



Housing need and provision for recently arrived refugees in Australia

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
CSHA	Commonwealth State Housing Agreement
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
OAA	On Arrival Accommodation
SAC	Special Assistance Category
SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Asylum seeker	An individual who arrives in a country and applies for recognition as a refugee.
Offshore processing centre	Refugee processing facilities have been established on Nauru and Manus Island with the cooperation of the Governments of Nauru and Papua New Guinea respectively. Protection claims are assessed by representatives of the UNHCR, or the Australian Government.
On Arrival Accommodation	On Arrival Accommodation program provides accommodation and support to newly arrived refugees. Its main aim is to facilitate their settlement into the Australian community.
Permanent residence	Persons wishing to live permanently in Australia must apply for, and be granted, a permanent visa. If you apply outside Australia, you are applying to migrate. If you apply in Australia, you are applying for permanent residence.
Refugee	<p>An asylum seeker who has been assessed against criteria contained in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and determined to be in need of protection.</p> <p>The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...' (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1996:16).</p>
Settlement services	Those general services necessary to help migrants and refugees establish themselves in their new country during their settlement period.
Special Humanitarian Program	Is for people who have suffered discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights, and who have been proposed by an Australian citizen or resident, or a community group in Australia.
Special Assistance Category	Is for people who, while not meeting the refugee or special humanitarian criteria, are nonetheless in situations of discrimination, displacement or hardship.
Unauthorised arrival	An individual who enters a country without a valid visa.
1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	International convention that is used to define refugee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Positioning Paper outlines the conceptual framework underpinning our study into the housing of recently arrived refugees in Australia. The study compares the housing experiences and pathways of three different categories of recently arrived refugees—persons who arrived as part of the offshore Refugee Program; the offshore Special Humanitarian Program; and persons who were granted Temporary Protection Visas in Australia. The research examines how refugees found accommodation, what forms of accommodation were chosen—and why—and what difficulties they experienced in obtaining suitable housing. The study also explores various housing provision options and attempts to identify best practice models in order to improve housing and settlement outcomes for refugees. The study is particularly concerned to investigate the incidence of homelessness amongst refugees and their pathways into and out of homelessness. Three types of refugee arrival to Australia are examined in this study because each of the refugee visa categories are eligible for different levels of settlement services, including accommodation assistance. The variation in the type and extent of accommodation assistance is likely to lead to significant variations in housing experiences. The research examines and documents these housing experiences and the different housing pathways that the three refugee groups follow. This study is based in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth, which permits the further comparison of housing provision, needs and experiences in different cities.

Refugees are one of the most vulnerable groups in Australian society, especially during the early stages of their resettlement experience. They have been forced to abandon their homes and flee their home country because of persecution, and many have been subjected to torture and trauma. Refugees often have to endure lengthy periods in refugee camps, or as illegal immigrants in a second country. However, only a small proportion of refugees ever resettle to third countries. They usually arrive in resettlement countries, such as Australia, with few or no possessions. Most refugees come from non-English speaking backgrounds, and encounter considerable language difficulties upon arrival. In addition, they must learn how to cope with different legal, social service, employment and housing systems in their place of resettlement.

The international and national literature (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 1999; Zetter and Pearl, 1999; Campbell, 1997; Jupp, 1994) indicates that housing plays a critical role in the successful settlement and integration of refugees. Without appropriate and affordable housing, refugees will remain on the periphery of Australian society (Dickman, 1995). As most refugee arrivals in Australia lack the resources to purchase housing immediately, they must rely on the private or public rental markets for accommodation. The Australian and international literature has described numerous obstacles that recently arrived refugees encounter in their search for affordable and appropriate housing, which places them at a high risk of becoming homeless. Their access to accommodation can be impeded by numerous factors, including

- financial barriers (low income levels; inability to accrue bonds, rent in advance and utility deposits);
- discrimination by real estate agents and landlords on the grounds of race, gender, age and social status (especially social security recipients);
- cultural barriers, especially for female headed, extended or large families;
- lack of suitable housing options; and
- lack of familiarity with Australian housing and legal systems.

Key researchers in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom have emphasised that there is strong need for detailed research on the barriers that refugees confront in searching for housing and the degree to which existing practices and institutions assist refugee settlement. They maintain that only by identifying the barriers can better programs be implemented.

This Positioning Paper reviews this body of work. It concludes that there has been little research into the housing experiences of refugees in Australia and that international experience provides only a limited guide for the development of policy in this country. Differences—and changes—in refugee acceptance programs across the developed world significantly affect the refugees' experiences of housing markets. This limits the transferability of insights derived from other nations, such as Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States. Australia's limited literature on the housing of immigrants provides some guidance, as does the writing on social inclusion and the homelessness literature.

1. HOUSING NEED AND PROVISION FOR RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES

1.1. Introduction

This Positioning Paper sets out the conceptual framework for a comparative study on the housing of three different categories of recently arrived refugees in Australia. The study compares the housing experiences of recently arrived refugees who arrived as part of the offshore Refugee Program, the offshore Special Humanitarian Program, and persons who were granted Temporary Protection Visas in Australia. This comparison is undertaken to determine how visa category—and all that it implies—affects the housing outcomes for refugees. It identifies variations in housing provision, needs and experiences generated by the different levels of settlement services—including accommodation assistance—available to each refugee visa category. The study examines and documents the different housing experiences and housing pathways that refugees follow. The research is being undertaken in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth, which permits the further comparison of housing provision, needs and experiences in different cities.¹

Defining refugees

Before discussing refugees and housing, it is important to define refugees and to distinguish them from asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are individuals who arrive in a country—either legally, as a visitor, tourist or student, or illegally, with no or fraudulent documentation—and apply for recognition as a refugee. Those who enter Australia without a valid visa—like the so-called ‘boat people’—are called unauthorised arrivals (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2001). Asylum seekers are not considered refugees until their claims for protection have been assessed against criteria contained in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and they are determined to be refugees. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1996:16).

For the purpose of this paper, the term refugee will be used to cover all persons who enter Australia through the Humanitarian Program (such as the Refugee Program, the Special Humanitarian Program, or who received a Temporary Protection Visa on-shore), even if they do not fulfil the United Nations definition of a refugee.

Immigrants, temporary protection visa refugees, permanent protection visa refugees, asylum seekers, etc. all live in Australia and have different legal, civil and economic status. Visa category also encapsulates other factors that are intrinsic to the arrivals—such as language ability and ethnic status. We know from other work (Beer and Morphett, 2002; Hassell and Hugo, 1996; Tonkin, Williams and Ackland, 1993; etc.) that visa category is strongly associated with success or failure in the housing market. It is for this reason that a comparison across refugee visa categories is central to this investigation.

Refugees are one of the most vulnerable groups in Australian society—particularly during the early stages of their resettlement experience. They flee their homelands because they have been persecuted in their countries of origin or fear persecution. Many refugees have been subjected to trauma and torture, and must deal with these issues in resettlement (Jupp, 1994). All too frequently, refugees are subjected to racism and discrimination once they arrive in Australia. Most refugees come to Australia from non-English speaking backgrounds, and consequently face considerable language difficulties upon arrival (Jupp, 1994). Hulchanski, Murdie and Chambon (2000:1) also noted that refugees encounter quite different legal, social

¹ Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth were selected as the cities for fieldwork in this study as each city has received—initially at least—one quarter of the Temporary Protection Visa holders released from detention centres.

service, employment, and housing systems in their resettlement country and must learn to deal with these new structures.

Refugees are generally not financially secure when they first arrive in Australia. Typically, most refugees arrive with few or no possessions (Kee, 1992; Tuohey, 2001). There is a high unemployment rate among newly arrived refugees due partly to language problems and difficulties getting overseas qualifications recognised (Jupp, 1994; Tuohey, 2001). The difficulty obtaining suitable employment means that many newly arrived refugees must rely on statutory incomes and live on very low incomes. Poverty means that most are in a precarious position in the housing market, as they are rarely in a position to secure a mortgage for purchasing a home and must rely on the rental sector. However, according to San Pedro (2001), the private rental market is often inappropriate for refugees in terms of the cost, size and location of housing.

The housing experiences of many recently arrived refugee households are negatively affected by a number of obstacles. The process of obtaining appropriate housing can be made more difficult by the financial, racial, and gender barriers that still permeate much of society (Hulchanski *et al*, 2000:1). Some refugees experience difficulties accumulating the funds for the bond and rent-in-advance necessary to secure accommodation in the rental market (San Pedro, 2001). Many refugees experience difficulties gaining access to private rental accommodation due to discrimination by landlords and their agents on the grounds of race, gender or social status—particularly welfare recipients (Campbell, 1997; Dickman, 1995; Hulchanski *et al*, 2000). The urgent need to find housing often leads to refugees finding themselves in sub-standard and/or overcrowded rented accommodation (San Pedro, 2001). According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants in Australia ([LSIA] cited in San Pedro, 2001), humanitarian visa holders tend to live in the largest households of all migrant categories. However, resettlement and social housing is rarely equipped to handle such households. Furthermore, refugee households must sometimes group together in order to afford housing. The LSIA also indicates that humanitarian settlers move more frequently compared to other migrants, and move to poorer quality housing (cited in San Pedro, 2001).

Even when they have secured rental accommodation, some refugees may continue to experience problems with their housing, such as paying the weekly rent. A survey by Ecumenical Housing (Campbell, 1997) found that many humanitarian settlers are forced to forgo other necessities, such as food and clothing, due to the high cost of renting. The study found that refugees frequently experience difficulties meeting other costs associated with housing, including electricity, gas, telephone, furniture, *et cetera*.

A lack of familiarity with the housing and legal system results in many newly arrived refugees and immigrants experiencing difficulties dealing with the maze of services that are available to them. San Pedro (2001) argued that insufficient knowledge of the housing system, together with language and cultural barriers, can result in refugees not enforcing their rights as tenants. She argued that this was a particular concern for the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders—who are not entitled to free English classes—and puts them at an even greater disadvantage when looking for, and negotiating, housing.

In addition, a number of social, cultural and experiential factors can inhibit the ability of newly arrived refugees and migrants to find suitable accommodation. Johnston (2001:16) identified various factors, including 'difficulty accessing appropriate and sufficient income or income support; problematic access to labour market; lack of familiarity with service system; and difficulty accessing suitable housing options.'

