Positioning Paper

Sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies

authored by

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for the

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Western Australia Research Centre

April 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATSS	Aboriginal Tenant Support Service (WA)
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
CSO	Community Service Organisation
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Australian Government Department)
ICH	Indigenous Community Housing
IHO	Indigenous Housing Organisation
IHPSP	In-Home Practical Support Program (WA)
ILP	Independent Living Program
PJSHP	Port Jackson Supported Housing Program (NSW)
PRTSS	Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (Tas)
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SAHT	South Australian Housing Trust
SHAP	Supported Housing Assistance Program (WA)
STP	Supported Tenancies Program (SA)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Indigenous households experience homelessness and live in overcrowded and sub-standard accommodation at rates much higher than those experienced by non-Indigenous Australians.[1] Overcoming severe Indigenous housing disadvantage requires a coordinated policy response which links health, education, labour market and anti-poverty policies with housing and homelessness programs. The latter include support programs designed to assist tenants sustain their tenancies when they face possible eviction and the prospect of homelessness, or experience significant difficulties managing their tenancy because of a mental and/or physical health condition.[2] The immediate reasons for referral to tenancy support programs include the accrual of rent arrears and non-rent liabilities, property standard or maintenance problems, anti-social behaviour notifications and difficulties in managing tenancies resulting from a disability or from a mental and/or physical health condition.[3] Such programs provide support services to address these factors as well as the underlying causal forces that may lead a tenancy to move to an at-risk position. As the role of social landlord has changed in recent years, tenant support services have come to play an increasingly important part in tenancy management. There is no uniform pattern of provision, and the limits of support are contested. Nevertheless, while the role of social landlords continues to evolve, the significant role of tenancy support programs continues to gather support.

This study examines the role of tenancy support programs in assisting Indigenous households maintain their tenancies. It aims to improve our understanding of their operation and effectiveness in sustaining at-risk Indigenous tenancies. Knowledge of tenancy support programs, particularly those operating outside the public housing sector, is limited. The study will describe both mainstream and Indigenous-specific tenant support programs around Australia, outline how they operate, provide details on the representation of Indigenous people in these programs, describe the services that clients receive and assess their outcomes. The project will also provide evidence of what works and doesn't work in terms of support services to Indigenous tenancies.

The study builds on recent AHURI research in tenancy support programs and Indigenous housing outcomes (for example, Cooper and Morris 2005; Flatau et al. 2005; Beer et al. 2006; Habibis et al. 2007). It is comprehensive in design, cutting across all jurisdictions and rental tenancy sectors including public housing, the private rental market, mainstream community housing and the Indigenous Housing Organisation (IHO) sector. The study considers both Indigenous-specific and mainstream programs. Indigenous-specific tenancy support programs provide support

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[1] See Jones (1994), Neutze (2000), Housing Ministers Advisory Council Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing (2001), House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2001), Altman and Hunter (2003), Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003), ABS and AIHW (2003), Memmott (2004), AIHW (2005a, 2005b), Flatau et al. (2005), Long, Memmott and Seelig (2007).

[2] Other relevant housing and homelessness measures designed to reduce Indigenous housing disadvantage include the following: improving Indigenous access to affordable social and private housing; upgrading the existing Indigenous community housing stock and adding to that stock to meet shortfalls in housing; improving the design of social and Indigenous community housing to better meet the needs and preferences of Indigenous households; providing crisis and transitional support to those Indigenous people who are homeless; and measures designed to prevent homelessness.

[3] We use the terms 'tenancy support programs' and 'tenant support programs' interchangeably throughout the text to refer to support programs provided to and for tenants in at-risk tenancies.

only to Indigenous tenants while mainstream programs provide support to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants.

The study puts particular emphasis on the role played by non-government community agencies in providing tenant support services to at-risk Indigenous tenants. This is because tenancy support is often provided by non-government Community Service Organisations (CSOs). How effectively these work with both tenant support program managers and tenant management officers on the one hand, and Indigenous clients on the other, determines, in large part, how successful the program is in achieving its goal of placing tenancies on a sustainable basis.

Some housing providers conduct tenant support programs in-house rather than contract out these programs to CSOs and other agencies. The study will compare the operation and effectiveness of programs in which tenancy support is undertaken by the housing provider and when it is provided by external agencies. It will also address the broader question of the role of the housing provider in sustaining Indigenous tenancies beyond the operation of designated tenant support programs. Should tenancy support services be a natural part of tenancy management? Are tenancy management operations undertaken by housing providers appropriately structured and administered to improve the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies?

There has been very little research on the role of tenancy support in discrete Indigenous settlements. In such cases, tenancy support may be provided by the same body (generally an IHO) which provides tenancy management. It is likely that tenancy support will not be provided in a structured program in discrete Indigenous communities. The study will provide insights into the operation of tenancy support in such communities and the effectiveness of arrangements surrounding their operation.

This Positioning Paper provides the reader with a brief review of the relevant literature and describes the research design of the study and policy context which informs the study. The Final Report, due in late 2008, will present the findings of the research and outline the policy implications which flow from those findings.

1.2   Method

The study will proceed through three stages.

Stage 1 involves a literature review, a national survey of administrators of tenant support programs around Australia and an analysis of administrative data sources. The aim is to gather and collate information about the operation of tenant support programs around Australia, their referral mechanisms, services provided to Indigenous clients and Indigenous client outcomes.

Stage 2 involves a series of case studies of tenant support programs. These are designed to enrich our understanding of the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs in sustaining Indigenous tenancies in specific geographic locations. The data gathered in this stage will provide insights into the factors that contribute to improving the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies and how providers/administrators of tenancy support services, operating in particular localities, experience the world of tenancy support.

Stage 3 involves a series of workshops with program administrators and service providers. These are designed to enable stakeholders to provide comment on the preliminary findings of the study, provide further information relating to the issues addressed and consider the study's policy and service delivery implications.

An end-use goal of the research is to provide a resource which policy makers and non-government organisations alike can utilise in the operation or development of new

or existing programs intended to sustain Indigenous tenancies. The project has national coverage and covers the full suite of tenant support programs in all rental sectors. As such, it will provide a mechanism for the cross-fertilisation of ideas between government and non-government agencies involved in the funding and provision of different tenant support programs in different jurisdictions.

In the context of high demand for, and scarcity of, affordable housing, governments want to make the most effective use of the housing stock they hold. The findings of this research will assist them to do so by ensuring that households allocated housing are able to maintain their tenancies and avoid homelessness. In doing so, the study will assist in the overall objective of improving Indigenous housing outcomes and reducing Indigenous disadvantage.

1.3   Structure

The structure of the report is as follows. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the study's research aims and questions. In Chapter 3, we provide a brief review of the literature, highlighting findings from recent work on sustaining tenancies with a focus on research into Indigenous tenancies. Chapter 4 sets out the key components of the research design and the methodology that will be used in this study.

2 AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The chapter provides an overview of the aims and objectives of this study, and of the research questions to be addressed.

2.2 Aims and objectives

This project has four key aims and objectives.

First, it is designed to provide an audit of both Indigenous-specific and mainstream tenancy support programs operating in Australia across all jurisdictions and all rental sectors. The study will examine the aims, structure, referral mechanisms and support services of each tenant support program and the representation of Indigenous households within mainstream tenant support programs.

