



National Housing Research Program

2020 Research Agenda

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

NHRP FUNDING ROUND

2020

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1 Purpose

The [National Housing Research Program](#) (NHRP) is building an evidence-base of practical applied research to support policy development, and is adding new knowledge to housing, homelessness, cities, urban policy and related disciplines. The NHRP Research Agenda is updated annually to provide direction in the development of this evidence-base and to set priorities for the annual funding round. The Research Agenda is developed through consultation with government Housing Chief Executives, the Australian Government, relevant state and territory government departments, Research Centre Directors, the AHURI Limited Board and the NHRP Research Panel.

The purpose of this document is to present the AHURI NHRP 2020 Research Agenda.

The 2020 Research Agenda is structured around two Evidence-Based Policy Inquiry topics, three Investigative Panels and topics provided for Stand-alone research and Scoping projects. AHURI also calls for Data projects.

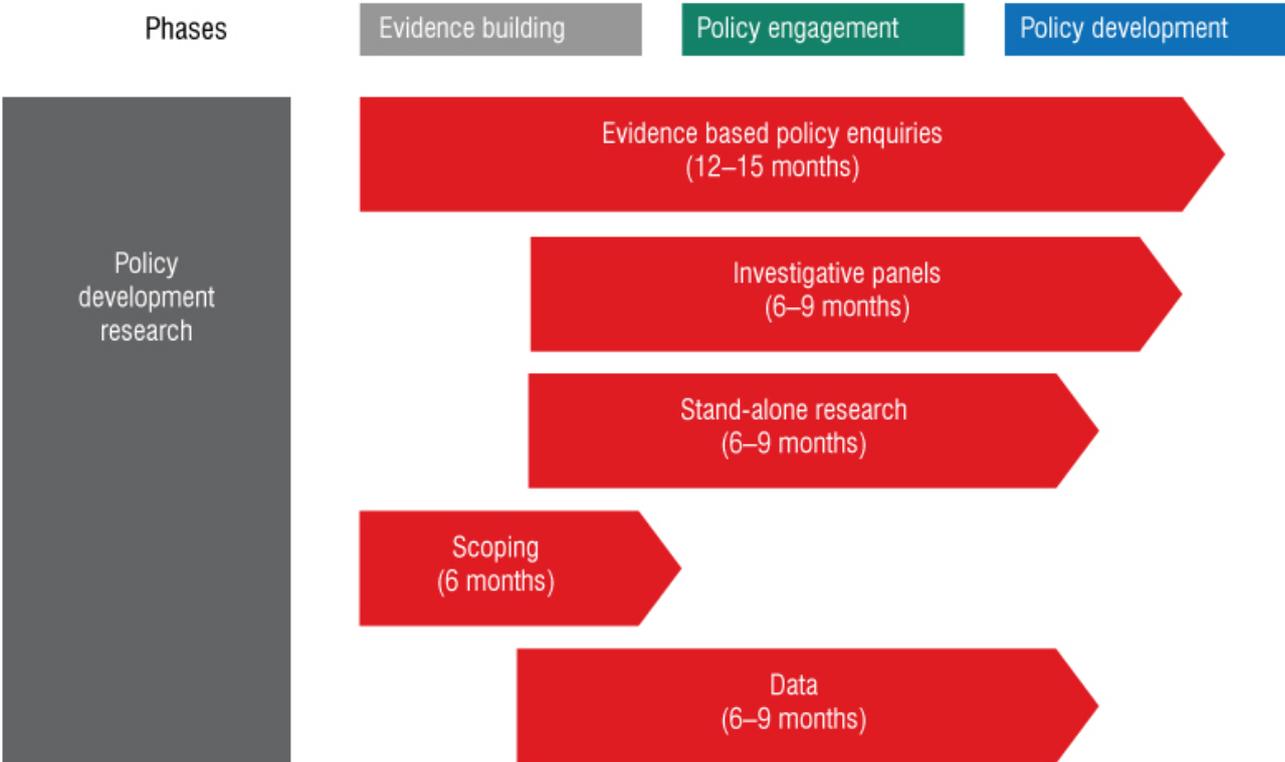
These topics have direct relevance to policy development priorities and call for research to inform practice and policy reforms.

2 Policy Development Research Model

The Policy Development Research Model facilitates engagement between the research and policy communities. Policy development research integrates the traditionally separate processes of evidence building and policy development into one set of practices. The Policy Development Research Model demands a high degree of collaboration within and between the policy and research communities.

This occurs through specialised research vehicles developed by AHURI in which research and policy engagement are integrated. These vehicles include Evidence-Based Policy Inquiries (henceforth Inquiries), Investigative Panels and stand-alone research, scoping and data update projects which are established to address priority policy issues (Figure 1). Policy priority issues are developed through consultation with Australian Government and state and territory government Housing Chief Executives, Research Centre Directors and the NHRP Research Panel; and endorsed by the AHURI Limited Board.

