# HAAG
# SURVIVING OR THRIVING FORUM
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## *First time homelessness amongst older people – family matters*

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# Overview

- Details of study

- Brief outline of findings

- Focus on theme – family

- Welcome discussion – links between family and older people's homelessness is relatively unknown in the literature

## 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

# Census figures – older homeless – context

## Table 1: Older homeless people, by age group and gender, 2006 and 2011

Source: ABS (2012). *Census of Population and Housing: estimating homelessness, 2011*, Cat. No. 2049.0.
Note: Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result cells may not add up to the totals.

|  | 2006 | 2011 | Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Men 55 years and over | 7,688 | 9,521 | 1,833 ↑ |
| Women 55 years and over | 4,772 | 5,330 | 558 ↑ |
| Total 55 years and over | 12,461 | 14,851 | 2,390 ↑ |
| Total homeless (all age groups) | 89,728 | 105,237 | 5,509 ↑ |

*People over 55 years – 14% of homelessness enumeration on Census night 2011*

# 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)

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# 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?

# Mixed Method Study

1. Data-mining – 561 client records – demographic information, critical housing incident, living circumstances, housing history, health, tenure, interventions – across Australia

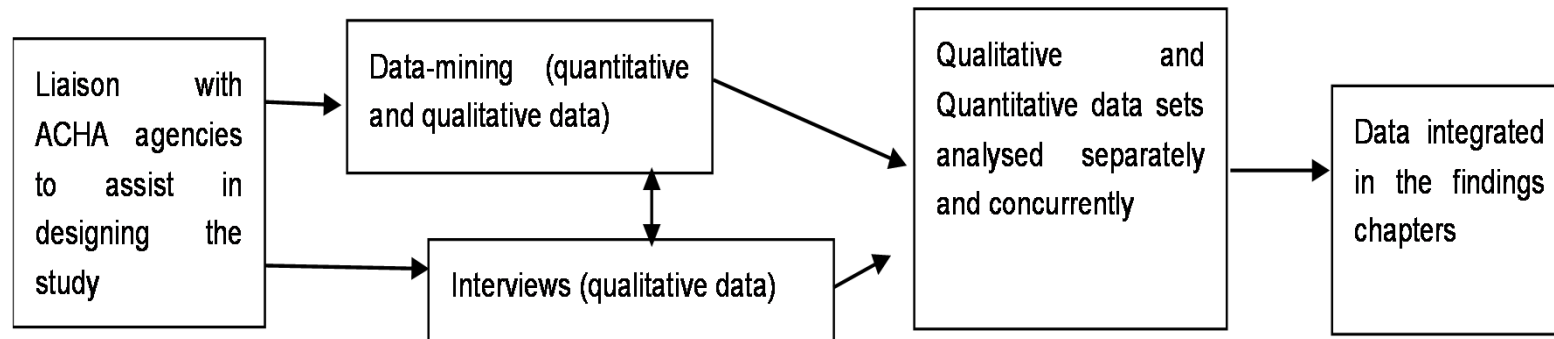2. Semi-structured interviews with 20 ACHA workers, managers and stakeholders



**Figure 1: Process of design, data collection and analysis**

- How can we summarise the life course of this participant?

- Have they worked? Raised a family?

- What is their housing history?

- Have their lives been characterised by instability or stability? What factors are linked to that?—work, health, housing, domestic violence, mental health concerns, agency—deliberate decision making?

- What is their health status? Are they experiencing a chronic illness or disability? Is this health or disability description linked to a history of homelessness (e.g. ABI from assault while sleeping rough)? Is their disability, such as increased frailty, linked to their inability to remain in their home?

- Consider affective notion of home and ontological security. Have participants had long-term links to a place, neighbourhood? Is 'home' in a number of places? What is their locale—inner city, remote, rural?

- Consider agency. Has the participant chosen to live a particular lifestyle? Travelling as a retiree? A person who has a history of undertaking itinerant work throughout various parts of Australia? And overseas?