Governments, for various reasons, including a declining public housing stock, are focusing increasingly on the private rental market and the community housing sector as accommodation options for households with multiple needs, and as a possible exit point from homelessness. Consequently, there has been greater recognition of the need to implement tenancy support programs to support those at risk of eviction in these sectors.

Previous research on tenant support programs has focused primarily on public housing programs. Knowledge of the operation of private rental tenancy support programs and community housing tenant support programs and their effectiveness in sustaining tenancies is limited. The need to understand better the role of tenant support programs in the private rental market is of particular relevance at the present time given the affordability crisis in that sector in many areas of Australia and the tightening of rental markets.

More generally, little work has been done on the role of tenancy support programs in sustaining Indigenous tenancies. The available evidence suggests that Indigenous households comprise a significant proportion of clients in public housing mainstream tenancy support programs. This may reflect the fact that they are over-represented in public housing where most tenancy support programs have been located, but also the fact that that the available (limited) data indicate that Indigenous tenants face a much higher risk of eviction than non-Indigenous tenants. Indigenous households are also significantly over-represented in the homeless population. As a result, the issue of the sustainability of at-risk Indigenous tenancies assumes even greater importance.

There has been, in recent years, a greater emphasis on the mainstreaming of Indigenous housing in urban and non-remote areas and the centralisation of Indigenous housing in discrete communities including the promotion of migration from small settlements to larger settlements and the greater reliance on regional IHOs.[4] Little is known about tenancy support programs operating in discrete Indigenous settlements and of the impact that mainstreaming and centralisation have had on

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[4] Long, Memmott and Seelig (2007, p. 38) distinguish between six Indigenous settlement types 1. Discrete Settlements that are generally separate or bounded from other centres and often referred to as 'communities'; 2. Discrete Urban Settlements that usually comprise an enclave or precinct within a rural town or regional city (they usually have origins as a 'fringe settlement', town camp, ration depot or mission on the periphery of a town); 3. Outlying Discrete Settlements, consisting of outstations or homelands which are small family-based settlements often located on traditional Indigenous countries, 'estates' or 'homelands' (and usually associated with a return to country from a larger settlement); 4. Dispersed Settlements in Urban Centres; 5. Dispersed Residence in Rural Centres; and 6. Camps, 'unofficial' and often unserviced settlements, including temporary and perennial camping places.

tenancy sustainability in these settlements. In such settlements, tenancy support may be provided by the same body, generally an IHO, which provides tenancy management. The study will provide insights into the effectiveness of arrangements surrounding the operation of tenant support measures and programs in these settlements.

Second, the project will assess the reasons for referral of Indigenous clients to tenant support programs, the support services provided to Indigenous tenants and Indigenous client outcomes from the implementation of tenancy support services, where these can be separately identified.

Third, the project will explore how tenant support program administrators interface with relevant agencies delivering support services to Indigenous tenants and identify the key ingredients of successful funder-provider collaborations in sustaining Indigenous tenancies.

While governments fund and administer tenant support programs, the majority of tenant support services are provided by non-government organisations. They include CSOs, IHOs and community housing organisations. The separation of the funding and administration of tenant support programs from service delivery functions means that the effectiveness of the programs will be influenced by how funders structure, implement and manage service provider agreements and the formal and informal relationships that exist between funders and providers that act to govern the day-to-day management of the programs. An aim of this study is to shed light on the key drivers of effective funder/provider collaborations. We will compare those programs where tenancy support is provided in-house with those where it is provided by external agencies. The study will consider the benefits and costs of separating out tenancy management from tenancy support functions, with the latter being provided by outside agencies.

Caseworkers providing tenancy support programs work closely with a range of other services including mental health services, drug and alcohol programs and schools. The study will also examine the importance of these inter-agency collaborations in improving outcomes for Indigenous tenants.

Fourth, the study seeks to examine how service providers deliver tenancy support services to Indigenous tenants and to assess the key drivers behind the successful delivery of services to Indigenous households in public, private and mainstream and Indigenous Community Housing (ICH). The project seeks to shed light on the extent to which funders and tenant support service providers have adapted programs, service agreements and CSOs service delivery models to meet the particular needs of Indigenous tenants in different environments. It will also examine the factors that have contributed to the successful delivery of services to Indigenous clients.

Fifth, at a broader level, the study will seek to address the role of the housing providers in sustaining Indigenous tenancies. This stage of the research aims to answer questions about tenancy management structures and operations and about the interface between organisations providing tenancy support and their Indigenous clients.

2.3   Research questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

→ **RQ1:** *The operation of tenant support programs*: What tenant support programs (both mainstream and Indigenous-specific) exist in Australia, how do they operate, what are their aims and objectives and what is the representation of Indigenous

households in mainstream programs? Are tenant support functions undertaken by outside agencies or conducted in-house? What are the key reasons for referral of Indigenous clients to tenant support programs, the support services provided to Indigenous tenants, and the post-support follow-up processes?

→ **RQ2:** *The role of Community Service Organisations*: What are the benefits and costs of separating out tenancy management functions from the tenancy support role? Where a separation of tenancy management and tenancy support occurs, how do tenant support program administrators interface with agencies who deliver services to tenants? What are the key ingredients of successful collaboration between tenant support administrators and the agencies delivering services on the one hand and between both groups and other agencies providing non-tenancy-related support to clients on the other?

→ **RQ3:** *The effectiveness of tenant support programs*: What are the key outcomes achieved by Indigenous people in tenant support programs? What factors act to increase the effectiveness of tenant support programs to Indigenous at-risk tenancies in different environments?

→ **RQ4:** *Tailoring tenancy support programs to meet the needs of Indigenous tenants*: How have funders adapted service agreements and providers' service delivery models to meet the needs of Indigenous people in different community settings? How successful have these adaptations been?

→ **RQ5:** *The role of housing providers in sustaining Indigenous tenancies*: Are tenancy management operations undertaken by housing providers appropriately structured and administered to improve the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies? Does the existence of tenant support programs reduce the impetus on the housing provider to undertake other actions designed to improve the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies?

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a definition of an at-risk tenancy and reviews the literature relating to the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies and the role of tenant support programs in sustaining tenancies. It looks at the current policy context relevant to a consideration of tenant support programs and gives an overview of the various types of such programs operating in Australia.

3.2 At-risk Indigenous tenancies and tenant support programs

3.2.1 At-risk tenancies

For the purposes of this study, at-risk tenancies are defined as public, private mainstream community housing and Indigenous community housing residential tenancies in which low-income tenants, tenants with multiple needs or otherwise disadvantaged tenants:

→ Face significant difficulties in sustaining their tenancies due to long-standing or immediate social, health or economic needs or behaviours; and/or,

→ Are under threat of possible or actual eviction or at risk of abandoning their tenancies as a result of rent arrears, accumulated housing or utility-related debt or tenancy breaches including property damage, inadequate property standards and anti-social behaviour.[5]

The definition adopted in this study is not conditional on an eviction process having been put into place.[6] Indeed, an at-risk tenancy may be a newly established one where past or present indicators suggest there is a good chance of tenancy failure. Tenants may have special needs (e.g. relating to a physical or mental health issue or problem or a disability) or enter the tenancy with a poor tenancy history and/or a history of homelessness, which places them in a position where significant support to maintain the tenancy may be required at the point of entry.