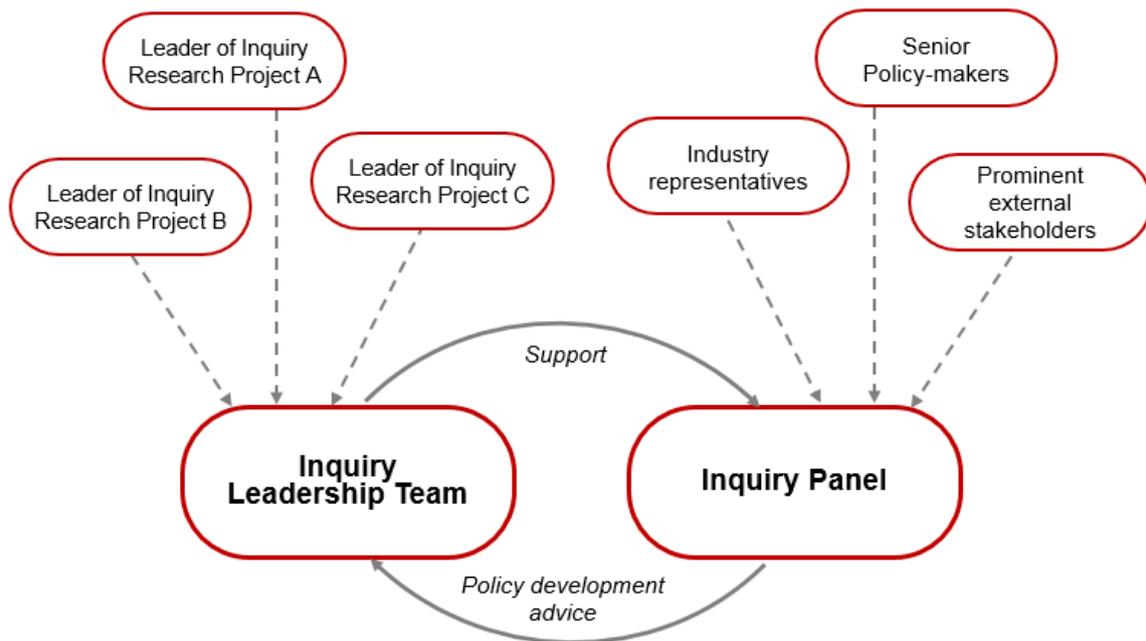
Figure 1: Policy development research



2.1 Evidence-Based Policy Inquiries

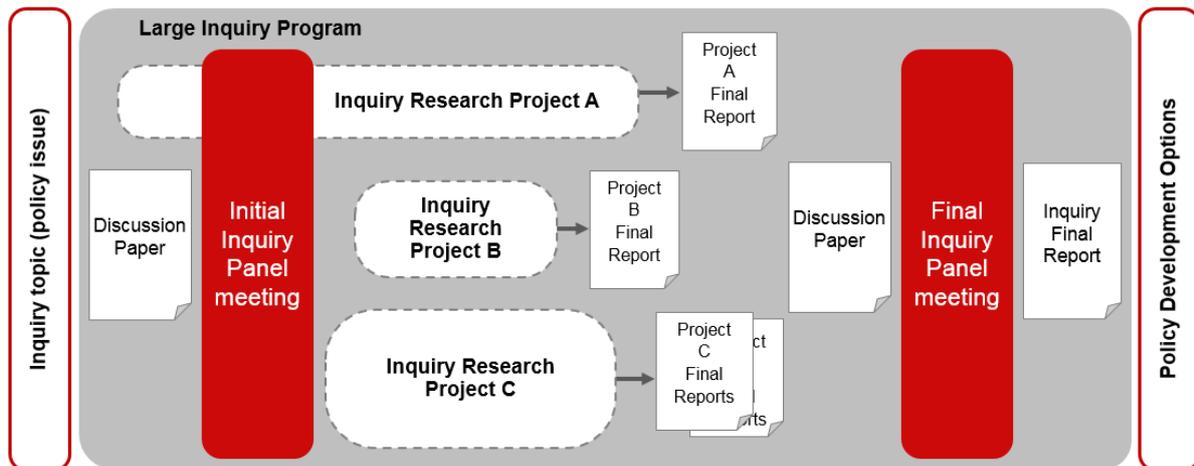
An Inquiry is led by academics with the expertise to develop the Inquiry Program which provides the overall logic and the framework of the Inquiry. This Inquiry Leadership Team also conduct a suite of independent, original Inquiry Research Projects to advance knowledge to address the policy issue. The Inquiry Panel draws a mix of policy and practice expertise from government, non-government and private sectors together to consider the evidence and the outcomes of the research to address the policy issue and to make particular recommendations for policy development and/or practice innovation (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Inquiry key personnel structure



The Inquiry Leadership Team authors the materials for the Inquiry Panel and all publications for the Inquiry. The Final Report for the Inquiry and for each of the Inquiry Research Projects are published over the course of the Inquiry in the AHURI journal series. These Final Reports are double blind peer reviewed. An example of the structure and outputs expected in an Inquiry is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Inquiry structure and outputs—large Inquiry



In the NHRP 2019 Funding Round, funded Inquiries will run in parallel—each focussed on one pressing policy issue, as listed below and detailed in Chapter 3.

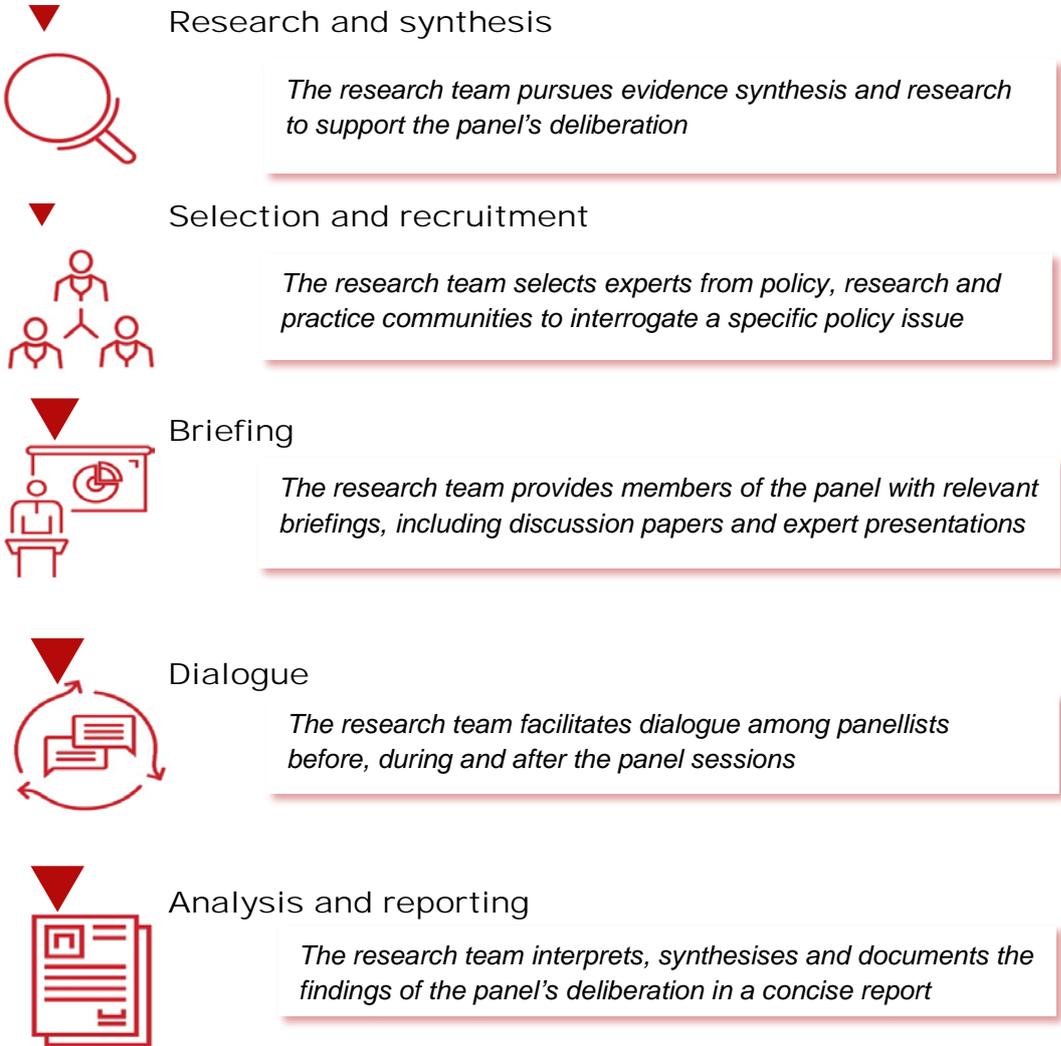
- 2020A** Inquiry into population settlement
- 2020B** Inquiry into housing older Australians

2.2 Investigative Panels

Investigative Panels are designed to bring about direct engagement between experts from the research and policy communities, and practitioners from industry and community sectors, to interrogate a specific policy or practice question. They are best suited to research examining new or emerging policy issues, for which rapid evidence building is required.

The Investigative Panel is a research method that draws together elements of key informant interview and focus group approaches, to generate new knowledge through the expert panel discussions. The Panel may be called together for one or two meetings depending on the research approach. The research approach may also include other research activities or methods such as a literature review, interviews or secondary data analysis but the information from the Panel members is an important contribution to the research. Panel members are chosen for their expertise and knowledge about the subject. The Final Report is however authored by the researcher(s) and contributions from individual Panel members are not attributed or identifiable. Typical processes involved in an Investigative Panel are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Investigative Panel process



An Investigative Panel is deemed the most appropriate method to address the topics listed below and detailed in Chapter 4.

- 2020C Investigative Panel on build to rent in Australia
- 2020D Investigative Panel on an integrated housing assistance system
- 2020E Investigative Panel on coordinated urban growth

2.3 Stand-Alone Research Projects

The NHRP Funding Round 2020 will include funding stand-alone research projects to ensure a broader range of policy issues and more varied research delivery output timelines. Stand-alone research projects use a wide variety of research methods to tackle the research topic. Research projects may vary in scale and can range across discrete secondary data analysis to limited primary data collection exercises. These are listed below and detailed in Chapter 5.

- 2020F The role of construction in housing affordability
- 2020G Defining overcrowding
- 2020H Housing for sustainable remote communities
- 2020I Social housing asset lifecycle management
- 2020J Cost offsets of social housing provision
- 2020K Housing people with disabilities
- 2020L Development in my backyard
- 2020M New housing and investment

2.4 Scoping projects

The NHRP Funding Round 2020 will include the introduction of Scoping projects.

Scoping projects operate under a shorter time frame and smaller funding limits than Stand-alone or Data projects—there is a cap of \$50,000 on the costing, and none should be longer in duration than 6 months.

Scoping projects must include Early Career Researchers as an investigator, working in collaboration with a senior researcher or researchers. Early Career Researchers are defined in line with ARC DECRA eligibility—researchers are typically eligible if they have been awarded a PhD within five years (longer if combined with periods of significant career interruption).

A key feature of Scoping projects is evidence mapping—describing the quantity, design and characteristics of evidence and available data in broad topic areas. Researchers can undertake a Scoping project to examine the extent, range, and nature of current evidence, determine the value of undertaking further research or policy development, and identify gaps in the existing evidence base. As such, researchers can use Scoping projects to clarify a complex concept and refine subsequent policy research priorities.

Scoping projects may be particularly relevant to issues with emerging evidence, where there is a lack of knowledge about the quality and applicability of the existing evidence base. In disseminating the findings from Scoping projects, it should be considered how to direct further research so that a body of literature can emerge to inform policy. These are listed below and detailed in Chapter 6.

