ANNUAL REPORT
2007/2008

School of Sociology and Social Work
University of Tasmania
Welcome to our annual report for 2007/2008, this comes on the back of another busy year for the Unit. A change of national government has created new impetus around housing as a core issue, for the working of the national economy but also the growing recognition of acute social need. The Housing and Community Research Unit (HACRU) has been one of many voices arguing for a greater attention to these issues. The work of the Unit takes these needs as central to its agenda and aims to support policy that works in ways to help address these issues and acknowledge the centrality of housing – from work to schooling, from health to security, as a place of play and space for personal growth and development.

The Unit has been active around many of the issues now high on community and policy radars. For example, work by Keith Jacobs has highlighted the problems associated with policing and drug use in public housing areas. Elsewhere problems of anti-social behaviour have been met in some jurisdictions by calls for more punitive approaches. Work on the needs facing many drug and alcohol dependent households who come under this classification (by Habibis and Atkinson) points instead to the need for support services to successfully tackle these issues, both to help both the families and communities affected by these issues. At the national level the efforts of academics working around Urban 45, led by HACRU and colleagues at RMIT continue to emphasise the need for a co-ordinated approach to some of the central issues facing our nation’s urban areas. Within the State, Michelle Gabriel has been working with the state housing authority on profiling the key locations and extent of problems of housing affordability. On top of all of this there has been work on household break-up, good communities, second home and city planning to mention a few.

HACRU’s postgraduates also work on a broad range of issues, both at the policy and more conceptual ends of urban and housing issues. Phillippa Watson is conducting important work on heating efficiency in the housing stock, while work by Dan Goss throws a spotlight on the decisions facing potential homeowners. Events in international credit markets and homeownership are also focused on by Peter Willans in what is likely to be an early and exciting first in this area. In addition the Unit and its associates have maintained a steady flow of research reports, edited books and journal articles that step between different audiences to achieve maximum impact and social value. After a series of successful events last year we will be organizing an important summit this year to discuss the role of public housing and its continued representation in community life.

In the coming year a series of new projects will start. Again, these will look at the burning issues relating to community, housing and urban affairs nationally and locally. Keith Jacobs will be taking a timely look at crime and other key issue responses to natural disasters in work funded by AHURI. Daphne Habibis will build on her work on demanding behaviour to look at the support needs of indigenous households and Rowland Atkinson is looking at patterns of household displacement in the major metropolises as neighbourhoods become ever more gentrified by high-income households. Closer to home the Hobart Urban Profile will see the release of a short housing history of Hobart as well as a photographic exhibition undertaken in different areas in neighbourhood quality across Hobart. All of this our work continues to focus on housing, but does so in a way which highlights the centrality of those four walls to so many aspects of our daily lives. Among all of this activity it is also important that we acknowledge the continuing kind support of the State’s housing authority, Housing Tasmania, without which much of this work would be impossible.

I hope that you will find something to interest you in our report and will get in touch if you feel there are other issues to which we should turn our attention.

Dr Rowland Atkinson
Director
Housing and Community Research Unit
**Indigenous housing, mobility and support services**  
*(Funder: AHURI)*  
Daphne Habibis  

A significant research project has begun, headed by Dr Daphne Habibis, to consider the role of housing policy responses to Indigenous mobilities and their improvement. Thesell be examining patterns of urban drift amongst Aboriginal peoples as well as more traditional movements between rural, remote and urban environments, and locating this in the changing policy context. As well as identifying existing formal and informal housing responses to these movements the research will seek answers to the causes of these shifts and innovative ideas about how they might be accommodated. The research will be conducted in close consultation with Indigenous individuals and groups as well as with housing policy personnel.

**Preparing for and responding to natural disasters and environmental emergencies:**  
a guide for state housing authorities  
*(Funder: AHURI)*  
Keith Jacobs  

This project is driven by previous research that suggests young people leaving care are at high risk of social marginalization, negative health, employment and education outcomes and homelessness. Thus, housing difficulties are part of a web of disadvantage. Support available to young people leaving care differs across jurisdictions and to date there has been no systematic investigation into what ‘best practice’ might look like. This research responds to this gap, examining who requires support, what services are available, and how effective those services are. The study has three components: desk based literature review of existing programs and service delivery models; focus groups with key stakeholders to identify standards, a best practice framework and appropriate outcome measures; 100 semi-structured interviews to evaluate the housing and other needs and experiences of care leavers.