At-risk tenants are in a vulnerable position because they may have limited housing options on loss of the tenancy. They may be in a position of absolute homelessness, move in with family or friends, placing pressures on them as a result (secondary homelessness), or have to move to less secure, safe, adequate or appropriate housing (tertiary homelessness). They may also lose supports and possessions which are vital to maintaining their housing in the future (Beer et al. 2006).

There has been considerable focus in the literature on identifying the factors that place tenancies at risk. While no single definitive 'list' has been developed, there is considerable congruence among the research findings (see Slatter and Beer 2004; Crane, Fu and Warnes 2004; LenMac Consulting 2005; Beer et al. 2006; DHS Victoria

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[5] The definition adopted is similar to that used in DHS Victoria (2006, p. 5): 'A high-risk tenancy is one that is at high risk of failure as a result of the negative impact of the tenant's social, health and/or welfare problems on their ability to responsibly manage the tenancy. Indicators of a tenant's inability to manage the tenancy include: significant and/or unresolvable rent arrears and serious tenancy breaches including anti-social behaviour and property damage.' See also Habibis et al. (2007).

[6] Possible eviction for low-income tenants, tenants with high/complex needs or otherwise disadvantaged tenants, however, obviously places the tenancy in the at-risk of failure category. Legislation in all states and territories requires a court or tribunal order before formal eviction is effected. However, research shows that many tenancies end without any recourse to courts or tribunals because tenants tend to pre-empt disputes by leaving when problems arise or are anticipated (Beer et al. 2006)

2006). Factors regularly identified by service agencies and by homeless people and evictees as jeopardising their housing include:

→ Physical and mental health issues;

→ Lack of coping skills;

→ Location;

→ Social isolation;

→ Lack of contact with, or awareness of, services and entitlements;

→ Drug and alcohol problems;

→ Relationship breakdown;

→ Domestic violence;

→ Accumulated or sudden debt;

→ Low or inadequate income and an absence of affordable housing options.

Inexperienced tenants have been found to be especially vulnerable, whether their lack of experience stems from their youth (Healy et al. 2005) or from other causes that render them less familiar with independent living such as incarceration, institutionalisation or the death of a partner or carer who has been responsible for such matters (Fopp et al. 2004; Crane 2004).

The precariousness of at-risk tenancies is particularly acute in the private rental market. The social housing sector (public and community housing) has traditionally been supportive of the introduction of support services for at-risk tenants and has used eviction as the remedy of last resort; indeed, until recently, lifetime tenure has been a realistic expectation. In contrast, support has not been available in the private rental market sector until relatively recently and landlords have always understood the very limited security of tenure that the law provides to tenants. However, as the public housing stock has been reduced, the role of supportive measures for at-risk tenants has become more critical. Relatively little research has been undertaken in respect of community housing agencies and their management of at-risk tenancies, even less in terms of the ICH sector; gaps which the current study will address.

Recent research in Victoria identified young and Indigenous tenants as being over-represented among the tenancies at high risk of failure (DHS Victoria 2006).[7] Indigenous people are significantly more likely than the non-Indigenous population to be low-income earners (Productivity Commission 2007) and in poverty. Therefore, they are particularly vulnerable to the rising costs of housing when they are not in controlled rent setting environments such as those which exist in public housing. This is particularly the case in rural and remote areas where the housing market is constricted and easily over-inflated as a result of lack of housing alternatives, increased competition for limited stock, and wages driven by the resources-led boom (particularly in Western Australia and Queensland over the last two years).

The prevalence of many of the non-income related risk factors in sustaining tenancies, identified above (e.g., physical and mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse), is also higher in the Indigenous population (Productivity Commission 2007). Moreover, Indigenous people are more likely to live in regional or remote areas where there may be limited availability of support services to assist people to address the problems placing their tenancies at risk.

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[7] See also Flatau et al. (2005) for evidence from Western Australia on Indigenous vs non-Indigenous eviction rates from public housing.

In addition, there is evidence that Indigenous people may encounter further culturally-specific impediments in accessing and sustaining tenancies. These include:

→ Discrimination by landlords and neighbours (Solonec 2000; Fopp et al. 2004; EOCWA 2004; Cooper and Morris 2005; Flatau et al. 2005);

→ Lack of choice in the rental market which results in accepting housing that is poorly located, in poor condition and is poorly maintained (FOCUS 2000, p. 15, Stanley 2001, p. 2);

→ Failure of housing agencies to appropriately address cultural behaviour and imperatives such as duties of hospitality and extended family responsibilities (Fopp et al. 2004; EOCWA 2004; Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, pp. 55-6) and sharing behaviour, including demand sharing, sharing of accommodation and household goods (Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, p. 49);

→ Lack of understanding of Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing (domiciliary behaviour), including preferences for external living environments (Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, p. 46);

→ Lack of fit between Indigenous domiciliary behaviour and western housing typologies (Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, p. 50);

→ Lack of fit between household size and composition and house size, contributing to overcrowding (Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, pp. 53-6);

→ Indigenous belief systems and mourning customs (Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, p.50);

→ Indigenous patterns of mobility which may act as an impediment to accessing and sustaining tenancies (Memmott et al. 2004; Memmott, Long and Thompson 2006; Walker and Ireland 2003; Long, Memmott and Seelig 2007, pp. 58-60);

→ Limited experience of managing a tenancy among Indigenous people who enter a tenancy following long periods of incarceration, homelessness or being accommodated in non-tenancy based housing or housing without standard amenities (Cooper and Morris 2005; Flatau et al. 2005);

→ A sense of powerlessness associated with a history of institutionalisation and 'state control', colonisation and dispossession (Keys Young 1998; HREOC 2003);

→ Housing that inadequately meets the needs of Indigenous households and places stress on tenants' capacity to manage the rental, impacting on health and education outcomes (Long et al. 2007, pp. 60-9).[8]

In short, Indigenous people are more likely to face the generic risk factors identified, for example, by Jones et al. (2004) as underlying unsuccessful tenancies. Additionally, they face, as Indigenous people, the specific risks outlined above.

3.2.2 Tenancy support programs

Tenant support programs are designed to put a tenancy on a sustainable path and avoid the damaging consequences to both tenants and landlords of abandonment, eviction or the threat of eviction. Evictees may suffer material and non-material costs; increased debt; denial of services; loss of personal property and family items; fragmentation of families; loss of personal and informal support systems; interruption of education, training or employment; and the negative impact on self-esteem, mental health and physical health that eviction can entail (Beer et al. 2006).

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[8] Pholeros, Rainow and Torzillo (1994), Flatau et al. (2005) , Habibis et al. (2007) and Long, Memmott and Seelig (2007) identify the impact of the condition/standard of housing available to Indigenous people and the linkages between the condition of housing and ill health.

Landlord costs are primarily financial. While hard to identify with universal precision, the 'core' cost of an eviction from public housing has been estimated at $5,000 (LenMac Consulting 2005). This ignores any costs of refurbishment, loss of rent or other outstanding charges. Research in South Australia showed that landlords who sought formal eviction with a bailiff through the Residential Tenancy Tribunal would lose the equivalent of four weeks' rent in addition to any rent arrears, refurbishment costs, re-advertising charges and rent lost through vacancy periods (Slatter and Beer 2003). There are often longer-term costs to the broader community too, identified most clearly in discussions of homelessness: 'Reducing homelessness is likely to correlate with not only reduced rent and utility payment defaults, but also fewer admissions to residential care, hospitals and prisons' (Crane, Fu and Warnes 2004; Flatau et al. 2008). The costs to the justice system, corrections, health and long-term 'losses' through lost education and employment opportunities are also borne by the public purse.