- 2020N Scoping prejudicial discrimination in the private rental system
- 2020O Scoping the potential and challenges of housing data sources
- 2020P Scoping Indigenous housing research capacity and research approaches
- 2020Q Scoping the modern key worker challenge in Australian cities

2.5 Data projects

In each NHRP Funding Round AHURI calls for Data projects which support policy development and address housing, homelessness and urban issues. The AHURI National Housing Research Program has, over time, systematically analysed a range of key secondary data sets (e.g. AIHW, ABS, HILDA) to provide a series of fundamental statistics about housing and homelessness in Australia. As new data becomes available these analyses require updating. Also as new datasets become available on additional areas of policy interest, analysis of these is encouraged to add to the evidence base. This is detailed in Chapter 7.

2020R Data projects

3 Evidence Based Policy Inquiries

2020A Inquiry into population settlement

Policy issue: Decentralising population growth has been identified as a key strategy to maximise economic benefits and improve housing affordability and liveability in Australia's cities.

What are the current patterns of settlement for international and internal migration in Australia, and how might the development of Australia's smaller cities work to mitigate the challenges of managing population growth?

Context

The 2016 Census counted 23.4 million people living in Australia, an increase of 8.8% since 2011. Between Censuses, the number of people living in capital cities grew nearly twice as fast as the number of people living outside of capital cities (10.5% and 5.7% respectively)¹. The costs of congestion in Australia's eight capital cities were estimated to exceed \$16.5 billion in 2015. Furthermore, measures such as the VAMPIRE Index show that Australian households are increasingly vulnerable to cost of living pressures that arise from the urban form of Australia's major cities; particularly in the context of the growing population. Perhaps because of this, public commentary (and a significant proportion of urban policy) in Australia often focusses on Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

It is proposed that a more dispersed population might ease some of these pressures. Second tier cities and smaller cities often have lower housing costs, are less congested, and are thought to have greater liveability and access to natural environments. However, they may suffer from lack of employment and educational opportunities and key services. There is a need to better understand the dynamics of second tier and smaller cities, including their housing markets, economies, services and amenities, and role in their region. For example, some smaller cities are regional hubs, whereas others might be considered commuter towns or satellite cities. While there are no agreed definitions, those capitals with a population of less than 50,000 could be thought of as 'second tier' cities. Regional centres with a population greater than 50,000 could be considered small cities.

The Senate Inquiry into The Future Role and Contribution of Regional Capitals to Australia² described "the failure of Australian governments to develop a nationally co-ordinated response to developing regional capitals and second cities". Geelong, Newcastle, and other second cities have campaigned for the development of a Second City Policy Framework. The Australian Government has recently invested in projects in second cities, such as the Regional Development Australia Fund and City Deals which have to date predominantly targeted second cities and second tier cities.

It is broadly recognised that employment opportunities are a driver of location choice. Current AHURI research is examining the economic effects of current settlement patterns, and how labour force decentralization might be achieved through 'smart cities' policy. While the availability of work is significant, there is a need to better understand other incentives or supports which may be needed to encourage growth in smaller cities and regional centres, such as: affordable housing, education opportunities, health and other social services. Facilitating more efficient connections between major

¹ ABS (2017) 2071.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016, Canberra. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Snapshot%20of%20Australia,%202016~2>

² Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport (2018) *The Future Role and Contribution of Regional Capitals to Australia*, the Senate Printing Unit, Department of the Senate, Parliament House, Canberra.

cities and commuter towns might also help decentralise employment opportunities and population. Consideration should also be given to perceived 'quality of life', lifestyle and cultural factors.

Opportunities

To address the policy question outlined above researchers might:

- Identify types of small cities according to economic profile, population growth or decline, main industries, and geographies.
- Consider the current settlement patterns of migrants (within Australia and international) in Australia (to SLA level) both spatially as well as in terms of tenure.
- Explain the mobility patterns of Australian households and immigrants, and the key things that influence or constrain their choices.
- Consider what supports or motivates moves to regional Australia including for example, employment opportunities and forms of infrastructure necessary to facilitate and encourage settlement outside of the metropolitan centres.
- Conduct new research into the place-based experiences of those who settle (both Australian born and international migrants) in Australia's small cities and regional towns.
- Determine the housing/employment outcomes of migrants in smaller regional centres (e.g. Newcastle, Geelong, Launceston) and how these compare with the outcomes in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

Relevant AHURI research

Beer, A., Tually, S., Rowley, S., McKenzie, F.H., Schlapp, J., Birdsall-Jones, C. and Corunna, V. (2011) *The drivers of supply and demand in Australia's rural and regional centres*, AHURI Final Report No. 165, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/165>.

Gurran, N., et al. (2015) *Housing markets, economic productivity, and risk: international evidence and policy implications for Australia - Volume 1: Outcomes of an Investigative Panel*, AHURI Final Report No. 254, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/254>.

Gurran, N., et al. (2015) *Housing markets, economic productivity, and risk: international evidence and policy implications for Australia - Volume 2: Supplementary papers*, AHURI Final Report No. 255, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/255>.

Maclennan, D., et al. (2015) *Making connections: housing, productivity and economic development*, AHURI Final Report No. 251, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/251>.

van den Nouwelant, R., et al. (2016) *Housing affordability, central city economic productivity and the lower income labour market*, AHURI Final Report No. 261, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/261>.

2020B Inquiry into housing older Australians

Policy issue: Older Australians without the security of home ownership face precarious housing as they age.

What protections are needed while living in current forms of alternative housing tenures and what innovative housing models could revitalise the sector for future generations?

Context

The ABS estimates there were 160,200 households aged 65 or more renting in the private rental market in 2015-16¹. This is expected to increase, AHURI research estimated that there will be 419,000 older people living in private rental in Australia by 2026.

There appears to be an age effect where large numbers of older middle-aged households are ageing 'in tenure' within the private rental sector with the rate of change toward older ages more rapid in the private rental sector than across the housing system as a whole. Private rental is often unaffordable, insecure and may not facilitate ageing in place.

Social housing is increasingly occupied by older Australians, and there is growth in the use of manufactured homes in residential parks in some jurisdictions.

In Australia a range of terms are used to describe housing for people in later life such as residential aged care, age specific housing and retirement housing, depending on life stage and level of support required. The Productivity Commission found that the strong preference of older people is to age in place ideally in a home they own, and to engage services to delay entry into residential aged care². However this is not achievable or practical for everyone, depending on their health, finances and stage of life.

There is particular concern over increasing numbers of single older women with insecure or unsuitable housing, and the implications of lower incomes often through part-time employment histories, lower superannuation savings and greater longevity.

Retirement villages are the main form of service-integrated housing in Australia. AHURI research has identified a typology of service integration types based on a continuum of support and care—from those suited to early retirees in good health (demanding lifestyle and recreational services), to those integrated with some social support, and finally those defined by fully integrated support and care.

A common criticism of the retirement housing sector is a lack of transparency of fee structures. Public commentary depicts a sector in which vulnerable older Australians are faced with extremely complex legal agreements including substantial exit costs.

Niche models designed to better meet the needs of older Australians are being implemented in various locations, including public-private partnerships and precinct-based models, but mechanisms to develop them to scale have not been identified.

There is a lack of consistency of legislation and regulation across the range of forms of housing for older people, and across jurisdictions.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017), Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2015–16, Cat. No. 4130.0, Canberra.

² Productivity Commission (2015) Housing Decisions of Older Australians, Commission Research Paper, Canberra. <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/housing-decisions-older-australians>

Opportunities

To address the policy question outlined above researchers might consider:

- The impact of later retirement age on income and access to housing options, particularly for non-home owners.
- Ageing in place options (particularly for non-home owners) and access to the Home Care Packages.
- Stigma of residential aged care and how this can be addressed/counteracted particularly in light of a Royal Commission.
- Consumer protection, dispute resolution, fair pricing and regulation/legislation in this area.
- Emerging and innovative housing models e.g. co-housing, resurgence of 'granny flats' due to planning rules.
- International best practice models for provision and regulation of housing for older people.

Relevant AHURI research

Beer, A. and D. Faulkner (2009) *21st century housing careers and Australia's housing future*, AHURI Final Report No. 128, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/128>.

