Building Housing Options

Understanding the housing aspirations of public housing tenants aged over 55 years in Logan
Acknowledgements

Churches of Christ in Queensland and BHC would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many individuals and organisations that have made this Research Project possible. Particular thanks to the University of Queensland Research Team lead by Laurel Johnston and Neil Sipe who undertook the research to make this Report possible. Thanks to staff of the Department of Housing and Public Works, and Smart Service Queensland who have provided, data, time and expertise to support this work. Thanks to members of the Project Reference Group who have guided the development of this Project and to Phil Heywood and Inkahoots Design who have supported the development of this Report.
Preface

The Building Housing Options research report is an important contribution to the body of knowledge about the needs of older Queenslanders requiring affordable housing assistance. This report identifies a broad range of opportunities to enhance housing service delivery, so that it may better meet the contemporary needs of older people in public housing, both in Logan and across Queensland.

This research project has been a truly collaborative effort between Brisbane Housing Company (BHC), Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ) and the Department of Housing and Public Works. The project has brought together the collective experience of partners in designing, delivering and managing community housing for Queenslanders, drawing particularly on the shared experience of BHC and CofCQ in delivering modern and age-friendly housing solutions for older people. Our colleagues and partners from the University of Queensland have also been essential in our ability to deliver this project. We offer our sincere thanks to each of the partners, who have each brought great understanding, enthusiasm and goodwill to our joint endeavours.

We also extend our great thanks to each public housing tenant in Logan who chose to participate in this research. The willingness of tenants to share their views, aspirations and challenges relating to their housing is key to enabling policy makers and housing providers to continue improving and evolving our housing responses.

We look forward to exploring opportunities to progress this important work with our partners in the future.

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1.0 Executive Summary and Key Recommendations
A collaboration between Brisbane Housing Company (BHC), Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ) and the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW), the Building Housing Options research project sought to understand the housing needs and aspirations of older people living in public housing in the Logan City Council area, who had been identified by the Department of Housing and Public Works as under-occupying their homes.

The University of Queensland was contracted by BHC on behalf of the Project Team, to develop and administer a questionnaire to 151 tenants who volunteered to participate in the research. Tenants were asked how they felt about their current housing, if it was meeting their needs and whether other forms of housing were appealing in offering a more suitable opportunity to age in place than their current homes.

Most respondents reported a strong attachment to their homes and a preference to remain in situ. Many respondents did not see themselves as “under-occupying” their homes, with the additional space often utilised for visitors, hobbies and storage. Over half of respondents were receiving some assistance with chores and upkeep of their homes. A significant proportion of respondents identified additional unmet support needs and a requirement for some home modifications and adaptations to support their continued independence. A third of respondents had considered alternative housing options and their responses were analysed separately to build a “potential transitioner” profile, highlighting the key demographics and the types of homes they may consider appealing as they age.

A ‘do nothing’ approach is not seen as a sustainable option as this will result in many seniors receiving inadequate care or support due to the poor design of their dwelling preventing them from ageing in place with dignity. Alongside this is the increasing burden on the DHPW and Treasury due to the high maintenance costs associated with ageing assets, many of which are beyond their useful life and no longer meeting the contemporary affordable housing needs of older Queenslanders.

A number of recommendations are made in this report to the Queensland State Government regarding current housing policy, practice and planning enhancements that would improve the housing experience and breadth of housing opportunities for older public housing tenants. They are as follows:
Key Recommendations...

1. **A “Seniors Choice” Capital Funding Scheme** should be developed to underpin the growth of contemporary seniors’ housing supply, to meet the needs of ageing public housing tenants who wish to voluntarily downsize.

2. **A review of intake, assessment and transfer processes for public housing tenants** should be undertaken to ensure that older public housing tenants are more able to register their interest in, and transfer to, specific age-appropriate accommodation, either in public or community housing.

3. **Information resources to support older public housing tenants to transition** should be developed. This may include a designated website or tool to provide detailed information (such as video presentations from tenants who have downsized), demonstration tours of existing seniors’ accommodation in community housing, enhanced printed materials and targeted communication strategies.

4. **A package of support for downsizing public housing tenants should be developed.** This should include financial support with relocation costs, and support with decluttering and hoarding issues where appropriate.

5. **A Tenant Participation Strategy** should be incorporated as a new initiative within the new Queensland Housing Strategy, scheduled to be released in 2017.

6. **Clear commitments to tenant participation** should be made by government where renewal or transformation programs occur.

7. **A service mapping exercise** would be beneficial to identify the availability of (and consequently, gaps in) community, government and low cost private services in Logan that assist older people in public housing to continue to live independently.
A dynamic needs assessment approach should be adopted to better understand the support services that older tenants require as they age, identifying their current and likely future support needs at different points of their public housing journeys.

An age-friendly communications plan should be developed for older public housing tenants, to enhance tenant access to information and build awareness of the range of supports available to them.

The Better Neighbourhoods Logan implementation plan should respond to local issues identified by older public housing tenants through the Building Housing Options project.

Maintenance programs should focus on enhancing accessibility (e.g. through systematic renewal of bathrooms and kitchens), and improving general ventilation, and should be guided by continuing tenant consultation.

“Crime Prevention through Environmental Design” (CPTED) principles should be incorporated into any new integrated living complexes or purpose-built seniors’ developments, including inter-visibility, good external lighting and emergency alarms.

Space for overnight accommodation of visiting family members and informal or formal carers, and design and designation of areas for those wanting to keep pets should be considered in the planning of new integrated living complexes or purpose-built seniors’ developments.
2.0 Respondent Demographics and Potential Transitioner Profile
2.1 Respondent Demographics

The demographic data collected provides an insight into the profile of senior public housing tenants who are ageing in place in Logan City. Predominantly Australian born, with a high rate of disability and with differing states of health, most are satisfied with their current homes. However, many identify needs for more lifestyle support and home modifications to continue in their tenancies. It is reasonable to anticipate that these and more complex needs will have higher representation as the ageing process continues.

The following summarises the key demographics of all 151 respondents participating in the Building Housing Options Project, with a detailed analysis available in the Data Report.
Respondent Demographics

Who I Am

- All respondents were aged 55 or older with approximately 81% aged between 55 and 74 years of age
- Approximately half were single (48%), with a similar representation of couples (46%). There were a small number of singles or couples living with adult children represented within the respondent cohort
- Most respondents were born in Australia (71%) with the United Kingdom and (11%) and New Zealand (6%) the next most frequent places of birth
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians made up 6% of the sample
- Some 53.6% of respondents identified that they had some form of disability, with most of these identifying as living with physical disability (41%)
- Approximately half (48%) of respondents identified that they currently were in good to excellent health whilst more than a third (34%) identified as fair and a further 17% described their health as poor.
My house

- Most respondents (92%) currently live in three bedroom homes, with 7% in four bedroom homes and 1% in 5 bedroom homes
- 62% of respondents had been in their current home between 11 and 30 years, 17% less than ten years, and 18% more than 30 years
- Most respondents (83%) were satisfied with the current condition of their home, however 57% identified that specific changes would make the home more suitable
- Whilst over a third of respondents (34%) believed that their home would continue to meet their needs for more than fifteen years, 21% of tenants believed that their current home would continue to be suitable for a maximum period of five years.