Tenancy support programs provide support services to tenants to address the factors which lead to the tenancy being at risk. Tenant support services may also seek to address at the individual, but not systemic, level the factors that led the tenancy to move to an at-risk position. Agencies delivering support services may seek to address these issues even if programs specify a more focused service delivery model centred on immediate housing-related referral problems. In short, tenant support programs are designed to put a tenancy on a sustainable path and to avoid the damaging cost to landlords and tenants of eviction.

A review of the pilot public tenancy support programs in South Australia (Baulderstone and Beer 2003, 2004) identified the importance of early identification and referral of at-risk tenancies in achieving successful outcomes. This requires a willingness to actively intervene in tenants' lives which is perhaps more likely to occur in public or community housing than in private rentals. It also requires an understanding of risk factors, and some training for housing providers in what level of 'problem' should be taken as an indicator that referral for support is appropriate. While evidence suggests that early intervention requires fewer resources and leads to better outcomes, fewer tenants accept referral at an early stage than when intervention occurs in response to a crisis. In addition, some participants in the South Australian studies did not believe they would be evicted from public housing. Thus, while accepting the referral for support, most required assistance with other non-housing problems before being willing and able to focus on the issues traditionally considered by State Housing Authorities as tenancy management issues. A similarly holistic approach has been found necessary in a range of studies of especially vulnerable households, including the Dundee Families Project (Dillane et al. 2001) and the intensive support projects put in place in England and Wales to assist families address housing risks posed by their anti-social behaviour (Department for Communities and Local Government 2006; Nixon, Hunter and Parr 2006).

Successful strategies for support do not necessarily need to be highly sophisticated. Reviews regularly identify the benefits of practical assistance such as establishing Centrepay arrangements for the automatic payment of rent and utilities, assisting with the purchase of whitegoods and other furnishings to establish a home, and assisting the client in liaising with utilities and landlords to negotiate debt (Fopp et al. 2004; Crane, Fu and Warnes 2004; LenMac 2005; Beer et al. 2006). The importance of staying in touch with the client, even by means of phone calls from volunteer 'befrienders', and establishing indicators to provide an early warning that the tenancy is off track are both highlighted by Crane's study.

While details vary from program to program, a review of the international literature and an examination of local programs, suggests the following fundamental factors lie behind successful tenant support interventions:[9]

→ Providing flexible responses (tailored solutions, flexible duration, flexibility of resources);

→ Engaging with clients and building relationships of trust;

→ Making early and appropriate referrals and implementing early intervention strategies (Jones et al. 2004; Healy et al. 2005);

→ Working jointly with other agencies where appropriate and planning and coordinating service delivery (O'Brien et al. 2002; DHS Victoria 2006);

→ Targeting those assessed as at-risk (Jones et al. 2004; Healy et al. 2005);

→ Ensuring that at-risk tenants have access to existing formal and informal support networks (Healy et al. 2005; O'Brien et al. 2002);

→ Addressing both housing need and other underlying issues that might impact negatively on housing outcomes (Kolar 2003; Newman and Samoiloff 2005).

There is a relatively small body of literature linking the challenges that face Indigenous Australians in sustaining housing to the role of tenant support programs in helping to meet those challenges (Victoria 2002; Burgess and Roberts 2003; Roberts and Burgess 2004; Walker and Ireland 2003; Cooper and Morris 2005; Flatau et al. 2005). The present study will contribute to this literature.

3.3   The policy context

Australian rental markets have undergone significant change in recent years. One major change has been the reduction in the proportion of households accommodated in public housing. As the stock of public housing declines, SHAs have implemented policy and procedural changes to ensure the most effective use of their scarce resources. Access is increasingly targeting those in greatest need (Flatau et al. 2005). For example, in Victoria, the introduction of the segmented waiting list in public housing has led to a significant increase in the proportion of allocations for those entering from priority access segments (targeting those experiencing recurring homelessness, requiring supported housing and those with special housing needs) and a corresponding reduction in wait-turn allocations for people eligible for priority access. Allocations from high needs segments of the waiting list (segments 1 to 3) comprised 70 per cent of allocations in 2004-05 as compared with 14 per cent in 1993-94 (DHS Victoria 2006, p. 39). Households entering from high needs segments of the waiting list now comprise 37 per cent of all public housing tenants in Victoria. The Queensland Department of Housing is also implementing a new One Social Housing System which will give priority to clients most in need (Queensland Department of Housing 2006, p. 2).

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[9] Newman and Samoiloff (2005), discussing the findings of the 2005 evaluation of the Tenancies at Risk pilots conducted as part of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy, note that the pilots worked at two levels, both of which were important in sustaining tenancies. Tenancies were first stabilised in the short to medium term, and subsequently arrangements to sustain tenancies longer term were put in place. The evaluation of the Melbourne-based Merri Outreach Services project funded through the SAAP I & IF found that early intervention strategies were essential in sustaining tenancies; that interventions should target vulnerable families with a risk profile; that access to formal and informal supports were key factors in success; that housing needs cannot be addressed in isolation; and that the role of SAAP is critical, not just at time of crisis, but in extending support past the immediate crisis.

As a consequence of increased targeting, a higher proportion of households in public housing have risk factors which indicate they might experience difficulties with their tenancies. In Victoria, those who entered from the recurring homelessness or special needs (non-health) segments of the waiting list were significantly over-represented among those public housing tenants who had rent arrears or who had exited through property abandonment or eviction (DHS Victoria 2006, p. 38). In relative terms, greater attention to proactive tenancy management and tenancy support issues on the part of SHAs is, and will be, required.

With a declining public housing stock, the private rental market and the community housing sector are increasingly playing a role in providing housing to low-income households and those with the risk factors associated with unsustained tenancies. This has led a number of jurisdictions to develop tenant support programs for the private rental market and the community housing sector. In every state and territory, but particularly Western Australia and Queensland, rising property markets and a diminishing supply of affordable housing is placing economic pressures on tenants, leading to greater stress in terms of access to housing and sustainability of tenancies.

Another important contextual element is the increased number of Indigenous households accessing mainstream public housing in recent years. As a consequence, their representation in public housing tenant support programs is also likely to increase (Flatau et al. 2005).

In the homelessness sector, there is an increased focus on the development of prevention, early intervention programs and post-crisis transition programs in which tenant support programs are a vital component. In the recently renegotiated Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) V Multilateral Agreement (and related bilateral agreements), increased funding to the states and territories was premised on a more concentrated focus on prevention and early intervention responses to homelessness as well as post-crisis and transitional initiatives. In this context, the issue of tenancy sustainability is receiving increased interest from SHAs and government agencies responsible for the administration of SAAP services.

