

# **Sustaining tenants with demanding behaviour: a review of the research evidence**

authored by

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for the

**Australian Housing  
and Urban Research Institute**

Southern Research Centre

May 2007

AHURI Positioning Paper No. 97

ISSN: 1834-9250

ISBN: 1 921201 91 6

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This material was produced with funding from the Australian Government and the Australian States and Territories. AHURI Ltd gratefully acknowledges the financial and other support it has received from the Australian, State and Territory governments, without which this work would not have been possible.

AHURI comprises a network of fourteen universities clustered into seven Research Centres across Australia. Research Centre contributions, both financial and in-kind, have made the completion of this report possible.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This Positioning Paper looks at the research literature concerned with managing and supporting tenants in social housing who present difficult and demanding behaviour. The Positioning Paper is the first of two reports designed with the housing practitioner in mind. They are written in plain language and are of a length and format designed to be of practical use for practitioners and policy makers who face these difficult problems in their daily professional lives.

The report is structured in a way that allows key headline results and issues to be focused on, while the details of methodology and so on are placed to the back of the document for those who might be interested in knowing more about the approach we have taken. We have also included a section that provides some more detail on research that is particularly significant and that practitioners and policy makers might like to read for greater insight. Finally, we have included a separate section on Indigenous issues in relation to these problems in order to offer greater clarity and relevance to providers working with Aboriginal clients.

It is important to stress that this is not simply a literature review. We have made a comprehensive search of all relevant research literature databases, the internet as well as the websites and personnel of housing organisations across Australia. In short the aim has been to be comprehensive, within certain limits. The value of this approach, known as a systematic review, is the confidence it gives in assessing the state of the evidence in a given area of research and understanding what gaps there are in that evidence. We have also consulted with international experts in the field and had team discussions to filter out several thousand 'hits' to reduce this vast literature to around a hundred and thirty pieces of research that have clear, relevant and robust things to say about housing practice in this area.

The overall project therefore constitutes both an international study of existing research evidence and practice as well as a national empirical study (in its second stage) to identify and compare models of best practice for sustaining the tenancies of people who present difficult and demanding behaviours in public housing. Our focus is on those individuals and families who are not integrated into formal mental health services yet whose behaviour places them at risk of eviction and may create significant problems for other tenants and residents. We place special emphasis on the distribution of resources and information on best practice that may be helpful to practitioners addressing these issues.

Little attention has been paid to supporting tenants who do not identify as suffering from a mental illness yet whose disruptive behaviour makes them vulnerable to eviction and potential homelessness. While they may have some underlying problem such as substance abuse or a psychiatric disorder, these people may lack the formal support services available to the diagnosed mentally ill and so are vulnerable to falling through housing and other social service nets. This is of particular concern since many households evicted from public housing include dependent children.

## 1.1 Context

Federal and State housing policies have changed the face of public housing, which is increasingly becoming the accommodation of last resort. This social residualisation of public housing in Australia and elsewhere has meant that sustaining tenancies is a challenge for public housing authorities because of the need to balance the sometimes conflicting objectives of social outcomes for tenants with difficult behaviours and the neighbours and communities who are negatively impacted upon by their behaviour, to say nothing of the need for sustainability outcomes for business managers in social housing. The difficulties of meeting this challenge not only increase the risk of

homelessness for these vulnerable tenants through their eviction, but may also threaten the tenancies of those affected by their behaviours.

The range of behaviours which we see as difficult and challenging in this review are broad. They lie somewhere between the statutory frameworks and intervention that surround social work and mental health interventions, on the one hand, and forms of anti-social and other behaviour that may threaten the viability of a tenancy, on the other. There has been a significant amount of research on anti-social behaviour and how to combat this through effective social housing management. There has also been investigation more recently into the challenges that surround dealing with and supporting tenants who have particular mental health needs. This review fits somewhere between these areas, in which a complicated situation of tenancy management may emerge that does not lie clearly within statutory mental health or anti-social behaviour interventions. In these situations a guide to effective action has not been forthcoming and will be the subject of the best practice guidance that follows this Positioning Paper.

While the States and Territories now offer programs of integrated support for the mentally ill, these tend to be directed towards those *diagnosed* with a serious mental illness. This leaves housing providers and integrated service providers with problems of care and tenancy management of tenants with difficult and anti-social behaviours who fall outside this category. These problems have become more extensive in recent years, partly fuelled by media treatment of local cases of ‘problem families’ and ‘neighbours from hell’. For housing providers, a consequence of the Federal government’s housing policy shift away from direct provision of housing has been to increase the concentration of disadvantaged people in social housing. This has impacted on those managing tenants in positions of multidimensional social disadvantage including poverty, family breakdown, substance abuse, mental illness and physical and sexual abuse.

The particular role of this review is to outline what has been said to date in terms of international research on this issue. The central question guiding this review is:

*What international evidence can be gathered on public housing management practices that are effective in sustaining tenancies of individuals and families whose behaviours place them at risk of eviction, and which negatively impact on other tenants and residents?*

Clearly this presents some problems of definition since we are not dealing with a group of tenants whose behaviour has placed them within the statutory interventions of state services. Rather we are looking at a group whose behaviours are identified by neighbours, housing managers and officers as problematic but which lie outside these statutory responses. These issues remain under-researched in the Australian context, with housing authorities lacking models of best practice to tackle these problems while trying to support tenants and their broader communities.

We already know from work by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the UK that mental illness is associated with around 18% of anti-social behaviour cases; there is also a range of other sources for such behaviour including abuse (18%), drug misuse (12%) and alcohol misuse (11%). To date AHURI research has focused on the related questions of the role of services for mentally ill tenants (Reynolds 2002; O’Brien et al 2002), on supporting people with complex needs (mental health and disabilities) and on how anti-social behaviour can be addressed through housing management policies (Jacobs & Arthurson 2003).

We need to remember that sustaining ‘at risk’ tenancies is also likely to lead to long-term benefits for the children of these households while reducing wider welfare and social costs linked to the displacement of households through eviction. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such households are equally likely to present similar problems

in new locations so that problems are moved around, rather than resolved, with families often presenting back to public housing providers as homeless.

Evidence also suggests that such tenants can have a destabilising effect on neighbouring tenants who may leave rather than tolerate anti-social or difficult behaviour. For example, a recent study in Queensland found that neighbourhood conflict was the main reason cited by ex-public housing tenants for their departure (EPIC et al 2000). In an environment of declining funding there is a growing expectation that housing authorities will strengthen their capacity to case-manage such tenancies unassisted by mental health services. The question of how public housing authorities can best distribute their limited resources is therefore critical.

Because Indigenous people are likely to form a significant section of this group we have presented a separate section on existing research and strategies used to assist in maintaining housing tenure. It is also important to acknowledge that there are significant differences in the range of services available in rural and urban areas that may be linked to these issues. Timely detection of behaviours most likely to threaten tenancies will enable potential difficulties to be managed before they become problematic and resource intensive.

## **2 MANAGING DEMANDING BEHAVIOUR: OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

In this section we report on evidence relating to problematic tenant behaviour, how it has been supported and managed, and how best practice has been described in the research evidence base. As we have already described, demanding behaviour may stem from a range of personal problems and difficulties that may be tied to mental health problems, substance abuse and personal relationship breakdown, among other problems. We begin by focusing discussion on how tenancy sustainability and support has been framed in relation to public housing management. We then look at the implications for managing and supporting tenants with problematic behaviours, including demanding and anti-social behaviour. Finally we set out some of the key findings that relate to how best practice may be identified and put into strategic use.