Living in my community

- Respondents participated actively in interest groups and clubs (42%) and volunteered in the community (27%). A smaller number of respondents were or had recently been employed (7%)
- Most respondents were likely to drive (68%), however there were a variety of other transport forms including bus, train and walking used regularly by respondents.
2.2 Profile of Potential Transitioners

Responses for all survey questions were separately analysed for the one-third of respondents (55 out of 151) who identified as having considered alternative housing options. The key demographics and attitudes of these respondents have been compiled into an indicative “Potential Transitioner” profile, which is set out below and represented in the diagram opposite.

Findings - Profile of Potential Transitioners
She is a single female aged between 65-74, was born in Australia and has been living in her current home for about 25 years. Her health is relatively good but she does feel it is worse than the year before. She is most likely to drive a car and does not catch the train. She does not necessarily think her home is too big as space is utilised with hobbies, storage and visitors. She is likely to have family staying over fairly frequently and space to enable that to happen is important.

She is relatively satisfied with the condition of the home, but may consider it will not be fit for her needs for more than 10 years. Family assists with maintenance and chores however she would like further assistance with cleaning, mowing and general maintenance. She does not have significant mobility issues currently however if she relocates, accessibility externally (no stairs) and internally (step-free shower and grab rails in bathroom) is important.

She is very concerned about safety and security in the local area. Safe and secure housing is therefore important, as is good ventilation. She wants to live in a community of people her own age. If she moves, she may consider a unit or retirement village with aged care options on-site. She does not necessarily need to stay in Logan but wants to be close to shops, doctor and family. Assistance with moving would be important if she were to relocate.
Potential Transitioner Profile

**single female**

*aged 65–74*

- Lived in home for 25 years
- Still drives her car
- Feels strong connection to the home she raised her family in.
- Home is used for hobbies, storage and family visits
- Concerned about safety in community
- Ok in her home for now but is unsure about the next 10 years
- Family helps with chores but needs extra help with mowing, cleaning etc...

**FUTURE HOME**

- **Community**
  - Wants to live in a community of people her own age. If she moves, she may consider a unit or retirement village with aged care options on-site.

- **Accessibility & Security**
  - Does not have significant mobility issues currently however if she relocates, accessibility is important. Safe and secure housing is also important to her.

- **Location**
  - Doesn’t have to be in Logan but would need to be close to doctors, shops and family.
3.0 Key Research Findings
The Data Report provides unique insights into the current housing needs and aspirations of senior public housing tenants in Logan (Section 3.1), and examines the use of support services and tenants’ needs for additional support (Section 3.2).

3.1 Housing Needs & Aspirations

Current Housing Circumstances
Several questions in this study identified how the respondents felt about their current home, and how well it meets their needs. The following summarises some of the key findings related to this issue:

Size of Home
When asked to describe the size of the home in relation to their current needs, 82% of residents indicated that their home was the right size, whilst 11% indicated that the home was too big and 6% described the home as too small. Similar results were also reflected in the subsample of the survey respondents who had considered alternative housing.

Current housing suitability
Residents indicated a high degree of satisfaction when asked whether their current home suits their needs. A total of 91% either strongly agreed or agreed that their current residence suits their needs. The potential transitioner subsample indicated that 82% either strongly agreed or agreed. It is theorised that concerns or anxieties that respondents have about forced relocation may have influenced their responses about current housing satisfaction.

Home modifications
In contrast to the identified high degree of respondent satisfaction with current housing suitability, a key theme which arose from the interviews with the residents was the potential for changes to make it more suitable for their needs (57%). This increased to 64% for those who had considered alternative housing options.
The Data Report indicated that in priority respondents identified changes to bathrooms, improved accessibility, improved heating and cooling, dwelling upgrades or additions, and general maintenance as issues that could be addressed to improve their current home suitability.

**Satisfaction with home and neighbourhood**
The findings of housing suitability are closely paralleled with respondents’ levels of satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood. The vast majority of respondents (83%) indicated that they were satisfied with the condition of their current home, with potential transitioners more likely to be dissatisfied with aspects of home and neighbourhood (20%).

**Expected duration of home suitability**
Some 5% of all respondents indicated that their current home did not meet their needs – all of these had considered alternative housing arrangements.

A further 16% of respondents indicated that they felt that their home would meet their needs for up to five years. For potential transitioners this increased to 22%.

A smaller number of respondents (10%) indicated that they believed that their home would be suitable for between five and ten years – for those who had considered alternative housing arrangements this increased to 13%.

One third of respondents (34%) believed that their home would continue to meet their needs for 15 years or more. In contrast, for those who had considered alternative housing arrangements this reduced to 24%.

**Downsizing**
Some 36% of respondents indicated that they had considered alternative housing arrangements to their current home. These findings are consistent with other Australian studies which have identified that many older Australians prefer to age in their long-term home, however reflect a willingness amongst a significant group of this ageing cohort to actively plan for a new housing future.

The Data Report observed that some respondents expressed strong concerns about being ‘forced’ to downsize. As noted later this Report, these impressions may arise from respondent’s perceptions of existing seniors public housing complexes, and may not match a contemporary understanding of the potential alternatives (refer to Leading Practice, Section 5).
Tenure
The Data Report noted that respondents regularly expressed concerns about the future of public housing, and the personal implications of this. Tenure was identified 17 times in the open-ended responses (11%), with respondents expressing concerns about security of tenure and being forced out of their home.

Themes Identified: Specific changes to make homes more suitable

- Bathroom
- Accessibility
- Ventilation – heating & cooling
- Additions
- General maintenance
- Upgrades
- Repairs
- General
- Outside
- Water, gas & Electricity

“I was terrified of being forced out when the Housing Minister announced a few years ago that tenants would be moved out if the home was ‘not suitable for their needs’.”
Future housing preferences / desirable features for Seniors Housing

A number of questions in the study attempted to identify what preferences respondents would have in a future home. The following summarises some of the key findings related to this issue.

Overall housing characteristics

Respondents were asked to consider how important certain house and neighbourhood features would be if they were to move to new housing.

The feature that rated as most important was good security (96%), with this issue even more significant to the potential transitioner group (100%). The next most important features for the respondents are being close to a doctor (93%), being able to have friends and family stay (94%) and being close to shops (92%). The potential transitioner group identified a slightly different order of priority as good security was followed by help with moving (91%), being close to the doctor (93%) and being close to shops (91%).

Building Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>Potential Transitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having good security</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being able to have friends/family stay</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a home with no stairs</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with moving</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a garden</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a pet</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a more modern home</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a smaller home</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seniors community
More than three quarters of potential transitioners (76%) preferred a seniors’ housing option, with only half finding appeal in living with a mix of ages (51%). When viewed across the total sample, however, 53% preferred seniors living options and 67% preferred living with a mix of ages.

Building type
More than a half of respondents (52%) found an integrated housing model (affordable retirement alongside aged care) a somewhat appealing to very appealing future option. This increased for potential transitioners to 64%.

Approximately a quarter of respondents found appeal to future living in a unit complex (24%), increasing to 36% for potential transitioners.

A smaller number indicated that living in a town house would be somewhat appealing to very appealing (22% for all respondents and potential transitioners).
Links to support
A clear majority of residents (80%) responded that having access to support services close by was important. This increased for potential transitioners where more than 90% indicated that this was a somewhat to very important feature of any future housing.

More than half of respondents (52%) indicated that having support services on site was somewhat appealing to very appealing, with 64% of potential transitioners finding this appealing.

Location
Whilst three quarters of respondents (74%) indicated that remaining in Logan was somewhat important to very important, attachment to the area reduced for potential transitioners (67%).