**Housing policies, Social mix and community outcomes**  
*(Funder: AHURI)*  
Rowland Atkinson  

This project will provide a systematic review of the international literature on social mix with particular attention paid both to the evidence on what types of social concentration produce specific negative local outcomes. The research is guided by two aims: i. To identify the international research evidence on the social and community effects stemming from various types of social concentration, and ii. To propose guidance around effective policy and practice interventions to ameliorate such effects. The main output of the research will be a good practice and policy guide considering those areas in which the State Housing Authorities may have positive influence.

**Gentrification and displacement in metropolitan Australia**  
*(Funder: AHURI)*  
Rowland Atkinson and Maryann Wulff (Monash University)  

This project, for AHURI, will look at how gentrification (the move of high-income households to low-rent/cost neighbourhoods) has impacted on the supply of affordable housing in areas in Sydney and Melbourne. The research will consider how much gentrification has taken place over the last decade and how much household displacement has occurred as a result of the loss of affordable housing. The work will also consider the social and economic costs to communities and the policy implications of these changes for both State housing and Federal government agencies.
Privatising neighbourhoods? Governance and social life in gated and master-planned estates (Funder: ARC Discovery)
Rowland Atkinson, Robin Dowling (Macquarie University) and Pauline McGuirk (Newcastle University)
This project is looking at the newer kinds of neighbourhood being developed privately but which may have wider implications for social life in Australian cities, public spaces and for social cohesion more widely. Given a tendency to provide larger private estates which may include their own community services and for greater privatism and social withdrawal by more affluent households, a study of the right to live in Australia (HACRU) and the staff of management boards and other relevant personnel will be taking place this year. Across the six case study sites interviews with potential developers, the management boards and other relevant personnel will be taking place this year. A household survey is now in the field.

Gated communities in Australia (HACRU)
Rowland Atkinson and Bruce Tranter
This project considers the rise of gated communities across Australia. These communities consist of walls and gates around neighbourhoods that would traditionally have been 'open' to non-residents. These physical changes in our built environment raise broader concerns about a growing insularity and fear in Australian suburbs. Using specially commissioned questions in a national survey this research will generate not only a clearer impression of the numbers of people living in such communities but we will also be able to consider the kinds of people and their broader social attitudes in comparison with the general population.

Child Support and Housing: Exploring the Links.
Dr Kristen Natkutsch (University of Tasmania), Dr Maggie Walter (University of Tasmania), Dr MaryAnn Wulff (Monash University), Margaret Reynolds (Monash University), Dr Rowland Atkinson (University of Queensland).
This research focused on the relationship between the payment and receipt of child support and housing outcomes of non-resident and non-resident Parents Apart. The study was guided by the question: How does the payment and receipt of child support, along with the receipt of government income and housing assistance, affect the housing outcomes of Parents Apart (both resident and non-resident parents)?

Primarily, the project aimed to assess the contribution of child support, government income support and housing assistance to the housing outcomes of Parents Apart. This study drew on quantitative data analyses of the HILDA Wave 4 dataset and qualitative analyses of in-depth interviews with resident and non-resident Parents Apart. This approach allowed the research team to investigate both the objective and interpretive dimensions of the relationships between housing outcomes and the payment and receipt of child support.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative components of the study suggest that the payment and receipt of child support has different impacts on the housing outcomes of resident and non-resident Parents Apart. In the quantitative analysis, receipt of child support, if it was above the median amount, was consistently and significantly associated with better housing outcomes. Payment of child support, on the other hand, while obviously making a difference to non-residents’ Parents Apart household budgets, was found to have little or no statistically significant association with non-resident Parents’ Apart housing circumstances. An impact on the payment of child support by non-resident Parents Apart, however, was found in the qualitative analysis. In the instance of resident Parents Apart, the impact is shaped by perceptions of legitimate uses of child support monies, and the amount and timeliness of its payment. For non-resident Parents Apart, the department of child support limits the monies available for housing costs. However its indirect impact is also significant: in particular, child support, associated as it is with the parenting arrangements for children, can be the focus of ongoing administrative or legal challenges, which are reported to have a significant impact upon the financial circumstances of resident Parents Apart.

