of 'not stated' and 'no issues' responses to the question regarding issues relating to caravan parks in their area, shows a level of ambivalence by Local Government towards the issues affecting caravan parks. The fact that there was approximately a 60 per cent non-response rate to the survey also indicates a lack of interest or a lack of knowledge of issues affecting caravan parks for many local Councils⁸. This may also be partly due to the relatively narrow scope of Local Government's regulatory responsibilities for caravan parks.

The responsibility for monitoring and regulating caravan parks is divided between State/Territory and Local Governments in all jurisdictions. While Local Government has responsibility for the conventional land use planning and environmental health aspects in most jurisdictions, the State/Territory Governments retain overall responsibility for regulating the caravan park sector in other areas including affordability, tenants' rights and other consumer protection issues. Nobody at the local level has overall responsibility for the many issues associated with the operation of caravan parks. The current division of responsibility between levels of government is failing to adequately address the totality of the issues affecting residents in caravan parks and the industry.

The analysis of the various data sources in the previous chapter shows that caravan parks are increasingly housing people in marginal circumstances. Caravan parks were not originally developed for such purposes. Indeed, as the audit of the regulatory framework relating to caravan parks carried out by the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle shows, the legality of living long-term in caravan parks is a relatively recent development in all jurisdictions in Australia, and there remain many unresolved issues relating to security of tenure for long-term residents from the perspectives of both the residents and the owners/operators of caravan park establishments.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the issues affecting people living long-term in caravan parks, a series of focus group discussions were held with caravan park residents and a number of key stakeholder interviews were conducted. The outcomes of the focus groups and stakeholder interviews are discussed in Chapter 6. The participants of the focus groups were invited to complete a questionnaire and the results of this questionnaire are presented in the next chapter.

⁸ While the high non-response rate may also be due to other factors, such as a lack of interest in completing forms or taking part in surveys, the principal researcher for this study has an intimate knowledge of the Local Government sector.

5 ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

5.1 Introduction

As part of this project six focus groups were conducted across the three case study areas (NSW, SA and NT), with two focus groups in each State/Territory. During the focus group discussions participants were asked to fill out a short questionnaire. This questionnaire obtained information about the participants' socio-economic characteristics, their experiences in caravan parks, and their housing history. This section examines some of the findings of this questionnaire and builds upon other data sources, like the Census, to build up a picture of those households who live permanently in caravan parks.

5.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics

From the six focus groups that were conducted in the three case study States/Territories there were 46 participants who answered the questionnaire. The age of the participants was spread across all categories. However, 54 per cent of participants were aged over 45. Approximately half of the participants were male and half were female.

The socio-economic characteristics of the focus group participants confirm the results from the Census analysis that there are distinctive sub-groups residing in caravan parks. Nearly 29 per cent of focus group participants were employed, however, 24 per cent were retired and not in the labour force, and 17 per cent were on long-term sickness and disability pensions.

Most of the participants (85 per cent) were born in Australia, while 11 per cent identified themselves as being Indigenous Australians. Further analysis also revealed that *all* participants, even those born overseas, stated that English was their main language spoken at home.

A large proportion (61 per cent) of the participants in the focus group discussions were single person households. Another 28 per cent were couples without children. The results from the focus group questionnaire confirm that there are very few families who live in caravan parks – only 10 per cent had children.

Further analysis revealed that 61 per cent of focus group participants own their dwelling but rent the site. However, 33 per cent rent their dwelling as well as the site.

TABLE 5.1: Social and Economic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
17-24	6	13.0%
25-34	6	13.0%
35-44	6	13.0%
45-54	10	21.7%
55-64	8	17.4%
65 and over	7	15.2%
Not Stated	3	6.5%
Total	46	100.0%
Gender		
Male	21	45.7%
Female	22	47.8%
Not Stated	3	6.5%
Total	46	100.0%

	Frequency	Percentage
Employment Status		
Employed Full Time	8	17.4%
Employed Part Time	5	10.9%
Registered as Unemployed	3	6.5%
Not Seeking Work/At Home	4	8.7%
Long Term Sick/Disabled	8	17.4%
Retired	11	23.9%
Student	1	2.2%
Inadequately Described	6	13.0%
Total	46	100.0%
Birthplace		
Born in Australia	39	84.8%
Born Overseas	7	15.2%
Total	46	100.0%
Indigenous Persons		
Indigenous Person	5	10.9%
Non-Indigenous Person	38	82.6%
Not Stated	3	6.5
Total	46	100.0%
Household Type		
Single Person Household	28	60.9%
Single Parent Family	2	4.3%
Couple without Children	13	28.3%
Couple with Children	3	6.5%
Total	46	100.0%
Tenure		
Rent Land but Own Accommodation	28	60.9%
Rent Land and Rent Accommodation	15	32.6%
Other	3	6.5%
Total	46	100.0%

5.3 Mobility

Findings from the survey of focus group participants confirm that a significant proportion of individuals who live on caravan parks are highly mobile and quite frequent movers. However, there are also a proportion of individuals who chose to reside in the one caravan park for significant lengths of time. Nearly 40 per cent of focus group participants had lived in their current location for less than 12 months, but 24 per cent had lived in their current location for more than 5 years.

Focus group participants were also asked how many times they'd moved in the last five years. Some 30 per cent of focus participants said they had moved more than five times in this period.

5.4 Housing Histories

Focus group participants were asked a number of questions about their previous housing experiences.

As Table 5.2 shows, participants ended up in their current location in a caravan park for a variety of reasons. Nearly 22 per cent moved to their caravan park for work, 20 per cent to be closer to their family or for other personal reasons, and 11 per cent because they were in transit with longer term aims to move to other destinations. There were however, three individuals who moved because they had no other choice, and four individuals who liked the cheaper rental prices of caravan parks. Again, this suggests that there are a number of different sub-groups using caravan parks. Some are there by choice and others by necessity. Similar responses were received from the focus group participants over their last four housing situations.

TABLE 5.2: Reasons why participants moved to their current locations

	Frequency	Percentage
Work	10	21.7%
Move closer to family/personal reasons	9	19.6%
Not Stated	7	15.2%
Travelling/Passing through	5	10.9%
Cheaper Rent	4	8.7%
Wanted Something Else	4	8.7%
No other choice	3	6.5%
Liked the area/Wanted to escape the city	3	6.5%
Different climate	1	2.2%
Total	46	100.0%

Focus group participants were also asked to state the three main types of accommodation they had lived in. Interestingly, 85 per cent of participants stated that a caravan/mobile home/campervan was one of their three main forms of accommodation. Some 63 per cent of participants also stated that they had lived in a separate house for a significant amount of time. Other forms of accommodation that individuals had lived in included boarding houses, hostels, squats, jail, tents and stations (e.g. accommodation on cattle stations). Of the 46 individuals that participated in the focus group discussions, 10 (22 per cent) of them stated that they were homeless before moving into their current dwelling. This finding confirms the role of parks as a source of accommodation for those trying to exit homelessness, although this does not necessarily mean the person was homeless prior to moving into the caravan park.

While the focus group participants had numerous reasons for moving, the reasons they stated as to why they thought caravan parks suited them were also numerous. Just over 26 per cent of participants said that they lived in caravan parks for 'lifestyle' reasons, however, 20 per cent of participants said they lived in parks because of the cheaper accommodation parks provided. Other reasons stated as to why individuals think caravan parks suited them include the flexibility

of moving whenever they thought they should move on, being around other people and being close to family and friends.

5.5 Summary

While the total number of responses to the questionnaire was small, the results reflect the outcomes of the Census analysis. The picture that emerges is that there are three distinctive sub-groups using caravan parks, as follows:

- A large proportion chose to live in a caravan park for reasons of lifestyle choice, including affordability and flexibility compared to other forms of housing. Within this sub-group there are a large proportion of retirees who own their dwelling but rent a site or rent both the caravan and the site.
- Also within this sub-group of 'lifestylers' are a significant number of itinerant or seasonal workers.
- A significant proportion of caravan park dwellers are not there by choice but as a last resort. Many of them are unemployed or on sickness benefits or are no longer in the active workforce.

The following characteristics of caravan dwellers also stand out:

- Single person households comprise a large proportion of caravan park dwellers and very few families with children live in caravan parks.
- A large proportion of caravan park dwellers for whom living in a caravan park is a last resort, is highly mobile and move frequently;
- For those who chose to live in a caravan park as a matter of lifestyle choice, have lived in the same caravan park for more than five years; and
- In terms of housing histories, a very large proportion identify a caravan/mobile home/campervan as one of their three main forms of accommodation prior to moving into their current accommodation in a caravan park.

The next chapter discusses the outcomes of the focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews in relation to the research questions for this study.

6 FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the discussion and findings of each of the key research questions. It draws on the record of both the focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews, the responses to the questionnaire completed by focus group participants, the results of the survey of local government, and the preceding analysis of available statistics and data sets.

Over 40 structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders in the three case study jurisdictions, including tenancy advice workers, community representatives, State housing authority officers, SAAP agency workers, caravan playgroup workers, community representatives, park managers, local planners, national and State-based housing and homelessness agencies such as Shelter, State and Federal Family and Community Services Department officers, caravan park industry association representatives, and academics with research interests in the areas of housing and crisis accommodation policies and programs⁹. The stakeholder interviews enabled some issues to be explored in more detail, for example, the extent to which caravan parks are being used by SAAP agencies either as exit points from crisis accommodation or as overflow because of acute shortages in crisis accommodation.

Each of the key research questions is discussed in turn, with the conclusions and recommendations arising from this analysis in the final chapter.

6.2 Profile of caravan park dwellers who are vulnerable to homelessness

From the focus groups and stakeholder interviews it is possible to identify three distinctive sub-groups that are using caravan parks. They are:

- People making a deliberate choice to live in a caravan park for reasons of lifestyle, including affordability and flexibility compared to other forms of housing. Within this sub-group there are a large proportion of retirees who own their dwelling but rent a site or rent both the caravan and the site. Many of them are on fixed incomes from superannuation or pensions and have been living in caravan parks for several years. For these people living in a caravan park is a matter of choice, albeit a constrained choice depending on their circumstances at the time they made the decision to do so.
- Itinerant or seasonal workers in the construction industry, farming and fruit pickers or other lower paid jobs who chose to live long-term or permanently in caravan parks also as a lifestyle choice. They tend to be renter renters rather than owner renters so they can move with the availability of work, although, according to caravan park industry association sources, there are a significant number of construction workers that own their dwelling in the manufactured housing estates in and around Sydney. For this group, the caravan park is an affordable and flexible form of housing.
- People who move into a caravan park as a last resort. They are not there by choice. They may have exhausted all other avenues or they simply do not have the means to gain access to housing in any of the mainstream sectors or they may already be on the public housing waiting list. They may have rent debts, they may not have money for a bond and rent in advance, they may have a range of personal crises in their lives and have complex support needs, and they may have been homeless previously. Many of them are unemployed or on sickness benefits or are no longer in the active workforce.

All of these groups of people were either present in the participants of the six focus groups or were referred to by participants as people who they knew were residing in caravan parks in recent months or were referred to in the stakeholder interviews. The analysis of ABS Censuses and data from other sources confirm the existence of these three sub-groups.

⁹ See Appendix 4 for more details.

For many of these people caravan parks provide a form of accommodation that is easy to rent. Parks seldom require payment of a bond or more than a week's rent in advance and dwellings are usually fully furnished and fully equipped. So it is easy to move in and out of a caravan park compared to living in any of the other mainstream housing tenures.

The following characteristics of caravan dwellers also stand out from the focus groups and anecdotal comments from the stakeholder interviews:

- single person households comprise a large proportion of caravan park dwellers;
- very few families with children live in caravan parks.
- a large proportion of caravan park dwellers for whom living in a caravan park is a last resort, are highly mobile and move frequently;
- for those who chose to live in a caravan park as a matter of lifestyle choice, they have lived in the same caravan park for more than five years; and
- in terms of housing histories, a very large proportion identify a caravan/mobile home/campervan as one of their three main forms of accommodation prior to moving into their current accommodation in a caravan park.

All three sub-groups are also vulnerable to homelessness or the caravan park is part of their 'homeless career' as defined by MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003), primarily because their grasp on security of tenure is often very precarious.

The focus groups of caravan park residents also revealed many different perspectives about their attitudes to their own housing circumstances and homelessness. They confirmed Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (1998:19) view that homelessness is a relative concept that acquires meaning in relation to the housing conventions of a particular culture or community. They also confirmed Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2002:5) depiction of homelessness as a 'process' rather than as an 'event'.