The prevalence of homelessness among Indigenous people is considerably higher than for the non-Indigenous population. This is so on both an 'absolute homelessness' measure (the absence of shelter) or a relative homelessness measure (the absence of accommodation that meets community norms of minimum adequate housing).[10] Homelessness for Indigenous people also has a unique set of meanings relating to cultural and historical factors. The Keys Young report on Indigenous homelessness in SAAP (1998) noted specifically Indigenous forms of homelessness, including spiritual homelessness associated with a history of dispossession. Memmott et al. (2003) and Cooper and Morris (2005) similarly note the different meanings Indigenous people may attribute to homelessness as a result of their traditional associations with country and histories of colonisation. In relation to housing responses, this literature indicates that the delivery of 'housing only' responses will not be sufficient to address these uniquely Indigenous dimensions of homelessness.

Applying even the accepted definitions of homelessness (and excluding specifically Indigenous forms of homelessness), Indigenous Australians are seen to be over-represented in the homeless population. Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (2003) analysis of the Census counts confirm the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the homeless population. Indigenous people constitute 17.1 per cent of all SAAP clients (AIHW 2007), but only 2.5 per cent of the general population (ABS 2007b).

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[10] See, for example, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992), ABS and AIHW (2003), AIHW (2005a, 2005b), ABS (2007), Productivity Commission (2007).

In attempting to make the transition from homelessness to housing, Indigenous people face a number of specific obstacles. These include discrimination in the private rental market, lack of a previous housing history in a competitive rental market, and lack of confidence and poor literacy skills. Indigenous women experiencing homelessness are also reticent about approaching services for assistance either because they feel a sense of shame (Cooper and Morris 2005), because they have a history of negative interactions with service agencies, or because service models are not appropriate for Indigenous people (Coleman 2000).

All states and territories have implemented some form of response to homelessness, although the focus varies from, for example, community amenity, the focus of the Northern Territory Community Harmony project, to creating sustainable exits from homelessness, a key element of, for example, the Queensland, Victorian and South Australian responses. In the Victorian context, Newman and Samoiloff (2005) identify some of the reasons why government becomes involved in responding to homelessness, dividing these into two categories: economic reasons and 'people' reasons. The economic drivers include: improved rent revenue; reduced costs in relation to damages and vacancies; reduced staff costs as tenancy turnover is the primary driver of SHA staff workloads; and the relatively low cost of accommodation in public housing compared to the cost of 'housing' in the homelessness service system, prisons and the psychiatric system. 'People' motivations include: reducing homelessness by creating sustainable exits from homelessness; consolidating gains made by homeless services; providing a base for community participation and employment; and better health and wellbeing outcomes for those who are housed.

The literature therefore suggests that there are benefits for both housing providers and for people in at-risk tenancies in ensuring that tenancies are maintained where possible and that sustaining tenancies is an important element in preventing homelessness.

3.4 Programs supporting/sustaining tenancies

A preliminary scan of tenant support programs suggests that there exist a number of different types of tenancy support programs in Australia. The majority of these are administered by SHAs and operate in the public housing sector. However, tenancy support programs also exist in the private rental market, long-term community housing and Indigenous-specific community housing.

While knowledge of tenancy support programs is limited, current knowledge suggests that they fall into six categories.

1. *Public housing tenant support programs* funded and administered by the public housing provider.

2. *Private rental and community housing tenant support programs* funded and administered by a range of government departments and agencies.

3. *Indigenous community housing tenant support programs* funded and administered by a range of government departments and agencies and by IHOs.

4. *National tenant support programs* funded and administered by FaHCSIA.

5. *SAAP services providing preventative tenancy support programs* funded by the Commonwealth and state/territory governments and administered by state/territory government departments.

6. *Tenants Advice Service programs* funded and administered by a range of government departments and agencies.

Other than the case of ICH tenancy support programs, where tenancy support is provided by IHOs, tenancy support is generally, though not always, provided by CSOs funded by government to do so.

Public housing tenant support programs, funded and administered by the SHAs, differ between states and territories according to the relative size of the program, the service delivery model adopted, the geographical scope of the program, referral and eligibility criteria and the services provided to clients. There is also variance in the tenancy management model adopted by SHAs, ranging from traditional tenancy management, through proactive tenancy management to the provision of direct support.

The Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) in Western Australia is one example of a public housing tenant support program. Over any given six-month reporting period, around 300 referrals are made to the program. Support services are provided to clients by non-government CSOs. While SHAP is a mainstream tenant support program, Aboriginal clients represent around 70 per cent of its client population.[11] SHAP community agencies provide a broad range of support services. These include: visits; advice and information; assistance to resolve the tenancy problems identified by the Department of Housing and Works in the original referral; financial counselling and support; domestic and family violence support; family/relationship support including child management support; assistance to maintain or obtain government income support payments; assistance with legal issues; and assistance with a mental health or other health condition or a substance abuse issue (Flatau et al. 2008). The key reasons for referral to SHAP are property maintenance, anti-social behaviour, rental arrears and tenant liability.[12] More than half of SHAP support periods last for over six months.

In addition to the mainstream SHAP, a number of Indigenous-specific tenant support programs operate in Western Australia. These include:

→ Department of Housing and Works (Western Australia) Aboriginal Customer Support Officers who assist Indigenous people in public housing experiencing problems with their tenancy including rental arrears, debt and overcrowding, and liaise with other agencies to resolve other issues impinging on the maintenance of the tenancy;

→ The Aboriginal Tenant Support Services (ATSS), which has operated since 2000 (and as a pilot since 1996) in regional Western Australia, provides support and information to Indigenous tenants or prospective tenants in any rental sector. Two organisations are funded to provide advocacy services. The Indigenous Tenant Advocacy Service (ITAS) also provides advocacy support to Indigenous tenants. These programs do not provide case management.

South Australia's public housing tenant support program, the Supported Tenancies Program (STP), is another example of a program funded and administered by SHAs. This was instituted during 2003-04 as part of the South Australian Housing Trust's (SAHT) response to the South Australian Social Inclusion Board's strategies (endorsed by the state government in July 2003) to address homelessness. Under the

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[11] Indigenous persons represented 3.0 per cent of the Western Australian population at the 2006 Census (2006 Census QuickStats: Western Australia). Indigenous households represented around 20.5 per cent of all households in Western Australia's public rental housing and state owned and managed Indigenous housing stock (AIHW 2006a, 2006b).

[12] SHAP caseworkers point to a range of other underlying factors leading to referral to the SHAP (Flatau et al. 2008). They include health issues, domestic and family violence, relationship breakdown and child management issues.

STP, five non-government organisations have been appointed to provide advocacy and support to SAHT and SA Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA) tenants who are at risk of eviction. Referrals are made by housing managers. To date, over 800 tenants have been referred to the program and only about 30 participating tenants have been evicted. Between 12 and 14 per cent of participating tenants identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. The principal source of non-housing debt has been found to be utilities, over half the participating tenants have mental health issues and approximately one-third have physical health issues. The outcomes are seen to be extremely positive, not only in the small number of evictions but in the development of tenant independence, improved tenancy skills, increased social connectedness, community involvement and participation in education and employment, and the resolution or successful management of debt problems.

The provision of tenant support programs in the private rental market is relatively new and has been associated with the implementation of state/territory-based Homelessness Strategies or Affordable Housing Strategies.