In light of these findings we suggested the following policy implications:
- An ongoing focus on improving the level and regularity of child support payments to Resident Parents Apart.
- An emphasis in Child Support Agency literature and policy on the importance of housing as a child oriented expense. In particular literature should refer to housing costs as one of the aspects of shared parenting that child support payments are aimed at addressing.
- Development of loan and grant schemes that increase the capacity of Parents Apart to amass sufficient amounts for a home deposit.
- Wider availability of schemes designed to assist Parents Apart and their children to meet their housing needs in the often turbulent years following separation.
- Support for an ongoing policy and research focus on housing affordability with an emphasis on investigating the supply-side issues impacting upon housing affordability.

Report at: www.shr.edu.au

1. CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

2. RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS
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Demanding Behaviour: Sustaining Anti-Social and Problematic Households (Funder: AHURI)

Rowland Atkinson and Daphne Habibis

The AHURI project took ‘sustaining’ approach to the question of effective and comprehensive approaches for managing challenging tenant behaviour. The project fits within a grey area of housing management where behaviour may have complex psychological and social factors. This research can help inform practice in the housing sector and policy, particularly in the context of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) and Anti-social and Problematic Behaviour Program (APBO).

AHURI website and the report at: www.ahuri.edu.au

The project had two key phases which involved an international literature review and report followed by a systematic review of all the international literature and report followed by national case studies with projects who have demonstrated effective and comprehensive approaches along with calls for tougher action for statutory and plain language approach which gives clear detail of effective and comprehensive enough to cover the range of issues on such matters as multi-agency working and case management.

Report: at www.ahuri.edu.au

Research spotlight: The rise of the savvy female investor

Michelle Gabriel

The rise of the modern, emancipated and financially independent women in the early part of the twentieth century suggested new possibilities for women’s place in Australian public and private life. Tensions between working and family life became a central battleground between social conservatives who advocated the virtues of motherhood and the household, and feminists who called on women to leave the home behind. In the last two decades, this dichotomy between work and home has collapsed in Australia as the strengthening of sexual discrimination legislation and the deregulation of the financial industry during the 1980s resulted in a substantially changed climate for women seeking to invest in the housing sector. Women are no longer the silent and supportive partner in home ownership. Instead, women make significant financial contributions to the purchase of property within married and de facto relationships, and they are increasingly investing in housing on their own.

In view of these changes, this study of young female investors charts the emergence of a new social ideal relating to women and housing; such as the recent appearance of the savvy female investor in public discourse. To date, the project has entailed a discourse analysis of women’s and financial investment magazines and personal interviews with twenty-seven young women who have recently purchased property in Melbourne. Preliminary analysis of these interviews already reveals a new set of priorities among young women in relation to their housing pathways and domestic lives. These include an appreciation of property ownership as the key to long term financial independence and security; a displacement of the home as a site of family, love 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.

Housing Stress in Tasmania: Recent Trends and Future Projections

Michelle Gabriel

The issue of housing affordability has attracted considerable policy media attention in recent years. Growth in the housing affordability problem in Australia is attributed to a combination of factors including the availability of mortgage finance, persistently low interest rates over the past decade, taxation incentives that favour home ownership and housing investment, and rises in household income (Productivity Commission 2004; Gabriel et al. 2006; Yates et al. 2011). In view of this national context, the Housing and Community Research Unit (AHURI) selected the issue of housing affordability and stress in Tasmania. Housing Stress in Tasmania: Recent Trends and Future Projections (2007) provides estimates of rates of housing stress and identifies the geographical distribution of private rental and mortgage stress among the population of households who are affected by private rental and mortgage stress. The analysis is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Household and Income (2005–06) and Census (2006). This report provides updates earlier estimates undertaken by AHURI in 2004.