The housing experiences of newly arrived refugees have not been a major focus of research. However, from the limited research available there is sufficient evidence to indicate that refugees encounter numerous obstacles in their pursuit of appropriate and affordable housing. These obstacles place refugees at a high risk of becoming homeless.

Definitions of homelessness

What do we mean by the term 'homelessness'? There is no nationally adopted definition of homelessness in Australia. A review of the literature on homelessness reveals a range of definitions used in different legislation and by different government departments and community organisations that provide services to homeless persons. For example, the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act* (1994) simply stated 'a person is homeless if, and only if, she

has inadequate access to safe and secure housing' (cited in Chamberlain, 1996:1). Another widely adopted definition defines homelessness as:

a state in which people have no access to secure housing, and/or shelter of a standard that does not damage their health or further marginalise them through failing to provide either cooking facilities, or facilities sufficient to permit adequate hygiene. This includes those living on the street, in squats, in refuges and shelters. It also includes those moving about between relatives and friends, since 'such accommodation is necessarily temporary, usually insecure and fails to offer protection and support'. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1987:7

This definition indicates that there can be considerable variation in the extent of homelessness experienced by people. Consequently, it is often beneficial to classify the 'degree' of homelessness using a system such as the one proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (cited in Chamberlain, 1996:10). This three-tiered system classified the homeless population as:

Primary homelessness

This first category coincides with the common sense assumption that homelessness is the same as 'rooflessness'. It includes all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter. In the census, people in these circumstances are recorded under the category 'improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out'.

Secondary homelessness

The second category includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. It covers: people using emergency accommodation (such as hostels for the homeless or night shelters); teenagers staying in youth refuges; women and children escaping domestic violence (staying in women's refuges); people residing temporarily with other families (because they have no accommodation of their own); and those using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis.

Tertiary homelessness

The third category refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis. Residents of private boarding houses do not have a separate bedroom and living room; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease. They are homeless because their accommodation is inferior to the characteristics identified in the community standard. (Chamberlain, 1996: 11).

This Positioning Paper and this study draw upon the Chamberlain and McKenzie definition. It accepts that homelessness is one circumstance refugees may experience and that it is important to understand both the perception of homelessness and the material conditions that can be considered as homelessness. This understanding will inform the conduct of the empirical component of our research.

Refugees and housing

Access to satisfactory housing is an important component in the successful settlement of refugees and other immigrants. There are a number of recent studies, in different countries, that have emphasised the crucial role of housing in the successful settlement of migrants and refugees. For example, Jupp (1994) states that appropriate housing plays a critical role in the successful integration of migrants and refugees into Australian society. Dickman (1995) adds that without appropriate and affordable housing, refugees remain on the periphery of Australian society. This is supported by Tuohey (2001: 9), who claims that affordable and secure housing—that satisfies a person's need for privacy, space, safety, interaction and allows suitable access to employment—is an essential component of integration into Australian society.

In the United Kingdom, numerous researchers have identified the crucial role housing plays in refugee reception and resettlement experiences (see Field, 1985; Robinson, 1993; Carey-Wood, Duke, Karn and Marshall, 1995; Carey-Wood, 1997; Zetter and Pearl, 1999). Zetter and Pearl (1999: 2) claim that housing is an essential resource in the resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees. They maintain that the 'security, shelter and personal space which housing provides are vital elements in the process of regaining the dignity and independence often denied to them through persecution, incarceration and torture in their countries of origin' (Zetter and Pearl, 1999: 2). Carey-Wood *et al* (1995: 56) argue that 'Good housing is as important as economic well-being in enabling refugees and asylum-seekers to become part of the community'.

The importance of housing for immigrants and refugees has also been recognised in Canada. For example, Hulchanski, Murdie and Chambon (2000:1) argued that 'finding a suitable place to live in a good quality, supportive neighbourhood is an important first step toward the successful settlement of new immigrants'. This is supported by Murdie and Teixeira (1999:4), who claimed that obtaining adequate, suitable and affordable housing, especially in the initial stages of settlement, was especially important towards successful integration.

Canadian researcher David Hulchanski (1997:2) argues it is also important for researchers to identify the barriers to successful settlement, as 'the more we know about potential barriers the better we enable those responsible for doing something about them to define appropriate responses.' If researchers are able to identify the barriers that refugees and immigrants encounter in searching for housing, and determine whether existing institutions and day-to-day practices help or hinder the settlement process, then professionals and policy makers involved in housing issues will be able to develop more responsive and equitable urban environments (Hulchanski *et al*, 2000).

1.2. Aims of the Research

The major aims of this study are to:

- document how refugees gain access to housing upon arrival in Australia or release from detention;
- document who provides housing to both refugees (e.g. use of public housing, reliance on private rental sector and, possibly, the use of community housing);
- interpret the major factors affecting success in finding accommodation, including assistance from voluntary agencies and support groups, government departments, and other sources.
- recommend ways in which existing good practice might be developed further in partnership with the needs and aspirations of the consumers;
- identify the main housing problems encountered by refugees and how these problems could be most effectively resolved;
- provide information about the housing needs of these refugee groups;
- address questions of the adequacy of housing for refugees, as well as questions of housing costs and modes of service delivery;
- explore the contribution (and potential) of voluntary organisations in housing;
- indicate typical pathways or progressions of refugees through Australia's housing system.
- compare the settlement experiences of different refugee groups.

These objectives raise fundamental questions of methodology and theoretical framework. These include: what guidance does the international literature provide in addressing these goals; are refugees more vulnerable within housing markets than the general population or other immigrants; do refugees suffer social and economic disadvantages greater than indicated by their position within the labour market; are refugees vulnerable to homelessness, and if so why; and, how do refugees enter and leave homelessness?

The research investigates and compares the housing provisions of refugees following their arrival in Australia, or their release from detention centres, and examines the various pathways that refugees follow in the housing market. The study identifies the housing options available

to refugees upon arrival, investigates the adequacy of these options, and documents typical pathways or progressions of different refugee groups through Australia's housing system. It is anticipated that these pathways will vary according to factors such as household type, country of origin, English language skills *et cetera*.

This research also documents who provides housing to refugees and how refugees gain access to housing. Importantly, the research identifies the major factors affecting success in finding accommodation, such as assistance from voluntary agencies and support groups, government departments, and other sources. Furthermore, it examines the contribution (and further potential) of voluntary organisations in the settlement of refugees in Australia.

A major component of this research is the identification of specific housing problems encountered by refugees in each visa category, as well as how these problems may be overcome. We recognize that recent arrivals have housing careers, albeit short careers, and the dimensions and determinants of those careers are investigated. The research compares the experiences of the main ethnic groups in the Humanitarian stream to determine what are the common housing problems faced by refugees in Australia, and whether any particular ethnic group encounters specific housing problems. Information from refugee respondents, service providers and agency personnel identifies ways in which these housing problems can be most effectively resolved.

The study considers the housing pathways of refugees. It considers the incidence and experience of homelessness as part of this broader investigation. The research identifies the prevalence of homelessness among refugees during the early period of resettlement and assesses the degree of homelessness according to Chamberlain and Mackenzie's (1992) three-tiered hierarchy: primary homelessness; secondary homelessness; and tertiary homelessness. The study identifies the key factors that contribute to homelessness among this population group (pathways into homelessness) and investigates how this outcome was—or can be—overcome (pathways out of homelessness). The research analyses and notes the similarities and differences in homelessness across visa categories and ethnic groups. The research also assesses the risk of homelessness to different refugee visa and ethnic groups under various scenarios.

This research examines various models for providing housing assistance, identifies existing good practices and recommends ways in which models of good practice might be developed further in partnership with the needs and aspirations of the consumers. Our study attempts to cost the delivery of services for the most appropriate means of providing housing. This costing is based on estimates obtained from the government and community housing providers in the three cities.

Interviews with recently arrived refugees and service providers indicate the use of government and non-government housing services by newly arrived refugees and shed light on the need for such services among different refugee groups. The research also questions housing providers to gauge the demand for various types of accommodation—both on arrival and at latter stages of settlement—as well as identify particular problems evident among these refugee groups.

The research addresses questions of the adequacy of housing for refugees, as well as questions of housing costs and modes of service delivery. In addition the research documents typical pathways or progressions of different refugee groups through Australia's housing system. It is anticipated that these pathways will vary according to factors such as household type, country of origin, English language skills etc. It is acknowledged that refugees may pass through a series of housing circumstances, including sleeping rough, the use of community-based resources, use of public housing, reliance on the private rental sector and, possibly, the use of community housing (i.e. a housing career). This research will document these experiences.

The multi-city focus of this research project—with fieldwork being undertaken in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth—enables the identification of housing needs, provisions and problems of different refugee categories in different cities and permits the comparison of housing experiences between cities. Consequently, this research identifies housing problems and practices that are common to all cities, as well as those that are unique to a particular city. From this it is possible to promote the most appropriate practices to solve specific housing issues.

1.3. Summary

This Positioning Paper examines published research relevant to this study and sets out the theoretical position of this comparative research. Chapter 2 outlines Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian program and offers a brief summary of the different categories of refugees in the humanitarian program, and their eligibility for settlement service. Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature on refugees and housing. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the structure of housing provision in different countries. The second section introduces the concept of social exclusion and the housing of refugees and the third section discusses the housing careers of refugees and immigrants. Chapter 4 provides a review of some of the international literature on refugees and housing, especially in Canada and the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent from other countries in the European Union. It then reviews the literature on immigrants, refugees and housing in Australia. Chapter 5 outlines the methodological approach that will be undertaken to complete this study. Chapter 6 considers the implications of the findings of this positioning paper for the further conduct of this study.

2. AUSTRALIA'S REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

2.1. Introduction

Australia has a long history of assisting refugees, dating back to the nineteenth century when Lutherans fled religious persecution in Germany and settled in South Australia. However, it was during the post-World War II period that refugee migration to Australia came to prominence, with large-scale refugee migrations from war-torn Europe, and later flows from the Middle East, South-East Asia and Central and South America. During the 1990s the focus for refugees returned to Europe (predominantly the former Yugoslavia). At the beginning of the 21st century, Australia resettles refugees from most regions of the world, although there is an increasing focus on Africa (DIMA, 2001c). Australia remains, in per capita terms, one of the major refugee resettlement countries in the world with a designated refugee and humanitarian program to assist those in need.