South Australia has adopted a tenancy support program which provides support on entry into private rental accommodation. In July 2003, the Social Inclusion Board published its report *Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia*. This provided a series of strategic directions for the reduction of homelessness and highlighted the need to prioritise responses for Aboriginal people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Subsequently a range of initiatives was developed, including the Private Rental Liaison Project which has been running since May 2004 in three centres and was extended to a further four during 2005. The scheme was designed and is operated by the SAHT and funded by the Social Inclusion Board. Its immediate aim is to assist households at risk of tenancy failure to access the private rental market and to maintain successful tenancies once housed there. Referrals are drawn from customers applying for bond or financial assistance. While not exclusively targeting Indigenous households, people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders constitute between 5 per cent (2003-04) and 12 per cent (2005-06) of clients referred to the project. Central to the scheme is the establishment of a range of local partnerships in each area where the scheme operates. These include linkages with private sector property managers and local businesses as well as government and non-government service providers. These linkages facilitate the successful support of tenancies and optimise the impact of services provided to participants, which include information, mediation, advice, advocacy and referral.

Victoria and Tasmania run private rental tenant support programs for tenants with high and complex needs. In Tasmania, the Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (PRTSS) was developed as part of the state's Affordable Housing Strategy, which was implemented in December 2003. Housing Tasmania funds and administers the PRTSS, with tenancy support services provided by community agencies. Victoria's private rental tenancy support program is based on providing brokerage money to agencies which use it to provide support services to clients.

A number of programs are funded specifically to sustain tenancies in Indigenous community housing, which for the purposes of this study we define as comprising:

→ Housing provided by IHOs; or,

→ Housing provided in discrete Indigenous communities.

There is a very significant overlap between the two components of the definition of Indigenous community housing. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2006 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) indicates that 91 per cent of

permanent dwellings in non-remote, remote and very remote discrete Indigenous communities were IHO managed (ABS 2007a). The remainder of the stock 'were state government owned, owned by other organisations or privately owned dwellings' (ABS 2007a, p. 21). Discrete Indigenous community dwellings owned by IHOS represented 72.0 per cent of all permanent dwellings managed by IHOs.

At the time of the 2006 CHINS, the Northern Territory had the largest number of IHO dwellings (6,448) followed by Queensland (6,230), New South Wales (4,176) and Western Australia (3,462). In the Northern Territory, the population of discrete communities served by IHOs is 41,681, representing around three-quarters of the Indigenous population. IHOs are relatively large in the Northern Territory (79 dwellings on average) and small in New South Wales (25 dwellings on average).

Arrangements differ between the jurisdictions in terms of the funding of housing and housing management services. In the Northern Territory, the territory and Australian governments agreed to pool Indigenous housing (Aboriginal Rental Housing Program and components of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program) and some infrastructure funds into one common fund administered by the Northern Territory government. On 21 June 2007, the Prime Minister, John Howard, and Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough announced that the Australian government had started emergency measures to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. The approach of the new Labor government in relation to the funding and management of housing in the Northern Territory, including in relation to rent setting systems and tenancy management arrangements in discrete Indigenous communities, at the time this report was completed, was yet to be determined.

In Western Australia, housing management services are funded by the Department of Housing and Works and provided by community-based IHOs or by regional IHOs or other Indigenous-specific bodies. Tenant support services are provided by these bodies through the Department of Housing and Works funded In-Home Practical Support Program (IHPSP), which has operated for many years in discrete Indigenous communities. The IHPSP is designed to develop the home living skills of Aboriginal people participating in the program. Information and assistance is provided on a range of subjects from cleaning skills, use of household appliances, parenting skills and diets through to budgeting, bill payment options, and water usage and sewage issues (http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/402_478.asp). IHPSP services are provided to a variety of tenants and do not necessarily target at-risk tenancies. The IHPSP works closely with the Western Australian Office of Aboriginal Health in respect to the Western Australian Indigenous Healthy Lifestyle Program with funding through the Australian Better Health Initiative. Hybrids of the SHAP and the IHPSP exist in town-based discrete Indigenous communities.

Finally, there are a number of tenant support programs targeting tenancies in long-term mainstream community housing which fall into three broad categories:

→ Programs which are part of a package of support measures introduced at the beginning of the tenancy to support those with a health condition or a disability issue, those who are frail and prisoners re-entering the community;

→ Programs designed to support tenants whose tenancies are failing and who are at risk of losing their tenancy;

→ Programs designed to support those who have a history of homelessness and/or tenancy failure.

Examples of the first type of tenancy support program are the Independent Living Program (ILP) in Western Australia and the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative in New South Wales. These are inter-sectoral programs in which support is provided to those with a diagnosed mental illness living independently in the community. An example of the second type of program is the Same House Different Landlord program administered by the Department of Housing in Queensland. This provides public housing properties to not-for-profit community housing organisations for lease to tenants in need of crisis and transitional accommodation. The properties are managed by community housing providers delivering housing services under the Crisis Accommodation Program, Community Rent Scheme and Boarding House Program. Managing organisations use revenue from rent payments to cover costs associated with tenancy and property management, and provide tenancy management support until the client is able to sustain a successful tenancy in the property. The organisation then negotiates with the nearest Department of Housing area office to transfer the client and the property back to public housing (www.qld/gov.au/programs/ch/support/same.htm).

Two recent New South Wales community housing initiatives operating in Sydney fall into the third of the tenant support categories specified, namely, the Port Jackson Supported Housing Program (PJSHP) and the My Place program developed by the Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH). The PJSHP provides support for people who are unable to maintain a tenancy either in social housing or the private rental market, due to the need for additional support. Target groups include those with multiple needs or those with a history of homelessness and tenancy failure. It incorporates an Intensive Supported Tenancy Management model implemented by community housing providers, with supports being provided by a range of support agencies. The My Place program is specifically targeted at those who have been homeless for long periods of time. Homeless people are provided with tenancy and other support services to help them make the transition from living on the street or in crisis accommodation into long-term, stable housing.

3.5   Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

In addition to the tenancy support programs described above, SAAP also provides what might be considered as tenancy support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. SAAP, established in 1985, is an integrated, nationally coordinated program funded by the Australian and state and territory governments. SAAP constitutes the primary government response to homelessness. It assists people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by providing crisis and transitional support, primarily through supported accommodation and a range of support services. The most recent SAAP V Agreement emphasises the importance of early intervention and prevention initiatives, and of post-crisis and transitional support.

Support services are generally provided to SAAP clients in crisis and, for those in transitional accommodation, this can include tenancy support. The SAAP V Innovation and Investment Fund has funded pilot projects through 2006-07 and 2007-08, a number of which are centred around tenancy support programs for those at risk of homelessness, and transitional support for those exiting prisons and those moving into tenancies.

The Australian government operates a number of homelessness prevention programs outside SAAP, including:

→ The youth-based Reconnect and Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET) programs;[13]

→ The Personal Support Programme;[14]

→ The Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program for families at risk of homelessness.

These programs provide a range of support services to their clients. Included among these services are those designed to maintain at-risk tenancies. Of the above programs, the HOME Advice Program has the greatest tenancy support component. It is a homelessness prevention program administered by FaHCSIA under the National Homelessness Strategy. The HOME Advice Program is an early intervention program aimed at reducing family homelessness which was commenced with the funding of the Family Homelessness Pilot Program (FHPP). One FHPP pilot site was located in each state and territory, with eight services operational by July 2003. In the 2004-05 Commonwealth budget, the government made a further commitment to funding the FHPP by extending funding of the eight sites for a further four years. At this time, the FHPP became the HOME Advice Program. HOME combines the resources of Centrelink and the community sector to provide prevention and early intervention strategies to families at risk of homelessness. The target group includes families with mortgages, and in private rental or public housing tenancies.