Focus group participants confirmed that homelessness is particularly relative to their own experiences and perceptions of what constitutes adequate and appropriate housing for their current circumstances. Those who were in a caravan park as a last resort did not necessarily see themselves as being homeless without shelter, but saw it as a transitory arrangement while they got their lives together. They certainly expressed strong feelings of wanting something more permanent and did not see a caravan or any other type of dwelling in a caravan park providing that kind of housing. In other words, they fall within the 'secondary' or 'tertiary' definitions of homelessness (Chamberlain 1999, Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998, Chamberlain and Johnson 2001, Strategic Partners 2001, and Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002).

In contrast, many older residents who had chosen to live long-term in a caravan park for reasons of lifestyle choice, did not regard themselves as being homeless. Many of them have lived in caravan parks for many years, some for as many as 20-25 years, and they had never thought of or identified themselves as being homeless. They know the conditions and the 'rules' that apply to living in caravan parks and while they may have complaints about the style of management of a particular park owner or manager, they nevertheless accept the circumstances and enjoy the lifestyle. It suits their life stage and for many of them their long-term aspirations are to remain living in a caravan for long as they are physically able. Several of them expressed absolutely no desire to return to low density housing with private gardens or to a flat or town house because they enjoy the 'community' or 'village' atmosphere and the camaraderie and security of the caravan park.

Many of the longer term residents who make the lifestyle choice to live long-term or permanently in a caravan park tend to own the caravan and rent the site. In many cases they owned caravans with fixed annexes or cabins or some kind of relocatable home. However, the extent to which such residents enjoy security of tenure through written lease or site rental agreements varies enormously between and within jurisdictions. For example, in NSW caravan owner/renters in privately owned caravan parks can sign a 'site rental agreement' which provides the occupants of the site with a reasonable degree of security of tenure provided all site

rentals and other park use conditions are satisfactorily met. In other jurisdictions, such agreements are not mandatory or are not generally offered to long-term residents.

6.3 The risk factors among groups vulnerable to housing crisis

Key stakeholders from government and voluntary sectors commonly consider all residents in caravan parks to be at risk of homelessness. This is primarily because caravan park residents have no guarantee that the caravan park will continue to operate in its current form and the legislative provisions relating to security of tenure in many jurisdictions is still precarious. Several key stakeholders also thought caravans are, by their nature, an inadequate form of accommodation and that all residents of caravan parks are, by default, homeless, especially if the caravan is without self-contained cooking and bathroom/toilet facilities.

The focus groups and stakeholder interviews revealed a wide range of risk factors that concern long-term caravan park residents and that make them vulnerable to homelessness. More often than not it is a combination of several factors that are the cause of homelessness. Factors often include one or more of the following impacting on their immediate housing circumstances:

- failure to pay rents;
- personal and life circumstances;
- park closures or changes in market sector;
- lack of security of tenure;
- park design and amenities;
- park rules and management styles.

Stakeholders, residents and park owners and managers all cited failure to pay rent as the most frequent cause of loss of housing or eviction from caravan parks. Some park managers or owners have strict policies for late or non-payment of rents, while a minority of park managers or owners may be more tolerant and provide two or three warnings before evicting residents. In most cases it was no more than a week's grace after which non-payment of rent resulted in immediate eviction. According to caravan industry representatives most caravan parks operated on very small margins and the owners or operators cannot afford to carry the risk associated with non-payment of rent. In NSW however, where tenancy legislation has improved the rights of caravan park residents, evictions for non-payment of rent have become somewhat more problematical for owners/operators because tenants have a right of appeal to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

People's personal or life circumstances were also cited as reasons for vulnerability over present and future housing options. Bad credit ratings, systemic unemployment, ill health, injuries resulting from industrial or personal accidents, relationship breakdowns and the cost of living were all cited as reasons why people left caravan parks or were evicted.

Several focus group participants and tenancy groups mentioned a 'rent debt roll' that was being used by caravan park managers and operators to exclude anyone with a history of bad debts arising from non-payment of rents from previous tenancies in caravan parks. Industry representatives neither confirmed nor denied the existence and use of such a roll. Other park owners or managers often excluded residents on the basis of a bad debt record or even on assumptions about someone's ability to pay rent based on their appearance.

Other personal circumstances such as the consequence of previous life experiences, alcohol and other drug usage, a history of offending and imprisonment, and family stress or relationship breakdown featured prominently in discussions with focus group residents and stakeholders about vulnerability over housing choices and future options. Focus group participants often talked about other residents they knew about who had had a history of previous housing experiences including periods in public housing, private rental, boarding houses and caravan parks. While some participants said they really did not like living in a caravan park, it was generally more affordable and provided a degree of stability in their lives that they had not experienced elsewhere.

Several tenants' rights agencies reported the rate of closure or change in market sector as resulting in an overall decline in the number of caravan sites available for permanent accommodation. Stakeholder interviews with caravan park owners/managers and key industry associations confirmed research undertaken in NSW by Connor and Ferns (2002) for the Park and Village Service NSW, that the loss of permanent caravan park accommodation result from a number of complex factors, including:

- increasing land values in the area surrounding the park thereby making the park economically unviable;
- the 'gentrification' of caravans to manufactured homes;
- upgrading of caravan parks to cater for tourists only; and
- loss of parks due to a range of State and Federal issues associated with factors as diverse as increases in insurance costs, the re-routing of highways and the tightening of compliance with tenants' rights and consumer protection issues for longer term occupants (especially in NSW).

In recent years there have been several closures of caravan parks resulting in the loss of permanent accommodation for approximately 2,000 people in NSW alone (Connor and Ferns 2002).

The discussions with focus group participants about the possible closure of their caravan park confirmed Connor and Ferns (2002:12) research about the effects of caravan park closures on residents. Focus group participants mentioned the increased stress caused by the uncertainty, the need to find an alternative location for the dwelling, the loss of community and support networks, and the loss of their main asset.

The extent to which this is occurring is not readily available because park operators would not readily admit to such actions. Data on the former occupants would not be easy to collect because they would often be reluctant to come forward after the event and it is difficult to know where they have moved to in terms of their housing. This is an area where further monitoring and research is urgently required and where remedial action prior to closure or change in use could avert people becoming homeless. Some of the tenancy groups mentioned that particular State governments were aware of the impact that closure of caravan parks can have on long-term residents and that the State Government was funding particular tenancy groups to work with residents prior to the closure occurring to avoid people becoming homeless as a result of forced closures.

In other cases, some tenants were totally unaware of what they were paying for because their tenancy or site rental agreements had long expired and had not been renewed, or their tenancy or site agreements had never been documented. They were also often unaware of their legal rights and did not know where to go for assistance. These circumstances were particularly worrying for some elderly residents because they were unsure of what their entitlements may be for when they can no longer continue living independently without some kind of ongoing support.

Several participants of the focus groups also mentioned the lack of written tenancy agreements or site leases to secure their occupancy of a caravan or a site. In SA participants of the focus groups said they are not covered under the State's *Residential Tenancies Act* because the *Act* does not apply to owners of caravans in caravan parks who rent their allotments. The caravan industry association in SA has developed a code of practice which includes a measure of security of tenure for tenants, but it only applies if the particular caravan park is a member of the caravan industry association and if the owners are prepared to abide by the association's code of practice. In the NT, there is no legislative protection for tenants at all.

In some jurisdictions long-term residents of caravan parks still have no real security of tenure backed by tenancy protection legislation. For example, in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania residential tenancy legislation either does not apply or there is some uncertainty about its application to occupants of caravan parks. In other jurisdictions, especially in New South Wales, the *Residential Parks Act 1998* (NSW) includes a number of important benefits for permanent residents of caravan parks, including standard tenancy agreements, limits on electricity and water charges, provisions for park liaison

committees, conditions on sale of homes on sites and dispute resolution mechanisms. While tenancy advocates and service providers applauded the tightening of the consumer protection measures in the relevant legislation in NSW, the caravan industry association and park owners and operators expressed concerns over the rights that tenants have been given and cited these legislative reforms as the primary cause of the closure of caravan parks and sites for permanent occupancy in parks throughout the State. Similar concerns were expressed by the industry about Queensland's *Residential Tenancies Act 1994* (Qld), but not so in Victoria.

The focus groups in NSW did identify a particular issue for residents of caravan parks on Crown land reserves administered by the NSW Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). Some of these caravan parks are handed over to the local Council in trust to operate. Some Councils do so reluctantly because they are not really equipped to handle the ongoing management and tenancy issues that go with that responsibility. There are several long-term caravan park dwellers in caravan parks located on Crown Land reserves scattered throughout NSW. CALM has told many of them that their long-term occupancy will not be renewed when they leave or when they die. CALM believes that caravan parks in National Parks or on Crown land reserves are intended for public use and should be available for public use by tourists. This policy is placing several long-term residents in such parks in a very precarious situation. For some, their site rental agreements have expired and current park managers are unable or unwilling to enter into new site rental agreements with long-term residents for fear of being in breach of CALM's current policies of discouraging long-term residents in caravan parks situated on Crown Land reserves. It also means the residents can't sell their dwelling in its current location. It means that as soon as they decide to leave, the caravan or cabin must be relocated to another caravan park or at least removed.

Focus group participants from a particular park in NSW said that the number of long-term residents in their particular park had been steadily declining over the past five years with former long-term residents either abandoning their caravan or cabin or relocating them to another caravan park. Some residents saw their current predicament as untenable in the long-term as they had invested in improving the amenity of their caravan or cabin and that they could never sell it. Their only options are to stay put for as long as they are physically able to do so or to move the caravan or cabin to another park depending on whether they could afford the costs associated with moving it. For some, especially those on low or moderate incomes and with no other sources of capital or investment, their options are more limited. Others thought they might pursue whatever legal avenues are available to secure new occupancy agreements depending on whether they could obtain legal aid. If the State Government decides at any stage to terminate their existing occupancy rights, they would be very vulnerable to homelessness. The number of persons in this situation is difficult to estimate but tenancy groups in NSW are aware that the policy is affecting a significant number of people, possibly in the hundreds, throughout the State, especially in coastal areas.

Several focus group residents and some stakeholders cited a range of aspects relating to park design and amenities as risk factors that may give rise to homelessness. Some parks are well designed, others are not. Often the minimum distances between caravans are such that park operators place them as close together as possible. This means that the occupants have very limited privacy. The walls of caravans are very thin and offer no sound proofing against raised voices, loud music or other noisy disturbances. These kinds of incidents give rise to neighbour disputes, which if they persist over long periods of time give rise to people choosing to move on or to being evicted for disturbance of the peace.

Cramped living conditions, proximity to neighbours (especially if they did not get on with each other), shared use of facilities, and the stigma associated with living in a caravan park were frequently cited by focus group participants as reasons for vulnerability in relation to future housing options.

"A caravan park is only a microcosm of ordinary society. So you can live in a suburb in any street in Adelaide and you get wankers, you can live in any street in any suburb and you get good people, so caravan parks are basically no different to any other place other than the fact that you're reasonably close together and your walls are thinner."

Park rules and management practices are important features that also affect the vulnerability of residents to eviction and homelessness. Park management attitudes relating to minor matters such as vehicle access and parking, waste disposal, use and maintenance or cleanliness of amenities and to major matters such as payment of rents, visitor access, the option of having relatives stay over and general attitudes toward people on low incomes often contribute to tensions between park managers and residents. Inconsistency in the application of park rules, especially in relation to neighbour disputes or disturbances to the peace were frequently cited as reasons why residents leave or are evicted.

Several pensioners amongst focus group participants complained that whenever the Federal Government announced increases in rent assistance or the age pension, park managers would announce increases in site rentals to match those increases. One particular resident said that despite increases in the pension over the past twenty years, she had never benefited personally in terms of increased disposable income because all such increases had been followed by increases in site rental for her caravan.

6.4 Pathways into caravan parks and the incidence of homelessness

Focus group participants and stakeholders often cited several interconnected reasons as to why people come to live in a caravan park either as their principal residence or as a last resort. Many of the stories are quite personal and their life circumstances are often important contributing factors. Key stakeholders make a clear distinction between those who choose to live in caravan parks and those for whom a caravan is a place of last resort.

Residents who chose to live in caravan parks for reasons of lifestyle make a choice to live in a caravan park or manufactured housing estate. Maybe not an informed choice in every case, but they may have had an enjoyable and positive experience in caravan parks previously and they have decided that it will suit their lifestyles. This includes many of the older park residents as well as the itinerant workers.