2.2. Refugee and Humanitarian Program

The Australian government's permanent immigration program comprises two distinct categories: the Migration (non-humanitarian) stream for skilled and family migrants wishing to immigrate, and the Humanitarian stream for refugees and other persons of humanitarian concern (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2002a). The Migration Program will consist of between 100,000 and 110,000 places in 2002–2003, while the Humanitarian Program will consist of 12,000 places (Table 2.1).

The Humanitarian Program itself comprises two programs: offshore resettlement and onshore protection. The former program is for persons overseas, and consists of two sub-programs:

- Refugees, for persons identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as refugees and in need of resettlement, and the
- Special Humanitarian Program, for people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country. The SHP enables the resettlement of those who, while not refugees, are in humanitarian need. Applicants for this program must demonstrate some connection with Australia² (DIMIA, 2002a).

Australia's offshore Refugee and Special Humanitarian Programs accept refugees from a wide variety of countries. The major countries of birth for Refugee and Humanitarian Program settlers over the past three years have been Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Ethiopia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan (Table 2.2). These figures do not include persons who were granted protection in Australia, such as excluding temporary protection visa holders.

² A SHP application must be supported by a person resident, or organisation based in Australia.

Table 2.1: Humanitarian Program, arrivals by category, 1997-98 to 2002-03

Category	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Projected 2002-2003
Refugee	4,010	3,988	3,802	3,997	4,160	4,000
Special Humanitarian#	4,636	4,348	3,051	3,116	4,258	6,000
Special Assistance^	1,821	1,190	649	879	40	
Onshore Protection	1,588	1,834	2,458	5,577	3,885	2,000
Temporary Humanitarian Concern*				164	6	
Total	12,055	11,360	9,960	13,733	12,349	12,000

The allocation of places in the Special Humanitarian Program is dependent upon the number of places required for refugees who are granted protection in Australia (onshore).

^ Special Assistance Category (SAC): is for people who, while not meeting the refugee or special humanitarian criteria, are nonetheless in situations of discrimination, displacement or hardship. Persons proposing the resettlement of SAC entrants are required to enter into a written undertaking to provide assistance to the applicant and his or her dependants for at least six months after arrival. SAC entrants in general are not eligible for specialised settlement services.

* The Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa was introduced in 2000 to allow safe haven visa holders in need of continuing medical attention to remain in Australia for a further three years. In 2000-01, some 164 Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas were granted and in 2001-02 only six THC visas were issued.

Source: DIMIA, 2002a.

Table 2.2: Humanitarian Arrivals to Australia, by Country of Birth, and humanitarian program category, 2000-2001

Country of Birth	Number of Arrivals		
	Refugee Program	Special Humanitarian Program	Special Assistance
Former Yugoslavia (NFD)	834	427	71
Iraq	437	440	
Croatia	271	272	21
Sudan	462	534	45
Bosnia-Herzegovina	201	105	17
Afghanistan	250	263	
Ethiopia	99	128	
Sierra Leone	248	73	
Others	716	734	46
Total birthplace known	3,518	2,976	200
Birthplace unknown	4	10	-
TOTAL	3,522	2,986	200

Note: NFD - Not further defined

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs; Settlement Database, Data extracted 8 November 2002.

Persons admitted entry to Australia through the offshore resettlement programs are granted permanent residency immediately upon their arrival, and may be eligible for extensive settlement services (Table 2.3). Furthermore, they are eligible for citizenship after two years of permanent residence (DIMIA, 2002a).

Table 2.3: Refugee Entitlements in Australia

Entitlements	Permanent Protection Visa	Temporary Protection Visa
Social Security	Immediate access to the full range of social security benefits	Access only to special benefit for which a range of eligibility criteria apply. Ineligible for Newstart, Sickness Allowance, Parenting Payment, Youth Allowance, Austudy and a range of other benefits
Education	Same access to education as any other permanent resident.	Access to school education subject to state policy. Effective preclusion from tertiary education dues to imposition of full fees.
Settlement Support	Access to full range of DIMIA settlement support services.	Not eligible for most DIMIA funded services, such as Migrant Resource Centres and ethno-specific community welfare agencies. Can use Early Health Assessment and Intervention Programs.
Family Reunion	Able to bring members of immediate family (spouse and children) to Australia.	No family reunion rights (including reunion with spouse and children).
Work Rights	Permission to work.	Permission to work, but ability to find employment influenced by temporary nature of visa and poor English skills.
Language Training	Access to 510 hours of English language training.	Not eligible for the Federally funded English language programs: the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) or the Advanced English for Migrants Program (AMEP).
Medical Benefits	Automatic eligibility for Medicare.	Eligibility for Medicare subject to lodgement of application for a permanent visa.
Travel	Will be able to leave the country and return without jeopardising their visa.	No automatic right of return.
On Arrival Accommodation	Refugee Program entrants are provided four weeks on arrival accommodation. Special Humanitarian Program entrants are provided accommodation by their sponsors.	No federally-funded accommodation provided.

Source: Refugee Council of Australia, 2000c.

The onshore protection program is for those people who arrive in Australia on a temporary visa or in an unauthorised manner, and request Australia's protection. Persons who arrive in Australia lawfully, and are subsequently found to require protection, are granted a protection visa that enables them to live permanently in Australia. Since 20 October 2000, unauthorised arrivals who apply for protection and are subsequently determined to be refugees according to international criteria are issued a temporary protection visa (TPV or visa category XA785). Additional temporary visa categories were introduced in September 2001 (see section 3.3 below for more details). This visa provides the holder with three years temporary residence in the first instance (DIMIA, 2001a). However, it does not entitle holders to the full array of settlement services to which offshore refugees may be entitled to (Table 2.3).

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA, 2002a) recognises the benefits that the provision of, and early access to, settlement services has for immigrants and refugees. Consequently, DIMIA provides specialised Humanitarian Settlement Services, that includes assistance with accommodation support, health services such as torture and trauma counselling, and individualised assistance in accessing government and community services, to some refugee and humanitarian entrants (DIMIA, 2002a).

In 2000 the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs outsourced On Arrival Accommodation (OAA) delivery for Refugee and Humanitarian Program refugees to private organisations, such as the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia, who in turn sub-contracted Anglicare SA to provide the accommodation services. In the process, DIMIA reduced the duration of on arrival accommodation from thirteen to four weeks. The consequences of this reduction in housing assistance have yet to be determined. The Refugee Council of Australia (2000b) report that supporters of the new system argue that now refugees will not be required to relocate after they have become established in on arrival accommodation. They maintain that it is better to rehouse refugees soon after their arrival rather than wait thirteen weeks after arrival and then rehouse them. They claim the previous system caused considerable disruption to refugees, by removing them from areas and institutions they had just become acquainted with (such as requiring refugee children to transfer to new schools). Contrary to the allegations made by some opponents, newly arrived refugees are assisted with rent in advance and bonds to secure appropriate housing. The Refugee Council of Australia (2000b) report that some opponents of the entitlement reductions claim that it will have a dramatic impact on the refugees themselves, as they will have to relocate to alternative accommodation less than one month after they arrive in Australia. Opponents claim that the need to establish a house so quickly will put greater pressure on the refugees. They also argue that it will place greater pressure on voluntary, government and other housing providers on whom the burden will fall. Shelter WA (2000:11) believed that the policy change will have a significant impact on the settlement process of refugees arriving in Australia and that it may impact on the demand for other short term and emergency accommodation. They recommended that

- the Government should re-assess the policy change;
- undertake an evaluation of the impact of changes to On Arrival Accommodation, with specific focus on housing outcomes for refugees;
- raise the issue through State Settlement Planning Committees and other forums; and
- the Ministry of Housing grant priority status to refugees applying for public housing (Shelter WA, 2000:11).

Whatever side of the argument is taken, it is apparent that there is an urgent need to evaluate the changes to the On Arrival Accommodation program, as proposed by Shelter WA (2000).

Not all persons who arrive in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program are eligible for On Arrival Accommodation. For example, most persons who arrive through the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) are not eligible for OAA. The government considers it is the sponsors' obligations to provide accommodation for the refugee upon arrival and to assist them obtain permanent accommodation. In addition, the sponsor is expected to provide information and orientation assistance to the entrant.

There is an urgent need to assess the provision of accommodation by the sponsors. An earlier study by Foley (2000) on Vietnamese refugee migration to Australia found considerable disparities in the provision of accommodation by sponsoring organisations. It is apparent from this and other research that there is also an urgent need to evaluate the housing needs and provisions of refugees in this category and how it affects their settlement in Australia.

2.3. Temporary Protection Visa

The Temporary Protection Visa (TPV - subclass XB785) category was introduced in November 1999—but backdated to 20 October—and allows three years temporary residence in Australia in the first instance. The TPV allows refugees to work, gain access to Medicare and provides limited benefits. However, the TPVs provides no rights for the holders to bring their families to Australia, return if they leave Australia, access settlement services or access the mainstream

social welfare system. Holders of Temporary Protection Visas are eligible to apply for Permanent Protection Visas (PPV or Visa subclass 866) providing they applied before 27 September 2001. Otherwise they may only apply for another temporary visa.

More than 8,350 persons have been granted temporary protection visas since the subclass was introduced in late 1999 (Table 2.4). The majority of the TPV holders come from Iraq (47.9%), Afghanistan (41.9%) or Iran (4.5%), with the remaining 5.7 per cent are from a variety of Asian, Middle Eastern or African countries.

Table 2.4: Total TPV Holders By Citizenship and Centre of Release. 3 May 2002

Total TPVs released	Immigration Reception and Processing Centre				Per cent of total	Total
	Curtin	Pt Hedland	Woomera	Other		
Iraqi	1,353	731	1,698	216	47.85	3,998
Afghan	1,266	816	1,351	70	41.93	3,503
Iranian	126	53	146	54	4.54	379
Sri Lankan	23	40	1	55	1.42	119
Palestinian	45	22	15	3	1.02	85
Turkish	0	2	14	15	0.37	31
Pakistani	4	2	0	18	0.29	24
Syrian	7	6	3	3	0.23	19
Somali	0	0	0	7	0.08	7
Sudanese	0	1	0	1	0.02	2
North Korean	0	0	0	2	0.02	2
Other**	42	30	71	43	2.23	186
TOTAL	2,866	1,703	3,299	487	100.00	8,355

Source: DIMIA, unpublished statistics.