- Consider cultural background.

- Consider family networks and family responsibilities. Have people lived with family for a long period? Are they staying temporarily? Do they move between family members? Is the family a source of support or exploitation?

# 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 2 : Pathways into homelessness**

|  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|:---:|:---:|
| Conventional housing history | 388 | 69.2 |
| Ongoing housing disruption | 125 | 22.3 |
| Transient housing history | 48 | 8.6 |
| Total *n* | 561 | 100.0 |

**Table 3 : Pathways into homelessness, by gender**

|  | n | Male % | Female % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conventional housing history | 388 | 48.5 | 51.5 |
| Ongoing housing disruption | 125 | 69.6 | 30.4 |
| Transient housing history | 48 | 70.8 | 29.2 |
| Total *n* | 561 | 309 | 252 |

# Pathways into homelessness for older Australians

1.First time (Crane & Warnes 2005  McFerran 2010, Westmore &  Mallett 2011, Batterham et al 2013  Petersen et al 2014)   -  **Distinctive**

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.

literature on unaffordability insecurity inappropriateness of private

rental for older people (Morris 2011, Fielder 2010, Faulkner 2007)

2.Long term (Rota-Bartelink & Lipmann 2007, Petersen et al 2014)

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

3. Transient lifestyles  (Petersen et al 2014; Westmore & Mallett 2011) working, housesitting, living (with families) Asia and Australia, living between Europe and Australia

Similar patterns  internationally – UK, US, Canada  (Crane and Warnes 2010; Shinn et al. 2007; McDonald et al. 2007)

# Conventional housing history - 70% of sample

## Table 4: Conventional housing history, by country of birth

Data not add up as country of birth missing on some client records

| Disruption to conventional housing | n | Australia % | Other countries % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Notice to vacate | 76 | 64.5 | 35.5 |
| Unable to live with family | 74 | 25.7 | 74.3 |
| Unaffordable | 70 | 47.1 | 52.9 |
| Inaccessible | 66 | 60.6 | 39.4 |
| Relationship breakdown | 30 | 60.0 | 40.0 |
| Other | 58 | 46.6 | 53.4 |
| Total *n* | 374 | 186 | 188 |

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# Focus today - Family matters

- History of conventional housing history

  Unable to live with family – number of reasons

  Relationship breakdown – staying with family

  Others wishing to move closer to family


- History of transient housing - family overseas – place Australia and overseas


*family matters more complex and diverse than previously understood in understanding older people's homelessness*

# What previous literature told us…

- Older people homeless first time- few family supports, insufficient to prevent homelessness

- For those who have lived with long term housing disruption - early trauma in life (often linked to family trauma resulting in estrangement (Crane & Warnes 2012)

- Very few older homeless people viewed their family as part of their social support network

- Women more than men likely to be to effectively manage staying with family friends

- Men more likely than women to be staying with family friends

- Better housing conditions and less burdensome housing costs encourage healthier more constructive families (Bratt 2002) – however it is difficult to separate out the influence of socio-economic status of residents

- 74.3% of unable to live with family identified with CALD background

**Table 5: Unable to live with family, by country of origin**

| | N | Asia | Aust. | Europe | North Africa/ Middle East | Oceania | Sub Saharan Africa | Americas |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unable to live with family | 74 | 21 | 19 | 14 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| | | 28.4% | 25.7% | 18.9% | 16.2% | 5.4% | 4.1% | 1.4% |

# Conventional housing history - unable to live with family

- Carer stress

- Overcrowding

- Family breakdown and conflict

- Elder abuse

*Linked to housing risk for older people - little detail of this in homelessness literature and policy re older people*

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# Multigenerational households

- Increasing focus in research (still limited)

- In 2011, over four million Australians lived in multigenerational households where two or more generations of related adults cohabit. This accounts for one in five Australians, with proportions higher still in the major cities. (Easthope et al. 2013)

- Easthope's study - More than half of survey respondents lived together for financial reasons.