Dwelling age
More than half of all respondents indicated that they found appeal in having a more modern home (51%), with 62% of potential transitioners preferring modern accommodation.

Stairs
A large majority of respondents indicated that they would prefer a house with no stairs in the future (82%). Amongst potential transitioners, 91% find this a desirable feature.

Garden
Whilst overall more than three quarters of residents (77%) found it important to retain a garden in the future, a smaller number of potential transitioners found this an important feature (62%).
Guests
The Data Report indicated strongly that respondents used the space offered by extra bedrooms to regularly accommodate guests (93%) and that an important feature of future housing options would be the ability to continue to do so (98% of potential transitioners and 94% overall).

Pets
A significant majority of residents (69%) identified that having a home that could accommodate pets was somewhat important to very important, this increased significantly for those who had considered alternative housing options (91%).
3.2 Use of Support Services and Additional Supports Required

What types of support services are being accessed by respondents?

Overall, approximately half of all respondents are accessing at least one form of support to assist them in independent living. The most commonly accessed support services are assistance with gardening/mowing (50%), followed by home maintenance (33%), transport (27%) and cleaning (25%). There was a very low take-up of personal care services and meal preparation assistance, as set out below. There were no substantial differences in the type of support services accessed by the potential transitioners, although this group was slightly more likely to access assistance with shopping.
Who provides the support services to respondents?

Support services are most commonly provided by family, friends and neighbours, with the exception of home maintenance services which are provided largely by government (i.e. DHPW). The prevalence of this informal support provision by family, friends and neighbours may be related to the high frequency of visitors staying over (see Section 3.1). For some tenants, family and friends perhaps combine a visit with provision of some home support tasks such as cleaning or gardening/mowing.

In these scenarios, the additional bedspace(s) may support ongoing social and familial connection, and help to facilitate the delivery of informal home support services that allow tenants to remain in independent living.

Other forms of support provision were from private businesses (relatively frequently for gardening/mowing and in-home health care support) and to a lesser degree, non-government services (also for in-home health care support and for help with bathing or getting dressed).

What additional supports are required?

Substantial numbers of respondents (40%) report having unmet support needs (see Appendix 8.1 for locations of respondents requiring additional support). For both the respondent group and potential transitioners, additional support needs were largely around cleaning (46%), gardening and mowing (46%) and home maintenance (31%), with very few respondents identifying additional needs in the other areas.

Given the predominant reliance on family/friends and neighbours for provision of cleaning and gardening and mowing services, it may be that respondents are hesitant to ask these informal providers for further assistance, despite their perceptions of an additional support need. Raising awareness amongst older public housing tenants about other low-cost home support services in the Logan area may assist in ensuring that older tenants’ support needs in these areas are more readily addressed. This is consistent with the Queensland Government’s Action Plan supporting the 2016 strategic direction statement Queensland: An age-friendly community, which highlights that enhanced communication and information for older people about available services is key to building independence and ensuring that changing needs can be properly addressed.
As identified in Section 3.1, most tenants (83%) reported high levels of satisfaction with the condition of their homes. However, a majority (approximately 60%) identified that changes could be made to their home to make it more suitable for them, including repairs and general maintenance. Respondents identified during the interviews that the processes around requests for repairs and maintenance from DHPW could be improved, with better communication and enhanced information about response times and prioritisation of repairs. Some tenants reported feeling unheard by DHPW in relation to their home maintenance needs. One explanation, at least in part, for the high rate of tenant participation in the interviews could be that tenants saw it as an opportunity to communicate with DHPW about their unmet needs in this area.
Berrinba Wetlands at Browns Plains
4.0 Policy and Practice Recommendations
A total of thirteen policy, practice, planning and built form recommendations have been made across the following areas: Housing Supply opportunities (Section 4.1), Resources to support older tenants to transition (Section 4.2), Enhancing tenant participation (Section 4.3), Understanding and responding to tenants’ support needs (Section 4.4), Place-based responses (Section 4.5) and Planning and Built Form (Section 4.6)

4.1 Housing Supply Opportunities – Seniors’ Choice

The research findings indicate that there is a significant group of older public housing tenants in Logan City who may be interested in exploring alternative housing arrangements as they age. This section examines opportunities to increase options and choice for seniors who require housing assistance, whether they are current or prospective tenants.

**Senior public housing tenants in Logan**

DHPW data shows that, within Logan there are currently approximately 650 households who are characterised as having a tenant over 55 years of age, and who have at least two bedrooms in excess of their designated bedroom entitlement (thus classed as “under occupiers” by DHPW). Extrapolation of the findings of the Data Report would indicate that within Logan, there are currently up to 240 of these households that would currently consider an alternative housing arrangement to better meet their needs as they age (i.e. “potential transitioners”).

In the context of the Queensland Government’s recently announced Better Neighbourhoods Logan initiative, this finding represents an opportunity to instigate and support transformative change to ageing and clustered public housing stock within Logan neighbourhoods.
Applying the same approach to the DHPW data for public housing tenants across Queensland, there may be up to 1,750 older households classed as under-occupiers who would currently consider transitioning to an alternative housing arrangement to better meet their needs as they age.

This finding is strongly supported by the practice experience of both CofCQ and BHC who collectively have delivered more than 400 units of seniors’ specific accommodation over the past decade. A significant percentage of this seniors housing has been developed in partnership with DHPW specifically for public housing tenants seeking alternative housing arrangements to their existing homes (including developments at Mount Gravatt, Mitchelton and Acacia Ridge).

These developments have experienced strong demand from public housing tenants seeking an alternative housing option as they age.

**Housing choice and mobility for seniors**

As is noted within the Data Report, the finding that a percentage of senior tenants are considering alternative housing options is consistent with downsizing trends amongst the broader Australian seniors’ population, who experience similar “push” and “pull” factors identified for this cohort through the research. There is an increasingly significant and diverse market response to the changing housing needs of financially empowered seniors to cater for Australia’s ageing population.

By contrast, Queensland’s existing public housing system is characterised by very limited options which reflect the changing housing needs and preferences of senior tenants. DHPW has a Seniors Housing Program that in the past, has provided a specific housing option for ageing Queenslanders in need of housing assistance. DHPW figures show that there are currently 9,200 units of accommodation identified within this program. This accommodation consists predominantly of studio and one bedroom apartments which were provided within seniors-only designated unit complexes, or which have had modifications to make them more suitable for people reduced mobility. As the assessment of eligibility and consequent allocation of housing assistance has changed over the past decade, allocations to these developments are likely to have increasingly become priority or needs based, rather than determined by age.
The Data Report points to a negative perception by participants to the existing available seniors housing, particularly in relation to the size of units.

Information provided by the DHPW Program area indicates that there is currently no facility to request specific seniors’ accommodation within transfer processes available to existing tenants, or through the application process for prospective tenants.

In any case, transfers of public housing tenants to purpose-built seniors accommodation (such as that operated by BHC and CofCQ) are rarely available, due to both the very low rate of turnover in existing premises, and the relatively limited level of overall stock that has been developed for this cohort.

**Recommendations**

The Queensland Seniors Strategy (*Queensland: An age-friendly community*, 2016) highlights the importance of providing for housing affordability, and improved planning and design of housing, which is suitable for older people and people with disability. The Seniors Strategy references the need to create more age-friendly housing opportunities in the community. These recommendations are framed in this context.