Other significant changes to Australia's immigration regulations were made on 27 September 2001 in wake of the Tampa crisis.³ From that date, unauthorised arrivals to Australia who resided in another country—where they could have sought and obtained effective protection—for at least seven days after leaving their home country, are restricted to temporary protection visas and not eligible to access a permanent protection visa. Persons determined to be refugees continue to receive a three-year temporary protection visa and may apply for further protection visas if they have a continuing protection need. However, they will only ever be eligible for three-year temporary protection visas and not a permanent protection visa (DIMIA, 2002c).

Unauthorised arrivals who did not reside in another country for at least seven days—where they could have sought and obtained effective protection—are eligible to access a permanent protection visa after 30 months if there is a continuing need for protection. These changes also apply to persons who received a temporary protection visa, but did not apply for a permanent protection visa until on or after 27 September 2001.

At the same time, the Federal Government passed a number of new laws aimed at deterring the activities of people smugglers. These included the *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Act 2001*, which removed offshore external territories, such as Ashmore, Cartier, Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands, from Australia's Migration Zone and labelled them as 'excised offshore places'. Persons arriving on these territories are not entitled to make an application for any visa for Australia, although they may make application from an offshore processing centre. The *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) (Consequential Provisions Act) 2001* also introduced two new temporary humanitarian visas: Secondary Movement Offshore Entry (Temporary) Subclass XB447 and Secondary Movement Relocation (Temporary) Subclass XB451. Visa subclass XB447 is a three-year temporary protection visa

³ On 26 August 2001, the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa rescued 433 asylum seekers from a sinking fishing boat, the KM Palapa 1. Lacking adequate medical supplies and space for the refugees the Tampa diverted its course and made for the nearest port, the Australian territory of Christmas Island. However, the Australian government refused the ship entry to Australian waters, maintaining that the boatpeople should have been taken to the nearest Indonesian port, not Australian territory. The Australian government arranged for the asylum seekers to be transferred to the Pacific Island nation of Nauru to have their claims for refugee status processed by the United Nations.

for persons who enter Australia unlawfully at a place outside of the migration zone, and are subsequently determined to be refugees according to international conventions. This visa does not provide access to a permanent protection visa if the person resided in a country where they could have sought and obtained protection for seven days or more. The XB451 is a five-year visa for persons who have not entered Australia. They can apply for a permanent protection visa after four and a half years (DIMIA, 2002d).

Recipients of Temporary Protection Visas are not eligible for the same range of settlement services available to conventional refugees (Table 3.3). For example, TPV refugees are not permitted to access the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) or the Advanced English for Migrants Program (AMEP). Perhaps most importantly, Temporary Protection Visas holders are not eligible for on arrival accommodation. Instead, they must make their own way in the housing market. TPV refugees have encountered numerous difficulties in their search for adequate and affordable accommodation because they do not have the community supports available to conventional refugees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that refugees, especially TPV holders, are experiencing increasing accommodation problems and many end up homeless in Australian cities, or are at high risk of becoming homeless (San Pedro, 2001; Tuohey, 2001). The difficulties that TPV refugees experience are likely to have long-term impacts on their settlement and integration in Australia. Furthermore, they are impacting on community and government housing providers and other charitable organisations.

2.4. Summary

It is apparent from this brief introduction to Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program that different refugee visa categories are eligible for different levels of settlement services, especially on arrival accommodation and housing assistance. There is an urgent need to determine the housing needs of refugees in the different categories and evaluate the effectiveness of the service provisions to these groups

3. REFUGEES AND HOUSING

This chapter seeks to understand the broad-scale factors that affect the housing of refugees in Australia. The chapter begins with a discussion of the structure of housing provision in this country. It argues that Australia's small social housing sector and reliance on markets to meet the housing needs of the nation's residents increases the likelihood that refugee arrivals will become homeless or experience housing distress. The chapter then goes on to consider questions of social exclusion.

Recent research (Beer and Morphett, 2002) suggests that social exclusion is a useful concept for understanding the housing circumstances of recent immigrants to Australia because it emphasises both the limited market resources of settler arrivals—wealth, employment *et cetera*—and their potentially limited rights with respect to government provided services and limited ability to pay for market services. The housing careers and housing trajectories of refugee arrivals are the third major concept discussed in this chapter.

Drawing upon recently published research (Ozuekren and van Kempen, 2002), the chapter considers the potential sequence of housing circumstances refugees may face in Australia. It discusses whether, and for how long, refugee arrivals should be considered as refugees or immigrants, and the factors that may differentiate the housing experiences of various arrival groups. Finally the chapter considers the national and international literature on the housing of refugees and concludes there is relatively little published research on this topic.

3.1. The Structure of Housing Provision in Australia

How housing is provided within society in general has an enormous impact on the supply of accommodation to refugees and asylum seekers. The social, institutional and economic processes that determine the supply of accommodation are recognised as having a determinant influence on all aspects of the housing system (Paris, 1993; Ball and Harloe, 1978). This includes the cost and availability of housing, tenure relations, the role of governments, housing quality, the dwelling construction process, gender and multi-cultural relationships.

Structures of housing provision vary across nations and reflect the specific legal and political histories of nations, their economic structure and factors such as the level of urbanisation. Broader attitudes to welfare provision are one important determinant of how housing is provided. The Norwegian scholar Esping-Andersen (1990) identified three major approaches to the provision of income support and social welfare, which he termed welfare regimes:

- First, the 'liberal' welfare state, 'in which means tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social insurance plans predominate. Benefits cater mainly to a clientele of low-income, predominantly working class, state dependents' (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 26);
- Second, nations such as Austria, Germany, Italy and France have a 'corporatist' model. This model accepts a higher level of government intervention than in the 'liberal' welfare state, but also acts to preserve income differentials between individuals. The Church is seen to play a strong ideological influence under this model, and there is a strong emphasis on family values and support;
- Third, the social-democratic welfare regime is embraced by a small number of countries, such as the Scandinavian nations, and accepts state intervention is justified to create a truly equal society.

Other researchers have identified a fourth type of welfare regime. This is the rudimentary welfare system, typically found in the Catholic/European rim nations, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain. This is a partially developed welfare system and one, which reflects an on-going agricultural tradition. This welfare regime is both weakly and unevenly developed with support for women, for example, often under-developed.

Australia has a 'liberal' welfare regime with the provision of benefits and income support tightly targeted via means testing and through the application of other eligibility criteria. Australia's reliance upon the market to provide housing to its citizens is consistent with this 'liberal' approach: fully 95 per cent of Australians are housed through the market, either as private tenants or home owners/home purchasers. The public rental sector is small and is contracting

in some States and Territories (Coopers and Lybrand, 1997). Additionally, there are long waiting lists for housing and speedy access to public housing is tightly limited to those most in need. These factors mean that, unlike the United Kingdom, or the Netherlands or Sweden, there is no sizeable stock of social housing available to refugee arrivals in the short term. Moreover, longer term access is problematic.

Australia lacks legislation such as the United Kingdom's *Homelessness Act* (1992) that charges local government with responsibility for providing housing for the homeless. Refugees and other vulnerable groups are therefore more likely to end up 'sleeping rough' or living in inappropriate and dangerous conditions.

Over the last decade housing assistance from the Federal Government to tenants in the private rental sector (Rent Assistance or RA) has increased. Federal expenditure on Rent Assistance exceeds its cash commitment to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA). The increased funds for RA recognise greater levels of housing distress in the private rental sector (National Housing Strategy, 1991).

The reliance of government policy on the private sector to provide housing for low income Australians raises several challenges. First, the providers of rental housing across Australia have been relatively uninterested in supplying the low cost end of the market. Landlords have been motivated by the expectation of capital gains and have been risk averse in their investment decisions, with both factors steering investment into the high cost segments of the rental market (Berry, 2000). Second, the low rent housing stock is often occupied by those on middle and higher incomes. This reduces the stock of rental properties available to those on low incomes (Yates and Wulff, 2000). Finally, discrimination remains evident within the private rental sector, and this can include discrimination on the basis of age, gender, Aboriginality and ethnicity (Drummond and Ransley, 2001; San Remo, 2001). Discrimination reduces the volume of housing available to the most vulnerable within society.

Australia's structure of housing provision makes access to housing difficult for refugee arrivals. Australia does not have a stock of public housing available to accommodate them, the emphasis on owner occupation is of little value to a newly arrived group with limited incomes and nil or very limited wealth, and the private rental market is often too expensive and subject to discrimination. This structure results in some refugees at risk of becoming homeless, at least for part of their period of settlement (Tuohey, 2001). It also makes the pathways out of homelessness more difficult, as the range of interventions available to government and non-government organisations is limited.

3.2. Social Exclusion and the Housing of Refugees

The concept of social exclusion has attracted considerable attention over the last decade, and especially the last five years, as governments have sought to put in place strategies to combat the causes of multiple disadvantage amongst their citizens (see, for example, Mandanipour, Cars and Allen 1998). Housing policy debates have been affected by this broader set of arguments (Marsh and Mullins, 1998) although relatively poorly developed within Australian housing research (for an exception, see Randolph and Judd, 2000). As Beer and Morphet (2002) noted, social exclusion is potentially a doubly useful concept in understanding the housing circumstances of immigrants and refugees. Social exclusion is concerned with the complex and multi-layered causes of disadvantage and the impact—and interaction—they have with government-provided services. Social exclusion therefore addresses the relationship between market outcomes—housing and/or labour markets—and the interaction with government provided assistance. Moreover, in a number of European nations the concept of social exclusion has been applied and developed to explain the condition of immigrant groups and minorities—such as 'travellers' (Marsh and Mullins, 1998).

What is social exclusion? Social exclusion is a concept that has been adopted in a variety of contexts (academic, policy development) and by a number of different types of organisations (national governments, supra-national organisations, non-government bodies) so it is not surprising that there are multiple definitions. The Social Exclusion Unit within the UK Cabinet Office suggests that

Social exclusion is a shorthand for what happens when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (Social Exclusion Website, 1998)

While Mandanipour (1998: 77) commented

The question of social exclusion and integration, it can be argued, largely revolves around access...to decision making, access to resources, and access to common narratives, which enable social integration.

The definition of social exclusion has been discussed more extensively elsewhere (see Beer and Maude, 2001) but it is important to note that the term is generally used to refer to multiple and linked social, economic and cultural problems within an area or group. It is concerned with 'joined up' problems, to use the language of the social exclusion literature.

