

1. INTRODUCTION

Commonwealth and State Governments spend very large amounts of money on housing assistance. They provide housing of particular types in particular locations, with specific affordability outcomes. The housing or shelter impacts of these interventions are reasonably well understood. However, given the capacity of housing to affect many other elements of people's lives, an important question is the extent to which housing assistance impacts on a range of what has become known as non-shelter outcomes¹.

An understanding of non-shelter impacts is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, if it can be shown that spending on housing has a variety of non-shelter benefits that may reduce the call on government funds in the short, medium and long term, this is an important argument to make when negotiating with Treasuries and others for housing assistance funds. Secondly, the type or "design" of housing assistance might have significant impacts on the multiplier between shelter and non-shelter benefits – this would have implications for State Housing Authorities (SHAs) and others in the delivery of housing assistance. Thirdly, the "multiplier" between shelter and non-shelter benefits might vary between different housing need groups. This outcome might affect the allocation process within SHAs.

The aims of the project include:

1. To describe the key non-shelter impacts of different modes of housing provision;
2. To examine how non-shelter impacts change as a result of different types of shelter provision i.e. to examine the interaction between these two groups of variables;
3. To examine the relative importance of price and non-price characteristics of public rental housing for different socio-demographic groups of public housing tenants.

Some preliminary findings of the project were reported at the last national housing conference (Phibbs 2001). This paper presents the final outcomes of the project.

2. THE FRAMEWORK

The Positioning Paper for the project (Phibbs and Young 2001) established a framework for conceptualising the nature of non-shelter outcomes.

This framework recognises the relatively unique nature of housing as a good – not only does housing provide the benefits of shelter but it also provides, through its location, access to a further bundle of goods and services. The fact that housing is provided in a fixed location means that it can also generate a number of positive or negative local impacts. Moreover, since housing is usually the single most expensive outlay for low to middle income families, housing costs can affect a household's ability to purchase other goods and services.

In developing a framework it is useful to start with the characteristics of the dwelling. For example, a house that is cold and damp can have a direct impact on the health of its residents. A house that is not matched to the needs of the household occupying it (e.g. it is too small) can have dramatic impacts on things like educational outcomes for children living in the house.

The next step in the hierarchy relates to the nature of the area that the house is located in. Some of these are local effects (e.g. the impact of traffic noise on sleep) whilst others are more regionally based (e.g. access to tertiary education or major hospitals). These outcomes are locational in nature².

¹ The term was first used in the AHURI context in the 2001 AHURI research agenda

² A very useful source of literature about the impact of area, neighbours and community is contained in the US literature on the relocation of public housing tenants in both the Gatreux and the Moving to Opportunity Program. See for example, Rosenbaum and Harris (2001) for a positive view on the effects of relocation of poor households to more affluent suburbs and Goetz (2002) for a less optimistic view.