**Recommendation 1: Stimulating supply – A “Seniors Choice” Capital Funding Scheme should be developed** to underpin the growth of contemporary seniors’ housing supply, to meet the needs of ageing public housing tenants who wish to voluntarily downsize.

The Seniors Choice Scheme should be established as a ten-year initiative that develops 100 units per annum at minimum in partnership with experienced community and industry partners (1,000 units 2018 – 2028). See page 32 for a proposed approach to delivery of such a scheme.

**Recommendation 2: Allocating appropriately – A review of intake, assessment and transfer processes for public housing tenants should be undertaken** to ensure that older public housing tenants are more able to register their interest in, and transfer to, specific age-appropriate accommodation, either in public or community housing.
A potential approach for delivery of a “Seniors’ Choice” Scheme

Tenant Eligibility
- New applicants to the Housing Register aged over 55, or existing tenants over 55 wishing to relocate or downsize
- Tenants can specifically list for these modern seniors’ properties and transferring tenants are able to remain on the transfer list until such a property becomes available

Types of Homes to be delivered
- A variety of development styles, catering for a range of needs from independent living, to co-location with other residential service offering a range of personal care, therapies and accommodation options
- Single level dwellings with good internal and external accessibility and good ventilation
- A mix of 1 and 1.5 bedroom dwellings but with the more generous floorplans of modern seniors accommodation (e.g. similar to that found in Caggara House and Acacia Ridge developments)
- Potential to include accommodation space (e.g. a 2 bed unit) onsite that can be booked for short stays by friends and family of tenants
- Communal garden areas for tenants to enjoy and to undertake gardening activities
- Communal internal space onsite for hobbies, crafts and visiting services

Locations for these developments
- Close to local services- doctors, shops, transport and support services
- Located across Queensland according to local needs- but not necessary for the developments to be sited in the precise areas that any transferring tenants currently reside

Potential Costs and Funding for this Scheme
- A $25 million per annum capital program over 10 years, delivering at least 100 units per annum for a total of 1,000 units overall (assumed $250,000* per unit) *(Subject to land and other development costs.
- The Scheme would be delivered with a joint investment approach between government and community/industry partners, with $7.5 million per annum to be funded by partners
- The rate of contribution proposed recognises the low level of rental that this housing will return with current rental policy settings, and ensures a viable long term housing solution is delivered for community members
- Depending on locations and strategic asset management decisions of the Queensland Government, vacated properties could potentially be recycled with funds channelled back into the scheme to support ongoing development.
4.2 Resources to Support Older Tenants to Transition

Whilst approximately a third of respondents had considered alternate housing options, the research identified that some negative perceptions exist about the traditional housing options available to senior public housing tenants. Despite the emergence of Leading Practice designs such as Caggara House and the Integrated Community Model (see Section 5), many tenants have concerns about moving to seniors’ accommodation (particularly about the size and space of the units) that are likely to influence their attitudes to downsizing. However, in real terms, the space standards of the modern purpose-built properties are comparable to that of the Logan public housing stock profile.

BHC and CofCQ’s experience in providing modern, purpose-built housing for downsizing public housing tenants demonstrates that in addition to built form and locational considerations, there are additional key factors that can support positive decisions to downsize. These include:

- Support with costs of relocation and moving processes (including packing, moving cleaning and connection of utilities);
- Detailed and accurate information about housing alternatives, including personal viewings of positive examples of the types of seniors’-specific accommodation that are available;
- Information about support in the community for downsizing and moving and for resettling into a new community (if applicable)

This understanding was in part confirmed through the Data Report with 81% of respondents identifying “help with moving” as important or very important for any future move (see comparison on page 35).
Recommendations

Should the Queensland Government adopt a scheme to stimulate the supply of seniors-specific housing, it would be imperative that there is clear delineation of such a scheme, to ensure tenants are better informed of the options that may become available and challenge unfounded negative perceptions.

Recommendation 3: Information resources to support older public housing tenants to transition should be developed. This may include a designated website or tool to provide detailed information (such as video presentations from tenants who have downsized), demonstration tours of existing seniors’ accommodation in community housing, enhanced printed materials and targeted communication strategies.

Recommendation 4: A package of support for downsizing public housing tenants should be developed. This should include practical assistance with moving, as well as financial support with relocation costs, and support with decluttering and hoarding issues where appropriate.
Comparison of average home sizes

**Brisbane General**

- **Home size**: 200m²
- **Land size**: 400m²

**Logan Public Housing**

- **Home size**: 100m²
- **Land size**: 600m²

**Community Housing Apartment**

(1 Bedroom in CofCQ seniors development)

- **Home size**: 85m²
4.3 Enhancing Tenant Participation Opportunities

The research provides key indicators that point to a strong desire by tenants to have closer engagement with DHPW. These include:

1. A high rate of voluntary participation by tenants following receipt of a letter from DHPW advising of the Research Project.

This high rate of early voluntary participation was unexpected by the Project Team, whose projection of response rates was consistent with lower rates typically found in comparable research. As noted within the Data Report, ultimately this high rate of participation impacted both the final research sample and process.

2. Consistent feedback from UQ Research Team that tenants were eager to provide their views to DHPW around a broad range of topics.

The desire for discourse with the DHPW emerged as a key theme arising from the qualitative analysis of the tenants’ interviews with the UQ Research Team. Many tenants were eager for DHPW to have a well-informed understanding of their needs and aspirations, and saw the research process as an opportunity to have their voice heard. Together, the high level of participation and reported keenness of tenants to connect with DHPW about their tenancies and their homes indicates a significant opportunity for the DHPW to positively develop its participation with tenants.

Tenant participation strategies typically establish specific goals around improving service delivery by seeking and acting on input about housing and tenancy management. They also seek to enhance well-being by supporting tenants to engage in activities and programs that improve relationships between tenants, strengthen local communities and address high priority social issues. Enhanced engagement and improved communication with tenants can contribute to an improved and more responsive social housing system that better meets the needs of contemporary Queensland seniors, and supports more effective housing management and asset planning practices for DHPW.
**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 5: A Tenant Participation Strategy should be incorporated** as a new initiative within the new Queensland Housing Strategy, scheduled to be released in 2017.

The relevant goals outlined in the Queensland Government’s strategic direction statement *Queensland: an Age Friendly Community* (2016) could be adopted to underpin the Participation Strategy, particularly in relation to participation by seniors.

The Tenant Participation Strategy should be implemented locally through Housing Service Centres and accommodate place-based responses by and for communities, and aim to partner broadly with government and community service providers.

**Recommendation 6: Clear commitments to tenant participation should be made by government where renewal or transformation programs occur** such as the *Better Neighbourhoods Logan* initiative, and significant under-occupancy projects. Tenant participation commitments should address the concerns likely to be most felt by tenants, including:

- Ministerial commitments to no reductions of aggregate social housing stock, either regional or state-wide;
- no enforced tenant relocations; and
- the establishment of consultative Policy Advisory Groups involving tenants, also operating as “Learning Groups” for specific initiatives, to promote development in departmental and tenant attitudes, through collaborative exploration of changing needs, opportunities and options.

**Churches of Christ in Queensland – Tenant Advisory Group**

The CofCQ Tenant Advisory Group is the key consultation and communication forum for tenants, advising CofCQ about improved service delivery, and representing tenants on key issues that affect them. Tenants are motivated to be involved by the opportunity to contribute to their unit complex, to connect with their community, to represent tenants and tenant issues, to make a difference, improve housing services and to make use of professional skills in retirement.
4.4 Understanding and Responding to Tenants’ Support Needs

Whilst this study did not seek to comprehensively understand all aspects of support services accessed by seniors in Logan, it did highlight that a significant proportion of tenants have unmet support needs. A holistic approach to identifying and responding to these needs is required.

