



Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022

**AUSTRALIAN HOUSING AND
URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Message from the Executive Director and Chairperson

Australia continues to experience sustained economic growth and is undoubtedly a prosperous country. However, the nation faces many challenges as it grapples with housing and urban issues that impact liveability and productivity.

Historically, Australia's housing, planning and cities policies have not been well-integrated. There has never been a greater need—or *opportunity*—for social and economic policies to be informed by credible and independent evidence derived from rigorous research that is focussed on identifying and answering the big policy questions.

Housing in Australia is many things: a substantial part of the infrastructure of our cities, towns and regions, a family home, an aspiration, a creator of household wealth. Housing is fundamental to positive outcomes in many aspects of life, from health and learning outcomes for children, to responses to domestic violence and homelessness, to ageing in place.

Australia is a highly urbanised country. The economic output of our major cities has grown and with that growth there is increased demand for infrastructure, transport and housing. The usability and liveability of cities are ongoing challenges, and an evidence-base for policy makers at all levels of government to consider those challenges now and into the future is essential.

Understanding the interactions between these seemingly disparate facets, to help build a society in which we all contribute and belong is a key driver of AHURI research.

As outlined by the Strategic Plan 2018-2022, AHURI will actively broaden our scope to consider the role, functioning and policy questions facing Australian cities. We will enhance our significant evidence base on housing and homelessness policy and solutions, and consolidate our role in delivering integrated and robust evidence to guide policy development.



Dr Michael Fotheringham
Executive Director



Tony De Domenico OAM
Chairperson

Emerging challenges

AHURI is the only institution with 20 years of ongoing commitment from all Australian governments, as well as Category 1 status and credibility through the Australian Competitive Grants Register. We have earned a reputation as the definitive source of evidence-based non partisan advice and policy development expertise.

Improving housing affordability and supply is central to the productivity and liveability of Australia's cities. To maximise the value AHURI delivers, we will seek to build on our successes and develop a more comprehensive, better integrated program of work across housing, homelessness, cities and urban policy.

As Australia explores a new phase in its policy for cities, and a renewed focus on housing policy, it is essential to bring an evidence-based, coordinated and integrated approach to policy, planning and investment across all levels of government. Included in this approach is a more strategic and longer-term vision of housing in our cities, informed by infrastructure and land use planning perspectives.

Australian Cities

Our cities are growing rapidly with increasing population. Cities with integrated affordable housing have real economic and social benefits for the community.

Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world, and most of our recent population growth has occurred in our cities. Over the coming years, the proportion of the population aged over 65 will continue to increase, while population growth in the traditional workforce age is expected to slow, resulting in an ageing population. The great majority of jobs are located in our cities, as are most new jobs being created. The economic output of our major cities continues to grow, and their national importance remains extremely high.

With such growth there is increased demand for housing, transport, infrastructure services—and the accompanying need for integrated planning.

Australian cities increasingly follow a pattern of spatial divide between centralised areas of highly productive jobs and the areas of population-based services. While growth patterns in each city vary, two common trends are being observed in most Australian cities: low-density growth on the urban fringe and high-density growth in the inner-city centres. Overall, the number of detached houses has declined as a proportion of all dwellings, while the number of medium- and higher-density dwellings, such as apartment buildings, has increased.

The housing and infrastructure needs of Australian cities are evolving. Changes in the social and economic distribution of cities have been paralleled by growth patterns that include significant population growth on urban fringes. The result is an increasing spatial divide between jobs and residents across many of Australia's cities, with significant implications for productivity growth. To grow a functionally efficient urban economy requires an adequate supply of workers in both highly skilled, highly paid occupations and lower skilled, lower paid jobs.

Housing affordability pressures

Housing affordability is an ongoing challenge in many Australian cities. There has been a decline in the proportion of households living in owner-occupied housing, and a rise in the percentage of households renting in the private rental sector—housing affordability stress is increasing. Pressures on our urban spaces and our housing options mean we are seeing an increase in the numbers of our most vulnerable citizens experiencing traumatic living conditions such as homelessness.

