

The effectiveness of public housing estate renewal in promoting social inclusion

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Objectives

- **Background - what is estate renewal?**
- **What are the benefits of renewal?**
- **How does it relate to social inclusion?**
- **What is the evidence that benefits happen?**
- **The policy dilemma: building communities or breaking communities?**



Estate Renewal: Background

- **Includes both community renewal and redevelopment aspects**
- **Shift from asset management to social inclusion objectives**
- **Main thrust now – mixed tenure renewal usually on a PPP basis**
- **Common policy in Australia**
- **Widespread policy approach overseas**

The Benefits of Estate Renewal (Drivers)

Asset management benefits

- Disinvest from obsolete or high cost stock or “asset farming”
- Portfolio reconfiguration (stock realignment)

Housing management benefits

- Reduced concentrations (dispersing disadvantage)
- Improved management outcomes (managing residualisation)

Social welfare outcomes

- Tackling social exclusion
- Reductions in social expenditures



What is social exclusion?

“Social exclusion is a shorthand for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.” (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998)

“Social exclusion is about income, but it is about more. It is about prospects and networks, and life-chances. It’s a very modern problem, and one that is more harmful to the individual, more damaging to self-esteem, more corrosive for society as a whole, more likely to be passed down from generation to generation, than material poverty.” (Tony Blair, 1997)

“Social exclusion extends beyond the problems of unemployment and access to labour markets. It manifests itself in a number of forms of deprivation and types of obstacles, and sometimes in discrimination. Either singly or together, these phenomena prevent full participation in fields such as education, health, the environment, housing, culture, access to rights and family support, training and offers of employment. Discrimination and xenophobia can exaggerate social exclusion, particularly in the case of immigrants”. (European Commission, 2000)



Conceptual basis of the social benefits of estate renewal – why renewal might make a difference

- **Neighbourhood effects – reducing concentrations**
- **Tenure-specific social polarisation – tenure mix**
- **Social mix and social capital – sustainable community outcomes**



Estate Renewal and Social Inclusion

- Estate renewal leads to increased “social mix”, creates more “balanced” and therefore more “stable” communities
- Displaced tenants benefit by transferring to smaller estates or scattered property – avoids stigma
- What is a balanced community?
- The best way to achieve balance – ‘salt and pepper’ mix *vrs* blocks?
- Reduction of concentrations to state “averages”



Estate Renewal and Social Inclusion

Renewal is said to address a range of interrelated social inclusion objectives:

- **Increased housing opportunities**
- **Increased social capital formation**
- **Reduced stigma and “normalised” estates**
- **Adoption of mainstream social norms by tenants**
- **Creating a range of ‘non-shelter’ benefits**



Have social inclusion objectives been achieved? – research findings are mixed – Australia and UK

- **Arthurson (2002):** public housing tenants were sceptical about social mix. Dispersed tenants expressed feelings of social isolation (Adelaide)
- **Parry and Strommen (2001):** the majority of tenants involved reported positive social benefits (Perth)
- **Atkinson and Kintrea (2001):** little evidence of inter-tenure socialising or commitment of owners to the local community, but feelings of stigma reduced (UK)
- **Jupp (1999):** most mixed estates were not characterised by inclusive social networks. Salt and pepper mixing of tenures better (UK).

Have social mix objectives been achieved?

HOPE VI Program in USA

- **Location is critical to success**
- **Mixed estates worked better in strong local housing markets**
- **Design quality and management important**
- **Subsidised homes should “blend in” and social mix downplayed in marketing**
- **Lower income tenants should be a minority**
- **Social mix not enough - employment access schemes for low income renters are also needed to overcome economic exclusion**



UFP Research Findings

- **Study of estate renewal programs of tenure diversification in four States – SA, WA, Queensland and NSW**
- **AHURI Funding**
- **Stakeholder interviews**
- **Focus groups on renewed estates and control estates**
- **Census data analysis**
- **Half way through reporting stage (home owners to analyse)**

UFP Research Findings: Stakeholder interviews

- **Wide range of claims made by stakeholders**
- **Confusion over causes of any perceived change – renewal or community initiatives?**
- **Asset improvements show positive changes (increases in property values)**
- **Stigma seen as having reduced**
- **Too early to see social inclusion/cohesion benefits?**
- **Little evidence from systematic evaluation**

UFP Research Findings: Focus groups (tenants)

General comments

- Mixed attitudes among tenants – generally those who benefited directly were more positive. Issue of causality of perceived changes?

Positives

- Reduction in stigma, impact on crime and drug use, greater housing choice (for young people), pepper potting preferred, house value increases

Negatives

- Impacts on waiting list and those in housing need, no increase in employment prospects, little positive impact on local services

Mixed views

- Impact of home owners on the upkeep of the area, impact on schools, impact on social mix and interaction



UFP Research Findings: Focus groups pro-forma

Estate type by perception of whether the estate has improved

	Improved	Got worse	The same	Total
Control estates	16%	45%	39%	31
Diversified estates	58%	17%	25%	72
All	45%	25%	30%	103



Estate renewal: the social case remains unproved

Making communities or breaking communities?

- **Stock reconfiguring outcomes need to be positive**
- **Uncertain social benefits – evaluation needed**
- **Break-up largely negates community building efforts**
- **Does it really help disadvantaged tenants?**
- **Alternatives for achieving social mix – community lettings policies and estate profiling are untried in Australia**
- **Potentially negative effects on welfare support service provision**
- **Impact on housing management costs?**



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