

UPCOMING RESEARCH

The impact of gender and location on housing crisis and homelessness for older persons

What are we doing?

Following the recently released *Ageing in What Place? The experiences of housing crisis and homelessness for older Victorians* study, Hanover and Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) is conducting research into the impact of location and gender on older Victorians' housing pathways.

Working across all Victorian DHS regions, we will examine the similarities and differences in service responses to older men and women experiencing housing crisis and homelessness across metropolitan and rural areas. We are looking for the input of men and women aged over 55 who have recently experienced housing crisis or homelessness, as well as homelessness and mainstream service providers who respond to this population.

Background

Hanover's *Ageing in What Place? The experiences of housing crisis and homelessness for older Victorians* study highlighted a number of broad individual and systemic issues which impact on older people's vulnerability to housing crisis. It presents detailed accounts of older people's pathways into, and experiences of housing crisis and homelessness as well as an overview of their experiences with the various service systems. It also makes recommendations for policy and service changes.

The second stage of this research has been generously funded by the Mercy Foundation (NSW).

What do we want to learn?

Hanover and HAAG would like to better understand which services and service responses can prevent older men and women from entering housing crisis and homelessness. We will explore whether being a man or a women impacts on how an ageing person enters, experiences and moves through housing crisis, even homelessness. We will also investigate whether men and women have differing service response needs.

As part of the project we will examine the different regional responses to housing crisis and homelessness for older people in order to highlight both best practice as well as challenges experienced in delivery responses to vulnerable older people.

"I had seen homeless men . . . to me they were always alcoholics, drug addicts, people who didn't want to work. . . Suddenly I'm in a situation where I could have been one of them. And you realise then that it's 'normal' people that just have a series of incidents that put them in a situation that they don't have control over." (Joan, 68)

Why is this important?

Australia is facing significant demographic shifts over the next decade as the population grows and ages. Recently, homelessness and housing services have reported increases in aged people presenting for assistance with no (recent) history of homelessness. All have faced insecure tenure and have limited income. Despite a



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lack of affordable, suitable and secure housing, there is no coherent response in Australia for older people in housing crisis or at risk of homelessness.

To extend our initial research, Hanover and HAAG would like to examine whether older people have equity of access to services across the DHS regions. We also believe there may be differences in the experiences of men and women in terms of their vulnerability to housing crisis and homelessness, as well as their journeys through.

Who can participate?

We want to talk to men and women aged over 55 who have recently experienced housing crisis or homelessness, as well as homelessness and mainstream service providers who respond to this population.

We will be conducting interviews and consultations which will take approximately half an hour. Your information will be confidential at all times, and you will not be identified in the research.

What's involved?

If you are aged 55+ and have recently experienced housing crisis or homelessness

A researcher will ask you about your age, your income source and your current accommodation arrangements. You will then be asked a series of questions about your housing situation, the circumstances that led to you entering housing crisis or homelessness, which services you were referred to, and the benefits or challenges experienced by you in using these services.

If you are a service provider working with people aged 55+

A researcher will ask you to complete information about the nature of your role and your broad areas of work. We will then ask you a series of questions about older clients who are presenting at your service in housing crisis or homeless. We will ask about the circumstances that precipitate clients housing crisis or homelessness, which services these clients were connected with before and after they contacted you, and the housing outcomes experiences by clients.

What will happen with the information I provide?

Interviews and consultation will form part of the final report into the impact of location and gender on housing pathways of older Victorians. We will also be creating an interactive map, which will compare and contrast the various service delivery systems across each region.

"Twenty years ago, , , , I didn't expected to be in this situation, , , , I didn't think all these things were going to happen to me. But they did. And everything fell apart, , , , it was an immense struggle ever since to come to terms" (Marcus 55)

The research will assist Hanover, HAAG and the Mercy Foundation to advocate or and on behalf of older Australians vulnerable to housing crisis and homelessness. It will inform both

policy and service responses for homelessness and mainstream agencies.

The final research will be publicly available in early 2012.

If you'd like to get involved?

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