The analysis found that between 2003-04 and 2005-06 housing affordability problems in Tasmania declined among low income households, but grew among middle and high income households. The proportion of Tasmanian households experiencing housing stress at 8.8% is slightly lower than Australia as a whole at 9.9%.

In regards to the distribution of housing stress in Tasmania, housing affordability problems in 2006 were concentrated in major population centres including Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, and Devonport, where households facing high mortgage costs, typically young families, were concentrated in outer suburbs such as Brighton, in growth corridors such as Sorrel, Huon Valley and Kingborough and in rural areas such as Kentish and the Bass Tamar Valley. In general, housing stress was more likely to be experienced by private renters, first time home buyers, younger households (15-34 years), lone and group households, and households who arrived in Australia less than 10 years ago than other household types. However, there were differences in the types of housing stress experienced. Private rental stress was more associated with households facing high mortgage costs. Private rental stress affected a broad range of household types including younger households (15-34 years); group, lone person and single-parent households; households with and without children; employed and unemployed; and Australian and non-Australian born.

In contrast, mortgage stress affected household aged 15-34 years and households aged 35-44 years; couple households; with employed households; and Australian born households.
Launceston Flood Research Initiative

Karen Wilis, Mhairi Vogt (Launceston City council), Jaewon You & Kristin Natalier

This research is driven by the need to investigate the economic and social outcomes of a modest or major flood event in the Launceston suburbs of Invermay/ Inveresk. These are low lying areas, protected from flood damage by a system of levees. However, recent engineering advice indicates the levee system has been subject to significant degradation over time, and there is concern that it could not currently deliver the functionality required to protect Invermay/Inveresk against flood. Plans are now underway to strengthen the system and implement other, additional protective measures but there is also a need to understand how residents perceive the likelihood and nature of flood, how they have engaged with the information provided to them and the strategies they plan to implement in a flood event. The research programme comprised of demographic information on the area, a review of relevant policy, and a community study drawing on 62 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Invermay/Inveresk residents. The community study found that perceptions of the likelihood of flooding, and the level of concern flood engendered, were linked to the nature of people’s ties to the area. But rather ideas of time, people saw flooding as an event that is limited in time, with short term impacts. People rely on lay knowledge rather than Council information when assessing flood risk. However, residents have not developed detailed flood strategies. Thus, in the event of a flood residents will look to Council to warn residents, for advice and assistance in regards to evacuation and short term accommodation and financial assistance after a flood. Residents believe the SES will also play a significant role in warning and evacuation.

The Unit has been particularly active around events that bring together academics, policymakers and community members. 2007 saw no less than six events held, one of which, Urban 45, a national venture with colleagues at AHURI-RMIT was held in Melbourne. These activities are seen as an essential way of bridging the work of the Unit into policymaking and to enable a broader audience to issues that are currently high on the research agenda. Two further events are planned for 2008 at this stage.

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3. EVENTS

The Pursuit of Theory: Contemporary Debates in Housing and Urban Research

February, 2007

In February 2007, HACRU hosted a two day symposium to enable academics to engage in a critical discussion about the role and deployment of social, geographical, economic and other theoretical vantage points in housing and urban studies. The number of attendees was limited to 20 and this enabled us to explore, in depth, some of the more challenging theoretical issues within the field of study. The key note speaker was Philip O’Neill, Professor of Urban Studies at the University of Western Sydney. In his paper Phillip discussed the contribution of Jim Kemeny as a basis to explore some of the critical issues for contemporary scholarship such as the interface between academy and the policy community. The remaining presentations were based on themes that included: the practice of housing research; the politics of homeownership and social disadvantage; feminist research methods, the discursive construction of affordability; and new directions in housing research. A selection of papers from the symposium will be published in a special edition of Housing, Theory and Society in 2009.

Another theory symposium will be hosted later this year at Swinburne University.

ASBOs and Australia - Anti-social behaviour, housing and the law

August 2007

Judy Nixon (Principal Lecturer in Studies into Anti-Social Behaviour, UK), Michele Slatter (Flinders, School of Law), Caroline Hunter (Senior Lecturer in Housing Law)

Housing improvement and health: a systematic review of world literature

July 2007

Hilary Thomson, Medical Research Council, University of Glasgow

Social mix and Public Housing

February, 2007

Kathy Arthurson (Swinburne University) and Kathy Arthurson (Newcastle University).