Costs to governments and the community

These are not only challenges for individuals and households—there are associated increased costs to government. For example, people experiencing homelessness have significantly elevated health and justice costs. Housing also has significant costs for government—capital gains tax exemption on the family home, negative gearing concessions to encourage investment in rental housing, rent assistance, and public housing provision are all significant impacts on government balance sheets and expenditures.

Tomorrow these costs and expenditures may be quite different. The constancy of political, economic and environmental change means always adapting to get the best from the resources allocated to housing our population in liveable, productive cities and regions.

Responding to change with forward-looking policy focus

To respond to these emerging social, economic and environmental challenges and to properly support the breadth of new policy instruments that seek to address these challenges—such as City Deals, the Smart Cities Plan, and the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement—AHURI will need to strengthen its focus on urban policy issues, the whole of housing system, and on the integration of housing and urban policy.

To develop this understanding and meet the need for a high quality, policy relevant evidence-base on the future of Australian cities, AHURI will work with governments and relevant stakeholders to expand our role in these areas.

We also acknowledge the challenge to maintain our relevance in this dynamic environment. To provide the responsive capabilities that can meet Australia's changing evidence needs, AHURI will develop new ways of delivering research and new mechanisms to guide public and professional understanding, and inform policy and practice.

Building on our strengths

While we will proactively address new challenges, AHURI will also continue to deliver and develop our existing strengths, including the National Housing Research Program, our Professional Services, and our conference and events program.

National Housing Research Program

Our National Housing Research Program is formulated by stakeholder experts in government and academia, with vital input from specialists in community housing, finance, economics and property. We will develop our consultations to engage with broader stakeholder groups, and expand the scope of the Program's activities.

The policy and practice environments in which we operate are increasingly dynamic, with emerging stakeholders, issues, and integrations. AHURI will seek to adapt and anticipate these dynamics, and develop intentionally to support these changing needs.

Professional Services

Our Professional Services activities deliver a range of solutions to a diverse range of clients both domestically and internationally. We work with our clients to understand and define the problem and develop solutions that meet their needs, bringing exceptional expertise through our team of social researchers, economists and policy specialists. Our approach is tailored to each project, and may include timely syntheses of relevant evidence, facilitation of workshops or consultations with community or professional groups, evaluations of service delivery, policy development, or development of specialised resources.

We will continue to develop new offerings and solutions to a changing clientele, to ensure our work informs the policies and practices of governments and the housing and urban development sectors.

Conferences, events and engagement

Our conferences, events and communication strategies stimulate professional and public dialogue. We will strive to innovate in the ways in which we disseminate research and engage with government, private, not-for-profit sectors and the community—including new event formats and programs, and new dissemination channels.

Who we are

AHURI is a national independent research network with an expert not-for-profit research management company, AHURI Limited, at its centre.

As the only organisation in Australia dedicated exclusively to housing, homelessness, cities and related urban research, AHURI is a unique venture. Through our national network of university research partners, we undertake research leading to the advancement of knowledge on key policy and practice issues.

AHURI research informs the decision making of all levels of government, non-government sectors (both private and not-for-profit), peak organisations and the community, and stimulates debate in the media and the broader Australian community.

Our funding is received from three sources: grants from the Australian and all state and territory governments; contributions from our university partners; and through our Professional Services.

What we do



Provide a major influence and focus on national policy discussions on housing and homelessness and the future of Australian cities, and conduct leading research into major issues for Australian housing and urban policy



Undertake a series of capacity building measures that develop the skills and resources of policy makers, practitioners and researchers in the housing, homelessness, cities and urban communities in Australia



Convene and host the biennial National Housing Conference, the biennial National Homelessness Conference, and a range of evidence informed forums, one-day conferences, workshops and other events



Deliver the National Housing Research Program, to ensure our research activity addresses the policy priorities of state, territory and the Australian government, through a portfolio of priority-based Inquiries and research projects



Publish and disseminate more than 20 new research reports each year as well as hosting a research library of more than 500 major reports, up-to-date analyses of current policy issues and an ongoing stream of news and commentary through the AHURI website



Provide a range of professional services that draw on our expert staff as well as on our network of more than 400 researchers through our university partners