### **2.1 Who are we talking about?**

The bulk of the research literature in this area suggests that, in parallel with the deinstitutionalisation of psychiatric services (see Lightman 1997; Geller & Kowalchuk 2000; and Mansell et al 2001), people with high level and complex needs (including dual-diagnosis) are increasingly involved in presenting problematic behavior to other tenants and to public housing organisations. Australian examples include Thomson Goodall Associates (2002) and their focus on the Complex Clients Project and Bisset et al (1999), who discuss the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which provides appropriate responses to homeless people with high level and complex needs.

While Australian articles have tended to concentrate on people with complex needs, British articles have focused on mental illness and intellectual disabilities in particular (see Slade et al 1999; Jäbrink et al 2001; Mansell et al 2001; O'Malley & Croucher 2005) as the root of these issues. In the USA and Canada, more focus is placed on those people exhibiting both mental illness and drug dependency (see Tsemberis & Amussen 1999; Geller & Kowalchuk 2000).

In their research in the UK, Nixon and Hunter (2001) found that those involved in anti-social behaviour were often themselves vulnerable. They had often had personal experiences of physical or sexual abuse, mental disability, drug and alcohol problems, or children with challenging behaviour. Combating anti-social activity can therefore provide an opportunity to help perpetrators access support services that will enable them to address the root causes of their behaviour. It is also clear from this that demanding behaviour may be considered to be a sub-set of anti-social behaviour, as it does not present cause for the intervention of statutory agencies, such as the police or social services, but does mean that neighbours may express alarm or discomfort.

Popkin et al (2005) suggest that hard-to-house people include multiple-barrier families coping with an array of problems such as limited work histories, low levels of education, substance abuse, domestic violence, criminal records, mental and physical health problems, and little or no experience in the public market. These groups can be defined as "public housing residents who are at risk of losing their tenancy for reasons that go beyond affordability" (Popkin et al 2005: 5). They also show that concern has been raised in the US about whether support services are sufficient for vulnerable families, as existing policies have largely failed to address the more complex needs of the hard-to-house residents who have relied on public housing as a source of stable, if less than ideal, housing.

Meert (2005) usefully draws upon four main bases, or types, of challenging behaviour by public tenants and others: clinical, criminal, anti-social behaviour and unsettled ways of living. Meert suggests that it is often important to question whether it is simply alternative lifestyles or challenging behaviour that is really the problem. In this context it

would seem possible, he argues, that many housing and tenancy initiatives by public housing organisations are intolerant of challenging behaviour and seek to exclude groups who present this kind of behaviour.

A clear problem, described by Crane and Warnes (2001), is that there is often no requirement upon health and social services professionals or welfare agencies to seek out vulnerable people who do not 'present' (i.e. ask for help). As deinstitutionalisation has proceeded, people with learning or physical disabilities and mental illness have become more concealed within public housing and within communities more generally. There are many single homeless people with mental health, alcohol and drug problems who are not serviced by statutory services. Some people also fall through the gaps of the different eligibility criteria of various providers and the bureaucracy of formal services makes access to services difficult for many people in these positions.

The risk factors for homelessness identified by Bisset et al (1999) can also be strongly linked to demanding behaviour. These include a strong correlation with mental illness, drug and alcohol disorder, behaviour disorder and intellectual disability. Chronic health problems and sexual abuse may also be important. The authors suggest that as many as 30 to 60 per cent of the homeless population have some sort of diagnosable condition (Bisset et al 1999: vi). In this sense preventing homelessness can also be closely linked to the need to manage and support people who are vulnerable in these ways, but who may also exhibit problematic behaviours. This may clearly include anti-social behaviour as well as more minor behavioural problems and support needs.

Geller and Kowalchuk (2000) report that mental health professionals defined the population experiencing mental health issues and who were in need of supportive housing as people (in this particular study, women) who were "difficult to manage" and "difficult to serve". This was because of a number of key issues which included the following:

- Mental health issues; criminal justice issues; addiction issues; crisis behaviours;
- The women have been abused or were at a high risk of hurting themselves or somebody else;
- They were likely to live in poverty;
- They had experienced behaviour issues and/or personality disorders;
- They had long-term mental health issues;
- They might be resistant, challenging women or suicidal, self-destructive and self-abusive; and
- They were difficult-to-engage women who want something but may not know what it is.

Importantly this research noted that there does not have to be a formal diagnosis in order to acknowledge these risk factors.

## **2.2 Public housing tenancies, demanding behaviour and support**

There is a clear tension between the duty of social landlords not to discriminate against the mentally disordered and their responsibilities to protect other residents of social housing from anti-social behaviour (Cobb 2006). Vulnerable tenants, such as those with a mental disorder, may be at risk of being excluded, yet may also pose risks to housing providers and the wider community (including the quality of life of individual residents and the reputation of entire estates or neighbourhoods).

Slatter and Crearie (2003) argue that there is a clear cycle that can often be observed with tenants who move through public rental housing, into arrears, subsequent eviction, to private rental accommodation, further eviction and homelessness. This may then



mean that tenants end up back in the public rental housing system. Among other key issues, this highlights that failed tenancies continue to represent a shifting public cost, to say nothing of the problems of the wider household evicted along with any central problematic individual. Further, much eviction activity is linked to problematic behaviour and arrears, often themselves the result of personal difficulty, tragedy, mental health problems and related anti-social or problematic behaviour. The key message that stems from much of the research evidence in this area is that systematic and close support of those exhibiting such behaviours and the case support of tenants in these life skills and personal challenges can be highly effective in reducing the costs to housing agencies, to say nothing of the traumas of displacement that result from eviction or tenancy failure.

Seelig and Jones (2004) suggest various key factors that may threaten the sustainability of tenancies. They point to poverty, prior household debt, mental illness/addiction, ill health/disability, lack of social supports and limited life skills, household/family instability, cultural factors and prior housing instability. They also suggest that precipitating life events, such as unemployment, illness, unanticipated expenditure, income loss, financial difficulty, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, family conflict/crisis, and the 'pile-up' of stressful life events are also important in determining outcomes and needs. They argue that what is needed is "a suite of interventions and policy options to tailor to individual circumstances, including early detection and proactive support" (Seelig & Jones 2004: 22). In order for this to happen, there needs to be a deep understanding of the factors that make tenancies vulnerable to failure and a more systematic and reliable process for early identification of vulnerable tenancies. In this context, state housing authorities are now expected to be supportive tenancy managers as well as effective housing providers.

Seelig and Jones (2004: 21) also discuss what is meant by 'sustaining tenancies'. They suggest that 'sustaining tenancies' refers to mixed notions of:

- Avoiding tenancy failure through eviction and exit under duress;
- Encouraging positive experiences and successful housing outcomes for the tenant; and
- The provision of supportive landlord practices such as balancing social and economic imperatives and linking housing with other services – particularly to tenancies considered "at risk" of failure.

For many tenants such support is often lacking. In research by Geller and Kowalchuk (2000) a number of 'needs gaps' were identified by their participants. These included the need for safe and affordable housing; supportive long-term housing; housing for young people in crisis, especially early intervention; and coordination and cooperation among housing providers. Generating such support, working between agencies with individuals with complex needs and sustaining tenancies is clearly challenging, yet the vulnerability of many tenants and their families – for whom public housing needs to be a stable and supportive aspect of their daily lives – remains an important focal point of housing and social need.

