

The voices of mid-life women facing housing insecurity



Andrea Sharam

*With the generous support of the Jean McCaughey
Social Justice Sub-Fund*

Victorian Women's  Benevolent Trust

Investing in Women and Girls.



The voices of mid-life women facing housing insecurity by Andrea Sharam is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

2015 Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia

DOI: 10.4225/50/55401BC479F9C

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and are not necessarily those of Swinburne University of Technology or the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the women who gave their time and candidly provided their experiences and views in the focus groups.

The writing of the findings of focus groups was generously supported by the Jean McCaughey Social Justice Sub-Fund (The Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust). The Jean McCaughey Social Justice Sub-Fund supports research projects that relate to women in the areas of:

- Homelessness;
- Poverty and family well-being;
- Strengthening local communities.

'Jean was a strong advocate for the rights of disadvantaged Victorians across many roles throughout her life. Her research on families, homelessness and communities made an important contribution to social research from the 1970s onwards. During her time as a Research Fellow at the Melbourne Institute for Applied Economic and Social Research between 1967 and 1977, Jean worked closely with Professor Ronald Henderson on the ground breaking research program into poverty in Australia' (VCOSS 2012).

The Victorian Women's Trust (VWT) is inspired by the vision of a just and humane society in which women enjoy full participation as citizens. VWT believes that by creating a better world for women, they create a better world for men, children, families and communities. Established in 1985 in recognition of women's role in shaping Victoria, the VWT has positioned itself as one of Australia's foremost women's organisations. Fully independent, the VWT exists to improve conditions for women in practical and lasting ways, through:

- A funding program by the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust, as the grantmaking arm, to invest in women and effect social change.
- Strategic alliances to undertake major projects
- Advocacy for women on key issues
- Showcasing women's talents and fostering networks for exchange of skills, ideas and information.

The Voices of Mid-life Women continues research commenced in 2007 when North East Housing Service (NEHS) approached Women's Information, Support & Housing in the North (WISHIN) to investigate the rising number of older, low needs women presenting to their service. That work culminated in *Going it Alone: Single, Low Needs Women and the Hidden Homeless*. In 2012 Elli McGavin, Territorial Social Policy and Programme Development Manager, The Salvation Army Southern Territory approached the Institute for Social Research to commission research in response to older women and the feminisation of poverty in Australia. The resulting research report, *No Home at the End of the Road: A survey of single women over 40 years of age who do not believe they will own their housing outright at retirement* is the forerunner to this current research report.

Along the way many organisations, especially women's organisations, have worked hard to promote these various projects and ensured respondents. Likewise many individual women, passionate about women's issues have used their networks diligently to garner support for these projects. Special thanks goes to Dr. Nicola Brackertz who has provided advice along the way and lead the first four focus groups.

Contents

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	6
2. Critical life events	7
2.1 <i>Critical life events and housing</i>	8
3. A changing housing market	9
4. The Women and Housing Affordability Survey	10
5. The focus groups and findings	12
5.1 <i>Education and employment</i>	13
5.2 <i>Renting and Home ownership</i>	15
5.2.1 <i>Renting</i>	15
5.2.2 <i>Home ownership</i>	16
5.3 <i>Savings, expenses and discretionary spending</i>	17
5.4 <i>Financial strategy for retirement</i>	20
6. Attitudes towards the equity land trust model	22
7. Conclusion	23
8. References	24

Executive summary

Single, mid-life women in Australia have emerged as a group vulnerable to housing insecurity, and having a high potential of homelessness in their old age (over 65). Mid-life is used here to denote women aged between 40 and 65. The social changes that have altered relationship partnering, and the ageing of the baby boomer generation means there has been significant growth in the number and proportion of single, mid-life and older women in the population. The mid-life period in women's lives is increasingly a period of transition and disruption, reflecting adverse 'critical life events', such as divorce and separation; or never partnering; loss of housing equity; eviction; housing stress; casualisation of work or retrenchment; and health crises to name but some adversities commonly experienced.

Traditionally for women, acquisition of housing equity (the main form of retirement savings) was linked to marriage. Despite changed attitudes to marriage and relationships, many women still consider intimate partnership a precursor to purchasing housing, and so fail to acquire housing if a partnership fails to eventuate. The economic need to partner to purchase housing is greater moreover, for women whose incomes tend to be lower than men's income. This gender pay gap is also an important factor in the aftermath of divorce or separation. While matrimonial asset division results in losses for both men and women, women's financial recovery is impeded by lower income. For mothers, who still overwhelmingly assume majority care of children income is further reduced by providing care rather than participating in paid employment.

Acquiring or re-acquiring housing equity has also been compromised by a long period of housing asset price inflation, with housing costs outstripping growth in average weekly male earnings, putting purchasing out of reach of many, but particularly women. Private rents have also increased dramatically, further reducing the ability to save for a house deposit, or in many cases, to adequately meet current living costs.

Differing gender pathways in acquisition and loss of housing equity are important in understanding why mid-life single women are increasingly entering the homeless population, and point to fundamental deficiencies in our asset-based welfare system that has private housing wealth as the foundation of welfare in old age in Australia.

This study, reporting on five focus groups with 30 single women follows a survey, conducted in 2011, of 111 single Victorian women over the age of forty with or without children who did not believe they would own their housing outright when they retired. *No Home at the End of the Road: A survey of single women over 40 years of age who do not believe they will own their housing outright at retirement* investigated whether there is a potential market for a subsidised home ownership product delivered via an equity land trust. While the survey revealed support for an equity land trust scheme, the responses left some doubt about the financial capacity of this cohort of women. The focus groups were intended to further our understanding of this group.

The main findings of the research are:

Single parents

- The birth of children and the subsequent loss of partner (through divorce, separation or death) are critical life events from which it is difficult to financially recover.
- Loss of housing equity was closely associated with the loss of a partner.
- Loss of partner and housing equity are associated with tenure change.
- Single parenthood limits employment participation affecting remuneration, career progression, and lifetime earnings demonstrating the accumulative impacts of these critical life events.
- The cumulative adverse impacts of single parenthood were partially offset by mothers gaining tertiary qualifications that permitted them to find better-remunerated employment.

The Voices of mid-life women facing housing insecurity

- The cumulative adverse impacts of single parenthood were significant enough to prevent the acquisition of housing or to be free of substantial mortgage debt by retirement.

Women without children

- Acquisition and loss of housing equity was closely associated with having and losing a partner.
- Living alone prevented economies of scale in consumption.

Education and work

- The women shared a key 'control belief' that education is of enormous value, both economically and personally.
- Tertiary qualifications were often gained as mature aged students and were intended to improve their longer-term economic prospects.
- Many mothers were supporting adult children through university.
- Most women went into sex-segregated 'female' employment, hence were subject to the gender wage gap.
- Labour market flexibility had reduced job security and hours of work, resulting in precarious employment.

Housing

- Three women were purchasing but were currently in housing stress or expected to be once they retired. They were not confident that they would not lose their home.
- Some renters were in housing stress.
- Many of the renters had experienced evictions and dramatic rent increases.
- Some of the women had been in their tenancies many years, thus paid less than market rent.
- Many women shared their accommodation to reduce housing costs.

Finances

- Most of the women had grossly inadequate superannuation.
- Many women were experiencing financial hardship as a result of low income and/or high rent. These women were unable to save.
- Some women were earning relatively good incomes, but this had only been a recent occurrence.
- A few women were saving in the hope that they may purchase housing in the future.
- Some women had disposal incomes but were not saving. Having assessed that there was no possibility of purchasing a home they were instead simply 'living for today'.
- Financially, the women were ill prepared for retirement, and anticipated severe impoverishment in their old age.

Wellbeing

- The unrelenting need to find savings in order to fund essential consumption was turned into an art form by some, but constant scrimping often had a corrosive impact on health and wellbeing.
- Many of the financial coping strategies adopted directly affected social participation and connectedness, and not all women were able to find ways to compensate for these losses.
- Poor health reduced employment participation and exhausted savings.

Equity Land Trust

- Most women would commence saving to purchase a home if they had the confidence an affordable option existed.
- The resilience and financial management the women had demonstrated throughout their lives indicated that an Equity Land Trust could have great confidence in accepting this cohort of women as purchasers.

Research approach

- The critical life events framework is a useful method by which we can understand disruptions to peoples' lives, and draws attention to the importance of control beliefs in adapting to adverse events. But it also highlights the limitations on individual agency: gender discrimination, labour market flexibility and costly housing undercut self-determination.

Policy

- Welfare policy that assumes individual ownership of significant assets as the basis of retirement must be highly attentive to the income security required over a lifetime to fund housing acquisition. Entry and re-entry to the housing market must be relatively easy: high, rising housing prices are a significant barrier to home purchase and retiring without debt.
- Policymakers need to be aware of, and respond to, the gendered pathways to acquiring and losing housing equity.
- Greater numbers of mid-life, single women will be vulnerable to homelessness. As a large demographic cohort even a small proportion becoming homeless will overwhelm the current homelessness service system. Increasing the opportunities for women to put funds into housing equity will alleviate this risk.

Single, mid-life women in Australia have emerged as a group vulnerable to housing insecurity and having a high potential of homelessness in their old age (Crinall, 2001, Beer, et al., 2006, Tually, et al., 2007, Sharam, 2008, McFerran, 2010, Sharam, 2011). The term 'mid-life' is used here to denote women aged between 40 and 65. This period in peoples' lives is increasingly a period of transition and disruption rather than, as in the traditional life course approach, one of wealth consolidation. Mid-life and older, uneducated, single, women who have worked throughout their lives are increasingly presenting to homelessness services (McFerran, 2010). The association between poverty and homelessness (Sharam and Hulse, 2014), and poverty and gender (Green, 2009) suggests their homelessness should not be surprising.