Bridge, C., L. Davy, et al. (2011). *Age-specific housing and care for low to moderate income older people*, AHURI Final Report No. 174, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/174>.

James, A., Rowley, S., Stone, W., Parkinson, S. Spinney, A., Reynolds, M. (forthcoming) *Older Australians and the housing aspirations gap*, AHURI Final Report ###, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne.

Jones, A., Howe, A., Tilse, C., Bartlett, H., and Stimson, R. (2010) *Service integrated housing for Australians in later life*, AHURI Final Report No. 141, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/141>.

Jones, A. Bell, M. Tilse, C. and Earl, G. (2007) *Rental housing provision for lower income older Australians*, AHURI Final Report No. 98, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/98>.

Judd, B., E. Liu, et al. (2014) *Downsizing amongst older Australians*, AHURI Final Report No. 214, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/214>.

Olsberg, D. and M. Winters (2005) *Ageing in place: intergenerational and intrafamilial housing transfers and shifts in later life*, AHURI Final Report No. 88, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/88>.

Stone, W., T. Burke, et al. (2013) *Long term private rental in a changing Australian private rental sector*, AHURI Final Report No. 209, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/209>.

4 Investigative Panels

2020C Investigative Panel on build to rent in Australia

Policy issue: Build to Rent has been promoted as a possible mechanism to increase the supply of affordable rental housing in Australia.

How can a build to rent model become an effective and appropriate model to expand supply of affordable housing in Australia?

Context

Build to Rent housing is built, owned and managed by the private sector with the purpose of leasing individual dwellings. The model contrasts with most other developer-built housing which is marketed to either potential owner occupiers or investors without a tenure in mind. The model was developed in the United Kingdom where it now represents a significant segment of new residential real estate investment. In the United States the model has been developed as multifamily housing.

Build to Rent models are seen as a way to increase the supply of rental housing in Australia. Advocates have argued for changes in the tax and planning systems, more attractive yields for investors, and consumer education to build interest in the model.

The New South Wales, Queensland and Victorian governments have all provided funding to support the development of build to rent. Despite this political commitment, it will take some time for the model to be established in Australia.

Build to rent is considered to have potential in building scale and long term institutional investor interest in the residential rental sector. Investments might take advantage of finance from the newly created National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC). However investments that yield affordable housing are likely to need government subsidy. It is also questioned whether any increase in rental housing has improved tenure security for tenants, and whether government investment might be better spent, such as investing in community housing more directly.

An Investigative Panel offers the opportunity to bring government, developer and investor stakeholders together to discuss the merits and prospects of Build to Rent in Australia.

Opportunities

An investigative panel might:

- Seek to better define what 'Build to Rent' is, and compare it with other models of rental housing investment in Australia and overseas, including whether it typically incorporates a subsidised or affordable element.
- Summarise available evidence around Build to Rent overseas and in Australia, including identifying market segments and locations that are likely to benefit most from housing produced, steps involved in successfully establishing the model, and public benefits (such as increased affordable housing and security of tenure) that might flow from government support of the model.
- Identify the impacts of the model on increasing supply or expanding low income affordable housing, and the taxation and subsidy arrangements that best suit to different policy objectives.
- Catalyse sharing of knowledge and learnings across jurisdictions advancing the Build to Rent.
- Identify the opportunities and barriers for this model to be established in Australia.

Relevant AHURI research

Lawson, J., Berry, M., Hamilton, C. and Pawson, H. (2014) *Enhancing affordable rental housing investment via an intermediary and guarantee*, AHURI Final Report No. 220, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/220>.

Lawson, J., Pawson, H., Troy, L., van den Nouwelant, R. and Hamilton, C. (2018) *Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway*, AHURI Final Report No. 306, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/306>.

2020D Investigative Panel on an integrated housing assistance system

Policy issue: Unmet demand for housing assistance is an enduring issue and can be attributed to finite funding and stretched resources, ever increasing need, restricted application to types of housing tenure, lack of integration of programs, and disconnected supply side and demand side approaches.

How can the housing assistance system be reconfigured for efficient and effective outcomes tenants and the housing system?

Context

The Productivity Commission's 2018 report *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services* includes a recommendation to establish a single system of financial assistance across private rental and social housing¹.

Demand based housing assistance such as Commonwealth Rent Assistance is designed to reduce housing stress, however is only available to eligible consumers in the private or community housing rental sectors. A robust housing assistance system needs to be flexible to be able to withstand market fluctuations and government policy changes while meeting the level and duration of need of consumers across all tenures.

Supply assistance innovation such as the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) bond aggregator is not expected to be enough to incentivise affordable housing supply without additional subsidies² and there is still argument for funding a tax credit program to help deliver more new affordable housing.

Policy intends to achieve a multi-provider system which balances and integrates public housing, community housing, and housing subsidies. Recent system reforms in aged care and disability services may provide lessons for the design and implementation of consumer-driven funding of integrated housing assistance.

How might policy and regulation support integration or coordination of governments and community service sectors to drive positive outcomes for vulnerable clients and a consumer-centric housing assistance system?

Opportunities

An investigative panel might:

- Determine what an integrated housing assistance system would look like.
- Investigate how consumer-driven funding models should be structured (including establishing who should be the consumer base).
- Determine an enduring policy response to the increasing demand for more subsidy.
- Conduct a government policy analysis, including gaps in social policy settings and links between portfolios such as welfare, infrastructure and financial policy.

¹ Productivity Commission 2018, *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: Reforms to Human Services*, Final Report, Canberra, <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/human-services/reforms/report>.

² Australian Government Council on Federal Financial Relations (2017) *Supporting the implementation of an affordable housing bond aggregator*, Affordable Housing Working Group report to Heads of Treasuries, September.

Relevant AHURI research

- Cigdem, M., Wood, G. and Ong, R. (2015) *Australian demographic trends and their implications for housing subsidies*, AHURI Positioning Paper No. 164, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/position-papers/164>.
- Jacobs, K., Hulse, K., Stone, W. and Wiesel, I. (2016) *Individualised housing assistance: findings and policy options*, AHURI Final Report No. 269, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/269>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-4105001.
- Milligan, V., Pawson, H., Phillips, R. and Martin, C. with Elton Consulting (2017) *Developing the scale and capacity of Australia's affordable housing industry*, AHURI Final Report No. 278, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/278>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-7108402.
- Randolph, B., Troy, L., Milligan, V. and van den Nouwelant, R. (2018) *Paying for affordable housing in different market contexts*, AHURI Final Report No. 293, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/293>.
- Rowley, S., James, A., Gilbert, C., Gurrán, N., Ong, R., Phibbs, P., Rosen, D. and Whitehead, C. (2016) *Subsidised affordable rental housing: lessons from Australia and overseas*, AHURI Final Report No. 267, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/267>.
- Wiesel, I., Habibis, D. (2015) *NDIS, housing assistance and choice and control for people with disability*, AHURI Final Report No. 258, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/258>.
- Wood, G., Cigdem, M. and Ong, R. (2017) *Australian demographic trends and implications for housing assistance programs*, AHURI Final Report No. 286, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/286>.

2020E Investigative Panel on coordinated urban growth

Policy issue: In the growth suburbs of Australian cities, there is often a lag in the delivery of critical infrastructure and services. This can compromise both productivity and liveability for residents.

What can be achieved through the planning system to streamline infrastructure delivery, and what other policy levers will help to address these challenges?

Context

It is forecast that Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth will need to accommodate 5.9 million more people by 2031. New housing is being built at the urban fringe and growth suburbs are experiencing rapid increases in density. The lag in the introduction (or absence) of key services and infrastructure, places pressure on existing infrastructure such as schools and transport links¹. Strategic and integrated delivery of infrastructure will be required to accommodate this².

AHURI research has identified the need for a nationally coordinated and consistent approach that incorporates planning system improvements and includes a range of planning mechanisms to retain, promote and create new affordable housing, but which are better connected to other areas of government. It is increasingly evident that there is a role for all levels of government in addressing these concerns, and a need to better understand the role of local governments.

The current City Deals represent an integrated approach to supporting economic development and infrastructure provision, but this sentinel site approach is highly labour-intensive, with significant transaction costs and lead times. There may be efficiencies in more systemic approaches to integration of urban governance. There may also be 'value capture' opportunities that can be identified to improve the provision of social infrastructure in growth areas.

