

# Addressing homelessness amongst older Australians

Maree Petersen

Institute for Social Science Research

University of Queensland

Thursday, 31 October 2013

National Housing Conference, Adelaide

*Project -Preventing first time  
homelessness amongst older  
Australians - the Research Team*



- Partnered with Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) agencies
- Dr Maree Petersen UQ
- Dr Cameron Parsell UQ
- Ms Rhonda Phillips UQ
- Dr Gentry White UQ (now QUT)

Funded by  
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

# Research Aims and Questions

**Gain a national understanding of older people's homelessness in Australia and**

**Inform prevention strategies by drawing on Interventions undertaken across Australia**

- What are the circumstances surrounding older Australians that put them at risk of homelessness for the first time?
- How do pathways into homelessness differ across Australia?
- What intervention strategies assist older people experiencing a housing crisis to achieve stable accommodation?
- What policy and practice initiatives would strengthen Australia's prevention capacity?

## Context

- Increasingly recognised as a significant issue
- Growing awareness of ageing of the population
- Pioneering work of organisations providing services to older homeless people
- Australian research providing fresh understanding

# Extent – Older homelessness in Australia

**Table 1: Number and proportion of older homeless persons, 2006 -2011.**

Age	2006			2011		
	no.	%	Rate per 10,000 of the population	no.	%	Rate per 10,000 of the population
<b>55–64</b>	6,950	8	31.7	8,649	8	34.6
<b>65–74</b>	3,560	4	25.9	4,174	4	25.7
<b>75 and over</b>	1,951	2	15.4	2,028	2	14.6
<b>Total over 55 years</b>	12,461	14		14,851	14	

# Marginal Housing

**Table 2. Number and percentage of older people, 55 years + living in Other Marginal Housing 2001, 2006, 2011.**

	2001		2006		2011	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
<b>Persons Living in Other Crowded Dwellings</b>	2,803	6	2,702	6	4,041	7
<b>Persons in Other Improvised Dwellings</b>	920	18	1846	24	1173	26
<b>Persons who are Marginally Housed in Caravan Parks</b>	4,869	25	4782	38	5695	44

Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2049.0.

## And Private Rental

**Table 3. Older people in private rental, 2006–2011.**

Year	Number	%
2006	235,348	9
2011	336,174	11

Source: Customised table from ABS TableBuilder 2006 and 2011.  
Counting: Persons Place of enumeration.

## Australian research

### Understanding homelessness in later life –

- **First time** Crane & Warnes 2005 McFerran 2010, Westmore & Mallett 2011, Batterham et al 2013

long periods of stable employment and housing; in later life significant health problems, relationship crises and loss of accommodation - insufficient resources to maintain independent housing.

- **Long term** Rota-Bartelink & Lipmann 2007

life circumstances include alcohol abuse, physical & mental health problems, depression, gambling, premature ageing

Similar patterns internationally - Crane and Warnes 2010; Shinn et al. 2007; McDonald et al. 2007



# Also older people renting

- living alone in private rental accommodation + insecure tenure
- where rent is costly relative to their income + have a fixed low income, few reserves
- adequately housed for most of their lives - never attained or dropped out of home ownership (Judd et al 2004, McFerran 2010, Faulkner 2009, Fielder 2010, Morris et al 2008, Yates et al 2007)
- significant numbers of older private renters live in inadequate, unsuitable dwellings, and are fearful of eviction or unaffordable rent increases (Jones et al 2007; Morris 2009; 2009a).

# Mixed Method Study

1. Data-mining – 561 client records – demographic information, critical housing incident, living circumstances, housing history, health, tenure, interventions – across Australia
2. Semi-structured interviews with 20 ACHA workers, managers and stakeholders

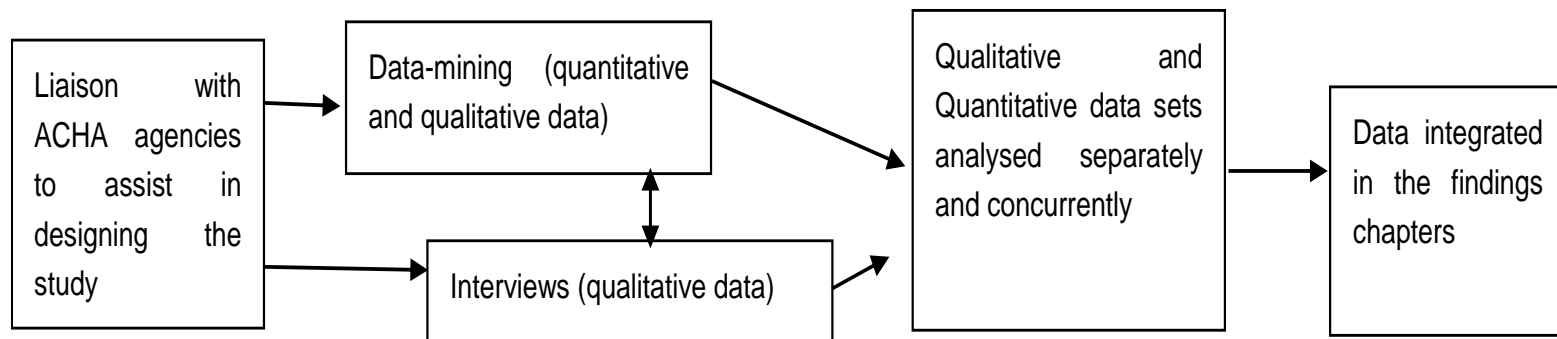


Figure 1: Process of design, data collection and analysis

# Summary of Findings: Pathways

Three pathways into homelessness for older Australians :