Australian policy and homelessness advocates share a 'loose consensus' that homelessness is caused by the interaction of individual factors such as mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, with structural factors such as the economy, including housing and labour markets but as Wood et al., (2014b: 17) note there is a 'near total absence of work directly investigating structural drivers of homelessness in Australia'. Historically, the homelessness services system has targeted high needs groups such as older indigent men, young people, people with mental health problems, those with substance abuse issues, women escaping domestic violence and aboriginal people. Mid-life and older, single, low needs women have not traditionally presented to homelessness services thus they have not been considered a group at risk. But it may be the case that they adopt alternative adaption strategies thereby rendering their homelessness invisible (Darab and Hartman, 2013).

The Australian, State and Territory Government's *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* (NPAH) includes education as a key means by which homelessness can be remedied (Australian Government, 2014). An underlying assumption is that homelessness arises from personal deficits that too often result in detachment from the labour market and over-reliance on welfare. This understanding of the causes and remedies to homelessness is challenged by the increasing numbers of homeless and insecurely housed, low need, tertiary educated women (Sharam, 2008). A recent study of low needs single homeless women aged 35-64 years old found more than two thirds had post-secondary school qualifications. A later survey of single women over 40 years of age who believed they would not fully own a home by retirement age, found three quarters of the women also had post-secondary school qualifications (Sharam, 2011).

Governments in Australia have promoted a 'switch to asset-based welfare' via taxation subsidies that allow the age pension to be set at a low level relative to other countries (Wood and Ong, 2012: 1) although housing prices have outstripped average incomes for many years and home-ownership rates are declining. As of December 2014 a single age pensioner is entitled to a maximum benefit of \$22,211 per annum. Eligible renters receive a maximum additional payment in Rental Assistance of \$3,317. However, the median rent for a one bedroom flat in metropolitan Melbourne as of September 2014 was AU\$309 per week, or \$16,068 per annum (DHS, 2014).

There are two immediate implications of an asset-based welfare policy. Firstly, without an asset such as a home, aged Australians will increasingly be at risk of homelessness, and the NPAH recognises older people as a new group vulnerable to homeless. Secondly, education and employment take on even greater importance as the primary means by which assets can be acquired and security in old age obtained. While the educational attainment of Australian women is to equal to, or outstrips that of men, wages are stubbornly and significantly unequal (WGEA, 2014).

In part the problem of homelessness amongst older women is an issue of scale, with demographic and social change contributing to an increase in the number and proportion of mid-life and older, single women in the population. The first of the post World War II 'baby boom' generation has reached retirement, and women's greater longevity means there are more older women than older men. Older women make up a significant demographic cohort.

Secondly, in a traditional 'life-course' approach, households at mid-life are consolidating: children have grown up and mortgage burden is negligible. But this trajectory of a single marriage partnership over a lifetime now only reflects the circumstances of around half coupled Australian households. Increasingly, divorce and separation are the norm. Moreover, around a

quarter of households are comprised of single people, many of whom have never married. Mid-life therefore is increasingly a period of transition and disruption rather than, as in the traditional life-course approach, one of wealth consolidation.

These social changes have been driven by many factors including the wide availability of the contraceptive pill by the end of the 1960s, the introduction of no fault divorce, the single mother's pension, and the ending of illegitimacy as a formal legal status in the mid-1970s. In the 1980s equal opportunity and equal wages legislation encouraged the entry of women into the paid labour force. Free education introduced in the 1970s saw large numbers of women entering tertiary education.

Household formation and dissolution can be viewed as 'critical life events'. The critical life events approach has its origins in medicine, and focuses on the impact of stressful events. Increasingly, critical life events framework is being linked to individual housing pathways.

This paper draws on the findings of focus groups with mid-life, single women in Victoria, held to improve understanding of the nexus between women's financial situations and housing, and what this meant for their future. But an unanticipated finding involved a shared 'control belief', concerning the value of education. Control beliefs are the 'emotional, motivational and epistemological beliefs...[that] affect...long term coping and resilience' that follow a critical life event (Turner et al., 2012: 215). The women often made substantial sacrifices in order to gain qualifications to improve their economic position. But this investment had not translated into a capacity to obtain sufficient housing equity to provide for economic security in their old age. Education and the resulting improvements to their earning capacity had not compensated for the cumulated impacts of critical life events, and were undercut by changes to housing and labour markets. These latter critical life events undermined any hope of acquiring housing equity.

The report proceeds as follows. In section two the critical life events framework is introduced and the impact of critical life events on housing pathways provides the context for analysing the women's experiences. Greater detail on the housing market context is provided in section three. We turn in section four to the findings of the earlier survey and some of the questions it raised. Five themes: education and employment; caring responsibilities; home ownership; savings, expenses and discretionary spending; and financial strategy for retirement, are drawn out of the focus groups and explored in detail in section five. Attitudes towards the equity land trust model are canvassed in section six, and conclusions drawn in the section seven.

2. Critical life events

Adverse critical life events are major 'experiences, which occur quite seldom but have a dramatic influence of [sic] one's life and require fundamental readjustment' (Stefanek et al., 2012: 202). The events can be normative reflecting developmental or life-course milestones such as graduation, obtaining a job, partnering, birth of children, and whilst such transitions are a generally regarded as positive, they are also often stressful. Events can also be non-normative such as loss of partner, death, disability, disaster or migration. Typically critical life events alter the status quo, and frequently trigger further events. The impact of critical life events is known to be cumulative, often over long time periods. In economics, adverse critical life events are often associated with hysteresis.

Hysteresis arises when a negative (positive) shock has long-lasting impacts so that when the shock is reversed, the affected person(s) does not return to the same position they were in before the shock (Flatau et al., 2004: glossary).

The concept 'critical life events' stems primarily from health and psychology to describe the interaction of events that have major impacts on peoples' lives, the ways individuals react to and manage these events, as well as some of the impact of this combination (Moloney, 2012). The way in which individuals experience adverse critical life events is influenced by personal and contextual circumstances (Baxter et al., 2012), coping strategies, personal appraisal of events reflecting a person's 'control' beliefs or belief system (Allen, 2000), and previous or current exposure to other events, along with command over material and non-material resources are each 'critical for adaptation' (Jopp et al., 2010). Successful responses to critical life events

include the need for 'time, money, skills, [and the] cooperation of others' (Ajzak, 1991). The ability to avoid negative impacts of, or recover from, an adverse event (and mitigate the accumulative effects of events) relates to the risk of such events occurring and the availability and extent of insurance. Insurance mechanisms include savings and credit, and access to increased earnings but also reflect market and socialised insurances such as life insurance and unemployment benefits and informal insurances such as familial or friendship supports. Control beliefs tend to determine the extent of profligacy or frugality in response to adverse events.

Modified for sociological inquiries, the term has increasing relevance for interpreting the intersection of the life events and individuals experience in the context of economic and social systems and individual agency in response, and their impact.

2.1 Critical life events and housing

Housing researchers are increasingly interpreting household formation, dissolution, changing household composition, and tenure change as events rather than normative life-course transitions (Wood and Ong, 2012). Changes to household composition affect economies of scale. Lone person households are reliant on a single income whereas couples and group/multi-generational households will have more than one income to defray housing related costs. The ability to accumulate equity in housing, and/or acquire savings and cope with adverse events is strengthened by sharing of housing costs, and the 'insurance' of more than a single income.

Couple household dissolution, through divorce or separation, has been observed to have adverse consequences for the wealth position of each partner (Hendershott et al., 2009) and with tenure change noted for at least one if not both former partners (Feijten, 2005, Feijten and Mulder, 2005, Babacan et al., 2006, Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2006, de Vaus, et al., 2007, Dewilde, 2008, Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2008, Wood et al., 2008, Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Mulder and Wagner, 2010). The division of matrimonial assets at divorce or separation in Australia reflects gendered care arrangements with women more likely to receive the family home in the property settlement in order to provide the primary caregiver and children stability (Sheehan and Hughes, 2001). In effect this measure is intended to reduce the adverse impact of divorce or separation as a critical life event. Women have been found to experience more difficulties with mortgage arrears in the aftermath of adverse events (Christie, 2000) and are less likely than widowers or male divorcees to replace housing equity withdrawn when a male partner leaves or dies (Babacan et al., 2006). There is some indication that many women subsequently fall out of home ownership post-property settlement (Beer and Faulkner, 2009).

Family conflict and change in household size are significant push factors for women entering public housing and assisted private rental (Burke et al., 2004). Sole parents, whom the great majority are women, experience higher than average mobility (Burke and Hulse, 2002) and tend to concentrate in poorer outer suburban locations, and inland and coastal regional centers reinforcing detachment from the labour market (Birrell and Rapson, 2002).

Re-partnering has been shown to recoup some of the losses of dissolution, with former partners who remain single experiencing more severe hysteresis than those who re-partner (Painter and Lee, 2009). As men are more likely to re-partner than women, a gendered housing wealth gap is created, thereby creating demand by women for housing assistance (Wood et al., 2008).

Despite housing being the key strategy for saving for retirement 'home ownership rates are in long run decline across all age groups other than over 65 years of age group' (Wood et al., 2014a: 39), and households are increasingly retiring with housing debt (Wood et al., 2010). Loss of a partner may result in use of retirement savings to meet debt obligations leaving the remaining partner reliant on the age pension (Wood et al., 2008). Jefferson et al., (2010) found significant gender differences in assets and debt held by men and women at retirement, with women holding far fewer assets (predominately only their home).