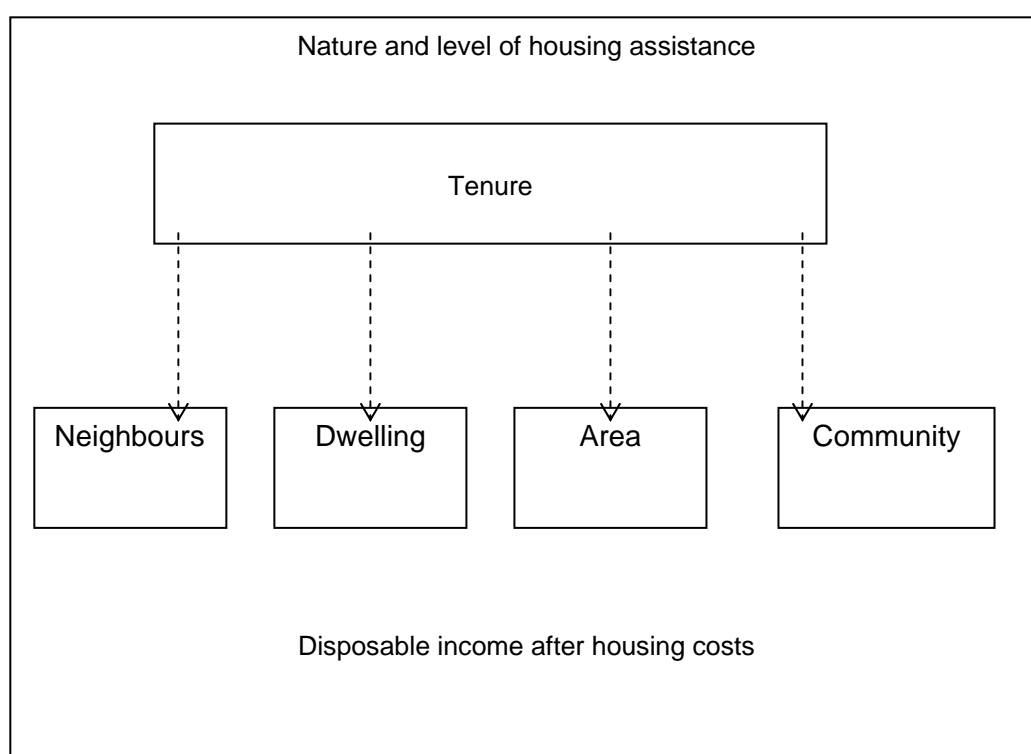
The next part of the framework highlights the impacts of neighbours on non-shelter outcomes. In extreme cases it is clear that neighbours can have dramatic impacts on the health and well being of residents. Given the magnitude of these impacts it is considered worthwhile to identify them as a separate component of the framework.

It is also clear from the literature that the local community can have an impact on non-shelter outcomes for households. For example, the nature of the local community can have major impacts on the expectations of young people.

Next, it is clear that characteristics of the tenure can have a significant impact on non-shelter impacts. For example, a major non-shelter impact relates to the instability of households operating in the private rental market.

A summary of this framework is shown in Figure 1. The positioning paper uses this framework to provide an outline of the linkages for between housing and a number of other important areas: - health, crime, employment and education.³

Figure 1– A framework for examining non-shelter impacts



In addition to a classification by the source of the impact (dwelling, area etc) and type (education etc) it is also important to classify non shelter outcomes by process.

A number of possible processes are outlined in Figure 2. In the most straightforward case non-shelter outcomes happen as soon as the housing change occurs (e.g. a reduction in crime as a result of an improvement in physical security). Other impacts require a change in attitude of the householders before non-shelter outcomes occur. In some other cases a change in behaviour as well as a change in attitude is required (e.g. a better health outcome as a result of a householder changing their diet) whilst in the case where the non-shelter outcomes have the most difficult path both a change in attitude and behaviour as well as action by a third party is required (e.g. a change in self esteem resulting from housing assistance leads to the householder undertaking a training program which requires the action of an employer to result in a change in employment).

³ For a comprehensive review of non-shelter outcomes literature the reader is directed to Bridge et al (2002). A more concise review is provided by Bratt (2002).

Other things being equal you would expect that the first type of non-shelter outcome would be more readily identifiable than the last one given that the path to generation of the non-shelter outcome is "shorter". In cases where action of a third party is required, it might be particularly difficult to establish non-shelter outcomes.

Figure 2: Some possible non-shelter outcomes (NSO) processes

Housing assistance → Housing change → NSO

(e.g. reduction in crime as a result of public housing having better physical security)

Housing assistance → Housing change → Attitude change → NSO

(e.g. change in interest in education of a child in public housing leading to better educational outcomes)

Housing assistance → Housing change → Attitude change → Change in behaviour → NSO

(e.g. change in self esteem resulting from housing assistance leads to a change of diet that leads to better health outcomes)

Housing assistance → Housing change → Attitude change → Change in behaviour → Action of 3rd party → NSO

(e.g. change in self esteem resulting from housing assistance leads to a training program but requires the action of an employer to result in a change in employment)

Source: Author with reference to Galster and Zobel (1998)

3. THE METHOD

Phibbs (2001) reviewed a range of possible methods that could be used in the study. In the end it was considered that a longitudinal study that used a prospective method was the most appropriate. In this design, researchers start measurement at T_1 and follow the sample up to T_t .

This study interviewed tenants just after they moved into public housing (T1) and about 6 months later (T2).