Several key stakeholders described how many older couples would opt to sell up their principal home, buy a caravan or mobile home and subsidise their income with the interest from any balance. Some, known as the 'silver gypsies' opted in the first instance for a nomadic lifestyle before settling down in a particular park. While the perception of reduced costs were regarded as important, other factors influencing their decision to live in a caravan park included having a more manageable site and enjoying the benefits of the communal areas were also cited.

Tenants advice agencies noted how this idyllic lifestyle is heavily promoted in glossy magazines, produced by the caravan and manufactured housing industry bodies in particular, and aimed at the retirement market.

Similar motivations, it was maintained by some stakeholders, lay behind the actions of younger caravan park dwellers who are making a clear lifestyle choice to live a semi-nomadic life. Park managers and owners in all three case study jurisdictions explained how many of these lifestylers would be continually on the move stopping periodically for work. Some might then choose to stay for a number of years in a particular place and decide that they would then remain there indefinitely. There were accounts amongst older focus group participants who had indicated that they wished to live the rest of their life on a particular park.

These accounts normally related to more affluent households, but there were indications that less well off people had also adopted this approach. This included Indigenous households in the Northern Territory.

"He was working at [a local town]. He bought a big caravan, a big tent and instead of renting down the road here from Territory Housing he moved there. ... This was his way of owing a home for his wife and kiddies buying this big caravan with this big annex so he moved there so that could be his own home. So that was the reason and also so he could travel around too. They went up to [another town] I think for about 8 to 10 months to live up there, they have family, and then they're back in Tennant Creek."

The second sub-group of residents who enter caravan parks are itinerant or seasonal workers that move from place to place for seasonal work, or the desire to be close to employment. In

many rural communities, the caravan park is often the only alternative as there is no public or private rental housing available for itinerant workers. These were not a large group in the focus groups but nevertheless were significantly represented. Their choice is based on the convenience, flexibility and affordability offered by caravan parks. For them, the caravan park offers a real alternative, however, the risks of homelessness for them are no less than for people in the other sub-groups. The loss of employment or changes in other circumstances in their lives can have significant consequences on their future housing options.

The third sub-group of residents who live in a caravan park are those for whom there is no other suitable alternative at a particular time in their lives. This was particularly the case with renter-renters, as a tenancy advice worker in New South Wales explained:

“It’s [the] last option ... it’s a roof over your head. ... When you’re in that spiral you don’t have a plan, you’re just thrown from pillar to post.”

The ‘spiral’ metaphor recurred across several accounts and explains the degree of incipency or the iterative nature of the housing experiences of many of the younger people living in caravans. The typical pathways recounted involve regular movements between friends, hostels, sleeping rough and living in caravans. As a tenancy advice worker in South Australia explained:

“They never actually developed the skills to not end something in a crisis so they’re not developing the skills to plan and make decisions, informed decisions. It is like you’re locked out, you find somewhere to stay yourself, whatever you can just pick up and often you make friends in the park and someone would find someone who’d got friends who’s got a father who’s got a place and so on.”

Amongst the primary reasons cited by focus group participants and key stakeholders for people moving into caravans are the lack of affordable housing and the failure of the other major housing sectors to meet particular housing needs. For example, waiting lists for public housing were often too long to meet their immediate housing need or crisis accommodation services for particular needs groups were non-existent in some rural and remote localities or they were stretched beyond capacity.

SAAP workers in all three states described how they were finding it increasingly impossible to find accommodation for people in need. The emergency accommodation in New South Wales and South Australia in particular, was described as inadequate and tenancy advice agencies reported that their clients in caravan parks had often been referred there by public housing authorities or community services departments. In some cases, it was suggested, this might be to some of the ‘rogue’ parks, which often compounded the issues for particular needs groups.

Some focus group participants cited insufficient funds to pay bond and up to four weeks rent in advance for accommodation in the private rental market or lack of previous references to be able to get into private rental housing. A small number of participants and several key stakeholders cited exclusion from public or private rental housing because of previous bad debts as reasons why people resorted to living in caravan parks as a last choice. According to some focus group participants, if your name was on any of the bad debtors lists held by real estate agents, then it is impossible to get into private rental housing. It was often easier and cheaper to get into a caravan at a caravan park because the threshold costs were much lower.

While caravan park owners and managers and their industry associations invariably claim that their tariffs compared favourably with the rents charged in the private rental market and for public housing, other key stakeholders and tenants’ advocacy agencies questioned this assessment. Many key stakeholders claimed that caravan parks were not always a cheap option, but rather were cheap to access because a bond was not usually required and there are no reconnection charges for basic utilities. It was these ease of access features that were advantages for people with no alternatives to seek out a caravan park for an immediate response to their housing need in a time of difficulty.

Supported accommodation agencies and homelessness groups cited the unavailability of suitable alternatives for people exiting crisis accommodation centres or an overflow from crisis accommodation places as the reasons why SAAP agencies were placing people in caravan parks. In one instance a SAAP agency placed a couple with five children in tents until a suitable

alternative became available. Several stakeholders reported severe shortages of crisis accommodation and public housing or community housing as options for people exiting supported accommodation, not just in metropolitan areas, but also in regional areas. Many SAAP services and other agencies claimed that some occupants of on-site accommodation, in contrast to those who owned their own vans, were in chaotic 'hand to mouth' survival situations with little opportunity to control their future housing.

The life circumstances of some residents in caravan parks was also a significant contributing factor. Several participants recited their own stories and the reasons why they have ended up living in a caravan park were often a complex interplay of several factors, including escaping from domestic or family violence, evicted from previous accommodation, a history of bad debts, being on the run from police or other government agencies, being released from prison, or simply having no where else to go. Indeed, in one of the focus groups, several of the participants referred to an element of 'no hoperism' in caravan parks, especially amongst those that had 'rough' life experiences.

Poor money management was highlighted by a welfare agency in South Australia:

"But there's a young couple that have just moved into [a caravan park] and they have got poor money management skills. They've got debt with private rentals, they've got debt with the Housing Trust and they have no references and they're young and they're unemployed, so there's a lot of people like that in there."

For young people, the reasons why they sought housing in a caravan was because they had not been able to enter alternative accommodation because of financial constraints, such as the lack of a bond or lack of furniture or a reference. For older individuals it was often the case that they had exhausted alternative options. Many, it was suggested by stakeholders in community support groups and SAAP workers, had been excluded from public housing because of outstanding debts and black listed in the private rental sector. As with younger people, a downward and recurring spiral was often recounted. Problems such as drug usage and addiction or other psychological problems were regarded as both a cause and effect of their experiences. The consequence, it was suggested, is that they are trapped in this spiral.

The crisis or trigger could be one of many things at each stage. Particular mention was made of relationship breakdown and/or the need to flee a violent relationship. Gambling problems, debts to friends, landlords and utilities were other factors mentioned. As one SAAP worker in New South Wales reported:

"So they might come for gambling and housing will be a problem. They might come for relationship counselling but housing's a problem and it's all linked. "

There were other residents whose life circumstances had been and continue to be very transient. Their transience was at times associated with an ongoing search for accommodation or secure employment or both. Part of this experience may involve time in hostels and rough sleeping. Several of the focus group participants described themselves as having been homeless prior to their move into the caravan park. The reasons were many and various including evictions from private or public rental housing because of difficulties with paying rent, dislocation due to relationship breakdowns, and personal or family traumas.

When asked what their previous housing was before moving into a caravan park, focus group participants cited hostels, boarding houses, private rental, home ownership, living in a tent, or living rough on the street. In one particular focus group they referred to those who had lived on the street or camped in tents as 'the long grassers'.

The focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews indicate that there is a high and recurring incidence of homelessness amongst some caravan park residents. It is not possible to provide a figure or any estimates of the extent of the problem in any particular region or metropolitan area, but there is sufficient evidence from caravan park residents and stakeholders from a range of agencies to show that it is occurring relatively frequently and at a steady rate in all jurisdictions. The circumstances surrounding people's experiences are often complex and interwoven, but the fact that many people end up living long-term in caravan parks as a last

resort is indicative of the failure of housing policy and programs for low income people and households in housing stress.

6.5 Pathways out of caravan parks

There was a consistent message from park owners/managers, SAAP service providers and other agencies that eviction from caravan parks normally resulted from a failure to pay site fees or rent, or from anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour was not clearly defined in many cases, but it was implied that this included behaviour associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs and/or some forms of mental disorder. It also included disturbance arising from noisy behaviour or disturbance of the peace. Some of the older and long-term focus group residents said they never hesitated to complain to the park owner or manager if they thought someone was causing an unnecessary disturbance. They openly admitted that their complaints sometimes resulted in other residents being evicted from the caravan park.

In some instances there was a suggestion that individuals were victimised by managers and owners who controlled access to caravan parks and their amenities. It was, for example, reported that residents had been locked out of their van because a park owner had taken a particular dislike to one household. Elsewhere, it was suggested that owner-renters had been forcibly evicted by the removal of their caravan.

In all three jurisdictions studied, key stakeholders asserted that permanent residents had been forced out as sites re-aligned themselves to the tourist market or were closed to take advantage of rising land values for urban development.

On the other hand, park managers and owners said their long-term residents were generally content with their experience on the parks and wished to stay and some focus group participants expressed similar views. This contrasts with the views expressed by SAAP and tenancy advice workers and the other welfare agencies who said that according to their information the experiences of both lifestylers and those in the parks as a last resort felt they were trapped. The latter view reflects this group of stakeholders' involvement with the more marginal groups using caravan parks.

Several key stakeholders suggested that many of the residents who had made a lifestyle choice and retired felt they were trapped mainly because of financial concerns. Several tenancy advice agencies and other key stakeholders suggested, for example, that those who owned their own caravan or mobile home were often unable to move because the accommodation was no longer in a state to be moved or that the caravan or unit would cost too much to relocate, often at a cost greater than the actual value of the accommodation. This places them in a position of dependency as tariffs continue to rise and their assets continue to depreciate. In some cases the threat of park closure also hangs over them.

Those living in caravan parks as a last resort were also trapped, it was suggested by key stakeholders, in other ways. As mentioned earlier, while the accommodation was considered easy to access it was described as almost impossible to leave. As a housing adviser in the Northern Territory explained:

"It consumes your resources. You don't have enough to save ... not enough money for furniture etc."

A similar viewpoint was expressed in South Australia:

"Sometimes there's an apathetic attitude that they don't necessarily 100 per cent like what they've got but it all seems terribly hard to go the next step and then they will find barriers to it like they mightn't have any furniture or bedding in particular and then you go back through their housing history and you find hey they owe \$800 to utility companies and things like that so it all again becomes too hard so they stay put. But they're not really happy with that and that affects their self esteem so much like I'm never going to have a normal lifestyle or normal house things like that which again puts down their productivity and their willingness to do things."

Most focus group participants for whom living in a caravan was not a matter of lifestyle choice, were not very hopeful about their future housing options. Having said that, many of them

believed they would continue living in a caravan park because they enjoyed living in a caravan park for the community or village atmosphere that exists between long-term or permanent residents. This was an important reason for not leaving a caravan park. However, some said they would be happy to leave if the opportunity arose. Incentives to leave include being offered public housing, the availability of home purchase assistance, moving into private rental if they have saved enough for the bond and rent in advance, and a desire to be closer to shops, schools and other community facilities and services. Some participants said that they would move either in search of employment or to be closer to their current place of work because it was too far away from the caravan park.

Domestic violence was also cited by some stakeholders and tenancy advice workers as a factor that might result in some women and their children moving out of caravan parks, although this was not mentioned in focus group discussions.

The impact of the GST on caravan park rentals was mentioned in some of the focus groups. The comments reflected people's experiences that the introduction of the GST resulted in an increase in rents and that the Federal Government was too slow to respond to the concerns raised by long-term residents.