Illness and unemployment are key factors driving mortgagee repossession with resulting indebtedness undermining subsequent private rental tenancies (Berry et al., 2010). Homeowners who exit into private rental are more likely to require housing assistance than longer-term private tenants, suggesting the impact of traumatic event(s) are cumulative (Wood et al., 2010).

Housing careers are scarred such that future interventions to support their housing circumstances become more likely (Wood et al., 2010: 1).

Disability and poor health are critical life events triggering unemployment, and use of housing assistance (Bridge et al., 2002; Tually, et al., 2011; Dockery et al., 2008; Rowley and Ong, 2012). The critical life event does not need to be directly experienced such as when a caregiver reduces hours of paid work, in order to provide care. Women at mid-life find poor health and care obligations accumulate to reduce their ability to return to work, and subsequent improvements to health do not increase their chances of entering employment (Austen and Ong, 2009). Caring is a significant barrier to female employment participation (Hulse and Saugeres, 2008a, 2008b; Austen and Ong, 2009; Sharam, 2011; McFerran, 2010) suggesting the cumulative impacts of critical life events can be different for men and women.

While employment is a key strategy by which households can obtain savings, and additional work a means to overcome the financial impact of critical life events, the labour market is also an increasing source of adverse critical life events. The shift from centralised wage fixing and tariff protection for local industry, to a more open, globalised economy has resulted in the decline of manufacturing and the growth in service industries with a concomitant loss of full time jobs, and growth in part-time work, especially casual work, thus increasing labour market 'flexibility' (Wood and Ong, 2012). The extensive literature on labour market conditions and housing security in Australia broadly focuses on either the labour market as cause of housing insecurity or the impact of housing on the labour market (Campbell et al., 2013). Recent research reveals underemployment as one of the most serious consequences of increasing labour market flexibility that has adversely affected housing security; most affected are single-earner households who are typically lone person or lone parent households and female (Campbell et al., 2014).

The housing market is a source of adverse critical life events such as evictions, rental increases, low vacancy rates, price inflation, mortgagee repossession, and housing stress (paying more than 30 per cent of their income in housing costs). Private tenants increasingly face difficulties sustaining tenancies as a result of the combination of weak labour market conditions, poor health or disability, evictions, rental increases, and low vacancy rates (Stone and Sharam, forthcoming). Rising house purchase prices deter home purchase and contribute to housing stress. The digression between incomes and housing prices means the average weekly earnings multiple required to buy a median priced house increased from 3.3 in September 1985 to 8.2 in June 2010 (Worthington, 2012: 239). The average weekly earnings multiple, a common housing affordability measure assumes full time employment but takes no account of a persistent gender pay gap of around 17 per cent (WGEA, 2014).

Housing researchers increasingly identify critical life events, such as changes in household formation, employment, caring, health problems and disability as triggering changes in housing pathways. The housing market is itself seen as a source of events. Longitudinal data has enabled housing researchers to appreciate the cumulative impacts of events, and has highlighted gender differences. The focus groups, which are discussed next draw attention to household dissolution and caregiving, and economies of scale, to the housing market, and the impact of changes to the labour market.

3. A changing housing market

The interactions between critical life events and housing take place within a specific housing market context in Australia that has been highly disadvantageous to lower income households and thus to the single, mid-life women. Australian house prices increased by 220 per cent between 1997 and 2010, outstripping housing price inflation experienced by comparable developed nations (Worthington 2012: 236). Over the longer term (1960 to 2010) the yearly average increase has been 2.5 per cent (Yates, 2011: 263) while household income between 1960 and 2006 grew only by 1.9 per cent per annum (Yates, 2008). The growth in prices, especially in the latter years can be attributed to many factors including, on the demand side, the growth in the number of households (reflecting natural population increase, high immigration, changing

household structures); increased real income and wealth; tax concessions to both owner-occupier and for rental housing; concessions for first home buyers; the low cost of finance and availability of finance. Increasing construction and infrastructure costs and charges, the constraints on the availability of land, land development processes and policies and taxation are often cited as driving the cost of housing supply (Yates, 2008). Critically, there is a substantial chronic under-supply of housing that has led to increases in market prices (NHSC, 2012).

The adverse impact of high housing costs on declining ownership has been examined in relation to first time home-buyers (Burke and Stone, 2014). However, older people with little or no equity seeking to re-enter home ownership face the further disadvantage of having fewer years in which to pay down mortgage. As Wood et al., (2010) have noted, women who lose homeownership are less likely than men to re-gain ownership.

The average weekly earnings multiple, a common housing affordability measure assumes full time employment and takes no account of the gendered nature of earnings. The gender pay gap, the difference between women's and men's average weekly full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings, is 17.1 per cent and has moved little over the past two decades (WGEA, 2014). The gender wage gap can be explained by 'gender segregated' industries, in which female dominated occupations are less well remunerated than male dominated industries. Further, despite two decades of Equal Opportunity legislation, and a legislated requirement for 'equal' pay, men and women are often remunerated differently despite having the same job. The Australian labour market is highly sex segmented with around 46 per cent of female employees concentrated in just three industry sectors: health and social assistance; education and training; and retail trade (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Those jobs as Sheen (2010) notes are increasingly precarious with women's employment increasingly part time with 58% of these part time jobs also being casual; around 30 per cent of employed women are casual compared with 22 per cent of employed men (Sheen, 2010: 4).

The high cost of housing has resulted in a decline in home ownership and the growth in the number of private rental tenants without any corresponding growth in rental stock. As a consequence vacancy rates in most capitals cities are chronically low, and the share of low cost rentals has declined markedly as rents have risen (Gilmore and Milligan, 2012). Rents have increased faster than house prices (NHSC, 2012) reflecting strong locational demand for housing in key employment zones and service rich areas. Higher income groups have displaced low-income renters from inner city areas to less economically advantaged outer suburban and regional areas. At the same time social housing comprises less than 5 per cent of housing stock (Gilmore and Milligan, 2012), and is targeted to those with complex, multiple needs (Burke and Hulse, 2005).

Housing asset inflation has had an adverse impact on all low-income households, and seen a significant spatial polarisation with lower socio-economic groups tending to settle on the city fringe while wealthier owner-occupier groups occupy employment and service-rich inner city locations. Many of the women who responded to the Women and Housing Affordability Survey, which we will discuss in the next section, had already moved to cheaper areas, or were clinging to unaffordable tenancies in order to stay in their communities; some were still enjoying affordable rents in well located areas but feared for the future.

4. The Women and Housing Affordability Survey

The focus groups follow a survey of 111 single, Victorian women over the age of forty with or without children who did not believe they would own their housing outright when they retired, conducted in 2011. The report *No Home at the End of the Road: A survey of single women over 40 years of age who do not believe they will own their housing outright at retirement* was intended capture the experiences of these women and ascertain whether there is a potential market for a subsidised home ownership product delivered via an equity land trust.

The respondents to the survey were a mixture of renters (85) and home purchasers (25), and one person was both a purchaser and a renter. Their median income was \$49,000 per annum, and 34% of the renters were in housing stress. The women who were purchasing felt pessimistic

about getting to retirement without housing debt but many had strategies including downsizing that could reduce their debt burden. Current superannuation accounts and anticipated superannuation at retirement were generally low.

One notable finding was the high number of women with post-secondary school qualifications. This finding was consistent with earlier research that found divorced women who remained single have the highest education levels of all Australian women (de Vaus et al., 2007). Nevertheless tertiary education is generally associated with higher earnings, so anew question was raised about why education was not translating into better long term economic outcomes for these women?

Single parent renters, primarily reliant on Parenting Payments, had grossly inadequate incomes on which to live and were accumulating debts or using pre-existing savings to fund current consumption. Once their earnings increased sufficiently however, they paid down debt and commenced saving. Assuming they could find an affordable property to buy, this delay in purchasing would mean having a mortgage well into retirement.

Half the survey respondents had incomes over \$49,000 per annum, and many had quite high incomes yet, on assessment, very few could afford to purchase housing at market prices, except in outer suburban or regional locations and even then most would have struggled with repayments. Many had affordable rents so had disposal income and hence could save, but few were doing so. Given almost all would be reliant on the aged pension and living in private rental in retirement, savings would be vital to meet their consumption needs yet few were actively saving. In the main those saving were still hoping to purchase housing. Mostly, the better off women had debts, for items such as cars, which they could afford.

This finding has implications for an equity land trust product. The equity land trust model provides dwellings for purchase that excludes the cost of the land, thus providing a shallow subsidy via free 'rent' on the land component. It does this by separating the title of the dwelling from the title of the land. It is a model that requires a significant capital contribution from participants. While many households are priced out of the market, many could afford the construction cost of a dwelling. Such households have latent equity (capacity to borrow) but currently there is no institutional arrangement that permits this latent equity to be exploited. An equity land trust enables the release of such equity, with development finance obtained for the construction on the basis of 'pre-sales' to women who can obtain mortgage finance. The model is being considered because firstly, there is both government and not for profit land and airspace available that could be donated for affordable housing schemes.

The survey specifically sought to understand whether there was interest from single women for an equity land trust that assumed:

- separation of land ownership from dwelling ownership, with land provided at no cost;
- dwellings purchased by individual women with private mortgage finance;
- dwelling cost of \$150,000 up to \$350,000;
- capital gains could not be captured by the dwelling owner;
- dwellings could be sold, bequeathed or transferred to another eligible person; or sold back to the Trust for the original purchase price plus CPI.