Somerville (1998) reviewed policy documents and academic work on social exclusion and concluded that those suffering from social exclusion experience greater disadvantage than poverty alone

What all these groups have in common, and what lies at the heart of all processes of social exclusion, is a sense of social isolation and segregation from the formal structures and institutions of the economy, society and state. (Somerville, 1998: 762)

Somerville (1998) noted that social exclusion has three drivers within advanced economies: first, social exclusion can arise out of disadvantage within the labour market; second, it may be a consequence of political/legal structures that disadvantage some individuals or groups and disenfranchise them from publicly provided benefits, and, finally, exclusion may arise out of predominant ideologies. Institutionalised racism is one such ideology, as is the gendered division of society, which forces many women out of the formal workforce and devalues their work within the domestic economy. Importantly, the socially excluded do not generally suffer the consequences of just one of these processes, but instead experience the impact of all three. Social exclusion is not simply an outcome, it is a process. The concept of social exclusion recognises that a range of processes alienate and disempower individuals, with adverse impacts for their welfare.

Adopting a social exclusion perspective leads us to anticipate that research into the housing of refugee arrivals into Australia will need to consider their position within the labour market. The research will also examine the potential for discrimination within the housing market and refugee access to—and use of—government provided assistance. Finally, the social exclusion literature directs us to pay attention to the cultural and other barriers that may prohibit individual refugees or refugee groups from participating fully in society or the Australian housing market.

3.3. The Housing Careers of Refugees and Immigrants

Housing careers are an established concept within the Australian (Kendig, 1981) and international housing literature (see, for example, Farmer and Barrell, 1981; Forrest, 1987). It is a concept that is often linked with the analysis of 'life course' and is concerned with how major shifts in a household's circumstances alters their housing (Ozuekren and van Kempen, 2002). For the purpose of this discussion we will accept that a housing career is 'the sequence of dwellings that a household occupies during its history' (Pickles and Davies cited in Ozuekren and van Kempen, 2002). It is quite simply the succession of physical dwellings, demographic relationships (single person, family with children, couple living alone), tenure and financial relationships a household moves through over time.

The concept of a housing career has been applied to the analysis of the changing housing circumstances of immigrant and refugee arrivals in developed nations (Ozuekren and van Kempen, 2002). Typically a refugee or immigrant household might be expected to move from poor or insecure housing circumstances to better and more appropriate accommodation as their period post-arrival lengthens. Beer and Morphett (2002), for example, suggested that recent immigrant arrivals to Australia typically stay with friends, relatives or community members for the first six to 12 months, they then move to the private rental sector where they stay for approximately two years, and then move into home purchase. Many refugee arrivals

experience a slightly different housing career, staying in on-arrival accommodation or emergency housing arrangements in the first instance, and then moving on to private or public housing. However, some refugees—particularly those who enter through the Special Humanitarian Program—experience housing careers more similar to the recent immigrant arrivals mentioned above. Alternatively, refugees may stay in housing provided by a non-government organisation in the first instance and then quickly move onto rental housing and home purchase.

Ozuekren and van Kempen (2002) noted that housing careers are the product of a number of social processes. Preferences have a critical role in shaping housing careers, and there may be a strong cultural element to the choices immigrant households will make in selecting a location, tenure, and set of living arrangements. However, preferences cannot fully explain the housing career of any group as choice is always constrained. Ozuekren and van Kempen (2002) identified a number of necessary resources if a household is to achieve its housing preferences. These included:

- Material resources: income, position in the labour market, *et cetera*;
- Cognitive resources such as education, skills and knowledge of the housing market;
- Political resources in terms of ‘attaining and defending formal rights in society’ (Ozuekren and van Kempen, 2002: 369);
- Social resources, such as contacts and community members who may provide assistance. Beer and Morphett (2002), for example, found that community and family members were the most important source of information for recent immigrants seeking a new dwelling.

Significantly, Ozuekren and van Kempen (2002: 370) concluded that ‘minority ethnic groups are not usually well positioned on the housing market with respect to these resources’ and this conclusion is likely to be even more relevant for refugee arrivals.

The concept of a housing career for refugees must be examined critically. First, it would be wrong to assume that all refugees or immigrants make ‘progress’ as they change their housing. There may be cyclical movements into and out of shelters as arrivals strive to find employment and secure accommodation. The literature on homelessness emphasises the importance of ‘exit points’ (that is, accommodation homeless people can move to) and a shortage of options may force some households into alternate periods in the private rental sector, boarding houses and supported accommodation.

Second, a number of authors have emphasised the variability within immigrant housing careers. Murdie (2002) noted that Polish immigrants were much more successful at establishing progressive housing careers than Somali immigrants who arrived at the same time. His results reflect the work of others, including Australian researchers (Hassell and Hugo 1996), who have noted significant variation between birthplace groups in their housing experiences. However, Bowes, Dar and Sim (2002) noted that the housing careers of Pakistani immigrants to the United Kingdom vary greatly. While cultural values—such as a strong emphasis on family—partly explain the distinctive housing of this birthplace group in the UK, other factors, including the strength of the local employment market, the quality of the housing stock, gender and class all affected the housing experiences of individual households. There is therefore no one housing career, either within a birthplace group, or for all immigrant/refugee arrivals.

The discussion of the housing careers of immigrants alerts us to the variable housing experiences of this group, and the need to recognise that factors at the place of settlement—such as the quality of the dwelling stock and the strength of the local labour market—can be as important as the characteristics of the arrivals. This literature also reinforces the need to understand the constraints facing immigrants in attempting to express their preferences in the housing market. Finally, the discussion leads us to consider whether we should consider the groups covered in this study as refugees or immigrants. In a number of critical ways this group is best thought of as refugees in that the decision to leave their home country was forced upon them. In addition, they entered Australian society on a refugee visa or after being granted protection by the Australian government. On the other hand, the groups covered in this study have much in common with immigrants who arrive in Australia through normal processes. They can potentially make use of the same facilities and services—such as Migrant Resource Centres—as conventional immigrants and their capacity to gain access to resources already offered to immigrants may significantly reduce their vulnerability within the housing market.

Some may join existing communities of immigrants from their country of birth, ethnic or language group. Clearly there are both refugee and immigrant dimensions to their settlement in Australia that become more blurred with the passage of time. This study therefore needs to consider empirically the capacity of refugees to take up services intended for the broader pool of immigrants. Access to these services may have a significant impact on their level of well being.

4. Refugees and Housing in International and National Perspectives

There is a very extensive body of literature that examines the resettlement of refugees in various developed countries. Unfortunately, there has been surprisingly little research specifically focused on refugees and housing and it is disappointing to find that although many developed countries have operated significant refugee resettlement programs for many years, these migrations have not generated a substantial body of research on refugee housing issues. This chapter reviews research on refugees and housing in Canada, the United Kingdom, and other European countries, as each of these have been a major recipient of refugees and has developed policies to accommodate these arrivals. This literature is reviewed to generate a broader understanding of refugee-housing interactions and to shed light on the research aims. The review adds to the evidence base around refugees and housing in Australia.

4.1. United Kingdom

Researchers in the United Kingdom have been at the forefront of the research on housing issues. Despite the extensive literature in this area, researchers have often pursued an ethnic/race perspective or broad immigration focus, rather than focussing specifically on refugees and housing. Much of the substantive research in the United Kingdom—such as the major studies by Henderson and Karn (1987), Smith (1989), and Sarre, Phillips and Skellington (1989), Bloch (1996) and Marett (1989) has taken this approach.

There is a considerable body of literature in the United Kingdom that has investigated reception and settlement experiences of refugees in the United Kingdom. These research projects have generally investigated broader settlement issues, of which housing is a part. For example, Field (1985), the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (1991), Robinson (1993), Carey-Wood, Duke, Karn and Marshall (1995), Duke and Marshall (1995), and Carey-Wood (1997) all recognised the importance of housing in resettlement.

According to Quilgars (1993:11), a considerable proportion of the earlier research on refugees in the United Kingdom focussed on one single refugee group, particularly those involved in government resettlement programs. She noted that much of the earlier research focussed on programme or quota refugees such as the Vietnamese (Jones, 1982; Edholm, Roberts and Sayer, 1983; Joly, 1988; Dalglish, 1989; Robinson and Hale, 1989); Ugandan Asians (Bell, 1993; Bristow, 1976; Community Relations Commission, 1974, 1976), and to a lesser extent, Chileans (Joly, 1989; Kay, 1987). Far less research has focussed on spontaneous arrivals that have predominated in recent years (Zetter and Pearl, 1999:7). In addition to these projects, there have been numerous smaller reports that have investigated refugees in various British locations/cities: for example, Bloch (1996) in Newham; Bristow (1979) in Manchester and Birmingham; Housing Associations Charitable Trust (1994) in North London; and Joly (1988) in Birmingham.

Quilgars (1993:11) and Zetter and Pearl (1999:7) found there had been little systematic research specifically on refugees and housing in the United Kingdom. Zetter and Pearl (1999:7) noted that much of the research referred to earlier periods, when other regulations applied. There is no doubt that research on housing and refugees in the United Kingdom has been hampered by the frequent and major changes to the British immigration regulations through the 1990s. Immigration regulations were changed in 1993, 1996 and 1999⁴ and a fourth White Paper is currently in circulation.⁵ These regulatory amendments have resulted in significant shifts in the provision of housing for refugees and asylum seekers. Consequently, much of the earlier research on refugees and housing is no longer applicable.

Notwithstanding these limitations, there are a number of specific publications that focus on the housing of refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom that are worthy of discussion.

⁴ 1993 *Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act*; *The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996*; *The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*.

⁵ Home Office, 2002. *Secure Borders, Safe Haven. Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*. Colegate: H.M.S.O.

Quilgars' (1993) research was one of the first projects that focussed on the housing of refugees in the United Kingdom and their different access routes into housing. She argued that the 'great majority of asylum seekers and refugees are, quite simply, homeless upon arrival in Britain' and that the majority of refugees needed some form of social housing, or other low cost housing in the private sector (Quilgars, 1993:vi). She argued that most of the earlier research appeared 'remarkably consistent in the general findings that refugees are resettled in, allocated to, and have to live in difficult housing circumstances in Britain' (Quilgars, 1993:13).

