Final Report

Integration and social housing in Australia: theory and practice

authored by

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ACRONYMS

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AHA	Aboriginal Housing Authority
AHO	Aboriginal Housing Office
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ARHP	Aboriginal Rental Housing Program
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAP	Crisis Accommodation Program
CHC	Community Housing Canberra
CHIP	Community Housing Infrastructure Program
CHP	Community Housing Program
COA	Commonwealth of Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
CSHA	Commonwealth State Housing Agreement
DoH	Department of Housing (NSW)
DFC	Department of Families and Communities
DSQ	Disability Services Queensland
FACS	Department of Families and Community Services
FACSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FAHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
JGOS	Joint Guarantee of Services
HASI	Housing and Support Initiative
HPLGM	Housing, Planning and Local Government Ministers
ICHO	Indigenous Community Housing Organisations
IT	Information Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NCHF	National Community Housing Forum
NFP	Not For Profit
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NRAS	National Rental Affordability Scheme
NSW	New South Wales
Qld	Queensland

QDoH	Queensland Department of Housing
SA	South Australia
SAAHT	South Australian Affordable Housing Trust
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SACHA	South Australian Community Housing Authority
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SHA	State Housing Authority
SOMIH	State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
THP	Transitional Housing Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the research

This study examines the themes of policy and service integration in the provision of social housing in Australia. It identifies the factors driving policy interest in this issue, and the views of social housing managers and service providers concerning integration issues, challenges, opportunities and risks. It identifies, describes and analyses some of the main integration initiatives of recent years and identifies principles that may contribute to better integrated social housing policies and services.

Methodology

In order to examine the issue of policy and service integration in the contemporary context, data were collected through four processes:

→ The current and historical policy context of Australian social housing was examined to provide understanding of the structural and institutional context of the integration problem. This was reported in detail in the positioning paper and is summarised in this report.

→ A detailed review of the international and Australian literature on integration of human services was undertaken, including theoretical and empirical studies drawn from a diversity of national contexts and policy and program areas. This was also reported in detail in the positioning paper and is summarised in this report.

→ Workshops of social housing managers and practitioners were held in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia between November 2006 and February 2007. A total of 52 individuals participated in the three workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to identify contemporary integration issues and problems as perceived by managers and practitioners.

→ Following the workshops, key informant interviews were undertaken in each state to obtain more detailed information concerning issues and initiatives identified in the workshops. Key informants included individuals with expertise and experience in social housing policy, management and service delivery who were closely involved with particular integration initiatives. Relevant policy documents (plans, policies, program and administrative reviews, etc.) and research and evaluation reports (including AHURI reports) were also reviewed.

It must be stressed that the data collection for the project was primarily undertaken in 2006 and 2007, supplemented by a smaller number of interviews in the first part of 2008. The report does not include analysis of the significant changes in social housing that have taken place since data collection concluded.

Key terms

The term 'integration' is used in this study to refer broadly to 'all structures and processes that bring together participants in social housing and related fields with the aim of achieving goals that cannot be achieved by participants acting autonomously and separately'. This definition draws together a wide range of activities including those often labelled as 'cooperation', 'collaboration', 'coordination', 'partnerships', 'place management' and 'whole-of-government' initiatives. 'Integration' is used in this report as a generic term encompassing all such linking activities.

The term social housing is used conventionally to refer to 'policies, organisations and services designed to provide long-term, not-for-profit, rental housing in order to achieve diversity of social purposes encompassing both shelter and beyond-shelter outcomes'. This definition identifies social housing with public housing, community

housing and Indigenous housing, but also draws attention to the diversity of purposes of social housing, suggesting the importance of linkages 'external' to social housing as conventionally defined.

Integration challenges

Integration is central to the policy and management challenges facing social housing in Australia. The capacity to 'do integration well' is crucial to the future of Australian social housing. In order to understand the centrality of integration at present it is helpful to view it as a problem of social housing management comprising three layers corresponding to the following three challenges.

The first layer emerged as a consequence of the diversification of social housing providers from the 1980s. To the traditional task of managing the public housing stock was added the management of relations amongst a diversity of providers, including those concerned with community and Indigenous housing.

To this layer was added the task of managing relations with other human service providers who, from the 1990s, began to view social housing as part of their response to a range of social issues that fell within their remit. This second layer of relationships was also a response to the increasingly targeted nature of social housing, which more and more requires the expertise of human service agencies to manage relations with tenants and to sustain tenancies.

The third and more recent layer involves the relations between social housing and a range of policies and programs designed to address the widely recognised problem of housing affordability. As housing products and services become increasingly diverse, social housing managers and service providers are faced with the additional imperative of developing coherent social/affordable housing linkages at the policy and service delivery levels.

Hence, the three main integration challenges facing Australian social housing are:

→ to develop effective relations amongst the public housing, community housing and Indigenous housing sectors;

→ to develop effective relations with human services, including homelessness services;

→ to develop effective relations with other policies and services concerned with housing assistance and provision of affordable housing.

The drivers of integration

The main drivers of integration as a policy and management theme are a series of structural problems facing governments and participants in social housing policy, management and service delivery. These include:

→ The expansion of community housing since the 1980s, which has resulted in a range of issues to be addressed concerning the nature of the relations between public and community housing, including role differentiation, client access and equity.

→ The expansion of Indigenous housing and concerns about the outcomes of Indigenous-specific housing provision which have led to questions about the roles and relationships of Indigenous-specific and mainstream social housing provision.

→ The targeting of social housing at tenants with urgent and multiple support needs, which has led to a requirement for housing and other human services to coordinate and link their policy and service delivery.

→ Policy changes such as deinstitutionalisation, and the development of community-based care and recovery programs in fields including health, mental health, disability, child protection and corrective services have increased pressure from these service systems for social housing to accommodate their clients, and thus the need for r coordination and collaboration.

→ Public and policy concern with the issue of homelessness, which has resulted in initiatives designed to prevent homelessness through whole-of-government strategiesand to develop pathways out of homelessness and into secure housing.

→ Demand pressures within social housing and tighter rationing of deeply subsidised social housing, which have focused attention on alternative products and services, including assistance to lower-income households to access private market housing options. This has led to a need for stronger linkages between social housing and the private rental market.

→ A reduction in housing market affordability and supply, which is driving governments to facilitate partnerships across public, market and community sectors to expand the supply of affordable housing.

→ Concentrations of social housing in socio-economically disadvantaged locations, which have become the focus of whole-of-government initiatives at the regional and local levels as they seek to invest in enhanced services and promote social inclusion.

In short, the importance of effective processes of integration in the current context is a consequence of the increasing diversity of social housing providers, the increasing complexity of the goals of social housing, and the increasing array of social and affordable housing services.

Perceptions of integration as a problem

The views of social housing managers and service providers on integration were identified through a series of state-level workshops conducted in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia in 2006 and 2007. These workshops provided an unique opportunity to explore a large number of views on the issues and problems associated with working in a multi-provider, multi-service system.

The workshops demonstrated that many of those involved in policy development, management and service delivery in social housing are well aware of the complex issues of integration that a multi-provider, multi-service system creates. 'Integration' for social housing managers and service providers is not an abstraction, it is an everyday problem. Furthermore, there is a high degree of consensus concerning the main integration challenges facing social housing at the present time. These are:

→ *The lack of policy coherence within the social housing sector.* In many states policy objectives and strategies have been concerned only with particular sectors rather than with social housing as a whole. The respective roles of public, community and Indigenous housing have often not been well defined, particularly the respective roles of community and public housing.

→ *The poor links between Indigenous housing and mainstream social housing.* Inadequate policy attention has been paid to relations between Indigenous-specific and mainstream housing policies, programs and services.

→ *Client access difficulties.* In a multi-provider system there are problems of client access to services as entry points tend to become fragmented and difficult to negotiate, particularly for clients with language or literacy problems.

→ *The lack of integrated local/regional planning of social housing.* Asset planning and resource allocation are not well integrated across sectors or programs at the local/regional level, and program silos make integrated local planning difficult.

→ *The difficulties in accessing and sustaining support services to assist clients to sustain social housing tenancies.* This has become a major issue for social housing providers in a highly targeted system. Social housing managers and workers need to be skilled in developing new linkages and partnerships with human service agencies, but there are major barriers to effective collaboration.

→ *The problems of developing effective linkages with homelessness services.* Enhancing the role of social housing in providing pathways out of homelessness has been an important focus of social housing in recent years, but working through the relationships with SAAP providers is an ongoing challenge.

→ *The difficulties of policy coordination at state-level.* Sustaining effective policy coordination with other human service departments is challenging, and there are ongoing problems of 'cost shifting' as changes in other human services create increasing demands for social housing.

→ *Poor connections between conventional social housing and the emerging 'affordable housing' sector.* There is a danger that the establishment of an 'affordable housing sector' creates the risk of another discrete system of housing provision (or 'silo') developing alongside the existing social housing sector.

Integration initiatives

Integration is experienced by housing managers and service providers not only as a set of problems but also as a set of initiatives designed to address the integration issue. Numerous integration initiatives have been formulated and implemented in recent years, and these provide pointers to the structures and processes required to effectively integrate the activities of social housing providers and their relations with those involved in related service areas.

A selection of these integration initiatives and programs undertaken in NSW, Queensland and South Australia was examined in this study, with analysis of policy documents, interviews with key informants, and scrutiny of the small number of available evaluation studies. The initiatives reviewed include:

→ Queensland's One Social Housing System initiative;

→ South Australia's One-Stop Housing Shops;

→ The NSW Housing and Human Services Accord;

→ Queensland's Memorandum of Understanding between Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Housing;

→ South Australia's Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse;

→ The NSW Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative;

→ The Queensland Transitional Housing Program;

→ The Private Rental Brokerage Service (Coffs Harbour, NSW);

→ The Queensland Responding to Homelessness Initiative; and

→ South Australia's affordable housing directions.

Principles of integration

The analysis of the integration initiatives, together with the views expressed in the state-level workshops, provides the foundation for the development of principles of good integration practice, though these principles have not been carefully tested and should be viewed simply as hypotheses arising from the research. Nonetheless, some of the lessons to be drawn from the recent history of integration in Australian social housing appear to be:

→ Integration is most likely to be successful when the objectives being pursued are clearly expressed and understood, and where time has been taken to persuade all those involved in the integration process of the value of the initiative.

→ Integration is not an end in itself and may be pursued to achieve diverse objectives, including improved client outcomes, responsive client services, enhanced management control or greater efficiency. Significant costs are generally incurred and trade-offs are required between objectives.

→ Effective integration often requires the allocation of additional financial resources, the provision of sufficient time for implementation, and the development of expertise in collaborative and partnership processes and arrangements.

→ Integration should be viewed as involving both formal structures and agreements and informal relationships and networks. Strategies that combine the formal and informal are more likely to succeed than those focused on one or the other.

→ Integration faces barriers arising from programmatic, organisational, funding and sectoral 'silos'. Strong countervailing forces or incentives are required to break down these obstacles to integration. Effective integration may require structural changes in funding, budget management and organisational arrangements in order to be successful.

→ Careful choice of broad integration strategy is important. Integration can be based on the exercise of authority, the development of perceived common interests and shared goals amongst participants, or a combination of both of these. Choice within this repertoire of strategies must be deliberate and reflect the specific context and goals.

→ Integration involving different organisations, sectors and programs often encounters cultural barriers. It is important to acknowledge and address these barriers.

→ Broad frameworks for integration at the policy level must pay attention to the factors facilitating and impeding integration at the front-line or service delivery level.

→ Leadership, either organisational or personal, plays an important role in effective integration, and integration initiatives must address the leadership issue at all levels of implementation. This may include clarification of lead agency responsibility at both central and local levels.

→ It is important to build an evidence base concerning integration initiatives through systematic program and policy evaluation. All major integration policies and programs should include a research and evaluation component that focuses on the level of effectiveness of the integration processes, as well as on outcomes for all participants, especially clients.

Building on the theoretical and research literature

The principles listed above derive from the analysis of the integration projects examined in this study. However, there is already a substantial theoretical and empirical research literature on the factors associated with successful integration of human services, and it is also important to use this literature as a foundation for good practice. This literature provides a conceptual framework to guide the design and implementation of integration initiatives in Australian social housing, and evaluation of these initiatives. This framework is summarised in Table 2. It is built around four questions:

→ What are (and should be) the objectives of integration?

→ What are (and should be) the modes and instruments of integration?

→ Which factors facilitate and impede implementation of integration?

→ Which issues are involved in evaluating the outcomes of integration?

These analytical questions, together with the provisional principles listed above, provide a framework to guide integration policy and practice in Australian social housing, pending the development of an extensive evidence base derived from systematic evaluation of Australian integration initiatives.

Evaluation of integration

A major challenge facing proponents of better integrated human services is to develop evaluation methods and tools to assess the outcomes of integration initiatives. The international evidence concerning reforms undertaken in the name of integration is inconclusive with respect to client outcomes, and somewhat gloomy with respect to unintended negative consequences such as over-centralisation of administration, confidentiality problems, and role confusion.

For these reasons there is a strong case for arguing that all major integration policies and programs should include a research and evaluation component. The evaluation of policies, programs and activities designed to enhance integration poses significant methodological challenges, but 'realist' evaluation approaches that emphasise the importance of relating interventions to context and studying change over time have considerable potential for yielding useful findings. A recent review of realist evaluation concepts and methods, and illustrations of how they could be applied to the housing field, can be found in a research paper developed for AHURI's national research venture on housing affordability for lower income Australians (Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan, 2007). That paper argues for more proactive and systematic use of evaluation techniques in housing, not only to contribute to the evidence bank on the impacts and outcomes of particular initiatives, but, importantly also as a strategic tool to underpin and strengthen housing policy development more broadly and to extend the understanding of what works when, where and why.

Evaluation studies that offer useful ideas for and/or examples of approaches to evaluating integration initiatives are identified and referenced in the relevant sections of this report and in the Positioning Paper.

A critical perspective

It is emphasised throughout this project that the outcomes of integration, which are always portrayed positively by their proponents, cannot be taken for granted. The outcomes of integration are matters to be empirically determined rather than

assumed. Some integration initiatives fail to achieve their objectives due to implementation difficulties. Others may involve trade-offs amongst objectives, e.g. greater efficiency may come at the price of reduced access or choice for consumers. Integration may or may not be an appropriate response to a problem, will always involve costs as well as benefits, and may have secondary or unintended consequences. Integration initiatives will always involve judgements concerning the values of coherence and cohesion relative to the values of differentiation, diversity and fragmentation. They will also impact on relations of power, influence and authority amongst participants. As social housing becomes increasingly characterised by complex relations amongst programs, organisations and sectors, the need for critical analysis of these relations will grow.

1   INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1   Research goal

This study explores the themes of policy and service integration in the provision of social housing in Australia. In particular it examines the nature of the integration challenges facing social housing, factors that are driving policy interest in these issues, and contemporary approaches to addressing them. The Positioning Paper (Jones, Milligan and Phillips, 2007) presented a review of the policy context and structure of social housing in Australia, with a focus on current integration challenges and their drivers, and developed a conceptual framework for analysing these challenges. This Final Report presents the findings of the study concerning different approaches to pursuing policy and service integration, using examples drawn from several states.   It identifies options and approaches that may contribute to greater policy coherence and service coordination, as well as promoting diversity, responsiveness, choice and innovation. The purpose is to provide policy-makers and practitioners with frameworks and evidence to inform integration strategies that aim to enhance the effectiveness of social housing provision.

1.2   The policy context

The issue of 'integrating' policies, programs, services and delivery systems is endemic to complex societies where governance involves relations amongst numerous organisations located at different levels of government and in different societal sectors. However, the form that the integration 'problem' takes is heavily influenced by factors specific to particular national contexts. At the broadest level these factors include geography and the pattern of human settlement, and state and societal structures such as the system of government (e.g. federal or unitary) and the roles of the community and market sectors. The nature of welfare regimes is a key factor (Geddes, 2005; Wiseman, 2005). For example, liberal welfare regimes such as those in the UK, Australia and the USA typically involve a mix of state, community and market-based organisations in human services delivery. The impact of neo-liberal ideas during the past two decades in these countries has tended to expand the roles of the community and market sectors in human services, bringing additional complexities to the integration issue.

The Australian context has a number of distinctive characteristics that shape attempts to integrate human services. Australian human services have been described as 'a complex, contested and crowded policy and service delivery arena, which has presented special problems for achieving coordination and realising effective service delivery' (Brown and Keast, 2005, p. 507). These 'special problems' include:

→ the complexity of national and state policy coordination arrangements, including intergovernmental relations (Farland, 2004; Keating and Wanna, 2000; Matheson, 2000; Monro, 2003);

→ the contested relations between the state and community sector organisations (Casey and Dalton, 2006; Darcy, 1999; Dollary and Wallis, 2001; Edwards, 2001; Meagher and Healy 2003);

→ the expansion during the past decade of the role of market sector organisations in human services delivery (Berry, M., Whitehead, C., Williams, P. and Yates, J., 2006; Earles and Moon, 2000; Quiggin, 1999);

→ the limited capacity of local integrative institutions, including local government (Dollery, Wallis and Allan, 2006; Fincher, 1999; Lawson and Gleeson, 2005; McDonald and Zetlin, 2004; Walsh 2001);

→ the existence of a distinct Indigenous service sector with complex links to mainstream human services (Neutze, 2000);

→ ongoing debate concerning the principles that should underpin the development and delivery of human services (Brown and Keast, 2005; Davis, 1997; Reddel, 2002).

These general characteristics of Australian human services provide the broad context for this study. The specific context is the policy interest expressed by state housing authorities (SHAs) in achieving improved 'integration' among the various providers of social housing in Australia. The most explicit articulation of this aspiration in Australia is the Queensland Government's aim to achieve 'One Social Housing System' by aligning policy and service delivery arrangements for all public, community and Indigenous housing programs (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2006). However, policy interest in pursuing enhanced integration is evident across all states and territories with respect to a wide range of social housing issues. These include:

→ coordinating public and community housing access (Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007);

→ more closely linking Indigenous housing with other social housing programs (Australia, Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2006; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007);

→ strengthening links between social housing and support agencies (Bleasdale, 2007);

→ developing closer links amongst state, community and private sector providers of affordable housing (Milligan, Phibbs, Fagan and Gurran, 2004).

The expressed need to 'integrate' the activities of organisations, sectors and programs has become widespread amongst those involved in the provision of affordable housing. This policy interest in improving integration stems from the increasing complexity of the goals of social housing and the increasing diversity of providers of social housing and related services. Historically, most social housing in Australia has been owned and managed by the public housing authorities of each state and territory government. However, during the past twenty years, social housing has become increasingly diverse with the entry of new types of providers, including community housing organisations, local governments, state owned and managed Indigenous housing organisations (SOMIH), Indigenous community housing organisations, and affordable housing providers in the community and private sectors. This diversification is taking place in a context of declining resources for social housing, increased targeting of public housing, and a broadening of objectives to include 'beyond shelter', as well as shelter outcomes.

Diversification, which is likely to continue to increase, has led to growing interest in the processes involved in developing coherent, integrated approaches to managing social housing and achieving a wider range of goals. Addressing these issues requires consideration of the wider inter-organisational context of social housing and the need to develop and sustain relations with cognate policy and service arrangements. For all of these reasons, the need to understand the meanings of 'integration' and the factors likely to enhance or impede integrationist success has become an important issue for social housing policy-makers, managers and service providers.

The national context

The form and emphasis that the integration issue takes varies over time and amongst jurisdictions. Nationally, the election in 2007 of a Labor government committed to a more proactive role across a range of housing policy areas (Australian Labor Party, 2007) has elevated the importance of effective integration strategies and processes. In particular, the proposal to develop a national affordable housing agreement with an overarching aim of improving housing affordability has brought the issue of integration to the forefront. Details of this agreement are still under development, but statements made so far acknowledge the need for a broader and more cohesive national policy framework; stronger and more explicit coordinating mechanisms between existing and new housing policies and programs; and a collaborative approach across levels and agencies of government, and non-government organisations involved in housing (Rudd, Swan and Plibersek, 2007).

Two particular areas in which a more integrated approach to housing provision have been emphasised by the new government are Indigenous housing and homelessness. The policy context, governance structures and service delivery arrangements for Indigenous housing in Australia are especially complex, reflecting a history of shared responsibility of state and Commonwealth governments for Indigenous affairs, including Indigenous housing (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007). The national government has identified Indigenous housing as a significant policy priority, announcing increased funding for Indigenous housing and the establishment of a Joint Policy Commission on Indigenous Housing. Key issues include the question of how programs for Indigenous peoples in different geographic contexts (urban, regional and remote) will be coordinated and delivered, and how responsibilities currently distributed between the Commonwealth and the states will be allocated in future.

Homelessness is another area in which the national government is now seeking to exert greater influence and leadership. During the past decade, most states have individually developed a range of strategies to strengthen and coordinate cross-agency responses to homelessness. The new national government has taken a strong policy interest in this area, commissioning a national inquiry. Current indications are that the main national homelessness response (SAAP) may be rolled into the proposed new national affordable housing agreement, heightening the need for effective policy and service delivery linkage between housing and homelessness policy and services.

The state contexts

In each of the three states where research was undertaken for this study, integration issues are prominent, but the form and emphasis of policy discussion varies significantly.

Since 2006, South Australia has pursued a wide-ranging and ambitious policy and service delivery reform agenda embodying integrative objectives and implications. Until May 2006, social housing in South Australia was administered through three statutory bodies. Public housing was the responsibility of the South Australian Housing Trust (the Trust); community housing was administered by the South Australian Community Housing Authority (SACHA) and Indigenous housing was managed by the Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA). Each of these entities was controlled by a board answering to the Minister for Housing. While the three social housing entities were the legislative responsibility of the Minister for Housing, administrative responsibility for program delivery lay with a comprehensive human

services agency, the South Australian Department of Families and Communities (DFC).

In May 2006 the South Australian Minister for Families and Communities announced a number of policy reforms and changes to governance arrangements for social housing (Weatherill, 2006). These included the establishment of a new social housing entity, Housing SA, to consolidate the activities of the Housing Trust, SACHA and the AHA; a change in role for the Housing Trust as provider of high-needs housing; and the formation of the South Australian Affordable Housing Trust (SAAHT) with specific responsibility for fostering innovation in affordable housing. These themes of targeting, integration and new products had been evident in strategic documents for a number of years (South Australia, 2005). The changes were explicitly linked to wider public administration reforms and were referred to by the Minister for Families and Communities as 'a generational change in the way services are administered, governed and delivered' (Weatherill 2006). While the focus of these reforms was on internal social housing integration, they were also linked to initiatives to better coordinate social housing and support linkages across the Department of Families and Communities, and to a package of initiatives to expand the supply of affordable housing (South Australia, 2007). Through these last-mentioned initiatives, South Australia has placed considerable emphasis on product diversification linked to facilitating community and market-sector involvement in affordable housing provision.