The survey found a majority of the renters earned sufficient income to finance housing valued at \$150,000 and some more than that, but few had savings to provide a deposit. On the financial parameters it appeared that a land trust scheme could meet a proportion of currently unmet need. A large majority of the women indicated they were interested in the concept. Very few were uninterested. Title differences and restrictions on renting dwellings were of minimal concern, whereas restrictions on capturing capture gains and bequests elicited more concern (30 per cent and 23 per cent respectively). However, as there are no established land trusts that have provided housing in Australia, there is a lack of familiarity with the concept and the survey was limited as to what it could ascertain about women's willingness to embrace such a model. The focus groups were, in part, intended to provide much more nuanced data.

5. The focus groups and findings

Five focus groups with single women over the age of forty years were conducted between November 2011 and November 2012. Four were held in Melbourne, and one in regional Victoria. A total of 30 women participated. Each focus group was comprised of between three and nine women.

Participants were recruited via direct contact (where they had participated in similar research previously and were known to the researchers), via email advertisements sent to emails lists and various networks, including the not-for-profit sector, and via social media. Many women expressed interest in participating but were either unable to make the dates as they were scheduled or were unable to travel to the two sites used. Each participant was provided with a shopping voucher valued at \$20 to compensate for her time, and in recognition of her contribution. Each session was held in the evening. The focus groups were transcribed and Nvivo software was used for coding and analysis.

The women were aged between 40 and 65 years. The majority was in private rental, two in social rental cooperatives, and three had mortgages on properties they had recently purchased. Two of the mortgagees were in severe housing stress. The two cooperative members were on 'market rents' although such rent is less than actual market rent (McNaughton, 2014). They further indicated that they did not feel secure, although ostensibly it is a secure form of rental housing. The private renters reflected greater diversity as many had been in their current tenancy for many years, and their rents had not risen in line with the market. For others rent increases and evictions had driven mobility. This latter group was experiencing considerable housing stress. Quite a number in both groups were sharing either in 'group' households with unrelated others, or with family (mostly adult children). A small number were single parents with dependent children living with them, but a much larger number were single parents whose children had moved out of home.

All were fluent English speakers. Although the women were not asked to disclose their cultural backgrounds, some indicated to the researchers or in the sessions that they were from a non-English speaking backgrounds, or Aboriginal. In terms of income, a small number were on pensions or unemployment benefits. Most received income from employment with remuneration between \$40,000 and \$90,000 per annum.

The focus of the research was on women at mid-life, with mid-life being a critical transition point. The experiences of the women in the focus groups reflected earlier life-course trajectories involving either partnering (and having children or not having children), purchasing or renting housing, separation or divorce, and loss of housing equity if they had purchased; or secondly, not partnering (for cohabitation) and renting. Purchasing was often but not always associated with the birth of children, but it was while they were younger and always with a partner. Home purchase (actual or envisaged) was inextricably linked to partnering.

So I somehow thought you leave year 12 and you magically get married, have kids and have a house and a car. I didn't know the way it worked, which is very naive...So I guess I try not to feel like a loser that I haven't got a home or probably never will have a home because I didn't have the foresight to think about that in my twenties.

Even as the women aged and relationships ended the connection between partnering and home purchase remained.

I just wanted to make one comment that as a single female, I became single in 2003... I was just hooked on - I'll meet someone and combine an income, but I found that you just can't bank on that, and you just have to set up your own.

This belief in waiting for a 'white knight', (a male to rescue them) is, anecdotally, not uncommon (Sharam, 2011). It reflects a control belief about what constitutes a normative life-course. Not partnering, with its psychological, social and material ramifications, is a critical life event, and, while it reflects a fundamental social change, it is not necessarily a choice.

On the other hand a number of women had shared housing for many years as much a matter of preference as of financial need. These women had control beliefs that meant they could adopt strategies that better enabled them to cope with rising rental costs, and as we shall discuss shortly, increasingly precarious work.

The cumulative impact of critical life events and control beliefs is evident in the following comment, with loss of partner resulting in an initial loss of wealth and further losses associated with being unable to work, and the very considerable increase in house prices during this period.

I came out of a marriage in 2004, and came out with a bit of money, and saw a financial advisor, and he said, "Well what do you want, [name]? Do you want, at the moment, like you've been married for 26 years, do you want a lifestyle, or do you want to use this for a deposit for a little place, and really struggle, like really, financially struggle." And so I picked the lifestyle, and put my money into long term investment, and then I started sharing rent, and I've lived everywhere, and I became the littlest hobo, and I tired of that after - got really tired after about four years. So then I looked at pulling my money out, and I got sick, and I was off work for four months, so I actually inquired about my super, so I got enough money together to pay a ten percent deposit on a little place by drawing most of my money out of super, and out of my savings.

Eight women had previously purchased housing and subsequently fallen out of home ownership. Each had purchased with a partner, and the subsequent loss of their home related to separation, divorce or death of that partner. Most indicated they received little equity as part of the property settlement. In one case the loss of housing equity involved repossession and related to a period of very high interest rates in the early 1990s.

I've had two household mortgages with two different marriage partners in my lifetime and there's nothing of that left because of interest rates hiking up at one stage. We were spending more than half of his income on the mortgage that we were paying out on and at the end of the year when the statement came in, we'd paid out some ridiculous amount of money, but we'd only paid \$200 off the loan of the house. But we'd gone without every month to just try and stay in that house.

For those women who had children, the impact of losing their partner was severe as they lost economies of scale. Their ability to earn an income was highly constrained by the need to also provide care for their children. Many funded their current household expenditure using debt, with repayments consuming a percentage of household budgets for many years.

While these trajectories revealed housing insecurity only one woman mentioned experiencing homelessness. As a person with a mental health issue she fits a known homelessness 'pathway' (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2013), and as such was atypical of the women in the focus groups.

The acquisition of housing equity by the women had been adversely affected by critical life events: loss of partner, birth and care of children, or never partnering, and the housing market. Whatever aspirations the women had had in recent years to purchase, their hopes had largely been dashed by the dramatic rise in house prices. Some were already experiencing housing stress and all were worried about being impoverished in retirement. Yet, most of the women were tertiary educated and many were working in professional fields. Surely these attributes should mean they are less vulnerable to homelessness? In the following section we explore why education figured so strongly, and why it has not translated into greater wealth.

5.1 Education and employment

The earlier survey found 75 per cent of the responding women had post-secondary school qualifications. This held true for the women participating in the focus groups; very few did not have at least a post-secondary school certificate, diploma or degree, and some had double degrees or had started graduate degrees. Most of the younger aged women, those in their 40s, appeared to have transitioned immediately to tertiary education after completing secondary school. The women aged over 50 however had returned to education as mature aged students. For some of these it was a deliberate strategy to improve their income. Others also saw the

opportunity provided by free university education as a means of self-improvement and self-fulfillment.

The women who partnered and had children early who then became single parents were particularly passionate about education. These women had been reliant on the 'single mothers pension' (now the Supporting Parents benefit), when their children were young but given the inadequacy of this benefit they also needed to work to support their children. The kind of work they could obtain that provided the flexibility to care for their children were typically in low paid 'female' jobs. Education was viewed as the longer-term solution. One woman sold her house in Perth specifically to fund her university course.

The equity that I had I thought would last maybe three years, re-qualify, so I did a degree, and thinking that then I can get a better paying job, and then I'll just buy back in.

Obtaining qualifications however generally meant considerable sacrifice.

I left school at 16 with a Year Nine education, and had my first daughter at 19, and then had my second daughter at 21, and then was divorced by the time I was 24...[at] 35 I was working as a barmaid, and worked as a cleaner, and in a cake shop, and eventually got a bank job as a teller in a bank, and knew all along that I needed to get an education to try to do better for myself, and my girls, so I took myself back to university...but by that stage the financial stress of - at one stage we were living on \$11,000 per annum.

The single parents typically struggled to make ends meet, and debt was used to make ends meet.

When I was a single parent, and especially going through my second degree, and even my first few years of working, when income was about \$30,000, you do, a lot of things go on your credit card, bills and that, and I had two, and I think between them they got up to about \$7,000-\$8,000 and there was a loan.

Once they had qualified and started working, debt was a legacy problem that needed to be addressed before savings could be accumulated.

I'm still paying off a HECS debt, and a Commonwealth debt, because there was a period of time where the government would give you, if you're on a single Mother's pension, they would give you a little bit extra for education, but they would give you a little bit more than extra if you agreed to pay it back later, so it came out of my degree with, in total, around \$30,000 debt. So I'm still paying that off. Plus the credit card debt, and the little Mazda that I'm paying off.

Having gained an education, a number of the women were in professional roles, and were earning a good income. One woman said her income had increased by \$30,000 over the past five years.

I agree with you, it was a really positive experience for me, and it enabled me to get the income I'm on now.

But they were now in the latter part of their working lives, and they knew they had insufficient working years ahead to acquire housing.

So my income now is really good, but it's kind of, at the tail end.

During this period house prices rose dramatically, blocking aspirations to purchase.

By the time you finish your education...houses have not just doubled - the prices, they've quadrupled, so it again puts it out of your reach.

The women believed in education for its own sake and for the economic benefits that could be derived from holding qualifications. The latter was particularly important for the women with children. These important control beliefs meant they were willing to make considerable sacrifices. Impossibility high housing prices however were not the only critical life event that impacted on them.

Extensive casualisation of employment and industry restructuring resulted in increased precariousness of employment with many of the women working far fewer hours than they want, and facing downward pressure on wages.

I'm only on a monthly contract which has been going for almost two years and it's government department, so they don't pay me enough money to be able to have a big social life.