Thomson Goodall Associates (2002) found, in a survey of community housing stakeholders, that a primary cause of unsuccessful tenancies was neighbourhood disputes and objectionable behaviour (66% of their stakeholders acknowledged this). Additional factors in tenancy failure included mental health issues (33%), though clearly this may be interrelated. O'Malley and Croucher (2005) have indicated that the integration of housing and social services is essential in these kinds of cases. With the deinstitutionalisation of the mentally ill, such researchers have shown that community-based arrangements are positive when compared with hospitalisation, but that this clearly requires that public housing agencies are placed in a supportive and complementary role, which is often lacking.

Sustaining a tenancy and managing the daily affairs of a household requires complex skills and competencies. These difficulties may be linked to demanding behaviour in that many such tenants may find these life skills are deficient. Finding a way to help tenants cope under these circumstances may be a critical role for public housing agencies, given the potential for a tenancy to fail if such support is lacking. Lake (2003) shows that, in Victoria, 14% of public housing tenancies are vacated annually. Of these vacancies, 28% are abandoned tenancies and 6.6% are evictions. Lake shows that more than one third of people leaving public housing do so because they cannot manage key aspects of the landlord/tenant relationship.

Crane and Warnes (2000) found that for the majority of those they studied, eviction followed a failure to meet their financial obligations or to keep their property in good condition. For many, mental health problems or exceptionally low competence in basic domestic skills were contributory factors in this. This means that the homelessness of such households may be prevented if support is provided to vulnerable people as their difficulties mount, so that there is clearly a value to monitoring vulnerable occupiers.

As in the US (Popkin et al 2005), Australia has also lost many single-room occupancy units which often played an important role in accommodating households and individuals with non-conventional lifestyles and borderline cases of mental ill-health. This loss has meant an inter-tenurial distribution of housing need as these groups have been shifted to public housing, itself under significant pressure. This highlights that what goes on within public housing in Australia is also a result of fluctuating patterns of provision and policies in other tenures. As we show later, there is a clear interaction between what goes on in the private and public rental sectors.

Another issue is that demanding behaviour of various kinds may cross tenurial boundaries. Most neighbourhoods are socially and tenurially diverse and this means that not only may public tenants generate problems for their neighbours and those in other tenures, in some cases such problems may be generated by private rental and owner-occupied units. This means that managing this behaviour to help support public rental tenants may become important, but it is also more difficult to deal with given the tenurial security of owners. This indicates that strategies that only consider public renting as the focal point of demanding and anti-social behaviour ignore the complexity and widespread nature of these problems and the requisite actions to deal with them.

### **2.3 What kinds of problems does this raise?**

These issues mean that several specialist and generalist services may be involved in providing and supporting groups displaying demanding behaviour, particularly with regard to mental health problems. This can cause logistical problems when people with complex needs are involved with several specialised services simultaneously (e.g. mental health, disability child protection, juvenile justice, drug treatment and housing support), as well as generic community services and resources, as such services have different responses, eligibility criteria and approaches, which can result in people being referred from service to service without improving their situation (Thomson Goodall Associates 2002). Furthermore, legislation relating to people with high and complex needs is generally driven at the State/Territory, rather than the national, level and there are therefore differences in the legislation of the different States and Territories (these will be discussed further in the final best practice guide, and reported separately).

These problems raise issues for those attempting to manage tenancies and avoid eviction (see Slade et al 1999; George 2001; Hill et al 2002; Slatter & Crearie 2003; Slatter 2005) as well as subsequent homelessness (see Randall & Brown 1999; Lake 2003). A critical difficulty concerns the duty to house those who have complex problems and the broader question of a duty to manage and maintain the tenancies of others, as well as the wider community who might be affected by difficult and

demanding behaviour. Distinguishing between and managing these tensions, as mentioned earlier, may be complex.

At the same time, these problems need to be addressed in the context of an increasingly disciplinary approach to 'welfare' in much of the western world. This has tended to shift the emphasis from the rights of tenants to their duties (Hamworth & Manzi 1999; Flint 2002). In the context of debates about demanding and problematic behaviour, this has placed such tenants in increasingly vulnerable positions. Some research has, however, supported an increased conditionality of welfare. For example, Deacon (2004) argues that conditionality is not necessarily disciplinary in intent or effect and that enforcement of mutual obligations is not incompatible with the pursuit of greater equality.

## **2.4 What can be done? Issues for good practice**

In this section we raise concrete issues for housing practice generated by the research literature. In relation to the demanding and/or anti-social behavior exhibited by people with complex needs, a number of pieces of research have been conducted which suggest that the key ingredients of a successful management approach will include the following:

### *2.4.1 Preventative strategies*

Bisset et al (1999) identify a range of issues and action points to help improve supported services for homeless people. They refer to a study of homelessness in inner Sydney which concluded that 75 per cent of homeless people using inner city hostels and refuges had had at least one mental disorder in the last 12 months. Ensuring that preventive strategies are in place to prevent homelessness as a result of mental health problems and the kinds of behaviour that may challenge the sustainability of tenancies is clearly important.

Increasingly, research on good and effective practice has also focused on the prevention of anti-social behaviour (e.g. Jacobs & Arthurson 2003; Nixon et al 2003a; Jacobs et al 2005) including both social and physical measures. In terms of physical measures, some papers point to a need to acknowledge the effects of poor housing design and construction standards on complaints of anti-social behaviour, particularly noise complaints (see Martin et al 2002), while others point to the possibilities afforded by, as well as the limitations of, 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design', the promotion of design initiatives that promote surveilability and accessibility (Samuels et al 2004).

In terms of social measures, Samuels et al (2004) point to the need for community consultation and participation in problem identification and the development and implementation of: strategies and initiatives targeting early intervention; locally based, empathetic housing management teams with community development training; and intelligence-based targeting of problem households by police in combination with a community policing approach. The importance of a simple communication information program that provides information for tenants on basic communication skills and dispute resolution has also been proposed by Baker (2005) as a way to prevent eviction.

Martin et al (2002) highlight the damaging effect of inappropriate allocations, where allocations might be made on the basis of what is available rather than what housing is needed (e.g. people with mental illnesses being placed in aged persons' blocks). The structural issue of insufficient housing stock is often ignored and tenants inappropriately housed are then seen as 'bad tenants'. There is therefore also a need to prevent inappropriate allocations if demanding behaviour is to be effectively addressed.