In New South Wales, public and community housing are administered by the NSW Department of Housing and Indigenous housing by the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO), which is a statutory authority established in 1998 and overseen by an Aboriginal Housing Board. Some Aboriginal housing is managed by the Department of Housing on behalf of the AHO and the remainder is managed by Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) that are funded and regulated by the AHO.

The emphases of recent social housing policy reforms in New South Wales include tighter rationing of public housing, enhancing of linkages between social housing and other human services, facilitation of the growth of the community housing sector accompanied by stronger regulation, and expansion of the range of housing assistance products. New policy directions for social housing in New South Wales under the banner of 'Reshaping Public Housing' were announced in 2006 (NSW Department of Housing, 2006). These reforms include new access, allocation and tenure arrangements for public housing and state-owned and managed Indigenous housing, which include tighter eligibility, ranking of applicants according to categories of relative need, and time-limited and reviewable tenancies. The applicability of these policies to community or community-based Indigenous housing sectors remains uncertain. The policy directions for community housing include introduction of a statutory regulation system for community housing providers, designation of a number of larger community housing providers as growth organisations, and continuing high levels of investment in additional community housing (NSW, Department of Housing, 2007). While these policies do not appear to be explicitly linked with public housing policy reforms, there is an emerging policy interest in the public/community housing interface. This is evidenced by recent consultation on a common access strategy to manage coordinated client assessment and allocations for public and community housing (NSW, Department of Housing, 2008).

In parallel with these developments, the NSW Department of Housing has been pursuing stronger links with other human services under the Housing and Human Services Accord, which provides an overarching framework for a range of integration initiatives, including the Housing and Support Initiative (HASI) and a whole-of-

government homelessness strategy. (NSW, Department of Housing, 2003; NSW, Department of Housing, 2005).

In Queensland, public, community and Indigenous housing are administered by the Queensland Department of Housing. In 2005 the Department released a policy information paper entitled 'Paving the Way: Housing People in Need in the Smart State' (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2005). The paper announced reforms aimed at tighter rationing of social housing as well as coordinating access arrangements and consistency in rationing between the public, Indigenous and community housing sectors. The policy information paper proposed that public, community and Indigenous housing sectors comprise 'one social housing system'. The reforms were predominantly directed to integration between the public, community and Indigenous sectors and were therefore internal to social housing. Expansion of private housing assistance products and linkages with support agencies were identified as potential components of the proposed reforms but these have not been a significant feature of implementation to date (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2005). The primary integration initiatives proposed within the reform package are the establishment of a common application process, a common social housing waiting list, and a consistent approach to allocating social housing.

The reforms are primarily aimed at the service delivery system and include plans for re-structure and consolidation within the community housing sector (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2006). They do not appear to involve significant changes to administrative or program structures, although there has been some re-alignment of responsibilities within the Department such as the amalgamation of the public and community housing service areas. Previous changes in 2004 saw responsibility for property and service delivery of state-managed Indigenous housing transferred from the Indigenous housing service area to mainstream property portfolio and client services areas.

1.3   Research Questions and Methodology

The overall research strategy is to identify and critically examine existing and potential structures and processes pertinent to integration in social housing by means of review of the relevant management and professional literature, analysis of policy documents, interviews and workshops with key informants drawn from key sectors and locations within social housing. The research has an Australia-wide focus and relevance, but due to limited resources is focused on three states: New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (Qld) and South Australia (SA). These three states were chosen because of their different types of strategic and administrative arrangements for the management of social housing programs and the different emphases in their approach to integration, as discussed above. They collectively comprise close to two-thirds of all social housing provision in Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005, p. 442). Analysis of the key challenges and options for integration in social housing is primarily based on the experiences of these three states, supplemented by analysis of selected documents drawn from other states.

1.3.1 The research questions

The research goal can be re-stated in terms of a series of research questions that provide a framework for the study. These are:

→ What are the factors driving policy interest in integration in the Australian social housing context?

→ What do the participants in social housing policy development, management and service delivery view as the key integration and linkage issues, challenges and opportunities for social housing?

→ What range and types of integration initiatives have been undertaken in Australian social housing?

→ Based on an analysis of these initiatives and the views of social housing participants, which principles and practices should underpin integration endeavours in social housing?

→ How can those involved in Australian social housing develop a more systematic, critical and evidence-based approach to integration?

1.3.2 Research methods

In order to address these questions a five-stage research process was designed and implemented. The five stages were:

→ Analysis of the policy context

→ Review of the international and Australian literature

→ State-level workshops

→ Key informant interviews and analysis of policy documents

→ Analysis of policy and practice implications.

The analysis of policy context was reported in Chapter 2 of the Positioning Paper. Based on an analysis of secondary sources, Chapter 2 of the Positioning Paper showed how the integration challenges facing Australian social housing are embedded in its history and structure. The contemporary concern with integration reflects a number of historical processes, including the evolution of social housing goals, the diversification of providers during the past two decades, the increasing need to link social housing provision with wider social polices concerned with housing, the greater than ever prominence of relations with other human services, the growing complexities of managing multiple goals and multiple providers, and the ongoing constraint of limited financial resources for social housing provision. Each of these issues has a long history that continues to shape prospects and possibilities for improved integration.

The review of the international and Australian literature on integration was reported in Chapter 3 of the Positioning Paper. The focus of this review was the theoretical literature on human services integration. The literature was reported in the form of an analytical framework addressing four questions:

→ What are the objectives of integration?

→ What are the modes and instruments of integration?

→ Which factors facilitate and impede implementation of integration?

→ Which issues are involved in evaluating the outcomes of integration?

These questions provide a framework for analysing the integration issues that are of contemporary interest in Australian social housing.

The state-level workshops of social housing managers and practitioners were held in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. A total of 52 individuals participated in the three workshops held between November 2006 and February 2007. Participants in the workshops were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

→ Experience in the social housing system over a long period of time

→ Breadth of experience across the public, community and Indigenous housing sectors

→ Experience in linking housing and other human services sectors

→ Mix of strategic (policy, program management) and operational (service delivery) experience

→ Representation from both non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas.

Prior to each workshop, participants were provided with a discussion paper outlining the background to the issue of integration, the purposes of the research project, and workshop processes. The workshops were designed to provide participants with the opportunity to identify key integration issues facing social housing in each state, and to discuss a wide range of issues relating to the objectives, modes, instruments, implementation and outcomes of integration. They were also designed to encourage dialogue across sectors and interest groups on the critical issues involved in managing a diverse social housing system. Participants were asked about integration issues and concerns, specific examples of integration initiatives and their implementation, and strategies to address priority issues and problems. The workshops were designed to capture common issues and themes across the three states to inform a national perspective.

Following the workshops, a series of key informant interviews was conducted in each state to obtain more detailed information concerning issues and initiatives identified in the workshops. Key informants included individuals with expertise and experience in social housing policy, management and service delivery who were closely involved with particular integration initiatives. Relevant policy documents (plans, policies, program and administrative reviews, etc.) and research and evaluation reports (including AHURI reports) were also reviewed.

Based on these sources of information, the major findings of the study were drawn together, and policy and practice implications identified.

1.4 Overview of the final report

The structure of the Final Report reflects the analytical framework introduced in the Positioning Paper.

Chapter 2 draws on the Positioning Paper to define social housing and integration, to present an analytic framework for the study, and to identify the three main integration challenges facing policy-makers and service providers.

Chapter 3 examines the relations between public, community and Indigenous housing to identify key 'internal' integration challenges. The perspectives of stakeholders on these integration challenges are reported and key integration issues identified. An analysis of responses to one key internal integration issue, integrated access to multiple social housing providers is then presented in greater detail.

Chapter 4 focuses on the linkages between social housing and other human services and draws on stakeholder perceptions to explore the nature of integration challenges across human services sectors. A number of instruments for improving policy coordination and service responses to social housing tenants and applicants with complex needs is considered.

Chapter 5 examines linkages between social housing and broader housing policies and programs. The focus is on the relations between social housing and policies and strategies that aim to encourage a wider range of affordable housing options in partnership with not-for-profit and for-profit providers and/or investors/lenders. Using recent reforms in one state as an example, potential integration issues are identified and discussed.

Chapter 6 draws together the main findings of the study and identifies implications for social housing management and research.

2 THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, an expressed need to find better ways to 'integrate' the activities of organisations, sectors and programs associated with social housing has become widespread amongst those involved in the provision of social housing. The purpose of this report is to provide a research foundation to underpin policies and practices designed to address issues of integration in social housing. This task is begun in this chapter through a critical analysis of key terms and an exploration of the meanings of 'integrating social housing'. An analytical framework designed to elucidate the processes and factors involved in policy and service integration is then provided. This framework is then used in later chapters to describe and critique integration initiatives in Australian social housing, and to identify the nature of the integration challenges facing policy-makers and service providers. The discussion draws heavily on Chapters 1 and 3 of the Positioning Paper.

2.2 Defining social housing

The term 'social housing' has come into common usage in Australia and internationally during the past two decades. The increasingly widespread use of this term signifies a growing perception that it is helpful to think holistically about housing provided through the 'social sector'. However, the term itself is often used imprecisely, and there is no one universally accepted meaning (Doling, 1997, p. 170; Reeves, 2005, p. 2). In the Australian context the term is commonly used to refer to three types of housing: public housing, community housing and Indigenous housing. For example, this approach is followed by the Productivity Commission, which provides formal definitions of each of these sectors (Australia, Productivity Commission, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), 2006, p. 16.10). These constituent parts of social housing are portrayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Australian social housing
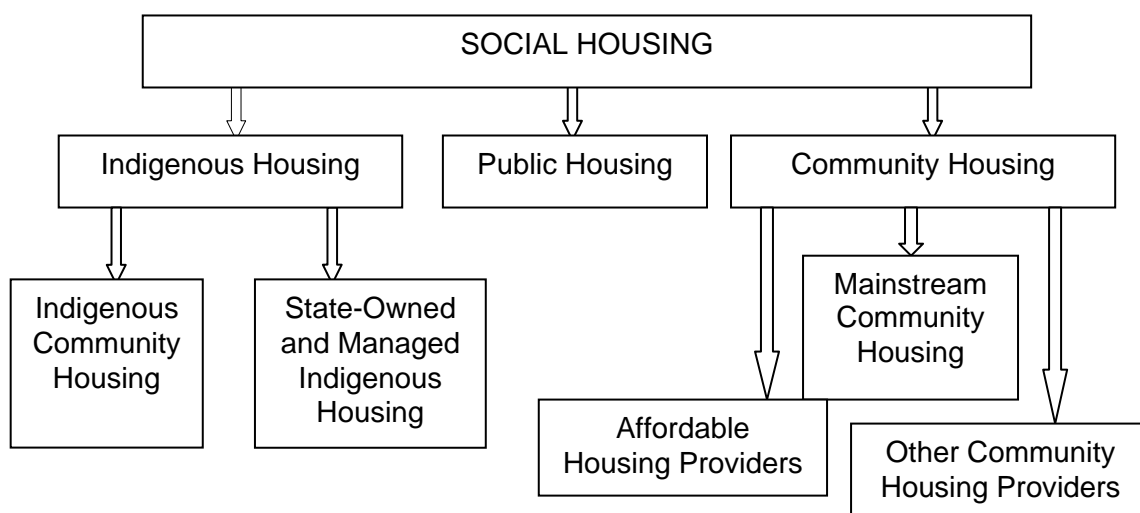
When defining concepts in the social sciences, it is typically easier to identify the broad territory encompassed by a word or phrase than it is to draw precise boundaries. This is certainly the case with the term 'social housing'. In this report we define social housing as:

Those policies, organisations and services designed to provide long-term, not-for-profit, rental housing in order to achieve diversity of social purposes encompassing both shelter and beyond shelter outcomes.

The rationale for this definition is two-fold. Firstly, it reflects common usage of the term in Australia (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004; Milligan, Phibbs, Fagan and Gurran, 2004; Queensland Department of Housing, 2006). Secondly, the definition reflects wider, international usage that associates the term 'social housing' with rental housing provided according to non-market principles. From this perspective, social housing is housing that is 'decommodified', i.e. rents are not set primarily according to considerations of profit, dwellings are allocated according to principles of need, and the level and quality of social housing is influenced by public and societal rather than market objectives (Dolling, 1997, pp. 170–173; Reeves, 2005, p. 2).

This definition identifies the territory occupied by social housing and also serves to shape understanding of the nature of the 'integration' issue in this context. Drawing on this definition, it becomes apparent that one set of integration issues concerns the relations amongst social housing sectors. It has been argued, for example, that the three social housing sectors should operate as 'one social housing system' in order to enhance client access to services (Queensland Department of Housing, 2006). On the other hand, the desirability of close links amongst public, community and Indigenous housing can be questioned. Some would argue the importance of the autonomy and distinctive contribution of particular sectors (e.g. community housing) and/or their links to other groups of services (e.g. Indigenous services, disability services).

A second set of integration issues is focused on the relations between social housing providers and other human service organisations. Many social housing tenants are also the clients of other public agencies and there has been increasing recognition that both working together and designing integrated services are required. This has resulted in initiatives such as the Housing and Human Services Accord in NSW, which establishes protocols for social housing providers to work collaboratively with other human service departments (New South Wales, Department of Housing, 2005), and a wide range of collaborative activities involving housing and support agencies (Bleasdale, 2007). The links between social housing and the kinds of crisis, short-term and supported accommodation provided through programs such as the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) have also been a major focus of policy interest (Australia, 2008).

A third set of 'integration' issues concerns the relations between social housing as defined above and other types of housing services and forms of housing assistance. During the past decade the range of policy instruments employed to address issues of housing access and affordability has grown, and in particular there has been an increasing blurring of social and market sector provision as governments seek to expand affordable housing through partnerships with market and quasi-market sector providers (Milligan, Phibbs, Fagan and Gurran, 2004). The linkages between social housing and other public policies concerned with access to affordable housing, and linkages amongst public, community and market-sector housing providers, constitute further integration challenges.

2.3   Defining integration

The term 'integration' has been used loosely up to this point to refer to linkages amongst policies, sectors, organisations and programs. While the term is widely used, it has been given many different meanings in the international literature on public sector management and human services (Austin, 1997), and a specific definition within this report is required. The policy and academic discourse on integration has

been described as 'a confused array of descriptive, normative, and explanatory theory' (Halley, 1997, p. 145), and there is wide agreement that the term is often used in a conceptually imprecise manner (Reitan, 1998; McDonald and Zetlin, 2004). The term is used to refer to a wide diversity of structures and processes, and with respect to both policies and service delivery. A recent Australian report on coordination and integration of human services commented that:

Given the level of interest in improving coordination of human services, it is surprising to discover how much vagueness, indeed fundamental disagreement, there is in defining even the most frequently used concepts such as 'collaboration', 'coordination' and 'integration' … as they are currently used in policy discussions, service provision and everyday language (Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson, 2000, p. 4).

The reasons for this conceptual confusion are discussed in the Positioning Paper (Jones, Phillips and Milligan, 2007, pp. 8–9), and include the diversity of contexts in which the term integration is used, the symbolic appeal of the term, and its normative assumptions. In the context of this report, we define 'integration' as:

Structures and processes that bring together participants in social housing and related fields with the aim of achieving goals that cannot be achieved by participants acting autonomously and separately. These goals include greater coherence and cohesion, efficiency, effectiveness and consumer accessibility. These structures and processes may occur at the policy or service delivery levels, or at both of these levels.

This is a broad definition which includes many activities that are also labelled as 'cooperation', 'collaboration', 'coordination', 'partnerships', 'place management' and 'whole-of-government' initiatives. 'Integration' is used in this report as a generic term encompassing all such linking activities. All such activities are pursued in the name of the positive goals listed in the definition, but whether such outcomes are achieved is a matter to be empirically analysed rather than assumed. Many integration initiatives fail to achieve their objectives due to implementation difficulties. Furthermore, the goals of integration may involve trade-offs amongst objectives, e.g. greater efficiency may come at a price of reduced access or choice for consumers. It is also important to emphasise that integration may or may not be an appropriate response to a problem, will always involve costs as well as benefits, and often will involve secondary or unintended consequences. Integration initiatives will always involve judgements concerning the values of coherence and cohesion relative to the values of differentiation, diversity and fragmentation. They will also involve consideration of effects on the relations of power, influence and authority among the participants in integrative activities.

2.4   The analytical framework

The voluminous international literature on human services integration is a mix of theoretical and empirical studies undertaken in diverse national contexts and in relation to many different policy and program areas. The literature is reviewed in detail in Chapter 3 of the Positioning Paper. This review suggests that four inter-related questions about integration are central to the literature, and that these questions provide a theoretical framework for analysing any individual integration initiative or any set of such initiatives. The four questions are:

→   What are (and should be) the objectives of integration?

→   What are (and should be) the modes and instruments of integration?

→   Which factors facilitate and impede implementation of integration?

→   Which issues are involved in evaluating the outcomes of integration?

2.4.1 The objectives of integration

The starting point for the development of a critical analytical framework on integration is clarification of objectives. Five broad sets of objectives with relevance to social housing are identified in the literature as underpinning integration initiatives:

→ Improved client outcomes

→ Enhanced client access

→ Greater equity and consistency

→ Increased efficiency

→ Enhanced accountability and control.

This listing serves a number of important purposes. First, it is important from a management perspective that the objectives of any particular integration initiative are fully understood as a foundation for effective program design and evaluation. For example, an integration initiative designed to achieve greater accountability will have different features from one designed to improve client outcomes. Secondly, the listing draws attention to the complexities involved in integration initiatives. Typically, programs or initiatives designed to achieve greater integration will have a number of objectives that may or may not be consistent or mutually supportive. Thirdly, understanding the diverse objectives of integration helps to identify potential implementation difficulties. Typically, the parties involved in integration processes will place greater weight on one or another set of integration objectives, and integration strategies need to take account of this diversity. For example, community sector housing providers may be inclined to support an initiative such as common housing registers on the grounds of coordination of client access, but may be uncooperative if they view this as a process involving loss of autonomy and greater state control. This suggests that the objectives of integration need to be understood both as management objectives that need to be clearly articulated, and as factors that involve the values and interests of participants in human services integration processes.

2.4.2 The modes and instruments of integration

Just as integration initiatives may be employed to address a variety of objectives, so they may be pursued in a variety of ways. It is useful to distinguish between the modes and instruments of integration. 'Modes' are broad approaches to integration. 'Instruments' are specific integrative mechanisms. The choice of modes and instruments can be influenced by several factors including the objective being pursued; the institutional context; the relations of power, authority and influence among participants; value considerations; and the availability of resources.

With respect to modes, a number of classifications of broad approaches to integration are identified in the academic literature (Brown and Keast, 2005; O'Looney, 1993; Martinson, 1999). These include the distinction, which is used in this study, between system-wide strategies of a strategic or policy nature and service delivery-level strategies that focus on individual clients (Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998). Two other classifications of broad approaches to integration appear to be particularly relevant to the Australian social housing context. These are the origins of the impetus for integration – 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' (Martinson, 1999), and the degree of integration involved – 'loosely coupled' or 'tightly coupled' (O' Looney, 1993).

The distinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' integration (Martinson, 1999) appears to have particular relevance to Australian social housing. Top-down integration refers to initiatives emanating from the authoritative and management core of human service systems, usually the political or administrative leadership of state

organisations. These integration initiatives are mandated or directed by the political or administrative leadership and flow down to the service delivery level in the form of orders, instructions and guidelines. Those operating at the service delivery level are required or encouraged to integrate their activities with other organisations or groups. Top-down integration may be pursued in a highly directive manner, or it may be implemented through processes of consultation and negotiation. It may involve all five of the objectives discussed in section 2.4.1, but it is often particularly associated with the objectives of efficiency, accountability and control.

Bottom-up integration refers to integration initiatives emanating voluntarily from front-line service delivery organisations, irrespective of central mandate and support. Most local or regional service delivery systems have some informal integrative activities such as referral pathways and inter-agency meetings, although extensive, formal linkages are less common. It has been suggested that bottom-up integration is often driven by resource scarcity and uncertainties in the political environment, as much as by the objective of improved outcomes and access for clients (Healy, 1998). There are numerous ways in which local agencies can link their services, both formal and informal. However, the preservation of organisational autonomy has been identified as a powerful factor impeding interagency collaboration and cooperation in many contexts (Healy, 1998).

The modes of integration can also be 'loosely' or 'tightly' coupled (O'Looney, 1993). Tightly coupled integration is associated with standardisation and formalisation imposed through the exercise of authority. Loosely coupled integration is associated with shared goals, cooperation and collaboration, and flexible, fluid and voluntary relationships (Halley, 1997; Parsons, 2004). It has been argued that tight integration has potential for adverse effects on vulnerable clients. It may reduce access points, lead to exclusion of clients who have had previous negative interactions with services, compromise client privacy, and lead to reluctance by some clients to declare risky or illegal behaviours. Where tight integration is accompanied by new information technologies, barriers may be created for those with limited literacy or technology skills (Corbett and Noyes, 2004; Reitan, 1998; Yessian, 1995). By contrast, loose coupling may result in fragmentation and inefficiency (Longoria, 2005).

These concepts are closely related to recent literature on governance approaches in public policy contexts involving multiple stakeholders. Stoker (2006) has proposed three broad 'governance' paradigms. The first, referred to as the 'traditional public administration' approach, involves hierarchical, 'command and control' processes that rely on political or bureaucratic authority and power. The second 'market orientated' approach is based on contract negotiations and obligations. The third approach, characterised as 'network governance', focuses on both formal and informal linkages between government and other actors structured around shared interests (Bogason and Musso 2006; Rhodes 2007).

The concept of 'network governance' has similarities with the distinction between loose and tight integration. The concept of network governance arises from the increasing interdependence of the public, private and voluntary sectors, and the consequent need to explore new approaches to governance that stem from this interdependence (Stoker, 1998). Increasingly, human service delivery requires the participation and collaboration of diverse state, community and private sector organisations. In such circumstances, conventional hierarchical, command and control approaches are inadequate, and governments and state agencies are required to develop new forms of partnership to achieve their objectives. Traditional single-organisation management approaches have to be overlaid with 'trans-organisational' management (Agranoff, 1991). New partnerships may take many forms (Rhodes,

1996). These may include 'tightly coupled' principal-agent relations in which governments contract out services to community and market sector providers with extensive processes of monitoring, accountability and control. But they may also involve the further development of 'loosely coupled' approaches to inter-organisational negotiation with greater emphasis on fostering collaboration and mediating the diverse interests of the partners. Over time there may develop a 'systematic coordination form of partnership in which organisations develop a shared vision and joint-working capacity that leads to the establishment of self-governing networks' (Rhodes, 1996, p. 22).