Like women more generally, the women in the focus groups work in female dominated industries such as teaching, health and retail that pay lower wages than available in 'male' industries.

I work casually in TAFE and I try and work up to an equivalent of full-time so in the last 20 years I've had two one-year full-time contracts and I've had a couple of short-term full-time things, like six weeks but otherwise I might be working for three or four or five employers in a year...I do everything like that I can. I tutor people in year 12 English to get extra money but try and bring my income up to what a full-time teacher would get but it's not that high.

The gender wage gap and employment precariousness is exacerbated by caregiving.

My daughter was in hospital for four months. I had to forego a promotion, which ultimately led to redundancy because the whole department moved, and instead of taking me with it, I had to just let it go, because I couldn't with my child in the condition [she] was.

New qualifications and more highly skilled jobs were instrumental for improving the economic position of the women who had lost a partner. This new earning capacity however was gained too late to avoid being priced out of the housing market. But the choice of most of the women to work in female sex-segregated industries has not only meant being subject to discriminatory lower wages, but to increasing employment precariousness. Lower lifetime earnings (compared to men) are reflected in them having very low superannuation accounts, increasing their future reliance, in retirement, on the age pension.

In the next section we turn to the women's experiences of, aspirations for, and the meaning they attached to home ownership and renting.

5.2 Renting and Home ownership

5.2.1 Renting

The women in the focus groups were a mix of private and cooperative renters and home purchasers with the former being by far the largest group. Most of the women had rented for long periods, and some for their entire adult lives. As their attitudes to home ownership reveal (discussed below) being a private tenant was not viewed as negative, although one of the regional tenants argued that there was stigma attached to being middle-aged renter. The issues were the extent to which rents had been rising and, evictions as a result of properties being renovated or sold. These housing-related critical life events were an increasing problem.

Just at the end of last year [my landlord] decided to renovate so I've moved into a new property and my rent has doubled virtually...and it's really quite difficult.

Everywhere I move they say it will be a long-term place and then within a year or two they're putting in a planning permit application then I have to move. It's happened in the last three places I've lived.

I'm just starting to realise how lucky I've been for ten years being in the one place, because as soon as I've moved out I'm being - I've been three months into my new place and they sold it and now I have to move out again. I'm just coming up to that fact that this is just going to keep happening.

While there was increasing mobility most were concerned with the narrowing gap between their income and their rent. As we outline in section 5.3 this meant many women were rationing with implications for their wellbeing.

5.2.2 Home ownership

Three of the women were purchasing their home. Two of these were experiencing considerable housing stress. Each of the purchasers was concerned about not being able to meet repayments particularly if they were unable to continue working to the same extent as they have been. One was a single mother in her early forties with a young child, who had purchased the house after she divorced but was struggling to meet the mortgage repayments on a single income. Another was woman in her early sixties who had purchased after returning from many years working overseas to find rents were unaffordable. Her mortgage was the weekly equivalent of market rent, which she could manage while working but the loan was issued on the assumption that she would use her superannuation to pay out the loan when she retired. The two older women, who had purchased recently, were anxious about entering retirement with housing debt and without savings.

As soon as I'm unemployed the super disappears into the house. So I have a security but then I can't afford to live there with all the other expenses. So I kind of think in the long term I have no idea and I'm quite petrified.

They did not regard the age pension as providing sufficient income to support them in retirement, even if they had outright ownership. This view of the inadequacy of the age pension was broadly shared by all the women, and influenced their attitudes to ownership.

A further eight women said they had previously been purchasers. Each had purchased with a partner, and the subsequent loss of their home related to separation, divorce or death of that partner, although the losses were not necessarily immediate. Some indicated regret in not seeking more equity in property settlements. One woman had left the family home only to have her ex-partner cease mortgage repayments resulting in repossession of the property.

So I have this real anger about, you should have let me stay in it, or I should have forced that situation, because I would have paid something.

Some of the other former purchasers were not strong advocates of home ownership. Both those who were unsure about the benefits of ownership, and those who were convinced that it was desirable shared concerns about managing the costs associated with ownership. They cited variability of interest rates, the need to pay council rates, insurance and undertake maintenance at a time when their incomes could be expected to fall considerably as perhaps tipping the balance towards continuing in rental. There was also some concern about the potential for house values to decline.

I'm not paying \$400,000 for a one-bedroom apartment when in my eyes it's worth \$200,000 regardless of what the market thinks. And then I'm thinking what if it crashes in a year like it did most other places? So I find it not a very safe investment, especially at the moment.

Not one mentioned that mortgage repayments decline over time. While one woman viewed purchasing as inflexible, others believed having equity provided options. Selling at retirement and downsizing into a lower value market was one strategy. One of the current purchasers highlighted the advantage in having a re-draw facility on her loan.

Now I can go to the bank if need be I could, and like if my car, if I have an accident or write the car off, at least I can go back to the bank and renegotiate my loan so I don't have to get a personal loan out to get a new car. So that's a massive big plus.

Home ownership, although not unproblematic, was viewed as providing security.

It is a degree of control of your environment, which I think is really important, which you don't have renting or you don't feel that you do in the same way, and financially I think ultimately better as well as emotionally.

Another, who worked in aged-care, cited the differences between self-funded and publicly-funded aged care.

The quality of life in aged care if you haven't got the superannuation to pay for it - you really need a house behind you if you need to go into aged care that can fund that, so it's security in a whole lot of ways. Security for living now, and security for old age.

There was some debate about 'planning' for aged care. Two women mentioned parental housing being sold to pay aged care bonds, and the concomitant loss of inheritance. In the main the women were not thinking of this late life transition, because they could not see how they were going to secure housing for their more immediate retirement needs.

Home ownership was also associated with lifestyle, particularly gardening, with a number of women indicating a desire to re-settle in a more rural setting. The tenure and ontological security offered by home ownership was in stark contrast to the anxieties caused by rising rents and eviction, often combined with declining and inadequate income. While some women had relatively good income, and paid below market rents because of the longevity of their current tenancy, most saw themselves as going backwards. All foresaw that their future retirement income would be very unlikely to meet their most basic living costs because of the need to continue meeting housing costs. In the next section we turn to their current financial circumstances and how they manage.

5.3 Savings, expenses and discretionary spending

Many of the women were struggling to make ends meet. The single parents were torn between the need to impose financial restraints on household expenditure and wanting their children to be included in the mainstream of society.

[I] have a 14-year-old son...It's hard to manage it on just one salary and try to make ends meet because to have to keep saying, 'Sorry, you can't go' is not nice. So rather than say, 'Sorry, you can't go' I'll try to think of another way of doing something like not eat when he's not with you so that he can go and do what he wants to do, because I don't want it to impact on him.

Everything is budgeted to the last cent to the extent that, you know, I won't go to work dinners if I can't afford it. If it means that I'm saving up to send my daughter on school camp or something like that at that point in time, so be it.

Single women living alone, without work or under-employed, found themselves needing to ration severely. Two groups did better; those who had full time professional work, and those who shared housing thus obtaining economies of scale. But most had periods, often long periods, where their income was low, and this had left its mark.

They were asked about saving and this engendered a discussion about the cost of living; rising rents, utilities, and health costs, and elicited detail of how to make ends meet. While a few women said they were poor managers of their personal finances, citing tendencies to profligacy, most were highly disciplined. Many of the women were frugal from long practice, and had lifestyles that valued activities and social interactions that did not involve a lot of expenditure. This enabled them to live cheaply and save for items that of particular importance to them.

I don't like to deprive myself with things like entertainment but I've always had this rule where I've saved 10% of my income so if I've managed to do that and I have got some money, some extra money, I will allow myself bands or movies or meals out or something but as long as I've managed to save 10% of my income that fortnight. It's kind of nice to do these things for yourself; it kind of gets your spirits up.

For some the need to be frugal had been turned into a virtue (eg. 'I prefer vintage clothes'), and there was agreement about the skill it required, but that it also took time.

I honestly can say I'm quite proud of actually the fact that I have this minuscule income and I make it go this far. I am astounded with what I can do with my minuscule income sometimes. The way I can budget and frugalise, just so we do have a roof and we have fruit in the bowl and bread in the cupboard and things like that. But that's not an interesting conversation to have at Little Athletics on a Saturday morning, you know, golly gosh, I found avocados and they were \$2 each, you know. If you wrote a blog or a book about it that people hear about, then you would be somebody.

However many struggled with the constant rationing because as one woman said it took constant 'vigilance'. Almost every aspect of behaviour became subject to self-questioning over costs

because savings could only be accrued as a result of small gains being made on many transactions.

I don't buy coffees any more when I go out. It's just not on, I just can't do it.

Discussion went beyond avoiding supermarkets and changing to cheaper brands to the corrosive social impacts of having a very limited budget for socialising. Many mentioned the difficulty in maintaining relationships with people who could afford to go out to bars and restaurants to socialise.

You just can't explain to people who are going out every night of the week. It's, 'At your age why can't you do it?' It's very difficult; it's very confronting.

I make sure I have a coffee with friends at least once a week, because if I don't, other than my volunteering I don't - and my two immediate neighbours - I don't talk or see anybody else. So there's a lot of social exclusion through being on Centrelink money and renting. A lot of social exclusion. And to the point that my house is probably not set up as nice as I would like it to be to be able to have a barbeque and invite friends over. I barbeque for myself in the garage and I sometimes sit out there, but it's not where I would invite my girlfriend and her husband or whatever.

And some socialising, such as attending work functions was resented because there was no means of avoiding the expense.

