



Housing and Urban Research Institute Western Australia

April 2007 Newsletter

The Housing and Urban Research Institute undertakes research and conducts consulting work for a range of potential clients which include the private and public sectors, academic institutions and NGOs regarding housing and urban issues. If you wish to discuss a piece of research regarding housing or urban and regional issues you need conducted, please contact Professor Fiona McKenzie at the Housing and Urban Research Institute of Western Australia on 9266 1087.

**** SEMINAR ****

A 'Public Housing and Workforce Participation Seminar', organised by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), will be held in Perth on **Friday 1 June 2007** at the **Curtin University Graduate School of Business, 78 Murray Street Perth**.

The seminar presents findings from a research venture that considers the relationship between public housing and the workforce participation patterns of public renters in Western Australia. The seminar has a particularly Western Australian focus because the findings are drawn from the WA Department of Housing and Works' tenancy administrative records.

There is no cost to attend the seminar. Details can be found in the attached flyer, and we hope that you will be able to attend the seminar on 1 June. (See attached flyer).

1. Improving Access to Social Housing: Paradigms, Principles and Reforms

Kath Hulse, Rhonda Phillips and Terry Burke, for Australian Housing & Urban Research Institute.

Access to social housing is of direct and immediate concern to many households in unaffordable, insecure or inappropriate housing; to residents, schools, services, facilities and local councils in areas in which social housing is located; to social housing providers in government and the not-for-profit sector; and to governments responsible for developing, financing and regulating the social housing sector.

The traditional means of access to social housing in Australia has been through administrative 'allocations systems', in which access has been predominantly through public housing wait lists in each state and territory, supplemented by the disparate allocations systems of a large number of small community housing providers. Such systems have been under pressure in recent years, as highlighted in a recent project for AHURI on 'Allocations Systems in Social Housing' (Burke and Hulse 2003; Hulse and Burke 2005).

This work detailed current allocations systems in social housing in Australia and the context for change. It found that there has been a significant decline in the number of new households able to access social housing each year, resulting in persistently high wait lists and long wait times in some areas. Social housing providers have responded with increased targeting to households with the most urgent and/or complex needs, prompting concerns by residents and councils in some areas about the effects of this targeting on the sustainability of local communities. At the same time, diversification in the range and type of social housing available, and different models of financing, ownership and management, have prompted questions about the costs and benefits of each provider maintaining its own access arrangements as is currently the case, as well as issues of information and choice for households.

This is the Final Report from a project that examines options for improving access to social housing in Australia, in ways that respond to some of the pressures on allocations systems highlighted above. It was preceded by a Positioning Paper (Hulse et al. 2006), which reviewed relevant literature and developed an analytical framework for examining allocations systems in social housing and potential reforms.

Table 1 summarises this framework, highlighting the similarities and differences in access to private rental housing (column B) compared with public housing and community housing, the two current sub-sectors of social housing in Australia (columns C and D).

The table also indicates a range of possible options to improve access to social housing as a single sector comprising multiple providers and including some components of access to private housing (column E).

For more information, go to:

http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download.asp?ContentID=50297_fr

2. Improving Access to Social Housing: Resource Kit: A practitioner's guide to review and reform of social housing allocation systems

Kath Hulse and Terry Burke, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Swinburne-Monash Research Centre April 2007

This Resource Kit is a stand-alone document which also forms Part C of the Final Report for this project.

Allocations are at the core of social housing provision. But allocations systems are not static. Changing financial pressures, changing client needs, restructuring of national and local housing markets, new policy directions (e.g. growth of affordable housing) and new policy ideas (e.g. client choice) may require a housing provider, or a set of providers, to review or change their allocations system or sub-parts of it.

This short kit is designed to assist social housing providers in undertaking reviews of their allocations system, and in changing those systems, e.g. adoption of choice-based lettings, common housing registers or local area allocation provision.

The kit is based on research undertaken by Swinburne University of Technology for two AHURI projects: Allocating Social Housing (Burke and Hulse 2003; Hulse and Burke 2005) and Improving Access to Social Housing: Common Housing Registers and Other Potential Reforms (Hulse, Neske and Burke 2006; Hulse, Phillips and Burke 2007).

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