What mechanisms can drive coordination between all levels of government, infrastructure agencies, planning, health, education, transport and other government portfolios to prevent isolation and adverse economic and social outcomes for residents of growth suburbs in Australia's major cities?

Opportunities

An Investigative Panel might:

- Identify growth areas with these challenges in Australia's major cities, both new suburbs and suburbs with increasing density.
- Explore the opportunities and the political and practical barriers for managing strategic and integrated growth through the planning system at the state and local level.
- Identify areas of government outside of planning with policy levers that can contribute to managing strategic and integrated growth.

¹ National Growth Areas Alliance https://ngaa.org.au/application/third_party/ckfinder/userfiles/files/NGAA%202019-20%20Pre-Budget%20Submission%20Final.pdf

² Australian Infrastructure Plan https://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy/publications/publications/files/Australian_Infrastructure_Plan.pdf

Relevant AHURI research

- Burke, T. and Hulse, K. (2015) *Spatial disadvantage: why is Australia different?*, AHURI Research Paper Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-papers/spatial-disadvantage-why-is-australia-different>.
- Burke, T. and Stone, J. (2014) *Transport disadvantage and low-income rental housing*, AHURI Positioning Paper No. 157, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/position-papers/157>.
- Goodman, R., Buxton, M., Chhetri, P., Taylor, E. and Wood, G. (2010) *Planning and the characteristics of housing supply in Melbourne*, AHURI Final Report No. 157, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/157>.
- Ong, R., Wood, G., Whelan, S., Cigdem, M., Atalay, K. and Dodson, J. (2017) *Inquiry into housing policies, labour force participation and economic growth*, AHURI Final Report No. 285, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/285>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-8107001.
- Gurran, N., Phibbs, P., Yates, J., Gilbert, C., Whitehead, C., Norris, M., McClure, K., Berry, M., Maginn, P., Goodman, R. (2015) *Housing markets, economic productivity, and risk: international evidence and policy implications for Australia - Volume 1: Outcomes of an Investigative Panel*, AHURI Final Report No. 254, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/254>.
- Gurran, N., Milligan, V., Baker, D., Beth Bugg, L., Christensen, S. (2008) *New directions in planning for affordable housing: Australian and international evidence and implications*, AHURI Final Report No. 120, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/120>.

5 Stand-alone Research Projects

2020F The role of construction in housing affordability

Policy issue: House prices are unaffordable for many people entering or looking to exchange in the current housing market.

What role do input costs play in driving of new housing supply in Australia and what effect does construction have on prices?

Context

AHURI research shows that new housing supply in Australia is concentrated in mid-high price segments rather than low price segments, and increased prices induce only modest increases in supply, meaning that housing supply typically lags demand. Shortages are most acute in urban areas where there are job opportunities and land shortages mean supply of units is stronger than for houses.

Construction costs are a factor in whether new housing development is viable in terms of rates of expected or required return. Key input costs relate to capital costs such as land, labour, materials, building design and the effect of regulation (building codes and land use planning); and financing costs. AHURI research finds that the most important capital costs are the holding costs of land and costs of labour while delays occur.

Some planning systems have sought to contain costs of housing by encouraging reduced lot sizes, but costs may still rise if developers build larger houses on those blocks. Other factors that can influence prices of land include infrastructure charges which add to effective development costs, and planning and land use restrictions which limit available supply. Production costs are relatively low in the suburban house building sector with labour generally available where it is needed, however fluctuations in house building activity, low labour force skills, poor management and work cultures also lead to high turnover in workers. Costs of material inputs to building may also have increased over time, especially with the increased use of concrete and other more technically challenging techniques associated with multi-unit developments.

Opportunities

Researchers might:

- Investigate how input costs influence production—this might include land sub-division, production and financing costs and how these influence decision making in starting new developments.
- Examine how house prices induce supply in different markets and understand the factors influencing production of new housing—this might also include examining the decisions developers and investors take in calculating returns on investment and pricing land for new developments.
- Identify structural issues in the supply side of the market constraining house production (e.g. planning constraints, capacity constraints in the labour market).
- Assess the scope to use other materials to reduce costs, and the potential risks in using those materials in terms of long term costs, environment, safety and asset values.
- Assess the relationship construction has with house prices and affordability more generally and what policy measures, if any, are appropriate to influence construction as a means to address affordability concerns.

Relevant AHURI research

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2020G Defining overcrowding

Policy issue: Measurement of overcrowding has been identified in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement as in need of improvement via the Data Improvement Plan.

How should overcrowding be defined and measured in the Australian context?

Context

Addressing overcrowding is a central objective of housing policy in Australia, yet, defining and measuring overcrowding is problematic. Overcrowding has been identified as one of the key indicators in need of improvement under the NHHA's data improvement plan.

In Australia, the standard measure is the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). The ABS uses CNOS to measure those in severely crowded dwellings (i.e. needing four or more bedrooms) as part of their measure of homelessness. The ABS also measures other crowding (needing three bedrooms) as a form of marginal housing. Such an approach recognises how overcrowding, marginal housing and homelessness are linked, especially in Indigenous and remote settings.

CNOS might be criticised because it is based on western cultural assumptions about appropriate dwelling usage. For example, some Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities will have different norms possibly associated with multi generational family arrangements and some Indigenous households have different norms around bedroom use, have higher incidence of multi-generation households, strong kinship ties, and high rates of residential mobility and temporary visitation which might influence measured rates of crowding. For this reason, researchers and the Productivity Commission have argued for new ways of measuring overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that is more sensitive to cultural norms, without downplaying the link between overcrowding and homelessness. Such a definition will need to identify any potential changes in data collection by the ABS, or other institutions.

Alternative measures for crowding to CNOS have been suggested. These include other density models, such as the Proxy Occupancy Standard, subjective stress measures (which utilise perceptions of tenants), and stress models (which incorporate demographic proxies for the vulnerabilities and stresses household might have).

Opportunities

Researchers might investigate:

- The extent to which a new density-based measure can be devised that accommodates different patterns and norms of living arrangements.
- The extent to which subjective experience can be accommodated into a measure of overcrowding.
- Whether one broad definition of overcrowding is appropriate, or specific measures are required for different population groups, such as Indigenous communities and Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- The data that needs to be collected, and the institutions and instruments required to develop more sophisticated measures of crowding.

Relevant AHURI research

- Birdsall-Jones, C., Corunna V. (2008) *The housing careers of Indigenous urban households*, AHURI Final Report No.112. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/112>.
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- Memmott, P. et al. (2012) *Australian Indigenous house crowding*, AHURI Final Report No.194. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/194>.
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2020H Housing for sustainable remote communities

Policy issue: Housing is essential but insufficient for a strong community.

How can housing policy support the economic, social and environmental sustainability of remote communities?

Context

There has been some improvement in remote Indigenous housing provision under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) reforms. These reforms involved bringing remote Indigenous housing into the mainstream state and territory housing system. This has led to improved housing standards and tenancy management, with the best arrangements involving partnerships with knowledgeable, and Indigenous/local providers.

Many of the challenges of infrastructure provision in remote communities are due to Australia's unique geographic and climatic challenges. Remote settlements are often located in harsh climates, both arid and monsoonal, which are more vulnerable to extreme weather events. There is a need to better understand how innovative construction methods incorporating culturally appropriate design principals might work to overcome these challenges.

AHURI research suggests that greater involvement of local people in housing maintenance and construction might present an opportunity to address these issues. This may present a potential role for prefabricated housing manufacture and installation.

While housing is vital infrastructure in remote communities, access to health and education services can be challenging to provide. This can contribute to high rates of population mobility, sometimes leading to property maintenance issues due to crowding or abandonment of properties.

There is a need to foster communities in which people are able to participate in a range of economic, social, recreational and cultural activities. This calls for approaches concerned with cultural, economic, social and environmental sustainability which is adaptable to local conditions.

Opportunities

Researchers might:

- Identify distinctive aspects of working in remote Australian communities, including its climate, which might require new or innovative approaches to improving sustainability.
- Consider how participatory approaches might be used to deliver culturally appropriate housing and social infrastructure to support communities living in remote areas.
- Consider existing asset management practices (including design, procurement, construction, maintenance, disposal) and explore how they might be improved to produce more sustainable outcomes, including in reducing ongoing property maintenance costs.
- Consider ways that housing policy and programs could be leveraged in remote communities so that they can provide economic opportunities.
- Identify any international evidence around improving housing and social sustainability in remote areas, and consider the applicability of these in Australia.