3. EVENTS

ii. Events for 2008

A public conversation about public housing: UTAS, 5th June
A discussion paper

5th June, 2008

Our aim in hosting this forum is to consider policies and strategies that can be developed to counteract the stigma that surrounds public housing. The forum will explore some of the significant factors that accentuate negative perceptions of public housing. It will also provide a space to:
- Comment on the existing practices (both here and overseas) that have been deployed to counteract negative perceptions of public housing.
- Scope some of the ways in which Australian housing and welfare agencies can address stigma and promote public housing in a more positive way.
- A discussion paper will be launched at the event

See www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU/news.htm for details

Urban 45: 2. Canberra

November 2008

With the success and media coverage of Urban 45 there is a need to maintain momentum on urban affairs at the Federal and State levels in Australia. Issues of infrastructure quality, housing affordability, health and education remain core issues. The second meeting of the Urban 45 will launch a second report profiling progress on the 15 theme areas, using both empirical data and policy analysis to generate an awareness of urban and spatial policy issues.

Date and location to be confirmed.

See http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU/news.htm for details
Postgraduate work is central to ensuring that scholars continue to take a keen interest in the role of housing and urban issues. We now have several candidates pursuing innovative work in a range of areas. In this report we highlight ongoing and new work by researchers.

Global Financial Markets and Housing

Peter Williams

Deregulation has brought higher interest rates and considerable public discussion concerning the plight of home buyers and these interest rate rises. Following deregulation the global finance systems in the 1990s there has been a considerable change in the way that home buyers have been influenced by higher volumes of capital available in Australia and through most developed countries. Following the September 11 attacks in the United States interest rates were slashed to stimulate the economy. This coincided with the parallel dynamic of an influx of overseas finance into the United States and also into Australia. House prices responded to demand from buyers with access to ready capital and to set new interest rate levels.

When markets began to show signs of distress in the United States the supply of capital from Japan, China and the Middle East into the credit markets of Australia and the United States. Hedge funds and financial institutions have lost up to 100 billion dollars over the past twelve months following the collapse of two hedge fund businesses attached to giant US financial institution Bear Stearns. A contagion effect has severely altered the nature of housing markets in the United States and the flow-on has influenced Australian homeowners and borrowers in all types of Credit markets. Australian banks insisted that they were not exposed to US risks but evidence now shows that banks exposed to international financial institutions are in default or have received notices from lenders. It is estimated that 300,000 Australian families are in default or have received notices from lenders. It is estimated that 300,000 Australian families are in default or have received notices from lenders.

This thesis will add to the growing evidence that global financial markets are influencing the way the state, public and private capital works in the orderliness of civil society. It suggests way for the effective regulation and administration over hedge funds and institutions that have been tacitly supported by the state. This research examines the social disruptions occasioned by an increasing number of people who are disenfranchised by circumstances beyond their control. It asks if elected governments who have supported the expansion of financial globalisation have taken account of the social dislocation caused by the activities of unaccountable and formidable global financial players.

Accommodating public housing change: The social relations of policy actors

Elle Francis-Brophy

Elle’s thesis, entitled Accommodating public housing change: The social relations of policy actors, analyses the social relations of policy actors, the Tasmanian State Housing Authority in a period of public housing residualisation and the critical policy and delivery in social housing to an arms-length third sector model. The thesis incorporates discussions surrounding public housing residualisation and the critical policy and delivery in social housing to a more private market. The thesis examines the social disruptions occasioned by an increasing number of people who are disenfranchised by circumstances beyond their control. The thesis explores the social disruptions occasioned by an increasing number of people who are disenfranchised by circumstances beyond their control. The thesis explores the social disruptions occasioned by an increasing number of people who are disenfranchised by circumstances beyond their control.
Sustainable Housing for Equity and Energy Efficiency

