



Australasian Housing Institute

Linking social housing workers in Australia and New Zealand

Implications of Targeting Social Housing

**National Housing Conference
February 2008**

Sydney

Presenter: Lynden Esdaile

1987 Housing Style



A snapshot of social housing in NSW

1986/87

Number of households:

- » public housing: 108,000
- » Community housing: 2,599

Housing Allocations: 12,176

Priority housing allocations: 2,103 (17%)

Dwellings completed: 4,551

**Department of Housing staff : approx
2,000**

2006/07

Number of households:

- » public housing: 120,500
- » Community housing: 14, 660
- » Aboriginal housing: 4,150

Housing Allocations: 8,870 + 433 AHO

Priority housing allocations: 2,597 (29%)

Dwellings completed: 883

Housing NSW staff: approx 2, 500

Who is being housed now in NSW?

2006/07

52% of those housed are special needs clients (young, aged, Aboriginal or Disabled).
80% in community housing (including CALD and refugee applicants).

Public Housing Tenants

Household heads:

- » 53% are over 55 (32% over 65 and 16% over 75)
- » 54% are single
- » 25% are on Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- » Only 11% are couples with children

Applicants

- » 40% are single
- » 31 % are single parents
- » Only 4% are on wages
- » 22% are on DSP
- » 11% are on aged pensions

Housing professionals must deal with increasingly complex and multiple need clients.

They must do this in a context where they also:

- Deal with contradictions and mixed messages in some government policy
- Deal with rationing strategies which change from time to time (points systems, allocations systems) and raising the bar ever higher for applicants.
- Deal with unpredictable behaviours associated with some disabilities and mental health issues – neighbourhood impacts, demands for intervention, issues about boundaries of roles (eg with mental health workers or police)
- Deal with management expectations of efficiency contrasted with the need for careful allocation or negotiation with several parties for housing solutions
- Need to have the skills to undertake all the tasks associated with finding housing solutions outside of social housing
- Must develop the networks to make case management and referral processes effective
- Must undertake project management & negotiation

Implications for the profession – Homelessness Prevention approach (UK 2007)

- ‘Adoption of the homelessness prevention ethos has had a considerable impact on the nature and organisation of local authority homelessness work, and homelessness prevention initiatives have re-shaped the roles of many local authority staff.
- ‘A prevention-centred approach can mean a pro-active rather than reactive style, with an increased stress on networking, negotiation and creativity.
- ‘*Housing options*’ interviews have a central role within this new framework. Such meetings explore, in detail, the feasibility of securing an applicant’s existing accommodation or, failing that, examining the full range of possible routes to accessing a new tenancy, asking ‘how can we help?’ rather than ‘who can we help?’

Evaluating Homelessness Prevention

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School of the Built Environment, Heriot-Watt University
December 2007
UK Department for Communities and Local Government