- More than one-quarter lived together for care arrangement and support

- One-fifth of resulted from adult children delaying their first home-leaving

- Overall, cultural reasons were not a common cause that led to multigenerational cohabitation (7.6%).  Notable regional differences, with a higher proportion of families living together for financial reasons noticed in Brisbane (66.0%) than in Sydney (49.2%).

- Cultural background was also a more influential factor in Sydney (10.2%) than in Brisbane (2.8%).

- About 14% rent in Sydney and Brisbane – less common tenure for multigenerational households

- UK migrants ineligiblity for housing and welfare benefits – more likely to be at risk of complete destitution (Fitzpatrick et al 2012 )

- People share housing to manage poverty  -  housing unaffordable

- lack of social housing  ( increasingly social housing is a residual form of   housing – 'the market will provide')

# Carer stress

- *Separated from husband. Not coping with living alone—moved in with family into demountable on property. Family unable to cope due to her care needs, deteriorating cognition and behaviour. (F, 68 yrs)*

- Informal care mainstay of Australia's aged care sector – *Living longer.Living better*.

- Families need resources to provide care

- ?financial reserves ?space ?housing type ?voluntary

- Can appropriate housing and supports assist in preventing housing crisis due to carer stress?

- Growing evidence of older parents moving in to reside with their adult children, both in Australia (Olsberg & Winters, 2005) and overseas

- move to reside with adult offspring to access care and support – practical care arrangement and or filial duty. Multi-generation households can provide financial as well as caregiving and emotional support  (Olsberg & Winter 2005)

- Social connectedness research – nuclear family focus not multigenerational

- Assumption older people wish to live independently not be a burden – lack of diversity in these studies particular in relation to culture, poorer families

- Managing housing crisis - ?involuntary move in due to housing difficulties – not consider dwelling to be their home – staying not living

# Overcrowding

- *[Client] has a very supportive husband and three daughters. They have been living with their youngest daughter and her family in [suburb]. She stated that it has been great living with her daughter as they were able to offer support to each other, however house is very crowded for them and to continue living with their daughter. (F, 67 yrs)*

- *Migrated to Australia in 2010. Was living with relatives in an overcrowded house on the floor. (F51 yrs, Iran)*

- Closely linked to family's housing & economic resources

- For some linked to care responsibilities

- People including Indigenous people moving for health care

- Definition overcrowding based on stress based crowding model – individual's experience (rather than density measure) overcrowding with Indigenous families requires specialised consideration (Memmott et al. 2012)

- *Aboriginal people are very tolerant of their living circumstances. They just accept it really. Things that we would never accept they're very resilient and you probably already know all this but they're incredibly resilient and they just accept their lot and think that's okay and the family, the connection to family, and land is so significant and important for Aboriginal people that it's again something that we underestimate. I think about that connection because people don't want to move away from country even for respite, even it they are having such as appalling time that family are humbugging them or doing whatever. (Manager 1)*

- *Of course one of the major housing issues in an Aboriginal community and I'm sure someone's already told you this is overcrowding. You can have 20 people in a family in one house here, one three bedroom house. So the old person is often just sleeping on the floor in the lounge room or the kitchen. The [older person] are the tenant but sometimes the tenancy might be their children's but in that house there's themselves, their children and their grandchildren and because of that you will find often those older people are left with the care of the young grandchildren so they have the stress and pressure of looking after young grandchildren during the day and then at night they've got their children and the older grandchildren hooning around in the cars at night, playing loud music, etcetera so they're getting very little sleep and then they're trying to care for the youngest grandchildren during the day and they've also got alcohol and drug use happening in those homes which is causing violence and also elder abuse (ACHA 4)*

# Family breakdown and conflict

- *Living with daughter long term but now relationship has broken down. (F, 81 yrs)*