Phillipa Watson

This research is investigating the potential for energy efficient improvement to existing housing for health, wellbeing and environmental gains. The aim is to establish the types of individual and institutional responses that will encourage basic energy efficient housing improvement in Tasmania. In Tasmania the socially disadvantaged make up a disproportionately high percentage of the population and according to the Tasmanian community sector their disadvantage is regularly compounded by the poor standard of the housing in which they dwell. Energy efficient housing improvement can lead to improvements in the health and ultimate wellbeing of occupants, reduce resource use and improve overall affordability. Philippa is currently in the middle of her fieldwork, which involves focus groups with professionals who deal with the housing processes in Tasmania, as well as an investigation of an energy efficient home improvement scheme in the Glenorchy Council area. Focus group data is being used to identify the drivers and impediments to housing improvement in the overall Tasmanian context. The home improvement scheme has provided an opportunity to analyse a successful energy efficient home improvement scheme, allowing the drivers and overall benefits of the scheme to be identified. Findings from this research will be fed back to the project participants and stakeholders of Tasmanian housing processes. The project is sponsored by the Office of Energy Planning and Conservation and the Graduate Dean of Research at the University of Tasmania.

Daniel Gross

The study aims to develop a comprehensive account of the content and paint a picture of the modern “Great Australian Dream” through developing a coherent understanding of the motivations of potential first home buyers, and the constraints which they face in attempting to realise the dream of owner occupation. It also aims to describe the multiple dimensions of the “Great Australian Dream”, and the multiple paths through which people might realise that dream. Identifying the strategies people put in place to achieve the dream of homeownership, and distinguish whether these paths differ dependant on a person’s particular ‘dream’ of homeownership is a further core objective.

This is a qualitative study which sets out to document the first home purchase experience, that is, the pathway between making the decision to purchase a first home, and actually seeing that decision through. The project will provide a comparison between first home buyers’ aspirations prior to purchasing a home, and their post-purchase experiences of living in their own home. Through speaking with first home buyers pre and post purchase, this research aims to come to an understanding of how first home buyers strategise and negotiate around the choices and constraints faced in the first home purchase experience, and how they strategise to utilise the resources available to them. It will also aim to distinguish whether the strategies first-home-buyers put in place to attain owner-occupation are dependant on their particular ‘dream’ of homeownership.


The Hobart Urban Profile (HUP) involves a series of thematic areas of work that focus on the city-region of Tasmania’s capital. These include housing, health, education, neighbourhoods, employment and other key areas. The aim is to produce documents that profile and measure key changes in these domains with a view to producing an overall snapshot of the Greater Hobart city-region and raise issues for policy and community debate as a result. This work is unfunded and ongoing and reflects a commitment to carry out work that is of relevance to local communities as well as to national-level policy interests around housing and urban issues.

i. A Short History of Housing in Hobart (HUP Report No. 1, forthcoming mid 2008)

As the capital of Tasmania, Hobart’s role in bringing investment, economic opportunity and its public role as the emblematic urban centre is perhaps self-evident. However, existing planning guidelines present an outdated vision of the metropolitan region which has the potential to undermine the key role that might be played by city’s core. Not only does the city contain one of the largest densities of listed heritage buildings in Australia but, side-by-side, these sites share the central city space with broad streetscapes that are dominated by car parks, non-residential ‘empty’ neighbourhoods and high speed one-way systems that diminish pedestrian roles and interest. The research found that even with a turnover to residential use of around half of the fifty existing car-related sites would produce a gain of around 800 dwellings at medium density (no higher than three floors including a ground floor with commercial uses). As housing affordability problems lock out more households there is a concerted need to consider the role of opportunity sites like this to enhance the livability, economic value and housing options for Hobart.


ii. Missed Opportunities? An appraisal of Hobart’s CBD (HUP Report No. 2)

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iii. A Visual Index of Deprivation and Opportunities (HUP Report No. 3) (forthcoming late 2008)
Our core interests

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. For further details please see our current research page at http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU/current_research.htm.

- Housing affordability
- Gentrification, neighbourhood change and displacement
- Indigenous and regional housing issues
- Diversity, inclusion and sustainability
- Housing, crime prevention, community safety and anti-social behaviour
- Migration, socio-demographic change and housing impacts

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