Participants also raised the issue of eligibility for the first home owners scheme. Some participants expressed the view that they thought purchasers of caravans or mobile homes should be eligible for the grant. The scheme did not and does not apply to the purchase of caravans or mobile homes. In NSW the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue has issued a First Home Owner Grant Ruling specifying that the purchase of a movable building to be used on land owned by the purchaser is an eligible transaction under the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* (NSW). However, movable homes may constitute the purchase of a first home. The Commissioner has ruled that "The interest of a person under any agreement which the person has the right to occupy land used, or intended to be used, as the site of a manufactured home within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1993 is recognised as a non-conforming interest for the purpose of subsection 5(4) of the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* (NSW) if the lessee has purchased the manufactured home and intends to use it as a place of residence on the land"¹⁰. This means that purchasers of manufactured homes may be eligible for the First Home Owner Grant. A manufactured home is defined in the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) as a self-contained movable dwelling. It does not include a caravan or other registrable vehicle under the *Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Act 1997* (NSW). Similar restrictions apply in other jurisdictions, which means that the purchase of a caravan is not eligible for the First Home Owner Grant.

The focus group discussions, pro-forma responses from focus group participants and stakeholder interviews reveal that a range of policy responses are necessary to prevent or reduce the incidence of homelessness amongst long-term residents of caravan parks. Stakeholders were invariably unable to propose solutions that did not involve substantial structural changes in housing supply such as the increased provision of affordable housing.

Several focus group participants and stakeholders were quite vocal about the failure of current housing policies to provide sufficient safety nets to prevent people from moving into caravan parks as their primary place of residence. They cited the continued decline of funding for public housing through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, the declining supply of public housing stock in some jurisdictions and the enormous pressure on the public housing system to meet those in greatest need. They also cited declining levels of affordability in the private rental market, high access costs, discrimination by private landlords against low income or disadvantaged people, and an overall lack of investment in low cost private rental housing. Barriers of entry into home ownership were not mentioned because for most long-term residents in caravan parks, home ownership is not an option.

The extent to which caravan parks are being used by crisis accommodation agencies is indicative of a severe shortage in the supply of low cost housing, especially for people in urgent

¹⁰ <http://www.osr.nsw.gov.au> - First Home Owner Grant: Frequently asked questions. Ruling by the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue, dated 4 December 2000, Searched 20 May 2003.

need of accommodation. Several crisis accommodation agencies indicated they prefer not to refer people in crisis to caravan parks, especially if there are children involved, as caravan parks can often exacerbate existing problems or tensions due to cramped living conditions, lack of privacy and the practical difficulties associated with having responsibility for more than one child in a caravan when the toilet and bathroom facilities are the communal facilities. But sometimes there are no alternatives.

The overwhelming impression from the focus group discussions and the key stakeholder interviews is that there are very few positive pathways out of caravan parks. This may or may not be true. While the focus group discussions mentioned that people do move from caravan parks into public housing or private rental housing, there was almost no mention of this in the stakeholder interviews. Many tenancy advice workers said they had little or no knowledge of why people leave caravan parks and where they go in terms of housing options. There has been very little research into where people go when they leave caravan parks in terms of their housing options and whether they go back up the housing choice ladder or whether they move to other forms of marginal housing. This is another area where more research is required.

6.6 Predictors of housing vulnerability

Several key stakeholders generally found it hard to identify predictors of housing vulnerability among park dwellers. For the advice agencies in particular residency in parks was, by its very nature, a vulnerable situation. Their experience suggested, for example, that all residents were at risk because of the potential for park closure or change in market sector. Clearly, the descriptions of the chaotic nature of the pathways into caravan parks, recounted above, suggest there is often a complex mixture of factors that impact on the range of options that people may have when they are in housing crisis. Departure from caravan parks might, as suggested above, be a result of getting into arrears or a consequence of anti-social behaviour, but issues relating to drug and alcohol use and the fear of violence were other triggers that might result in individuals moving into or out of caravan parks. A respondent in the Northern Territories referred to the issue and noted the flexibility and 'opportunity to run' that living in caravans gave:

"Families might be moving interstate they might have a lot of reasons like drug addiction issues, homelessness, family violence, conflict with family of origin that sort of thing."

Park owners and managers were asked to estimate the numbers that they turned away in recent months and why they did so. They were unable to provide any accurate figures because they did not keep records of such occurrences. The manager interviewed in Western Sydney revealed, however, that he had 25 to 30 enquires a week and often had to turn people away because he did not have any vacancies.

Park managers and operators indicated they were reluctant to accept people on referral from welfare or crisis accommodation agencies. There were accounts of difficulties that resulted from allocating caravans to people with high and complex needs and suggests that referral agencies were not providing adequate support.

Several tenancy advice agencies in New South Wales and South Australia reported that several caravan parks were moving to exclude individuals and families in need of long-term or permanent housing and shifting the focus of their business to holiday makers and tourists. As one tenancy advice worker in South Australia commented:

"They're becoming tourist only or if the payment is ... a cheque from the Housing Trust or PHASE (a tenant's support group), or whatever, they won't accept them because they also say we've had trouble before with someone so we're not accepting you so that means again, ... even though that's not an appropriate place for people to be staying, it's another avenue that's getting closed now."

Even where park managers/owners were prepared to take people in need they explained how they vetted and excluded certain applicants. In the Northern Territory a park owner explained how he put some applicants through "a fair grilling" and put others off by charging higher prices:

"We just vet our customers or our potential long-term stayers. And if we don't like them in the first instance we don't say no, we just say it will cost you this amount of

money and they can either like it or lump it. A lot of people want us to provide accommodation well I always think well if they can't provide their own accommodation that's a minus for them. ... If somebody's 35 [to] 40 years old and they want you to provide their accommodation which is a caravan I start thinking they're no hoppers - don't want them."

Often the criteria for exclusion appeared arbitrary. In South Adelaide a park manager described how she simply used her intuition to exclude certain applicants.

Interviews with caravan park industry bodies confirmed that managers and operators often used their discretion to exclude certain types of people or declined requests from housing departments or SAAP agencies because of previous experiences with bad tenants or bad debts. In NSW in particular, the improvements to tenancy legislation giving tenants greater rights and appeal rights was cited as the principal reason why caravan park managers and operators were no longer inclined to respond to requests from housing departments or other community organisations for people in housing crisis.

6.7 Appropriate policy responses and early intervention among caravan park residents at risk of homelessness

Caravan parks in Australia have become an important part of the housing market. The nature of risk and need for intervention varies enormously across the population of caravan park dwellers.

For people who choose to live permanently in caravan parks for reasons of lifestyle choice, the sector operates reasonably well. There are issues around matters such as improved security of tenure with clear written lease agreements, improved amenities and park design, and greater consistency in the application of park rules by managers, which, with some adjustments in various jurisdictions, could remove or diminish the risk of homelessness for those residents. However, for those facing eviction in the face of park closures or changes in market sector, the risk of homelessness is much greater. For these households, there is much more that governments can do, in both the short and long-term.

A range of policies and actions are required aimed at meeting the immediate needs of people living long-term in caravan parks, including those whose housing is threatened by park closures or change in market sector. These include:

- appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the patterns of use of caravan parks, the possibility of closure or change in market sector leading to a loss of permanent accommodation;
- improved security of tenure arrangements between residents of caravan parks and caravan park owners/operators, including written site lease agreements, especially in jurisdictions where this is not already a requirement;
- priority access to public or community housing for those in desperate need of housing because of eviction or park closure;
- better dissemination of information about the positives and negatives of living long-term in caravan parks or manufactured housing estates, including information about legal rights and responsibilities for all the parties involved; and
- improved resourcing of advisory and support services;
- consideration of compensation for forced relocations to cover the rehousing and/or relocation costs where such costs are not covered by the park owner's legal obligations.

For those who are forced against their will to live long-term in a caravan park for reasons of unavailability of suitable alternatives in either public or private rental housing or community housing, there are a range of policy supports required to reduce or prevent the incidence of homelessness.

Key stakeholders identified a wide range of potential policy responses to the risks of homelessness for long-term caravan park residents. They ranged from structural issues such as the need for an increased provision of affordable housing to micro factors such as improved

awareness of the availability of a range of support services that might flow from the provision of information on notice boards in caravan parks.

A common theme emerging from the stakeholder interviews was that 'early intervention' was often 'too late' for many residents already living in caravan parks. Housing advice workers in both New South Wales and South Australia, for example, described how many people living in caravan parks had literally fallen through the welfare net. From this perspective interventions should have occurred beforehand or structural issues in the overall supply of affordable housing remedied to make it unnecessary for people to meet their housing needs by living in a caravan park as a last resort.

Several stakeholders made the same suggestions about the need for improvements in overall housing policy and programs as the primary method of addressing the risks of homelessness faced by long-term residents of caravan parks. These include:

- Increased supply of public rental housing, especially in small rural and provincial towns and in metropolitan areas;
- Increased supply of community housing;
- Greater investment in low-cost private rental housing;
- Improvements in the network of crisis accommodation services, especially in rural and provincial centres.
- Increased provision of suitable exit routes for people leaving crisis accommodation services.
- Enhanced access to a range of support services, either before they need to access a caravan park as a last resort or immediately after so the 'homeless career' path is severed.

Several suggestions were also forthcoming about the service needs of residents and the policy implications of their experiences. Key stakeholders were swift to point out the gaps that already exist in service delivery for residents living long-term in caravan parks. It was stated, for example, that caravan park dwellers miss out on basic mainstream services such as road cleaning or grading simply because the parks are located on private land. Poor access to local schools, child care centres and other facilities and services were also highlighted, reflecting a common planning misconception that all caravan park dwellers are temporary residents on holidays.

The notion that caravan park dwellers are not permanent still pervades policy makers and program delivery agencies resulting in inadequate responses from both government and non-government specialist community services and support agencies. For example, the playgroup initiatives developed in the Northern Territory and South Australia stemmed directly from the realisation that there are child protection issues in caravan parks that require special interventions. It is also recognised that many people with drug and/or alcohol problems, mental health problems or the victims of domestic violence are not receiving effective support services. A tenancy advice worker in South Australia suggested that one of the main service needs of caravan park dwellers is that of financial counselling.

As is often the case, the multiple problems faced by those living in caravan parks as a last resort are exacerbated by the remoteness of caravan parks and poor transportation links to facilities and services. If residents do not have their own vehicle, as is often the case with some people with complex needs, then issues of accessibility to services become more problematical.

The need for the development of or improvements to advice and support services was highlighted in both focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews in New South Wales and South Australia. A caravan park activist in New South Wales pointed out that, in her view, current advice in New South Wales was of limited benefit, as few really understood the issues that were being faced by caravan park residents and suggested that 'help line' for prospective caravan park residents would be of assistance.

While the *Residential Parks Act 1998* (NSW) and the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) and *Regulations* relating to caravan parks in New South Wales were broadly welcomed by residents and some stakeholders representing residents in this State, there are

strong views amongst tenancy advice workers that there is a lack of enforcement of the law in relation to security of tenure. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of clarity about whose responsibility it is to monitor compliance. In South Australia it was suggested by some key stakeholders that legislation should be amended to ensure that caravan park dwellers are covered by the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995* (SA). Residents of caravan parks in the Northern Territory currently have no legislative protection.

As mentioned earlier in this report, there is room for improvement in the legislative protection available to residents of caravan parks in all jurisdictions, perhaps with the exception of NSW. Although it should be noted that caravan park industry associations have different views on these matters. The Caravan and Camping Industry Association in NSW is generally opposed to the improved consumer protection measures that have been given to residents of caravan parks in NSW. In particular, they are opposed to the appeal rights over matters such as rent increases and evictions. The Association blames these reforms as contributing, in part, to the closure of some parks and the change in market sector from permanent to tourist in NSW.

The matters in NSW reached a crisis point in late 2002 with the Minister for Planning and Housing in NSW calling a round table conference into the future of caravan parks¹¹. The outcomes of the round table meeting are yet to be released by the NSW Government.

More significantly, was the consistency of comments from key stakeholders and from focus group participants that failures in overall housing policy and programs are the primary cause of people meeting their housing needs by living in caravan parks as a last resort.

In New South Wales and South Australia key actors expressed strong views about the need for more affordable housing options. There is a high degree of unanimity about the bottleneck that is occurring in emergency accommodation. Waiting lists for refuge and hostel places are commonly reported and the decline in public housing in all jurisdictions came in for strong criticism. As a SAAP worker in the Adelaide Hills explained:

“I would like to see an increase in Housing Trust properties up here. If that’s not going to happen, [because] I know they’re trying to reduce the Housing Trust stock here, perhaps more housing for community housing associations. I’d really like to see an increase in supportive accommodation housing made available and the whole [issue of] who’s responsible to actually be resolved because its been going on for years, just to get some physical supported accommodation here because that’s worked very well but there has to be exit options.”

