STRATEGIC PLAN
2006–2007

Welcome

The Australian Housing Urban Research Institute (AHURI) is a national consortium of research centres funded by the Australian, State and Territory Governments and various university partners (see http://www.ahuri.edu.au). The AHURI Sydney Research Centre (SRC) at the University of Sydney is one of seven AHURI nodes nationally. Each of the AHURI Research Centres specialises in high-level housing and urban research and policy.

Who are we?

The AHURI Sydney Research Centre operates across several faculties, reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of research on housing. Currently, the Centre draws together specialist researchers from four participating faculties: Architecture, Economics, Health Sciences and Science. Researchers undertake research projects collaboratively within or across these faculties, and with researchers at other AHURI Centres across Australia. The office of the Centre is located and managed in the Faculty of Architecture. Dr Vivienne Milligan, Adjunct Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Faculty of Architecture, is Director of the Centre.

What do we do?

AHURI Ltd aims to draw together researchers, policy-makers and industry and community stakeholders to achieve better housing market outcomes, to achieve effective and efficient housing assistance programs, and to build viable communities. The core function of the AHURI Sydney Research Centre is to conduct research funded by AHURI Ltd in the fields of housing policy and programs, housing markets, and related urban and regional policies. AHURI SRC also undertakes contract research for a range of clients in the public, private and academic sectors.
Previously, the AHURI SRC has contributed to projects on:

- Practical ways to expand the supply of affordable housing;
- Financing affordable housing in Australia and the UK;
- Housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes;
- The supply of and demand for low-rent private housing;
- Relations between the labour market and housing assistance programs;
- Boarding house programs;
- Housing policy and sustainable urban development;
- Housing affordability, occupation and location in Australian cities and regions;
- Regulatory arrangements for community housing in Australia; and
- The impact of indirect forms of housing assistance.

Current projects

The AHURI Sydney Research Centre has several ongoing and new projects. These include a major 3-year Collaborative Research Venture on ‘Housing Affordability for Lower Income Australians’, being managed by Associate Professor Judith Yates (Faculty of Economics) in conjunction with the AHURI Research Centres at Swinburne, RMIT/NATSEM and UNSW/UWS.

Other projects being undertaken in 2006/07 include studies of:

- National and international practice in planning for affordable housing (with Queensland University of Technology);
- Costs and benefits of using private housing as a ‘home base’ for the care of older people (with the University of Queensland);
- The Australian housing system and intergenerational sustainability (with the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM));
- International trends in national housing policy and their relevance to Australia;
- Service diversity and integration in the housing assistance system (with the University of Queensland); and
- Relationships between housing assistance and labour market outcomes (with Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Curtin University).

A scoping study on Information Systems for Strengthening Australian Urban Management was completed in March 2006.

In addition to funding an annual research program, AHURI Ltd currently provides scholarships to help support two doctoral students working on housing related research in the Faculty of Architecture, and one in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Research topics chosen by past and present postgraduate students include housing mobility and children’s work achievement; community involvement in hallmark events; interest rates and the investment demand for housing; financing for affordable housing; and the relationship between neighbourhood design and health outcomes.
Research specialties

Specific research interests of researchers active in the AHURI Centre across the participating faculties include the following:

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Disciplinary links

The AHURI Sydney Research Centre is based currently in the Discipline of Urban and Regional Planning within the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney. Several core members of the AHURI SRC research team are teachers in the Urban and Regional Planning program, which offers a range of housing courses. In February 2006 the AHURI SRC was instrumental in establishing and teaching an inaugural Professional Development Course in ‘Affordable Housing: Concepts, Strategies and Models’, which emphasised links between housing research, policy-makers and practitioners. The course provided a conceptual and practical foundation for people involved in the brokerage, financing, planning, procurement and/or delivery of new models of affordable housing.

The AHURI SRC has close links with the Planning Research Centre (PRC) in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sydney. Professor Edward Blakely, who is also the Chair of Urban and Regional Planning, directs the PRC. That Centre’s core purpose is to further research into physical planning and development. Like the AHURI SRC, the PRC also sponsors seminars in specialised fields, undertakes research and consultancy projects, runs professional development courses, and promotes the publication of research material. The AHURI SRC also has links with the Ian Buchan Fell Housing Research Centre, housed in the Faculty of Architecture and established to promote research into aspects of social housing.
Seminars

The AHURI SRC sponsors and co-sponsors occasional seminars and forums to present the findings of AHURI research and to provide an opportunity for visiting researchers and practitioners to speak on, and contribute to discussion of, housing related topics. Recent guest speakers and visitors to the Centre have included Professor Geoff Meen, Faculty of Applied Economics, University of Reading; Dr Peter Williams, Council of Mortgage Lenders UK; Professor Peter Ambrose, Visiting Professor of Housing Studies, University of Brighton; Professor Andrejs Skaburskis, Urban and Regional Planning, Queens University, Ontario; and Professor Christine Whitehead, London School of Economics and Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, University of Cambridge.

Future directions

Over the 2006-2007 year the AHURI Sydney Research Centre will be pursuing the following key strategic directions:

- Establishing links with researchers and educators working on Indigenous issues across the University, with a view to building the Centre’s capacity to support postgraduates and undertake research on Indigenous housing issues;
- Developing our collaboration with the Planning Research Centre through joint projects and seminars that address housing issues in the context of broader urban agendas;
- Looking for locally funded research opportunities to complement AHURI-funded research;
- Strengthening the Centre’s links with government agencies, the not for profit housing sector, and peak industry bodies that have the potential to partner with us on particular initiatives;
- Attracting high quality postgraduate students to work on projects associated with the Centre, and examining the feasibility of expanding the AHURI scholarship program for postgraduate and postdoctoral students;
- Extending our program of research policy seminars/workshop and forums; and
- Strengthening our links to international housing research groups.

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