The study by Quilgars (1993) was conducted at a time of high demand by newly arrived refugees for social housing, as well as many other groups in society, especially other families and single people who were homeless. This increased need coincided with a contraction of the private rental sector that led to a growing housing crisis, particularly within London. The study found that refugees were considered to be at the bottom of the queue, and that many refugees encountered 'considerable difficulties in gaining access to appropriate accommodation to meet their needs. Furthermore, housing policies and overall levels of housing provision were failing to meet the housing needs of refugees in the United Kingdom' (Quilgars, 1993:21).

In the late-1990s, Zetter and Pearl (1999) conducted a comprehensive study of the access to social housing by asylum seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom. This two-stage study questioned refugees and asylum seekers, as well as service providers (registered social landlords, registered community-based organisations, and local authorities). The study found that housing provision and support services for refugees and asylum seekers in the public sector was 'patchy and inconsistent with no clear locational or organisational pattern'. Good and poor practices were found, often within close proximity to each other (Zetter and Pearl, 1999:27). The authors argued 'many asylum seekers need a much greater level of support than just access to housing for resettlement' (Zetter and Pearl, 1999:46). The study found that respondents had experienced a number of problems with housing, including:

- the access and allocation process (the length of time to be housed and the bureaucratic process);
- problems with their accommodation (most commonly repairs and overcrowding);
- widespread social isolation, but particularly among the elderly (Zetter and Pearl, 1999:81).

It should also be pointed out that the study found that most respondents recognised the benefits of, and appreciated the provision of, housing. The majority were satisfied with the physical accommodation, its maintenance and quality.

A more recent UK study on asylum seekers in private rented sector accommodation was undertaken by Garvie (2001) after the introduction of the *Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*. This study found that asylum seekers experienced a great number of housing problems, and claimed that they were even more severe than originally expected. In particular, it was found that a significant proportion of asylum seekers lived in shared, overcrowded housing and there was a high use of sub-standard, unfit and dangerous housing (Garvie, 2001:52). Other problems highlighted by the study included the inappropriate placement of asylum seekers, particularly of women and unaccompanied minors, and a lack of cooperation between agencies in the settlement of asylum seekers. The study found 'the NASS [National Asylum Support Service] regime was likely to impact on asylum seekers themselves, on agencies attempting to manage the new system, and on the ability of local authorities to strategically plan for the best use of their housing stock' (Garvie, 2001:54). Furthermore, there was a strong likelihood that these problems would continue under the current regime.

Garvie's (2001:54) study found that asylum seekers were in 'an even weaker position than most people living in the private rented sector'. She argued that asylum seekers had virtually no housing rights: 'no choice in where they are housed, no security of tenure and no financial means to find alternative accommodation'. In addition, their ability to take action against sub-standard housing conditions and inappropriate practices was 'further hampered by fear of authority, fear of jeopardising their asylum claim, physical and mental health problems, poverty, ignorance of what to expect and where to seek advice, lack of support, and language difficulties' (Garvie, 2001:54-55).

4.2. Other European Union Countries

The European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) commissioned six Good Practice Guides on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union that focussed on different settlement issues. One of these reports was devoted to housing, which was based on research conducted by the Dutch Refugee Council in 1998 (ECRE, 1999). The study found that the major problems encountered by refugees were access to housing, affordability and housing quality. ECRE (1999:12) categorised accessibility problems as:

- Housing shortage, especially in the social rented sector;
- Social housing criteria often made it difficult for individuals to find accommodation in the social sector;
- Discrimination by the receiving community, particularly landlords;
- Allocation schemes that provide lack of choice, promote dispersal, provide housing far away from other facilities, such as education, care facilities, *et cetera*.
- Failure to recognise the specific housing needs of refugees.

The affordability problems for refugee housing refer to:

- Difficulties in paying rent;
- The inability to pay rent in advance and/or rent deposits (bonds);
- Frequent reluctance of landlords to rent to people who were dependent on social benefits [security].

Quality of housing referred to the physical and social environment, as well as the material minimum standards. This includes factors such as the socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhoods (e.g. ethnic and refugee concentration), access to social services (education, employment, health care, *et cetera*), and suitability of accommodation for refugees (ECRE, 1999: 24-25).

The Dutch Refugee Council (1999) undertook a study on the 'Housing for Refugees in the European Union', which identified a number of significant housing problems for refugees. These included:

1. *Unequal starting position on the housing market.*

Refugees in most European Union countries encounter difficulties dealing with unfamiliar and bureaucratic housing allocation systems. In particular, they frequently have difficulties accessing information from housing authorities, as this is often only available in the native language of the country or in the languages of the largest ethnic groups. Secondly, the options of refugees in the formal part of the housing market are more restricted because they generally have a limited social network when they start their housing search.

2. *Discrimination from landlords in the private rental sector.*

Refugees in a number of EU countries are dependent on the private rental sector for housing. The Dutch Refugee Council (1999) study found that all NGOs with mediation services it interviewed reported discrimination against refugees by landlords. The Council reported that foreigners in Austria paid more than local citizens for equal quality accommodation. The study also found that NGO mediation services can help to overcome the 'fear of the unknown' amongst landlords and pave the way for other refugees. Once landlords discover refugees do not cause additional problems, their reluctance to have refugees as tenants decreases.

3. *Segregation between ethnic minorities/refugees and national citizens*

The residential segregation of ethnic groups—the over-representation of some groups in an area and the under-representation of other groups—is evident in most metropolitan areas in the EU, although not to the extent that ethnic minorities are separated by nationality. This residential segregation usually occurs because some areas become inaccessible to population groups—mostly for financial reasons—which force them to other areas. Refugees tend to find accommodation in neighbourhoods that have above average

concentrations of ethnic minority populations. This residential segregation can be a positive attribute. The concentration of people from similar cultural backgrounds can assist with community development, such as sporting and social clubs and shopping. It can also assist with the delivery of social services, such as the provision of education and health services to immigrant populations (Dutch Refugee Council, 1999:24-5).

4.3. Canada

There is not an extensive body of literature devoted to immigrants and housing in Canada. Kobayashi and Peake (1997:27), for example, claimed that the literature on immigrants and housing in Canada was scant, and the information anecdotal. This view was echoed by Hulchanski, Murdie and Chambon (2000). The latter argued that there has been relatively little investigation of the housing experiences of immigrants and refugees in Canada. They argued that much of the research in Canada has focussed on various aspects of ethnicity and race. Murdie and Teixeira (1999), however, reported an increase in studies undertaken on immigrant housing during the 1990s. This included immigrants and housing tenure patterns, the role of discrimination in accessing housing, as well as case studies of individual immigrant and refugee groups (see, for example, Ray and Moore, 1991; Chisvin/Helfvand and Associates, 1992; Ray, 1994 and 1998; Murdie, 1995; Murdie, Chambon, Hunchanski and Teixeira, 1995; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995; and Owusu, 1999). However, only Opoku-Dapaah's (1995) study of Somali refugees in Toronto specifically targeted refugees, although not exclusively on housing issues.

One particular Canadian project that should be mentioned is the Housing Experiences of New Canadians in Greater Toronto project, conducted by Chambon, Hulchanski, Murdie and Teixeira (1997:6). This research identified ten distinctive types of barriers that three groups of immigrant households encountered in the Toronto area as they searched for a place to live, and which are equally applicable to refugees as immigrants. These barriers could be divided into two: primary and secondary. Primary barriers were those resulting from the social construction and the social use of certain characteristics of a person's profile and are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change. These are (1) skin colour ('race'), (2) ethnicity/culture/religion, and (3) gender. Secondary barriers are personal characteristics that can, and usually do, change over time. These are (1) level of income, (2) source of income, (3) knowledge of the housing system (4) language/accent, (5) household type and size, (6) knowledge of institutions and culture, and (7) experience with the dominant institutions and culture.

As in the United Kingdom, there is an extensive body of literature that has investigated the settlement experiences of refugees in Canada. Some of the Canadian literature has been at the forefront of refugee research, such as Chan and Indra's (1987) study of the resettlement of Indochinese refugees in Canada; Dorais' (1992) research on Indochinese refugee adaption in Quebec; Dorais, Le and Huy's (1987) investigation of the Vietnamese in Canada; and Neuwirth's (1988) examination of refugee resettlement in Canada. The tradition of research has continued with more recent publications, including Israelite, Herman, Alim, Mohamed and Khan's (1999) study of the settlement of Somali refugee women in Toronto, Opoku-Dapaah's (1995) profile of Somali refugees in Toronto, and Young's (1996) study of the adjustment of Somali refugees. While much of this research has incorporated aspects of housing into the research, none have focussed solely on refugee housing.

Hulchanski, Murdie and Chambon (2000: 4) refer to only one research project focused specifically on refugees and housing: a study commissioned by the City of Toronto Housing Department that investigated the experience of refugees securing housing in Toronto. This study found there was a lack of adequate and appropriate housing for refugees in the city and that the housing options 'did not accommodate changes in household size, a sense of community living, tenant involvement or stable tenure'. Furthermore, the research found that many recent refugees encountered discrimination in the rental sector, from private landlords as well as public and non-profit housing providers (Chisvin/Helfvand and Associates, 1992:12).

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Canadian African Newcomer Aid Centre, 1999) subsequently funded a study to determine the present and future housing needs of African refugees, and design guidelines to meet these needs. One of the major concerns for the refugees in this study was finding suitable housing that could expand to meet changing family needs, especially after the arrival of other family members from Africa. Israelite *et al* (1999) identified three major housing problems in their study of the settlement and integration of

Somali refugee women in Toronto: difficulties in finding affordable housing; difficulties in managing housing costs and other basic needs; and the quality of life in high-rise apartments. They found there was a shortage of affordable rental units in Toronto, long waiting lists for subsidised housing, evidence of discrimination against Somalis, and refugees often experienced difficulties dealing with bureaucracy (Israelite *et al*, 1999:15).

4.4. Refugees and Housing in Australia

Australia remains one of the major immigrant and refugee resettlement countries in the world, with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (2001c) estimating that almost six million migrants have come to Australia since the end of World War II. Of these, nearly 600,000 persons have arrived through humanitarian programs.

The long tradition of immigration to Australia has led to an extensive body of literature on various issues concerning this topic. One indication of the commitment to immigration—and research in this field—can be seen in the Federal government's decision in 1989 to establish the Bureau of Immigration Research to specifically fund and conduct immigration research. Over the ensuing years, the Bureau commissioned an extensive array of research on different immigration issues, including:

- Settlement patterns and residential concentration of immigrants
- Immigrant employment, unemployment and the labour market
- Settlement needs and services
- Demography of immigrant populations, including issues associated with gender, fertility, the elderly, *et cetera*
- Migration and settlement of specific ethnic groups
- Immigration programs and policies.

