

Allocating Social Housing

Terry Burke

Kath Hulse

Swinburne Institute of Social
Research

Swinburne Monash AHURI Centre

Aims of the presentation

To report on an AHURI study that documents the current state of practice in Australian social housing allocations systems;

To provide data and ideas to progress discussion about reforms to allocation systems to fit a changing social housing context.

Allocations: Australian overview

Public housing

- 223,000 households on waiting list;
- 354,000 public housing units (5% of total stock);
- 40,000 vacancies per annum for allocation

Community housing

- Also excess demand (data less clear)

The Allocations Problem:

- *Who gets what, when and where?*

The changing context

- Diversity of need;
- Targeting;
- Different types of housing assistance (integration)
- Greater diversity of providers (common wait list)
- Housing market diversity;
- Community sustainability;
- Client choice;
- Sending signals about behaviours
- Mutual obligation/welfare reform

What is an Allocations System?

A multi-stage rationing process that includes:

- Defining eligibility;
- Assessing housing need;
- Managing the wait list;
- Matching a household with a property;
- Reallocations (transfers)

Each stage comprises *informal* and *formal* rationing

The Research

- Scoping current policies and practices;
- Historical context;
- Literature review;
- Practitioners' survey (public housing and community housing);
- Focus group discussions;
- Senior Management Workshops.

International trends

- ‘Sea change’ of thought in terms of needs based allocations systems.
- Greater recognition for locality specific allocations policies;
- Greater acceptance of choice based models;
- Common wait lists;
- Linking allocations with mutual obligation (United States);
- Transfers used as a positive tool,
- Focus on ‘anti-social’ behaviour.

Findings and policy issues (1)

- Targeting (needs-based allocations) is problematic but resigned acceptance by managers and practitioners;
- Segment 1/high priority dominating the system;
- Little move towards choice-based systems (interest but don't know how to make it work);
- Growing acceptance of *some* locally based allocation criteria (community renewal);
- Different degrees of integration between allocations to parts of the system;
- System increasingly dysfunctional.

Findings and policy issues (2)

- Increasingly resource intensive systems;
- Increasingly frustrating to applicants who have less choice and control;
- Local housing market market diversity requires allocations diversity (hard to let and high demand).

More information

Contact the authors:

Tburke@swin.edu.au or
khulse@swin.edu.au

Conference paper on the NHC web site

<http://www.plevin.com.au/housing2003>

Paper(s) on the AHURI web site

<http://www.ahuri.edu.au>