Recommendations

**Recommendation 7: A service mapping exercise would be beneficial** to identify the availability of (and consequently, gaps in) community, government and low cost private services in Logan that assist older people in public housing to continue to live independently.

**Recommendation 8: A dynamic needs assessment approach should be adopted** to better understand the support services that older tenants require as they age, identifying their current and likely future support needs at different points of their public housing journeys (e.g. when joining the Housing Register, prior to the allocation of a home, and periodically throughout the tenancy). This should be supported by ongoing engagement through Tenant Participation approaches (See Section 4.3).

**Recommendation 9: An age-friendly communications plan should be developed** for older public housing tenants as part of the Tenant Participation Strategy recommended in Section 4.3. A key outcome of this communications plan should be to build awareness of the range of DHPW, non-government and low cost private services supports available to support independent living and/or to signpost to resources that support tenants to transition to alternate housing options.

Communication outputs should be delivered in a variety of formats (online, face to face, letters to tenants etc.) and should be developed in consultation with tenant representatives, for example through the previously recommended Policy Advisory Groups.

Support from DHPW for enhancements to key web resources (such as the Seniors Enquiry Line service directory and DHPW’s own webpages) could also assist in improving ease of navigation, age-friendly presentation of information and ensure that older people in housing need are efficiently signposted to services and information to support independent living.
4.5 Place-based Responses

The Queensland Government announced the Better Neighbourhoods Logan initiative in December 2016, with a focus on transforming social housing and creating inclusive communities with better streetscapes, greater economic activity and a strong sense of community and place.

Place-based responses are typified by a focus on multiple, rather than single, issues, a focus on integration and collaboration to reduce disadvantage, action plan development and implementation of tangible initiatives. They can lead to a profound practical understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of issues impacting local communities. Typically, they are established within a community development framework.

This Report has made the recommendation that a Tenant Participation Strategy is developed by DHPW and implemented locally by Housing Service Centres (see Section 4.3). That recommendation noted the Participation Strategy should include place-based responses to social issues identified by the community.

Within Logan, the research has identified that there are some concerns amongst senior public housing tenants around security and safety, which may be impacting housing choices in this group (11% do not feel safe at home). Respondents noted concerns with crime (17%), bad behaviour (9%), home security (5%) and neighbours (11%). Security was important to 92% of respondents in any future housing option, and represented the most common featured nominated. The research also highlighted a strong relationship in particular suburbs between reduced perceptions of safety amongst respondents and a greater likelihood of considering alternative housing options (for example, 92% of respondents in Loganlea who reported feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood had considered alternative housing options).

A strong sense of connectedness was identified amongst many senior public housing tenants to their communities, represented through their participation in local clubs or interest groups and volunteering, and relatively high rates of mobility. However, with a growing need for lifestyle and personal support services, and self-identified perceptions of declining health for many, linking these seniors effectively to supports that enable them to continue to sustain independence and engage in community life will present an increasing challenge.
Place-based responses will be key to supporting ageing in place, or providing opportunities to transition to more appropriate housing circumstances. A place-based approach such as that envisaged within the Better Neighbourhoods Logan initiative can support better outcomes for older public housing tenants in Logan, particularly with regard to several concerns and needs identified in this research, including:

- neighbourhood safety and security;
- health; and
- ageing within the community.

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 10:** The Better Neighbourhoods Logan implementation plan should respond to local issues identified by older public housing tenants through the Building Housing Options project.

These responses should include collaboration with the Queensland Department of Health, the Queensland Police Service and Logan City Council, in addition to other local stakeholders and service providers.

Responses should include Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) reviews of the provision of lighting, pavement surfacing and sight lines and encourage mixed uses in new and renewed developments.

Responses should also consider the opportunities to better support seniors through enhanced local coordination of pathways to health services and other necessary supports that assist ageing in place.
4.6 Planning and Built Form

The Queensland Government possesses influential powers over the provision, location and integration of affordable housing throughout the state. However, it does not command all the resources necessary to ensure delivery of these outcomes.

Collaboration will therefore be required with other key contributors, including different levels of government; community housing associations and companies; and market providers; as well as among its own departments responsible for relations with these sectors.

The relevant decision areas will include dwelling form, design and location; urban development; and community services.

With regard to the specific findings from the Data Report, the research results indicated that respondents stressed the importance of space for varied activities, including overnight provisions for family and other visitors, safety for daily life and security from intruders, single level living, and improvements in bathrooms, kitchens and general ventilation. Considerable support was also expressed for ability to keep pets.

Recommendations

This feedback from tenants provides guidance to capital expenditure planned through the recently announced Better Neighbourhoods Logan initiative, and for any future capital works projects (such as the proposed Seniors Choice Scheme) and can be summarised through the following recommendations:

Recommendation 11: Maintenance programs should focus on enhancing accessibility (e.g. through systematic renewal of bathrooms and kitchens), and improving general ventilation, and should be guided by continuing tenant consultation.

Recommendation 12: “Crime Prevention through Environmental Design” (CPTED) principles should be incorporated into any new integrated living complexes or purpose-built seniors’ developments, including inter-visibility, good external lighting and emergency alarms.

Recommendation 13: Space for overnight accommodation of visiting family members and informal or formal carers, and design and designation of areas for those wanting to keep pets should be considered in the planning of new integrated living complexes or purpose-built seniors’ developments.
5.0
Leading Practice Examples
Integrated Communities – Churches of Christ in Queensland model

Alongside CofCQ’s experience offering specialist community housing for seniors, we have a growing portfolio of over 1000 retirement living units, manage over 1,700 residential aged care places and provide community care and home modification services for over 5,800 older people.

This experience is brought together in the Integrated Community Model for seniors, which provides community housing that is co-located and integrated with retirement living and residential aged care accommodation. This model provides a range of accommodation options with on-site support services within safe and secure campuses located at Bribie Island, Mitchelton and Acacia Ridge.

The strength and appeal of the model is that once moved in, people can stay in one place and not have to move away from friends and family when they need more care as they age. This provides peace of mind for families, who know that their parents or other loved ones are cared for and supported.

Each campus has unique design features to meet community need and is developed using varying sources of capital. Combined, these three projects have re-housed over 110 public housing tenants that were under-occupying family homes.

In 2012, Coolamon apartments at Bribie Island joined the existing Churches of Christ Campus and were jointly funded by CofCQ and the Federal Government’s National Building Economic Stimulus Plan – Social Housing Initiative. In partnership with the Queensland Government, Award-winning Dianella Apartments at Mitchelton joined the Moonah Park Retirement Village, Aged Care Service and Centre for Excellence in Dementia Care in January 2013. CofCQ’s Acacia Ridge development, Wattle Apartments, is scheduled for completion in January 2017 and is also being delivered in partnership with the Queensland Government.
On-site support services and community engagement

In integrated campuses, people access a range of health services, professional management services, tenancy support and communal facilities, such as laundry, meals, community gardens, community care packages and occupational health. Care staff also receive training in the award-winning Positive Wellbeing Model of Care – a holistic, person-centred approach focused on uplift and quality of life.

CofCQ also employs community chaplains who are skilled at nurturing healthy communities and take a community development approach to build strong social cohesion across each campus. A central feature of the campus model is the community centre where many events and activities are hosted.