The Australian government through the National Homelessness Strategy Demonstration Projects has also provided funding to organisations to 'trial and document new and innovative approaches that prevent, reduce or respond to homelessness'. Demonstration projects in the 2005-09 funding round with a focus on tenancy support include the Home But Not Alone project (Catholic Healthcare and Mercy Arms Community Care, Sydney); the My Place project mentioned above (Anglicare, Tasmania); and A Place to Call Home (Sisters Inside, Brisbane).

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[13] The Reconnect program is a FaHCSIA administered program designed to 'improve the level of engagement of homeless young people or those at risk of homelessness with family, work, education, training and the community' (http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/youth/programs-reconnect.htm). The JPET program is a Department of Employment and Workplace Relations program which 'assists young people aged between 15 and 21 years, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and/or have multiple barriers that severely limit their capacity to: participate socially in the life of their communities; participate in economic focused activity such as education, employment or vocational training and/or benefit from employment assistance.' (http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/JPET).

[14] The PSP is designed to provide individualised attention to clients 'because of their difficult circumstances. They may face homelessness, drug and alcohol problems, psychological disorders, domestic violence or other significant barriers to participation. The PSP acts as a bridge between short-term crisis assistance and employment-related assistance.' (http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/PSP).

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Stage 1: Program-level analyses

This study will proceed in three stages. Stage 1 of the research entails the following components:

→ Reviewing the Australian and international research and evaluation literature relating to the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs and the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies;

→ Identifying mainstream and Indigenous-specific tenant support programs operating in public housing, mainstream/Indigenous community housing and private rental market housing throughout Australia;

→ Describing the operation of each tenant support program;

→ Analysing the existing evidence base in each jurisdiction in relation to court orders, restored tenancies, vacated or abandoned tenancies, bailiff evictions, and reasons for eviction by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status and by each rental sector (a preliminary scan suggests that such information is generally not available);

→ Gathering and analysing data on the representation of Indigenous households in tenant support programs, reasons for referral of Indigenous clients to tenant support programs, the support services provided to them, the post-support follow-up processes, and the extent to which tenancy support service agreements have been tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous tenants in different settlement locations;

→ Examining and assessing the available evidence on the operation and effectiveness of tenancy support programs in sustaining Indigenous tenancies at risk and improving the outcomes for Indigenous tenants.

The principal instrument used to obtain information on the operation of tenant support programs is a national survey of funders/administrators of tenant support programs (hereafter the *National Survey of Tenant Support Programs*). We shall seek responses from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), State and Territory Housing Authorities and other state/territory and Australian government agencies which fund/administer tenant support programs.

The *National Survey of Tenant Support Programs* will elicit information on the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs throughout Australia. For each program, the survey will seek the following information:

→ *General*: Date the program commenced. Reasons for implementing the program and key developments. Aims and objectives of the program.

→ *Funding of services*: Who finances the program? What is the total level of funding? What is the breakdown of expenditures in terms of types of personnel (caseworkers, managers and administrators) and non-salary expenditures?

→ *Provision of services*: Is there a separation of the financing and service delivery functions (e.g. government funds and administers the program, but support services are provided by non-government organisations)? If so, which agencies provide the program's tenant support services? Where support is provided by non-government agencies, to what extent have tenancy support service agreements been tailored to the needs of Indigenous clients, particularly those in discrete communities?

→ *Jurisdictional coverage*: Is the program a state/territory-based program or an Australian government program?

→ *Representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients*: The number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous referrals and clients. The representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients on the program relative to their representation in the relevant rental sector.

→ *Target group – Indigenous or general*: Is the tenant support program mainstream or Indigenous-specific in focus?

→ *Characteristics of referrals, clients and support periods*: Age, gender, family status, number of children, and length of support period.

→ *Geographical scope*: In which geographical locations (very remote, remote, outer regional, inner regional, major cities) is the program applied?

→ *Settlement type*: Is the program applied in Indigenous communities and, if so, which types (e.g. discrete remote settlements or communities, discrete urban settlements)?

→ *Rental sector type*: Which rental sector does the program operate in – public housing, private rental housing, mainstream community housing or Indigenous-specific community housing?

→ *Referral reasons and mechanisms and eligibility criteria*: On what grounds are tenants referred to the program? Are there differences in the reasons for the referral of Indigenous clients as compared to non-Indigenous clients? Which clients are eligible for support? Who makes referrals to the program (tenants themselves, landlords or community agencies)? Is client participation voluntary or mandatory? Are all referrals accepted by tenant support agencies? If not, what are the reasons for non-acceptance?

→ *Client needs and services*: What are the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients? What services are provided to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients?

→ *Support periods*: How long is support provided to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients? What are the key reasons for exit from the program?

→ *Client outcomes*: What client outcomes are measured in the program? What evidence is available on client outcomes for both Indigenous clients and non-Indigenous clients?

→ *Post-support follow-up processes*: Are clients followed up after completion of the support period?

In addition to the inter-jurisdictional survey, the study will undertake an analysis of the existing administrative tenant support program data where that is made available to the research team.

Submissions will be sought from homelessness peak bodies, CSOs providing tenant support services, Indigenous and mainstream community housing bodies, tenant advocacy services and other relevant bodies.

4.2 Stage 2: Case studies of tenant support programs in specific locations

Stage 2 of the project involves a series of case studies of tenant support programs designed to deepen and enrich our understanding of the operation and effectiveness of these programs in particular locations. Case studies will gather information of the type gathered at the general program level through the *National Survey of Tenant*

Support Programs and program administrative data on the operation of the tenant support program in the chosen location. The focus, however, will be on funder/provider relationships and the range of issues that arise at the local level. These are best examined through a case study approach. The data will provide insights into the factors that contribute to improving the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies and how providers/administrators of Tenancy Support Services, operating in particular localities, experience the world of tenancy support.

One issue of particular interest is the ways in which funders/administrators and service providers interface with CSOs, community housing providers and IHOs. We shall examine three issues in depth:

→ What strategies do programs and agencies adopt to engage with Indigenous clients?

→ What are the key ingredients of successful collaborations between tenant support administrators and the agencies delivering services?

→ What is the role of inter-agency collaborations in the successful operation of tenancy support programs?

A second point of focus in the case studies is on the ways in which the service delivery approaches taken by tenant support service providers impact on the effectiveness of programs. We are particularly interested in the following questions:

→ How have funders adapted service agreements and providers service delivery models to meet the needs of Indigenous people in different community settings?

→ How successful have these adaptations been in meeting the needs and sustaining the tenancies of Indigenous people?

While administrative data sets typically provide good client output data, there is often insufficient detail in such data sets on client outcomes. A final important aim of the project's case studies, therefore, is to understand better the outcomes achieved by Indigenous people in tenant support programs and assess the factors which influence the effectiveness of tenant support programs to Indigenous at-risk tenancies in different environments.