Originally, the plan was to undertake surveys of new public tenants in both Sydney and Brisbane. For a variety of reasons, described in detail in Phibbs and Young (2003), reliable results were only obtained from the Brisbane survey. A qualitative study was also undertaken of about 15 public housing tenants as well as a number of educators. Also, about 80% of respondents allowed access to their Medicare records a year before and a year after they moved into public housing.

4. RESULTS- THE BRISBANE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS

4.1 What are some of the key characteristics of the respondents at T1

Who are the respondents

The household structure of tenants at time T1 is shown in Table 1. Note the predominance of single parents and single people which generally reflects the demographic structure of the allocations made in the relevant Brisbane regions over the same period⁴, although single persons are slightly over represented.

Table 1: Household structure at T1 compared to total allocations

	Valid T1 %	Total SHA allocations in same period %
Single person, living alone	55	47
Single person, living with 1 or more children	32	35
Couple living without children	5	4
Couple living with 1 or more children	6	7
Group home of unrelated adults	2	7
Total	100.0	

N=178

Sixty nine households in the sample had a total of 116 dependants, 99 of which attended school. The age breakdown of the dependants is shown in Table 4.2. Note that 49% of the dependants were female.

Where did the respondents live before they moved into public housing

The majority of the respondents were living in separate houses before they moved into public housing and living in the private rental market (see Table 2).

⁴ Sourced from Queensland Housing as a special data request

Table 2: Type of dwelling (previous dwelling) and nature of tenure at T1

Type of dwelling	Valid percent	Tenure	Valid percent
Separate house	52.2	Owner/purchasers	2
Terrace, semi-detached	7.3	Private rental (agent)	75
Flat, unit/apartment	37.1	Private rental (friends/family)	16
Caravan, mobile home	3.4	Boarding House	5
		Other	2
Total	100.0		100

N=178

Eighty one percent of the respondents were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance. Before moving into public housing only 61% of households were living as separate households – some were living with friends, family or shared housing.

How many schools have they attended over the last two years?

As mentioned above, sixty nine households in the sample had a total of 116 dependants, 99 of whom were at school. Respondents were asked to identify how many schools their dependants have attended in the previous two years. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The number of schools attended over the previous two years

Number	Percent *
1	36
2	24
3	14
4	10
5 or more	16
Total	100

*99 responses in total

Table 4.9 shows evidence of the mobility of the respondent group. Whilst some movement of students between primary and secondary school will occur, about 40% of children were changing schools 3 or more times over a two year period. The interviews with school staff in Section 4 identified this frequent movement as a risk factor in the education of children.

How many times has the respondents moved in the last 2 years?

Respondents were asked at T1 how many times they had moved in the last two years. The minimum number of moves (the one into public housing) was one. The average number of moves was 2.2 moves for the entire sample and 2.3 moves for households with dependants.

Summary

The respondents demonstrated high mobility levels before they moved into public housing, both for themselves and for the school attendance of their children. Most were operating in the private rental market with about 80% receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance. Some households were sharing with friends and relatives before they moved into public housing. They had mixed view about their previous housing with the largest area of concern being associated with the quality of the dwelling and the noise levels in their neighbourhood.

4.3 The results of the T2 survey

Detailed results of the study are contained in Phibbs and Young (2003). A summary of the results is outlined below.

Health

People report an improvement in their health as a result of the change of housing. The main mechanisms they report include:

- Eating better foods as a result of increases financial resources;
- An ability to prepare their own foods rather than to buy take away food since they now have a functioning kitchen;
- An improvement of conditions in their dwelling ranging from less dust, to the avoidance of stairs to trip on;
- Increased self esteem, often associated with independent living, means that people are now looking after themselves better;
- Extra income means that they can participate in illness prevention programs such as joining a gym and getting more exercise
- More support from neighbours
- Reduced stress due to security of tenure and more income; and
- Improved access to medical resources;

It must be remembered that a significant number of households were sharing with friends and relatives prior to moving into their public housing. These people often reported greatly reduced stress levels when moving into their public housing because they no longer had to endure an ongoing conflict with a parent or carer.

The analysis of the Medicare data revealed some interesting trends (see Table 4). Whilst there was an overall small decrease in the use of Medicare services, what was most interesting was the difference between previously light users of the Medicare system and heavier users. Light users tended to increase their levels of usage whilst heavier users reduced both the number and cost of services after they moved into public housing.