Others suggested there needs to be a greater range of options for emergency or crisis accommodation. This might, it was suggested, include boarding houses and caravan park accommodation. While some stakeholders expressed the view that caravan parks could be used as crisis accommodation, the prevailing view of several stakeholders and focus group participants was that caravan parks are inappropriate for people in crisis. There is a lack of privacy, confined spaces, shared facilities, a management untrained and unqualified in handling people in crisis and a tendency to over concentrate people in crisis tends to increase the level of stress and trauma for the people concerned.

¹¹ Media Release 9 October 2002, ‘Roundtable into future of caravan parks’ Released by the NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Planning and Housing.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

The caravan park sector is highly segmented. It is used as permanent, temporary and crisis accommodation depending on the income and personal circumstances of the resident. There are marked differences in a range of variables for assessing living conditions in caravan parks, including the nature of permanent arrangements, the location of caravan parks in relation to other community services and facilities, the standard of accommodation, the level of amenities, management style and the perceptions of park residents. It is very difficult therefore to settle on a typology of caravan parks that encompasses all of these facets. However, based on the analysis of available data from AAA Tourism it is possible to conclude that for most people living permanently in caravan parks, either as a life style choice or against their will, live in very basic conditions with minimal facilities and amenity compared to conventional forms of housing.

In the Positioning Paper for this project (Wensing and Wood 2003), a distinction was made between two types of caravan park dwellers.

On the one hand, there are those who have chosen caravan park living as their primary form of housing for a range of reasons that suit their lifestyle. This population mainly comprises older people with a high proportion in retirement that have chosen to sell their former home and move into a caravan or a manufactured home on a residential park. Anecdotally, many of the retirees are influenced by their positive experiences while on holidays or while travelling. Of the households in the focus groups that were in this category, they readily admitted they are attracted to the natural settings in which the parks are located, particularly coastal sites, as well as climate and the sense of community in a caravan park. This group broadly corresponds to the 'independents' category as defined by CURA (1978).

Caravan parks are also a common choice for people who have to travel with work and do not wish to tie themselves to any one residency. This group also broadly corresponds to the 'independents' category as defined by CURA (1978). Clearly, there is an element of choice for these two sub groups, but sometimes a constrained choice due to factors such as affordability or lack of full information about the options available to them at the time.

On the other hand there are those who find themselves living in caravan parks because there are few alternatives available to them. They are there not necessarily of their own volition, but rather out of sheer necessity. This includes people on low incomes and others who for various reasons are unable to access other forms of accommodation either in the private, public or community housing sectors. The focus groups and stakeholder interviews confirm that this includes single men, young people, women (especially women with children escaping domestic violence), and families. This group are regarded as the 'trapped' in CURA's typology (CURA 1978). For these people, caravan parks are often a last resort.

All three of these sub-groups were confirmed as strongly represented in the parks surveyed in this study, and at least two of these sub-groups are at risk of homelessness.

The cultural definition of homelessness as developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) has been used for this research. It first appeared in 1992 and was used to define homelessness in the 1996 Census (Chamberlain 1999). The "cultural" definition of homelessness identifies three segments as set out in Figure 7.1.

The cultural definition of homelessness in Australia is based on the prevailing belief that an independent person or couple should be able to expect at least a room to sleep in, a room to live in, kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own and an element of security of tenure because that is the minimum accommodation that most people achieve in the private rental market. The minimum community standard adopted in Chamberlain and MacKenzie's cultural definition is therefore, equivalent to a small rented flat, which is significantly below the culturally desired option of an owner occupied house (Chamberlain 1990:9). This minimum is not specified in any regulations, it is a 'cultural construct' identifying the minimum standard embodied in current housing practices and provides a benchmark for assessing homelessness or inadequate housing.

FIGURE 7.1: A model of homelessness based on shared community standards embodied in current housing practices.

Minimum community standard

Equivalent to a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom.

Culturally recognised exceptions: where it is inappropriate to apply the minimum standard – e.g. seminaries, gaols, student halls of residence, etc.	Marginally housed: people in housing situations close to the minimum standard.
	Tertiary homelessness: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses or caravans – without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure
	Secondary homelessness: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including: friends, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses.
	Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted or abandoned buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc.).

Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992:291

Residents living in caravans of their own volition generally live in cabins or in caravans with permanent annexes and they tend to fall into the first category – marginally housed. However, where their security of tenure is precarious they are at risk of homelessness.

Residents living in caravan parks as a last resort fall into the middle two categories. They are in single roomed accommodation without their own facilities and often move around between various forms of housing (Chamberlain 1999:11). These people may or may not show up as being homeless on Census night as they move between different forms of housing. They show up in the figures for people who have not resided in the same place since the previous Census, but the intervals between Censuses are too long to give any indication of their characteristics including their housing history or ‘homeless career’ as suggested by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2002:5). According to Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2002:5), homelessness should be viewed as a ‘process’ rather than as an ‘event’. Other researchers have suggested that some residents of caravan parks, particularly those with mental illness, may be “transiently, episodically or chronically homeless” (Arce and Vergare 1984).

Chamberlain (1999:8) asserts that it is not possible to have a meaningful debate about the best policy responses to assisting homeless people without more reliable information. We agree. Our research found there is no reliable empirical information on the rate of people moving in and out of caravan parks as long-term dwellers, why they came to live in a caravan park, the average duration of their stay, why they leave and where they go in terms of their housing choice or circumstances, and whether they come back to this form of housing and for whatever reasons. The Census provides us with an overall figure and a broad indication of their characteristics, but a lot happens in caravan parks between each Census and we have no real indication of what is happening.

Indeed, there are several deficiencies in current data sets, including the ABS and the SAAP National Data Collection. For example, ABS data can be improved in a number of ways, including for example, clear and concise definitions of what constitutes a caravan, a cabin or a mobile home, better methods of collection of Census returns from caravan parks, better identification of permanently occupied sites in caravan parks (as distinct from permanently reserved for ‘annuals’ or ‘weekenders’). Residents in caravan parks also need reassurance that the information they provide in Census returns will not be used to prejudice them in any way now or in the future. The SAAP National Data Collection can be improved by better data collection of information from SAAP clients about their housing ‘before’ and ‘after’ a support period and disaggregating the data about caravans from boarding houses, hostels and hotels, and collecting more information from SAAP agencies about the extent to which caravan parks are

being used as overflow for crisis accommodation or as exit points from other crisis accommodation services.

While some State/Territory and Local Governments have some knowledge of the use of caravan parks as long-term or permanent housing as a last resort or as crisis accommodation by SAAP and other welfare agencies, the full extent to which this is occurring in any particular jurisdiction or local government area is not clear. While some States/Territories and Local Governments know how many caravan park establishments there are in their jurisdiction and what the general patterns of use are, others have no knowledge and suggested we use the Yellow Pages and ring around a selection of parks to find out. The effects of on long-term residents of caravan park closures or change in market sector is poorly monitored by State/Territory and Local Governments.

The absence of more reliable information about these issues has significant implications for policy and program development in a number of areas, including for housing policy, provision of support services and for better regulation of the sector to protect the interests of both the residents and the owners/operators of caravan parks. Without better data on trends in the characteristics of caravan park dwellers, it is not possible to conclude to what extent caravan parks form a part of a 'homeless career' for certain types of people or households. No regular monitoring or random sampling is currently being carried out by governments at any level, non-government agencies or research establishments to be able to diagnose the issues.

While there have been some improvements in living conditions and security of tenure for long-term residents living in caravan parks in some jurisdictions, there is room for improvement in all jurisdictions. For example, in the NT, SA, Tas and the ACT there has been little if any improvement in the level of security of tenure for long-term caravan park residents. In all jurisdictions the division of responsibility within and between spheres of government for the oversight and regulation of caravan parks continues to bewilder residents. Nobody at the local level has overall responsibility for the many issues associated with the operation of caravan parks. The current division of responsibility between levels of government is failing to adequately address the totality of the issues affecting residents and the caravan park industry.

This research agrees with earlier research that the issues confronting permanent residents in caravan parks, including the level of housing risk, are much the same today as they were more than a decade ago. They include:

- lack of security of tenure;
- inadequate housing standards;
- high risk of homelessness;
- minimal access to community, health and education services;
- lack of knowledge about and lack of support in asserting tenancy rights; and
- a range of social justice issues (Purdon Associates 1994; DFACS 2000).

The focus groups and stakeholder interviews revealed a range of factors make caravan park residents vulnerable to homelessness and that a combination of several factors are the cause of homelessness. These include:

- failure to pay rents;
- personal and life circumstances;
- park closures or changes in market sector;
- lack of security of tenure;
- park design and amenities;
- park rules and management styles.

Stakeholders, residents and park owners and managers all cited failure to pay rent or anti-social behaviour as the most frequent causes of loss of housing or eviction from caravan parks.

The findings confirm that there is a high and recurring incidence of homelessness amongst some caravan park residents and that this is occurring relatively frequently and at a steady rate in all jurisdictions. While the circumstances surrounding people's experiences are often complex and interwoven, the fact that people are resorting to living long-term in caravan parks as a last resort is indicative of the failure of housing policy and programs for low income people in housing stress and with complex support needs.

7.2 Policy Implications

Caravan parks have become an important part of the housing market in Australia. The nature of risk and need for intervention varies enormously across the population of caravan park dwellers.

A whole-of-government approach is required to improve data collection and monitoring of trends in the use of caravan parks for long-term or permanent housing. The research reveals that current data collection is unreliable in terms of drawing clear conclusions about the extent to which this is occurring, why it is occurring and in which regions/locations. More reliable monitoring and analysis is required to understand why caravan parks are closing or changing market sector and the effects this is having on long-term residents.

There is little doubt that caravan parks will continue to play a significant role in the housing market for both short and long-term purposes as a lifestyle choice as well as a stop-gap measure by individuals or households that may have no other choice. Despite the improvements shown that have been achieved over the last decade, there is still considerable room for improvement in the overall quality of life, security of tenure and access to services and facilities for caravan park residents.

A range of policies and actions are required by all spheres of government to meet the immediate needs of people living long-term in caravan parks, including those whose housing is threatened by park closures or change in market sector. These include:

- appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the patterns of use of caravan parks, the possibility of closure or change in market sector leading to a loss of permanent accommodation (State/Territory Governments can set the framework for monitoring with Local Government and the caravan park industry involved in collecting or providing information at regular intervals);
- improved security of tenure arrangements between residents of caravan parks and caravan park owners/operators, including written site lease agreements, especially in jurisdictions where this is not already a requirement (State/Territory Governments can improve the legislative provisions relating to security of tenure with greater enforcement carried out by appropriate State Government agencies. A self-enforcement or self monitoring regime by caravan park industry bodies will not work in this area and Local Government cannot undertake this function where they own and/or manage caravan parks);
- priority access to public or community housing for those in desperate need of housing because of eviction or park closure (Commonwealth/State/Territory Government public housing agencies, community housing providers and better coordination with SAAP agencies);
- better dissemination of information about the positives and negatives of living long-term in caravan parks or manufactured housing estates, including information about legal rights and responsibilities for all the parties involved (Commonwealth/State/Territory Governments, tenancy groups, and other housing providers, including the caravan park industry); and
- improved resourcing of advisory and support services (Commonwealth/State/Territory Governments with Local Government playing a provider role);
- consideration of compensation for forced relocations to cover the rehousing and/or relocation costs where such costs are not covered by the park owner's legal obligations (State/Territory Governments).

Interventions are required earlier so as to avoid the necessity of having to meet housing needs by living in a caravan park as a last resort. Current practices of using caravan parks as crisis

accommodation or as exit routes from supported accommodation appear to be in response to severe pressures in that sector. A wide range of policy responses are required involving all spheres of government, the community services sector and the private sector. These include:

- increased supply of public rental housing, especially in small rural and provincial towns and in metropolitan areas;
- increased supply of community housing;
- greater investment in low-cost private rental housing;
- Improvements in the network of crisis accommodation services, especially in rural and provincial centres;
- increased provision of suitable exit routes for people leaving crisis accommodation services; and
- enhanced access to a range of support services, either before they need to access a caravan park as a last resort or immediately after so the 'homeless career' path is severed.

The notion that caravan park dwellers are not permanent still pervades policy makers and program delivery agencies. A whole-of-government, whole-of-community response is required to ensure this sector of the housing market is properly recognised and serviced so as to reduce the need to resort to this kind of housing as a last resort and to reduce the risk of homelessness amongst those who actively choose this form of housing for reasons of lifestyle choice.

