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The Housing and Community Research Unit 18
Welcome to our annual report for 2011-2012. The last year has been an interesting time for housing researchers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics recently published data showing that house prices in the period March 2011 - March 2012 fell by an average of 4.5% in the eight capital cities, with the highest fall being in Hobart (6.7%). For those of us who have been concerned with the impact of the affordability crisis this is good news. The current downturn in the house building industry makes it a good time for governments to fund new social housing projects as it can reap cost savings from the change in market conditions.
In tandem with falling house prices there has been a considerable hike in energy costs that has led to electricity bills rising in some States by as much as 15%. Utility companies justify price hikes as necessary to pay for infrastructure costs but household bills will always have a greater proportional impact for those on low-incomes. An injection of funds to support low-income households to retrofit their properties would yield important dividends by reducing fuel poverty and easing the demand for electricity.

Yet it is difficult to be optimistic that Federal and State governments will be bold enough to take up these opportunities. Governments are already under pressure to reduce their costs and there is a reluctance to commit resources for long-term aspirations. Undoubtedly, politics in Australia is too focussed on the day-to-day issues and this has meant strategic decisions are often put on hold. Governments need to commit resources to social housing if they are serious about tackling social inequality and assisting low-income households to live in secure accommodation.

Last year was a productive one for us working in HACRU. Amongst the projects we have completed are: ‘The adaptation of the built environment to prepare for the impact of natural hazards’, ‘Improving housing policy responses to Indigenous patterns of mobility’, and ‘Independent housing for young people recovering from mental illness’. We have also commenced four new projects; Daphne Habibis is working on an AHURI multi-year research project titled ‘Aboriginal lifeworlds, conditionality and housing outcomes’ (with colleagues based at the University of Queensland) and Keith Jacobs and Anne Coleman are leading on two projects evaluating front-line services for homeless people that are being funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Michelle Gabriel and Keith Jacobs are working with colleagues at RMIT on an AHURI funded project that is examining marginal rental housing and the experiences of those who reside in the sector.

Other news we can report is the exhibition organised by Adrian Franklin titled ‘The Research Life of Arts Objects’ that was displayed at the University. In March, we convened an interdisciplinary symposium on the theme of ‘Home, Objects and Things’ that attracted scholars from as far as the UK and Canada to reflect on our understandings of household practices and the home. Some of the papers from the symposium will be published in a special edition of the journal *Housing, Theory and Society* in mid 2013. We also hosted a visit from Annette Hastings, an academic based at the University of Glasgow, who presented a paper on ‘Urban inequalities, local public services and middle class community activism’. Anne Coleman edited a special edition on ‘Homelessness in Tasmania’ for the journal *Parity* and we congratulate one of our PhD students, Erika Altmann, for being awarded an AHURI ‘top up’ scholarship earlier this year.

In the pages that follow we have outlined our current projects and those that have recently been completed.
'Marginal rental housing and marginal renters’ (Funder: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute)

Robin Goodman (RMIT)
Tony Dalton (RMIT)
Anita Nelson (RMIT)
Michelle Gabriel
Keith Jacobs

With greater demand for affordable housing and critically inadequate supply, low-income Australian households are likely to be forced into living in marginal rental housing, such as a rooming house, boarding house, hostel, hotel/motels and caravan park accommodation. This project aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics driving the use of various forms of marginal rental housing and the experiences and circumstances of renters.
2. CURRENT PROJECTS

‘Identities, disadvantage and belonging’ (Funder: UTAS community engagement grant)

Max Travers
Keith Jacobs
Roberta Julian

The project entails an innovative collaboration with residents of three public housing areas in Hobart to research social disadvantage and stigma. The aim is to contribute, in a modest way, to breaking down stereotypes and developing a relationship between interested communities and the University of Tasmania.