By living in an integrated community, residents are able to volunteer and initiate or join social groups with others across community housing, retirement living or residential aged care accommodation types. Activities people often participate in include community gardens, resident or volunteer-run cafés, craft groups, physical activity classes or going to the on-campus hair salon.

Community housing aspect

The community housing component of CofCQ’s integrated campuses are apartment complexes designed for lower income seniors in housing need. Each resident lives in a modern, self-contained unit designed to Gold or Platinum Universal Standards, averaging from 70m² (1 bedroom) to 105m² (2 bedroom). Community housing complexes are designed to be highly energy efficient, with Acacia Ridge achieving an EnviroDevelopment six star sustainability rating. Housing is also pet-friendly, responding to the important positive impact pet companionship has on people’s wellbeing.

A recent outcomes evaluation of the community housing aspect of the integrated community in Mitchelton found that residents experienced some positive change across the following outcome areas:

- Increased independence and ability to manage their own home;
- Reduced stress and isolation;
- Increased physical health, mental health and mobility;
- Increased help-seeking skills and feelings of connectedness;
- Increased positive change in housing status and reduced risk of homelessness.
The aggregated results show that Mitchelton residents have experienced increased levels of health and wellbeing, feel more positive about their housing status, and feel more supported and cared for than before moving to the Mitchelton community. The evaluation found the most significant change is how much better the residents feel about their standard of living and the security of their tenure. Most residents now feel they are living in more suitable housing.

Example of an Integrated Campus Model.
BHC Affordable Seniors Housing

BHC has delivered two award winning developments for Queensland seniors, Caggara House at Mt Gravatt and Bowen Court at New Farm. Both developments are well located multi-level residential buildings offering independent living within a secure community of senior tenants. The following briefly describes the key features of these developments:

Caggara House

Caggara House was developed specifically to provide a housing option for senior public housing tenants to voluntarily downsize and was completed in late 2014. Consisting of fifty-seven one bedroom apartments, Caggara House incorporates secure entry, a resident’s common area, two lifts, a community laundry and scooter charging bays, BBQ area and common garden. The development includes fifty-two undercover car spaces, and is located within the Mt Gravatt central shopping village. An interactive artwork in the entrance foyer provides residents an opportunity to participate in planning community activities, which is supported by BHC staff.

Caggara House attracted residents from the immediate community who were long term public housing tenants, in addition to residents from other parts of the greater Brisbane area. Vacancies within the development are filled by senior public housing tenants (over 55 years of age) wishing to downsize. Caggara House has received UDIA (2015) and RAIA Awards for Excellence in Queensland (2016) (Affordable Housing).

As noted elsewhere, a longitudinal research project investigating the outcomes for residents who have downsized to Caggara House is still underway; however preliminary results indicate a very high rate of satisfaction and positive quality of life outcomes for most residents.

The development was possible through significant financial contributions from both the DHPW and BHC. The project enabled decanting of ageing public stock, providing an opportunity for strategic re-alignment and divestment as required by the State.
Bowen Court
Developed in partnership with BlueCare, Bowen Court consists of fifty-one one and two bedroom apartments in New Farm. Providing an affordable rental option for seniors, Bowen Court incorporates secure entry, a resident’s common area, lift access, BBQ area and common garden. A former nursing home that was refurbished to independent living, Bowen Court received the UDIA Award for Excellence in Queensland (2016 - Affordable Housing).

Centrally located within New Farm and close to Brisbane’s CBD, the project responds to the need for secure, long term affordable housing options for seniors in Brisbane’s inner city. Tenants come from a range of backgrounds and have had a range of housing histories, and have developed a strong sense of community life at the building.

The development was possible through significant financial contributions from both Bluecare and BHC and is supported through the National Rental Affordability Scheme.
6.0
Further Research
It is apparent from the literature reviews that there is currently limited information available about the lived experience of public housing tenants in Australia. As such, this *Building Housing Options* research provides important data to assist in understanding and planning around public housing provision in Queensland, and points to areas where further enquiry is warranted.

**Further extensions to the body of knowledge about older public housing tenants**

The University of Queensland, in conjunction with BHC is currently undertaking a three-year research study to understand the motivations and outcomes for public housing tenants who voluntarily transitioned to BHC’s Caggara House during 2015, and a sample group of those tenants who declined the offer to relocate. At the time of publication of this Report, this research is currently ongoing.

Similarly, in 2015 Onward Consulting completed a social outcomes evaluation of residents’ experiences of having moved to the CofCQ’s Mitchelton Campus. In 2016/17 in partnership with University of Queensland, a longitudinal social outcomes study has commenced into the experiences of under-occupying public housing residents moving to the newly developed in Acacia Ridge Campus.

A comparative study of the findings of these Reports has potential to provide further understanding of the circumstances and needs of senior public housing tenants in Queensland.

**Evidence-based investment in repairs and modifications**

The Data Report indicated a high level of requests for some form of home main-tenance or modification that arose through interviews. With recent announcement of the proposed expenditure in this area as part of the Queensland State Government’s *Better Neighbourhoods Logan* initiative, there is an opportunity to extend the understanding of building condition and tenants’ needs through further investigation of this area to support targeted, evidence based investment in repairs and modifications.
Conclusion
The Queensland Government and its Department of Housing & Public Works face a number of challenges in building housing options for ageing households. Demand for social and affordable housing is increasing, at the same time that existing public housing stock is ageing. In Logan, timely renewal of over-concentrations of public housing in locations such as Loganlea, Woodridge, Eagleby and Inala is coinciding with under-occupancy by empty nesters and single person households, which is certain to be increased by current population trends. Decisive action over renewal is therefore required but difficult and constrained.

The project has explored the causes of these problems, their likely trends and the range of available methods of management and solutions. “Push” and “pull” factors have been examined to establish that push factors of excess space and difficulties of maintenance are generally outweighed by tenants’ affection for existing homes and communities, though significant proportions of tenants are beginning to think positively about transitioning to smaller and more appropriate accommodation. The “pull” factors of easier maintenance, more modern structures and better supported living conditions, likewise are often outweighed for the majority by concerns over the anticipated difficulties of moving house and having to establish fresh links with new neighbours and communities. There are, however, sufficient numbers of under-occupying households prepared to move to downsize accommodation to make such programs worthwhile.

Queensland has been at the forefront of such pioneer programs with the work of BHC at Caggara House in Mount Gravatt and in New Farm, and with Churches of Christ in Queensland’s (CofCQ) integrated communities at Mitchelton, Bribie Island and Acacia Ridge, attracting much attention, gaining awards from planning and housing institutes and achieving great popularity with residents with evidence based outcomes. These integrated service developments, often occupied by former tenants of DHPW, are enabling their residents to “age in place” from now on. They have simultaneously assisted in making available for more appropriate occupation or redevelopment their often obsolescent former dwellings on large outer suburban sites.
The current Queensland Government’s Better Neighbourhoods Logan initiative offers the prospect of new funds and fresh thinking on ways to solve increasingly challenging problems, including the use of highly successful supported transitioning programs. In order to test their relevance and gain detailed insights into the potential problems and solutions, the Building Housing Options research project investigated the attitudes of a large sample of existing ageing and under-occupying residents. It established that while the objective conditions of many ageing tenants were already posing difficulties of home and garden maintenance, there were often outweighed by personal preferences to stay put. The attractions of purpose-built accommodation with integrated on-site support services in convenient central locations of established communities already interest a significant minority of our sample. However, active engagement and promotion will be required for the remaining majority of ageing residents to make the transition to such downsized accommodation.