The instruments of integration can be understood as specific mechanisms or tools adopted to achieve integration objectives. The academic and management literature identifies a wide range of instruments that are employed in coordination and integration of human services (Healy 1999; Morgan, 1995; Yessian, 1995). Integration instruments at the service delivery level are either client or provider-centred. Examples of client-centred instruments are case management, case conferencing, consultation, cross-agency client information and referral protocols, and joint assessment processes. Provider-centred instruments may include co-location, shared information systems, joint staff training, inter-agency meetings, common application processes, staff secondments, joint delivery processes, staff recruitment and volunteer programs (Healy, 1999). At the strategic level, integration instruments may be program-centred and include shared guidelines, common targeting strategies, or joint, coordinated or pooled funding arrangements. Organisationally-focused instruments include protocols and memoranda of understanding, ministerial or executive interagency coordination structures, advisory committees, reorganisation of agency responsibilities or structures, and agency amalgamations. Policy-centred instruments aim to achieve coherence between policy areas to achieve shared objectives, and avoid duplication and inefficiency. Policy and strategy documents of various kinds, together with policy units, are the most common instruments (Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998; Martinson, 1999; Morgan, 1995).

2.4.3 Implementation factors

A clear message from the human services and public sector management literature is that integration projects are inherently difficult to implement and to sustain, and that replication of successful integration projects is also difficult (Corbett and Noyes, 2004). Integration, be it at the policy or service delivery level, is typically perceived by organisations and agencies to involve some degree of loss of autonomy, and some countervailing incentives or advantages are usually required to ensure active engagement in cooperative and collaborative activities (Healy, 1999). Furthermore, integration often requires public sector managers to direct processes involving trans-organisational change comprising a range of public, community and private sector organisations, where authority may be indirect or contested (Agranoff, 1991; Yessian, 1995). Some public sector managers are inexperienced in such processes. Public sector accountability and financing processes emphasise vertical rather than horizontal structures, and the 'silos' of government programs and administration are often identified as major factors inhibiting cross-organisational, cross-sector and cross-program integration.

Sitting beneath these wider structural factors are a range of equally critical micro-factors that have been identified in the public sector management literature as both enabling and impeding successful integration in the human services. Much of this literature also proposes guidelines and prescriptions for successful integration management (Agranoff, 1991; Austin, 1997; Corbett and Noyes, 2004; Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998; Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson, 2005; Luetz

1999; Martinson, 1999; O'Looney, 1997; Waldfogel, 1997; Yessian 1995). A number of common themes emerge from this literature, although some are particularly relevant to specific integration contexts, objectives and modes. At a broad level, those factors that appear most relevant to the Australian social housing context are:

→ Leadership, including formal authority and informal leadership qualities (Agranoff, 1991; Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson, 2005; Martinson, 1999; O'Looney, 1997; Waldfogel, 1997)

→ Trust and commitment amongst participating organisations, often requiring long-term relationships and effective communication and information sharing (Agranoff, 1991; Corbett and Noyes 2004; Martinson, 1999; O'Looney, 1997; Ragan, 2003; Yessian, 1995)

→ Effective planning, monitoring and evaluation processes (Agranoff 1991; Calista, 1996; Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998; Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson, 2005; Martinson, 1999)

→ Clear allocation of leadership and management responsibilities (Agranoff, 1991; Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998; Martinson, 1999; Waldfogel, 1997)

→ Interventions that are multi-faceted, multi-level and mutually reinforcing (Agranoff, 1991; Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998; Martinson, 1999)

→ Shared infrastructure such as common funding, eligibility, information and training, as well as compatible management and client information systems (Martinson, 1999)

→ Adequate time and resources for change management (Martinson 1999; Dennis, Cocozza and Steademan, 1998).

2.4.4 Evaluation factors

A major challenge facing proponents of better integrated human services is to develop evaluation methods and tools that can demonstrate the positive outcomes of integration initiatives. The evaluation literature provides conflicting evidence about whether client outcomes have been improved as a result of integration efforts (Corbett and Noyes, 2004; Longoria, 2005; Martinson, 1999). Many evaluation studies have focused on the question of whether enhanced integration has been achieved, and the factors enhancing or impeding success. Consistent themes in this literature include: the tendency for the objectives of integration to be poorly specified; the need for clear, central mandates and support for service delivery-level integration combined with flexibility of local implementation approaches; and the need for long-term commitment to integration initiatives. Issues that have been identified as often arising in integration processes include conflicting visions and motivations for reform; fragmented reform efforts; proliferation of IT systems; over-centralised administration; confidentiality problems; and changing staff roles and role confusion (Corbett and Noyes, 2004; Hassett and Austin, 1997).

The evaluation of policies, programs and activities designed to enhance integration poses significant methodological challenges. Integration initiatives are often deeply embedded in service delivery contexts, making causation difficult to establish. Many of the factors that have been identified as significant determinants of outcomes are also context specific, making replication of findings difficult. 'Realist' evaluation approaches that emphasise the importance of context and longitudinal studies may be required to establish a sound evidence base.

2.5   Conclusions

The increasing complexity of the goals, organisational arrangements and relationships of Australian social housing has brought 'integration' to the forefront of the policy and practice agenda. The discussion of the nature of Australian social housing in section 2.2 suggests that there are, theoretically, three major sets of integration challenges:

→ The challenges 'internal' to the social housing system, i.e. relations amongst the three core sectors of public housing, community housing, and Indigenous housing;

→ The challenges of effectively linking the social housing system with human services systems, including homelessness services;

→ The challenges of effectively linking the social housing system with the wider set of policies, programs and services concerned with housing assistance and housing affordability.

Each of these potential challenges might affect the policy and management level, and the service delivery level, as portrayed in Table 1. Each of these sets of challenges are considered in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 1: Integration challenges for Australian social housing

	Policy and management level	*Service delivery level*
Relations among the public housing, community housing and Indigenous housing sectors	To develop structures and processes for ongoing policy development and management of social housing, including involvement of the three sectors (public housing, community housing, Indigenous housing).	To develop structures and processes to enable the three sectors to work together at the service-delivery level to provide integrated services to clients in localities and regions.
Linking with human services, including homelessness services	To develop structures and processes that strategically link social housing policies with policies for other human services, including homelessness services.	To develop structures and processes that link social housing at the regional and local level to the provision of human services, including homelessness services.
Linking with housing assistance and affordable housing	To develop structures and processes that strategically link social housing policies with other policies concerned with housing assistance and housing affordability.	To develop structures and processes linking social housing at the regional and local level to the provision of housing assistance and affordable housing.

The international literature on human services integration provides a mix of theoretical and empirical studies that can be used to critically assess the integration initiatives that have taken place in Australian social housing and to inform future integration strategies that aim to enhance the effectiveness of social housing provision. In this chapter, this literature has been used to generate a framework for analysing any individual integration initiative in human services provision or any set of such initiatives. This analytical framework is summarised in Table 2. In later chapters of this report this framework will be used to identify key issues relating to the integration challenges facing social housing at the policy, management and service delivery levels.

Table 2: A framework for critical analysis of integration initiatives in Australian social housing

Key integration question	Options and choices
What are (and should be) the objectives of integration?	→ Improved client outcomes
	→ Enhanced client access
	→ Greater equity and consistency
	→ Increased efficiency
	→ Enhanced accountability and control
What are (and should be) the modes of integration?	→ Top-down or bottom-up
	→ Tightly-coupled or loosely coupled
	→ 'Traditional public administration' or 'market-oriented' or 'network governance'
What are (and should be) the instruments of integration?	→ Client-centred, e.g. case management, case conferencing, consultation, cross-agency client information and referral protocols, and joint assessment processes
	→ Provider-centred, e.g. co-location, shared information systems, joint staff training, inter-agency meetings, common application processes, staff secondments, joint delivery processes, staff recruitment and volunteer programs
	→ Program-centred, e.g. shared guidelines, common targeting strategies, joint, coordinated or pooled funding arrangements
	→ Organisation-centred, e.g. protocols and memoranda of understanding, ministerial or executive interagency coordination structures, advisory committees, reorganisation of agency responsibilities or structures, and agency amalgamations
	→ Policy-centred, e.g. policy and strategy documents, policy units
Which factors facilitate and impede implementation of integration?	→ Macro-factors, e.g. incentives, culture and skills of managers in trans-organisational processes, organisational structures
	→ Micro-factors, e.g. leadership, trust and commitment, effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, clear allocation of management responsibilities, multi-faceted, multi-level and mutually reinforcing interventions, shared infrastructure, adequate time and resources
Which issues are involved in evaluating the outcomes of integration?	→ Pose evaluation challenges due to importance of context specific factors
	→ Studies should focus on outcomes, as well as factors supporting and impeding outcome achievement
	→ 'Realist' evaluation approaches may be required

3 LINKING PUBLIC, COMMUNITY AND INDIGENOUS HOUSING

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, the first set of integration challenges for social housing were identified as those to do with 'internal' integration, centred on ensuring that policy-makers and service providers across the three sectors of social housing work together more effectively. At the policy level the internal integration challenge is to develop coherent policies to guide the future of social housing and to articulate the respective roles of public, community and Indigenous housing and the relations amongst them. At the service delivery level, the challenge can be seen as developing structures and processes that enable public, community and Indigenous housing organisations to work together effectively within a multi-provider delivery context. The issues are partly to do with local service planning and coordination and partly to do with providing coordinated responses to meet the needs of individual consumers.

There are similarities and differences in the approaches of individual Australian states and territories to issues of internal integration in social housing and these have influenced how relationships between sub-sectors have developed over time. In recent years most jurisdictions have promoted a convergence of roles between public and community housing as the focus of public housing has narrowed to tenants with high needs and as community housing has grown and diversified. At the same time, concern about a failure to address the housing conditions of Indigenous people has focused policy attention on Indigenous housing and increased pressure for mainstream social housing to better cater for the needs of Indigenous people. These changing policy directions have been driven in large part by national funding, policy and institutional arrangements such as the CSHA and the changes in national approaches to Indigenous affairs. Differences between jurisdictions can be attributed to the way national policy has been interpreted, implemented and adapted over time within the different political, economic and social contexts of each state and territory.

This chapter explores the issue of 'internal integration' by examining inter-sectoral linkages between public, community and Indigenous housing, drawing on stakeholder perspectives identified through workshops, key informant interviews, and reviews of policy documents. The views of workshop participants on the key integration challenges and their experiences of integration initiatives are reported. An overview is then provided of key internal integration themes emerging from the workshops and key informant interviews. One issue, integrated client access to social housing, is examined in greater detail to illustrate the prominence of access as a contemporary integration concern and to describe the diversity of instruments that have been applied to this issue across jurisdictions. Approaches to managing client access in South Australia and Queensland are examined to illustrate contrasting approaches. Drawing on the research literature and study findings, opportunities and options that have potential to enhance relations amongst social housing sectors are suggested.

3.2 Stakeholder perspectives

The key informants and workshop participants who contributed to this study include client advocates, representatives of peak non-government organisations, policy-makers, service managers and front-line workers with extensive experience and expertise across public, community and Indigenous housing in South Australia New South Wales and Queensland. Many have worked across social housing sectors in

different policy and service delivery roles. The level of interest, views expressed and examples provided by participants confirmed the proposition that integration amongst social housing sectors is a highly relevant policy and service-delivery concern. A summary of the most commonly raised issues and participants' views is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Stakeholder perceptions on internal integration

Integration themes	*Key issues raised by participants*
Co-ordinating client access across multiple providers	→ Entry points are fragmented, with clients needing to identify options and negotiate their own access to multiple providers. This is a problem particularly for those facing specific barriers such as disability, language or literacy.
	→ Current access arrangements, especially relationships with referral and support agencies, allow specialist community housing providers to streamline access for mutual high needs clients.
	→ Concern about the potential for some clients to fall through the net or be 'excluded' if access is too tightly coordinated.
	→ Duplication in filling out multiple application forms imposes costs on both applicants and housing providers.
	→ Lack of mechanisms for brokering appropriate housing solutions across sectors or providers, especially for clients with urgent or complex needs.
	→ Social housing providers need expertise and resources to ensure successful tenancies for high needs clients.
	→ Lack of shared, updated information on housing options limits client choice and access as well as having resource impacts for housing providers and advocates who duplicate effort in sourcing information, referring and advocating for clients.
	→ Concern about lack of consistency between providers in application and assessment processes.
	→ Lack of transparency and accountability in allocation processes and perceptions of favouritism and 'creaming' by some housing organisations.
	→ Coordinating access will not address the underlying problem of lack of supply.
Links between Indigenous housing and other social housing	→ Mainstreaming agenda increases the need to work together across sectors.
	→ Integration agendas in some states are diverting Indigenous housing resources from other policy and service delivery priorities.
	→ Indigenous housing/infrastructure linkages are more important than social housing linkages in rural and remote areas.
	→ Cross-sector networks only operate in some locations.
	→ No-one has clear responsibility for facilitating Indigenous/mainstream housing linkages.
	→ Program silos and separate regional structures impede cross-sectoral engagement and networking.
	→ Training and professional development needs to focus on fostering cross-sectoral relationships and cross-cultural competency.
	→ Limited engagement of Indigenous community housing

Integration themes	Key issues raised by participants
Policy coherence: roles and relationships between public and community housing.	organisations (ICHOs) in mainstream social housing policy processes.
	→ Integrating SOMIH with public housing service delivery is resulting in increased demand from Indigenous applicants for public housing.
	→ Some states have only articulated sector-specific policy objectives and strategies without coherent overarching social housing policy frameworks.
	→ Targeting public housing at clients with high and complex needs is resulting in duplication and overlap of responsibilities with specialist community housing providers.
	→ Increasing need for local public/community housing collaboration in matching available social housing vacancies to clients with specific needs.
	→ Cultural differences and power imbalances between public and community sectors are barriers to collaboration.
	→ Common training for public, community and Indigenous housing could strengthen relationships and facilitate more common culture and service-delivery practice.
	→ A lack of accurate information and knowledge-sharing between public and community housing is a barrier to working together in the interests of clients.
	→ Community housing advocacy role for public housing applicants can create local tensions.
	→ Emergence of an affordable housing agenda is driving changes in the role of community housing from working with high needs clients to a more commercial focus. This is contentious and confusing for stakeholders.
Integrated planning and resource allocation	→ Flexibility is needed to shift or pool resources and assets between public and community sectors and programs to improve outcomes and choices for clients.
	→ Asset planning and resource allocation is not integrated across sectors or programs at regional level.
	→ Planning is centrally driven, primarily through program silos, leading to duplication and gaps in services.
	→ There are examples of success in local areas in facilitating integrated local planning and resource sharing across public and community housing and, to a lesser extent, Indigenous housing.
Differences in public, community and Indigenous housing policies.	→ Indigenous housing developed different policy approaches under ATSIC, especially with respect to eligibility and rent setting.
	→ Centrally-driven policy uniformity and prescription will impede responsiveness to local needs and conditions.
	→ Addressing policy differences has not been seen as a high priority by NSW or SA housing authorities.
	→ Policy uniformity is, however, a core reform objective in Queensland.
	→ Only public housing tenants are specifically targeted under regulation such as anti-social behaviour legislation.
Accountability regimes for public, community and Indigenous housing.	→ Community housing programs and providers are subject to higher levels of reporting and evaluation demands than public housing programs and providers.

Integration themes	Key issues raised by participants
Implementing integration initiatives	→ There are questions about whether there should be common regulatory requirements, standards and performance criteria for public and community housing, or at least for mainstream and Indigenous community housing. NSW explored common approaches but did not implement them; Qld regulation covers Indigenous housing providers. → Client appeals processes are broadening in some states to include both public and community housing, and NSW is considering broadening them to include Indigenous housing. → Clarity of purpose, vision and leadership are needed for social housing, including clarity about the roles of public, community and Indigenous housing. → Stronger local management and discretion as well as resourced regional networks are needed to build relationships and facilitate policy, planning and practice integration. → Top-down initiatives should engage front-line workers and providers from all sectors in policy development and implementation planning. → Program and organisational silos create barriers to local flexibility and cross-program integration. → Consistent and mutually reinforcing approaches are needed for integration interventions across client, service-delivery and policy domains. → There is often a gap between policy intentions and reality on the ground. → Integration needs to be about relationships and network building as well as about structures and formal agreements. → Integration initiatives need to be focused and resourced (e.g. homelessness strategies). → Integration needs long-term commitments because change takes time.

The integration concerns identified by participants include strategic and operational policy issues, planning issues, and service-delivery issues. They represent a range of views about the potential benefits and feasibility of greater integration in different contexts. While most participants identified areas of policy and service delivery that would benefit from improved integration, many expressed a view that integration agendas are an inadequate response to diminishing resources for social housing. In some cases integration is viewed as a legitimate attempt to utilise limited resources more effectively and efficiently. In others, it is seen as an attempt to divert attention away from the underlying problem of diminishing social housing supply. Another commonly expressed concern of participants was that values such as provider autonomy, service flexibility and consumer choice may be compromised by undue attention to policy goals such as equity, system efficiency and accountability. These are highly contested issues and are likely to be matters for ongoing policy debate.

3.3 Internal integration challenges

Drawing on the stakeholder workshops, key informant interviews, policy document and literature reviews, it is possible to identify key internal integration issues that are of widespread stakeholder concern and that are the subject of considerable policy attention. These include:

→ lack of policy coherence, especially during times of policy turbulence;

→ operational policy differences within and between social housing sectors;

→ uncoordinated program, portfolio and service-delivery planning;

→ diversity of accountability regimes for providers and clients;

→ client access to multiple social housing providers.

3.3.1 Strategic policy coherence

A widespread desire for policy coherence as a foundation for effective linkages between sectors was evident in stakeholder views. Clarity about the purpose and objectives of social housing and its constituent sectors was particularly identified as a pre-condition for making effective and purposeful linkages between the public, community and Indigenous housing sectors. The dynamic nature of the policy environment and the diverse and changing roles of public, community and Indigenous housing nationally and in the three states that were examined raise a number of unresolved issues about the future relationships between these sectors and their respective roles in social housing provision.

The role of public housing is increasingly to target those with the highest and most complex needs and this has been explicitly articulated through the CSHA and in policy statements from the three states examined. South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales have all announced new rationing policies over the past two years in order to tighten public housing eligibility criteria and introduce new approaches to prioritising allocation to those considered most in need (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2005; NSW Department of Housing, 2006; South Australia, 2005).

There appears, however, to be less clarity and consistency in articulating the future role of community housing, and variable attention has been paid across jurisdictions to the implications for community housing of new approaches to public housing rationing. In part, a lack of consensus about the role of community housing can be seen as a continuation of historical patterns, where community housing has included a diverse range of specialist and generalist housing providers that both complement and supplement public housing. However, recent moves to encourage consolidation and scale within community housing are increasing the divide between smaller localised or specialised providers and larger, generalist housing organisations. The role of community housing is addressed explicitly in recent Queensland policies that aim to eliminate differentiation between public and community housing (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2006). New South Wales and South Australia are yet to articulate explicitly the preferred future roles for the community housing sector vis-a-vis public housing and, to date, have largely quarantined the sector from public housing rationing reforms.

The Indigenous housing policy context is even more complex and unclear, with changes occurring at both the public/community sector and the Indigenous specific/mainstream program interfaces. Under the previous national government, public management of Indigenous housing in remote areas and mainstreaming of Indigenous housing in urban areas were implemented with limited policy debate or consideration of the implications for the future role of the Indigenous housing sector. The Rudd government is yet to announce the detail of its Indigenous housing agenda. However, the historical separate development of Indigenous housing policy and service delivery has created a range of integration challenges requiring policy attention in the current context. At the strategic level, it is imperative to articulate

clearly the future role of Indigenous-specific housing vis-a-vis mainstream provision to ensure that social housing provides a range of responsive housing options to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous people in urban, rural and remote locations.

The definition of roles within social housing is also challenged by the need to accommodate new approaches to affordable housing funding and provision. Chapter 5 explores new affordable financing and management models for housing and the implications for social housing of increasingly blurred boundaries between social and market housing.

3.3.2 Managing operational policy differences

Differences in tenancy management policies between public, community and Indigenous housing in areas such as eligibility, prioritisation, bedroom entitlements, length of tenure and rent setting are in some cases intentional, but in other cases simply reflect lack of coordination. The negative impacts of inconsistent policies, especially inequity in outcomes for service users, were raised as concerns by some workshop participants. Similar concerns also underpin initiatives such as those in Queensland that are pursuing policy consistency by applying common access policies across sectors.

An alternative view presented by other participants was that operational policy differentiation can be beneficial for clients and is necessary to respond to specific client needs and market situations. Differences in policy have been intentional in the design of many housing programs and initiatives such as boarding-house, crisis, transitional and affordable housing models and specialist models developed to address specific age, ethnic, cultural or disability-specific housing needs. Policy differentiation has also been a strategy to address inequities associated with diversity in the location, size, age and condition of social housing properties and differences in housing sub-markets.

A number of examples of operational policy differentiation can be drawn from the area of Indigenous housing. An inconsistency cited by workshop participants in NSW is that Indigenous tenants in Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA) properties managed by the NSW Department of Housing are eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance while Indigenous public housing tenants are not. This is because tenants in houses owned by AHA are not considered public housing tenants for the purpose of CRA eligibility, even if the tenancies are managed by the state. Such examples of policy ambiguity are likely to become more common as the distinctions between public, community and market housing become blurred through diverse funding, ownership and management arrangements.

Tenancy policies and practices in some parts of the Indigenous housing sector have developed quite separately from the remainder of the social housing system, in large part because Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) were funded directly by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and lay outside CSHA policy parameters. Areas of significant policy difference include eligibility and rent setting. Under ATSIC housing funding programs, income eligibility was broader than under the CSHA as it included all Indigenous households that were not homeowners. Rent has generally been set by the housing provider, usually with a fixed market or cost-related rent for each dwelling rather than rent being based on household incomes. Such differences present considerable challenges in integrating this sector under state or territory programs and the ambit of a new national affordable housing agreement. It is unclear to what extent this sector will be required to adopt income-related rents consistent with CSHA-funded social housing approaches. The

implications of such a policy change for tenants and the viability of the Indigenous housing organisations are also uncertain.

Some degree of operational policy differentiation can be viewed as inevitable in a dynamic policy environment and may be desirable to achieve targeted and responsive services. Operational policy differences do, however, pose some challenges for integrating aspects of service delivery such as common access arrangements and tenant transfers between sectors. The benefits and problems with operational policy differences across social housing programs and sectors need to be considered in relation to overall social housing policy objectives. Strategic policy coherence and clarity in articulating the rationale for differentiated roles and policies of the sectors will go a long way to addressing concerns about inconsistency and inequity. Proposals for increased policy uniformity or prescription need to be carefully examined to consider their impacts on innovation, responsiveness to consumer needs, and the sustainability of social housing providers.