‘Is there a ‘tipping point’ at which additional services for homeless people do not lead to additional improvements in health and well-being? A study of the STAY service in Tasmania’ (Funder: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)

Keith Jacobs
Michelle Gabriel
Stewart Williams
Kathleen Flanagan

An evaluation of Housing Tasmania’s Specialist Intervention Tenancy Service. The project will consider the views of policy makers and the users of services to gauge the optimal point or points of intervention at which different services might become more effective. It is envisaged that the findings from the study will provide policy makers with insights about the level and form of support that is the most effective in assisting homeless people settle in suitable accommodation.

‘The practice of outreach and its role in responding to primary homelessness’ (Funder: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)

Anne Coleman
David MacKenzie (Swinburne)

This project is an exploration of outreach as an integral part of responding to street (or primary) homelessness. The research team will examine and document outreach practices currently employed in capital cities and regional centres in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania.
2. CURRENT PROJECTS

‘Housing: a post war history’
Keith Jacobs

The book is an historical study considering the most significant housing issues in the contemporary world including the political economy surrounding homeownership; the role of public housing, the problem of homelessness; the ways that housing performs in accentuating social and economic inequality; and how suburban housing has transformed city life. Reaktion Press will publish the book in late 2014.

‘Women’s housing pathways and priorities’
Michelle Gabriel

This project identified a new set of housing pathways and priorities among young women compared with their mothers and grandmothers. These include: an appreciation of property ownership as the key to long term financial security; a displacement of the home as a site of family, care and work; the reorientation of residential location towards place of employment; and recognition of the home as a place in which particular ethical modes of living, such as a mindfulness of energy and water consumption, can be enacted.
2. CURRENT PROJECTS

‘Home comfort’
Michelle Gabriel
Phillipa Watson

This project interrogates changes in societal and individual expectations surrounding housing form and comfort, in particular, the increasing reliance of households on energy-intensive heating and cooling systems to manage household comfort levels. It will provide insight into differences in the living standards and comfort levels of households across low and high-income neighbourhoods. The project is important in understanding how the transition to a lower carbon society may potentially exacerbate differences in the household experiences of home comfort and hence the quality of life of low and high-income households.

‘Lifestyle migration towns in transition’
Felicity Picken
Nick Osbaldiston (Monash)
Angela Ragusa (Charles Sturt University).

This project will attempt to locate, explore and analyse some of the effects of lifestyle migration in Australia. We are particularly interested in investigating the effects that are played out through housing including ‘gentrification and displacement’, ‘housing market indicators’ and possible response mechanisms.
‘Adaptation of built environment to climate change induced increased intensity of natural hazards’ 
(Funder: Climate Change Adaption Research Grants Program, Bureau of Meteorology)

David King (JCU)  
Alison Cotterell (JCU)  
John Ginger (JCU)  
Stewart Williams  
Kate Booth  
Keith Jacobs

This project focused on the use of building codes, land-use planning and housing insurance as key regulatory mechanisms in climate change adaptation. Whilst often deemed to be amongst the most important tools for disaster mitigation, they are not well understood, especially in terms of how they might be adapted for use under changing climatic conditions. Perceptions are held about stakeholders’ views on these issues but there has been little comprehensive research. The project addresses the gap in knowledge through an all-hazards approach to building design, land use planning and building stock, using case studies in each sector to facilitate a proactive approach that will link practice to policy. The UTAS team investigated insurance as an under-utilised regulatory mechanism in relation to housing. The more traditional understandings and deployments of insurance, actuarialism and risk management are not adequate for the complexity of today’s natural disasters. The report will be published in late 2012.
3. COMPLETED PROJECTS

‘The role of informal community resources in supporting independent housing for young people recovering from mental illness: a guide for housing policy makers and practitioners’ (Funder: AHURI)

Cameron Duff (Monash)
Shane Murray (Monash)
Stephen Loo
Keith Jacobs

This project considered the housing policy interventions that strengthen the array of informal resources available in communities to support independent housing for youth in recovery and to determine the role of informal resources in promoting social inclusion. The project identified neighbourhood factors that moderate the risk of homelessness for youth in recovery.