Despite the large number of research projects funded by the Bureau, there was not a strong focus on immigration and housing research. The most notable research in this field was Junankar, Pope, Kapuscinski, Ma and Wood's (1993) study on recent immigrants and housing; Burnley and Murphy's (1994) study of immigration and housing costs in Sydney, and Hassell and Hugo's (1996) study of immigrants and public housing. The Bureau also funded research on similar projects, such as Fincher's (1991), investigation of the impact of immigration on urban sprawl and urban infrastructure.

Junankar *et al*'s (1993) research was undertaken as a two-part study. The first part examined the interaction between immigration and the housing market, particularly the impact of immigration on the demand for, and supply of, housing and the relationship between house prices and rents and immigration. The study found an inflationary impact of immigration on housing and urban sprawl. They found the housing demand by immigrants was influenced by immigration patterns, destination of immigrants, immigrants' characteristics (such as visa category, country of origin, demographic composition, household size, employment status, *et cetera*). The second part examined the experience of immigrants in the Australian housing market. It found that the housing experience of newly arrived immigrants was dominated by private rental tenure, lower affordability for immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, and immigrants (and private renters) who arrived after 1983 were more likely to be in housing stress. The study emphasised the importance of On Arrival Supported Accommodation for newly arrived immigrants, particularly for refugees who arrive in Australia with little or no resources and no support networks or opportunities to find suitable housing. The provision of housing was found to be a major settlement issue for many refugees. The study also found that affordability was a major obstacle to housing access for newly arrived immigrants, particularly for refugees who arrived without assets or savings, and were consequently vulnerable to housing stress (Junankar *et al*, 1993).

Most of the research on immigrant populations has failed to distinguish between refugees and immigrants. For example, in most of the Vietnamese research noted above, the focus has been on the Vietnamese as an ethnic group rather than as a predominately refugee group. Although immigrants and refugees both experience settlement difficulties, it is argued here (and elsewhere) that the problems encountered by refugees are far more acute.

The second notable problem with the research literature is that there has not been sufficient focus on newly arrived immigrants or refugees. The research has not focussed on the greater problems that recently arrived immigrants and refugees encounter. The Bureau of Immigration and Population Research compiled an annotated bibliography of Immigrant Housing in Australia (1994). This contains 100 published and unpublished references to material relating to immigrants and housing. However, only a small proportion of these are directly related to housing issues of recently arrived immigrants.

Bibliographic and electronic database searches identified a small number of references that focussed on refugees and housing in Australia. These include Milne's (1979) investigation of Indochinese refugees and public housing in South Australia, Ng's (1983) survey of Indochina refugee housing in Brisbane, David's (1991) thesis on the housing of Latin American refugees in Adelaide, Dickman's (1995) study of the housing needs of Somali refugees in Victoria, and Campbell's (1997) research on Housing Needs of Humanitarian Settlers in Victoria. More recently, an issue of the journal *Parity* was devoted to homeless migrants and refugees in Australia, in which Alloush (2001), Drummound and Ransley (2001) Johnston (2001), Mitchell (2001), San Remo (2001), Smiley (2001) and Tuohey (2001) briefly discussed issues confronting refugees when seeking housing.

Milne's (1979) study provided an insight into the settlement of Indochinese refugees in Adelaide. The study found that housing was not a major concern, probably due to the provision of accommodation at the Pennington Migrant Hostel. However, the study found a strong desire to move away from the hostel. Home ownership was not high among the refugees and most rented property—either privately or from state housing authority—in the suburbs surrounding the hostel. The close location enabled them to maintain contacts and support services at the hostel, as well as check new arrivals for relatives, and to live close to the manufacturing industries located in Adelaide's western suburbs. Milne's (1979) study identified a number of problems experienced by the Indochinese refugees as they accessed rental housing. Their poor English language skills and their unfamiliarity with the housing and legal systems left them open to exploitation by landlords, and also prevented some refugees in need from accessing public housing. The most frequent problem was finding a suitably large house that could accommodate a large extended family, at an affordable rent. The study found that 'as a result, overcrowding (as we know it)' was common (Milne, 1979: 18).

Another study of Indochinese refugee settlement was conducted by Ng (1983) in the West End area of Brisbane. The study found that although three quarters of respondents were satisfied with their various housing arrangements, approximately half had difficulties with their past accommodation, most in their first six months of settlement. Difficulties experienced at the time of interview were mostly maintenance and repair type problems, with only a few households experiencing overcrowding. Accommodation problems were usually solved within the network of families and friends. The major problem of refugee families at the time was unemployment, with half of household heads unemployed.

David (1991) conducted an investigation into the housing of Latin American refugees in Adelaide. The refugees had also been provided on arrival accommodation at the Pennington Migrant Hostel. The study found that cost, dwelling type and size, and proximity to schools and shopping facilities were the factors considered most by Latin American refugees when searching for housing in Adelaide.

A short research project on the housing needs of Somali refugees in Victoria was recently undertaken by Dickman (1995). This research found that both short and medium term housing was difficult for refugees to access. Furthermore, Dickman (1995: 1) argued that the lack of public housing led to many refugees being 'inappropriately housed in emergency accommodation or forced into the private rental market, which could cause a financial crisis for many families.' Previous research on African settlement in Melbourne by Radebe and Sandy (cited in Dickman, 1995: 6) found that

- newly arrived African migrants have difficulty in accessing public housing because of the long waiting time;
- public housing, if available, may not be appropriate in terms of location and size;
- private rental can be difficult to access because immigrants lack the references needed by real estate agents, racist attitudes on the part of real estate agents, lack of English language skills, and a lack of appropriately sized stock;
- most immigrants from African countries have difficulty affording private rental and its costs causes housing stress for many families.

Dickman (1995: 8–9) claimed that the basic housing needs for Somali refugees were not being met because of the lack of available stock. She identified two basic housing needs: the need for on arrival accommodation that is linked to settlement support services, and the need for secure, long-term housing. According to Dickman (1995: 9), short term on arrival accommodation was becoming critical, due partly to the closure of migrant hostels. She maintained that only ‘those most in need are able to access a place on arrival.’ Furthermore, it was difficult for Somali refugees to access medium to long-term housing. The study (1995: 11) found that some Somalis were exploited because of their lack of knowledge of the Australian housing system and that racial discrimination was evident in both the private and public rental sectors. Other problems identified by Dickman (1995: 11-12) included the small house size for large families, culturally inappropriate housing designs, and poor access to public transport and cultural services and shops.

Campbell (1997) conducted a study of the housing needs of recent humanitarian settlers in Victoria that utilised data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) and from a survey of recent humanitarian settlers. She found that humanitarian entrants were ‘clearly and significantly more disadvantaged in comparison to other migrants’ (Campbell, 1987: 29). For example, she found that although most Humanitarian entrants were eligible for public housing, less than ten per cent were accommodated in public housing in the first eighteen months of settlement.

Campbell (1997: 29) claimed that a lack of housing alternatives was forcing humanitarian settlers into private housing. The proportion of persons on Humanitarian visas living in private rental accommodation—approximately seventy per cent—was higher than any other visa category. According to Campbell (1997: 30), high rental housing costs was a major problem for Humanitarian settlers, as they ‘pay an unacceptably high proportion of their income on rent.’ High rental costs often forces Humanitarian entrants into shared arrangements, to trade-off location against cost, and/or leaves them without money to pay for other necessities, such as food and clothing (Campbell, 1997: 29).

The study also found that access to rental housing was often hindered by poor English language skills and lack of understanding of the Australian housing system amongst Humanitarian entrants. In addition, humanitarian entrants often experienced difficulties dealing with real estate agents, due to an apparent reluctance by agents to rent to people who were unemployed and/or without a previous rental history in Australia. Campbell (1995: 29) claimed that Humanitarian entrants were discriminated against, with discrimination more prevalent among Somalis and Iraqis than Humanitarian entrants from the former Yugoslavia.

Waxman (1998) questioned providers of services to refugees in Sydney on the major needs of client groups during the first three months of settlement. He found that housing was a major concern for almost two-thirds (65%) of key informants. Waxman (1998: 765) argued that settlement adjustment was difficult without adequate accommodation, and because many refugees had previously abandoned their family homes and possessions, obtaining appropriate housing would be their first step in reaching normalcy.

The Refugee Council of Australia (2000b: 26) claimed that securing accommodation is one of the major problems confronting refugees and those seeking to assist them. They identified a number of specific hurdles to gaining access to housing, including:

- the lack of rental history among newly arrived refugees makes agents reluctant to accept refugees as tenants;
- rental accommodation can be prohibitively expensive in the larger cities, especially Sydney;
- affordable accommodation is often available only in less desirable areas, such as too far from public transport, or high crime areas;
- the lack of appropriate rental accommodation for large families;
- cultural differences in accommodation preferences;
- lack of language and cultural skills to negotiate with real estate agents and utilities.

Similar barriers were identified by the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region and these were seen to place newly arrived refugees and migrants at risk of homelessness (Johnston, 2001). These included: difficulty accessing appropriate and sufficient income or income support; problematic access to labour market; lack of familiarity with service systems; and difficulty accessing suitable housing options.

Moreover, refugees participation in the housing market is often characterised by:

- lack of information on public, private and community housing sectors;
- lack of knowledge and understanding about housing and legal rights and obligations;
- inadequately sized housing for large families;
- overcrowding;
- hidden homelessness (e.g. sharing with other families);
- homelessness due to family breakdown or rental termination;
- safety concerns in rental properties with poor living conditions;
- community safety issues caused by harassment and racism;
- health risks due to inadequate provisions and maintenance (e.g. poor heating);
- geographical isolation from family, ethnic communities, community services, *et cetera*;
- vulnerability in private rental market;
- lack of accessibility in private rental market due to lack of references, finances, communication barriers, *et cetera*;
- lack of rent regulation in the private rental market;
- lack of education around cultural and linguistic sensitivity for housing staff and real estate agents;
- direct and indirect discrimination in the private rental market; and
- language barriers. (Alloush, 2001)

Homelessness can be a significant problem for different sections of the refugee population, particularly young people. Mackenzie (cited in Drummond and Ransley, 2001: 10) claimed that young refugees were six times more likely to become homeless than other young people. Furthermore, Drummond and Ransley (2001: 10) stated that the incidence of homeless among young refugees is steadily increasing. Young refugees are severely influenced by their refugee and settlement experiences and this affects their adolescent development and the transition to independence.⁶ Drummond and Ransley (2001: 11) found that young refugees often do not have the language skills or confidence necessary to access housing services, and are often confused about accessing transitional housing. Additional barriers in the private rental market include being discriminated against (on the basis of age and race) and not being able to afford the rent and bonds required. According to Drummond and Ransley (2001: 11), there are few appropriate housing options for migrant and refugee young people.