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APPENDIX 1. ABS 1996 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING – CURF

TABLE A1.1: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Households Who Reside in Caravans, 1996¹²

	Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted Number)	Percentage of Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted %)	Percentage of All Households (Weighted %)
Household Income			
\$0	600	1.0%	0.6%
\$1-\$199	13,900	22.6%	7.8%
\$200-\$299	10,800	17.5%	7.9%
\$300-\$399	6,900	11.2%	6.6%
\$400-\$499	5,300	8.6%	6.8%
\$500-\$599	3,200	5.2%	5.6%
\$600-\$699	2,600	4.2%	5.8%
\$700-\$799	2,400	3.9%	4.6%
\$800-\$999	2,600	4.2%	8.2%
\$1,000-\$1,199	800	1.3%	6.3%
\$1,200-\$1,499	600	1.0%	5.8%
\$1,500-\$1,999	500	0.8%	4.3%
\$2,000 or more	200	0.3%	4.2%
Not Stated	11,200	18.2%	25.6%
Total	61,600	100.0%	100.0%
Household Type			
One Family Household	22,000	35.7%	60.1%
Two Family Household	100	0.2%	0.8%
Lone Person Household	31,000	50.3%	19.1%
Group Household	1,800	2.9%	3.5%
Other	2,300	3.7%	1.3%
Not Stated	4,400	7.1%	15.3%
Total	61,600	100.0%	100.0%
One Year Mobility Indicator			
All residents changed address during last year	17,700	28.7%	14.0%
Some residents changed	1,400	2.3%	3.2%

¹² The data contained in the CURF is a 1% sample of the entire population. Figures from the CURF are 'weighted' to obtain a figure that reflects the entire population. The figures also exclude overseas visitors.

	Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted Number)	Percentage of Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted %)	Percentage of All Households (Weighted %)
address during last year			
No residents changes address during last year	33,800	54.9%	64.7%
Not Stated	6,700	10.9%	1.6%
Not Applicable	2,000	3.2%	16.6%
Total	61,600	100.0%	100.0%
Five Year Mobility Indicator			
All residents changed address during last 5 years	18,900	30.7%	42.3%
Some residents changed address during last 5 years	3,200	5.2%	2.6%
No residents changes address during last 5 years	6,700	10.9%	16.6%
Not Stated	600	1.0%	3.1%
Not Applicable	32,200	52.3%	35.5%
Total	61,600	100.0%	100.0%
	Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted Number)	Percentage of Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted %)	Percentage of All Households (Weighted %)
Tenure			
Fully Owned	32,100	52.1%	34.8%
Being Purchased	4,400	7.1%	21.8%
Private Renter	9,400	15.3%	16.5%
Social Renter	200	0.3%	4.8%
Rent from Employer	600	1.0%	0.9%
Rented from Other Sources	3,500	5.7%	0.7%
Other	1,000	1.6%	1.9%
Not Stated	6,000	9.7%	3.3%
Not Applicable	4,400	7.1%	15.3%
Total	61,600	100.0%	100.0%
Housing Stress			
Households in Rental Stress	6,000	40.5%	26.8%
Households not in Rental Stress	7,600	51.4%	62.5%
Not Applicable/Not Stated	1,200	8.1%	10.7%

	Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted Number)	Percentage of Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted %)	Percentage of All Households (Weighted %)
<i>Total Renters</i>	14,800	100.0%	100.0%
Households in Mortgage Stress	1,200	27.3%	16.7%
Households Not in Mortgage Stress	2,400	54.5%	68.6%
Not Applicable/Not Stated	800	18.2%	14.7%
<i>Total Purchasers</i>	4,400	100.0%	100.0%
Weekly Rent			
\$0-\$24	1,300	8.8%	5.8%
\$25-\$49	900	6.1%	9.3%
\$50-\$74	2,900	19.6%	8.9%
\$75-\$99	3,700	25.0%	10.3%
\$100-\$124	2,300	15.5%	14.3%
\$125-\$149	1,700	11.5%	14.6%
\$150-\$174	1,000	6.8%	14.8%
\$175-\$199	100	0.7%	6.6%
\$200-\$299	0	0.0%	9.3%
\$300-\$399	0	0.0%	2.2%
\$400-\$499	0	0.0%	0.5%
\$500 or more	100	0.7%	0.6%
Not Stated	800	5.4%	2.8%
Total Renters	14,800	100.0%	100.0%
Monthly Mortgage Repayments			
\$1-\$199	500	11.4%	4.9%
\$200-\$399	1,400	31.8%	8.9%
\$400-\$499	300	6.8%	8.0%
\$500-\$599	100	2.3%	8.3%
\$600-\$699	500	11.4%	10.8%
\$700-\$799	100	2.3%	7.8%
\$800-\$899	400	9.1%	10.2%
\$900-\$999	100	2.3%	6.0%
\$1,000-\$1,099	0	0.0%	8.0%
\$1,100-\$1,199	200	4.5%	3.6%
\$1,200-\$1,299	0	0.0%	3.0%

	Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted Number)	Percentage of Households Who Reside in a Caravan (Weighted %)	Percentage of All Households (Weighted %)
\$1,300-\$1,399	100	2.3%	4.3%
\$1,400-\$1,499	0	0.0%	1.7%
\$1,500 or more	200	4.5%	9.5%
Not Stated	500	11.4%	5.1%
Total Purchasers	4,400	100.0%	100.0%

(Source: ABS, 1996 Census of Population and Housing CURF)

APPENDIX 2. ABS 2001 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

TABLE A2.1: Number of Individuals in Caravan Parks, Manufactured Home Estates (MHE) and Other Caravans in Australia by Selected Socio- Economic Characteristics, 2001

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total
Age				
0-14	5,742	152	3,546	9,440
15-24	5,605	137	2,049	7,791
25-34	6,772	157	2,790	9,719
35-44	7,818	231	3,287	11,336
45-54	10,074	500	3,390	13,964
55-64	11,590	1,268	2,840	15,698
65 and over	13,862	3,407	2,551	19,820
Total	61,463	5,852	20,453	87,768
Occupation				
Managers and Administrators	425	14	514	953
Professionals	786	45	449	1,280
Associate Professionals	1,425	65	567	2,057
Tradespersons and Related Workers	2,874	96	1,005	3,975
Advanced Clerical and Service Workers	179	19	141	339
Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	1,739	132	595	2,466
Intermediate Production and Transport Workers	3,147	106	883	4,136
Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	1,392	104	467	1,963
Labourers and Related Workers	4,245	151	1,680	6,076
Inadequately described	162	6	76	244
Not stated	389	35	155	579
Total Employed	16,763	773	6,532	24,068
5 Year Mobility Indicator				
Same as in 2001	22,771	2,671	7,207	32,649
Elsewhere in Australia	24,188	2,402	7,247	33,837
Overseas 1996	1,419	73	286	1,778
Same as in 2000	4,724	402	1,759	6,885
Not stated	6,245	261	2,791	9,297
Not applicable (aged <5)	2,113	51	1,168	3,332
Total	61,460	5,860	20,458	87,778

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total
Post School Qualifications				
Postgraduate Degree	105	9	63	177
Graduate Diploma/Certificate	101	8	57	166
Bachelor Degree	871	96	447	1,414
<i>University Degree</i>	<i>1,077</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>567</i>	<i>1,757</i>
Advanced Diploma/Diploma	1,161	145	481	1,787
Trade Certificate	7,718	739	2,401	10,858
<i>Total Certificate</i>	<i>8,879</i>	<i>884</i>	<i>2,882</i>	<i>12,645</i>
Other Certificate level	875	61	256	1,192
No recognised qualification	44,468	4,619	13,007	62,094
Total	55,299	5,677	16,712	77,688

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total
Labour Force Status				
Employee	14,677	685	4,988	20,350
Employer	585	15	385	985
Own account worker	1,380	62	1,051	2,493
Contributing family worker	120	6	104	230
<i>Total Employed</i>	<i>16,642</i>	<i>768</i>	<i>6,528</i>	<i>24,058</i>
Unemployed looking for full-time work	4,708	107	1,151	5,966
Unemployed looking for part-time work	826	29	248	1,103
<i>Total Unemployed</i>	<i>5,534</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>1,399</i>	<i>7,069</i>
Not in the labour force	28,133	4,421	6,722	39,276
Not stated	5,289	386	2,260	7,935
Total	55,718	5,711	16,909	78,338
Birthplace				
Australia	43,244	3,781	14,726	61,751
Other Oceania	2,609	150	510	3,269
North West Europe	6,961	1,461	1,470	9,892
South East Europe	736	73	302	1,111
North Africa	36	7	0	43
Middle East	114	0	17	131
Asia	556	42	238	836
Northern America	174	15	44	233
South America	54	4	13	71
Central America	12	0	3	15
Caribbean	9	0	6	15

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa	171	14	71	256
Inadequately Described	35	3	11	49
Not stated	6,769	312	3,052	10,133
Total	61,480	5,862	20,463	87,805

TABLE A2.2: Percentage of Individuals in Caravan Parks, Manufactured Home Estates (MHE) and Other Caravans in Australia by Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics, 2001

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total	Australia
Age					
0-14	9.3%	2.6%	17.3%	10.8%	20.8%
15-24	9.1%	2.3%	10.0%	8.9%	13.7%
25-34	11.0%	2.7%	13.6%	11.1%	14.5%
35-44	12.7%	3.9%	16.1%	12.9%	15.3%
45-54	16.4%	8.5%	16.6%	15.9%	13.7%
55-64	18.9%	21.7%	13.9%	17.9%	9.4%
65 and over	22.6%	58.2%	12.5%	22.6%	12.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Occupation					
Managers and Administrators	2.5%	1.8%	7.9%	4.0%	9.2%
Professionals	4.7%	5.8%	6.9%	5.3%	18.2%
Associate Professionals	8.5%	8.4%	8.7%	8.5%	11.8%
Tradespersons and Related Workers	17.1%	12.4%	15.4%	16.5%	12.3%
Advanced Clerical and Service Workers	1.1%	2.5%	2.2%	1.4%	3.7%
Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	10.4%	17.1%	9.1%	10.2%	16.5%
Intermediate Production and Transport Workers	18.8%	13.7%	13.5%	17.2%	8.1%
Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	8.3%	13.5%	7.1%	8.2%	9.5%
Labourers and Related Workers	25.3%	19.5%	25.7%	25.2%	8.6%
Inadequately described	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%
Not stated	2.3%	4.5%	2.4%	2.4%	1.2%
Total Employed	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
5 Year Mobility Indicator					
Same as in 2001	37.1%	45.6%	35.2%	37.2%	49.2%
Elsewhere in Australia	39.4%	41.0%	35.4%	38.5%	-
Overseas 1996	2.3%	1.2%	1.4%	2.0%	-
Same as in 2000	7.7%	6.9%	8.6%	7.8%	-
Not stated	10.2%	4.5%	13.6%	10.6%	-

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total	Australia
Not applicable (aged <5)	3.4%	0.9%	5.7%	3.8%	-
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-
Post School Qualifications					
Postgraduate Degree	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	1.8%
Graduate Diploma/Certificate	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	1.4%
Bachelor Degree	1.6%	1.7%	2.7%	1.8%	9.7%
<i>University Degree</i>	1.9%	2.0%	3.4%	2.3%	12.9%
Advanced Diploma/Diploma	2.1%	2.6%	2.9%	2.3%	6.0%
Trade Certificate	14.0%	13.0%	14.4%	14.0%	-
Other Certificate level	1.6%	1.1%	1.5%	1.5%	-
<i>Total Certificate</i>	15.6%	14.1%	15.9%	15.5%	15.8%
No recognised qualification	80.4%	81.4%	77.8%	79.9%	65.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total	Australia
Labour Force Status					
Employee	26.3%	12.0%	29.5%	26.0%	
Employer	1.0%	0.3%	2.3%	1.3%	-
Own account worker	2.5%	1.1%	6.2%	3.2%	-
Contributing family worker	0.2%	0.1%	0.6%	0.3%	-
<i>Total Employed</i>	30.0%	13.5%	38.6%	30.8%	55.9%
Unemployed looking for full-time work	8.4%	1.9%	6.8%	7.6%	-
Unemployed looking for part-time work	1.5%	0.5%	1.5%	1.4%	-
<i>Total Unemployed</i>	9.9%	2.4%	8.3%	9.0%	4.4%
Not in the labour force	50.5%	77.4%	39.8%	50.1%	35.4%
Not stated	9.5%	6.8%	13.4%	10.1%	
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Birthplace					-
Australia	70.3%	64.5%	72.0%	70.3%	72.6%
Other Oceania	4.2%	2.6%	2.5%	3.7%	2.4%
North West Europe	11.3%	24.9%	7.2%	11.3%	7.2%
South East Europe	1.2%	1.2%	1.5%	1.3%	4.1%
North Africa	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Middle East	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.9%
Asia	0.9%	0.7%	1.2%	1.0%	5.2%