3.3.3 Program and service planning

The findings of this study indicate that social housing planning occurs predominantly through program silos with program goals, resource allocation, asset utilisation and service delivery models driven centrally. The most commonly reported arrangement is program-based planning for public, community and Indigenous housing. In some cases, different community housing programs also have separate planning processes. These planning processes are generally driven by centrally located program managers and involve variable levels of participation by regional public housing staff or community housing providers. The study identified few state-wide or regional examples of formalised or robust cross-program or cross-sectoral planning processes or governance models.

The structures, resources and skills located in regions to support cross-sectoral networking and integrated planning vary significantly across jurisdictions. Queensland has centralised planning processes for each program and some limited regional planning infrastructure. A current review of resourcing strategies is proposing changes to regional housing networks in order to strengthen cross-sectoral relationships between public and community housing (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2008). NSW and South Australia have more regionalised structures with some capacity for regional planning and some devolution of discretion over asset utilisation, although this does not appear to be associated with strong, inter-sectoral program or service delivery planning.

Where examples of cross-sectoral, regional service planning and development were reported by participants, they tended to be 'bottom-up' locally or regionally driven processes. Typically, these are collaborative mechanisms to improve service coordination, address specific issues and contribute to locally integrated responses. Some of these 'bottom-up' initiatives are centrally resourced but most rely predominantly on local relationships and the commitment of time and resources by regional offices and local public and community housing service delivery agencies.

In most of the cases described by workshop participants, the objectives of local collaborative efforts were associated with improving access, coordinating services for clients and pooling limited local resources. Some cases were reported by workshop participants of housing provider networks initiating information sharing and joint training for staff with the aim of strengthening relationships and encouraging shared culture and practice. Others involve more formalised and specific purposes such as implementing common client needs assessments, joint allocation decisions or

collaborating to share resources to fill a local service gap. Planning linkages were most commonly reported between public and community housing agencies, with Indigenous housing linkages less common. Instances were identified, however, of strong local relationships between Indigenous and mainstream services. For instance, in some Queensland regions, Indigenous community housing organisations participate, along with mainstream community housing organisations and representatives from public housing area offices, in regional housing networks.

3.3.4 Accountability issues

Enhanced accountability and control were identified as common themes during the stakeholder workshops. The workshops identified three key accountability and control issues linked to themes of integration between public, community and Indigenous housing. One relates to the different accountability regimes in place for each social housing sector and the impediments these create for working across sectoral boundaries. The second is the implications of differential accountability regimes for the rights and responsibilities of tenants in different sectors. The third refers to the respective accountabilities of central policy or program managers and service providers in pursuing enhanced integration.

Accountability regimes

The current centrally-driven program approach with separate accountability arrangements for each social housing sub-sector, and even for individual programs within each sector, is seen by some participants as reinforcing 'program silos' and impeding stronger linkages between public, community and Indigenous housing at the local, service-delivery level. Stakeholders perceive different service standards as well as separate processes for reporting and monitoring performance and compliance as inefficient, inequitable and contributing to a lack of shared information and understanding between sectors.

National service standards and accreditation have been in place for community housing since 1998, although they have not been adopted in all jurisdictions. While Indigenous community housing organisations in Qld participate in the national standards and accreditation system, NSW adopted a modified model to achieve a cultural fit for Indigenous housing organisations (National Community Housing Forum, 1998; NSW, AHO, 2006). There are no national service standards for public housing, although individual jurisdictions have formalised standards in codes of practice, client-service standards, operational policy manuals or legislation. Accountability requirements for community and Indigenous housing organisations have strengthened progressively over the past decade. Requirements, including financial and performance reporting, are mandated for community-based housing organisations through funding contracts and regulation. Legislation regulating community housing has been introduced in SA, NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Monitoring and reporting of performance and compliance have increased progressively in recent years, in line with increased regulation and better capacity for collecting and managing data.

A broadly consistent set of national performance indicators has been adopted for public, community and Indigenous housing funded under the CSHA. These are reported against annually, using data collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and published by the Productivity Commission. Since national performance reporting was introduced in 1996, the performance indicators and measures have been revised and reporting has improved in terms of consistency and

comprehensiveness, especially for community and Indigenous housing (Australia, Productivity Commission, 2007). These reports are the primary source of regular, independently published national and jurisdictional level information across social housing sectors, although the usefulness of the data for comparative purposes is constrained by inconsistencies in data collection methods and quality. Other annual sources of performance information include government budget documents and annual reports of public and community-sector housing agencies. In Queensland, accreditation status reports for community housing organisations are available publicly. Government audit office reports and program evaluations also provide accountability and public reporting mechanisms.

Participants in the workshops identified inequities and inefficiencies associated with current accountability arrangements. Many argued that community and Indigenous housing organisations are subject to more onerous accountability requirements than public housing, while others argued that accountability continues to be inadequate. This brief overview of social housing accountability regimes indicates that performance monitoring and accountability frameworks across social housing may warrant further examination to identify opportunities to strengthen cross-sectoral linkages, improve information sharing and ensure transparency and accountability.

Tenant rights and responsibilities

A second set of accountability issues raised by stakeholders concerned the implications for inter-sectoral integration of the different rights and responsibilities accorded tenants and applicants across social housing. Social housing tenants and applicants have different rights and responsibilities, depending on their provider, in such areas as review of decisions, the approach taken to unacceptable behaviour, and the approach taken to providing false information.

Tenants and applicants for public housing have various rights to internal and independent review of certain decisions affecting their housing, which are enshrined in housing authority policies, client service charters, and housing or administrative review legislation. Access by community housing tenants to appeals is less widespread and is highly dependent on the policies and practices of individual housing organisations. Requirements for community housing organisations to establish internal decision review and dispute resolution processes is a common feature of community housing regulation, some contracts and national standards. Access to an independent review of decisions for community housing tenants is only formalised in South Australia and New South Wales. In NSW the Social Housing Appeals Committee undertakes reviews of public and community housing decisions and is consulting on the option of expanding its scope to Indigenous community housing tenants.

While public housing tenants may have greater ability to exercise their rights to have decisions reviewed, they are also the subject of more onerous regimes for enforcing their responsibilities. Examples of differential treatment of public and community housing tenants include provisions of 'acceptable behaviour' in legislation applying to public housing tenants in NSW[1] and penalties under housing legislation for obtaining housing assistance by 'false and misleading information' in Qld[2] . These sanctions

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[1] See *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* Section 63I

[2] See *Housing Act 2003* Part 3:s17

apply only to those who receive assistance directly from the state, such as public housing tenants.

These examples illustrate how different policies and regulatory regimes applying to public and community provision impact differentially on service users. This highlights the need for policy-makers and service providers to identify and address unintended impacts of diversification in social housing providers and products.

Policy implementation accountabilities

The third accountability issue that emerged from this study concerns accountability between central policy and program managers and service providers. The integration issues here are about the interplay vertically between policy and service delivery, rather than horizontally across sectors. They relate to the responsibilities and accountabilities of service providers in implementing policy. Public and community housing service managers and frontline workers participating in the study argued for greater attention to the accountability of central policy and program managers for the impacts of their decisions on service delivery. They pointed to ways that overly prescriptive and siloed policy approaches constrain the capacity for improving integrated service delivery to consumers. Study participants referred to examples such as tenancy management and property usage policies that inhibited their ability to tailor flexible and timely responses for clients with specific needs. Inflexibility in moving resources between program and budget boundaries, restrictive delegation of decision-making, and complexity and delays in central decision-making were all viewed by participants as factors limiting service providers' ability to take advantage of local market conditions, opportunities for collaboration, flexible use of properties between programs, and innovation. Examples of 'bottom-up' service integration and innovation discussed elsewhere in this report appear to have relied on local leadership and risk-taking, strong and trusting relationships between public and community service providers, and preparedness to maximise the exercise of local discretion, often by side-stepping or bending the rules.

The preceding discussion positions accountability as an important aspect of policy, governance and service delivery. Workshop participants argued that accountability processes such as standards, regulation and performance reporting and monitoring have implications for efficiency, equity and service quality. Approaches to tenant rights and responsibilities, and to program boundaries and devolution of decision making to the local, service delivery domain are accountability issues that impact on consumers. Overall, there seems to be a case for greater attention to accountability issues in the management of diversified service provision.

3.3.5 Client access

A common theme emerging through the literature review, policy document analysis and practitioner workshops is the widespread concern that service delivery arrangements for accessing social housing are problematic for clients, housing providers and policy-makers (Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007; Phillips 2007). This has been a theme of recent research:

> … the social housing sector in Australia is moving towards a more explicit multi-provider and multi-service system in which applications via each provider or service may no longer be appropriate. In such a system, it may be difficult for households to find out about what is available and to determine their preferences, providers may duplicate each others' work leading to inefficiency

and unnecessary costs, and fragmentation and lack of information may make it increasingly difficult to develop the sector in a coherent and strategic manner. (Hulse et al. 2007, p.12)

Numerous comments by workshop participants in all three states provided further evidence for this finding. Participants perceived access problems as a consequence both of diversification and increasing competition for limited social housing resources. These issues are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

3.3.6 Summary

In summary, social housing can be broadly characterised as comprising distinct sub-sectors dominated by centralised control exercised through program and sectoral silos. There is limited national, state-wide, regional and local integrative capacity. Examples are emerging of top-down integrative initiatives aimed at strengthening cross-sectoral governance, policy and service delivery. Bottom-up initiatives are also evident in some regions and localities where social housing organisations have established a range of formal and informal local governance mechanisms for networking and collaboration. A significant focus of these processes is joint service delivery planning and coordination of services for individual clients. Apart from some notable exceptions in Qld and NSW, the Indigenous housing sector is not generally well connected to social housing regional planning and coordination processes..

Local collaboration, strong service-provider networks and devolved decision-making are highly valued by study participants who argue that these contribute to better, more integrated services for consumers. The potential of bottom-up approaches to achieve significant service-delivery improvements is, however, highly dependent on mandates and resources that are the province of the policy domain. This suggests the importance of mutually reinforcing top-down and bottom-up initiatives in order to achieve a more integrated social housing system.

3.4 Managing access to multiple providers

One aspect of 'internal' integration amongst social housing providers that received extensive attention in the workshops, and which has also been the focus of attention in social housing policy, is the issue of client access in an increasingly diversified, multi-provider social housing context. In recent years a number of instruments have been developed by social housing authorities to address this issue, and these will now be examined. The material in this section is drawn from the views of stakeholders expressed in workshops, the research literature, and policy documents from the three states. Many of these initiatives are associated with Queensland's common system of access for all social housing under the policy banner of 'One Social Housing System' and South Australia's 'One-Stop Housing Shops'. Each of these initiatives is analysed in this section. However, a wide range of instruments has been used to address access issues in each of the three states included in this study, and seven of these instruments will be examined. These are:

→ One-stop shops

→ Common application forms

→ Shared assessments frameworks

→ Common waiting lists

→ Nomination rights

→ Collaborative allocation decisions

→ Common access policies.

3.4.1 One-stop shops

Various forms of 'one-top shops' are identified in the literature as offering a common provider-centred approach to improving client access to services with simplified entry points to a range of services from one location (Healy 1998). A key feature of South Australian housing reforms announced in 2006 was the establishment of 'Housing One-Stop Shops' in Housing SA regional offices throughout the state. The goal of 'Housing One-Stop Shops' is to streamline social housing access through provision of a 'continuum of responses', including information about housing assistance options, housing needs assessment, help with applications and referrals to a full range of housing and support options (South Australia, 2006). These integrated information and assessment services were to be launched during 2008focusing mainly on assisting social housing applicants, although information and referral will be provided on a wide range of public, community and market rental and homeownership assistance products and providers as well as links to support services. ********

As discussed in Chapter 1, these changes are occurring in the context of a major public sector reform agenda aimed at improving coordination of government services and greater targeting of social housing to those in greatest need. In this context, the Housing One-Stop Shop concept aims to shift the role of Housing SA client service offices from a primary focus on delivering public housing to a role of linking clients with a wider range of housing options, thereby diverting demand away from public housing. This is associated with a significant change in the role of public housing in SA from an affordable housing option for low-income workers and families to a high-needs housing provider. One-Stop Shops signal this change to staff, applicants and the broader community.

This initiative can be viewed as pursuing client-orientated objectives, including improved access and better client outcomes. It also pursues efficiency goals by re-directing demand from public housing to less highly subsidised alternative housing options. The focus on providing information and referral across a range of products and providers requires effective program level linkages with a range of services, including home lending, affordable housing, community housing and Indigenous housing.

It is planned that implementation of the Housing One-Stop Shop concept will occur through a staged process. The initial priorities of the implementation process are cultural change within Housing SA, and a process of providing staff with the knowledge, skills and tools needed for their new roles. Implementation strategies include: training about the full range of housing products and providers; development of systems for online access to information; development of tools and training in client needs assessment; and establishment of referral protocols. It is proposed that, over time, stronger linkages will be established with community housing, Indigenous housing, homelessness services, home-lending programs, newly developing affordable housing products and support services. This may involve the Housing One-Stop Shop playing a greater role in application and assessment processes for these programs, including co-location of client service staff.

Participants in the SA workshop raised concerns about the challenges for the Housing One-Stop Shops in attempting to provide accurate and up-to-date information across a wide spectrum of products and providers, and with providing in-depth assessment,

assistance with applications and linkages to support services. However, implementation of this initiative has a strong mandate from government and senior management. Implementation is in the early stages so it is not yet possible to assess outcomes. However, the emphasis in implementation planning on cultural change, staff training, allocation of time and resources for change management, and ongoing evaluation are consistent with success factors identified in the integration literature.

Another example of a one-stop shop approach is the establishment of a state-wide homelessness information service and regional service hubs to coordinate access to services for homeless people under the Queensland Government's Responding to Homelessness initiative (Queensland, 2005). Both initiatives provide identifiable entry points to the service system, offer information about the full array of assistance available, make referrals and assist clients to apply for assistance across a variety of programs and providers. They operate in the service-delivery domain and can be seen as examples of loosely coupled integration interventions in that they provide integrating functions without diminishing the diversity of provision or compromising the autonomy of individual service providers. While the examples cited here are top-down initiatives, One-Stop Shops could also be bottom–up, for example, where local service providers voluntarily initiate agreements to co-locate or establish shared entry points.

3.4.2 Common application forms

Common application forms are integration tools that are used widely in other human services sectors, such as residential aged care. They are a feature in social housing systems overseas. In Australia, there are examples of social housing and homelessness service providers coming together within a locality or sector to develop a common application form. In NSW, development of a community housing common application form was facilitated by the peak agency the NSW Federation of Housing Associations to enable applicants to apply to multiple community housing associations by filling out one application form. Applications are lodged through participating community housing organisations and forwarded to the Federation for distribution to the other organisations. Use of the common application form is voluntary and there has been take-up by only 14 of 42 associations. A review by the Federation concluded that the benefits of the scheme are not clear and that levels of participation and effectiveness are constrained by inadequate resourcing, the limited scope of the process, and the lengthy application form (Southwell, 2006; Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007).

Prior to the introduction in Queensland of the shared waiting list, one public housing area office and a number of community housing organisations in inner Brisbane collaborated on a project to develop a common application form. However, the project was discontinued because agreement could not be reached about the level of detail and type of information to be collected (Phillips 2007). These examples of a state-wide, sector-based scheme and a local cross-sector project illustrate that common application forms encounter difficulties where they involve organisations changing established practice and compromising perceived autonomy.

While common application forms may be implemented as a stand-alone initiative, they are often one element of wider integration projects such as common housing registers (Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007). Their objectives may include improved client access and/or enhanced efficiency. They may operate as a component of loosely or tightly coupled service delivery arrangements in that they may be voluntary agreements between agencies or part of centrally mandated service entry systems.

3.4.3 Shared assessment frameworks

Common assessment frameworks involve agencies agreeing to adopt common approaches to assessment, especially for applicants with complex needs. The objectives of shared assessments include simplified access and improved outcomes for clients and improved efficiency. They may aim to achieve consistency in the priority assigned to applicants by multiple social housing providers or to achieve coordination between housing and support providers for mutual clients.

Common assessment tools have been adopted widely by homelessness services, especially in South Australia and Victoria, where their implementation has been driven and resourced centrally. Shared assessments are an attempt to avoid clients having to re-tell their story when they are referred between services and to assist services to work together to identify the most appropriate responses to meet the needs and circumstances of individual clients. A number of initiatives to develop common assessment frameworks and tools for social housing were reported by study informants. These are in various stages of development and appear to be attempts to encourage collaboration and to achieve consistency in the application of new policies to more accurately target those with the greatest needs for social housing. to.

In some cases, agreement is reached between agencies that an assessment undertaken by one organisation will be recognised and accepted by other organisations. This requires that the organisations agree to use common assessment tools and consistent practice in assessment and documentation. An example of shared assessment operates in Victoria, where Transitional Housing Managers, crisis centres and refuges are accredited to undertake client assessments.   These assessments are accepted by the Office of Housing as verification of eligibility under the recurring homelessness category for the housing segment of public housing waiting list (Victoria, Office of Housing, 2008). This is a tightly integrated service-delivery approach, where the assessment role is effectively outsourced to specialist homelessness agencies that agree to apply public housing policy and provide the details of their assessment to the Office of Housing.

3.4.4 Common social housing waiting lists

Common waiting lists, often called common housing registers, have been adopted in some overseas social housing systems and have been the subject of policy discussion in Australia since the early 1990s, along with associated practices such as common application forms, common assessment and common prioritisation systems (Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007; Phillips, 2007). Practical difficulties, including information technology issues and significant resistance, particularly from the community housing sector, inhibited a NSW attempt in the mid-1990s to introduce a common register for public and community housing (Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007). NSW is currently in the early stages of planning a common access system that is likely to include a common register (NSW, Department of Housing, 2008).

A community housing register has been planned since 2004 for South Australia. It is proposed that it be compulsory for all community housing organisations to allocate from the register, which will be housed on a web-based, interactive database administered by Housing SA. The objective of the system is to streamline access and improve choice for applicants, as well as to strengthen accountability in the allocation process. The system will include a standard registration of interest form to be completed by all applicants. Using data from this form, the system will automatically assess social housing eligibility and undertake an indicative needs assessment. Applicants identified as potentially meeting priority criteria will be assessed by

Housing SA offices or accredited housing associations, using a common assessment framework.

The registration form, information system and assessment tools are under development and the register is expected to be operational by mid-2008. Applicants will be able to nominate one or more providers, although there will be a filter to ensure applicants for cooperative housing meet the additional criteria for membership of these organisations. Community housing organisations will have web-based access to the system and will have discretion in matching applicants with vacant properties. Community housing organisations expressed some concerns about the top-down nature of this project and the potential loss of their autonomy and control over allocation decisions. They also expressed a degree of uncertainty about the centralised nature of the system administration and expressed intentions of Housing SA to further integrate community housing and public housing access arrangements. The register currently has tightly integrated policy and processes at the application and assessment stages but allows discretion for providers at the selection and matching stage of the allocation process.

The most comprehensive approach to common social housing waiting lists, encompassing public, community and Indigenous housing, is being implemented by the Queensland Department of Housing. Integrated access through common waiting lists is a central feature of the broader reform agenda announced in Queensland in late-2005 under the banner of 'One Social Housing System', and is closely associated with the other major reform initiative, tighter targeting of social housing on the basis of need (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2005). The package of integrated access initiatives adopted in Queensland includes:

→ Common eligibility and prioritisation policies for public, community and Indigenous housing;

→ A common application form for public, community and Indigenous housing; and

→ A shared waiting list for public, community and Indigenous housing.

The aim of the policy reforms is to deliver social housing in a 'client focused and cohesive way' (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2005, p. 9) and to create a 'One Social Housing System [that] removes boundaries that exist between housing programs, resulting in the integrated delivery of housing assistance to clients in need throughout Queensland' (Queensland, Department of Housing, 2006, p. 1). The objectives of the new access arrangements as articulated in policy documents released by the Department include enhanced client access, greater equity and consistency, and enhanced accountability and control. Enhanced client access is to be facilitated through a single application form and a shared waiting list that provides a simplified entry process for applicants. This will give clients an opportunity to be listed for all social housing for which they are eligible without having to lodge multiple applications. Equity and consistency is pursued by a strong focus on uniformity in eligibility and allocations policies across public, community and Indigenous social housing sectors. The integrated access arrangements can also be seen as strengthening accountability, especially for community housing providers and enhancing control by greater surveillance of allocation decisions and increased state prescription of community housing allocations policies and practices.

This integrative project focuses primarily on the service delivery domain. While some attention has been given to aligning operational access policies across the social housing programs, the main emphasis is on shared service delivery tools and infrastructure. Limited change is proposed to system-wide governance arrangements and administrative or program structures. However, the new service delivery

arrangements represent a significant departure from previous service-delivery practice where individual community housing providers tended to target clients with specific characteristics and manage their own access systems within broad policy parameters. Limited consultation preceded the policy announcements and implementation has involved relatively short time-frames, limiting opportunities for engaging community housing organisations or public housing frontline workers.

Implementation of the common access arrangements in Queensland has occurred progressively during the course of this study and it is not possible at this early stage to assess the success of the implementation or its outcomes. The implementation has been facilitated by a strong political mandate and by widespread agreement within the public and community housing sectors about the need for reform. Short timeframes for implementation are reported to have contributed to some implementation challenges, including levels of confusion and uncertainty within the service delivery domain. While the overall policy direction has been clearly and consistently articulated, there has been some uncertainty about policy detail. One issue that appears to be unresolved is the relationship between the single entry process for social housing and the newly established coordinated entry to homelessness services through service hubs and a state-wide homelessness information service (Seelig et al. 2008). It is also unclear what monitoring and evaluation processes are in place to identify problems, make policy and practice modifications and assess outcomes. Given the unique nature and scope of this major reform initiative, a robust evaluation framework would make a major contribution to our knowledge of the benefits and risks of tightly integrated models of social housing access.

In summary, common housing registers vary significantly and encompass a continuum from loosely coupled arrangements, involving a common application form and a shared data base with housing providers retaining autonomy over prioritisation policies and allocation decisions, to tightly coupled arrangements, featuring uniform policies and centralised allocation decisions. The complexity of common housing registers and the significant resources required to implement them means that these tend to be top-down initiatives. However, common housing registers require significant engagement of frontline users for successful implementation (Hulse, Phillips and Burke, 2007).