Table 4: Changes in the use of Medicare services before and after public housing – Brisbane

	Average services per month before public housing	Average services per month after public housing	Average benefits per month before public housing	Average benefits per month after public housing
Total sample (N=130)	1.92	1.86	\$60.96	\$58.66
Light users*(N=42)	0.46	0.95	\$13.46	\$28.88
Heavy users (N=22)	4.32	3.39	\$152.36	\$106.23

* where average services per month before public housing is less than 1

** where average services per month before public housing is greater than 3

Source: Authors analysis of data provided by the Health Insurance Commission

Crime

People report that they felt safer and more secure in their public housing dwellings because they now had better security on their dwelling⁵ and because they thought they were living in a safer neighbourhood. There are of course a number of exceptions to this general trend- for example one woman was living in a block of units where two residents had been stabbed the week before. They were often unable to install these same features in their previous dwelling because of concerns of the landlord or because they were unsure about their length of tenure.

Employment

There were mixed messages coming from respondents about what was happening in the labour market. In some cases households used the extra disposable income to reduce their employment. In some cases this reduction in employment was used to provide extra care for a household member or to spend some extra time with their children. In other cases it was to give them some more time out. Some households reduced their employment in order to undertake additional training. Another man was able to give up his part time job as a result of his extra disposable income and to go and work for a charity on a full time basis. Households were often aware that a benefit of reducing their employment levels was that their rent would go down. However, it was unclear whether this was a primary financial consideration and whether and to what extent it influenced labour force participation decisions.

On the other side of the ledger, the increase in self esteem that some respondents reported meant that they wanted to work on their career. Comments such as "well I have got my housing organized, now its time I got a good job organized". A number of respondents reported that they had invested their financial savings into small businesses which they were starting. The additional disposable income also meant that respondents had additional resources available for the job search.

Note that the ambiguous findings about employment are consistent with previous research in the area. Some people appear to consider financial factors when making decisions about employment; however this is clearly not the only consideration. For example, some participants in this study indicated that they had increased their levels of employment to reduce social isolation, to improve their self esteem, and to provide a positive role model for their children. Financial factors such as increases in rent levels did not appear to be the predominant consideration for these people.

⁵ Note that a number of respondents complained about the costs they had to bear in installing security items in their dwellings.

Education

In many ways the triggers for non-shelter outcomes are clearest in terms of education. When pressed on the issue of why their children's performance had improved respondents cited three main issues. The first were really to do with the nature of the school and included issues such as the quality of teaching and also having a more motivated group of peers. The second concerned changes at home and ranged from an increased happiness of the child that now was living in a good quality dwelling and the stress levels of their parents had decreased. The third issue was more pragmatic – improved performance occurred because children now had more space and could do their homework without disturbing or fighting with their siblings. It must be noted that the current housing situation is in marked contrast to a very mobile past that included a number of school changes.

In general the findings are consistent with the literature. The main unexpected outcomes of the study relate to the high profile of "stress" as an issue amongst respondents and the results showing a very positive education impact even in a relatively short time period. Both these issues might relate to the very negative housing situations of the respondents prior to their move into public housing that was characterised by sharing with friends/relatives and frequent moves.

The education data is explored in more detail below.

Respondents were asked if their children were at the same school at T2 that they were at T1. Ninety two percent of respondents indicated that they were at the same school. This stable pattern of school attendance is in contrast to the frequent changes of schools reported before they moved into public housing.

Educational performance was examined in the main survey by asking respondents to comment on the performance of the children over their last term of school. Respondents were able to identify four performance categories:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Fair
- Experiencing difficulty

They were then asked to indicate whether this performance was better or worse than in the term before they moved into public housing. Performance was estimated on two measures:

1. Subject performance: that is their performance in school subjects (which might be based on their school report)
2. Motivation performance:- their level of motivation

Table 5 shows the results of the comparison of performance before and after their move.