#### 2.4.2 *Early detection of risk factors in tenancies*

Some research has focused on the prevention of evictions and homelessness (Smyth & Reddel 2000; Shelter 2004), including the proposal that tenancies be screened for risk factors that are known to contribute to the loss of tenancies (see Slade et al 1999; Baker 2005). Randall and Brown (1999), in a review of the related research, highlight the key risk factors related to homelessness. These issues are shown below, and where they can be clearly linked to demanding behaviour we have placed them in bold:

- Disputes with parents and step parents
- **Experience of physical or sexual abuse**
- **Time in local authority care**
- Lack of qualifications
- **School exclusion**
- Unemployment
- **Alcohol and drug misuse**
- **Mental health problems**
- **A combination of mental health, drug and alcohol problems**
- **Contact with the criminal justice system**
- Previous service in the armed forces
- Marital or relationship breakdown
- Previous experience of homelessness
- Lack of a social support network
- Failure to furnish or maintain a home
- Debts, especially rent or mortgage arrears
- **Causing nuisance to neighbours**

Slade et al (1999) identify four key risk factors for tenancy breakdown and include housing crisis, which may indicate that there are identifiable and precipitating events that often precede tenancy failure. They also look at the possibility that a loss of housing benefit or other financial support following admission to a mental health service may occur because of poor inter-agency liaison, such as inadequate communication between housing and health professionals when a tenant is admitted to hospital. Third, they consider the risks associated with being in contact with support services, which they found was related to an increased risk of tenancy failure. Finally, they look at tenants who have no social support in place once a resettlement team has been withdrawn. They suggest that there is a need for flexibility about when specialist support is withdrawn and what it is replaced with so that tenants are not presented with greater risks to the sustainability of their tenancy because of inflexible programs. Crane and Warnes (2000) suggest that, in order to ensure tenancy sustainability a number of factors need to be considered:

- Mechanisms for pooling and linking information about the circumstances and progress of vulnerable people between housing and other relevant agencies.
- Clarifying and locating the responsibility for the care of the most vulnerable occupiers including the duty to detect and respond to cases of high risk.
- Determining practical, effective and affordable prevention procedures.
- Ensuring the long-term funding of these activities.

Baker (2005) proposes a 'tenancy health check' that can be developed for use by housing providers which would include a list of critical factors that make a person or family more vulnerable to housing instability, which may clearly be relevant to behavioural issues. Identifying these issues early on allows for the use of better preventative measures. Crane and Warnes (2000) found that of the 45 people they studied who had been made homeless, many of their evictions could have been prevented if appropriate referrals and procedures had been made as their difficulties mounted. They identify their own set of six 'risk factors' that may lead to a high likelihood of eviction (again with demanding behaviour issues highlighted):

1. A change from a regular to a poor payment record
2. The inheritance of a tenancy or mortgage in middle or old age
3. Neighbours' reports of disturbed behaviour
4. Defective housing benefit or other social security applications
5. Living alone and the absence of a confidant or carer, especially when compounded by the recent loss of a co-resident supporter
6. A previous episode of homelessness

It is clear that the simple screening of new tenancies will help to ensure that these risks are understood and located and that sensitive allocations and support packages can be identified. This does not mean that public housing agencies need to take on direct social service roles (in fact, as we show later, there are clear benefits to ensuring that such services are not managed in-house). Rather, support between multiple agencies needs to be forthcoming and effective, not least because this will help to ensure that a tenancy is sustainable, thereby ensuring that rental streams are not threatened as well as helping to avoid unnecessary and unacceptable hardship for vulnerable people.

#### *2.4.3 Responding to needs*

The importance of recognising and responding to people's particular needs is noted in several pieces of research. For example, Seelig and Jones (2004) argue that in order to sustain tenancies in public housing, a suite of interventions and policy options that can be tailored to individual circumstances is required. This includes the need to collect and utilise needs data (Foord & Simic 2001) in order to meet the needs and preferences of tenants (Jäbrink et al 2001; Lake 2003), including those tenants with mental health problems (O'Malley & Croucher 2005). Bisset et al (1999: 54) even provide a typology of need:

Type 1: People with multiple non-intensive needs

Type 2: People with a few intensive needs

Type 3: People with multiple intensive needs that compromise functioning, but not the ability to meet basic needs

Type 4: People with multiple intensive needs that compromise the ability to function and meet basic needs and which often manifest in challenging behaviours

In the Danish context, Meert (2005) argues that best practice must include user involvement (i.e. users' needs and wishes should inform decisions) and adaptation of services to individual needs. In the UK, however, even probation officers with contacts in housing are having trouble accessing support as local authorities are replaced as the dominant housing providers by many smaller registered social landlords and thus making multi-agency cooperation more complex (Allen & Barkley 2002).

#### *2.4.4 Inter-agency cooperation and tenancy support*

Much of the research literature demonstrates that there is often a mismatch between the multiple and complex needs of people with various forms of demanding and

behavioural problems. Allen and Barkley (2002) show that the division of professional knowledge into 'silos' is unhelpful on a practice level because service users' problems tend to be 'joined up'. High-need clients have multiple needs, requiring an intensive response, for a longer period of time and involving greater complexity of service provision.

The importance of inter-agency collaboration is a prominent theme in the Australian (Bisset et al 1999; Thomson Goodall Associates 2002; Lake 2003; Samuels et al 2004) and British (Scott & Parkey 1998; Randall & Brown 1999; Robinson & Flemen 2002; Scott 2002; Allen 2003; National Housing Federation 2003; Keeble et al 2004) literature. However, in the Australian context, Arthurson and Jacobs (2004) also note that the emphasis on 'joined up' government makes accountability harder to enforce because it is difficult to evaluate the different elements of 'joined up' policies in a Federal/State government context. In Britain, Nixon et al's (2003b) research found that coordinated action to deal with anti-social and demanding behaviour through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships has been difficult, but effective when it was achieved.

Crane and Warnes (2001) point to the need to decide which agencies will do what when providing services and Lucas et al (2003) discuss how relevant authorities can work together to deal with anti-social behaviour, while Hill et al (2002) note that shared ownership of a project by key agencies is important.

Inter-agency approaches can also be beneficial for holistic service models. For example, in the Australian context, Fernbacher (1999) argues for the benefits of a holistic service which takes people's whole lives into account rather than separating aspects. According to Fernbacher (1999: 21) and in the context of women with mental health issues, holistic service models emphasise:

- The links between the stress of homelessness and mental and emotional well-being
- Culturally appropriate support matched with the particular woman's interpretation
- The potential, rather than the 'deficit' in a person and encourage self-determination and empowerment
- Working with the person and not their diagnosis
- The recognition of the long-term effects on emotional and mental well-being of having a child or children temporarily or permanently removed; in particular the effects on Indigenous women who are part of the stolen generation and who have had their own children removed
- Appropriate support to children, particularly at times when their mother is unwell or hospitalised
- Support to assist women and children to navigate their way through the bureaucratic and institutional maze.

In the UK, Hunter and Nixon (2001) also support the adoption of a holistic approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour, while Hill et al (2002) note that the holistic approach taken in an intensive project for families at risk of eviction due to anti-social behaviour contributed to the project's success.

Foord and Simic (2001) found that housing practitioners didn't refer many people to social services because they believed that care assessments were 'rationed'. At the same time, social workers held the view that the drivers in housing (e.g. performance indicators around rent arrears) were impelling the system towards impersonality while social services try to operate in a 'personal culture' focusing on individual need. This often meant that multi-agency assessments were uncommon and that confusion remained around what constituted a 'joint assessment'. They found that joint working

was good as a result only of the commitment and talents of individuals and that a lack of joint training (see staff development issues below) exacerbated this problem.

The idea of having a tenancy support worker was also raised in a number of articles. Allen and Barkley (2002) point to the benefits of having a tenancy support worker operating as an intermediary between probation officers and housing officers and argue that strategies to 'join up' professional knowledge are not enough in themselves (because housing officers remain wary of probation officers and their clients), and the tenancy worker is important because they are able to provide a personal touch, which is appreciated by tenants. A similar argument is made by Blandford et al (1989) in the Canadian context in reference to the position of tenant resource coordinator whose job is to link social and health services with housing as a type of supportive housing. In the Australian context, the 'personal touch' is again noted by Rymill and Hart (1992) who discuss the benefits of having 'direct care workers' providing on-site assistance in supported accommodation for people with mental health problems.