Relevant AHURI research

- Cooper, L., Morris, M. (2005) *Sustainable tenancy for Indigenous families: what services and policy supports are needed?*, AHURI Final Report No. 81, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne , <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/position-papers/58>.
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2020I Social housing asset lifecycle management

Policy issue: In a context of constrained supply, efficient and effective management of the lifecycles of social housing assets is of heightened importance.

How can policy makers and housing providers maximise benefit from social housing assets?

Context

Over the last 25 years, the public housing sector has faced increased pressures as it has targeted its limited supply of affordable and secure housing to the most disadvantaged tenants. Social housing organisations have had to arrange or provide more support to tenants to maintain their tenancies and also subsidise the rents of those reliant on welfare incomes. In the face of these pressures, many public housing organisations recorded operating deficits in the early 2000s, and continue to do so. The stock of public housing is also ageing, and there are on-going concerns to ensure that the location of housing stock is appropriate to emerging demands.

Public housing organisations have sought to respond to these pressures in different ways:

- Some have looked to transfer management responsibilities for public housing assets to community housing providers using leasing agreements.
- Public-private partnerships have also been used as a way to renew ageing stock and introduce a more blended tenure and social mix to estates dominated by public housing and low-income tenants.
- Many providers are also looking for ways to free up their resources by better utilising the private rental market, either through head leasing or through brokerage arrangements to place some of those on social housing waiting lists into affordable private rental tenancies.
- Community housing providers have sought to grow portfolios through a combination of stock transfers and through new developments, often via partnerships.

There is a need to understand the processes public housing providers have used to efficiently manage the lifecycle of assets they have in their control and in particular the decisions made by state and territory agencies in managing their portfolios (beyond transfer to community housing agencies).

While some AHURI research has looked at asset management approaches, previous research comparing management costs of community and public housing organisations has been inconclusive due to differing treatments of costs. There has also been no rigorous quantification of the rate of effective public subsidy in different scenarios. There is interest in understanding how to optimise use of social housing asset portfolios.

Opportunities

Researchers might investigate:

- Best practice for asset lifecycle portfolio management in public and community housing.
- How social housing providers are presently managing their property portfolios and what criteria are used to efficiently and effectively manage assets.
- How agencies assess the costs of maintaining their housing assets and assess public benefit derived from these assets, including the different returns gained from different sites and their highest and best use.

Relevant AHURI research

Hall, J., Berry, M. (2007) *Operating deficits and public housing: policy options for reversing the trend, 2005/06 update*, AHURI Final Report No. 106, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/106>.

Kenley, R., Chiazor, M., Hall, J., Heywood, C. (2010) *Good practices for managing Australia's public and community housing assets*, AHURI Final Report No. 148, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/148>.

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Pawson, H., Milligan, V., Wiesel, I. and Hulse, K. (2015) *Public stock transfers to community housing the best option for a sustainable and financially supportable housing system*, AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin No. 184, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-and-policy-bulletins/184>.

2020J Cost offsets of social housing provision

Policy issue: Stable housing underpins the delivery of a broad range of social services, including aged care, disability support services, rehabilitation and corrections.

What are the cost savings accrued to the whole of government through the provision of stable, appropriate social housing?

Context

Social housing provides shelter for many of the most vulnerable people in our community. The ability to access below market rental housing contributes to income support of those on who are eligible for government benefits. It is well understood that without stable housing it is more challenging to achieve good client outcomes from other forms of support.

For example, it is well established that caring for older people in their own homes is less costly to government than residential aged care or hospitalisation and facilitates further wellbeing outcomes for clients. Research on the cost of community corrections, compared with institutional incarceration found that institutional incarceration was nine times more expensive¹. When those under community correction orders are housed in public housing, this represents a cost-shift between portfolios for government, and likely savings overall.

Previous AHURI research found considerable cost savings to government through specialist homelessness service provision. This research demonstrated that specialist homelessness services are highly cost effective in terms of the outcomes delivered per dollar spent.

There is an opportunity to apply cost offset methodology (or similar) to consider the benefits accrued by other areas of government through the provision of social housing in terms of both the cost of providing services as well as client outcomes. In particular the healthcare (including mental health), justice, child protection and income support systems could be considered.

Opportunities

Researchers might investigate:

- Suitable data sets to enable a pilot study.
- How the improved outcomes of high needs clients housed in social housing can be measured in terms of cost offsets for other agencies before, after, and one year on, from being successfully housed (by comparison with those who do not access suitable accommodation).
- The number of clients in receipt of intensive social supports (e.g. in home care) who are currently residing in the social housing system, and the estimated costs of providing supports to those individuals in institutional settings.

¹ Morgan A. 2018. How much does prison really cost? Comparing the costs of imprisonment with community corrections. Research Reports No. 5. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/rr/rr5>

Relevant AHURI research

Bridge, C., Cockburn-Campbell, J., Flatau, P., Whelan, S., Wood, G., Yates, J. (2003) *Housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes*, AHURI Final Report No. 40, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/40>.

Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Brady, M., Haigh, Y., Martin, R. (2008) *The cost-effectiveness of homelessness programs: a first assessment*, AHURI Final Report No. 119, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/119>.

Flatau, P., Conroy, E., Spooner, C., Eardley, T. and Forbes, C. (2013) *Lifetime and intergenerational experiences of homelessness in Australia*, AHURI Final Report No. 200, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/200>.

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2020K Housing people with disabilities

Policy issue: Developments in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) creates challenges and opportunities for housing people with disability.

How can the housing needs of people with disability be best served?

Context

In 2015, around 1 in 5 Australians reported living with disability and 1.4 million Australians reported a 'severe or profound core activity limitation'¹. The NDIS and the SDA will meet the support and accommodation needs of only a proportion of this population.

It is well understood that enabling independent living in appropriately designed and located housing achieves important shelter and non-shelter outcomes for people with disability. This includes a sense of independence, improved privacy, improvements in physical and mental health, and improved social participation.

Most recipients of funding from the NDIS or past targeted funding schemes have experienced major barriers to accessing a limited supply of affordable and suitable housing. These barriers include: being a low priority in social housing allocations, shortfalls in accessible or adaptable housing stock across all tenure options, discrimination and disadvantage in applying for private rental tenancies, lack of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people with disability, and difficulty in gaining finance for home purchase.

AHURI research has considered how shared equity models for housing for people with disability might best be established and how the SDA program might realise opportunities to develop housing for the cohort eligible for this program. Other available support through private rental brokerage programs has been considered, as well as how online technology might assist people to locate accessible housing. There is interest in understanding how accommodation needs might be met across tenures and through a range of assistance programs, given the small proportion of people with disability who will benefit from the SDA investment.

Opportunities

Researchers might investigate:

- Practices and emerging models in Australia and internationally which are meeting the accommodation needs of people with disability.
- Developments in 'like' sectors, such as aged care, that might help to inform practices.
- The range of outcomes and benefits achieved through different programs providing accommodation options to people with disability.

¹ ABS 2016. Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings 2015. ABS cat. no. 4430.0, Canberra: ABS

Relevant AHURI research

- Burke, T Wiesel, I., Laragy, C., Gendera, S., Fisher, K., Jenkinson, S., Hill, T., Finch, K., Shaw, W. and Bridge, C. (2015) *Moving to my home: housing aspirations, transitions and outcomes of people with disability*, AHURI Final Report No. 246, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/246>.
- Sharam, A., Byford, M., Karabay, B., McNelis, S. and Burke, T. (2018) *Matching markets in housing and housing assistance*, AHURI Final Report No. 307, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/307>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-5315301.
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2020L Development in my backyard

Policy issue: An impediment to urban consolidation is community opposition.

How can community support for urban consolidation be fostered?

Context

The policy objective of urban consolidation has often been hampered by community opposition to increased density in local neighbourhoods, and to social housing projects in particular. This opposition is often dismissed as NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard). However, there are various reasons for objecting to a given development, and better understanding such reasons can enhance the likelihood of gaining community support for development.

