Stigma and segregation: Investigating attitudes towards public housing in rapidly changing neighbourhoods in Melbourne

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Public Housing Renewal Program
2.2 The Sites

The Program includes the redevelopment of the following eight existing Public Housing Sites comprising multi-level ‘walk up’ apartments:

1. Walker Street site, Northcote
2. Gronn Place site, Brunswick West
3. Tarakan and Bell/Bardia estates, Heidelberg West
4. Abbotsford Street site, North Melbourne
5. Noone Street site, Clifton Hill
6. Flemington estate*
7. Bangs Street site, Prahran
8. Stokes/Penola, Miller and Oakover sites, Preston.

*Excludes the four existing high-rise towers
Context of public housing in Australia


Key challenges

1. Lack of long-term direction
2. Financial sustainability
3. Ageing stock
4. Unmet demand
5. Stock configuration misaligned with demand

Woman sues public housing landlord over 'intimidating' neighbour

A woman who says she was stalked, harassed and eventually assaulted by her neighbour, a public housing tenant, is suing the state’s Director of Housing for allegedly failing in its duty of care.

In a statement of claim submitted to the County Court, the 36-year-old woman, who The Age has chosen not to identify, says that in 2014 she bought a unit in a northern suburb of Melbourne.

Next door to the unit she bought was a unit owned, operated and managed by the Director of Housing, the landlord for public housing tenants in Victoria.

The woman alleges the man living in this neighbouring unit was repeatedly intimidating towards her. He carried a machete, painted over dividing lines between car parking spaces, and threw glass and lit objects at neighbours’ properties, she says.
Project Aim

• To analyse whether the renewal of public housing and the integration of private dwellings on public housing estates improves **quality of life** and **reduces stigmatisation** for public housing tenants and surrounding communities.

• To identify and quantify how members of two selected neighbourhoods that contain public housing estates at various stages of renewal **feel about public housing tenants, public housing buildings, and their neighbourhood.**

• To identify the **causal factors** that contribute to stigmatisation and to changes in the quality of life of both private and public housing tenants.
• Urban planning:
  – Social mix literature used to justify redevelopment of housing (Arthurson and Darcy, 2015; Goetz, 2013).
  – Design is important (Levin et al., 2014)

• Inter-cultural relations
  – Inter-group contact can reduce prejudice between groups (Ata et al., 2009)

• Economics:
  – Children living in the projects may have better educational attainment (Currie and Yelowitz 2000)

• Social Psychology
  – Internal stigma is more likely when an individual’s community reflects that stigma (Schofield and Butterworth 2018)
• Generally residents were in agreement that introducing mixed tenure into the neighbourhoods had positive effects. For social housing tenants the improved design of social housing was a critical factor. (Arthuseron 2013) (Adelaide)

• Many respondents supported tenure mix as a way of building community, and valuing diversity in and of itself. Yet the views of some public and private housing tenants as fundamentally different and potentially deserving of different levels of housing and amenity speaks to entrenched prejudice, stereotyping and stigma associated with social housing tenure (Ziersch, Arthuseron and Levin 2018) (Carlton, Melbourne)
Methodology

1. Initial survey and research design
2. Research Assistant recruitment
3. Survey testing with a focus group
4. Pilot Study
5. In-person surveys at events
6. Online Survey Panel
7. Survey Analysis
8. Presentation of findings
Survey Design

Q8. What are the first 5 words that come to mind when you think of social housing?

Q10. In general, are public housing residents different or similar to other residents because of their...

- ethnic background?
- educational background?
- personal values?
- nationalities?
- culture?
- age?

Q17. Please rate how satisfied you are with the following aspects of your home:

- Price (e.g., rent)
- Help for special needs (i.e., ramps or mobility supports)
- Size of home
- Parks and common space
- Distance from services I need (e.g., shops, food, work)
- Safety/security of the house

Q18. Now think about the local area in which you live. How strong is your preference to continue living in this area?

- Strong preference to stay
- Moderate preference to stay
- Moderate preference to leave
- Strong preference to leave
- Unsure
Methodology Considerations

- Interdisciplinary challenges, strengths and priorities
- Emphasis on engaged, empathetic research design, particularly considering anxiety around redevelopment
- The value of working with the community of interest
- Online panels for constrained geographical boundaries
Future Research Goals

• Baseline study for future difference-in-difference research across the 9 sites
• Setting a methodological standard
• Engaged sharing of findings