3.4.5 Nomination rights

Nomination rights are commonly used mechanisms in several overseas countries to provide access for public housing applicants to government-funded social housing delivered by non-government organisations (Hulse et al. 2007). In the past, nomination rights have not been applied widely in Australia. However, they are used in New South Wales where community housing organisations accept nominations from public housing waiting lists for an agreed percentage of vacancies in housing transferred from public housing management. Housing associations are able to make final allocation decisions from a shortlist of eligible applicants provided by the local Department of Housing office.

Nomination rights are also being used where dedicated resources for housing and support have been allocated for specific purposes. Examples include mental health and housing programs such as the Housing and Support Initiative (HASI) in NSW and the Mental Health Housing Transitional program in Queensland, homelessness crisis accommodation, and support partnerships and initiatives such as specialist court diversion programs for drug users. Nomination rights can be characterised as top-down and tightly integrated policy initiatives because they usually involve prescribed

policy implemented through formal regulatory or contractual regimes that impose specified processes and outcomes. As such, they can be seen as a policy tool for achieving access for specific types of applicants and exercising control over access to publicly funded social housing.

3.4.6   Collaborative allocation decisions

Collaborative allocation decisions are an example of bottom-up approaches to integrated access. Generally they involve two or more housing providers working together to share information about vacancies and applicants and to identify jointly the most appropriate housing response to meet the needs of applicants. Workshop participants in South Australia and NSW reported locally driven examples of this sort of collaboration between public and community housing providers. In NSW an example was cited of a regular meeting involving local public and community housing representatives to review the priority applications on each organisation's waiting list and to identify and agree on the most appropriate response to the applicant's needs. A South Australian example is the Avalon project in the Marion region, where public housing applicants who are at high risk of tenancy failure are provided with transitional housing and support by a community housing organisation, Housing Spectrum. Allocation to public housing is facilitated collaboratively between Housing Spectrum and public housing when the tenants are assessed as ready to move into independent housing. In these examples, collaborative approaches were primarily used to ensure the best, most timely and sustainable housing option for applicants with urgent and/or complex needs. These initiatives appear to emerge where strong local relationships are in place, all housing providers are focused on the best outcome for clients, and where public housing regional managers exhibit leadership and have some degree of local discretion. Workshop participants identified the potential for further innovation of this type where there is flexibility to transfer property management between providers. Collaborative allocation decisions can be characterised as bottom-up and loosely coupled initiatives for integrating client access. They operate in the service delivery domain and have a primary objective of enhancing client outcomes.

3.4.7   Common access policies

Common access policies involve all social housing providers applying uniform eligibility and prioritisation policies. This may be a loosely coupled arrangement where individual housing providers develop their own operational policies within broad policy principles and parameters set through regulation or contract. Alternatively, they may be tightly coupled where a group of providers voluntarily agree to adopt a consistent set of policies and procedures or where all housing providers are required to comply with detailed and uniform policy that is centrally prescribed.

Adoption of common eligibility policies is relatively straightforward as eligibility criteria tend to be easier to prescribe and assess, leaving limited room for the exercise of discretion. It is more complex to achieve consistency in implementing allocation policies because they require the application of discretion both in assessing needs and matching applicants with suitable properties (Phillips, 2007).

3.4.8   Summary

There was general consensus amongst social housing stakeholders who attended our workshops that priority should be given to enhancing the access of clients to an

increasingly complex, diverse and highly rationed array of social housing options. However, there were also concerns that tightly integrated access arrangements might disadvantage some consumers, including the most disadvantaged, and impact negatively on providers. The preceding overview illustrates the complexity of implementing common access arrangements and the assortment of instruments that can be employed. In some instances these initiatives are used separately. In other cases various initiatives are packaged together to achieve more comprehensive reform. The range of instruments discussed and their characteristics is summarised in Table 4.

The diversity of approaches we found reflects different decisions made about policy objectives and priorities, approaches to public/community sector relationships, and implementation strategies across jurisdictions. It also reflects differences in the way diversity in service provision is valued, with some jurisdictions seeking higher levels of uniformity and consistency and others seeking higher levels of choice and local innovation.

Overall, this report concludes that access to an increasing complex and diverse social housing system is a core and ongoing integration issue for social housing in Australia. Impending further diversification of housing assistance will require ongoing attention to the best ways of matching applicants with appropriate housing responses. Jurisdictions face critical decisions about the relative benefits of centrally driven, tightly integrated and bureaucratic approaches to coordinating access and about decentralised, network-based options that operate at a scale that is responsive to local contexts and that are grounded in inter-agency collaboration.

Table 4: Characteristics of instruments to integrate social housing access

Instrument	Objectives	Domains	Modes
One-stop shops	Primarily improved client access and outcomes. Also system efficiency.	Service delivery initiative requiring policy, program and provider linkages.	May be top-down or bottom-up initiative. Generally loosely coupled.
Common application forms	Streamlined client access and provider efficiency.	Service- delivery initiative requiring provider linkages.	May be top-down or bottom-up initiative. Loosely coupled unless linked to common waiting list.
Shared assessments	Coordinated client access .	Service delivery initiative requiring provider linkages.	May be top-down or bottom-up initiative. Tightly coupled, requiring formal agreements.
Common waiting lists	Improved client access to a range of options. Also system efficiency greater provider accountability	Service delivery initiative requiring policy, program and provider linkages.	Generally these need top-down coordination and resourcing. May be loosely or tightly coupled, depending on level of central control.
Nomination rights	Control over asset utilisation.	Policy initiative requiring program and provider linkages.	Top-down initiative. Tightly coupled, involving mandated compliance
Collaborative	Best use of assets to	Service delivery	Bottom-up initiative.

allocation decisions	match client needs and improve outcomes	initiative requiring provider linkages.	Generally loosely coupled but may be formalized.
Common access policies	Improved client access as well as equity and consistency. Greater provider accountability.	Policy initiative.	Top-down initiative. Tightly coupled policy but may provide differing levels of provider discretion in application.

3.5 Opportunities and options

Policy attention to integration within social housing is a relatively new phenomenon in Australia. Various attempts to develop policy consistency and build stronger linkages between sub-sectors can be identified over the past decade or so and interest in these issues has strengthened recently. This coincides with significant policy changes and external market pressures that challenge the roles and sustainability of each social housing sector. It is likely that social housing providers and products will continue to diversify. The complexity inherent in this situation has some negative impacts that will need to be managed within both policy and service delivery domains. This report has identified some areas where potential benefits, especially for clients, may be derived from improved linkages between public, community and Indigenous housing. It has also identified some of the risks, including: the need for caution in pursuing integration as an end in itself; the potential for negative impacts on clients if innovation, flexibility and choice are compromised; and the costs and uncertain outcomes of integration attempts. It is now suggested that there are six broad areas where there are opportunities for greater attention to be paid to internal integration amongst public, community and Indigenous housing. These are shown in Table 5.

Having identified areas where improved integration may have potential benefits, the next step is to consider the modes, instruments and implementation approaches to be adopted. The current wave of social housing reforms in South Australia, NSW and Queensland comprises both 'loosely coupled' approaches, such as the local collaboration in priority allocation processes between public and community housing providers in NSW, and 'tightly coupled' approaches, such as the uniform prioritisation and allocation policy prescriptions in Queensland. These represent significantly different approaches to pursuing similar objectives, such as consistency in assessing priority, improved client access across public and community housing, and enhanced accountability. However, each approach has very different implications in terms of client outcomes, costs, efficiency, flexibility and relationships between public and community housing agencies. Similarly, attempts at strengthening linkages between public, community and Indigenous housing include both 'top-down' and 'bottom -up' approaches and adopt a variety of integration instruments. Given the range of options available there is a need for clear objectives, an awareness of alternatives, and a careful approach to choosing the most appropriate modes and instruments. Ongoing evaluation of processes and outcomes is also necessary.

Table 5: Internal integration opportunities and options

Themes	Opportunities and constraints
Strategic policy coherence	→ Policy objectives are clear and promote choice, diversity and responsiveness. → Roles of different sectors/providers are clearly articulated and ensure culturally sensitive services. → Provider roles and tenant needs are aligned with provider skills and resources. → Service providers (public and community sectors) must participate in policy development and be consulted about the potential impacts of proposed changes and implementation issues. → Policy changes and implementation processes and timeframes are negotiated with affected stakeholders. → Potential impacts of policy change on other providers / programs / sectors should be taken into account.
Operational policies	→ Accurate information is readily available to all providers and clients about the nature and rationale for policy differences across programs/sectors, especially for key policies such as eligibility, allocations and rent. → Differences in standards across sectors for protecting clients' rights, including appeals, complaints and redress opportunities, should be reviewed.
Program and service planning	→ Inclusive, cross-sectoral regional planning processes should be established and resourced. → Regional planning should be informed about robust and timely needs and given market information. → Barriers to flexible use of property assets across programs and sectors should be reduced. → Delegation should ensure that flexible and collaborative responses to local/regional needs and housing market opportunities are enabled.
Accountability	→ Performance and compliance standards should be adoped across sectors that allow flexibility to recognise differences in service delivery, governance and regulatory contexts for public and community sector organisations. → Results of evaluations, regulatory assessments and performance data should be publicly reported.
Client access to multiple providers	→ Accurate and accessible web-based information for applicants about available options should be ensured. → Common assessment processes and information-sharing protocols should be adopted. → Web-based, shared waiting lists that maximise applicant choice and enable providers to match applicants with vacancies, should be established → Collaboration should be encouraged between providers to identify the most appropriate and timely housing option for applicants with complex or special needs.
Cross sectoral relationships	→ Strong local and regional networks should be facilitated between public, community and Indigenous housing providers. → Barriers to participation of Indigenous housing providers in mainstream networks should be identified and responded to. → Responsibility and resources to support effective networking should be allocated.

Themes	Opportunities and constraints
	→ Cross-sectoral training and professional development opportunities to build shared language, culture and practice need to be provided.
	→ Staff movement across sectors should be encouraged.

4 LINKING SOCIAL HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we are concerned with addressing social housing tenants' needs 'beyond housing'. These integration challenges were identified in Chapter 2 as the need to develop structures and processes to link social housing policy and service delivery with other human services. The chapter begins with an overview of housing and human services integration, and is followed by a report of views on these issues provided by stakeholders who participated in the workshops. Examples of housing and support integration initiatives from South Australia, NSW and Queensland are then examined. Finally some opportunities and options for action are presented. The findings in this chapter draw on policy and evaluation documents, research literature, workshop outcomes and key informant interviews.

The linking of housing assistance with other human services is a significant and growing housing management imperative for social housing providers. In the Positioning Paper and in Chapter 1 it was argued that the increasingly targeted nature of social housing and other developments in human services has contributed to greater recognition of the important role of housing in achieving 'beyond shelter' outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged households. Over the last two decades social housing has increasingly targeted those in greatest need. At the same time policy changes such as deinstitutionalisation and the development of community-based care and recovery programs in fields including health, mental health, disability, child protection and corrective services have also increased pressure on social housing. The combined effect has been to change the profile of social housing applicants and tenants, whose needs are now generally more complex, with higher prevalence of mental illness, disability and behavioural issues associated with multiple social disadvantages (AIHW, 2005; Jones, Phillips and Milligan, 2007).

Social housing providers are frequently expected to be supportive housing managers, given that they provide the housing of last resort for many vulnerable households with many and complex needs. Sustaining these tenancies can be a major challenge (Bleasdale, 2007). In many cases, meeting such needs requires a combination of housing, clinical and other support services, which must be well coordinated and complementary. The changing tenant profile is also contributing to spatial concentration of disadvantage and creating challenges in managing large public housing estates, prompting whole-of-government community renewal initiatives (Darcy and Georgiou, 2004). Managing the complexity of this situation requires an integrated approach that links housing with other areas of public policy and human services delivery.

Policy concern about the implications of changing social housing tenant profiles is reflected in the significant attention that has been given in AHURI research to issues of housing clients with specific needs. Reynolds, Inglis and O'Brien (2002) argued that effective coordination of housing assistance and other support can play an important role in sustaining affordable and appropriate housing for people with a mental illness and they identified a range of approaches to improving linkages between housing and support services. Other research has shown that there are background risk factors and precipitating events which need to be taken into account by social housing providers when considering how best to sustain tenancies (Jones, McAuliffe, Reddel, Thompson & Marston, 2004). Research on partnership arrangements between housing and mental health services in Queensland highlighted the potential for linking

housing and health services, but also signalled that such linkages require strong policy support, clarity of purpose and process, and resources to secure broad-scale and sustainable outcomes (Seelig and Jones, 2004). Bleasdale (2007) examined the issues of supporting tenancies for people with complex needs with a focus on specific programs and service delivery outcomes, and Tually (2007) reviewed the integration of state and territory housing and disability policies. All of these studies emphasise the importance of effective policy, program and service delivery linkages between housing and other human services in delivering integrated services and enhancing outcomes for people with complex needs.

A growing public policy interest in exploring and strengthening the relationships between housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes, addressing the problems of large public housing estates, and integrating social welfare and health programs with housing assistance is driven both by state housing authorities and by other government departments. This is taking place in a context of growing attention to whole-of-government initiatives, which seek to work across agencies to achieve inter-portfolio outcomes, sometimes referred to as 'joined-up solutions to joined-up problems' (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2003). There is increasing policy and research attention to the emergence and significance of this approach to contemporary public management in Australia and overseas (Institute of Public Administration Australia, 2002; Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson, 2005).

4.2   Stakeholder perceptions

The workshops conducted in SA, NSW and Qld confirmed that relationships between housing and other human services are a prominent concern of social housing practitioners. They identified a number of ideas about how to better coordinate housing and human services linkages, and highlighted significant challenges in developing and sustaining integration initiatives.

The key challenges identified by stakeholders were:

→ the increasing need for support services to assist social housing tenants to sustain their tenancies;

→ the difficulties in coordinating timely access to housing and support services for high-needs applicants;

→ the relationship between the homelessness and social housing sectors;

→ the negative impacts arising from a lack of policy coordination between housing and other human service systems.

Stakeholders identified a range of initiatives and ideas for responding to these challenges and emphasised the need for policy-level and service-delivery responses to be mutually reinforcing. Key integration barriers identified by participants included: the impact of different funding priorities and requirements; differing cultures and policies between housing and other departments. Collaborative relationships, formal agreements and effective governance structures were identified as beneficial in driving change and building robust and sustainable relationships. The views expressed by stakeholders are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Stakeholder perceptions of linkages with human services

Integration challenges	*Key issues raised by participants*
Accessing support services to assist tenants to sustain social housing tenancies	→ Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between State agencies do not necessarily ensure local linkages for individual clients. → Community housing is not always included in scope of MOUs. → Many tenants depend on the availability and flexibility of support services to sustain their tenancy. → Sustaining tenancies requires new roles/skills for public housing staff. → Sustaining tenancies for high-need clients is resource-intensive for social housing. → Housing and support linkages require local relationship-building, coordination structures and protocols. → Sustaining tenancy initiatives need to be proactive rather than crisis reactive. → Boundary blurring and 'responsibility creep' is occurring as social housing takes on support and coordination roles.
Coordinating access to housing and support services for applicants with housing and support needs	→ Differences in professional paradigms and cultures is a barrier to collaboration. → Responsibility for leading/facilitating coordination is sometimes not clearly assigned. → Policy differences can make it difficult to join up programs for individual clients (e.g. different eligibility and priority criteria). → Local agreements between housing and support providers exclude people without access to support services. → Coordinated access arrangements require long-term planning, especially for people with disabilities. → Limited housing supply both drives the need for coordination and constrains integration by limiting suitable housing opportunities. → There are moves in some states to develop integrated IT systems to facilitate coordination (e.g. NSW). → Joint-funding initiatives can be successful in ensuring resource availability is coordinated and provided at the right time. → There is a need for specific strategies for different issues (e.g. young people leaving care, released prisoners, homeless people, etc.).
Enhancing the role of social housing in addressing homelessness.	→ Relationships and boundaries between SAAP and social housing are unclear. → Whole-of-Government homelessness strategies provide an important mandate for integration but do not ensure this occurs on the ground. → Structural integration occurs in some states with housing and homelessness administered from the same portfolio.
Ensuring policy coordination	→ Changes in other human services shift costs by increasing demand for social housing (deinstitutionalisation, early release from prison and hospitals, outpatients care, community care for elderly, etc.). → Managing policy coordination across separate government agencies requires dedicated resources. → Coordination between health and housing departments is

Integration challenges	Key issues raised by participants
	particularly challenging given differences in structure, culture, resources and power.
	→ Formal agreements are difficult to develop and to sustain. They are vulnerable to personnel, administrative and political changes.

4.3 Integrated housing and support initiatives

A variety of approaches to integrating housing with other human services has been adopted over recent years in the three study states, with others planned or in the process of being implemented. The examples from SA, NSW and Qld can be categorised as:

→ Formal inter-agency agreements;

→ Joint or formally linked programs;

→ Informal service-delivery collaboration; and

→ Whole-of-Government strategies.

A number of these initiatives are now examined as examples of the different approaches adopted across the three jurisdictions. The main source of information in this section is policy documents and evaluation reports. However, as many of the initiatives are in the formative stages and have limited public documentation, we have relied heavily on phone and face-to-face interviews with key informants who have been closely involved in the planning and implementation of the initiatives. Where possible, this information was corroborated using other sources, including information collected from workshops, interviews with other stakeholders or reviews of relevant documents.

4.3.1 Formal inter-agency agreements

Formal inter-agency agreements to coordinate housing with other human services are written commitments that outline shared objectives, clarify roles and responsibilities of partners, and establish agreed principles and processes to manage relationships. Such agreements may be between two or more government or community-based agencies and may be time-limited or ongoing. They may have a state-wide or local service-delivery focus and generally include processes for monitoring, amending and re-negotiating the agreement. Four such agreements are discussed below.

Multilateral agreements

The NSW Housing and Human Service Accord (the Accord), established in 2006, is a multilateral, formal agreement involving the NSW Department of Housing, the Aboriginal Housing Office and eight other NSW government agencies. The signatory agencies include the following departments: Attorney General's; Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Community Services; Corrective Services; Education and Training; Juvenile Justice; Health; and Police. The Accord is an umbrella agreement that acts as a framework for specific cross-agency agreements which form schedules to the agreement. The objective of the Accord is:

> … to improve the planning, coordination and delivery of services to assist social housing tenants to sustain their tenancies, as well as to facilitate

community building and to reduce social disadvantage in the larger public housing estates. (NSW DoH, 2005, p. 3)

The Accord was initiated in conjunction with the 'Reshaping Public Housing' reforms in recognition of the need to strengthen housing and support linkages to deal with the implications of targeting public housing at people with high and complex needs. It was initiated by the Department of Housing and endorsed by human services ministers. The focus of the agreement is on mutual clients and it only commits agencies to operating within existing resources as no additional resources were specifically attached to the Accord.

The Accord encompasses a range of bilateral and multilateral agreements. These include specific joint programs such as the Housing and Support Initiative (HASI), discussed below, and more generic projects such as agreement about sharing client information, community regeneration, shared access trials, and shared assessment processes. Shared access trials involve priority access to public housing for clients of other agencies in return for their commitment to providing ongoing support. Some of these individual new initiatives such as HASI do have dedicated funding.

Governance of the Accord is by a Human Services Senior Officers Group which endorses specific initiatives as schedules to the Accord. While the signatories can only be government agencies, there is agreement that individual agencies will be responsible for enabling non-government organisations (NGOs) to participate through contracted services.

The Department of Housing has a dedicated implementation team, which includes an evaluation officer to incorporate evaluation into all initiatives. Regional coordinating management groups have been established to progress implementation and a regional partnership strategy is being developed to engage all service delivery stakeholders. Engagement of NGOs has occurred through an NGO partners' reference group comprising state-wide welfare and housing peak bodies and the participation of local NGOs in regional areas. Rollout is supported by training in partnerships for service-delivery staff and tools such as templates for developing different types of local agreements.

Progress was reported by key informants to be initially slow but, in the view of one key informant, momentum built over time with varying levels of interest from other agencies. Reservations appear to be related in part to concerns about unrealistic expectations and resource implications. Some agencies have indicated a view that social housing clients are not a priority. This has been attributed in part to a perception by other agencies that the Department of Housing has taken responsibility for their tenants by employing specialist staff in positions such as intensive client service, anti-social behaviours and regeneration.

Success factors to date cited by informants include: commitment from senior management within the Department of Housing; commitment and continuity of staff; pre-existing relationships with other agencies and NGOs; staff taking the time and effort to develop an understanding of each other's roles and structures; and shared objectives and commitment to meeting specific needs. According to informants, challenges have included: the time taken to engage other agencies; variations in delegations and devolution of responsibility between agencies; and achieving cultural change. Some resistance was reported by frontline staff who do not see the value of formal partnerships, especially where they don't deliver immediate results for clients in crisis.

It is difficult to assess the success of the accord or the factors cited by informants as barriers or facilitators as no evaluation has been undertaken to date. It is an ambitious

project with broad aims and multiple partners and as such will potentially provide important evidence regarding integration processes.

Bilateral agreements

Bilateral agreements generally in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) are quite commonly negotiated by public and community housing providers with disability, health, homelessness and other support agencies. Examples include MOUs between The Queensland Department of Housing and Disability Services Queensland (DSQ), and between mental health and housing authorities in South Australia. Local agreements between community housing and support providers are common in several states.

The Queensland Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Housing was signed in 2006. Its stated objective is:

> To coordinate and facilitate provision of housing and disability services and supports … to provide the best available outcome for people with a disability who are in need of services from both parties. (Qld Government, 2006a)

A Joint Ministerial Statement issued in 2003 and agency endorsement of a Joint Work Plan in 2005 preceded the MOU. The MOU provides a vehicle for developing operational policy for improved coordination, especially in relation to public housing co-tenancies with shared support provided or funded by DSQ. This includes processes for addressing escalating issues that cannot be resolved between the two Departments, and sharing of information about clients. A significant priority is to coordinate access to housing and support for mutual clients.

Specific schedules have been developed to cover specific joint initiatives such as

→ helping younger people in residential aged care;

→ providing services for people with acquired spinal cord injuries; and

→ developing protocols for sharing client information.

The MOU focuses on the relationship between the two departments and does not explicitly address relationships with NGOs funded by the two agencies. However, some initiatives do involve NGO disability support providers.

Under the MOU, regional directors and area managers are responsible for establishing partnership agreements and operational structures. The MOU does not include implementation tools such as templates for regional level agreements and it is up to regional staff to decide on the best approach. Processes to resolve issues locally have been developed with involvement of regional staff.