A body of AHURI research found people are hostile to development because they are opposed to: change per se, 'inappropriate' built form, crowding, and demographic shifts. Specific objections relate to: height, overshadowing, appearance, congestion, and fear about who might reside in new developments—particularly relating to social housing. To avoid opposition, the community should be involved early in the development process. Effective engagement comprises: being transparent with information, listening to community preferences, being willing to negotiate, and aiming toward a collective decision, which might involve compromises.

Community engagement can turn NIMBYs into QIMBYs—Quality In My Backyard. QIMBYs accept development, but on the grounds that the development is appropriate to their neighbourhood. What constitutes appropriate is subject to deliberation, and what residents accept as appropriate can expand if there is adequate community engagement.

Concerns about neighbourhood demographic changes are particularly pertinent to social housing. To address such concerns, it is important that a positive message about affordable housing is promoted. Governments and community housing organisations need to challenge stigma and develop a positive narrative about the role and impact of social housing.

There is a growing international community movement that not only accepts quality development, but advocates for it. Such advocates are YIMBYs—Yes, In My Backyard. Rather than react to development proposals, YIMBYs proactively support development, especially of affordable housing. Most Australian states have a YIMBY group. YIMBYs adopt urban consolidation as an important planning objective, and aim to influence development outcomes to foster 'inclusive' and 'sustainable' design.

To advance urban consolidation, planners and developers can make alliances with YIMBYs, but they also need to address the concerns of residents via effective community engagement, thereby transforming NIMBYs into QIMBYs.

Opportunities

Researchers might investigate:

- The role YIMBY movements have played in Australia and the roles they might play.
- How governments and developers can effectively engage the community, including QIMBYs and YIMBYs.
- Aspects of development which indicate 'quality' from a community perspective.
- Examples in Australia where developments have been significantly adjusted, satisfying both resident concerns about quality and planning objectives.
- How resident support can be garnered for different kinds of development, including private, social and community housing.

Relevant AHURI research

- Cook, N., Taylor, E., Hurley, J. and Colic-Peisker, V. (2012) *Resident third party objections and appeals against planning applications: implications for higher density and social housing*, AHURI Final Report No. 197, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/197>.
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2020M New housing and investment

Policy issue: The vast majority of housing in Australia is privately owned, and there is inadequate social housing to meet the needs of people on a low income.

How might governments incentivise private investment in affordable housing?

Context

In market-based systems, new housing is often marketed towards middle or high income households, not those on low incomes. US researchers have argued that the benefits of new supply 'filter down' as lower income households occupy the discounted vacated stock. There is evidence that supply of this vacated housing can make housing more affordable, especially in some rental markets. Even so, the effects of filtering are not uniform, and price reductions are often less than expected, especially in areas of high demand¹. Supply may also be mismatched to demand, with many of the lowest rent properties occupied by those on higher incomes.

To address these issues, housing advocates argue either for a dedicated supply of new housing that is affordable for those on low incomes. Governments are already preparing to support investments in new dedicated affordable rental housing through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC). AHURI research has shown how investment opportunities for institutional investors could open up through Managed Investment Trusts and social impact investment. These options rely mainly on long-term institutional investors.

At the same time, there is the potential for governments to make reforms to negative gearing that could redirect some private rental investment of 'mum and dad' investors away from existing housing stock to new housing supply. AHURI research shows that 'mum and dad' private rental investors in Australia are mainly motivated by financial return, but are also impacted by factors like tax and retirement decisions. However not much is known about how private investors might be motivated to invest in newly constructed dwellings.

There is also a need to better understand how changes in taxation and subsidy arrangements might affect existing investments in private rental housing - both in newly constructed housing and older stock, and its downstream impact on affordability for renters.

Opportunities

Researchers might investigate:

- How governments could change taxation or other investment rules to incentivise greater investment toward those on low incomes or with particular needs.
- How filtering contributes to low income housing—analysis could identify locations and housing types where filtering operates effectively and where does it not work effectively.
- How changes in taxation regimes and investments in new private rental housing might have on existing investments in private rental housing.

¹ Rosenthal, S. (2014). Are Private Markets and Filtering a Viable Source of Low-Income Housing? Estimates from a "Repeat Income" Model. *The American Economic Review*, 104(2), 687-706.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42920713>

Relevant AHURI research

- Lawson, J., Berry, M., Hamilton, C. and Pawson, H. (2014) *Enhancing affordable rental housing investment via an intermediary and guarantee*, AHURI Final Report No. 220, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/220>.
- Muir, K. Moran, M., Michaux, F., Findlay, S., Meltzer, A., Mason, C., Ramia, I. and Heaney, R. (2017) *The opportunities, risks and possibilities of social impact investment for housing and homelessness*, AHURI Final Report No. 288, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/288>.
- Seelig, T., Thompson, A., Burke, T., Pinnegar, S., McNelis, S., Morris, A. (2009) *Understanding what motivates households to become and remain investors in the private rental market*, AHURI Final Report No. 130, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/130>.
- Sharam, A., Moran, M., Mason, C. Stone, W. and Findlay, S. (2018) *Understanding opportunities for social impact investment in the development of affordable housing*, AHURI Final Report No. 294, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/294>.
- Wood, G., Ong, R. (2010) *Factors shaping the decision to become a landlord and retain rental investments*, AHURI Final Report No. 142, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/142>.
- Wulff, M., Reynolds, M., Arunachalam, D., Hulse, K. and Yates, J. (2011) *Australia's private rental market: the supply of, and demand for, affordable dwellings*, AHURI Final Report No. 168, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/168>.

6 Scoping Projects

2020N Scoping prejudicial discrimination in the private rental system

Policy issue: To what extent is there prejudicial discrimination in the Australian private rental system, and what can be done about it?

Context

Although private landlords are at liberty to select tenants, they can be restricted by Commonwealth and State laws to discriminate against tenants and potential tenants on numerous grounds, including: race/ethnicity, disability, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age (includes discrimination due to having children) and religion. Despite this, there is evidence that prejudicial discrimination exists within the Australian rental system.

There is more evidence about discrimination in the Australian rental system against some groups than others. The strongest evidence of prejudicial discrimination in the Australian rental system relates to race and ethnicity, especially Indigenous Australians. In addition, AHURI research, and The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission¹ have found discrimination on the basis of disability is common in the private rental market. Most Australian research lacks experimental methodology², which is commonly applied in the US to explore this issue.

Although landlords and property managers are subject to anti-discrimination law, AHURI research has shown how 'minimising risk' becomes a proxy for discriminating against certain groups. Concern has also been raised about the potential of renting apps to exacerbate prejudicial behaviour by landlords and agents³. Recent reviews of rental rights in Queensland and Victoria can also inform patterns of discrimination.

The Victorian⁴ and Western Australian⁵ Equal Opportunity Commissions made recommendations on how to reduce prejudicial discrimination in the rental system. However, with a stronger body of knowledge about which groups suffer from discrimination in the rental system and how that discrimination is implemented, more effective reforms could be developed.

Opportunity

To address the policy question outlined above, researchers might draw on existing data to identify groups who are subject to prejudicial discrimination in the Australian private rental systems, as well as scope policies that address prejudice in Australia and overseas and how this might inform action in Australian jurisdictions.

¹ Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. (1991) Disability and Human Rights: Needs and Options for Further Protection, Canberra.

² Nelson, J., MacDonald, H., Dufty Jones, R., Dunn, K., & Paradies, Y. (2015) Ethnic discrimination in private rental housing markets in Australia, pp.39-56, in R. Dufty Jones & D. Rogers (Eds) Housing in Twenty-First Century Australia: People, Practices and Policies, Ashgate, Surrey.

³ CHOICE. (2018) Human Rights and Technology: Submission to the Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights and Technology Project, Sydney.

⁴ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. (2012) Locked out: Discrimination in Victoria's private rental market, Melbourne.

⁵ Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission. (2009) Accommodating everyone, Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission, Perth.

Relevant AHURI research

- Beer, A. and Faulkner, D. (2009) *The housing careers of people with a disability and carers of people with a disability*, AHURI Research Paper, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-papers/the-housing-careers-of-people-with-a-disability-and-carers-of-people-with-a-disability>.
- Milligan, V., Phillips, R., Easthope, H., Liu, E. and Memmott, P. (2011) *Urban social housing for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders: Respecting culture and adapting services*, AHURI Final Report No.172. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/172>.
- Short, P., Seelig, T., Warren, C., Susilawati, C., Thompson, A. (2008) *Risk assessment practices in the private rental sector implications for low income renters*, AHURI Final Report No. 117, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/117>.
- Tually, S., Beer, A. McLoughlin, P. (2011) *Housing assistance, social inclusion and people living with a disability*, AHURI Final Report No. 178, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/178>.
- Tually, S. (2007) *A review of the integration of state and territory housing and disability policies in Australia*, AHURI Research Paper No. NRV2-2, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/nrv-research-papers/nrv2-2>.