Our vision

Australian policy and decision making in housing and urban issues is informed by credible and independent evidence to facilitate:

- the alignment of public, private and not-for-profit sector investment to optimise outcomes and value
- an integrated approach to planning productive, sustainable, and liveable urban environments
- healthy, cohesive and connected communities and places
- affordable and secure housing choices for all Australians

Our values

The core values that guide this Strategic Plan, define the organisation's culture, and underpin the organisation's performance:

Innovation	we encourage fresh thinking and informed debate through our research and engagement
Quality	we strive for excellence and rigour in our research and services
Relevance	our work is informed by the needs of Australia's housing and urban policy making and practice communities
Integrity	our research is conducted independently; our approach is nonpartisan and transparent
Collaboration	we collaborate and consult within the organisation and with partners, to ensure we provide relevant services cost-effectively and inclusively
Accountability	we are responsible for our outcomes and results, and operate within a governance framework based on transparency and performance

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The scene shows a mix of residential houses with various roof colors (red, brown, grey), green lawns, and trees with autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. A winding river or stream flows through the lower left portion of the image. A large white circle is superimposed over the center of the image, containing text.

Our mission

“ To inform and impact better housing, homelessness, cities and related urban outcomes through the delivery and dissemination of relevant and authoritative research.”

Our strategic goals



CITIES

Inform and influence cities policy, planning and practice across government, private and not-for-profit sectors



UNDERSTANDING

Build public and professional **understanding** and informed dialogue on housing and cities issues



HOUSING

Inform and influence housing policy, planning and practice across government, private and not-for-profit sectors



CAPABILITY

Enhance national policy and research **capability** and relevance for better informed outcomes



ENGAGEMENT

Foster **engagement** across all sectors and stakeholder groups



VALUE

Optimise the **value** we deliver

Strategic goal one

INFORM AND INFLUENCE CITIES

Inform and influence cities policy, planning and practice across government, private and not-for-profit sectors

Key activities underpinning this goal

- Leverage the commitment of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, as well as AHURI's Category 1 status, to expand the body of high quality research in cities and urban policy
- Initiate and consolidate a biennial conference on cities and urban issues
- In conjunction with key stakeholders, develop a compelling research agenda on the major issues facing Australian cities
- Secure a pipeline of funding for research on major issues facing Australian cities from a range of stakeholders
- Prioritise involvement in key forums on cities policy and planning
- Develop partnerships with key cities-related private sector peaks and organisations to support evidence-based planning, development and investment
- Develop partnerships with key international centres on cities research.



Cities



Housing



Engagement



Understanding



Capability



Value

Strategic goal two

INFORM AND INFLUENCE HOUSING

Inform and influence housing policy, planning and practice across government, private and not-for-profit sectors

Key activities underpinning this goal

- Develop partnerships with key private sector peaks and organisations to support evidence-based planning, development and investment in housing and homelessness
- Consolidate and broaden AHURI's role in research into factors driving affordability, quality, supply and demand across Australian housing markets
- Support innovation and evidence-based best practice in policy, planning and delivery of social housing and homelessness
- Build on AHURI's international reputation and links to ensure that Australian policy debate and practice innovation is informed by international best practice
- Consult with Australian, state and territory government representatives to develop an annual research agenda that reflects strategic policy priorities of all jurisdictions.



Cities



Housing



Engagement



Understanding



Capability



Value

Strategic goal three

ENGAGEMENT

Foster engagement across all sectors and stakeholder groups

Key activities underpinning this goal

- Engage senior policy makers throughout our research and dissemination processes
- Develop closer links with private, not-for-profit and peak organisations to ensure AHURI research can inform and influence their decision making
- Innovate in how we present research findings to stakeholders—through a variety of research outputs and engagement opportunities
- Work with our partners and other stakeholder groups to better understand how they use AHURI research, to better define and measure our research impact
- Grow and diversify AHURI's research funding base.