And were having a farewell lunch so there's \$30 for lunch that you wouldn't normally spend, but you can't not go, because you become not part of that group, and it's an expectation of the job

Somebody was leaving work, it was a dinner that we went, and it was the director for heavens sakes, you know, and everybody put it, "Oh you can't pay, we'll pay for yours." Kind of thing, and I didn't even have - so what can you do, you can't exactly say, "Well I haven't got the money. So I had to pay it. And I just thought, God. She could more than adequately pay for hers, and here's me, you know."

Where women had friends who were in similarly straightened circumstances the impact of rationing heavily was not necessary negative, but the sense of being social exclusion remained.

I find that often with my friend, it's like being a teenager again when - we get together to watch a DVD and make a meal and have a chat and a gossip and a chinwag. You do a lot of those things that we used to do before you had jobs.

There were also accounts of friends who were generous, who would pay for coffees or drinks, and sometimes more.

You just suck in. My girlfriend was subsidising me. She...moved in with me for just over six months...when my rent went up I was studying. I was at my limit. I was struggling to do the petrol, the ink cartridges and eat healthily, because I do have some dietary considerations...And she was subsidising me, I think it was \$25 a week. I think it was about \$100 a month she was giving me for a period of about nine months while I finished the course that I was studying, so that I was healthy, I could get there, had petrol, no stress.

A key way many of the women saved money was through sharing their housing with others. A few had been in share houses most of their adult lives, and were philosophically committed to communal living. While driven by financial need, many also valued the companionship, and that sharing food made for better eating habits.

Me still living collectively just because it's a cheaper option and you can kind of afford - yes, affording things is possible when it's a shared expense.

A lot of people who are in full-time partnerships that's what they're doing, they've got somebody else that they have to compromise with the living conditions and have their bills shared with someone so it's not that bizarre...Contact is part of it too... Most of us said they're sharing now and it's got scope, a lot of good things.

A number of the women had savings as they had been aiming for a house deposit. Others maintained enough savings to provide a positive cash flow. Most however said they were unable to save to any great extent.

I don't have money to spend anyway. So that's like a dead subject to me.

Saving for me is paying down the credit card and having the space then to get the car fixed.

Pinching from Peter to pay Paul.

I don't expect to ever save a cent the rest of my life.

I feel grateful if I don't go into debt.

Asked what they could possibly give up in order to save, most felt they couldn't give up more.

I couldn't see anywhere I could cut anything more out of what I do, or out of - you know I don't, I probably go to the hairdresser once a year. I do my own waxing of legs. Just, all of those things. I've already cut out all of those things. I make my own lunch, and you'll save yourself \$50 a week. If you cut out coffees, you save yourself \$20 a week on top of that. So I do the coffee at home.

There was widespread agreement that wholesome, quality food should not be sacrificed. While cars were acknowledged to be a major expense most regarded their car as essential.

I used to live in Hawthorn actually. I worked at [x] so I could work to walk and/or cycle but because I've been forced out of this rental area due to health problems and earning capacity, things are further away where I live now so you need a car, one needs a car.

There was some discussion about the lack of safety on public transport, although those who did not have cars indicated public transport worked well for them. The woman who had experienced homelessness said she had a clear set of priorities as a result; she was willing to give up her car, then her private health insurance (which was very important as she had on going health issues) in order to maintain secure housing.

I wouldn't want to let go of being able to decide where I live... I want to live somewhere where it's suitable for me, because I've lived in a rooming house with all other blokes, everyone else was a bloke and that was really hard and I don't want to be forced back into a situation like that. So I think I would release a lot of things in order to stay somewhere which is woman safe where I can have my cat and it's quiet and safe. I wouldn't give up my cat.

One item, which most women currently had, that many were willing to give up, was Internet access. Some had the Internet primarily for their children and envisaged doing without it later. Some said they did or would use public access or free Wi-Fi services. Some had given up having a telephone landline and used mobiles, limiting usage to texting. Many had 'dumb' phones and were happy not having mobile Internet access. For others Internet access was important to staying connected to children or for work.

One of the issues identified by the earlier survey, were the women who had disposable income but who were not saving. At the time we took their income, savings and debts to calculate whether they would have time to purchase housing and pay down sufficient debt to avoid high housing costs in retirement. We found they did not have enough working years ahead of them to succeed: it seemed that these women had decided that housing was too expensive to purchase. But nor were they saving to have some capital to draw on once they finished working. It seemed to mean that they had decided to 'live for today'. In the focus groups lack of hope about the future did indeed translate, for those who had disposal income, into enjoying themselves while they could.

I've always been a saver and extremely frugal and ...I was saving on a couple of occasions to buy a house ...it's been pretty lush for me at the moment because I guess any idea owning a house ever has finally gone out the window so I'm just like I'll buy some stuff, which is yeah, you know, not so mature.

I've had some lovely holidays in the last couple of years as well so whilst I've got absolutely no hope of finding a home I'll continue to have holidays and if hope comes back into my world then I guess holidays can go.

Finally, the need to provide for children did not necessarily end once the children had left home, and a number of women continued to assist grown children with the costs of education and housing.

I thought once they finished school, 'Off you go, look after yourselves, bye' pop one off to the Sunshine Coast, pop one on the plane and I could go to Melbourne, 'Bye'. No. They come and go. It's just so different to when I was that age. I thought she'd just be at a part-time job, look after - she was sharing this place that's going to be pulled down and everything so she couldn't have gotten cheaper rent and still couldn't afford to support herself entirely which was a big shock for me so reluctantly, about a year later, she's been evicted back so I acknowledge that they need help to get through uni, what they need, because they're considered dependent on you even without the government [subsidies].

Some of these women could not really afford the financial support they were providing to their children.

I don't save. I almost never go out. I've got two university-aged daughters that I assist with their living expenses.

Given their strong support for education it is not surprising that these women were willing to assist their children through university. Some women though were simply attempting to ensure their children had the housing security they did not, and were making very significant sacrifices.

My son...He's always needed money. So that's always been a burden on my own pocket, and when he wanted to buy his first home with his new partner, again he asked - he asked to lend \$10,000 and you know, I went on this big guilt trip, and I had no money, and I had this plan I'd buy my own little place with 10% deposit, and I ended up giving him \$5,000 as a gift. So, you know, I think when you're a parent it just doesn't - it never ends somehow that you are handing it out somehow. It doesn't matter what age they are or anything, because you love them.

Care and financial support for children does not end when the children come of age. Only one woman talked about a son or daughter who provided support to her. In this section we have highlighted the financial discipline the women applied in order to make ends meet. For those who have disposable incomes, future financial security was linked to home ownership, and as such was viewed as unobtainable. Accordingly, rather than saving for retirement these women were living 'for today'. Asked about their financial strategy for the future, most responses were unsurprisingly bleak. In the next section we relate the feelings that brought the women to the focus groups in the first place.

5.4 Financial strategy for retirement

The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the circumstances and attitudes of women who believed they would be renting in the private market in their retirement, or who would have high mortgage costs in retirement. Only one woman was not anxious about retirement; she had not purchased a home but rather had invested her money in the share market in the belief that she could make better returns. Retirement for the others was an anxiously anticipated critical life event that had become a major preoccupation.

Security of somewhere to live, that's my goal...[it] is the only thing that's on my mind at the moment.

In terms of strategy, the home purchasers and one of the aspirational purchasers hoped that they would have enough equity in their home by retirement that they could sell the property and either live on the proceeds or move to a cheaper housing market.

Few had superannuation over a few tens of thousands of dollars. Those who were currently working said retirement was not an option; that they would need to keep working.

I think I'm going to work until I fall over.

A few said once they could not work they would suicide.

So the strategy for retirement is not to retire. I'll just keep working and being self-employed, I can work until I'm 75 and then top myself or something, whatever.

If the money goes I go.

Death and destitution.

But some women were already out of the workforce.

That's the key factor and that's very confronting when you're - well, I'm 62 - and being told - they're on Newstart because there just isn't any work available but on Newstart because of my age you don't have to really try that hard to get a job because we know you're not going to find one.

One of the unemployed women cheerfully mentioned that the age pension would mean a pay rise, that she would feel 'rich' then. Nevertheless she doubted whether her health would permit her to get to pension age. The overwhelming sentiment was of hopelessness.

It's very soul destroying.

Head in the sand. Head in the sand.

I'm not thinking about that because I want to sleep tonight.

I try not to think about it. I'm quite serious.

I find it quite anxiety provoking.

I think the thing about getting to retirement age is I don't want to be a burden, and that's what worries me, is that I will have no superannuation, no income, no house that I own, the car or whatever measly little possessions I've got will be gone and I do not want to be a burden on anybody. I will drive myself off a cliff before I'm a burden. I've made that decision in my head...if I'm financially not capable of caring for myself.

Because I just can't visualise what I'm going to do. I don't know. How bad is it going to be?

In asking them to look to their future, we were in effect, seeking their understanding of the accumulated impacts on their lives of critical life events. Their responses were unequivocal; the experience of partnering, purchasing houses, losing partners and houses and bringing up children on their own, had exacted a huge cost; never partnering had meant a lost opportunity for home ownership; well-remunerated employment had come too late in their lives, and increasing employment precariousness undercut the gains in obtaining better qualifications. And try as they may to recover, they knew they were not going to have the essential components of security in old age: safe, affordable housing and an adequate, living income. The women did not have, as Jopp and Schmitt (2010) describe it, command over the material resources critical for adapting to an indefinite period on a low income with high housing costs. Education had been highly beneficial, but its value was undercut by employment precariousness, by housing shock, and by gender discrimination.