1. People with conventional housing histories
2. People that had experienced long-term exclusion
3. People transient housing histories

**Table 4: Pathways into homelessness**

	Frequency	Percentage
Conventional housing history	385	68.6
Ongoing housing disruption	128	22.8
Transient housing history	48	8.6
Total <i>n</i>	561	100.0

# History of Conventional Links to Housing (focus)

**Table 5: Conventional housing history by gender**

	n	Male %	Female %
Notice to Vacate	75	50.6	49.4
Unaffordable	70	45.7	54.3
Inaccessible	69	58.0	42.0
Unable to live with family	76	38.2	61.8
Relationship breakdown	34	50.0	50.0
Other	61	50.8	49.2
Total <i>n</i>	385	187	198

# Older people with ongoing housing disruption

**Table 6: Living circumstances of older people with ongoing housing disruption**

	n	Ongoing housing disruption %
Boarding house, rooming house, substandard caravan park.	67	52.3
Sleeping rough, moving around, couch surfing	61	47.7
Total <i>n</i>	128	100

# Transient lives

**Table 7: Transient pathway**

	Frequency	Percentage
Moving within Australia	19	39.6
Moving between Australia and overseas	17	35.4
Moving for work, housesitting	12	25.0
Total	48	100.0

# Summary of Findings: Interventions

## Pathways

Conventional  
links to  
housing

Continuous  
housing  
disruption

Transient  
lives



## Holistic assessment

1. Client profile and needs include housing, health, supports, coping capacity, culture, personal characteristics, functioning