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total	Australia
Northern America	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%
South America	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
Central America	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Caribbean	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.8%
Inadequately Described	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Not stated	11.0%	5.3%	14.9%	11.5%	5.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE A2.3: Number of Households in Caravan Parks, Manufactured Home Estates (MHE) and Other Caravans in Australia by Selected Socio- Economic Characteristics, 2001

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total
Household Income				
\$0-\$199	4,600	269	1,765	6,634
\$200-\$299	8,806	951	1,663	11,420
\$300-\$399	6,017	851	1,372	8,240
\$400-\$499	4,343	547	953	5,843
\$500-\$599	2,534	222	697	3,453
\$600-\$699	2,448	278	623	3,349
\$700-\$799	1,255	77	383	1,715
\$800-\$999	1,623	102	553	2,278
\$1,000-\$1,199	1,104	52	347	1,503
\$1,200-\$1,499	541	24	256	821
\$1,500-\$1,999	526	26	251	803
\$2,000 or more	205	0	89	294
Not Stated	4,274	379	1,044	5,697
Total	38,276	3,778	9,996	52,050
Tenure				
Fully Owned	20,685	3,109	4,851	28,645
Being Purchased	1,099	74	836	2,009
Rented - State/Territory Housing Authority	43	0	41	84
Rented - Community/Co-operative housing group	132	17	285	434
Rented - Other Sources	11,435	291	1,737	13,463
<i>Total Rented from Other Sources</i>	<i>11,567</i>	<i>308</i>	<i>2,022</i>	<i>13,897</i>
Rented - Landlord Not stated	474	7	43	524
Other Tenure Type	1,824	162	1,582	3,568

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total
Not Stated	2,589	111	609	3,309
Total	38,281	3,771	9,984	52,036
Household Type				
Couple Family with children	1,944	88	1,282	3,314
Single Parent family	2,307	134	680	3,121
Couple without children	9,393	1,538	2,060	12,991
Other Family	281	24	109	414
Group Household	1,259	80	298	1,637
Lone Person Household	23,089	1,910	5,558	30,557
Total	38,273	3,774	9,987	52,034

TABLE A2.4: Percentage of Households in Caravan Parks, Manufactured Home Estates (MHE) and Other Caravans in Australia by Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics, 2001

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total	Australia
Household Income					
\$0-\$199	12.0%	7.1%	17.7%	12.7%	4.8%
\$200-\$299	23.0%	25.2%	16.6%	21.9%	4.1%
\$300-\$399	15.7%	22.5%	13.7%	15.8%	7.5%
\$400-\$499	11.3%	14.5%	9.5%	11.2%	8.8%
\$500-\$599	6.6%	5.9%	7.0%	6.6%	7.5%
\$600-\$699	6.4%	7.4%	6.2%	6.4%	5.4%
\$700-\$799	3.3%	2.0%	3.8%	3.3%	6.2%
\$800-\$999	4.2%	2.7%	5.5%	4.4%	4.8%
\$1,000-\$1,199	2.9%	1.4%	3.5%	2.9%	9.3%
\$1,200-\$1,499	1.4%	0.6%	2.6%	1.6%	8.1%
\$1,500-\$1,999	1.4%	0.7%	2.5%	1.5%	8.0%
\$2,000 or more	0.5%	0.0%	0.9%	0.6%	10.0%
Not Stated	11.2%	10.0%	10.4%	10.9%	15.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Tenure					
Fully Owned	54.0%	82.4%	48.6%	55.0%	39.8%
Being Purchased	2.9%	2.0%	8.4%	3.9%	26.5%
Rented - State/Territory Housing Authority	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	4.5%
Rented - Community/Co-operative housing group	0.3%	0.5%	2.9%	0.8%	-

	Caravan Park	MHE	Other	Total	Australia
Rented - Other Sources	29.9%	7.7%	17.4%	25.9%	-
<i>Total Rented from Other Sources</i>	30.2%	8.2%	20.3%	26.7%	21.5%
Rented - Landlord Not stated	1.2%	0.2%	0.4%	1.0%	0.3%
Other tenure type	4.8%	4.3%	15.8%	6.9%	2.8%
Not Stated	6.8%	2.9%	6.1%	6.4%	4.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Household Type					
Couple family with children	5.1%	2.3%	12.8%	6.4%	34.4%
Single Parent family	6.0%	3.6%	6.8%	6.0%	26.2%
Couple without children	24.5%	40.8%	20.6%	25.0%	11.3%
Other family	0.7%	0.6%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%
Group Household	3.3%	2.1%	3.0%	3.1%	3.8%
Lone Person Household	60.3%	50.6%	55.7%	58.7%	24.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX 3. SUMMARY OF STATUS OF CARAVAN PARK LIVING 1993 AND 2001 BY STATE AND TERRITORY

In 1993 and in 2001 the National Dissemination Program of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle undertook a survey of the status of caravan park living in each State and Territory (FAC 2002). The same questions were asked of key stakeholder agencies in 1993 and in 2001. The results of the two surveys are summarised in the following tables¹³.

The questions were as follows:

1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan parks and manufactured homes in your State/Territory?
2. What percentage of the State's population lives in caravan parks and manufactured home communities?
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the caravan park industry?
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure? E.g. leasing arrangements, protection for residents.
5. Are there any caravan parks or manufactured home communities designated as Retirement Villages?
6. What government departments are involved in the control of standards and tenancy matters?
7. How adequate is the current legislation in dealing with the issues and problems that the developing industry has posed?

This comparative assessment shows there are still disparities in the approach to issues around caravan park residency and that in some jurisdictions the situation had not changed markedly in the period 1993-2001.

¹³ Source for all the following tables: National Dissemination Project, Family Action Centre (2002), *National Overview 1993-2001*, University of Newcastle.

TABLE A3.1 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – Australian Capital Territory

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	Yes. The ACT Housing Trust manages a long stay caravan park for owner-occupants on a long-term or semi permanent basis, with both caravans & mobile homes.	Yes. ACT Housing used to own a long-term park. The park was purchased by & is now managed by a community organisation (Koomari).
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	At 1986 Census, 727 people lived in caravan parks, representing 0.3% of ACT population. By 1991 Census, there were 778 people living in caravan parks (0.3%).	There are only 3 caravan parks in the ACT. 1991 Census there were 550 residents in caravan parks & by 1996 this dropped to 340, 0.1% of the ACT population.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	No regulatory standards developed. The Government is able to impose conditions on leasing arrangements with the park lessee. If conditions not adhered to, action can be taken to ensure compliance.	There are no standards or specific regulations for caravan parks & residents. Conditions for residents contained in lease agreements & adequacy of protection is limited to how comprehensive the terms are – generally not very comprehensive.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	Dept of Environment, Land & Planning is considering a proposal to enable owners of mobile homes to 'sub-let' land from proprietors of mobile home parks. If this can be achieved, then financial institutions would accept the sub-lease as a mortgageable property. The rights of residents & park owner will be addressed.	In 1995, as part of the development of new residential tenancy legislation, the Community Law Reform Committee produced a consultation paper on the need for Residential Tenancy law in relation to caravan parks and relocatable home parks. There has been no further work on this issue. The <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> does not apply to caravan parks. Residents' protection limited to individual lease agreements. Residents can seek redress through the Small Claims Court or the Magistrates Court.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	No caravan parks are designated as Retirement Villages.	No caravan parks are designated as Retirement Villages.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	The Dept of Environment, Land & Planning is responsible for the planning & administration of the leasehold system of land tenure in the ACT.	The Dept of Urban Services is responsible for planning & administration of the leasehold system of land tenure in the ACT. Dept of Justice & Community safety is responsible for tenancy legislation.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	Caravan parks in the ACT not regulated by legislation, the land use is subject to the lease. The Community Law Reform Committee preparing a report on landlord/tenant relations in the ACT & expected to report by 1994.	There is currently no legislation & this is clearly inadequate. There have been calls for further work on the development of such legislation as part of the review of the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> .

Sources for ACT information: 1992 ACT Dept of Environment, Land & Planning. 2002 Tenants Union ACT.

TABLE A3.2 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – New South Wales

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	Yes, since the introduction of Ordinance No. 71 on 1 Dec 1986. Parks may be divided into long and short-term residence. Standards are higher for long-term sites.	Yes, since 1986.
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	It is not possible with any degree of certainty to determine the number of people occupying sites in caravan parks long-term. As at 30 th June 1990, the population of NSW was 5,826,800 (ABS). The number of long-term sites on caravan parks at that time was 22,371.	It is estimated that less than 1% of NSW's population resides in residential parks. There are up to 40,000 permanent residents of parks in NSW. About 25,000 park sites in the 950 NSW parks may be used for permanent occupancy.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	Standards developed for regulation of the caravan park industry are found in Ordinance No. 71 under the Local Government Act.	Tenancy aspects dealt with under the <i>Residential Parks Act 1998</i> and the <i>Residential Tribunal Act 1998</i> . Local Government aspects by regulations under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> .
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	Protection of residents and leasing arrangements are covered by the <i>Residential Tenancies Act</i> . Security of tenure is covered in the Code of Practice for the Caravan/Relocatable Home Industry developed by the Dept of Housing. Section 289K of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> permits subdivision for purposes of leasing up to 20 years.	The <i>Residential Parks Act</i> includes a number of important benefits for permanent residents. E.g.: Standard tenancy agreements, limits on electricity and water charges, park liaison committees, sale of homes on sites, & dispute resolution mechanisms. Park owners must have reasons for termination and compensation may be payable if residents are required to vacate. An order of the Residential Tribunal must be obtained before possession of a site may be taken by the park owner.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	It is believed that several licensed caravan parks are designated as "Retirement Villages", however the Dept of Fair Trading does not keep any records regarding this issue.	The definition of 'retirement village' in the NSW <i>Retirement Villages Act 1999</i> specifically excludes residential parks. It is an offence to represent a complex as a retirement village if it is not within the meaning of the legislation.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	Standards: Local Councils, Dept of Local Government & Co-operatives, Dept of Conservation & Land Management. Tenancy matters: Dept of Housing, Tenancy Service.	Standards: The Dept of Urban Affairs & Planning. Tenancy matters: The Dept of Fair Trading.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	The legislation is considered adequate. Problems of a technical nature may, as a last resort, be resolved through the Land & Environment Court. Tenancy problems may be resolved through the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.	The <i>Residential Parks Act</i> considered to be adequate for dealing with the major concerns of park residents, but continues to be monitored by the Dept of Fair Trading. Planning Dept of the view that there are no serious deficiencies with the Regulations.

Sources for NSW Information: 1992 Dept of Local Government & Cooperatives. 2001 Dept of Fair Trading.

TABLE A3.3 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – Northern Territory

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	Yes.	Yes
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	Unknown. ABS advises that there were 1,151 sites within caravan parks occupied by long-term guests as at June 1992. There are no figures for average occupancy available. The Territory population as at March 1992 was 168,600.	Unsure. Latest ABS data is dated 1996.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	Regulation of standards is covered in the schedule to the <i>Caravan Parks Act</i> .	<i>Caravan Parks Act 1975</i> was brought in after cyclone Tracy when vans were brought in for construction workers & temporary homes. This applied only 26 kms from Darwin GPO. The Act is now repealed. No plans at present to introduce new legislation.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	Security of tenure is on an agreed resident/management rental/occupancy basis and conformity with other management rules within the park.	None at all. 1997-98 new <i>Tenancy Act</i> does not apply to caravan park residents.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	No parks are designated as 'Retirement Villages'.	No parks are designated as 'Retirement Villages'.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	The Office of Local Government has administrative responsibility for the <i>Caravan Park Act</i> . Other government bodies involved through responsibility for other Acts and Regulations are the Power & Water Authority, Dept of Lands and Housing, Dept of Health & Community Services, Northern Territory Service and the Police.	Dept of Business, Industry and Resource Development.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	Current legislation only covers caravan parks within a 26kms radius of the Darwin GPO. Complaints over recent years have been minimal. The <i>Act</i> is currently under review.	No specific legislation.