An effective way of meeting the needs of residents is through individual care plans. Housing support key workers can then make sure a resident's care plan is implemented both through working with the resident and through liaison with all other relevant agencies (Thomson Goodall Associates 2002). Clarke (1988) also points to the importance of management measures such as support officers, housing superintendents, cleaners and overnight security wardens. People who live in small-scale, high quality and non-institutional environments were found to be less likely to engage in disruptive behaviour when a larger proportion of other tenants in their blocks also had a serious mental illness (Newman 2001).

Kirby et al (1999) conducted research in which case manager 'dyads' (pairs) were shown to have a number of additional benefits. These included the possibility that if one case manager gets sick the other can cover for them, but also that clients benefited from the strengths of both managers and this increased their safety when doing outreach work. Work by the National Housing Federation (2003) in the UK indicated that effective work was linked to the use of staff who could act as 'the eyes and ears' of the community, particularly through the use of neighbourhood wardens.

Baker (2005) makes specific recommendations around disputes and support for tenants. He suggests that straightforward information be provided for tenants on basic communication skills and how to resolve disputes with their housing provider, neighbours or government departments. This should give tenants advance information that tells them how they should behave and how to get support if they need it. These methods can also be complemented by visual aids to reinforce key messages. Baker gives the example of a fridge magnet which could summarise key communication methods.

Robinson and Flemen (2002) and Scott and Parkey (1998) also note the importance of involving residents. Strong (1998) notes that good practice for providing housing advice to people with mental illnesses must include the involvement of tenants. However, while this focus on multi-agency, or 'joined-up thinking', is considerable, it does not always appear to include the participation of tenants and service users.

#### *2.4.5 Staff development and evaluation*

Staff development is seen to be an important part of successful strategies. For example, Bisset et al (1999) point to the need to have adequate supervision and ongoing training for staff (see also Strong 1998; Norris 2003; Keeble et al 2004). Training in being empathic to the problems of recently released prisoners, often identified as a problematic group, was seen as essential in research carried out by Allen and Barkley (2002). Allen and Barkley (2002) argue that housing and other professionals working with vulnerable groups with problematic behaviours need to immerse themselves in the lives of their service users to understand what it is like to be

in that position. A key reason for this is that those practitioners who display good relationships with tenants often then found that the tenant was additionally motivated not to let them down.

Evaluation is also seen as an important part of the development of new approaches to dealing with anti-social behaviour, the threat of eviction and sustaining tenancies. This includes the monitoring and recording of incidents, inspection and review of outcomes as well as the provision of follow-up action (see Jacobs & Arthurson 2003, and Lake 2003 in the Australian context; and Strong 1998, Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions 2001, Mansell et al 2001, Hill et al 2002, and Lucas et al 2003 in the British context).

#### *2.4.6 Managing mixed tenure areas and allocations*

Norris (2003) indicates that best practice should include preventive measures, such as sensitive allocation of tenancies, but also that non-legal solutions should occur first before eviction. Tsemberis and Amussen (1999) in their US research show that individuals who are homeless with severe psychiatric disabilities and/or substance-abuse problems can be successfully housed in independent apartments with support services but that treatment participation and tenure is achieved more effectively when the tenant determines the conditions under which to participate.

Lake (2003) shows that it is essential to ensure that people who are homeless are 'housing ready' when they enter public housing. Lake draws on the experience of The Transitional Housing Management Program in Australia which provides housing information and referral to access all forms of housing and appropriate support and allocates and manages transitional housing for homeless people and people most in need. However, there is often a lack of appropriate housing which may compromise these goals. Lake also found that support from SAAP (Supported Accommodation Assistance Program) workers sometimes stopped upon provision of public housing even though it may still be needed.

A further important, yet highly problematic, point is raised by Nixon et al (2003). They argue that, because of the mixed tenure composition of many neighbourhoods, strategies tackling complex and problematic behaviour, including anti-social behaviour, should not be limited to particular tenures (see also Scott & Parkey 1998). In discussing the control of problematic behaviour in mixed tenure areas in the UK Nixon et al (2003) argue that the key determinants in deciding whether behaviour is anti-social or not should be the impact of behaviours on others and the perceptions of local residents. Effective anti-social behaviour interventions were dependent on the development of a shared understanding of the nature of the problem; the existence of mature multi-agency partnerships operating at both strategic and operational levels which had established relationships of trust and the engagement of local residents (Nixon et al 2003: 133). Dedicated officers to coordinate initiatives were also seen to be helpful.

#### *2.4.7 The need for autonomy in specialist support services*

Randall and Brown (1999) suggest that successful projects that specialise in supporting tenants have a number of common features. These include: being commissioned by social landlords to provide support services, yet remaining independent of the landlord; not to be seen as part of 'the system' and to be proactive in providing services; dealing with people with multiple problems; having realistic objectives and focusing on practical solutions; and providing a flexible and multidisciplinary service. They also argue that effective services, such as housing, should not "attempt to resolve all the problems of their clients, but refer them into other mainstream services, which they are better able to access when they are in settled accommodation" (p. 33). Tsemberis and Amussen (1999) similarly argue that housing



and treatment/support services must be regarded as separate domains to avoid support being seen as part of 'the system' by vulnerable tenants.

### **Case Study: An example of good practice: The Dundee Families Project**

Hill et al (2002) describe the work, in Scotland, of the Dundee Families Project, an example of a specialist and intensive project set up for families who were being evicted or were at imminent risk of eviction and in order to tackle 'anti-social behaviour'. Although the primary aim of the Project and its key referral criterion are housing-related, it was evident from the nature of the referrals that the families facing eviction on the ground of neighbour nuisance nearly all had a combination of poverty and internal family difficulties. Most of the parents were not employed and were characterised by at least one of addiction, mental health difficulties or criminal behaviour. The service takes three main forms. A core small residential unit for up to four families, dispersed accommodation which supported families in tenancies held by the local authority across the city and outreach accommodation which offered support to families in their existing homes.

Scott (2002) suggests that the key achievements of this intensive management of tenants who presented major behavioural problems was an advance in inter-agency cooperation, which established good working relationships with most of the key agencies (although there were reported gaps in support from the mental health services). There was also a high degree of trust and cooperation among stakeholders in the project. The project was also seen as being well managed. The fact it was run by a voluntary agency made families less suspicious. The majority of families who participated in the project made progress so that rates of evictions in Dundee dropped markedly. However, uncertainty over long-term funding had an impact on staff morale.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

As Martin et al (2002: 13) argue, "models of sustainable community management which promote acceptance and tolerance are an urgent priority". To prevent various forms of demanding behaviour threatening the sustainability of a tenancy, public housing agencies need to ensure that risk factors are identified, that appropriate allocations and accommodation are matched with identified household needs and that inter-agency support is made available in effective and sustained ways. The complexity of many demanding behaviours is linked to a range of risk factors, including mental health, substance misuse, and personal histories of abuse and neglect, which make tenants vulnerable and in need of support.

Ensuring that the right mix of support and advice is available helps to ensure that tenancies are sustainable and that rental streams and management costs are reduced. The tension between providing housing to those in need and serving an existing community who need to be protected from the effects of disruptive, demanding and anti-social behaviour is significant. In the context of extreme social residualisation in Australian social housing and the deinstitutionalisation of mental health services, these various demands create major challenges for housing providers who may not see themselves as part of a chain of social service support. This may mean that not only are vulnerable tenants let down, but that support may not be activated that could more easily help such groups become competent and sustainable tenants. Ultimately, policies that do not support tenant security of tenure do not help maintain tenancies and may well produce insecurity among individuals and tension in communities.