Such schemes require collaboration among different participants: DHPW; other government departments and agencies at federal and local level responsible for health and social and community services; and the community agencies who have been pioneering this type of solution. The successes of Caggara House and the integrated community models of CofCQ, built on voluntary transitioning of occupants from older dwellings originally designed for larger households, can be replicated by regional and even state-wide policies built on collaboration, participation, mutual understanding and trust, and anticipation and communication of future trends.

It is clear that policies of major public housing divestment, which have sometimes been advocated, would be bitterly resented by existing residents and the increasing proportion of the community entering retirement without the possibility of access to home ownership. Guarantees to maintain current public and social housing stocks will do much to allay these fears. Similarly existing tenants reassured by guarantees of no enforced moves from their current dwellings, will be encouraged to consider their changing options with clearer and calmer perspectives. The further step of including volunteer tenants in Policy and Advisory Groups will promote the contact with the DHPW that the survey respondents volunteered as being highly important to them. Such groups can form useful channels to exchange information about values and options that can promote new thinking and increase flexibility of choices.
Collaboration is important with tenants as well as with partners in the supply chain of housing and services. Sufficient incentives are required to start programs and to maintain viability. Government also has a crucial role to play in identifying required outcomes of number and quality. Cooperation among its own departments in new place-based developments is also needed.

Community housing providers have already proved their capacity to deliver high quality schemes in collaboration with DHPW and can now commit to further shared objectives with the public sector. The Commonwealth Government, which will be the source of essential funding for the rental payments of many future residents, can also be involved. Finally, local governments, in this case Logan Council, can play a crucial role in helping to identify and allocate appropriate sites and services in Local and Neighbourhood Plans. In these ways long established and widely accepted policy objectives can be maintained and enlarged through programs that are both innovative and collaborative.
8.0
Appendix
8.1a – Building Housing Options:
Locations of all survey respondents

**Survey Percentage**

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**Response Count**

- 0 – 1
- 2 – 4
- 5 – 8
- 9 – 12
- 13 – 23

Logan Housing Research Project Case Study Area

Distance Scale: 0 – 1 km

8.1b – Building Housing Options:
Locations of potential transitioners

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Survey Percentage

Logan Housing Research
Project Case Study Area
8.1c – Brisbane Housing Options:
Residents who require additional support

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<th>Percentage</th>
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Survey Percentage

Logan Housing Research Project Case Study Area

8.1d – Building Housing Options: Locations of potential transitioners who report feeling unsafe or uncomfortable

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>Woodridge</td>
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</table>

Please note: The frequency values for the transitioners who feel unsafe or uncomfortable are very low and no significant conclusions should be drawn in regards to the safety conditions of the subject suburbs.
8.2 Background and Context – Ageing in Place and Under-Occupancy

Political Context
In Queensland, as in other states, social housing is under increasing stress. This is due to the combination of reduced funding, ageing stock, a focus on demand-side assistance channelling people into private rentals, and eligibility restrictions focussing on those with complex needs (Cheshire 2016). One of the effects of this stress is that demand significantly exceeds supply, resulting in long waiting lists for social housing (Milligan 2004).

To address this pressure, many governments are paying attention to the issue of the perceived under-occupancy of singles or couples living in properties of three or more bedrooms (Cheshire 2016). The Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) has also looked at addressing under-occupancy among the older cohort that is the focus of this research.

Existing housing models include purpose-built age-appropriate housing, such as those developed by Brisbane Housing Company (BHC) and Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ). Some of these include integrated services at the housing site, including on-site management with health and other care and well-being services readily accessible.

The purpose of this research was to ask this older cohort if their homes continue meet their needs and if not, would they consider moving, and what models of alternative housing might appeal to them. Respondents indicating they have considered alternative housing options that might better meet their needs are an important cohort in this research. An understanding of the characteristics and motivations of those tenants who are potential transitioners gives policy makers and housing providers a context for developing responsive housing programs and products for older housing tenants who are motivated to relocate.
Ageing in Place

A number of studies indicate that the majority of older Australians prefer to age in place, continuing in the home they have lived in since before retirement (Han & Corcoran 2014; Olsberg & Winters 2005; Stimson & McCrea 2004). Willingness to downsize even appears to decline with age, with residents over 80 being far more definite about staying in their homes (Cheshire 2016).

Ageing in place is a key strategy to reduce the cost burden of aged care and to encourage independent and active ageing. To facilitate this, governments have progressively stepped up the level of care delivered in people’s homes from the fairly basic support provided under the inaugural rollout of the Home and Community Care program (Judd et al. 2014).

The Queensland Government is attempting to address ‘ageing in place’ and ‘active ageing’ through its Queensland: an age-friendly community - Action plan (Queensland Government 2016). This approach is structured around the seven elements of World Health Organisation’s “Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide” (2007), that support active ageing in urban environments:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings;
- Transportation;
- Housing;
- Social participation;
- Respect and social approval;
- Civic participation, communication and information; and
- Community support and health services.

Ageing in place is directly linked to neighbourhood elements and the active involvement and belonging of elderly residents in the local community. The local community for older residents can become a source of identity and approval, formulating strong ties with neighbours and local residents (Burns, Lavoie & Rose 2011). Whilst Barrett, Hale and Gauld (2012) identified the presence of smaller social networks, Han & Corcoran (2014) alternatively describe older residents as being able to maintain strong social ties and participate in local community activities.
Under-occupancy

Under-occupancy in the social housing sector describes living in a property with two or more bedrooms in excess of household needs (DHPW 2014). Under-occupancy is seen as primarily affecting older tenants whose normal life transitions (such as adult children leaving or the death of a spouse) have left them living in family homes that are too large for them (Cheshire 2016). This simple definition, however, does not take into account the dwelling or bedroom size, nor how spare bedrooms are used (Pannell, Aldridge & Kenway 2012).

From the perspective of residents, this poses challenges in living in properties that may no longer meet their needs. For public housing providers, the main policy challenge is that housing space is not being released back into the sector for younger, larger families (Clark & Deurloo 2006). An additional challenge is that income-based rent setting means that rents for these larger properties remains low, thereby contributing to declining revenues faced by many state housing authorities (Cheshire 2016).

In developing its Housing Strategy (DHPW 2016b) the Queensland Government has included under-occupancy responses in the Consultation Summary of submissions (DHPW 2016a) as follows:

“Encourage those who no longer need a large house to move to smaller accommodation and free up the space for families who currently need the space.”

Online survey response

As mentioned above, governments have attempted to implement policies to reduce under-occupancy in social housing and maximise use of limited housing stock. These include penalties for under-occupation, such as the so-called ‘bedroom tax’ (Gibb 2015; Moffatt et al. 2015), and inducements for tenants to ‘downsize’ into smaller properties (Banks et al. 2010; Judd et al. 2014). Unfortunately neither approach has worked. Aside from the lack of suitable housing alternatives, most tenants are unwilling to leave their homes and communities, or are unable to afford the costs of moving (Moffatt et al. 2015).
An alternative to this ‘carrot and stick’ approach of penalties and inducements, is to address the lack of suitable housing alternatives (Cheshire 2016). This involves purpose-built developments specifically targeting older, under-occupying social housing tenants. Both CoCQ and BHC have experience in successfully delivering such developments, as described in this Report.