Sources for NT information: 1992 Office of Local Government. 2001 Dept of Local Government.

TABLE A3.4 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – Queensland

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	The legality of living permanently living in caravan pars subject to the whims of local authorities. However, most authorities have developed ordinances to cater for more permanent mobile home parks.	Yes. The <i>Mobile Homes Act 1989</i> provides for written agreements with the park operator to secure a particular site. The agreement remains in force until terminated by either party. The <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1994</i> applies to renters of caravans, caravan park sites and mobile homes for periodic & fixed term tenancies.
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	According to 1986 Census 58,000 residents living in caravan or mobile home parks. About 30% of Australia's park population.	According to 1996 Census about 40,000 people reside in mobile homes, house boats, cabins & caravans. The Office of Fair Trading data suggests approx. 10,000 mobile home owner occupied dwellings subject to the <i>Mobile Homes Act 1989</i> .
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	Dept of Housing, Local Government and Planning developing a model code for caravan and relocatable parks.	<i>Residential Tenancies Act 1994</i> provides security of tenure based on written agreements (other than for short tenancies) & outline rights & responsibilities. Also provides for dispute resolution, maintenance of basic facilities & application of park rules. Failure to comply may result in penalties. All Local Councils must develop their own local laws relating to health aspects.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	Mobile Homes Act 1989 offers protection to a small section of the park community. Residential Tenancies Act being expanded to include those not already covered.	Under the <i>Mobile Homes Act 1989</i> written agreements to secure rental of a site. Under <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1994</i> provides for short (up to 42 days with 1 renewal) & long (fixed or periodic) term tenancies, and requires written agreements, a statement on rights & responsibilities, condition reports, obligations for park rules & processes for breaches of agreements.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	No parks are designated as 'Retirement Villages'.	No parks are designated as 'Retirement Villages'.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	Dept of Housing, Local Government & Planning & Dept of Justice & Corrective Services.	Building Code of Australia applies to relocatable homes. BCA administered by LG. Dept of LG & Planning. Residential Tenancies Authority.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	Totally inadequate, except in the case of mobile homes.	Residential Tenancies Act monitored on a continual basis. <i>Mobile Homes Act 1989</i> under review.

Sources for Qld information: 1992 courtesy of Caravan & Mobile Homes Residents Association. 2001 combined Qld agency response.

TABLE A3.5 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – South Australia

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	Yes.	Yes.
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	Based on available statistical data, a Task Force estimated that some 4,000 people reside in caravans. Estimated total population of SA in 1991 was 1,454,443.	According to ABS, number of residents decreased by 38% between 1991 & 1996.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	The key industry association has developed a code for long-term residency in caravan parks.	The Caravan Parks Association released a new Code of Practice in Nov 2000. Covers permanent living, occupancy, conditions for termination, planning & building & health & safety.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	Residents in on site and 'fixed' van or cabin come within the provisions of the <i>Residential Tenancies Act</i> . Other residents have recourse only through civil action or Office of Fair Trading.	Limited & uncertain coverage of agreements between landlord & tenant of caravans under the <i>Residential Tenancies Act</i> . The Act does not apply to a resident who owns the caravan and rents the allotment. Security of tenure is addressed in Code of Practice from the industry association.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	No parks are designated as 'Retirement Villages'.	Currently 5 'age specific' residential parks in SA, 2 of which are manufactured homes sites. 1 of which is seeking to be designated as a retirement village.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	Standards: Local Government Councils, Local Boards of Health, SA Housing Trust, Metropolitan & Country Fire Service.	The Office of Consumer & Business Affairs, Residential Tenancies Tribunal, Local Government Authorities & the SA Housing Trust.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	A Task Force has prepared a report on long-term residency in caravan parks. Awaiting Cabinet endorsement for release. The Task Force identified current legislation relating to planning & zoning inadequate & major shortcomings in relation to consumer protection issues. This was most evident in respect of mobile rental vans not being covered by the Residential Tenancies Act & lack of tenancy protection for individuals who rent a site only.	No recent legislative changes in SA that deal with the caravan & mobile home park industry. A Private Members Bill, the Residential Tenancies (Caravan & Transportable Home Parks) Amendment Bill 2001, was introduced in the House of Assembly on 5 July 2001.

Sources for SA information: 1992 SA Housing Trust. 2002 Office of Consumer & Business Affairs.

TABLE A3.6 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – Tasmania

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	Yes.	Subject to local Council by-laws governing Council controlled caravan parks where they occur, it is still legal to live permanently in a caravan park.
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	Less than 0.4%.	No current statistics, but unlikely to exceed 0.5%.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	No specific code of regulations has been drawn up to cover this industry.	No specific code for caravan parks, except that standards applicable to tourism accommodation which are the responsibility of the Licensing Commission.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	These matters are sorted out between landlord & tenant. No complaints have surfaced at this time.	Security of tenure is a matter between park management, owners and lessees.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	There are no caravan parks or manufactured home communities designated as 'Retirement Villages'.	There are no caravan parks or manufactured home communities designated as 'Retirement Villages'.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	The Licensing Commission has some control over caravans but this is primarily in relation to tourism.	The Licensing Commission & the Consumer Affairs Division of the Department of Justice & Industrial Relations in relation to tenancy issues.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	No major problems have arisen so for the present the situation appears to be adequate. However, the need to address specific legislation may well increase in the years ahead.	Local Councils are seeing issues emerge in relation to planning scheme and permanent residency in caravan parks. No action yet.

Sources for Tas information: 1992 Local Government Office. 2002 Dept of Premier & Cabinet.

TABLE A3.7 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – Victoria

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan parks?	Yes, it is legal to live permanently in caravan parks & manufactured home communities in Victoria.	Yes, it is legal to live permanently in caravan parks & manufactured home communities in Victoria.
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	There are no clear figures available regarding the percentage of the State's population living in these communities, an estimate is between 12,500 & 20,000.	ABS Census data from 1996 indicates that 9,362 people live in caravan parks, approximately 0.2% of the population. 3,745 residents rent the caravan & the site, while the remainder own their van & rent the site.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	Standards for regulation of the caravan park industry are currently being formulated.	Caravan parks are regulated by the <i>Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks & Movable Dwellings) Regulations 1999</i> , covering design standards, fire safety, water & sewerage standards & licensing requirements. The <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> prescribes the rights & responsibilities of park owners & residents, however it is only applicable once a resident has lived in a park for 90 consecutive days, unless by written agreement with the park owner. The <i>Building Act 1993</i> and the <i>Health Act</i> also apply.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	In February 1989 the Caravan Parks & Movable Dwellings Act was proclaimed followed by the Amendment Act 1989. The legislation provides a degree of protection for tenants including access to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.	Once a resident is covered by the <i>Residential Tenancies Regulations 1999</i> , the legislation provides a degree of protection for residents, including access to the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal. 90 day "no reason" notices to vacate are a concerning feature of the legislation. The Act is currently under review.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	There are parks in Victoria which have been designated by the owners as 'Retirement Villages'.	A small number of parks in Victoria are operated as Retirement Villages, but no solid data. Some parks advertise as providing a retirement option.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	The Dept of Housing, the Office of Local Government and local Councils, the Minister for Fair Trading & Women's Affairs.	Office of Housing for public/social housing system, housing policy, Consumer & Business Affairs Victoria for funding for tenancy services, enforcement/compliance with the RTA, Dept of Infrastructure and local Councils for enforcement/compliance of health & building codes, & Dept of Justice for funding & operation of the Tribunal.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	The Caravan Park Residents' Network believes the legislation falls short of its intentions.	Current legislation ineffective in dealing with key issues, including affordability, standards, & security of tenure. Lack of enforcement an issue.

Sources for Vic information: 1992 Caravan Park Residents' Network. 2001 Tenants Union of Victoria.

TABLE A3.8 Status of Caravan Park Living 1993 and 2001 – Western Australia

Question	1993	2001
1. Is it legal to live permanently in caravan park?	Under Caravan Park By-laws adopted by most local governments a person cannot remain in a caravan park for more than 6 months in any 1 year, except with the approval of Council.	Yes.
2. What % of the population live in caravan parks?	Unknown. ABS indicates that as at 30 th June 1993, 4,950 sites were occupied by permanents. If 2.5 persons per van, then approximately 12,375 people (of a population of 1.6m) live permanently in caravan parks.	Unknown. Dept does not collect this information. Need to check with ABS.
3. What standards have been developed for regulation of the industry?	Caravan park industry regulated under the <i>Health Act</i> of WA and by individual by-laws adopted by local Councils. New regulations currently being prepared.	The Western Australian Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997.
4. What is the situation relating to security of tenure?	Residential tenancy protection specifically provided for in the <i>Residential Tenancy Act & Regulations</i> . Minimum 60 days notice of termination of tenancy to be given. Rent increases 60 days notice must be given & thereafter 6 months notice to be given. The <i>Act</i> provides for a lease agreement, but it is not known whether any tenant is occupying a site in a caravan park pursuant to a lease agreement.	Security of tenure is covered for a permanent tenant in a caravan park under the Residential Tenancy Act, administered by Dept of Consumer & Employment Protection.
5. Are any caravan parks designated as Retirement Villages?	No. Not to the Dept of Local Government's knowledge.	No.
6. What Government agencies are involved in the control of standards & tenancy matters?	Dept of Local Government responsible for preparation of model by-laws for caravan parks & are used to regulate and licence caravan parks. Dept of Health enacts regulations to provide minimum requirements for health matters. Ministry of Consumer Affairs responsible for <i>Residential Tenancy Act & Regulations</i> regarding tenants' and owners' rights & duties.	Standards: Dept of Local Government & Regional Development. Tenancy: Dept of Consumer & Employment Protection.
7. How adequate is current legislation?	The legislation at the time was seen by Government as being insufficient to deal with the needs of the industry. New legislation was being prepared.	Current legislation appears to be dealing adequately with the licensing, regulation and standards of caravan parks in WA. However, the Government in its election platform is considering greater tenancy protection for permanent residents in caravan parks.

Sources for WA information: 1992 Dept of Local Government. 2001 Dept of Local Government.

APPENDIX 4. SCHEDULE OF FIELD WORK

New South Wales

Tenancy Advice Workers x 4 (Sydney)
Tenancy Advice Workers x 2 (Wollongong)
Park Manager x 2 (W Sydney)
Community Representative x 2 (W Sydney)
Park Manager x 1 (South Coast NSW)
NSW Caravan and Camping Industry Association x 2 (one face-to-face and the other by telephone)
Policy Officer, Planning NSW x 2

Two further park managers refused interviews and a several parks in NSW refused to co-operate in allowing the University to gain access to residents to set up the focus groups. Both the focus groups in NSW were conducted off site from the caravan park so as to protect the residents from reprisals by park owners/managers.

A number of visits and informal discussions and observations were made in several parks in NSW.

Northern Territory

Policy Officer FACS (Darwin)
Project Officer FACS (Darwin)
Housing Trust/FACS Officer (Darwin)
Caravan Playgroup Worker (Darwin)
Park Owner (Katherine)
SAAP Worker (Katherine)
Park Owner (Tennant Creek)
SAAP Worker (Tennant Creek)
Housing Trust (Tennant Creek)
Community Rep (Tennant Creek)
Development Consent Authority, Dept of Lands x 2

Two focus groups with caravan park residents were conducted in the NT.

South Australia

Park Manager (Adelaide)
SAAP Worker x 2 (Adelaide)
Planning Officer x 2 (Adelaide)
Housing Officer (Adelaide)
Shelter SA (Adelaide)
Park Manager (Adelaide Hills)
SAAP Worker (Adelaide Hills)
Caravan Playgroup Worker (Adelaide/Adelaide Hills)
Policy Officer, Office of Local Government x 2

Two focus groups with caravan park residents were conducted in SA.
Visits, informal discussions and observations at 4 further caravan parks.

National

AAA Tourism
Several Officers in the Federal Department of Family and Community Services
Several prominent housing researchers
Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle

AHURI Research Centres

Sydney Research Centre
UNSW-UWS Research Centre
RMIT-NATSEM Research Centre
Swinburne-Monash Research Centre
Queensland Research Centre
Western Australia Research Centre
Southern Research Centre

Affiliates

Northern Territory University
National Community Housing Forum



Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
Level 1, 114 Flinders Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000
Phone +61 3 9660 2300 Fax +61 3 9663 5488
Email information@ahuri.edu.au Web www.ahuri.edu.au