Table 5: Comparison of the educational performance of children before and after moving into Public Housing

	Subject Performance (%)	Motivation Performance (%)
Better	53	45
Worse	7	10
About the same	40	45
Total	100	100

N=60

While about half of respondents reported that educational performance had improved after the move into public housing, no more than 10% reported that it had got worse. The number of respondents who thought their children’s subject performance had improved outnumbered those who thought it had got worse by a factor of almost 8 to 1. Where the performance was better or worse, respondents were asked to suggest why⁶. Table 6 presents the results of the question if they responded that performance had improved.

Table 6: Reasons for changed educational performance of children – Better performance

Reason	Percent of responses
1. Better teacher	13
2. Better school	12
3. More motivated group of friends	18
4. Things are better at home	24
5. Child is happier	25
6. Other	9

Number of responses =89

The first two reasons could be related to an area issue where a child has changed schools but in some cases the student may have simply changed teacher. The third reason is described in the community category in Figure 5 – the peer group has changed for the child. The most important reasons relate to issues at home and the fact that the child is happier. When discussing this issue, respondents indicated that things like “family tension had decreased”, the child “now had a private space to do their homework”, “the child felt settled and had a group of friends in the neighbourhood”. “there is more space at home”. Some of these issues are explored in more detail in the section on Health. Or in other words, the bundle of goods that housing could provide (from the dwelling to the community) was all involved in improving outcomes for the child.

There were only a small number of responses that provided reasons for worse performance with the main issue being that the respondents thought that the student had a worse teacher.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

Despite the limitations of the survey and problems with response rates, there does seem clear evidence that demonstrates the existence of a number of non-shelter outcomes.

The surveys reveal that public housing tenants in the study perceive that the major benefit of their change in housing goes a long way beyond the immediate issue of shelter (see Table 7). That is, they value things that go beyond the provision of a dwelling. For example, they value the increased security of tenure available in their public dwelling and the fact that they now have some control over their own environment. They also acknowledge that on the whole they are less depressed and consider that they have better emotional well being. There is a marked contrast between some of their experiences in the private rental market where they have been frequent movers resulting in a number of associated problems including disjointed schooling for their children and a lack of engagement with the surrounding community.

⁶ The answers to this question were pre-coded on the basis of the extensive research on this issue in the qualitative component of the study

Table 7: What has been the most important change for you since you have moved into the property?

Factor	Percent of responses*
Security of tenure	22
Control over own environment	20
Less depressed/better emotional well being	10
More financially secure	10
Close to amenities/family	5
Other	33
Total	100

*Greater than 5% identified separately. Number of responses 202

In other words, it is clear that for many of the respondents to the surveys there is a clear product distinction between being private renters receiving rent assistance and living in public housing.

The impact of the stress of inappropriate housing is an interesting finding of the study. For many respondents what seems to be happening is that the cumulative day to day stress that is operating in their lives is so great that they are having trouble functioning. This appears to be a particular issue when children are involved, possibly because of the additional stress issues concerned with dealing with children living in inappropriate housing. Environmental psychologists refer to a concept of environmental load – when someone is overloaded their ability to undertake even straightforward tasks is inhibited (Bell et al, 1996; p118-120). For many respondents the improved housing seems to be reducing their environmental load to the point where they can start dealing with a number of other issues in their lives including employment, health issues etc.

However, the results have to be qualified by a number of factors:-

- The sample is small;
- The survey could suffer from respondent bias whereby public tenants are over optimistic
- There is no control group
- The short time between housing and the final interview of the study.

5.2 Policy Issues: Housing and Education

The study has highlighted the connection between housing and education. In particular the impact of frequent moves on educational outcomes appears to be an issue⁸. There are two very immediate policy implications from this research – Who to target for priority access to public housing, and what other forms of housing assistance to offer.

Who to prioritise for assistance?

As funding through the CSHA contracts, housing authorities are increasingly required to make difficult policy decisions about prioritising access to public rental housing. Wait turn access to public housing is being replaced by needs based allocations to ensure that those in greatest need get fastest access to increasingly scarce stocks of public rental housing.

Following is a table summarising the basis for making a priority or out of turn allocation to public housing in all Australian States and Territories:⁹

⁷ This finding appears to be consistent with the findings of a recent systematic review of housing and health research conducted by the Medical Research Unit at the University of Glasgow. They reviewed more than 30,000 housing intervention studies dating back to 1887, and concluded that investment in housing does have the capacity to improve mental health (Thomson 2002, p.23).