‘Retro: the mid-20th century design revival’

Adrian Franklin

This project examined the way in which objects designed in the mid-twentieth century have captured our imagination in the contemporary period. Original designs and objects are highly sought after and valued and many of the designs from the 1950s-1980s have been reissued. The book considers the nostalgia for the optimistic days of the space race, the electronics revolution and the democratisation of design for living and more luxurious homes for all. The project has been published as a book by UNSW press with the title ‘RETRO: a guide to the mid-20th century design revival’.

‘Leadership and the state of planning and architecture’

Felicity Picken

This project explores the importance of ‘transformational leadership’ as a vehicle for establishing more socially inclusive cities. It will address questions such as: how do professionals view leadership? What role can leadership play in creating a more inclusive urban setting? And how can leaders be encouraged within the design profession?
4. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Current Doctoral Students

- Corporate expertise and its impact on organisational capacity and governance
  
  - Erica Altmann

- Youth, language and identity in a new African diasporic community in Australia
  
  - Meredith Izon

- Sustainable housing for equity and energy efficiency
  
  - Phillipa Watson

- Global financial markets and housing
  
  - Peter Willans

- Neo-liberal ideologies and their impact for government service providers
  
  - Kathleen Flanagan
5. PUBLICATIONS

2011 Duff, C., Murray, S., Alic, N., Loo, S and Jacobs, K. The role of informal community resources in supporting independent housing for young people recovering from mental illness: a guide for housing policy makers and practitioners, positioning paper, Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.


2011 Hulse, K., Jacobs, K., Arthurson, A. and Spinney, A. At home and in place? The role of housing in social inclusion, final report, Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.


5. PUBLICATIONS

2011 Willis, K., Natalier, K. and Revie, M. ‘Understanding risk, choice and amenity in an urban area at risk of flooding’, *Housing Studies*, 26 (2), 225-239.


2012 Natalier, K. ‘Means and ends: why child support money is not used to meet housing costs’, *Housing Studies*, 27 (2), 174-188.


The Housing and Community Research Unit is located in the School of Sociology and Social Work. It receives core funding from Housing Tasmania and the University of Tasmania along with other funding through AHURI and the Australian Research Council and other small NGO funders via small-scale consultancy work. The unit began in 2002 as a collaborative research venture between Housing Tasmania and UTAS to undertake housing and community related research that would both support the policy environment in which Housing Tasmania operates as well as producing rigorous academic work of a national and international standing. A range of outputs by the Unit includes peer-reviewed articles, articles for the housing policy press, seminars for housing practitioners and reports for Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. The work of the unit is centred on housing, urban and community issues.

Within this broad remit there is a focus on the following areas:

- Housing affordability
- Gentrification and neighbourhood change
- Indigenous and regional housing issues
- Diversity and social inclusion
- Housing, crime prevention and community safety
- Migration, demographic change and housing impacts
- Regulation of the ‘not-for-profit’ sector
- Environmental planning and mitigation.
Core staff

Assoc. Prof. Keith Jacobs (Director)
Social exclusion, social housing, urban policy

Dr Michelle Gabriel (Research Fellow)
Housing affordability, environmental sustainability

Dr Anne Coleman
Homelessness, policy implementation, social housing

Dr Felicity Picken
(AHURI Postdoctoral Fellow)
Homelessness, urban planning

Dr Daphne Habibis
Indigenous housing, complex needs

Dr Kris Natalier
Homelessness, criminal justice, young people

Dr Stewart Williams
Risk management, environmental disaster planning

Associate staff

Prof. Adrian Franklin

Prof. Rob White

Dr Max Travers

Assoc. Prof. Maggie Walter

Assoc. Prof. Bruce Tranter

Ms Helen Norrie

Dr Kate Booth

Prof. Stephen Loo

Dr Rowland Atkinson
(University of York)

Prof. Jim Kemeny
(Honorary research fellow)

Dr Jesse Shipway
(Honorary research fellow)

Dr Jed Donoghue
(Honorary research fellow)

Dr Jan Forbes
(Honorary research fellow)

HACRU postgraduate students

Erica Altmann
Meredith Izon
Phillipa Watson
Peter Willans
Kathleen Flanagan

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