2020O Scoping the potential and challenges of housing data sources

Policy issue: What data is available, how can it be used and what data is needed to support Australian housing and urban research and policy?

Context

To support policy development in the areas of housing, homelessness and urban issues, the AHURI NHRP has, over time, systematically analysed a range of key secondary data sets to provide a series of fundamental statistics about supporting policy understanding and development in Australia.

Policy makers may benefit from access to a wider range of data sources to more comprehensively understand housing markets, outcomes, and related policy and service provision opportunities—for example through the use of Valuer-General data, bond board data, commercial data held by the private sector and data held by the Real Estate Institutes.

Researchers have the opportunity with a scoping project to explore underutilised datasets or data sources, or to identify data sources or gaps in data availability to explore contemporary housing, homelessness and related urban issues.

There may also be opportunities to expand research reach by considering data sets internationally which could be used for benchmarking or comparisons to a wider population group, trends or programs in another country.

Opportunity

Researchers might investigate data sets held in government departments, bond boards etc. and consider other institutes e.g. Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN), Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to identify data sets and data driven approaches which might guide policy for specific outcomes.

Relevant AHURI research

Long, S., Memmott, P., Seelig, T. (2007) *Australian Indigenous housing research: a review and audit*, AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin No. 95, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-and-policy-bulletins/95>.

See AHURI [Housing-related secondary data sources](#) for examples of available datasets.

2020P Scoping Indigenous housing research capacity and research approaches

Policy issue: How can we develop Indigenous housing research capacity and knowledge of appropriate research methods in Indigenous contexts?

Context

The Australian Government has included a draft target that *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing as a pathway to better lives* in the review of the Closing the Gap¹. Quality research, dissemination and engagement is fundamental to informing policy and practice and to achieving better outcomes. AHURI has, over time developed an evidence base which focusses on Indigenous housing and homelessness issues and engages with policy through research capacity building, research conduct and dissemination, and network development. There nevertheless remains a lack of capacity in Indigenous housing research.

The AHURI National Housing Research Program (NHRP) is the main vehicle for the funding of research, which includes Indigenous specific issues. The current expectation is that all research funding applications include a focus upon Indigenous issues or explains why this is not feasible, and follow the NHRP Ethical principles and guidelines for Indigenous research.

In the NHRP, AHURI actions to support the development of the evidence base have included: hypothecated research funds for Indigenous housing and homelessness research, investment in a larger multi-year research project and the continued development of Indigenous specific topics. AHURI has also run Investigative Panels, Policy Development Workshops and roundtables to support the policy development process in this area. AHURI includes Indigenous early career research scholars in capacity development initiatives.

AHURI established an AHURI Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Policy, Practice and Research Network which met with key stakeholders across Australia between December 2012 and May 2014 when funding ceased. Through direct engagement, the Network aimed to improve the transfer of research evidence to policy and practice change through consultative and more inclusive practices where the voice of communities was incorporated.

AHURI seeks to understand how more culturally engaged research approaches which support capacity building and institutional change can be developed to translate research into policy and better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

Opportunity

To address the policy issue outlined above, researchers are asked to explore research approaches to Indigenous housing, homelessness and urban issues that will translate into better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and support capacity building and expertise in the network across Australia.

¹ <https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/>

Relevant AHURI research

Crabtree, L., Moore, N., Phibbs, P., Blunden, H. and Sappideen, C. (2015) *Community Land Trusts and Indigenous communities: from strategies to outcomes*, AHURI Final Report No. 239, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/239>

Habibis, D., Phillips, R., Phibbs, P. and Verdouw, J. (2014) *Progressing tenancy management reform on remote Indigenous communities*, AHURI Final Report No. 223, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/223>.

Habibis, D., Phillips, R., Spinney, A., Phibbs, P. and Churchill, B. (2016) *Reviewing changes to housing management on remote Indigenous communities*, AHURI Final Report No. 271, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/271>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-4103701.

Moran, M., Memmott, P., Nash, D., Birdsall-Jones, C., Fantin, S., Phillips, R. and Habibis, D. (2016) *Indigenous lifeworlds, conditionality and housing outcomes*, AHURI Final Report No. 260, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/260>.

2020Q Scoping the modern key worker challenge in Australian cities

Policy issue: How can we ensure that low income key workers can access affordable housing in our cities?

Context

Businesses and their workers tend to cluster in major cities due to the benefits of agglomeration. Economies of agglomeration are characterised by firms working in proximity to each other—usually clustered in large cities—reaping cost efficiency and knowledge sharing benefits to innovate and create new products and services. However, if key workers cannot afford to live near where they are needed, economic productivity can be undermined, as workers need to spend more time commuting, and employers may have more difficulty finding staff.

Australian low-income workers employed in the central city have to travel greater distances to get to work and are more likely to make a number of housing related compromises, such as living in a smaller dwelling, sharing with unrelated adults, or renting rather than buying.

Previous AHURI research identified broad categories of policy response that could address this spatial mismatch:

- transport strategies connecting jobs and labour
- distributed economic development strategies moving jobs closer to labour
- inner-city housing strategies moving labour closer to jobs
- job-finding strategies overcoming barriers to labour force participation.

Numerous specific strategies lay within each of these broad approaches, with varying rates of applicability to Australian cities.

Opportunity

To address the policy issue outlined above, researchers are asked to identify approaches to addressing issues to housing key workers, as well as programs and practices that have addressed the issue. Researchers are also asked to consider the applicability of such approaches, programs and practices to Australia's cities.

Relevant AHURI research

- van den Nouwelant, R., Crommelin, L., Herath, S. and Randolph, B. (2016) *Housing affordability, central city economic productivity and the lower income labour market*, AHURI Final Report No. 261, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/261>.
- Gurran, N., Phibbs, P., Yates, J., Gilbert, C., Whitehead, C., Norris, M., McClure, K., Berry, M., Maginn, P., Goodman, R. (2015) *Housing markets, economic productivity, and risk: international evidence and policy implications for Australia - Volume 1: Outcomes of an Investigative Panel*, AHURI Final Report No. 254, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/254>.
- Yates, J., Randolph, B., Holloway, D. (2006) *Housing affordability, occupation and location in Australian cities and regions*, AHURI Final Report No. 91, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/91>.

7 Data projects

2020R Data Projects

To support policy development in housing and homelessness, the AHURI National Housing Research Program has, over time, systematically analysed a range of key secondary data sets (e.g. AIHW, ABS, HILDA) to provide a series of fundamental statistics about housing and homelessness in Australia. As new data becomes available these analyses require updating. Also as new datasets become available on additional areas of policy interest, analysis of these is encouraged to add to the evidence base.

Data projects should include a national picture and comparisons across areas such as states and territories, in particular in relation to the following themes: affordable housing supply and tenure change in home ownership, private rental and social housing; homelessness; Indigenous housing; urban and regional infrastructure and planning; housing and labour markets; housing finance; housing assistance; non-shelter outcomes; and demographics in relation to different housing need cohorts.

Applications to undertake secondary data analyses projects should clearly demonstrate the policy development rationale for undertaking the data analysis. Applications must also demonstrate critical engagement with recent developments in methodology and critical awareness of the current policy and practice context.

The deliverables resulting from secondary data projects will be short reports focused on the data analysis and its implications for policy development which may, by negotiation, warrant peer review and publication in the AHURI Report series.

8 National Housing Research Program Funding Round 2020

The annual NHRP Funding Round opens with the publication of the NHRP Research Agenda 2020 which calls for research funding applications.

The annual NHRP Funding Round 2020 capacity building component consists of one Scholarship Top-up for a postgraduate student at each AHURI Research Centre, and their attendance at the annual postgraduate symposium.

	Opening	Closing
NHRP Funding Round	Monday 6 May 2019	Thursday 1 August 2019 12 noon AEST
Scholarship Top-up	Monday 6 May 2019	Thursday 30 April 2020 COB AEST