⁸ A detailed analysis of this issue was undertaken by the General Accounting Office (1994) in the US.

⁹ Many housing authorities also provide priority allocations to facilitate stock redevelopment, or to maximise use of stock (for example to reduce under-utilisation). These criteria have not been included in this table.

Table 8: SHA policies for determining out of turn allocations to public rental housing

State/ territory	Basis for allocating out of turn	Source
Qld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless or at risk of homeless • Medical condition affected by present housing • Current housing unsuitable because of a disability • Threat of violence makes present housing unsuitable • Improved housing needed to return custody of child, or avert custody being removed • Victims of major crime or harassment • Current housing affected by natural disaster 	Application for priority housing – Department of Housing web site
NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless or at risk of homeless • At risk of coming to harm from violence, sexual assault or child abuse • Current housing is very unsatisfactory (crowding, repair, essential facilities) • To return a child to custody • Severe medical condition or disability 	“Priority Housing Fact Sheet” September 2002 – Housing NSW web site
Vic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Witness Protection • Natural disaster • Recurring homelessness (actual or at-risk of) • Disability or long term illness requiring special housing • At risk of homelessness • Inappropriate housing (overcrowded, prevents reunification of parents and children, risk of violence, serious health problem) 	“Allocations Manual”, version 2.10 September 2003 – Office of Housing web site
Tas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing adequacy (homeless, substandard quality, insecure) • Housing affordability • Housing appropriateness (match of housing to personal needs, for example family violence, need for modifications, ill-health, requirements for stability, and locational disadvantage) • Exceptional need 	“Overview of the Housing Assessment System”, September 2003 – document provided by Housing Tasmania
SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent housing need (homeless or at risk of homeless) • Facing long term barriers to accessing or maintaining housing 	“Waiting List Information” – South Australian Housing Trust web site
WA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical condition caused or aggravated by housing, or requiring housing close to treatment • Domestic or family violence • Racial harassment • Accommodation to take a child out of care 	“Applying for Priority Housing Assistance” – HomesWest web site
NT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious medical or social problems (such as family violence or sexual assault) • Homelessness • Disability 	Public Rental Housing: Priority Housing – DCDSCA web site
ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless or living in emergency housing • Facing imminent eviction • At risk of domestic violence • Rent is greater than 40% of income • Medical need • Serious overcrowding 	“Early Allocation” – Housing ACT Fact Sheet 15/10/03 – DHCS web site

These policies all have a number of common dimensions:

1. An *aspect of housing* (too small, too expensive, very poor condition)
2. A *household characteristic* (ill-health, disability, victim of violence, very low income)

Resulting in:

3. A *non-shelter consequence* or impact (illness, violence, reduced quality of life or opportunity)

Based on:

4. An implicit assumption about the *role or importance of housing*

Underlying many of these policies are un-stated views about the importance or role of housing. For example, those housing authorities that provide priority allocation on the basis of medical grounds must presumably view poor housing as a possible contributor to ill-health (and improved housing as an appropriate strategy to contribute to improved health). Similarly those that prioritise on the basis of reuniting families are presumably operating within a broader child protection policy that views good housing as a contributor to child safety and development.

This research indicates that housing may, in some cases, have a role to play in facilitating or impeding educational attainment. Using the framework suggested above, the following could therefore be usefully considered for inclusion in priority allocation policies:

1. Households living in unstable housing and/or a history of frequent moves (*an aspect of housing*); and
2. Households with a child requiring school based remediation (*a household characteristic*);

Such a policy may result in:

3. Improved school attainment levels and retention rates (*non-shelter impact*)

Because:

4. Unstable housing and changing schools is thought to reduce the effectiveness of school based remediation strategies (*a role of housing*).

Not all children living in unstable housing who require school based remediation will, however, necessarily benefit from stable housing. For example, some children with learning needs may live in an area where required remediation support is not available, or where a school environment is not conducive to that child's particular needs (for example if the child's class already has a number of other children with learning and/or behavioural problems). In such a case, stable housing in a *different* area may be most beneficial educationally.