What each of the women appreciated was that retirement was likely to be a very critical life event, perhaps the most critical of her life, because they could see the likely adverse consequences of the impoverishment they would experience. Part of what drew them to participate in the focus groups was the hope of finding a means to avert this future. Their responses to our proposal for a new housing model reflected key control beliefs and coping strategies, which had already been essential factors in mitigating the impact of earlier adverse critical life events.

6. Attitudes towards the equity land trust model

The original survey wanted to establish whether single women had interest in and capacity to purchase an equity land trust apartment. The proposed equity land trust scheme would provide a shallow subsidy in the form of free rent on the land component, and deliver housing at cost, thus providing a very considerable saving compared with market housing. Because such schemes incorporate public or community funds (via donated land), and seek to provide lasting benefits that subsequent owners can enjoy, eligibility restrictions are imposed and buyers are asked to tradeoff certain entitlements. These relate to key elements of control that are commonly associated with home ownership; 1) foregoing land ownership (which is the appreciating component of housing); 2) foregoing capital gains/losses; 3) restrictions on earning rental income; 4) restrictions on selling or transferring the title. As noted above, the majority of women in the survey were interested in the potential of such a scheme.

In the focus groups the concept of the land trust model was introduced and the benefits and restrictions outlined. The subsequent discussions revolved around just a few themes. There were a group of women for whom such a scheme was financially out of their reach, because they were already close to retirement, and/or could not see themselves as either saving for a deposit or affording the repayments. This group, perhaps not surprisingly did not engage much with the concept, and one indicated a high degree of distrust with the idea of a Trust as an institution. This concern, an important one for a new scheme that requires personal investment, was not taken up by any of the others.

In the main, reflecting the findings of the survey, the women were positive, and saw it as a means of obtaining security.

I would think it's offering security and it wouldn't increase over time as opposed to rent is continually going up. It would be fixed.

I think it's a pretty good model, because it's got the benefits of private ownership, but it's affordable for later stages of life, which is the key thing that we've started off with was the notion of security. You just want to know that you can live out the rest of your life somewhere, and can't be kicked out of it. I think that's one of the key things.

You are in control, whereas if you're renting, you're not in control.

Just for the security. You know just, the thing with renting is that yes, the landlord can kick you out unless the landlord is the state or something, but that to me, that's a great idea, because then you can choose when you go. And if you needed something permanent you could enter into something like that. I think that's a fantastic option.

It's a good idea to me, particularly for my little bit, still sort of private ownership, because in terms of your autonomy and space, you've still got that, but at the same time it's affordable at a later age, and for someone like me that doesn't need something that big

The extent of endorsement was evident in the discussion moving quickly to issues of implementation. Location was very important, with strong sentiments expressed about staying in their current communities. As the discussion was about apartments, there was debate about the extent of choice or control over who the other residents would be.

Basically my concern would be: who's going to be my neighbour?

This concern reflected an understanding that social housing allocation policy gives priority to people with multiple high needs, which can cause issues for neighbours, but which would not be applicable in the case of an equity land trust. More broadly, the neighbours issue reflected perceptions of living in higher density housing. Some of the women simply did not want to live in an apartment, disregarding the potential for design input.

Other women raised the issue of competition with other groups wanting to enter such scheme. Gender was mentioned, and it was suggested that men should not be excluded from the opportunity if their circumstances meant they were otherwise eligible. Existing homeowners were seen as a threat, and reassurance was sought that the women would not be competing with

them. The other group, perceived as competition, was the 30 plus year olds, who were seen as locked out of the market.

But I'm just thinking there is a lot of 30 something who haven't been able to even - well my oldest daughter is 30 now, and she's still renting, she'd love to be able to buy something.

But I'm just thinking of that cohort, all these younger people who are on really good incomes, so could they come along and -

And then we'd all be edged out again you see. That's all I'm thinking.

In the survey the main concerns related to the inability to capture any capital gains and whether or not the dwelling could be bequeathed to children. The focus group participants however had no problem with giving up potential capital gains, viewing security and certainty as much more important. As many had children the issue of transfer of property was of greater interest. This concern was quickly allayed once it was understood that the property rights could be transferred to other eligible people, or the Trust would buy the property back, thus releasing the equity to the beneficiaries of wills.

Interest in the proposed scheme largely came from those willing to entertain the idea of living in an apartment, and as having the financial capacity to support a mortgage. For some of the women in the focus groups the equity land trust model was an exciting prospect. Others saw it as unattainable as market housing. All understood that without intervention or a miracle they would be likely to need social housing in the future, but knew that it was not likely to be available.

7. Conclusion

The life experiences of the women in the focus groups reflected the adverse impacts of critical life events and demonstrated how such impacts accumulate over time. Specifically, the women who partnered and had children who then lost that partner, either through divorce, separation or death were very adversely affected in financial terms. For those who had been purchasing loss of partner often resulted in a loss housing equity and tenure change. This group could have otherwise expected to accumulate housing equity to enter retirement with full home ownership and the benefits that brings. Instead, raising children on their own meant low paid work with flexible (mostly part time) hours. The coping strategies adopted included short to medium term sacrifices to gain qualifications that would permit them to gain better-remunerated employment. Many of the mothers also supported adult children through university. This reflects a key 'control belief' that education is of enormous value, both economically and personally. Of the women who did not have children, some had had partnerships and had purchased, but lost equity when those partnerships ended. Like the single parents, these women also valued education, and often sacrificed earnings in order to obtain qualifications.

While tertiary education was intended to improve their longer-term prospects, most women went into sex-segregated employment, where wages are substantially lower than average male weekly earnings. Education and employment are critical life events that are capable of having positive and adverse impacts, and while the women experienced positive impacts of education, the full value of their qualifications were not realised because of the effect of gender discrimination.

Changes in labour market conditions are also critical life events. Increased labour market flexibility had reduced hours of work and job security for many driving, as Sheen (2010) argues, increased employment precariousness in Australia, the brunt of which is experienced by women. The low lifetime earnings of the women and their consequential low levels of superannuation, amply demonstrate the cumulative affects of such critical life events.

A common coping strategy amongst women without dependent children was their preparedness to share their housing to reduce costs and to enjoy the social benefits of communal living. On the other hand many of the women who lived alone had low incomes, experienced chronic financial hardship, and were socially isolated. Many of the financial coping strategies adopted

directly affected social participation and connectedness, and not all women were able to find ways to compensate for these losses. The unrelenting need for many of the women to find savings in order to fund the most essential consumption was turned into an art form by some, reflecting how some coping strategies can mitigate impacts. Nevertheless constant scrimping was often corrosive on their health and wellbeing, demonstrating that critical life event impacts can be as much about constant pressure as sharp disruptions.

Fear of the future, in which they would be impoverished through their reliance on the age pension and private rental housing, was upper most in their minds. The purchasers were equally frightened by the future, because their mortgages were consuming too much of their current income, or would once they retired. Moreover, they knew it would take little, a period of poor health for example, to lose their home. All the women looked at retirement as the next known critical life event; one they were financially ill prepared for, and for which they alternated between trying not to think about and brutal realism.

The evidence provided by the focus groups reflects much of what is understood in housing research about the nexus between partnering, loss of partner, not partnering and housing equity. Similarly, housing researchers have noted the impact of increasing labour market flexibility. What this research adds is the importance of control beliefs and coping strategies. These women valued education enormously, and they were incredibly disciplined in regard to their finances. Most were very resilient, although a few were struggling with poverty and social isolation. The critical life events framework is a useful method by which we can understand disruptions to peoples' lives, and draws attention to the importance of control beliefs in adapting to adverse events. It also highlights the limitations on individual agency: gender discrimination, labour market flexibility and costly housing undercut self-determination.

Our purpose in conducting the focus groups was to gain a better understanding of whether single mid-life women would have interest in and capacity to purchase an equity land trust dwelling, should such a scheme be realised. While the focus groups confirmed the findings of the earlier survey, which suggested that few women could immediately take up an offer of a land trust property, the focus groups revealed women would commence saving for a home if they had confidence that an affordable purchase option existed. The resilience and financial management the women had demonstrated throughout their lives - reflecting their control beliefs and coping strategies - indicated that an Equity Land Trust could have great confidence in accepting this cohort of women as purchasers of the homes they could offer for sale.

Finally welfare policies that assume individual ownership of significant assets as the basis of retirement, must be highly attentive to the income security required over a lifetime to fund housing acquisition. Rising housing prices may mean increasing wealth for those who have purchased housing, but constitute a significant barrier to those entering for the first time and especially those entering again with little or no equity. Policymakers need to be aware of, and respond to, the gendered pathways to acquiring and losing housing equity. Social changes are resulting in more women becoming lone person households, which means more mid-life, single women will be vulnerable to homelessness. As a large demographic cohort, even a small proportion becoming homeless, will overwhelm the current homelessness service system.