⁶ Young refugees can be subjected to torture and trauma, have their education disrupted, spend lengthy periods of transition in refugee camps (or as illegal immigrants in second countries or as internally displaced in their country of origin), travel to an asylum/resettlement country unaccompanied (Drummond and Ransley, 2001: 10).

The public housing sector cannot provide a solution for the housing problems confronting all refugees. Access to the public housing stock has worsened over the last decade because of the decline in Commonwealth funding for public housing. The long waiting lists for public housing, caused by the reduction in available housing stock and the increased demand for affordable housing, has pushed more refugees into the private rental sector. In San Remo's (2001:4) view, the private sector was 'often inappropriate for refugees and humanitarian settlers in terms of cost, size and location'.

The most vulnerable of all refugee and migrant groups in Australia would appear to be asylum seekers who arrive on a temporary visa and seek asylum. Mitchell (2001:18) claimed that asylum seekers have considerable needs, such as housing, food and material aid, medical, legal advice and counselling, yet are eligible for very few services. The matter is complicated by the fact that rights and entitlements of the asylum seeker change at each level of the refugee determination process. For example, Mitchell (2001: 18) claimed that all asylum seekers who appeal directly to the Minister of Immigration do not have the right to work, and are not eligible for Medicare or the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS). Very often it is left to community and church groups to meet the needs of asylum seekers.

4.5. Implications for the conduct of the study

The review of the national and international literature on the housing of refugees has highlighted important issues of the further conduct of this research. The international literature and international experience has shown:

- Little research effort has focussed specifically on the housing of refugees and there are therefore significant gaps in our knowledge of this topic;
- Homelessness is a potential problem for refugees in some recipient countries;
- Refugees may have difficulty gaining access to public and private housing because of language, cultural and discrimination barriers;
- Refugees often move to private rental housing, and this housing may not be appropriate for their needs;
- Overcrowding and low housing standards are a problem in some sections of refugee populations and these conditions may reflect hidden homelessness.

The Australian studies show that:

- On Arrival Accommodation was important for the housing of refugees in the past, but access is now more restricted and is available for shorter periods;
- Earlier studies did not report homelessness was a problem for recently arrived refugees. However, more recent research suggests TPV and many young refugees are vulnerable to homelessness;
- There are a number of barriers to participation in the housing market—safety concerns, lack of knowledge on rights and obligations, etc.—and these must be considered in collecting data on the housing histories and pathways of refugee arrivals.

The insights to emerge out of this review will inform the schedule of interviews that lies at the centre of this research.

5. METHODOLOGY

This research is a multi-site project, with fieldwork investigations being undertaken simultaneously in three Australian cities: Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. These cities were selected as research locations because each city has received approximately one-quarter of all Temporary Protection Visa holders released from detention.⁷ In addition, the three cities all receive refugees for settlement through the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

The project involves interviewing 150 refugees in each of the cities, with equal numbers—75 respondents—of Temporary Protection Visa holders and offshore refugees who entered Australia through either the Refugee Program or the Special Humanitarian Program. Furthermore, the research targets specific nationalities in each program—Croatian, Iraqi and Sudanese refugees in the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Programs, and Iraqi and Afghan refugees who have been granted Temporary Protection Visas. These ethnic groups have been identified from DIMIA settlement database as being significant groups in each program.

The principal method of inquiry for this study is personal interviews using a survey questionnaire. One questionnaire has been designed that contains a series of core questions, as well as a distinctive set of questions for each migration program (Refugee Program, Special Humanitarian Program, and Temporary Protection Visa holders). These different modules are designed to collect information on the different housing entitlements and experiences of persons in the different programs upon their arrival in Australia, and reflect the different housing pathways available to each group. The questionnaires are comprised of predominantly closed questions, as this is considered more effective and less intrusive when interviewing refugees. There are, however, a small number of open-ended questions.

The interviews are being conducted by a small team of field assistants recruited from within the refugee ranks and from other sources. The field assistants have some knowledge of the refugee and ethnic communities in each city, which assists with the recruitment of respondents. In addition, a snowball sampling methodology—where respondents or key personnel in network organisations recommend prospective respondents for interviewing—is being implemented to recruit additional respondents. The researchers in each state are responsible for training field assistants, providing interview guidelines and maintaining a research schedule to ensure that the project progresses at the same speed in all three states.

The interviews are conducted in various national languages, because the majority of TPV refugees and a significant proportion of Refugee and Humanitarian Program entrants have poor English language skills. To assist the interviewing process, the questionnaire is being translated into a number of languages that are common among the major refugee populations—Arabic, Dari and Croatian. Arabic is the native language of Iraq and Sudan, Dari is one of the main languages in Afghanistan and Croatian is the native language for Croatia. Once the questionnaire has been translated into the various languages it will be back-translated by the field assistants to ensure accuracy.

Table 4.1: Sampling Frame of Research: Nationality of Respondents

TPV holders	Refugee and Special Humanitarian Programs
Afghan (40)	
Iraqi (35)	Iraqi (25)
	Croatian (25)
	Sudanese (25)

The key researchers in each state are conducting in-depth interviews with a wide variety of representatives from community and refugee organisations, state government departments and other people involved in providing assistance and services to refugees. These interviews provide necessary background information on refugee settlement, as well as identify refugee needs, the provision of existing settlement services (including housing) to refugees, and gaps in service provision. The information supplements the data gathered in the survey.

⁷ There has been an out-migration of TPV refugees from these three cities, particularly to Sydney. However, it is impossible to determine the exact extent of this movement or the extent of in-migration or return migration by TPV refugees to these cities.

This study is indicative rather than a representative sample. A representative sample cannot be constructed because:

- the refugee population in each city is not known;
- standard random selection processes cannot be used because of the difficulties recruiting informants;
- it is our expectation that the population of TPV refugees is structured in ways that cannot be known at this stage.

Because of the indicative nature of this research, care will need to be taken in the presentation and discussion of the results.

6. CONCLUSION

Australia is one of the world's major refugee resettlement countries, with a dedicated Humanitarian program that facilitates the settlement of some 12,000 refugees and others of humanitarian concern in the country each year. However, it is evident from Chapter 2 that there are considerable differences in the eligibility of different categories of refugees to settlement services—particularly On Arrival Accommodation—with some refugee categories eligible for services while others are not. However, even those refugees provided with On Arrival Accommodation receive only limited housing entitlements.

Numerous authors—in Australia and overseas—have recognised the importance of housing in refugee resettlement. This Positioning Paper has reviewed the literature and found relatively little research has focused directly on the housing of newly arrived refugees in Australia. The review of the national and international literature in Chapter 3 found that key researchers in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom have identified a strong need for detailed research on the barriers that refugees confront in searching for housing and the degree to which existing practices and institutions assist refugee settlement. They claimed that it is only by identifying the barriers that better programs can be implemented.

International studies have identified financial, racial, gender and social barriers that can obstruct refugees from obtaining appropriate and affordable housing. In addition, housing providers—in both the public and private rental sectors—have generally failed to provide housing that is appropriate to the different and changing needs of refugee households rarely equipped to handle such households. However, the international literature can provide only a muted guide for the development of policy in this country, as there are significant differences in refugee programs in these countries compared to Australia. This limits the transferability of insights derived from other nations, such as Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States.

This Positioning Paper has identified an urgent need for a better understanding of the housing experiences of newly arrived refugees in Australia. This research will identify the obstacles refugees encounter during the early stage of resettlement, which place them at a high risk of becoming homeless. This study will compare the housing experiences of different refugee categories, and identify the housing needs within each refugee group. This research will also interview service providers and community organisations about different housing programs for refugees and their views on settlement needs and services, including housing. The research will also gauge the use of government and non-government housing services and other settlement services, and shed light on the need for such services among the refugee groups. In addition, the research will identify the key factors that could lead to homelessness and assess the risk of homelessness among different refugee groups. The information from refugees and services providers will be used to examine various models for providing housing assistance. It is envisaged that the information collected in this study will directly assist statutory and community agencies in developing practical strategies to assist the settlement of Temporary Protection Visa and other refugee and humanitarian program migrants in Australia.

This Positioning Paper adopts a social exclusion framework for the comparative study on the housing of different categories of recently arrived refugees in three Australian cities. The concept of social exclusion has been applied and developed to explain the condition of immigrant groups and minorities in a number of European countries (Marsh and Mullins, 1998). It has also been identified as a useful concept to understand the housing circumstances of immigrants and refugees in Australia (Beer and Morphett, 2002).

Social exclusion is concerned with the complex and multi-layered causes of disadvantage. It is generally used to refer to multiple and linked social, economic and cultural problems within an area or group. The concept of social exclusion recognises that a range of processes alienate and disempower individuals, with adverse impacts for their welfare. Somerville (1998) identified three drivers of social exclusion that are particularly relevant to refugee populations.⁸

⁸ Within advanced economies, social exclusion is driven by three factors:

1. disadvantage within the labour market;
2. a consequence of political/legal structures that disadvantage some individuals or groups and disenfranchise them from publicly provided benefits, and,

Consequently, the social exclusion perspective into the housing of newly arrived refugees into Australia will:

1. consider the position of refugees within the labour market;
2. examine the discrimination of refugees within the housing market and their access to—and use of—government provided assistance; and
3. examine the cultural and other barriers that prohibit individual refugees or refugee groups from participating fully in society or the Australian housing market.

The materials covered in this Positioning Paper will inform the next phase of the study, such as the development of the questionnaire.

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3. predominant ideologies, such as the gendered division of society, which forces many women out of the formal workforce and devalues their work within the domestic economy.

Somerville (1998) argued that the socially excluded suffer the consequences of all three processes, not just one.

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