This latter discussion highlights the need for such a policy to be developed in partnership with education experts. Implementing such a policy would certainly require housing authorities to work in partnership with the education system to identify those children for whom unstable housing is likely to result in an educational detriment, and to determine the most helpful educational context suited to that child's needs. While many local housing authority offices are familiar with working in partnership with local welfare providers, such a policy would require a broadening of both their local networks (to include local schools), and their understanding of their role to include enabler of school success.

What forms of assistance to offer?

As well as contributing to policy making about who to prioritise for public housing assistance, this research also sheds light on the importance of one particular aspect of housing – housing stability.

In the past much attention has been paid to the problem of housing affordability. In many cases housing need is defined purely in terms of housing cost as a proportion of household income. However this research suggests that the instability experienced by some households in the private rental market may be a key contributor to a number of non-shelter outcomes such as stress and poor educational attainment. In some cases housing instability may indeed be a product of housing affordability (rent arrears leading to eviction, for example), but in other cases the inherent short-term nature of the private rental market may be contributing to the high rates of movement we observed.

As CSHA funding declines, housing authorities are under increasing pressure to find more efficient ways of meeting housing need. One approach is to develop more sophisticated processes to determining what aspects of housing are of concern (that is, what specific aspects of housing matter most to particular clients), and developing a wider range of products and services that specifically target those aspects of housing. By just targeting that aspect of housing that matters most, it may be that housing authorities can effectively assist more households for a given cost.

At present most housing authorities have a limited range of housing assistance measures, broadly categorised as either multi-need or single-need specific:

	<u>Example of program</u>	<u>Aspect(s) of housing need targeted</u>
Multi-need:	Public housing, community housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing	Housing cost, affordability, appropriateness, stability
Single-need:	Rent assistance Bond loan	Housing affordability Housing access

This research suggests that a single need program just targeting housing instability associated with short-term private rental leases may be a useful complement to the range of housing assistance measures offered by housing authorities. This may be particularly important as more and more households become long term private renters¹⁰.

In summary, this research suggests that there may be benefits in:

1. Reviewing public housing allocation policies with a view to improving educational outcomes for children, especially children with learning difficulties.
2. Developing housing assistance products that focus on increasing residential stability, such as products aimed at increasing the length of residential leases to reduce the number of times that children in highly mobile private rental households change schools;
3. Providing rental subsidies targeted at maintaining primary school students at the one school (particularly children requiring school based remediation); and
4. Education departments developing programs aimed at reducing the impact of frequent moves on educational performance through such mechanisms as better case management of children with learning difficulties when they change schools and better monitoring of children who are frequent school movers.

5.3 Future research strategies

This study has generated some interesting findings in relation to non shelter outcomes but also suffered from a number of limitations. It is considered that there are a number of research strategies that can be undertaken to improve our knowledge of non shelter outcomes.

1. Increase the use of administrative data sets

The use of administrative data sets can be more cost-effective than collecting primary data and have the advantage of allowing a much broader coverage. In this survey the use of Medicare data provided an important supplement to the survey data. Outcomes from the basis skills test can be combined with data on tenure to further investigate the relationship between housing and educational outcomes¹¹. Adding a housing variable where possible to administrative data sets would assist with this task;

¹⁰ Wulff (1998) suggests that 40% of private renters are now long term renters – that is, they have rented privately for more than 10 years (p.89).

¹¹ AHURI has funded the preliminary phase of a study that involves tracking Education Queensland results

2. The use of longitudinal studies

In general, cross sectional studies, especially studies with small samples are not reliable in measuring non-shelter outcomes. The usefulness of further longitudinal studies is encouraged. For example, the use of HILDA by housing researchers may be a fruitful area of further research.

3. Undertake an ongoing evaluation with the assistance of State Housing Authorities.

A clear lesson from this study is that the success of evaluation studies works best when the SHA is closely involved with the study¹². A rolling national evaluation study undertaken in conjunction with SHAs that focused on a subset of the issues in this project would provide a more robust evidence base for future discussions about housing assistance. This study would include the use of administrative data sets such as the Basic Skills test results and Medicare data.

¹² This study succeeded in recruiting high numbers of public tenants because of the involvement and commitment of Queensland Department of Housing staff at all levels of that organisation – in particular client service staff.

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