2. How does the client view the problem?

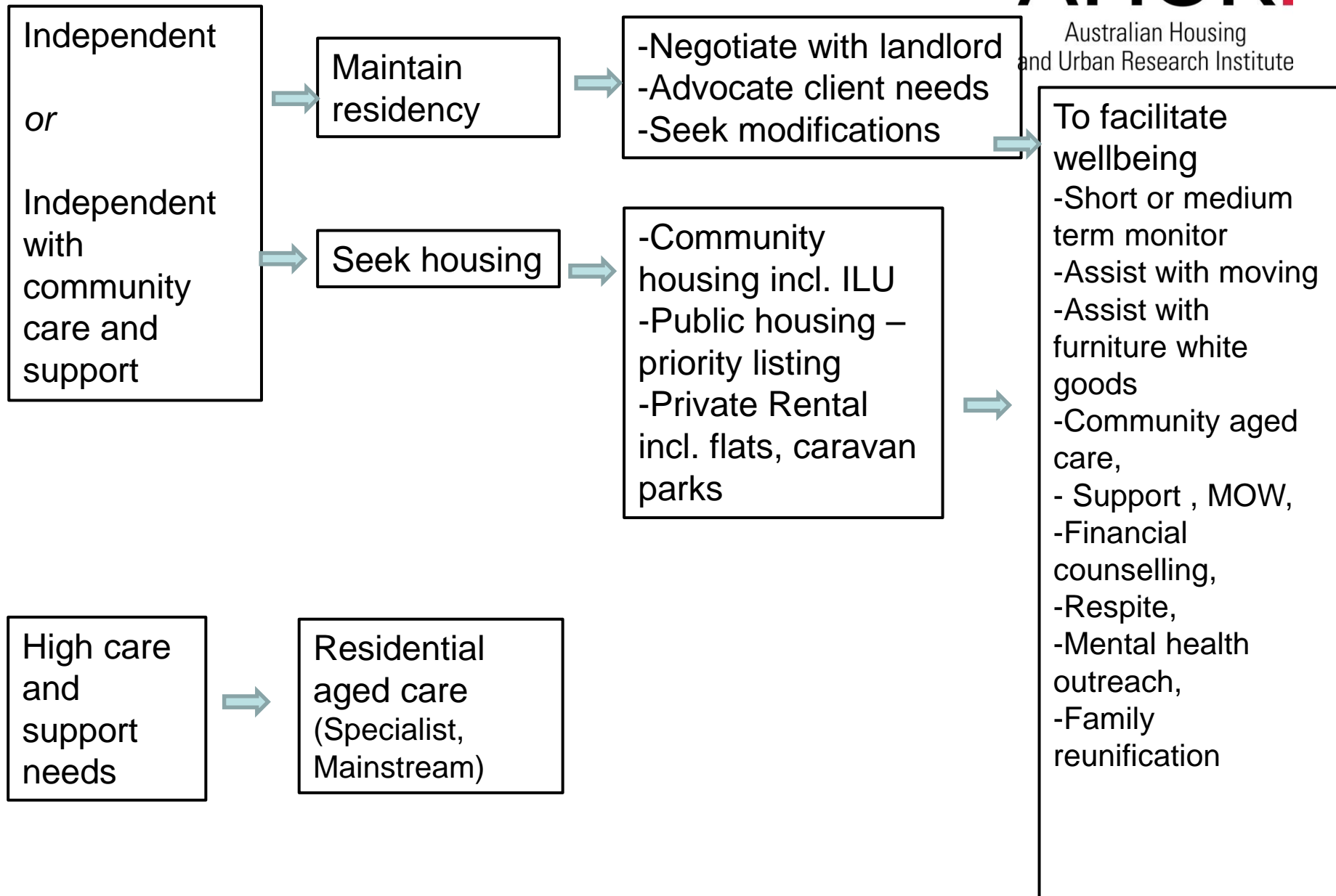
3. Social arrangements

All within local context - availability of affordable housing, community care, health care, and environment.

Cultural factors.

Integral  
elements  
*Relationship  
with client  
Time*

Continued





# Summary of Findings: Interventions <sup>2</sup>

## ■ Facilitated by:

### → Policy Integration

- Housing & Homelessness & Community Aged Care
- Facilitates client centred and flexible nature of intervention
- Recognition of specialist knowledge

### → Service Integration across formal and informal sectors

### → Affordable Accessible Housing – *an issue*

*Distinctive service model linking homelessness & ageing sectors with wider community sector – exemplifies contemporary homelessness prevention paradigm – but small, under-resourced*

# References



Batterham, D, Mallett, S, Yates, E, Kolar, V and Westmore, T. 2013, *Ageing out of place? The impact of gender and location on older Victorians in homelessness: A pilot study. Final Report*, Hanover Welfare Services, Melbourne.

Crane, M., Byrne, K., Fu, R., Lipmann, B., Mirabelli, F., Rota-Bartelink, A., et al. (2005). The causes of homelessness in later life: Findings from a 3- Nation Study. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 60B(3), S152-S159.

Crane, M. & Warnes, A. M. 2010. Homelessness among older people and service responses. *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology*, 20, 354-363.

Faulkner, D. 2007. The older population and changing housing careers: Implications for housing provision, *Australian Journal on Ageing*, 26, 152-156.

Fiedler, J. 2010. The ageing elephant in the room, *Parity*, Apr.

Gonyea, J.G., Mills-Dick, K. and Bachman, S.S. (2010) The complexities of elder homelessness, a shifting political landscape and emerging community responses, *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 53(7), pp. 575-590.

Jones, A., Bell, M., Tilse, C., & Earl, G. (2007). Rental housing provision for lower-income older Australians. Queensland Research Centre: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Judd, B., Kavanagh, K., Morris, A., & Naidoo, Y. (2004). Housing options and independent living: sustainable outcomes for older people who are homeless. UNSW-UWS Research Centre: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

McDonald, L., Dergal, J. and Cleghorn, L. (2007) Living on the Margins: Older Homeless Adults in Toronto, *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 49(1-2), pp. 19-46.

- McFerran, L. (2010). *It could be you: Female, single, older and homeless*. Woolloomooloo, New South Wales: Homelessness NSW.
- Morris, A., Judd, B. & Kavanagh, K. 2008. The older homeless and marginally housed: The forgotten group. *Parity*, 21, 4-5.
- Morris, A. (2011) Older Social and private renters, the neighbourhood, and social connections and activity, *Urban Policy and Research*, DOI:10.1080/08111146.2011.635411
- Petersen, M. & Jones, A. (2013) *Addressing later life homelessness*, Department of Family, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.
- Petersen, M. Parsell, C. Phillips, R. White, G. (forthcoming) *Preventing first time homelessness amongst older Australians*, AHURI, Melbourne.
- Rota-Bartelink, A., & Lipmann, B. (2007). Causes of homelessness *among* older people in Melbourne, Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 31(3), 252-258.
- Shinn, M., Gottlieb, J., Wett, J. L., Bahl, A., Cohen, A. & Ellis, D. B. 2007. Predictors of Homelessness among Older Adults in New York City, *Journal of Health Psychology*, 12, 696-708.
- Westmore, T., & Mallet, S. (2011) *Ageing in what place? the experience of housing crisis and homelessness for older Victorians*. Melbourne: Hanover Welfare Services
- Wood, G., Colic-Peisker, V., Berry, M., & Ong, R. (2010) *Asset poverty and older Australians' transitions onto housing assistance programs*, AHURI Final Report No. 156. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.
- Yates, J., Milligan, V., Berry, M., Burke, D., Gabriel, M., Phibbs, P., Pinnegar, S. and Randolph, B. (2007) *Housing affordability: a 21st century problem. National Research Venture 3: Housing affordability for lower income Australians*, Sydney Research Centre, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.



ahuri.edu.au