

AHURI

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Research report into housing careers of people with disabilities and their carers

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Housing options for people with a disability have become increasingly restricted due to the reduced availability of public and private rental housing, the high cost of relocation, limited earning capacity and general housing inflation.

Launched at Federation Square, Melbourne on 8 May 2009, this report presents the findings of research into the housing careers of persons with a disability and family members with care responsibilities. This research was conducted as part of a larger program of research, National Research Venture 2 of the AHURI Research Program, investigating 21st century Housing Careers and Australia's Housing Future. The overall aim of the research was to address the question: "How are housing careers for persons with a disability and their family members with care responsibilities changing in Australia and what are the implications of change for government provided housing assistance?"

It is recognised that the housing careers of people with disabilities are shaped by the full range of factors of all participants in the housing system (family life stage, labour force participation, age, gender and so on) and that disability adds to this complexity, rather than being the sole driver of housing careers. As the term 'disability' encompasses a wide spectrum of conditions, housing needs and housing careers vary according to the type and severity of the disability. The housing decisions of persons with a disability, however, are often shaped by significant constraints.

This report examines the issues and processes that shape the housing careers of people with a disability including housing affordability, the accessibility and suitability of the housing stock, and the impact of government assistance. It identifies the lack of choice, and constraints upon choice with regard to housing and location outcomes, as well as choices, preferences and aspirations. The report also includes information on the housing careers of carers. The research recognises the important roles and responsibilities of carers and the influence that caring for a person with a disability can have on their own housing and locational outcomes.

As persons with a disability are now part of the general community, this research draws comparisons between the housing careers of the mainstream population and those of people affected by disability to raise awareness of the challenges to successful housing careers confronting persons with a disability and the challenges facing the policy community.

LISA Comment: Although considerable reference was made by the key speakers at the AHURI launch seminar about the needs of those living in supported accommodation group homes (SSA/CRUs), we are not confident that many group homes will not continue to be HOSTELS not HOMES.

Many residents of group homes are denied residential tenancy rights (Section 23 of the RTA), and have few reasonable rights, despite they pay rent. Some supported accommodation providers are both landlord and service provider!

Many SSA/CRU resident groups are incompatible, as the DSR (Disability Support Register) process is driven by unmet demand, and that there is insufficient behaviour management units with professional staff to help residents who have particularly challenging behaviour to have a better quality of life.

Frequently, residents receive little more than basic minder care, not quality of life care with the "Interaction, Developmental and Social Activity" framework of the formal "Active Support" concept.

Community Visitors, under the (Victorian) Disability Act 2006 can, at any time they choose, without notice, inspect a part of a group home, and any document relating to any resident and/or the service. Yet there is no requirement that they consult with the resident and/or the resident's family or guardian, as to their views of the service being provided.

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