Overall, governance is by the Director-Generals, who receive regular reports and discuss issues at monthly meetings. A joint senior officers group meets bi-monthly and progress is monitored through a standing agenda item. Nominated staff are responsible for implementing specific initiatives on the joint work plan, which has three projects: mapping common clients; assessment and prioritisation; and dealing with DSQ clients in emergency and crisis situations.

Factors facilitating the implementation of the MOU were identified by a key policy informant as including:

→ a strong mandate from Director-Generals of both agencies, who have regular communication and an understanding of each others' business;

→ dedicated staff to progress the work, especially in DSQ, which has established a housing policy team;

→ formalised structures and regular monitoring;

→ early successes, which have built confidence and credibility with staff, clients and the community.

The informant considered the most significant risk to be the possibility of changes in staff or management and consequent loss of knowledge, relationships and shared history. Ongoing challenges were identified as a lack of appropriately designed and located housing and ensuring responsiveness to the diversity of client needs. Regular processes are in place for reviewing the operation of the MOU and evaluations are a feature of the individual initiatives. However, to date, no evaluations have been completed.

A South Australian MOU between the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse was signed in January 2007 following a protracted period of negotiation. The aim of the agreement 'is to ensure a collaborative working relationship to improve the housing outcomes for people with mental illness' (South Australia, 2007, p.1.). The primary objective is to support public housing tenants and applicants with mental health problems to access and maintain stable housing. The initial focus is on building relationships between housing and mental health services at regional level and facilitating client access to services. The MOU does not guarantee joint service or commit either agency to bypass existing prioritisation policies.

The MOU was instigated as a recommendation of a parliamentary committee review of disruptive behaviours of public housing tenants and has been instigated primarily by Housing SA. The scope of the agreement includes community-managed housing as well as public housing and community housing will be rolled out as a second stage. The agreement includes detailed operational guidelines and a regional framework template to guide implementation, both of which have been developed and implemented with the active engagement of head office and regional staff.

Governance structures are in place centrally and in regions. A state-wide steering committee includes senior housing and mental health managers. Regional housing and mental health managers are responsible for developing regional agreements and providing local leadership. Joint meetings are held in regions to monitor implementation and coordinate services for common clients.

Key informants reported that the implementation process had built relationships at regional level that were not there in the past and that mental health staff were enthusiastic about the initiative both centrally and in the regions. There are already indications of improvements in sharing information and linking tenants with mental health services.

The success to date is attributed by key policy informants to the mandate provided by the parliamentary committee report and the Minister and the support and leadership provided by senior managers in Housing SA. Other success factors were identified as having a dedicated implementation team and an Implementation Steering Committee. This committee included a range of players from housing and mental health who built relationships and developed a common understanding of each other's organisations that translated into protocols and procedures that would work for both parties.

Challenges in formalising and implementing the MOU, which have led to delays in implementation, were identified by workshop participants and a key policy informant as including:

→ three changes of Minister and changes in senior managers responsible for mental health, which necessitated re-building understanding and support for the MOU;

→ a requirement to work within existing resources and concern within mental health services about the potential resourcing implications of the MOU;

→ the need to work with different mental health regional structures;

→ difficulties communicating with and engaging diverse community housing organisations.

The MOU has a three-year term and is being rolled out with an understanding that it will be monitored and fine-tuned, based on experience. Regional implementation groups are collecting and reporting data and an evaluation is planned towards the end of the term.

Community Housing and Support Agreements were identified by workshop participants in NSW, SA and Qld as examples of formal bilateral agreements used by NGOs to create partnership for coordinating housing and support for people with specific needs. There is limited research, evaluation or consolidated information about the use of these formal housing and support agreements, apart from one NSW study (NSW Federation of Housing Associations, 2001). Based on a survey of NSW community housing organisations, this study found extensive use of agreements between community housing organisations and a variety of types of support agencies. The 36 organisations that responded to the survey reported having agreements with over 157 support agencies. More than half the housing organisations had agreements with support providers who worked with homeless people (63%), people with mental health problems and disorders (61%), young people (58%) and people with disabilities (56%). Over 85% of the agreements were written and a majority incorporated confidentiality, complaints and review processes. Selection processes featured in a majority of agreements and included nomination of tenants by the support provider, often to properties quarantined for that target group.

A separate study in Brisbane found that it is relatively common for community housing organisations to enter into more general agreements with support services to facilitate access to housing for clients of support services and to involve support providers to activities to assist tenants to sustain their housing (Phillips, 2007).

4.3.2 Joint programs

Another common approach to promoting housing and human services integration is to establish joint programs delivering integrated housing and support to meet specific needs. The target groups for these programs include people with disabilities or mental illness, homeless people, participants in drug-court diversion programs, and young people exiting state care. Joint programs usually have formally linked guidelines, joint funding and governance arrangements, and common eligibility criteria and coordinated access arrangements. A number of examples of programs such as these are considered below.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP)

Well known examples of joint Commonwealth-state programs are the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP), which are coordinated responses to homelessness. These national programs were established in 1984 under the National SAAP Agreement and the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA), and are administered by state and territory governments. In the past, nationally mandated governance structures,

included joint state plans, joint officers groups and joint advisory committees. Changes over the past decade in national program requirements, in particular reduced planning, approval and reporting requirements, have loosened some of these formal linkages. Coordination of these programs has been the subject of national and state-level reviews, including a recent Queensland review of the administrative arrangements for the programs (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2004; Queensland, Department of Housing, 2008a).

The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI)

HASI is a program jointly funded and administered by the NSW Department of Housing and the NSW Department of Health. It provides an integrated approach to providing housing, clinical care and accommodation support for people living with mental illness and psychiatric disability. The program has been in place since 2003 and was built on a previous housing and mental health formal agreement, the Joint Guarantee of Service for People with Mental Health Problems and Disorders Living in Aboriginal, Community and Public Housing (JGOS). The program initially had capacity to assist 100 high support tenants, but by 2006 was able toassist 736 people with varying levels of support need (Muir, Fisher, Dadich, Abelló & Bleasdale, 2007).

The objectives of HASI are primarily to enhance access to stable housing and to improve client outcomes. Its stated objective is:

> … to assist people with mental illness problems and disorders requiring accommodation support to participate in the community, maintain successful tenancies, improve quality of life and, most importantly, to assist in recovery from mental illness (NSW Health, 2006, p. 2).

As a joint housing and mental health program, HASI enhances access by targeting a specified package of coordinated housing, clinical care and support for people who meet the program eligibility requirements, thus allowing them to bypass mainstream waiting lists. This coordinated approach also enhances client outcomes by maximizing the likelihood of participants maintaining stable accommodation and participating in rehabilitative activities.

The use of a joint program as the instrument of integration has the benefit of quarantining resources and guaranteeing timely access and coordination of the three components of service, housing, clinical care and accommodation support. The program state-wide and local governance structures include shared responsibility by the Departments of Housing and Health for program management, monitoring and evaluation.

Program management arrangements have a strong integration focus, as evidenced by the establishment of program-delivery policy, frameworks and tools for:

→ Service level agreements;

→ Individual client service plans;

→ Application, referral and needs assessment forms;

→ Joint assessment policy;

→ Service monitoring and client satisfaction forms;

→ Local service coordination structures;

→ Escalating dispute resolution processes; and

→ Robust monitoring and evaluation processes (NSW Health, 2006).

The program involves a high level of devolution of responsibility to local service providers. The evaluation findings indicate a high level of local discretion rests with the service delivery partners to adapt the common policies, frameworks and tools to local conditions through the negotiation of local service level agreements.

The program evaluation found the program has been effective in achieving stability of tenancies, community participation and family connectedness, access to specialist and generalist services, improved mental health, reduced hospitalization and cost-effectiveness (Muir, Fisher, Dadich, Abelló & Bleasdale, 2007). It also found that partnerships were an important contributor to the effectiveness of the program, identifying the key factors that facilitated strong inter-agency working relationships under HASI. These include:

→ Shared understanding and a strong commitment to the program;

→ Clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and realistic expectations;

→ Shared and strong commitment to participant outcomes;

→ Respectful relationships and open and constructive communication between partners;

→ Transparency and shared information;

→ Capacity to work together and resolve issues; and

→ Continuity in staffing (Muir, Fisher, Dadich, Abelló & Bleasdale, 2007).

The evaluation process for HASI was established to enable the findings to inform program development and focused on both participant outcomes and governance and processes. It was longitudinal, comprehensive and supported by information collected through robust data collection and monitoring.

The Queensland Transitional Housing Program

The Queensland Transitional Housing Program has many similarities to HASI but is more limited in scale and scope. The program is a component of the 'Responding to Homelessness' program announced in 2005 and is a joint initiative of the Queensland Department of Housing and Queensland Health (Seelig, Phillips and Thompson, 2007). The program offers a coordinated package of transitional accommodation, clinical services, case management and accommodation support to homeless people. Services are located in Brisbane and Townsville and there is accommodation capacity for up to 44 participants. Eligibility is restricted to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and are exiting mental health facilities. Participants are accommodated for six months by community housing organisations in specially purchased dwellings owned by the Department of Housing and assisted to access longer-term housing options. Case management and clinical care are provided by Queensland Health, and accommodation support services are provided either by Queensland Health or contracted NGOs. Initial findings from the mid-term review of the 'Responding to Homelessness' program indicate a high level of support for the initiative by all stakeholders (Seelig, Phillips and Thompson, 2007). An outcomes evaluation was undertaken in early 2008.

4.3.3 Service delivery collaboration

Workshop participants reported various examples of local service-delivery collaboration between housing and support services initiated by public and community sector agencies in the three study sites. Some examples involved informal working relationships between two or more organisations to improve access or sustain tenancies for people with specific needs. In other cases, housing and support providers collaborate to adapt existing services or attract resources for new services to meet identified service gaps. An example is the Private Rental Brokerage Service.

The Private Rental Brokerage Service

The Private Rental Brokerage Service is an example of a service delivery collaboration aimed at integrating housing and support services to provide housing access and sustainability for people with complex needs. The service commenced as a pilot project in Coffs Harbour in May 2003 and assists people who are homeless, cannot immediately access social housing, and are assessed as being unlikely to access or sustain a private tenancy without support.

The brokerage service was initiated and actively promoted by the local office of the NSW Department of Housing in recognition of the fact that the private rental market is often the only housing option immediately available for people applying for housing assistance. The service coordinates private rental assistance provided by the Department of Housing with supported accommodation services in the community and housing from the private rental market. The Department of Housing's Coffs Harbour office works with community-based support partners as well as local real estate agents (NSW Department of Housing, 2005a).

The service assists approximately 100 households a year to make a successful transition from temporary or crisis accommodation to a private rental tenancy. Participants are often homeless or at risk of homelessness and are experiencing a range of situations, including serious health conditions, social isolation, substance abuse, mental health issues and disabilities. They have difficulty obtaining a tenancy due to lack of a private rental references or listing on a tenancy database. The Department's role is to act as a broker between clients, support services and private real estate agents. Tenancies are monitored for rent payments, property care and support requirements for 3-6 months and an exit plan is negotiated once the tenancy is stabilised.

According to the local partners, the scheme has achieved a high success rate attributed to the initial careful assessment of clients and the support provided by partners in the project. The service has increased the housing options available by building confidence by real estate agents that tenants housed under the program can sustain successful tenancies (NSW Department of Housing, 2004). The success of the service was recognised in 2004 when it received a NSW Premier's Public Service Award (NSW Department of Housing, 2004). Success factors for the project include the availability of affordable housing, staff skilled in complex needs assessment, and strong links with support services (Jacobs, Natalier, Slatter, Berry, Stoakes, Seelig, Hutchison, Grieve, Phibbs and Gurran, 2005).

The Private Rental Brokerage Service provides an example of a local initiative that harnesses existing local resources and programs to respond flexibly to community needs. It demonstrates the outcomes that can be achieved across sectoral boundaries using a collaborative approach that is built on working with the differing and particular strengths and limitations of each sector.

4.3.4 Whole-of-government strategies

Whole-of-government strategies are instruments for responding to complex issues that are identified as strategic government priorities requiring participation and coordination across multiple government agencies. Examples that have a core focus on links between housing and other human services include place-based strategies, such as Community Renewal, as well as specific issues, such as homelessness (Wright-Howie, n.d.; Australasian Housing Institute, 2005). It is increasingly common for housing to be included in whole-of-government strategies such as Families First in NSW, where improved housing is one of several objectives (Valentine, Fisher and Thomson, 2006).

Community Renewal

Community or neighbourhood renewal strategies are interventions directed towards improving physical and social amenity and addressing social disadvantage in targeted locations, commonly those with high concentrations of social housing. In Australia these strategies are usually driven and coordinated by state housing authorities to address safety, crime prevention and housing management issues, and focus on upgrading dwellings and public areas as well as tenant engagement and community-development interventions (Darcy and Georgiou, 2004). In some states, such as Victoria and Queensland, community renewal is implemented through a whole-of-government strategy, attracting additional state funding and involving a range of state government departments, as well as engaging local government, residents and community organisations. Whole-of-government community renewal interventions typically apply community development techniques to engage local stakeholders in planning and implementation.

Homelessness strategies

Most states and the Commonwealth have developed whole-of-government homelessness strategies in recent years, in recognition of the complexity of factors contributing to homelessness and the need for a multi-faceted but coordinated response (Wright-Howie, n.d.). State housing authorities in a number of states have taken a lead role in coordinating the development and implementation of these homelessness strategies, even in states such as NSW and Queensland, where responsibility for SAAP, the core homelessness program, lies with another government agency (e.g., NSW Department of Housing, 2003; Queensland, 2005).

The scope of homelessness strategies varies considerably across jurisdictions. Integrated service delivery is a core theme and is involved in each of the following common strategies:

→ Prevention through interventions such as diversion and discharge planning in the justice, corrective services, health and child protection systems;

→ Early intervention to assist at-risk households to maintain tenancies;

→ Coordinated housing and support to establish and sustain tenancies for people with complex needs;

→ Coordinated access by homeless people to accommodation and support;

→ Outreach and crisis accommodation options for rough sleepers; and

→ Enhanced pathways for homeless people to secure housing.

The Queensland Government 'Responding to Homelessness' initiative was announced in 2005 and committed over $235 million over four years to new and enhanced services. The Queensland Department of Housing has responsibility for coordinating the development and implementation of the initiative, which involves another six departments, including those responsible for community services, health, corrective services, justice, police and fair trading. The goal of the initiative is:

> … to ensure homeless people have access to an integrated service system that meets their immediate needs and that leads to opportunities for connecting with and participating as part of the community (Queensland, 2005a, p. 3).

The dual focus is to enhance existing services and to establish new services, and to better coordinate services provided by government agencies and community organisations. Integration is clearly a core focus of the initiative and the objectives include enhanced access to services and improved outcomes for homeless people.

'Responding to Homelessness' was initiated and driven centrally by government, with limited regional and service provider participation. It largely consists of complementary but separate responses by individual agencies under a common banner and is targeted primarily to five agreed locations. State-wide and regional coordination mechanisms were established to monitor implementation and to encourage linkages between programs and services (Seelig, Phillips and Thompson, 2007).

The mid-term review of 'Responding to Homelessness' indicates considerable success in establishing new and enhanced services according to plan and within short timeframes but less success in achieving enhanced policy and service-delivery integration. The success to date has been attributed to a strong mandate from government, additional resources, and a high level of support and commitment from government and community sector organisations for the new services.

Areas identified by the review for further development include:

→ strengthening and clarifying policy and service delivery leadership and governance arrangements;

→ building a common understanding between policy makers and service providers about what constitutes an integrated homelessness service system;

→ improving communication with service providers;

→ engaging service providers in policy and program development and implementation planning;

→ Strengthening planning, monitoring and data collection systems; and

→ developing a long-term view to inform system change management strategies (Seelig, Phillips and Thompson, 2007).

The initiative includes a commitment to evaluation of the overall strategy and its component parts. A mid-term review of the implementation process was undertaken early in 2007 and an outcomes evaluation was planned for 2008 following evaluation by individual agencies of their programs.

4.3.5 Summary

The key characteristics of the identified housing and human services integration initiatives are summarised in Table 7. Common features of these initiatives are that

they have a primary focus on service delivery and shared core objectives to improve access to services and to enhance housing and non-shelter outcomes for people who might otherwise be excluded or have difficulty navigating the service system. Most also have some focus on new or reformed policies or programs. A range of different instruments are evident, in part reflecting differences in the number of government agencies participating and the breadth and nature of the initiative. Joint programs and whole-of-government strategies tend to use more formalised instruments than local service provider partnerships. Many of the examples adopt top-down modes of initiation while others involve bottom-up approaches instigated and driven by frontline services. Many of the initiatives involve a mix of loosely and tightly coupled approaches to achieving integration.

Table 7: Characteristics of human services integration initiatives

Instruments	Objectives	Domains	Modes
NSW Housing and Human Service Accord	Improvement of planning, coordination and delivery of services to clients and communities.	Focuses on both policy and service delivery coordination.	Top-down initiative, including both loosely and tightly integrated initiatives.
Qld Housing and Disability MOU	Coordination and improvement of access to housing and disability services and improved outcomes for mutual clients.	Primary focus on service-delivery coordination.	Top-down initiative with regional flexibility in implementation. The overarching agreement is loosely coupled but encompasses some tightly-coupled joint programs.
SA Housing and Mental Health MOU	Collaborative working relationships to improve housing outcomes for people with mental illness.	Primarily focused on service delivery, with policy focus on resource allocation and evaluation.	Top-down initiative with prescribed regional operational guidelines. Flexibility for regions to develop MOUs to meet local conditions.
Community housing support agreements	Coordination of housing and support and improvement of access and outcomes for high-needs clients.	Service-delivery focus.	Bottom-up initiatives. Generally loosely coupled but in some cases support agencies have nomination rights.
Joint programs: SAAP/CAP; HASI; and THP.	Coordination of housing and support for people with specific needs.	Primarily service delivery focus, with policy and program level focus on resource allocation and evaluation.	Top-down initiatives. Tight coupling is inherent in design of joint programs.
Private rental brokerage service	To assist homeless people to access and sustain private rental housing.	Service delivery focus.	Bottom-up initiative. Tightly coupled, with formal protocols involving multiple partners.
Community renewal	Addressing locational disadvantage.	Primarily service-delivery focus. Often involves policy and program-level interventions.	Top-down initiatives, generally with strong local participation. Mix of loose and tight coupling, involving multiple stakeholders.
Whole-of	Coordination of	Primary focus on	Top-down initiatives

		service delivery, with strong focus on policy and program-level responses.	involving multiple agencies. Mix of loosely and tightly coupled initiatives.
government responses to homelessness	policies, programs and services to prevent and respond to homelessness.		

A number of the interventions have incorporated comprehensive, phased evaluations that focus on client outcomes, as well as on service delivery and governance processes. A small number have recently been completed for established initiatives, and others are planned. Such evaluations have potential to improve knowledge about the impact of different approaches to pursuing service integration between housing and other human services and how these approaches contribute to improved service provision and client outcomes.

4.4 Opportunities and options

Concern with the linkages between social housing and other human services will continue to be a feature of social housing provision for as long as social housing operates as the safety-net housing option for those with high and complex needs and for the clients of other publicly supported human services. The evidence in Australia regarding the success of attempts to achieve policy and service coordination between housing and support is patchy and inconclusive. However, based on previous research and evaluation literature as well as on the findings of our study, we have identified two key themes and potential strategies for responding to these challenges. They are summarised in the following table.

Table 8: Human services linkages: opportunities and options

Themes and issues	Strategies
Inter-agency relationships and governance	→ Build a common understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.
	→ Establish lead agency responsibility.
	→ Establish decision-making (governance) processes and authority.
	→ Establish problem solving and conflict resolution processes and forums.
Coordinated housing and support policies, programs and services	→ Identify and agree on objectives, policies and program parameters.
	→ Ensure partners have a shared understanding of policy intent.
	→ Understand resource implications and potential for cost shifting.
	→ Allocate adequate resources for implementation and evaluation.
	→ Establish realistic timeframes and staging of implementation.
	→ Review policies and practices to identify barriers to coordinated prioritisation and access.
	→ Agree on case management protocols.
	→ Develop tools, training and processes to build

	relationships and collaborative capacity across housing and support staff.

The first theme recognises that linkages between housing and other human services generally involve inter-organisational relationships. Our review of initiatives in this area are not conclusive but support the findings of previous studies about the importance of a shared understanding of the roles, opportunities and constraints of the respective agencies and robust and inclusive central and local governance structures. The second theme centres on the development of coordinated policies, programs and services. The strategies proposed here emphasise the importance of shared objectives and deliberation about the most appropriate implementation modes and instruments. They are underpinned by recognition of the challenges inherent in formulating and implementing such integration projects.

5 DIVERSIFYING HOUSING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

5.1 Introduction

So far in this report we have been concerned mainly with integration issues arising within the multi-provider delivery system for social housing (Chapter 3) and with those that arise in linking human services and social housing for clients with special needs (Chapter 4). This chapter focuses on the third cluster of issues we identified in Chapter 2, those concerned with effectively linking social housing with the wider set of policies, programs and services of housing assistance, especially government's role in promoting the provision of more affordable housing. Essentially, such initiatives are designed to address unmet housing needs, to offer clients more housing choices, and to promote pathways within the housing system for clients whose needs and aspirations change over the life course.

5.2 Policy context

Over the past two decades Australia, like many countries, has experienced significant changes in the scale and scope of policies designed to tackle housing problems. In Australia there has been a winding-back of many forms of home ownership assistance, targeted previously at marginal buyers. There has been a decline in investment in social housing supply, while funding for income support for low-income private renters and for homelessness services has been increased (AIHW, 2005).

Recently, however, there has been renewed government interest in promoting and developing a greater variety of ways to assist households with housing needs. The main drivers of the renewed interest in diversifying housing policy strategies can be found in:

→ The changing role of social housing that we outlined in the previous report of this study (Jones, Phillips and Milligan, 2007). At its present scale and as it is now configured, the social housing system cannot meet the housing needs of many who apply. In 2005/06, 27,544 eligible applicants were assisted with public housing across Australia but there were 186,934 outstanding applications (Australia, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007, Table A4). As well, there are more low-income households in housing stress who are renting outside the social housing system than there are similar households being assisted[3] .

→ Declining market provision of appropriate housing that is affordable for low and middle-income households in many locations across Australia (Yates, Wulff and Reynolds, 2004, Australia, Productivity Commission, 2004). This situation has generated renewed policy interest in targeting some form of housing assistance to households in the gap between market housing and deeply subsidised or non-

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[3] In 2002/03 there were 460,000 low-income households (lowest two quintiles) in the private rental market paying 30% or more of their gross household income for their housing. This compared with around 308,000 similar households in public housing who were benefiting from a rent level linked to their capacity to pay (usually assessed at around 25% of their assessable household income). (Yates and Gabriel, 2006: Tables 1.1& 3.6)

market housing[4] and in promoting a continuum of housing assistance options (Weatherill, 2006a; Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan, 2007).