### **3 SUSTAINING INDIGENOUS TENANCIES**

In this section we consider the issues surrounding the identification and support of needs that are specific to Aboriginal communities. The literature review of policy documents and reports surrounding sustaining Indigenous tenancies highlighted a number of key areas and reasons for which Indigenous tenancies fail. We conclude by examining recommendations that have been made in the literature to produce effective interventions.

#### **3.1 Causes of tenancy failure**

Indigenous families in Australia are sixteen times more likely to be homeless than other families. This can be partly attributed to cultural differences, higher rates of poverty, poor health, premature ageing, substance abuse, incarceration, educational disadvantage, limited employment opportunities and welfare dependency. They are often further disadvantaged by a lack of affordable, culturally appropriate housing as well as by discrimination in housing markets (Stracey 2003; Roberts et al 2006).

Disadvantage and risk factors, alongside discrimination, cultural and historic forces are identified as particular barriers preventing Indigenous people from accessing and sustaining public housing tenancies in Australia. In relation to the concerns of this review particular risk factors include:

- Poverty
- Domestic and family violence
- Incarceration (with particular risks immediately after release from prison)
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Mental illness

Many of these factors are interrelated or linked, which may compound the kinds of risk linked to particular households. Such factors have also tended to be more prevalent in the Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous population.

Cooper and Morris (2005) show that Aboriginal women are particularly difficult to re-house where they have been subjected to domestic or family violence. Research shows that they often end up in crisis accommodation, not longer-term housing, and cannot always be housed at a safe distance from their perpetrators. Indigenous women move into and between homelessness and sustainable tenancies through identified pathways, which include poverty and debt; 'unemployment'; 'low education levels'; accommodation costs; 'family' violence; 'multi-generational family units' alongside numerous visitors and overcrowding; 'historical factors'; discrimination (racial, sexual); 'the criminal justice system'; 'lack of skills in accessing formal services' as well as home management and living skills; 'disempowerment' and 'cultural depression'; child (and child sexual) abuse; 'poor health'; 'anti-social behaviour'; and 'mental illness and lack of culturally appropriate mental health services'. Also identified were structural barriers, including the supply, standard and appropriateness of housing; 'long waiting lists'; lack of information and 'culturally appropriate services'; alongside the lack of 'inter-agency coordination' and a 'whole-of-government approach' which hinder "effective service delivery to Indigenous women and families" (Cooper & Morris 2005).

Indigenous homelessness often follows discharge from prison, in which Indigenous people are also significantly over-represented (Flatau et al 2005). Furthermore, research indicates that episodes of anti-social behaviour often follow incarceration (Flatau et al 2005; Burke 2004), which suggests that inter-agency working between criminal justice and housing needs to be improved to help prevent these kinds of problems from persisting.

Discrimination may occur at various levels in State/Territory housing authorities no matter what policies are in place. Some programmes/policies may also be unintentionally discriminatory, placing Indigenous people in a worse position. The cultural and historical traditions of Indigenous people, especially their high mobility and large families, may also make sustaining tenancies more difficult than for general needs housing. A lack of home management and 'urban' skills have also been raised as key issues in the research literature. The 'European style' of housing in which Indigenous tenants are housed is often inappropriate in cultural, social and traditional terms, especially if a family is housed in a non-Indigenous neighbourhood where support structures for such households may be further away (Flatau 2004).

The South Australian Housing Trust experience (reported in Gale 2003) shows that the maintenance of a tenancy, or adhering to the conditions of a tenancy agreement, requires skills that 'high need' tenants often lack. Such situations are made worse by low income, high debt levels, difficult and disruptive behaviour and/or property damage or neglect. The 'revolving door syndrome' is the problematic cycle whereby high-need tenants are housed with a pre-existing debt, subsequently evicted because of debt (and/or other issues), become homeless and spend time in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) sector before being re-housed, this time with a larger debt.

For all forms of rental tenure, discrimination is a barrier to accessing and sustaining housing for Aboriginal people and may stem from ethnicity but also limited income, past housing histories or an inability to provide a reference. Aboriginal people who live in rental accommodation have been seen as the most likely group to be complained about, most often for reasons of property appearance, bad behaviour or high numbers of people at the property (State Homelessness Taskforce 2002).

## **3.2 Preventative strategies**

A number of key points regarding the need for preventative strategies emerge from the literature with regard to Indigenous housing:

### *3.2.1 Discrimination and cultural insensitivity*

Berry et al (2001) show that pervasive discrimination was found to reduce housing opportunities for Indigenous people and therefore also increased overcrowding and inappropriate housing. The State Homelessness Taskforce (2002: 17-18) made a series of relevant recommendations, including the use of community education via television commercials and newspapers that provides a positive image of Aboriginal culture. They also suggest a broader approach that encompasses creative employment that would enable Aboriginal people to maintain jobs in the long term would have clear housing benefits. The development of more community and crisis accommodation options for Aboriginal people such as cooperatives, cluster housing, sobering-up centres, and a continuum of accommodation from short to long term is also recommended. They also list a number of other simple but effective initiatives that could be part of a more holistic approach that clearly feeds into concerns about sustaining tenancies and the links between this and demanding behaviour. These include:

- Design and implementation of different styles of housing that take into account utilisation by large numbers of people;
- The creation of more community development models that are focused on working with those Aboriginal people who require support in accessing and maintaining stable accommodation;
- More funding to employ Aboriginal outreach workers within both Aboriginal and mainstream services;

- Increasing the funding of existing Supported Accommodation Assistance Program providers so that more people can be helped;
- Mainstream agencies and Aboriginal agencies (both government and non-government) working more closely together to develop new knowledge, understanding and different ways of working; and
- The development and promotion of joint services and strategies that involve Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies working together.

The Victorian Indigenous Homelessness Study (Berry et al 2001) also looked at these issues and made recommendations regarding effective practice in sustaining tenancies. This research found that policy makers and service providers need to become more knowledgeable about the way that culture matters in housing issues. The Study also showed that current policies tended to ignore the reality of extended family commitments and interaction in Indigenous communities. It suggested that existing policies with respect to housing allocations, rental charges, occupancy norms and the like should be looked at in consultation with Indigenous representatives to ensure that they are appropriate.

Processes also need to be in place that do not always allow past tenancy histories to impede access to housing. In other words, to avoid long-term social exclusion, some flexibility in allocation practices may be required to prevent outright exclusions of particular households. Mainstream public housing offices also need to employ more Indigenous people in order to provide a positive environment, reduce discrimination and provide appropriate support for Aboriginal households (Flatau et al 2005).

Because of restricted and declining opportunities elsewhere in the housing system, the stock of housing managed for Indigenous people by organisations clearly needs to be expanded to tackle overcrowding and homelessness. The key policy task is to find ways of effectively blocking the slide into homelessness and the self-reinforcing cycle of disadvantage and despair that this gives rise to.

### *3.2.2 Integrated service delivery*

Particular groups of Indigenous people were mentioned during the Berry et al (2001) study as being at high risk of becoming homeless. They included young people, single men, ex-prisoners and victims of domestic violence. While homelessness was a common consequence, the factors underlying this outcome were often seen to be very different and therefore require different responses.