The case studies chosen for the study provide broad coverage of tenancy support programs operating in different jurisdictions and rental sectors. Following the typology set out in Chapter 3, they fall into six categories (the case studies for each category are listed under the program type):

1. Public housing tenant support programs

    → Western Australia: Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) – selected sites in Perth, the Kimberley and South-west regions

    → Western Australia: Aboriginal Tenants Support Service – selected sites in Perth, the Kimberley and South-west regions

    → Victoria: Indigenous Tenancies at Risk Program

2. Private rental and community housing tenant support programs

    → South Australia: Private Rental Liaison Officers program

    → Western Australia: Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program – selected sites in Perth and the South-west regions

    → Western Australia: Private Rental Aboriginal Support Program – selected sites in Perth

→ New South Wales: Port Jackson Supported Housing Program and the My Place program developed by the Partnership Against Homelessness

→ Queensland: Same House Different Landlord program

3. Indigenous community housing tenant support programs

→ Northern Territory: Selected IHOs in and around Katharine

→ Queensland: IHOs in North-west Queensland (Dajarra), Cairns (Yumba Meta) and in Cherbourg

→ Western Australia: Selected IHOs in the Kimberley region – case studies will examine, among other things, the operation of the In-Home Practical Support Program and the Sustainability and Development Program

4. National tenant support programs – Home Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program

→ South Australia: Salisbury Wodlitinattoai administered by Centacare and Salisbury Centrelink (Indigenous-specific)

→ Darwin/Palmerston Darwin Home Advice Service administered by Centacare and Darwin Centrelink (mainstream but with 60 per cent of clients Indigenous)

5. SAAP services providing preventative tenancy support programs

→ SAAP I & IF projects providing tenancy support at pre- and post-crisis points

→ Queensland: Umpi Korumba SAAP pilot on sustaining Indigenous tenancies

6. Tenants Advice Service programs providing support to Indigenous tenants on entry to the tenancy

→ New South Wales: Indigenous-specific services operating under the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program (Sydney and surrounding areas)

Queensland case studies will consider the issue of sustaining Indigenous tenancies within the context of the new integrated One Social Housing System and the new responsibilities the state government has assumed for IHOs. The Victorian case study will take into account the recent transfer (where tenants wish) of Victorian Aboriginal Rental Housing Program tenants to Aboriginal housing organisations. The Northern Territory case studies will take into account the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Each case study will require the approval of program administrators, Indigenous communities and tenant support service providers prior to implementation.

Case studies will involve the following components:

→ An examination of service policies and procedures documents;

→ An analysis of the available data from both funders and service providers on the needs of Indigenous clients, the services provided to Indigenous clients and Indigenous client outcomes;

→ Semi-structured interviews with program administrators and executive managers of organisations providing tenant support services;

→ Focus group discussions with caseworkers and Indigenous clients of programs.

4.3   Stage 3: Public consultations

Stage 3 involves three workshops undertaken in Western Australia, Queensland, and South Australia involving program administrators and service providers designed to

enable stakeholders to address the preliminary findings of the study, provide further information relating to the issues addressed and consider the policy and service delivery implications.

Table 4.1 outlines the method by which each research question will be addressed and the data sources used.

Table 4.1: Research questions, data and methodology

Research Question	Data	Methodology
RQ1 *The Operation of Tenant Support Programs:* What tenant support programs (both mainstream and Indigenous-specific) exist in Australia, how do they operate, what are their aims and objectives and what is the representation of Indigenous households in mainstream programs? Are tenant support functions undertaken by outside agencies or conducted in-house? What are the key reasons for referral of Indigenous clients to tenant support programs, the support services provided to Indigenous tenants, and the post-support follow-up processes?	Australian and international research literature, program evaluations, program-related material and AHURI projects on Indigenous housing	Literature review
	National Survey of Tenant Support Programs survey to be administered to all funders of tenant support programs in Australia	Thematic and comparative analysis
	Tenant support program administrative data	Descriptive statistical analyses
RQ2 *The Role of Community Service Organisations:* What are the benefits and costs of separating out tenancy management function from the tenancy support role? Where a separation of tenancy management and tenancy support occurs, how do tenant support program administrators interface with agencies who deliver services to tenants? What are the key ingredients of successful collaboration between tenant support administrators and the agencies delivering services and between both groups and other agencies providing non-tenancy-related support to clients?	*National Survey of Tenant Support Programs*	Thematic and comparative analysis
	Generic service agreements relating to the funding and delivery of tenancy support programs	Thematic and comparative analysis
	Funder/ program administrator views regarding the interface between funders and service providers and the key ingredients of successful collaboration	Interviews with funders/program administrators and executive managers of organisations providing tenant support services in relevant case study areas

Research Question	Data	Methodology
RQ3 *The Effectiveness of Tenant Support Programs:* What are the key outcomes achieved by Indigenous people on tenant support programs? What factors influence the effectiveness of tenant support programs to Indigenous at-risk tenancies in different environments?	*National Survey of Tenant Support Programs*	Thematic and comparative analysis
	Tenant support program administrative data	Descriptive statistical analyses
	Service provider-based client outcome data	Descriptive statistical analyses
	[In case study sites only]	[In case study sites only]
	Funder/program administrator and service provider views on Indigenous client outcomes and on the factors influencing the effectiveness of tenant support programs	Interviews with funders/program administrators and executive managers of organisations providing tenant support services
	[Case studies only]	[Case studies only]
	Indigenous client and caseworker views on client outcomes and the effectiveness of tenant support services	Indigenous client and caseworker focus groups
	[Case studies only]	[Case studies only]
RQ4 *Tailoring Tenant Support Programs to Meet the Needs of Indigenous Tenants:* How have funders adapted service agreements and providers service delivery models to meet the needs of Indigenous people in different community settings and how successful has this been?	Service agreements with non-Indigenous and Indigenous service providers	Thematic and comparative analysis
	Service delivery models adopted by providers of tenant support services	
	Funder/program administrator views on the effectiveness of tailored service agreements and service delivery models	Interviews with funders and executive managers (or their representatives) of CSOs community housing providers and IHOs
RQ5 *The Role of Housing Providers in Sustaining Indigenous Tenancies*: Are tenancy management operations undertaken by housing providers appropriately structured and administered to improve the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies? Does the existence of tenant support programs reduce the impetus on the housing provider to undertake other actions designed to improve the sustainability of Indigenous tenancies?	*National Survey of Tenant Support Programs*	
	Housing provider and external third-party views regarding the role of housing providers in sustaining Indigenous tenancies in general tenancy management processes and other non-tenant support programs	Interviews with housing providers and external parties and individuals

5   CONCLUSION

This research project will bring together information and findings derived from a broad range of sources to produce a resource on the operation and effectiveness of tenant support programs relevant to policy makers and service providers alike. The project has national coverage and is designed to cover the full suite of tenant support programs. As such, it will provide a forum for the cross-fertilisation of ideas between government departments and agencies involved in the funding and provision of tenant support programs in different jurisdictions.

The findings of this research have the capacity to inform the development of programs and initiatives funded by government agencies, which are intended to sustain tenancies in the private rental market and in community housing, and to complement the research already undertaken in relation to sustaining tenancies in public housing. This has implications for housing policy generally, for homelessness policy and for the development of responses to Indigenous housing need and homelessness. In a context of high demand for and scarcity of affordable housing, governments want to make the most effective use of the housing stock they do hold. The findings of this research will assist them to do so by ensuring that households allocated housing are able to maintain their tenancies and avoid homelessness.

This research will also support work on housing assistance linkages by contributing to understanding the implications of personalised service delivery approaches to housing assistance (specifically, housing assistance to sustain tenancies) which actively involve tenants.

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