→ The potential to develop new forms of affordable housing that do not require as much direct public subsidy as traditional forms of social housing. Different ways of financing and delivering a variety of affordable housing options in partnership with non-government agencies have been demonstrated in a small way in Australia and on larger scales in other comparable countries (see Milligan, Phibbs, Fagan and Gurran, 2004; Lawson and Milligan, 2007).

→ The incidence of persistent affordability problems in the private rental market, where housing stress is concentrated. While private renters represent less than one quarter of Australian households, over half of low households in housing stress in Australia in 2002/03 were renting privately (Yates and Gabriel 2006, Table 1.1).

→ Following from this situation, the potential to utilise the existing supply of housing in the private rental market to address the needs of low-income households who cannot access social housing (Yates, Wulff and Reynolds, 2004). Policy responses to this situation involve matching low-income households to private rental housing that is within their capacity to pay, making additional subsidies available where affordable alternatives are lacking, and providing tenancy support to help sustain a tenancy (see Chapter 4 on rental brokerage models).

→ A broad policy concern with promoting social cohesion or combatting segregation and locational disadvantage. This has contributed to recognition of the potential to use housing and planning policies to influence the social vitality of local communities, particularly by providing for more diverse forms of housing and diffusing subsidised housing across areas rather than concentrating it in particular neighbourhoods (Hulse and Stone, 2006).

→ The potential to use forms of housing assistance to attract or retain specified target groups in a local area. An example often cited in Australia is the use of shared equity or below-market rental housing products in the UK to assist public-sector workers and other employee groups to obtain housing located close to their work (Pinnegar, Milligan, Quintal, Randolph, Williams and Yates, 2008).

5.3   Overview of affordable housing initiatives

In 2003 the Australian Government and all state and territory governments (hereafter state) adopted a principle to 'promote a national, strategic and long-term vision for affordable housing in Australia through a comprehensive approach by all levels of government' (CSHA Principle 11, COA 2003). Following on from this commitment, the Framework for National Action on Affordable Housing was released in 2005 and a 3-year policy development process was established. (Details are in Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan, 2007).

5.3.1 State and territory affordable housing initiatives

Meanwhile, in response to the drivers identified above, several state governments have taken the lead by developing affordable housing strategies and by beginning to

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[4] In 2002/03, 16% (or 162,000 households) of low and moderate income households in housing stress in Australia had household incomes in the third income quintile (Yates and Gabriel, 2006: Tables 1.1 & 1.2)

invest in new models of affordable housing provision. A summary of the kinds of initiatives that are emerging in states and territories is given in Table 9. Initiatives included in the table are those state-funded activities that are additional to public, community and Indigenous housing programs and other forms of assistance funded under the CSHA.

At present, these state-based affordable housing strategies differ in scope and emphasis, and scales of investment also vary. Victoria has made the biggest government investment so far in affordable housing, amounting to nearly $520 million in expenditure and forward commitments for the decade commencing 2000/01 (Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan, 2007). South Australia and the ACT have introduced the most wide-ranging strategies that link planning, land supply and financial mechanisms to produce and promote a variety of forms of affordable housing. In South Australia the initial emphasis is being placed on additional supply of low-cost home ownership, although some new rental supply is also envisaged[5] . Other jurisdictions have initiated their strategies with a boost to rental housing supply. While it is early days for assessment of these initiatives, there have been some research and evaluation studies that have documented their characteristics and performance and considered their potential. (See for instance Milligan, Phibbs, Fagan and Gurran, 2004; KPMG, 2005; Milligan and Phibbs, 2005; Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan, 2007).

Table 9: Australian state and territory affordable housing strategies

Jurisdiction	Recent affordable housing initiatives	Main affordable housing providers	Main products
New South Wales	→ Capitalisation of one affordable housing company using Commonwealth and state funds and developer contributions (1994); state and developer input is ongoing → Capital grants for affordable rental housing projects initiated by registered community housing providers that can procure minimum 40% non-government funding (debt and/or equity) → Application of planning requirements or incentives to the provision of affordable housing in specific areas/sites → Allowing use of negotiated planning agreements under state planning law to procure developer contributions for affordable housing → Pilot program offering 35-year leases on	City West Housing Ltd Registered housing associations, designated growth providers[6]	Rental housing for low and moderate income households

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[5] Small amounts of additional housing will not provide for growth in the supply of affordable rental housing in the foreseeable future because the SA Government is also selling about 8,000 units of former public housing to help reduce their debt burden.

[6] Two growth providers, St George Community Housing Ltd and Affordable Housing Ltd were announced in December 2007. A tender for up to 10 additional providers was underway at the time of writing. Five additional growth providers were announced in May 2008: BlueCHP, South West Inner Sydney Housing Cooperative Limited, North Coast Community Housing Co ltd, Compass Housing Services Co. Ltd and Community Housing Ltd.

Jurisdiction	Recent affordable housing initiatives	Main affordable housing providers	Main products
	600 government-owned properties managed by non-government 'growth providers' to provide a secure revenue stream to support their borrowings for affordable housing		
	→ Target 7.5% land sales by government land developer (Landcom) sold at prices that are affordable to moderate income households		
Queensland	→ Capitalisation of two affordable housing companies by state and local governments	Brisbane Housing Company Ltd	Sub-market priced rental housing
	→ New Housing Affordability Strategy to improve the operation of the housing market announced in July 2007. Includes establishment of government land development agency to, *inter alia*, increase the supply of affordable land	Gold Coast Affordable Housing Company Ltd	
South Australia	→ Legislated provision for up to 15% affordable housing (including 5% high-needs housing) in significant new release areas	Private sector and NFP partners	Market provided fixed-price rental and home-ownership initiatives
	→ Establishment of South Australian Affordable Housing Trust to provide and promote affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income South Australians		Priced for low- and moderate-income target groups
	→ Innovative financing products offered through SA government corporation, Home*Start* Finance		Target groups and NFP partners have preferential access for given periods.
	→ Capital grants for affordable rental housing projects developed by not-for-profit/private partners that leverage additional financial resources		Brokered private rental housing
ACT	→ Significant increase in land-release targets, including targets for low-priced blocks	Community Housing Canberra (CHC) Ltd	Sub-market priced rental housing
	→ Title transfer of 135 former public housing dwellings to CHC to redevelop and procure additional housing		Lower priced house and land packages
	→ CHC access to a revolving government finance facility of $50m at government borrowing rates		Commitment to shared equity scheme
	→ Rolling program of land sales to CHC		

Jurisdiction	Recent affordable housing initiatives	Main affordable housing providers	Main products
	through the Land Development Agency		
	→ A range of other strategies to promote housing diversity and affordability in the ACT housing market, coordinated and monitored through the Chief Minister's Department		
	→ http://www.affordablehousingact.com.au		
Victoria	→ Development of a regulated housing associations sector capable of initiating and delivering affordable housing projects.	Currently eight registered housing associations under Part VIII of the Housing Act 1983	Below-market rental housing for a mix of low-and moderate-income households
	→ Capital grants to housing associations		
	→ Land development agency (VicUrban) operates small-scale affordable housing rental and purchase initiatives		
	→ Funding to six local governments for development of local action plans for provision of affordable housing in strategic locations		
	→ Further strategies under development		
Tasmania	→ Annual operating subsidy to Tasmanian Affordable Housing Ltd.	Tasmanian Affordable Housing Ltd (TAH)	Head-leased private housing
	→ Release of crown land for development of affordable homes		New rental housing developed by TAH on crown land
			Low-cost market housing on state or privately owned land

Note: An affordable housing strategy is under development in Western Australia and the Northern Territory

5.3.2 Commonwealth Government affordable rental supply initiatives

The Commonwealth Government has announced a specific rental housing supply initiative, the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) to commence in the financial year 2008/09. This initiative is designed to promote large-scale institutional investment in the rental market. In return for an annual refundable tax offset valued at $6,000 per annum (or an equivalent grant to charitable non-profit organisations) for 10 years, to be funded by the Australian Government, and an additional annual subsidy to the value of $2,000, to be delivered through state governments, investors will be required to provide funding for new rental housing to low-and moderate-income

households that are experiencing housing affordability stress at rents no higher than 80 per cent of market levels (ALP 2007; Australia, 2008a). Provision has been made to offer this incentive for 50,000 additional dwellings over four years (to 2011/2012) initially. Provision for another 50,000 has been promised once the scheme reaches its initial target, subject to demand (Rudd, 2008, Australian Government 2008a). This is the first scaleable program of private investment in affordable rental housing to be mooted in Australia. Policy details and implementation plans are presently subject to development and consultation (Australia, 2008a). The NRAS program will be critical to shaping future arrangements for financing and delivering affordable housing in Australia – in particular, for determining who will develop, own and manage the housing, and under what conditions.

5.3.3 Integration challenges

Applying the focus of this study on integration challenges to the emerging policies and strategies designed to address housing affordability problems, suggests the following challenges are likely to arise:.

At the policy level:

→ Coordination and interaction of affordable housing assistance policies with the policies of a wider range of government agencies, especially planning and land development agencies and local governments;

→ Establishment of a sound basis for allocating resources and apportioning subsidies across a greater mix of housing products and a broader range of target groups; and

→ Development of coherent policy requirements and managing compliance for multiple programs/products.

At the service delivery level:

→ Enabling and managing a greater variety of partnerships involving market and community sector agencies to finance and deliver affordable housing;

→ Ensuring clients are well informed about the wider range of housing options;

→ Managing client access to the greater variety of providers; and

→ Facilitating client choice among different products.

Some of these challenges are likely to be manifest in quite similar ways to those policy and service delivery issues facing the multi-provider social housing system examined in Chapter 3. However, issues such as resource allocation and the targeting of subsidies, coordination with non-housing government agencies and provider accountabilities are likely to be more significant in the affordable housing domainas more policy levers are adopted, more partnerships are established, more products emerge, and as target groups are broadened. The framework presented in Chapter 2 provides concepts and analytical tools that assist in examining and responding to the integration challenges inherent in this complex and multi-stakeholder environment.

Participants in the workshops conducted for this study as well as key informants were asked to consider how the emergence of additional housing policies and programs would impact on the existing policy and service-delivery framework. Their views are presented next.

5.4　Stakeholder perspectives

Workshop participants identified several specific issues which they considered would need to be addressed under emerging policy frameworks and service models for the provision of a wider range of affordable housing options.

Participants considered that there needed to be more clarity on what was meant by 'affordable housing'. Use of this term has been ambiguous, variously used to refer to traditional public and community housing and/or to other forms of market-provided or subsidised housing that is affordable for low-and middle-income households.

The call for clarity was linked to current concerns that the notion of establishing an 'affordable housing' sector would create a risk that another discrete system of housing provision (or 'silo') develops alongside the existing social housing sector. The origins of these concerns can be seen in policies and/or promotions that distinguish affordable housing from social housing, and the trend to establish new structures and institutions for the provision of affordable housing in some jurisdictions. Thus, having clarity about what is affordable housing and a better understanding of the rationale for establishing different financing and service delivery arrangements emerged from the workshops as key integration issues.

Workshop participants were also concerned about social housing becoming further marginalised and residualised. It was felt that the services, assets, providers and tenants of the social housing sector needed to be recognised as forming an integral part of a more diversified affordable housing system. Explicit consideration of the links between traditional social housing and emerging affordable housing options might provoke changes in social housing policies and service-delivery models that would follow logically from having additional products and larger-scale alternative providers. Such considerations would also bring to the fore questions about how existing tenants of social housing can benefit from a more diversified housing assistance system.

When considering questions about how interfaces between affordable housing and the human services delivery system might develop, participants expected that the issues would be similar to those for social housing. However, depending on who lives in affordable housing, these issues may not loom as large as they do for social housing currently (See Chapter 4).

Another key issue identified by stakeholders was that of how the roles and responsibilities of government and its partners would be delineated and coordinated in a more diversified system. In particular, participants queried how a partnership approach would be facilitated and how the risk of duplication and inconsistency in policies and practice across a continuum of models could be avoided.

To help to tease out the integration issues and themes that may emerge between existing housing assistance arrangements and new directions we turn now to an examination of developments in South Australia in a little more detail. However, as the implementation of new directions there is only just underway, it is not possible to make a thorough assessment of the approach to the issues we have just raised.

5.5　South Australia's affordable housing directions

As discussed in the previous chapters, South Australia is implementing a set of major reforms to its housing product range and housing delivery system. There is a four-fold focus for reform in South Australia involving: better use of resources, providing quality of service, stronger governance and development of a continuum of housing options

(Smith, personal communication; see also South Australia, 2005). In previous chapters different features of these reforms have been described as they relate to the social housing and human service systems respectively. In this chapter, we focus on the development of a continuum of housing options.

The rationale for increasing the range of housing options in South Australia, in the context of growing affordability problems, is to:

→ Increase value-for-money for government investment through partnering and private financing;

→ Demonstrate workable models not used previously;

→ Diversify responses across tenures, locations and target groups and to match the changing community profile of need;

→ Promote planning initiatives relating to the supply of affordable and high-need housing (South Australia, 2005).

Additional housing products being developed and offered in South Australia are designed to meet the diverse needs of low- and moderate-income households and to offer additional options to households that would otherwise be reliant on highly subsidised social housing or that might be trapped in unaffordable and/or inappropriate private rental housing. There is also promotion of a government-facilitated function to better match available low-cost private housing to low-income households.

Table 10 provides a summary of current and planned affordable housing products in South Australia. A key mechanism that has been adopted to facilitate the procurement of these affordable housing products has been the setting of explicit targets for the provision of affordable housing, including high-needs housing, in major new development areas. A social integration theme underpins this initiative: it is designed to promote a greater supply of more, well designed affordable housing that is integrated into local communities in desirable locations.

Recent guidelines issued by the South Australian Affordable Housing Trust (see below) suggest a range of ways that developers might achieve the 15% affordable housing target that has been set, including 'design and construction of simple, high quality homes, resulting in a lower market value (smaller homes on smaller lots) and innovative financing, such as the use of soft second mortgages, deferred land purchase or shared equity or subsidised financing options, which makes the sale price within reach of low and moderate income buyers' (South Australia, 2007a, p. 3 quoted in Gurran, Milligan, Baker, Bugg, and Christensen, 2008) . South Australia already has a range of government-provided home loan products (both commercial and subsidised), which may be available to assist households to purchase (see http://www.homestart.com.au/home-loans/home-loan-summary). More financing products such as shared equity and rent-to-buy are expected to be added to the HomeStart product range in future, to boost the access of lower income buyers to home ownership (Lawson, personal communication).

Examination of policy documents and interviews with housing officials in South Australia have provided some insights into how policy coordination and service integration in this area will be addressed, although much of what is being discussed is still prospective. Below, we consider three specific areas where some initial responses to integration issues are indicated.

5.5.1 Client information and access

An element of the reforms in South Australia that will have a crucial bearing on the success of this model at the service-delivery level is the role intended for Housing SA offices[7]. Planning has commenced to establish specialist staff, currently being described as 'housing career consultants', in each of these offices (Lawson personal communication). Their primary roles will be to assess client eligibility and needs, to provide comprehensive information about what different providers offer and to help to match a client to one of the growing range of housing products being offered. Thus, local offices of Housing SA will provide the information gateway to the range of housing options that are supported by the South Australian Government and provided by a mix of government and non-government agencies.

It is expected that 'housing career consultants' will also assist clients whose circumstances change to review their housing options. A key challenge will be whether a client with changed financial circumstances will be able to elect another product along the continuum and remain in their existing residence and/or stay with their current service provider. One way of achieving this flexibility will be to encourage more providers to diversify their product range.

Table 10: Government supported affordable housing products in South Australia

Product	*Provider*	*Target*	*Access*	*Affordability governed by:*	*Other elements*
Public and community housing	Department of Families and Communities (FACS) and community housing providers	High needs clients	Low-income households (up to 80% of area median)	Income-related rents	Secure tenure Stock is being reduced by about one sixth to address financial viability issues Changes to planning policy enable FACS to seek sites for housing for high-need groups at the time of land release
Social Landlord Program	Private landlords who agree to meet government-specified rent requirements for 10 years	Clients eligible for but unlikely to be allocated public housing	Referred clients	Lower-range market rents of properties under the scheme, annual rent increases limited to CPI for 10 years Client access to Commonwealth Rent Assistance subject to eligibility	Support provided through government-funded programs for tenancy, where required Aims to match affordable privately-owned stock to lower-income households Existing source of stock is mainly sales of public housing (condition of sale) New build also

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[7] See Chapter 3 for more information on the functions of Housing SA and planned *Housing One Stop Shops*

Product	Provider	Target	Access	Affordability governed by:	Other elements
					anticipated
Affordable Rental Projects (Procurement through rental partnering).	Registered housing agency that is subject to an affordable housing facilitation agreement with FACS	Low-and moderate-income; special needs groups	Negotiated on a project-by-project basis at present. Targeted at clients who can afford the rent	Rents up to 75% of market rent	Aim is to leverage public investment with private debt and equity and thereby increase outputs compared with fully government-funded projects. Projects must be viable, without the need for recurrent subsidy from the SA government
Affordable Homes Program	Market-provided	Low- and moderate-income earners All SA Housing tenants	Preferential access to eligible buyers at fixed market price for 90 days. Web-based property locator	Maximum price points linked to affordability for moderate-income earners (up to 120% area median income)	Houses are provided under the government's target of 15% affordable housing in significant new housing developments Provision in legislation to use covenants to provide some controls over resale of properties to protect affordability or to continue occupancy by eligible purchases over time.
	Sales of ex-public housing	As above	Preferential access to eligible buyers at fixed market price for 30 days	As above Houses for sale through this program will be those that meet affordable housing price points	

Source: Lawson, personal communication

5.5.2 Matching clients and low-cost housing options

One of the key aims of introducing more housing products in South Australia is to offer market-constrained households more choice. This is intended to relieve some of the pressure on the high-cost and shrinking social housing system, at the same time as helping to meet the diversity of needs among lower-income households. One of the defining characteristics of the approach will be the existence of a range of private and not-for-profit providers who will offer different products or services along the continuum. For example, an eligible client may rent a house privately from a private investor who has agreed to a prescribed rent regime for a period of time (referred to in

South Australia as a 'social landlord'). Another client may rent a house from a not-for-profit provider at a rent that is higher than that charged for public housing but lower than the market rent. The proposed One-Stop Shop initiative discussed in Chapter 4 is one strategy to assist clients to navigate the range of available housing assistance options.

The approach to matching and allocating clients to a suitable housing option will be choice based. Eligible clients will have to determine the trade-offs that they are prepared to make. For example, an approved applicant for public housing could elect to wait for an offer of housing or opt to rent privately from a social landlord, probably at a somewhat higher rent. Similarly, any existing public housing tenant, who can secure private finance or a SA HomeStart Finance product, will be able to register to purchase any home listed under the affordable housing program. However, in keeping with the choice-based approach, while they may be offered financial incentives to become a home buyer, they will not be required to leave public housing.

A web-based information tool, Property Locator (www.propertylocator.sa.gov.au) is now available in South Australia for use by potential beneficiaries of the continuum of housing options. Property Locator is a catalogue of all low-cost properties exclusively for sale to eligible buyers across South Australia at any point in time. The mechanism uses the capacity of the web to help promote access and to enable the exercise of choice by customers of government-supported housing programs. It covers the sale of former public housing, as well as the purchase of private homes that have been produced to meet requirements under planning legislation and also links clients to information on housing-finance products offered by the government's home-lending agency, HomeStart Finance. Having a policy of exclusive access for lower-income households to housing that is listed on the locator for defined periods will assist in matching those households to affordable and available stock. This tool is the first of its kind in Australia. The functionality and applications of the property locator could be expected to develop quite rapidly. For example, some private developers who produce low-cost housing are also listing through the property locator (Gurran, Milligan, Baker, Bugg, and Christensen, 2008).

5.5.3 Policy coordination and governance

The South Australian Affordable Housing Trust (SAAHT) was established in 2006 as the leadership group for managing and coordinating the government's affordable housing innovations.

Set up through legislative amendment as a division of the South Australian Housing Trust (the Housing Trust), the long-established public housing agency in that state, the SAAHT reports to a Board whose Directors are selected on the basis of their experience in the housing industry, local government, planning and/or the services sector.

The respective roles of the two agencies,as described in the second reading speech for the bill to establish the SAAHT are:

> The Housing Trust and its new Division, the Affordable Housing Trust, will work in a complementary fashion to address the Government's target to reduce housing stress. Housing Trust assets will provide higher subsidy services to those in greatest need, including personal support needs, in the community. The Affordable Housing Trust will focus on partnerships with the not-for-profit and private sectors, with lower Government subsidy requirements

to families in housing stress but requiring services which are less capital-intensive than public housing. (Weatherill, 2006)

Thus the SAAHT is intended as the key vehicle for providing a wider set of solutions to address housing affordability problems. Its role is centred on finding innovative ways of providing affordable housing in partnerships with the private and not-for-profit sector. It is not intended to have a direct role in housing-service delivery or direct asset-management functions. These remain with the Housing Trust (now Housing SA), which has been placed under direct Ministerial control. However, the new Trust does have a role in providing advice on the best use of the existing housing held by the Housing Trust.

An important coordinating role for the SAAHT is emerging from the implementation of new planning requirements for affordable housing that are giving effect to policies outlined in the Housing Plan for South Australia that was released in 2005 (South Australia, 2005). Following changes to planning legislation in 2007, the SAAHT has been given the responsibility to review amendments to development plans to ensure they reflect requirements for affordable housing targets and to certify whether projects meet affordable housing targets. The SAAHT has also played a key part in implementing relevant changes to the planning legislation and in providing resources and information for local councils to assist them in assessing and planning for housing needs, particularly the need for affordable housing (Gurran, Milligan, Baker, Bugg, and Christensen, 2008).

The SAAHT is also envisaged as a means of positioning South Australia to participate in a national approach to affordable housing and to adopt additional affordable housing strategies progressively over the longer term.

The SAAHT represents the centrepiece of the SA Government's model for tackling aspects of two of the broad integration challenges that we identified above: viz., the need to coordinate affordable housing policies and planning policies and practices of state and local governments effectively; and to obtain the resources, skills and capacity to encourage a greater variety of partnerships with not-for-profit agencies and the private sector to finance and deliver affordable housing. It is too early to assess how well the SAAHT model is working.

