



Housing and Urban Research Institute Western Australia

March 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. Research and Policy Bulletin, Issue 86:

How can the benefits of housing regeneration programs be sustained?

Keith Jacobs, Kathy Arthurson and Bill Randolph, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

This research has found that formal exit strategies from social housing regeneration programs assist an estate to become a community by involving local tenants, developing leadership capacity and establishing community-run successor organisations.

Social housing estate regeneration strategies are funded and facilitated by

government for a discrete period of time, for particularly disadvantaged communities or locations. Most seek to sustain community standards and services without recourse to large injections of additional public funds. In the UK, it was recognised in the 1990s that more effective policies were needed to sustain the benefits of the strategies after the formal end of regeneration activities. This study examined the present operation of exit strategies in Australia, and the potential for their future implementation.

For more information, go to:

http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/rap_issue_86

2. Research and Policy Bulletin, Issue 87:

How Does Housing Affect Employment, Health And Social Cohesion?

International evidence shows that housing assistance provides positive 'non-shelter' benefits through affecting affordability, tenure type, security of tenure, location and dwelling quality, but key gaps remain in the Australian evidence base.

Housing assistance programs in Australia vary in their methods of delivery, groups targeted and facets of housing addressed. For example, transitional and public housing may provide shelter to those who would otherwise be homeless. Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) enables recipients to achieve better-quality housing than they might otherwise be able to afford. Other assistance measures enable recipients to more easily make the transition to home ownership.

In community renewal, housing assistance is aimed at improving the physical appearance of, and social outcomes for, a particular neighbourhood. These programs also affect broader well-being outcomes, including the employability, health and social connectedness of households that receive assistance.

They may do so by improving housing outcomes (e.g. improved dwelling quality leads to lower morbidity) or other related outcomes (e.g. improved health may improve labour market participation).

This study reviewed international and Australian evidence for links between housing and broader well-being outcomes. It also sought to identify the pathways by which these links might occur, including those relating to characteristics of housing (Table 1), as well as the circumstances in which they occurred.

For more information, go to:

http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download.asp?ContentID=rap_issue_87

3. **Experiencing the Housing Affordability Problem: Blocked Aspirations, Trade-Offs and Financial Hardships**

Terry Burke, Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology

This paper focuses on the actual experience of housing affordability, revealing how deeply the problem cuts into the financial and general wellbeing of renters. Not only does it create intense hardship for many, but there is no escape from the relentless squeeze between income and rents. The findings also indicate that, for many renters, it is not that rents have increased to excessive levels (they

have been relatively constant) that has created the affordability problem, but that incomes are too low and too uncertain. In a deregulated labour market environment, this is only likely to worsen.

Recognition that there is a deep and permanent affordability issue for many renters suggests that all the focus on home ownership programs has got more to do with political point scoring and policy capture than anything to do with the real affordability problem. This is not to say that we do not have a purchasing problem. We do, but it is now of a form that the current policy interventions are as much part of the problem as the solution. We have to recognise, as the respondents in these two surveys do, that labour markets and housing markets are interlinked.

As previously indicated, the high rates of ownership achieved in the first three decades of the post-war years were enabled by a very different labour market to that of today, one that was inclusive of all (except married women), full-time and permanent. Today's labour market is polarised. For many, it is increasingly casualised, part-time, low paid and exclusive (particularly of the old and those without skills). For others in the professions and skilled trades, it provides opportunities for real income increments unparalleled in earlier years. This flows into the housing market and will continue to do so. Appeals to raise home purchasing rates back to those of the past are increasingly futile.

New times create new market patterns and therefore the need for new policy interventions. Rental is the tenure of the future, and more policy attention should be given to providing this sector with more of the elements of ownership (security, ability to adapt to tenants' needs, long-term affordability), but without undermining continued investment in new stock that is appropriate and sustainable.

For more information, go to: <http://www.sisr.net/publications/0703burke.pdf>

4. Australian and Urban Research Institute Research for 2007-08

Issues that affect all Australians including housing affordability, the impact of the housing market upon the economy, support for home ownership, conditions in the private rental market, and homelessness, are amongst those that will be the focus of fourteen new research projects in 2007 at the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).