

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 27 February 2019

Moving into social housing not smooth for all, research shows

A new research report produced by RMIT and Unison Housing shows that the transition into social housing can be precarious for some people, with 43% of tenants exiting their social housing within 18 months.

The report, which will be launched on Thursday in Melbourne, finds that certain groups of people are more vulnerable to losing their social housing.

'Who stays, and who leaves social housing, and why?' was produced by Unison Housing Research Lab, a collaborative partnership between RMIT and Unison Housing, Victoria's largest social housing provider. The researchers examined the records of 967 social housing tenants and found that a large number experienced tenancy breakdown within 18 months of being housed, because they struggled to 'settle in'.

The report reveals that there are three cohorts of tenants who are most likely to experience 'tenancy breakdown', and leave their social housing: Indigenous households, young people and people who've previously experienced homelessness.

The report emphasises that supporting longer tenancies among these cohorts is crucial because high turnover had a negative impact on individuals and social housing providers.

'When people cycle through social housing, they're not able to put down roots in the community, they're not establishing friendships in the neighbourhood, and they're uprooting themselves and their families to great detriment. It's in everyone's best interests to reduce turnover in social housing,' said lead researcher Professor Guy Johnson, who is also the Chair of Unison Housing Research Lab.

The researchers were quick to point out that despite the challenges involved, the transition to social housing was a success for a great many. The report found that the longer people stayed in social housing, the more likely they were to leave for positive reasons such as moving into private rental, or reconnecting with family.

Professor Johnson said, *'Living in social housing can be the springboard for people on low incomes to reach their full potential, providing a foundation of stability and security. Some people make the transition to their new housing with ease. This report reminds us that there are some people who need more intensive supports to ensure success. There's no one-size-fits-all approach.'*

Unison Housing CEO, Ed Holmes, said that the report provided many important learnings for governments and social housing providers.

'This research tells us that providing the housing is only part of the response to homelessness. Helping people settle in, and make that housing into a home is equally important. It takes so much more than just giving them the key, especially when dealing with people who have multiple challenges to sustain tenancies.'

'Understanding the policy context is critical, too. As social housing stock has declined in Australia, housing providers are increasingly focussing on housing only the most needy and disadvantaged people in our community, which are also the people who are most likely to experience tenancy breakdown,' said Mr Holmes.

Event details

What: [Who leaves, and who stays in social housing, and why?](#) Research report launch

When: Thursday 28 February

Time: 10am – 12 midday

Where: RMIT City campus, Building 80, 445 Swanston St, Melbourne (Theatre 80.02.02 accessible from Swanston St entrance)

Media contact: Lanie Harris, 0418 552 377

Interviews available:

- Dr Juliet Watson, Deputy Director Unison Housing Research Lab
- Prof Guy Johnson, Chair Unison Housing Research Lab
- Ed Holmes, CEO, Unison Housing