- *Client and his wife live with their daughter. The situation has become very difficult, bordering on abuse. Clients require help with securing private rental accommodation. Client's wife has Parkinson's Disease. Had been owners however they couldn't afford mortgage repayments and daughter took over mortgage and then wanted her parents out of the home. (M, 65 yrs)*

- Fine line between tension and conflict, and elder abuse

# Elder abuse

- *… what we're seeing as well is that much older people whose kids are ripping them off. We've had a number of clients with that. Generally property. They'll get them to sell their home and invest it in the kid's home with the view of there being a granny flat and then of course that doesn't eventuate and/or they get them to invest in businesses and things like that or into rental properties and that just falls over and they lose all their money. (ACHA 13)*

- *Renting unit for 7 years following divorce. Step son lives with him but does not contribute monies for rent and food. Emotionally abusive to his father. (M, 69 yrs)*

- *Living with son who has addiction and is abusive. Lived in public housing long term. (F, 69 yrs Egypt)*

- Complex phenomenon

- Challenges associated with assessing abuse (Bagshaw et al 2013, Tilse et al 2003)

- Predominately financial abuse – finances and property

- Interplay with culture and familial responsibilities

- *In Aboriginal culture any money that comes in people see that that's for general distribution. So if an older person has some money a younger person might come and say they want some money and the older person will just give it to them. ….They just see it as part of life. (Manager 1)*

- *Humbugging is quite normal. That's a normal part of living in the [region] and it would be anywhere where Aboriginal people will come up and try and get something from you but that's from a white's perspective.   (Manager 1)*

# Relationship breakdown

- *Client, 69 years, has left husband due to domestic violence, she has been living in a friend's home with five other people (two adults and three teenagers) for the past two months. She has been sleeping on a couch in the kitchen at this property and appears to have no other family to assist her. She contributes $120 per week for utilities. (F, 69, Greece)*

- Recent evidence highlights the increasing incidence of relationship breakdowns (including divorces in later life) amongst older people, with some parents moving in to live with their adult offspring for emotional and practical support and to provide caring duties for their grandchildren (Judd et al., 2010).

- These shifts have reconfigured the role that family plays in care giving in an environment where government policies encourage ageing in place for older people with low care needs (i.e. Living longer.Living better)

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# Transient lives

**Table 5: Transient pathways**

|  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Moving within Australia | 19 | 39.6 |
| Moving between Australia and other countries | 17 | 35.4 |
| Moving for work or housesitting in Australia | 12 | 25.0 |
| Total | 48 | 100.0 |

- All had decisively made lifestyle decisions to live a transient lifestyle – not traditional ontological security to housing
- Health impacted in later years on this choice

Moving within Australia

     moving to access health care

Moving between Australia and other countries

     Lived and worked in Asia – family there

          rural and remote parts of Australia (north)

          return to Australia for health care

          ?global citizens

Cultural links with other countries

     largely older women

     gave up tenancy to visit extended family overseas

Moving for work and housesitting in Australia

# Conclusion

- Older people's homelessness in Australia is largely about older people experiencing homelessness for the first time in later life

- The descriptor 'conventional' penned by Shinn *et al.* (2007) was useful in outlining the life circumstances of the older people; many had worked, raised a family and had largely been long term renters in the private market.

- New knowledge of the role of the family in older people's housing crisis

  ? Interplay of culture    ? Changes in intergenerational housing

  ? What families have always done – support in times of crisis

- Being unable to continue living with family as a critical housing incident exemplifies the interconnection of housing and aged care policy and practice, and need for housing to be seen as an aged care issue.

- The importance of further research to address the lack of knowledge of intergenerational families, culture including Indigeneity and risks of homelessness for older people.

- Little research on older Indigenous Australian's homelessness. Our research highlighted the risk to older people living on their home communities as they became frail and their housing stock was incongruent with their changing needs.

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