

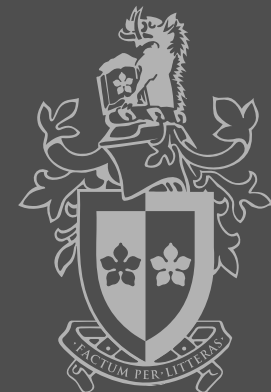
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## 'Making a home': a stronger and fairer housing system for renters

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Notes for Shelter NSW conference,  
'The crisis and beyond: for a stronger  
and fairer housing system',  
Sydney, 2 July 2009



# The idea of home

The idea of home is bound up with relationships, emotional security and a powerful sense of belonging. For many people, "home" is forever attached to the place where they grew up, the place where they discovered the meaning of family and friendship, the place where, if they were lucky, they learned the inestimable value of unconditional love.

When you mine the meaning of home, you find that the house itself is usually only half the story. For most of us, the house is in a street and the street is part of a neighbourhood. To interpret the meaning of home too narrowly is to miss this crucial point: the sense of home is linked to the even more evocative sense of place. The idea of home can't be separated from the idea of a stamping ground, a locality, a district, a neighbourhood.

Hugh Mackay, 'Dreams beyond the quarter-acre' Sydney Morning Herald, 23 Feb 2008

# Outline: 'Making a home'

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- ❑ The research
- ❑ The role of housing policy
- ❑ Changing the architecture – across the rental sector
- ❑ Public policies – investment/incentives geared to better outcomes for tenants

# Research

- ❑ Tenure and 'non shelter outcomes' – home ownership often a surrogate for income, wealth, etc.
- ❑ The meaning of home
  - ❑ Relatively little on tenants
  - ❑ Flip side (family violence, hard work, etc)
  - ❑ People actively constitute home in a variety of conditions
- ❑ 'Ontological security'
  - ❑ Focus on home ownership; some on homelessness
  - ❑ Very profound level of security (self, family, trust in relationships, etc)
- ❑ Risk and mobility

# Some recent research on housing insecurity (tenants)

## 6 dimensions of housing insecurity (housed)

- ❑ Mobility
- ❑ Housing instability
- ❑ Lack of privacy
- ❑ Feeling unsafe
- ❑ Lack of belonging
- ❑ Lack of comfort

Hulse and Saugerres (2008)

## Sources of insecurity (in transitional housing)

- ❑ Moving to unfamiliar area
- ❑ Uncertainty & lack of control
- ❑ Multiple 'client hood'
- ❑ Risks (caring)
- ❑ Lack of belonging
- ❑ Quality/location

Hulse and Kolar (2009)

# Making a home: the role of housing policy?

Enabling in terms of rental housing which is:

- ❑ Safe and secure (dwelling and environment)
- ❑ Sufficient level of comfort/amenity
- ❑ Private space for intimate relationships including parenting/caring and ability to exclude others
- ❑ Ability to personalise, have own stuff, keep pets, express identity
- ❑ Environment in which daily routines can be developed and sustained (place)
- ❑ Sense of belonging and attachment to place
- ❑ Some control over housing circumstances (eg rent rel. to dwelling type/size and location, provider, unit, etc)

## Housing policy plus.....

- ❑ Social housing provision and management
  - ❑ improve choice/control of provider, dwelling, place
  - ❑ reduce excessive targeting in particular places
  - ❑ management practices which enable home-making and reduce 'churn'
- ❑ Also about:
  - ❑ Coordination with other public policy areas (eg domestic violence, criminal justice, health, disability)
  - ❑ Nature of place (eg community development, planning, local governance)
  - ❑ Cultural change – rental housing not just a waiting room for home ownership or social rental

# Changing the architecture?

- ❑ Consider settings for a broad rental sector with some breaking down divisions between sub sectors. NRAS and new style affordable housing can encourage broader thinking.
- ❑ Some policies/settings across the whole rental sector (eg revisit/update Kennedy et al's 1990s work on principles of residential tenancies legislation, register providers of rental housing, consider accreditation, provide for variable lease lengths, etc.)
- ❑ All public investment in rental housing to be tied to outcomes eg rent levels, degree of security of tenure, minimum standards, management arrangements, etc.

# Last words (1)

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- 1) Home is more than a roof over one's head – it is about physical and emotional security and a sense of belonging and place in the world
- 2) Research indicates that the psycho-social benefits of home (security, stability, control, etc) provide better 'non shelter outcomes' in health, education, well being
- 3) Housing policy could improve opportunities for realising some of these benefits of home, although currently more in the small social housing sector than for renters more generally
- 4) Some of the psycho-social benefits of home for renters are more likely to be realised with better coordination with a range of non housing policies, particularly as regards place

## Last words (2)

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- 5) Current housing policy developments provide a chance to look across the rental sector to improve settings that provide opportunities for people to make a home
- 6) It is a good time to consider legislation, policy and practice across the whole rental sector – inc. basic principles of quality, rents, security – as well as attention to housing and management practices and quality in all parts of the sector
- 7) Public policies which entail investment in, or subsidies to, rental housing should require outcomes for tenants, including those which make it easier to make a home.

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