However, as we have established above, integrated and connected approaches to tenancy management are important for all groups. In relation to Indigenous housing there is seen to be a significant fragmentation of government and community services (Berry et al 2001). Implementing a whole of government approach would require appropriate protocols to identify households at risk of homelessness, inform appropriate service providers and help monitor the effectiveness of any support provided.

Cooper and Morris (2005) outline a range of strategies to prevent homelessness arising from the breakdown of tenancies linked to demanding or anti-social behaviour, with a particular focus on Indigenous families. Prevention strategies need to be undertaken in order to stop homelessness in its early stages. They argue that primary, secondary and tertiary prevention strategies are needed:

- Primary prevention may include: “strengthening women’s education from childhood to adulthood and ensuring literacy skills, ensuring that women obtain experience in the labour market and maintain employability, and improving the housing stock so that overcrowding is not necessary” (Cooper & Morris 2005: 92).

- Secondary prevention would involve identifying not only the 'at risk' women and children in the early stages of homelessness, but also the factors which put them at risk, and implementing strategies to prevent exacerbation of their situation.
- Tertiary prevention includes the provision of health, welfare and housing services that actively support homeless Indigenous women and their families to increase their ability to sustain their tenancy.

A form of 'active monitoring' through 'case management' may also help prevent the homelessness of 'at risk' women and their children. Outreach services operating 24/7 in areas such as caravan parks and hostels, where homeless women and children are likely to be, are also seen as useful methods to help assist in accessing services. 'At risk' women also need to be identified in this way (Cooper & Morris 2005).

### **3.3 Conclusion**

The needs of Indigenous households in relation to demanding behaviour raise significant challenges, primarily based around the lack of sensitivity and action that is culturally appropriate. While many of the issues that Aboriginal households face in accessing appropriate housing are similar to that of households more generally, there has been a history of institutional discrimination and a lack of appropriate housing and support services to ensure that these needs are responded to. We have found that the most significant factor is the lack of cultural awareness in the kinds of issues that Indigenous households face and the means by which appropriate support services can both be put in place and operate in connected ways to prevent clients falling through the net of such provision.

The kinds of demanding behaviour sometimes presented as a result of substance use or linked to conditions after incarceration cause continuing concern about how adequate services might be set up to prevent a revolving door whereby tenants move through a series of service providers without having their needs adequately dealt with. It is clear that more concerted, strategic and culturally sensitive provision needs to be made, both to help such tenants maintain their tenancies and in order to support the communities in which these tenants live. These concerns are expressed both in relation to more remote communities, where service provision is undoubtedly more problematic from a logistical point of view, but also in urban areas where a lack of appropriate service interfaces and support has left already marginalised Aboriginal households at a further disadvantage in the housing system in relation to potentially challenging behavioural needs.

## 4 CONCLUSION

In this report we have raised a number of issues in relation to managing and sustaining tenancies where tenants exhibit problematic or demanding behaviour. We have provided an overview of some of the complexities of such problems, including the complex needs of people at risk of homelessness, who may have mental health and substance abuse problems as well as exhibit forms of behaviour that are difficult to identify as criminal or as remediable through statutory interventions. These difficult tenants are often themselves vulnerable, yet face the prospect of eviction, which itself may move these problems elsewhere without resolving them. It may also mean that they ultimately return to be re-housed by public housing providers at a later date. The research evidence here suggests that a range of good practice principles can be identified, which are available to help ensure the support of tenants whom housing practitioners may find difficult to deal with.

Among the general principles underlying a strategic and effective approach to demanding and challenging tenant behaviours we would highlight the need for a tenant-centred approach that seeks to help and support tenants in order that both they and their households are catered for. We must remember that we are not talking about criminal actions or the harder edge of anti-social behaviours but, rather, issues that indicate the presence of mental health, substance abuse and other interpersonal problems that lead tenants to a point at which their tenancies and fundamental point of stability, their home, may be at risk.

The implications of this are not that public housing providers need to be seen as part of a wider suite of social service and other support interventions. Rather they should be seen as landlords with a social responsibility to their tenants, in order to protect the tenant, effectively manage their stock portfolios, and ensure that such behavioural problems are properly and effectively remedied to generate wider harmonious relations with neighbours. This can only be effectively carried out using protocols that assess the relative risks associated with particular tenants at the outset and through multi-agency direct working that both reflects the complex needs of these clients and the means by which their problems can be managed or resolved.

A number of continuing challenges in the current housing context are worth noting. First, how to coordinate improvements in the living conditions and circumstances of public housing tenants, while increasingly accommodating tenants with complex needs. Second, how to provide multi-pronged approaches that achieve what are seen by tenants as straightforward solutions that are grounded at a local level and that match their particular problems (Lake 2003). The level of respect shown to clients is clearly important so that a service culture is required that demonstrates that services are responsive to the needs of clients. All of these issues may present challenges for some public housing providers who are themselves balancing acute housing needs with responsibilities both to house tenants and to ensure balanced and sustainable communities.

The danger of taking no action with regard to demanding forms of tenant behaviour can be linked to the kinds of concerns raised by studies into anti-social behaviour. As Jacobs and Arthurson (2004: 24) suggest “as well as the considerable distress for tenants who have to endure anti-social behaviour, public housing estates will remain stigmatised and unpopular unless tenants are confident their concerns are being met”. Writers like Nixon et al (2003a, 2003b) have shown that new and innovative practice in the UK, for example, has begun to move towards being preventive, rather than just being punitive. Given the results of the literature and research outcomes identified in this report, this shift will be important in determining the effectiveness of programs dealing with problematic behaviour. While most of the literature on anti-social behaviour has tackled such problems from the point of view of housing management, it

seems time to make a more concerted effort to concentrate on the modification of difficult behaviour and support for behaviour that does not cause alarm or damage to neighbour relations and does not allow vulnerable tenants to be a risk to themselves or the tenancies of their wider households.

While many would agree that the housing needs of people with mental health problems do not appear to have been solved in the community, it would seem preferable that many of these groups find a home there rather than in institutions. However, this implies support that requires funding, strategic and innovative management, as well as a client-centred approach that achieves an empathy with the plight of individuals and households in these positions. We should remember that for many years it was thought that the most important cause of rough sleeping was a shortage of housing. While this is an important factor it has become increasingly clear that many people sleeping rough also have a range of problems which make it difficult for them to access or sustain permanent housing (Randall & Brown 1999; Sahlin 1995). Ensuring support for such households to prevent homelessness and helping people to cope with difficulties they face in managing a household are essential to prevent the social and economic costs that such a breakdown presents.

## 5 READING GUIDE

Here we have included brief summaries and a list of relevant documents which may be of use to practitioners who are looking for more detailed and relevant information to inform their own strategies and daily practice. A full reference list to all of the research literature consulted during the literature review can be found in chapter 8.

**Baker, I. (2005) *Phase One Report for the Sustaining Tenancies in Community Housing Project*, Toowoomba, Australia: Shelter**

This report address the causes of tenancy failure in the Toowoomba community housing sector as well as factors that aid the support of tenancies. It proposes a simple communication program designed for community housing staff to work with tenants to help them resolve disputes before eviction occurs along with the development of a “tenancy health check” – a list of factors that make people more vulnerable to housing instability, to enable early detection of problems and the use of preventative strategies.