Cities



Housing



Engagement



Understanding



Capability



Value

Strategic goal four

UNDERSTANDING

Build public and professional understanding and informed dialogue on housing and cities issues

Key activities underpinning this goal

- Within the existing AHURI brand, develop a distinctive and separate communications approach for the housing and cities activities of the Institute
- Build AHURI's profile in the Australian media through enhanced engagement with key publications and journalists
- Expand our national conference and events program to bring policy, practice and research communities together
- Enhance the AHURI website to ensure it provides an intuitive and innovative platform to disseminate new and existing research and analyse key policy issues
- Keep pace with technological change to ensure research findings and policy analysis is accessible across existing and emerging platforms.



Cities



Housing



Engagement



Understanding



Capability



Value

Strategic goal five

CAPABILITY

Enhance national policy and research capability and relevance for informed outcomes

Key activities underpinning this goal

- Strengthen national research capability through a range of capacity building activities supporting researchers and policy makers
- Broaden the range of policy issues we address through the National Housing Research Program and through engaging in professional services along with our university partners
- Explore the partnerships required to develop an Australian national urban data centre
- Build national policy development capability by delivering professional development programs for our government partners and related departments and agencies
- Identify research areas that require greater research capability and work with the AHURI network to build capacity
- Identify and engage with cities and urban researchers to ensure capacity and capability to deliver an expanded body of high quality research in cities and urban policy.



Cities



Housing



Engagement



Understanding



Capability



Value

Strategic goal six

VALUE

Optimise the value we deliver

Key activities underpinning this goal

- Maximise the return on investment of our university and other partners through efficient leveraging of collective investments and efficient use of resources
- Broaden our reach and deepen our engagement with non-government sectors (private, not-for-profit and peak organisations) and expand on our engagement and impact in cities and urban policy arenas
- Pursue partnerships across sectors that enhance our value and broaden our impact
- Build our international links and engage with leading researchers, practitioners and policy makers globally.



Cities



Housing



Engagement



Understanding



Capability



Value

Our partners



AHURi

Australian Housing
and Urban Research Institute

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

AHURI integrates evidence building and policy development via a collaborative process with Australian and state and territory government partners

- Australian Government
- Australian Capital Territory Government
- New South Wales Government
- Northern Territory Government
- South Australian Government
- Queensland Government
- Tasmanian Government
- Victorian Government
- Western Australian Government

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Sydney, Australia, featuring a mix of modern high-rise buildings and older structures. A large white circle is superimposed on the image, containing text about research and non-government partners. A red dashed arrow points from the left edge of the circle towards the city. Another red dashed arrow points from the bottom left of the circle towards the bottom left of the page.

RESEARCH PARTNERS

AHURI oversees a national independent research network, where research leading to the advancement of knowledge is conducted by university partners across Australia

- Curtin University
- RMIT University
- Swinburne University of Technology
 - The University of Adelaide
- The University of New South Wales
- The University of South Australia
 - The University of Sydney
 - University of Tasmania

KEY NON-GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

AHURI holds partnerships with key private, not-for-profit, research and peak organisations to support evidence-based planning, development and investment

- Private sector peak organisations
- Not-for-profit peak organisations
- Local government peak organisations
- Professional associations in planning, urban design, transport, and architecture
- Key not-for-profit housing providers and homelessness services
 - Private sector housing and property organisations
 - Financial institutions
 - Australian and international research institutes

About this plan

The Strategic Plan 2018-2022 is a key component of the governance framework for AHURI. It has been prepared under the guidance of AHURI Limited's Board of Directors, with valued input from AHURI staff and executive team, and in consultation with our government and university partners.

AHURI will continue to develop and maintain a governance structure that enhances its capability and enables it to deliver on its strategic intent, within a framework of transparency and accountability.

This Strategic Plan is necessarily founded on assumptions about the future drawn from the current environment and will be reviewed regularly. It will be delivered through the operational mechanisms of an annual Business Plan, Budget, and Risk Management Plan, as well as a range of supporting operational activity plans.

The transformative aspects of the Strategic Plan will be implemented through a range of strategic initiatives, outlined in the annual business plans. We will place a strong focus on expanding our role in cities and urban policy research, while continuing and consolidating our role in housing and homelessness research. Our strategic initiatives will develop AHURI's contribution to evidence-based policy and practice, public dialogue, and national capability in research and policy development.



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