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Expensive and insecure private rental market limits pathways out of social housing

- There are limited pathways for tenants to leave social housing for the private rental market, even for those who want to.
- The private rental market is largely inaccessible, unaffordable and insecure for households leaving social housing.
- The social housing market is perceived by tenants as a destination rather than a pathway to other forms of housing.
- If tenants are to be supported out of social housing, providers should make sure adequate support is available at all stages of the process: before, during and after a move is made.

The Australian private rental market is largely inaccessible, unaffordable and insecure for households that might otherwise have had the capacity to move on from social housing, new AHURI research has shown,

The research, *'Understanding the experience of social housing pathways'*, was undertaken for AHURI by researchers from University of Tasmania, Swinburne University of Technology, The University of Adelaide and The University of New South Wales, and explores the ways very low income households experience pathways into, within and out of the Australian social housing system.

'Government policies to move people through and out of social housing won't be effective unless there are strong improvements to security of tenure and affordability for these tenants as they move into the private rental market,' says Dr Kathleen Flanagan, lead author of the research.

'Many of the tenants we interviewed did not feel they had any option but to stay in social housing, considering themselves unable, financially and otherwise, to negotiate the private rental market. In practical terms, for many tenants there are no feasible pathways out of social housing to another form of housing. Instead, the social housing system is seen as a destination,' says Dr Flanagan.

Of the tenants interviewed for the research, most tenants had experienced significant housing instability and insecurity prior to accessing social housing. This includes experiences of homelessness; domestic and family violence; inadequate and unhealthy housing; significant financial stress; and high levels of household mobility.

Interviews with practitioners from state and community housing providers reported challenges in accommodating tenants with particularly complex issues that can lead to antisocial behaviour. To reduce the likelihood of such events, tenants need good, ongoing support services, including health-related services and financial counselling.

'If policies to encourage or enforce transitions out of social housing and into the private rental market are to be promoted, then housing providers should make sure adequate support is available at all stages of the process: before, during and after a move is made,' says Dr Flanagan. 'In addition, there needs to be private rental housing that is affordable and secure that tenants can move into.'

The report can be downloaded from the AHURI website at <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/324>

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