**Bisset, H., Campbell, S. & Goodall, J. (1999) *Appropriate Responses for Homeless People Whose Needs Require a High Level and Complexity of Service Provision: Final Report*, Melbourne, Victoria: Ecumenical Housing and Thomson Goodall Associates,**

**<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-SAAPreport.htm>**

This research report was commissioned by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program to look into ways to provide appropriate support to people who are homeless and have high-level and complex needs. The report focuses on the importance of linkages to other programs, particularly in relation to clients with a psychiatric illness, intellectual disability, or drug or alcohol problem. It provides a typology of need as well as comprehensive advice on what needs to be done at the regional, state and national levels to improve the support offered to ‘high need’ housing clients.

**Keeble, M., Hughes, K. & Stirling, T. (2004) *Living in Harmony Toolkit: A guide to preventing, managing and resolving neighbour disputes*, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government, Housing Management and Homelessness Branch**

A very accessible document which presents a range of ideas and methods that can be used by social landlords to help prevent, manage and resolve neighbour disputes. The report is split into four sections:

1. Provides advice on communities and self-help.
2. Looks at the role of social landlords in tackling neighbour disputes.
3. Looks at what is required for successful multi-agency working.
4. Discusses training options for tenants, residents, community organisations and landlords.

**Pettitt, G. (1999) *On My Way: Helping young people to retain their tenancies*, London: Children’s Society, Metropolitan Housing Trust, London Research Centre**

This report evaluates the effectiveness of a housing and support scheme (the Young Tenants Support Project) to help young people who are at risk of homelessness to sustain their tenancies. The report makes extensive best practice recommendations relating to referrals, needs assessment and selection processes; procedural issues; setting the parameters of the project; reviewing needs; providing support around Housing Benefit and housing management issues; and providing support more generally in partnership with other agencies.



**Randall, G. & Brown, S. (1999) *Prevention is Better than Cure*, London: Crisis, <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pdf/Prevention.pdf>**

This report addresses the prevention of homelessness, focusing not on the provision of housing for homeless people, but on intervention before the point of homelessness. It provides a summary of risk factors contributing to homelessness as well as an overview of some of the common features of projects that are successful in supporting tenants.

**Seelig, T. & Jones, A. (2004) “Sustaining Tenancies in Public Housing: Motives, issues and options”, *Parity*, 17(10) and *Housing Works*, 2(2)**

This is a two-page summary of some “motives, issues and options” for sustaining tenancies in public housing in Australia. It points to the need to better understand the factors that make tenancies vulnerable to failure, a more systematic and reliable process for early identification of vulnerable tenancies, and individually tailored interventions.

**Slatter, M. & Crearie, M. (2003) “Sustainable Tenancies: From public to private?”, *Flinders Journal of Law Reform*, 7(1), pp. 15-26**

This paper describes some strategies being trialled in South Australia to sustain tenancies among Housing Trust tenants, focused on “successful tenancies, sustainable communities and service integration”. It then considers whether these strategies could be utilised in the private rental market.

## 6 REVIEW METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review was undertaken to identify the national and international literature on the causes of eviction in public rental housing, the strategies employed to sustain the tenancies of people with problematic behaviour and the consequences of termination and evaluation and identification of best practice. The research involved three key stages:

1. An international literature review.
2. Internet searching.
3. Contact with experts in the field to check for further research and grey (unpublished) literature that the databases might have missed.

The review located documents produced by public housing authorities with the aim of:

- Describing those behaviours identified by public housing authorities as most likely to threaten tenancies.
- Outlining the policies and practices currently used to identify at-risk tenancies due to these behaviours.
- Outlining the strategies used to manage these behaviours. This included material distributed to tenants, internal and public policy documents and government reports.

The review will also inform the interviews in Stage 2 and will contribute to the identification of the particular housing area case studies selected for further investigation. The review excluded material dealing specifically with anti-social behaviour arising from mental health needs and support. The review was carried out as follows:

- Relevant social science bibliographic, internet and grey literature databases were searched from 1995 to date.
- Searches of relevant internet sources, policy websites and further documentary sources were carried out using techniques to avoid any possible omissions not included in keyword searches.
- Enquiries were made to recognised national experts (in both Australia and the UK) to locate and highlight any missing literature.
- For each document included, a review pro forma was filled out to facilitate comparable data extraction from each source and to enable synthesis.

The benefit of this approach was that we were able to provide a confident depiction of the state of the art in this particular area to facilitate the identification of gaps in research knowledge and assessment of an evidence-base upon which policy makers can draw. The review then searched for grey literature and other relevant policy documentation from Australia alone. The following electronic databases were searched:

- ASSIA
- BL Direct (Inside Web)
- Family and Society (Australia only)
- Google
- Google scholar
- IBSS
- SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe)

- Social Care Online
- Social Policy and Practice – Includes Acompline, Planex, AgeInfo and SCO
- Social Science Abstracts
- Social Services Abstracts
- Web of Knowledge (SSCI)
- Web of Science

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria* – A number of references, which did not at first sight appear to be relevant, contained relevant papers in their own reference lists. These additional references were occasionally important but this did mean sifting through significant amounts of material. The final search strategy, although it had many terms, was in fact 'controlled' by the first set of terms – (housing or rents or rental or tenan\*), in order to delimit the scope of the findings to research based on social housing and relevant areas.

*Screening and selection process* – The titles and abstracts of identified documents, where these were available, were screened independently by two reviewers. In some databases only the title was available. Where only the title was available the reviewer initially screened the titles to exclude obviously irrelevant and duplicate documents. A data extraction form was constructed to ensure that both reviewers extracted the same relevant data. Around two thousand citations were identified through the search strategy. From this around 130 documents were finally obtained for more in-depth reading and inclusion in the final review.

## 6.1 Search terms

The final search terms used in the review are outlined below. Initial searches with several further terms had to be dropped because of the vast numbers of references that were yielded. With advice from our consultant based at the British Library we found that many of these 'hits' were 'false drops', or irrelevant material that could be excluded. By fine tuning our search strategy we were able to come up with both a more manageable and relevant set of search results. We searched in the title and abstracts of each document across all of the databases.

### 6.1.1 Search terms used in the review

#### Policy area

(housing or rents or rental or tenan\*) and (sustain\* or legislat\* or "best practice" or "joined up" or allocat\* or eligib\* or "what works" or intervent\* or partnersh\*)

#### Policy issues

and

(mental\* or breakdown\* or ill\* or antisocial or "anti social" or nois\* or nuisance\* or disorder or complaint\* or dispute\* or

((drug\* or substance\* or alcohol) and (abuse or misuse or addict\*))

or conflict\* or dangerous\* or disrupt\* or violen\* or (breach and contract) or disabl\* or deinstitut\*)

and ("hard to house" or residualisat\* or (prevent\* and homeless\*) or evict\* or secur\* or intensiv\* or prevent\* or failur\* or exclu\*) not (child\* or young or adolescent\* or famil\* or aids or HIV)

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\* denotes wildcard, any permutations of the word following the asterisk will be included. For example, prevent\* would pick up preventable, prevents, preventing and so on.

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<b>Key outcomes or practice issues identified (give page nos)?</b>	
<b>Key empirical and policy conclusions</b>	Policy/practice had positive effects <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/practice had negative effects <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/practice had complex outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship between policy and outcomes could not be measured <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other <input type="checkbox"/> (add details):</b>
<b>Quality descriptors/assessment</b>	A Robust/replicable/intensive and extensive <input type="checkbox"/> B Significant contribution based on limited evidence <input type="checkbox"/> C Poor quality – not worth including in evidence base for the study <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other comments:</b>

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