5.5.4 Summary

As we have noted previously, it is still early to consider how far South Australia has progressed with the development of a framework and strategies for integrating its new affordable housing policies and services with existing social housing programs,. The new dedicated and specialised agency (the SAAHT) has the potential to offer strong leadership for new policies and to promote different ways of doing business through partnerships that could generate innovation and additional resources. However, new relationships (such as with the private sector and local governments) and different policies and products will also add to the complexity of the housing policy and operating environments in SA.

5.6 Opportunities and options

Under current policy settings, it is likely that Australian governments will continue to develop additional policies and direct more resources to different forms of affordable housing in the foreseeable future. As we have shown, this is already occurring at state government level in most jurisdictions. Following the change of national government,

state government efforts could be boosted significantly through the provision of a substantial program of subsidies for private investment in affordable rental housing from July 2008. A growing number of local governments are also considering how they can contribute to affordable housing, both directly, such as though planning policies, and in partnership with other agencies (Gurran 2003, Gurran, Milligan, Baker and Bugg, 2007). This unfolding policy environment provides the opportunity to incorporate, at an early stage, strategies and processes that aim to promote greater policy consistency and cohesive service delivery under a multi-faceted affordable housing strategy.

This study has identified a number of specific integration challenges in the housing assistance system and framed conceptual and practical ways of responding to such challenges in the domains of housing policy and service delivery. The findings of the study can be used to propose how effective linkages between social housing and other emerging forms of housing assistance – especially the supply of additional affordable housing – could be developed in future. In table 5-3 we draw on those overall findings of the study and our brief exploration of new housing policy and service directions, particularly in South Australia, to identify some key themes and issues of integration in housing policies and service delivery that are coming into focus as a result of these directions, and to outline some ways in which these could be addressed.

One theme or set of issues that will require specific attention in the near future in all spheres of government is the development of coherent social/affordable housing policy linkages. In particular, it is not clear how so-called 'affordable housing' will be connected to mainstream social housing policies and services. Consideration could be given to specific processes and structures that would support understanding of the new directions across the whole housing sector. Such mechanisms could also provide one means of identifying emerging policy coherence and coordination issues and help to promote the ongoing adaptation of policy settings. Existing structures such as SAAHT and coalitions or networks such as the Affordable Housing Summit (www.housingsummit.org.au) are only loosely articulated with traditional social housing systems and have a limited policy coordination mandate.

A second theme is concerned with the need to develop the stakeholder relationships required for implementing these new approaches. In what could be seen as an initial instrument of integration, the Australian Government has foreshadowed contracting 'expert partnership facilitators' to help to develop the involvement of diverse participants in the NRAS scheme (Australian Government 2008). This is an example of a strategy that is designed to fast-track inter-sectoral relationships and build collaborative capacity.

A third theme is concerned with ensuring service delivery is coordinated to address barriers to client access, choice and mobility. Many of the instruments discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 will also have applicability in managing the integrated delivery of new affordable housing products and services.

These policy and service delivery themes represent challenges that are integral to the implementation of new approaches to affordable housing provision and efforts to address them will benefit from the options proposed in Table 11. The analytical framework presented in Chapter 2 provides a guide to implementing these types of integration strategies. It emphasises the need for: clarity of integration objectives; deliberation about the most appropriate implementation modes and instruments; attention to implementation barriers and facilitators and evaluation of outcomes. Early consideration of these integration issues provides an opportunity to avoid unintended

consequences of new affordable housing policies for policy-makers, service providers and clients.

Table 11: Affordable housing opportunities and options

Themes	Opportunities and actions
Designing affordable housing policies	→ Ensure clarity of objectives and rules/guidelines for the provision of affordable housing
	→ Actively consider how the linkages with existing social housing policies and service-delivery systems should be developed.
	→ Make reforms in the social housing system that will improve policy cohesion and combat stigmatisation (e.g. through promoting client mobility and considering voluntary tenancy transfers)
	→ Encourage national consistency in policy and regulatory frameworks governing the provision of affordable housing to the extent appropriate (i.e. balanced with allowing for local flexibility and responsiveness). This should be aimed at promoting efficiency and reducing barriers to the involvement of national partners, not at achieving uniformity *per se.*
	→ Encourage policy-makers to enable innovation (e.g. through adopting more flexible policy approaches and by promoting good ideas and working models)
	→ Develop policy networks that include non-government partners
Capacity building to support new policies and products	→ Dedicate resources to managing change in government functions
	→ Align recruiting in government with changed roles and functions
	→ Provide resources to enable not-for-profit partners to change-up to new functions
	→ Create appropriate specialised positions e.g. housing career consultants, affordable-housing brokers
Managing multiple agency activities	→ Promote central government ownership and coordination of new directions
	→ Ensure regular monitoring of outputs across agencies
	→ Determine where leadership in government lies and strengthen profile of leading agency
Interagency relationships	→ Promote a shared understanding of the role of new affordable housing policies and delivery models across all stakeholders (public, private and not-for-profit)
	→ Develop power-sharing arrangements that reflect the partnership nature of affordable housing businesses and that align with risk allocations
	→ Target training to breaking down cultural barriers across government, not-for-profit and private sectors
	→ Nurture appropriate networks of stakeholders e.g. housing service providers, local planners involved in housing, client access officers
Strategic and regional planning/ resource allocation	→ Conduct robust housing needs assessments and housing sub-market analyses on a regular basis
	→ Undertake joint service planning across providers/agencies
	→ Regularly review policies and programs to ensure they are

Themes	Opportunities and actions
	responsive to changing needs and market conditions, and revise resource allocations accordingly
	→ Use an ongoing program of independent evaluations to assess impacts and to assist policy development/review and service planning processes
Compliance requirements	→ Reduce program and project-based contracting and compliance
	→ Move to assessing portfolio and organisational performance against business plans and expected strategic outcomes (i.e. government policy and objectives)
Information and access	→ Utilise common access systems and other shared service-delivery tools
	→ Develop and maintain web-based registration and information tools for clients
Client mobility, pathways and choice	→ Identify and address barriers to client mobility and choice within the continuum of housing options
	→ Allow greater flexibility in use of assets and subsidies to facilitate client choice and better client outcomes (e.g. non-shelter outcomes)
	→ Develop cross-provider policies as appropriate (e.g. tenant transfer)
	→ Encourage larger providers to diversify their service options (e.g. to offer shared equity to their tenants)

6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study has examined the themes of policy and service integration in the provision of social housing in Australia. In particular, it has identified the factors driving policy interest in this issue, and investigated the views of social housing managers and service providers concerning integration issues, challenges, opportunities and risks. It has sought to identify, describe and analyse some of the main integration initiatives of recent years, and to identify some options and priorities that may contribute to better integrated social housing policies and services.

This summary draws together the main findings of the study. In broad terms these are:

→ The theme of integration is central to policy and management challenges facing social housing in Australia. 'Doing integration well' is crucial to the future of Australian social housing.

→ The importance of effective integration in the current context is a consequence of the increasing complexity of the goals of social housing, the increasing diversity of social housing providers, and the expanding array of social and affordable housing programs and services.

→ Many of those involved in policy development and service delivery in social housing are aware of the complex issues of integration that a multi-provider, multi-service system creates. 'Integration' for social housing managers and service providers is not an abstraction, it is an everyday problem. Furthermore, there is a high degree of consensus concerning the main integration challenges facing social housing at the present time.

→ Integration is experienced by housing managers and service providers not only as a set of problems but also as a set of initiatives designed to address the integration issue. Numerous integration initiatives have been formulated and implemented in recent years, and these provide pointers to the structures and processes required to effectively integrate the activities of social housing providers and their relations with those involved in related service areas.

→ Initiatives designed to achieve better integration of social housing generally require a clearer conceptual base, and should take into account the theoretical and empirical research literature on the factors associated with successful integration of human services. This literature provides a foundation for more effective integration practice in Australian social housing and related areas, and should be used as the basis for policy and program design and training initiatives for social housing managers.

→ This literature also provides a foundation for a systematic program of research designed to underpin better integrated, and hence more effective, social housing policies and services.

These findings are elaborated below.

6.2 The centrality of integration

The first finding of the study is that integration is central to the policy and management challenges facing social housing in Australia. The capacity to 'do integration well' is crucial to the future of Australian social housing.

In order to understand the meaning and significance of this finding it is necessary to revisit the ways in which the terms 'integration' and 'social housing' are defined in the study. The term 'integration' is defined broadly to refer to 'all structures and processes that bring together participants in social housing and related fields with the aim of achieving goals that cannot be achieved by participants acting autonomously and separately' (p. 10). This definition draws together a wide range of activities, including those often labelled as 'cooperation', 'collaboration', 'coordination', 'partnerships', 'place management' and 'whole-of-government' initiatives. 'Integration' is used in this report as a generic term encompassing all such linking activities. The term social housing is defined conventionally to refer to 'policies, organisations and services designed to provide long-term, not-for-profit, rental housing in order to achieve a diversity of social purposes encompassing both shelter and beyond-shelter outcomes' (p. 8). This definition identifies social housing with public housing, community housing and Indigenous housing, but also draws attention to the diversity of purposes of social housing, suggesting the importance of linkages 'external' to social housing as conventionally defined.

Building on this foundation, the study identified three sets of integration challenges:

→ to develop effective relations amongst the public housing, community housing and Indigenous housing sectors;

→ to develop effective relations with human services, including homelessness services;

→ to develop effective relations with other policies and services concerned with housing assistance and provision of affordable housing.

Each of these poses issues at the policy and management level, and at the service delivery level (Table 1).

This portrayal of the nature of the challenges of integration in social housing was strongly affirmed by the state-level workshops, the key informant interviews and the analysis of policy documents, as well as by the review of the policy context of the study. These data sources indicate not only that this portrayal of the three sets of integration issues is robust but also that addressing issues of integration has become a core issue for state and territory housing authorities, and for the Commonwealth, as they collectively seek to find solutions to the complex issue of housing affordability and to the wide range of social problems that have a housing dimension.

In order to understand the centrality of integration at the present time it is helpful to view it as a problem of social housing management, comprising three layers. The first layer emerged as a consequence of the diversification of social housing providers in the 1980s. The traditional task of managing the public housing stock took on an additional layer that involved managing relations amongst a diversity of providers, including community and Indigenous housing. To this layer was added the task of managing relations with other human service providers who, from the 1990s, began to view social housing as part of their response to a range of social issues falling within their remit. This second layer of relationships was also a response to the increasingly targeted nature of social housing, which more and more requires the expertise of human service agencies to manage relations with tenants and sustain tenancies. The third and more recent layer involves social housing's relations with a wide range of

policies and programs designed to address the widely recognised problem of housing affordability. As housing products and services become increasingly diverse, social housing managers and service providers are faced with the additional imperative of developing coherent social/affordable housing linkages at the policy and service delivery levels.

6.3   The drivers of integration

The second finding of the study is that the importance of effective processes of integration in the current context is a consequence of a series of 'drivers', which include the increasing diversity of social housing providers, the increasing complexity of the goals of social housing, and the increasing array of social and affordable housing services.

It is sometimes argued that a focus on integration simply reflects the term's symbolic appeal and that service integration 'represents a veritable "holy grail" for many in the human services professions' (O'Looney, 1997, p. 32). Service coordination is often 'simply regarded as a matter of rationality' (Reitan 1998, p. 285), and 'pulling services together into a comprehensive package is [viewed as] such a patently sensible concept that it is difficult to reject, even in the face of evidence to the contrary' (Waldfogel, 1997, p. 465). Furthermore, the case for greater integration can simply be 'an argument for centralisation in disguise' (Halley, 1997, p. 150). From these perspectives, the contemporary emphasis on integration in Australian social housing could be viewed simply as a management fad or as an attempt by senior management or central agencies to exert greater control.

While management fashion and a desire by senior managers to centralise power, authority and influence may be pertinent to some degree, it would be simplistic to perceive these as the sole or main drivers of the current emphasis on integration in social housing. Our study concludes that the main drivers of integration as a policy and management theme are a series of structural problems facing governments and participants in social housing management and service delivery who are seeking to achieve a range of public policy outcomes in difficult circumstances. The main drivers include:

→ The expansion of community housing since the 1980s, which has resulted in a range of issues to be addressed concerning the nature of the relations between public and community housing, including role differentiation, client access and equity. Service provider diversification has also focused attention on issues of accountability and the power relations between public and community housing providers.

→ The expansion of Indigenous housing and concerns about the outcomes of Indigenous-specific housing provision, which have led to questions about the roles and relationships of Indigenous-specific and mainstream social housing provision. This is associated with an emerging recognition of opportunities to strengthen linkages and share capacity building infrastructure between the Indigenous and mainstream community housing sectors.

→ The targeting of social housing at tenants with urgent and multiple support needs, which has led to a requirement for housing and other human services to coordinate and link their services at the policy and service delivery levels in order to manage social housing more effectively and to sustain tenancies.

→ Policy changes such as deinstitutionalisation, and the development of community-based care and recovery programs in fields including health, mental health, disability, child protection and corrective services, which have increased pressure

from these service systems for social housing to accommodate their clients, hence the need for coordination and collaboration.

→ Public and policy concern with the issue of homelessness, which has resulted in initiatives designed to prevent homelessness through whole-of-government strategies, and to develop pathways out of homelessness and into secure housing. This has resulted in the development of closer links between social housing providers and homelessness services, and closer links with agencies across government.

→ Demand pressures within social housing and tighter rationing of deeply subsidised social housing, which have focused attention on alternative products and services, including assistance to lower-income households to access private-market housing options. This has led to a need for stronger linkages between social housing and the private rental market.

→ Reducing housing market affordability and supply, which is driving governments to facilitate partnerships across public, market and community sectors to expand the supply of affordable housing. Many of these initiatives involve or impact on social housing providers.

→ Concentrations of social housing in socio-economically disadvantaged locations, which are the focus of whole-of-government initiatives at the regional and local levels to invest in enhanced services and promote social inclusion. Similarly, many of these initiatives involve or impact on social housing providers.

While the study concludes that these structural issues are the primary drivers of integration initiatives involving Australian social housing, it does not therefore conclude that any particular integration initiative, or the form that any integration initiative takes, is necessary or desirable. It is essential to maintain a critical perspective when analysing integration initiatives, a point further discussed later in this summary.

6.4 Integration as a policy, management and practice problem

The third finding of the study is that many of those involved in policy development and service delivery in social housing are well aware of the complex issues of integration that a multi-provider, multi-service system creates. 'Integration' for social housing managers and service providers is not an abstraction, it is an everyday problem. Furthermore, there is a high degree of consensus concerning the main integration challenges facing social housing at the present time.

The views of social housing managers and service providers on integration were primarily identified through the state-level workshops conducted in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia in 2006 and 2007. These workshops provided a unique opportunity to explore the views of a large number of social housing managers and service providers concerning the issues and problems associated with working in a multi-provider, multi-service system. These findings are reported in detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. In summary, the main integration challenges facing the Australian social housing system at the present time, as identified by social housing managers and service providers, are:

→ *The lack of policy coherence within the social housing sector.* In many states policy objectives and strategies have been concerned only with particular sectors rather than with social housing as a whole. The respective roles of public,

→ *The poor links between Indigenous housing and mainstream social housing.* Inadequate policy attention has been paid to relations between Indigenous-specific and mainstream housing policies, programs and services. In many places there is limited engagement of Indigenous community housing organisations (ICHOs) in mainstream social housing processes, and often no-one has clear responsibility for facilitating Indigenous/mainstream housing linkages.

→ *Client access difficulties.* In a multi-provider system there are problems of client access to services as entry points tend to become fragmented and difficult to negotiate, particularly for clients with language or literacy problems. Furthermore, there are often inadequate mechanisms for brokering appropriate housing solutions across sectors or providers, especially for clients with urgent or complex needs.

→ *The lack of integrated local/regional planning of social housing.* Asset planning and resource allocation are not well integrated across sectors or programs at the local/regional level, and program silos make integrated local planning difficult. Community renewal strategies have pointed to the ways that local coordination, involving social housing organizations, and a range of other government and community agencies, might work together to address local issues.

→ *The difficulties in accessing and sustaining support services to assist clients to sustain social housing tenancies.* This has become a major issue for social housing providers in a highly targeted system. Social housing managers and workers need to be skilled in developing new linkages and partnerships with human service agencies, but there are major barriers to effective collaboration.

→ *The problems of developing effective linkages with homelessness services.* Enhancing the role of social housing in providing pathways out of homelessness has been an important focus of social housing in recent years, but working through the relationships with SAAP providers is an ongoing challenge.

→ *The difficulties of policy coordination at state level.* Sustaining effective policy coordination with other human service departments is challenging. Formal agreements are vulnerable to personnel, administrative and political changes. Differences in culture, structure, resources and power between agencies often makes collaboration difficult, and there are ongoing problems of 'cost shifting', as changes in other human services create increasing demands for social housing.

→ *Poor connections between conventional social housing and the emerging 'affordable housing' sector.* The emergence of the affordable housing agenda is changing the role of the community housing sector, in some cases introducing a more commercial focus that requires reconsideration of roles and relations. More broadly, there is a danger that the establishment of an 'affordable housing sector' could create a risk that another discrete system of housing provision (or 'silo') will develop alongside the existing social housing sector.

6.5   The experience of integration

Integration is experienced by housing managers and service providers not only as a set of problems but also as a set of initiatives designed to address the integration issue. Numerous integration initiatives have been formulated and implemented in recent years, and these provide pointers to the structures and processes required to effectively integrate the activities of social housing providers and their relations with those involved in related service areas.

A selection of these integration initiatives and programs that have been undertaken in NSW, Queensland and South Australia have been examined in this study, based on analysis of policy documents, interviews with key informants, and scrutiny of the small number of available evaluation studies. The initiatives examined include:

→ Queensland's One Social Housing System initiative;

→ South Australia's One-Stop Housing Shops;

→ The NSW Housing and Human Services Accord;

→ Queensland's Memorandum of Understanding   between Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Housing;

→ South Australia's Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse;

→ The NSW Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative;

→ The Queensland Transitional Housing Program;

→ The Private Rental Brokerage Service (Coffs Harbour, NSW);

→ The Queensland Responding to Homelessness Initiative;

→ The Commonwealth Government's National Rental Affordability scheme;

→ South Australia's affordable housing directions (section 5.5).

With one or two exceptions, this suite of integration initiatives and programs has not been systematically evaluated from the perspective of the integration issues that are the focus of this report. However, the analysis provided in our report, together with the views expressed in the state-level workshops, begins to establish a foundation for the development of principles of good practice in integration. These principles have not been carefully tested and should be viewed simply as hypotheses arising from the research. However, some of the lessons to be drawn from the recent history of integration in Australian social housing appear to be:

→ Integration is most likely to be successful when the objectives being pursued are clearly expressed and understood, and where time has been taken to persuade all those involved in the integration process of the value of the integration initiative. Integration is not an end in itself and may involve significant costs and trade-offs.

→ Effective integration often requires the allocation of financial resources, the provision of sufficient time for implementation, and the development of expertise in collaborative and partnership processes and arrangements.

→ Integration should be viewed as involving both formal structures and agreements and informal relationships and networks. Strategies that combine the formal and informal are more likely to succeed than those focused on one or the other.

→ Integration faces barriers arising from programmatic, organisational and sectoral 'silos'. Strong countervailing forces or incentives are required to break down these obstacles to integration.

→ Careful choice of broad integration strategy is important. Integration can be based on the exercise of authority, the development of perceived common interests and shared goals amongst participants, or a combination of both of these. Choice within this repertoire of strategies must be deliberate and reflect the specific context and goals.

→ Integration involving different organisations, sectors and programs often encounters cultural barriers. It is important to acknowledge and address these barriers.

→ Broad frameworks for integration at the policy level must pay attention to the factors facilitating and impeding integration at the front-line or service delivery level.

→ Leadership, either organisational or personal, plays an important role in effective integration, and integration initiatives must address the leadership issue at all levels of implementation.

→ It is important to build an evidence base concerning integration initiatives through systematic program and policy evaluation.

→ Equally, it is important to use the existing literature on integration as a foundation for good practice, as discussed below.

6.6 A conceptual framework

The principles listed above derive from the analysis of the integration projects examined in this study. However, as indicated in the positioning paper and in Chapter 2 of this report, there is already a substantial theoretical and empirical research literature on the factors associated with successful integration of human services. Initiatives designed to achieve better integration of social housing can use this literature as a conceptual framework and guide, and terms derived from this literature have been used throughout this report to describe and analyse integration policies and programs. This framework is summarised in Table 2. It provides a series of analytical questions that can guide the design and implementation of integration initiatives in Australian social housing, and evaluation of these initiatives. These questions are:

→ What are (and should be) the objectives of integration?

→ What are (and should be) the modes and instruments of integration?

→ Which factors facilitate and impede implementation of integration?

→ Which issues are involved in evaluating the outcomes of integration?

These analytical questions, together with the provisional principles listed above, provide a framework to guide integration policy and practice in Australian social housing, pending the development of an extensive evidence base derived from systematic evaluation of Australian integration initiatives.

6.7 Research and evaluation implications

The emphasis on integration in the current Australian social housing context provides important opportunities for policy and program evaluation. Various approaches to integration have emerged as responses to structural problems in Australian social housing, as discussed in 6.3. However, a major challenge facing proponents of better

integrated human services is to develop evaluation methods and tools to assess the outcomes of integration initiatives. As discussed in Chapter 2, the international evidence concerning reforms undertaken in the name of integration is inconclusive with respect to client outcomes (Corbett and Noyes, 2004; Longoria, 2005; Martinson, 1999) and somewhat gloomy with respect to unintended negative consequences such as over-centralisation of administration, confidentiality problems, and role confusion (Corbett and Noyes, 2004; Hassett and Austin, 1997).

For these reasons, there is a strong case for arguing that all major integration policies and programs should include a research and evaluation component. The evaluation of policies, programs and activities designed to enhance integration poses significant methodological challenges, but 'realist' evaluation approaches (Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan, 2007) that emphasise the importance of relating interventions to context and studying change over time have considerable potential for yielding useful findings.

As emphasised throughout this project, the outcomes of integration, which are always portrayed positively by their proponents, cannot be taken for granted. The outcomes of integration are matters to be empirically determined rather than assumed. Some integration initiatives fail to achieve their objectives due to implementation difficulties. Others may involve trade-offs amongst objectives, e.g., greater efficiency may come at a price of reduced access or choice for consumers. Integration may or may not be an appropriate response to a problem, will always involve costs as well as benefits, and may have secondary or unintended consequences. Integration initiatives will always involve judgements concerning the values of coherence and cohesion relative to the values of differentiation, diversity and fragmentation. They will also impact on relations of power, influence and authority amongst participants. As social housing becomes increasingly characterised by complex relations amongst programs, organisations and sectors, the need for critical analysis of these relations will grow.

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