8. References

- Ajzak, I. (1991) 'The Theory of Planned Behavior.' *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50: 179-211.
- Allen, C. (2000) 'On the "Physiological Dope" Problematic in Housing and Illness Research: towards a critical realism of home and health.' *Housing, Theory & Society*, 17: 49-67.
- Austen, S. and Ong, R. (2009) 'The employment transitions of mid-life women: health and care effects.' *Ageing & Society*, 30(02): 207-227.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2011) *Census of Population and Housing 2011*, ABS: Canberra.
- Australian Government (2014) 'Australian and state and territory governments working together to reduce homelessness', <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing->

[support/programmes-services/homelessness/national-partnership-agreement-on-homelessness/australian-and-state-and-territory-governments-working-together-to-reduce-homelessness](#) [Accessed 09.01.2015]

- Babacan, A., Chamberlain, C., Cullen, G., Dockery, M., Stoakes, A. and Wood, G. (2006) *The implications of loss of a partner for older private renters*, Positioning Paper No. 93, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Baxter, J., Qu, L., Weston, R., Moloney, L. and Hayes, A. (2012) 'Experiences and effects of life events.' *Family Matters*, 90: 6-18.
- Beer, A. and Faulkner, D. (2009) *21st century housing careers and Australia's housing future*, Final Report No. 128, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Berry, M., Dalton, T. and Nelson, A. (2010) *Mortgage default in Australia: nature causes and social and economic impacts*, Final Report No. 145, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Birrell, B. and Rapson, V. (2002) *The location and housing needs of lone parents*, Final Report No. 7, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Bridge, C., Kendig, H., Quine, S. and Parsons, A. (2002) *Housing and care for younger and older adults with disabilities*, Final Report No. 16, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Burke, T. and Hulse, K. (2002) *Sole parents social wellbeing and housing assistance*, Final Report No. 15, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Burke, T. and Hulse, K. (2005) *The changing role of allocations systems in social housing*, Final Report No. 75. AHURI: Melbourne.
- Burke, T., Neske, C. and Ralston, L. (2004) *Entering rental housing*, Final Report No. 59, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Burke, T. and Stone, W. (2014) *Generational change in home purchase opportunity in Australia*, Final Report No. 232, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Campbell, I., Parkinson, S. and Wood, G. (2013) *The housing security consequences of underemployment*, Positioning Paper No. 152, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Campbell, I., Parkinson, S. and Wood, G. (2014) *Underemployment and housing insecurity: an empirical analysis of HILDA data*, Final Report No. 230, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. (2006) 'Homeless Careers: A Framework for Intervention.' *Australian Social Work*, 59(2): 198-212.
- Christie, H. (2000) 'Mortgage Arrears and Gender Inequalities.' *Housing Studies*, 15(6): 877-905.
- Crinall, K. (2001) *Representing the invisible: images of women among the 'new' faces of homelessness*, *Parity*, 14(1): 7-9.
- Darab, S. & Hartman, Y. (2013) Understanding Single Older Women's Invisibility in Housing Issues in Australia, *Housing, Theory & Society*, 30(4): 348-367.
- DHS (2014) *Rental Reports 2014*, Department of Human Services: Melbourne, <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/research,-data-and-statistics/rental-reports-2014>
- de Vaus, D., Gray, M., Qu, L. & Stanton, D. (2007) *The consequences of divorce for financial living standards in later life*, Australian Institute of Family Studies research paper no. 38, AIFS, Melbourne.
- Dewilde, C. (2008) 'Divorce and the Housing Movements of Owner-Occupiers: A European Comparison.' *Housing Studies*, 23(6): 809-832.
- Dockery, A., Feeny, S., Hulse, K., Ong, R., Saugeres, L., Spong, H., Whelan, S. and Wood, G. (2008) *Housing assistance and economic participation*, National Research Venture 1, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Flatau, P., Hendershott, P., Watson, R. and Wood, G. (2004) *What drives Australian housing careers*, AHURI Final Report No. 68, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Feijten, P. (2005) 'Union dissolution, unemployment and moving out of homeownership.' *European Sociological Review*, 21(1): 59-71.
- Feijten, P. and Mulder, C. H. (2005) 'Life-course Experience and Housing Quality.' *Housing Studies*, 20(4): 571-587.
- Feijten, P. and van Ham, M. (2010) 'The Impact of Splitting Up and Divorce on Housing Careers in the UK.' *Housing Studies*, 25(4): 483-507.

- Gilmore, T and Milligan, V. (2012) 'Housing Affordability, affordable housing and the policy agenda', in *Australia's Unintended Cities*. (ed) Richard Tomlinson, CSIRO Publishing: Collingwood, Vic.
- Green, M. (2009) "The Social Distribution of Harm", in D. Hume and R. Kanbar (eds.), *Poverty Dynamics*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Gram-Hanssen, K. and Bech-Danielsen, C. (2008) 'Home Dissolution: What Happens After Separation?' *Housing Studies*, 23(3): 507-522.
- Hendershott, P.H., Ong, R. Wood, G.A., and Flatau, P. (2009) 'Martial History and Home Ownership: Evidence from Australia', *Journal of Housing Economics*, 18(1): 13-24.
- Hulse, K. and Saugeres, L. (2008a) *Home life, work and housing decisions: a qualitative analysis*, Research Paper No. 7, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Hulse, K. and Saugeres, L. (2008b) *Housing insecurity and precarious living*, Final Report No. 124, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Jefferson, T. and Ong, R. (2010) *Profiling Gender differentials in Asset and Debt Portfolios in Australia*, Working Paper Series 201004 March, CRAE, Curtin University of Technology: Perth.
- Jopp, D. and Schmitt, M. (2010) 'Dealing with negative life events: differential effects of personal resources, coping strategies, and control beliefs.' *European Journal of Ageing*, 7(3): 167-180.
- McFerran, L. (2010) *It could be you: female, single older and homeless*, Homelessness NSW and Older Women's Network NSW: Sydney.
- McNaughton, A. (2014) Co-op Development Coordinator, Common Equity Housing Ltd, personal comment.
- Moloney, L., R. Weston, L. Qu, and A. Hayes. 2012. "Families, life events and family service delivery." AIFS: Canberra.
- Mulder, C. and Wagner, M. (2010) 'Union Dissolution and Mobility: Who Moves From the Family Home After Separation?' *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 72(5): 1263-1273.
- NHSC (2012) *Housing Supply and Affordability - Key Indicators, 2012*, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.
- Painter, G. and Lee, K. (2009) 'Housing tenure transitions of older households: Life cycle, demographic, and familial factors.' *Regional Science & Urban Economics*, 39(6): 749-760.
- Rowley, S. and Ong, R. (2012) *Housing affordability housing stress and household wellbeing in Australia*, Final Report No. 192, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Sharam, A. (2008) *Going it Alone: Single, Low Needs Women and Hidden Homelessness*, Women's Information, Support and Housing in the North: Melbourne.
- Sharam, A. (2011) *No home at the end of the road: A survey of single women over 40 years of age who do not believe they will own their housing outright at retirement*, Salvation Army Southern Territory and Swinburne Institute for Social Research: Melbourne.
- Sharam, A and Hulse, K. (2014) 'Understanding the nexus between poverty and homelessness: Relational Poverty Analysis of families experiencing homelessness in Australia', *Housing, Theory & Society*, 31(3): 294-309.
- Sheehan, G. and Hughes, J. (2001) *Division of matrimonial property in Australia*, Research Paper No. 25, AIFS: Melbourne.
- Sheen, V. (2010) *The social risks of precarious employment for women*, Paper presented at the International Social Security Association International Policy and Research Conference on Social Security, Luxembourg – 29/9/10 – 1/10/10. <http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv45392> [Accessed 10.01.2015]
- Stefanek, E., Strohmeier, D., Fandrem, H., and Spiel, C. (2012) 'Depressive symptoms in native and immigrant adolescents: the role of critical life events and daily hassles', *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 25(2): 201-217.
- Stone, W and Sharam, A (forthcoming) *Critical life events and housing shocks in the private rental sector*, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Tually, S., Beer, A., and Faulkner, D. (2007) *Too Big to Ignore, Future Issues for Australian Women's Housing 2006-2025*, AHURI Southern Research Centre: Adelaide.
- Tually, S., Beer, A. and McLoughlin, P. (2011) *Housing assistance social inclusion and people living with a disability*, Final Report No. 178, AHURI: Melbourne.

- Turner, J., Goodin, J., and Lokey, C. (2012) 'Exploring the Roles of Emotions, Motivations, Self-Efficacy, and Secondary Control Following Critical Unexpected Life Events', *Journal of Adult Development*, 19: 215 - 227.
- VCOSS (2012) 'Vale: Dr Jean McCaughey AO (1917-2012)', Media release, <http://vcoss.org.au/media-release/vale-dr-jean-mccaughey-ao-1917-2012/>.
- Wood, G., Chamberlain, C., Babacan, A., Dockery, M., Cullen, G., Costello, G., Nygaard, A., Stoakes, A., Adam, M. and Moloney, K. (2008) *The implications of loss of a partner for older private renters*, Final Report No. 116, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Wood, G., Colic-Peisker, V., Berry, M. and Ong, R. (2010) *Asset poverty and older Australians transitions into housing assistance programs*, Final Report No. 156, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Wood, G., Ong, R. (2012) *Sustaining home ownership in the 21st century: emerging policy concerns*, Final Report No. 187, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Wood, G., Ong, R. and Cigdem, M. (2014a) *Housing affordability dynamics*, Final Report No.233, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Wood, G., Batterman, D., Cigdem, M. and Mallett, S. (2014b) *The spatial dynamics of homelessness in Australia 2001-2011*, Final Report No.227, AHURI: Melbourne.
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) (2014) *Gender pay gap statistics*, https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-03-04-Gender_Pay_Gap_factsheet_website.pdf.
- Worthington, A. (2012) 'The quarter century record on housing affordability, affordability drivers, and government policy responses in Australia.' *International Journal of Housing Markets and Analysis*, 5(3): 235-252.
- Yates, J. (2008) "Australia's Housing Affordability Crisis." *The Australian Economic Review*, 41(2): 200-214.
- Yates, J. (2011) *Housing in Australia in the 2000s: On the agenda too late?*, Reserve Bank of Australia: Melbourne.