Interestingly, the expectation that these older under-occupiers should give up their larger homes in favour of smaller properties seems to contradict the idea of ageing in place (Judd et al. 2014). Older people may not see themselves as under-occupying their homes, since they often use extra space by turning bedrooms into offices, sewing rooms or guest rooms for visitors and temporary residents, including grandchildren (Judd et al. 2010). The Productivity Commission (2014) has examined the contribution of grandparents in providing child care, which is one of the many advantages of actively engaged grandparents that benefit family stability, the community, employment and the economy.

“Under-occupying households tend to be single older people, many of whom struggle to keep on top of maintenance and property upkeep; and whose restricted mobility means that property configurations are no longer fit for purpose... These households also seek a living arrangement that better meets their needs now and into the future, enabling them to age in place and remain connected to community, social life and wellbeing services.”

BHC – Submission to DHPW Housing Discussion Paper
**Downsizing: push and pull factors**

Whilst this study aimed to identify and address the needs and aspirations of all older under-occupiers in Logan, there is a strong focus on identifying the decision-making process of relocation or ‘downsizing’. Downsizing is not restricted to older residents who are under-occupying public housing. Downsizing can include the reduction of the size of the dwelling, or a reduction of personal belongings located within the home (Judd et al. 2014). Yet relocation involving older members of the population can be quite stressful and confusing (Buys & Knight 2003).

A helpful framework used to investigate residential relocation decision-making choices is the push-pull factor approach. A push-pull framework proposes a range of place-based and people-based socioeconomic, life-cycle, and locational attributes constituting factors that, on the one hand, act to push people away from, causing them to decide to leave a place (stressors) and that, on the other hand, act as factors that pull people to a place and cause them to relocate or migrate (attractors) (Stimson & McCrea 2004).

Push and pull factors are not mutually exclusive and are likely to be in a symbiotic relationship. For example, the push factor ‘deteriorating health’ might be expected to be manifest in a pull factor relating to seeking an environment with support services (Stimson & McCrea 2004).

The framework also includes drivers that work against relocation. These can be referred to as anchors and moorings (Stimson & McCrea 2004). Moorings are factors attaching a person or household to a locality. They have to be ‘untied’ for migration to occur. Moorings emphasise social networks and reference groups, representing the relational group factors influencing a decision to move or not to move, particularly over a long distance (Longino 1992). Anchors represent conditions or circumstances that can be ‘pulled up’ at one location and ‘set down’ in another to provide stability (for example, club membership, occupational and business skills, transfer payments, and support services). Anchors may provide stability in life circumstances for older people when moving from place to place (Manicaros & Stimson 1999).
Push factors

An Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) study by Judd et al, indicates that the most common circumstances leading to seniors downsizing is a desire for lifestyle change or an inability to maintain a large house or garden. Children leaving home or retirement were moderately important while financial reasons were only rarely a factor (Judd et al. 2014). Alternatively, Stimson and McCrea (2004) identify the following as significant push factors:

- Influence of family and/or friends
- Distance moved
- Age when moving out of home to the village
- Previous visit to a village
- Advertising
- Gender
- Relationship status
- Pre-retirement occupation
- Dwelling type

The AHURI study indicated that less maintenance of the home and less maintenance of the yard were the most nominated considerations for close to three-quarters of downsizers. This was followed closely by moving to a smaller dwelling, which may be considered a related concept (assuming that smaller implies easier to maintain) (Judd et al. 2014).

Pull factors

The AHURI study by Judd et al indicated that the most important considerations for downsizers in looking for a new dwelling, were low maintenance of house and yard, dwelling size, lifestyle improvement and a number of locational factors (to shops, public transport and health services (Judd et al. 2014). Alternatively, Stimson and McCrea (2004) identify the following as significant pull factors:

- Influence of family and/or friends
- Distance moved
- Age when moving out of home to the village
- Previous visit to a village
- Advertising
- Gender
- Relationship status
The AHURI study also indicated that the availability of care services featured as an important consideration for many interviewees (Judd et al. 2014). This included:

- Call buttons in retirement villages
- On-site/on-call management and nurse in some retirement villages
- Community care from non-government organisations and local councils
- Emergency transport to medical care for remote locations

Despite the overall low level of support for relocation, the AHURI study indicates that if more age-friendly and accessible dwellings in desirable locations and existing neighbourhoods were made available for older people, downsizing rates would increase accordingly (Judd et al. 2014).

**Obstacles (moorings and anchors)**

The AHURI study by Judd et al (2014) indicated that the major obstacles to downsizing are:

- dwelling and locational availability;
- financial disincentives; and,
- psychological and practical barriers.

Interviewees in the AHURI study described how difficult it was to find suitable accommodation, and that this sometimes resulted in their moving into less than ideal dwellings or locations. Participants in the AHURI study also pointed to a distinct lack of diversity in the housing models available for older people who might wish to downsize, stating that affordable options outside the two or three bedroom family home can be very difficult for older people to find (Judd et al. 2014). The lack of availability of age-friendly, affordable housing in neighbourhoods in which older people wish to live was identified as the major obstacle to downsizing. Any policy initiatives which encourage older people to downsize need also to ensure that suitable housing options exist in which to downsize. Judd et al concludes that with the stock of smaller accessible properties limited, downsizing numbers are likely to remain low. (Judd et al. 2014)

The AHURI study by Judd et al highlighted the emotional attachment that older people can feel toward their existing home, neighbourhood and social connections, including of family and friends (Judd et al. 2014). This attachment may be a barrier to relocation in the respondents’ decision-making process.
8.3 Project Methodology

This *Building Housing Options* report is the product of a proactive collaboration between Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ) and Brisbane Housing Company (BHC), in partnership with the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW).

CofCQ and BHC have delivered a combined total of more than 400 units of purpose built affordable accommodation for seniors’ over the past decade. A significant percentage of these homes have been developed in partnership with DHPW, specifically for public housing tenants seeking alternative housing arrangements to their existing homes (including developments at Mount Gravatt, Bribie Island, Mitchelton and Acacia Ridge).

The housing needs and aspirations of older public housing tenants in the Logan City Council area were identified as a research area of key interest, given the practice experience of CofCQ and BHC in developing purpose-built accommodation for older public housing tenants, and changes in Queensland Housing policy and strategy that would likely have affected many households within this cohort (such as under-occupancy targets and the former government’s Logan Renewal Initiative).

Respondents who indicated that they have considered alternative housing options that might better meet their needs are an important cohort in this research. An understanding of the characteristics and motivations of those tenants who are “Potential Transitioners” gives policy makers and housing providers a context for the development of responsive housing programs services and products for older housing tenants who, given the right opportunity, may be motivated to relocate.

In addition to identifying the housing aspirations of under-occupiers who have considered alternative housing, this study also aimed to identify the housing and support needs generally of older public housing tenants in Logan, to inform policy and practice changes that may better support them to age in place as appropriate.
As part of a collaborative Project Team involving colleagues from DHPW and CofCQ, BHC contracted with the University of Queensland (UQ) to provide expert guidance on the development of an interview questionnaire. DHPW sent a letter to over 500 qualifying tenants, inviting their voluntary participation in the research, with a follow-up telephone call to book an interview time, should tenants wish to participate. Over the course of four weeks, UQ conducted 151 interviews with tenants, at their homes, by telephone, or in the Woodridge Housing Service Centre.

The results from these interviews, along with DHPW dwelling and tenant data and interviewers observations were compiled and analysed by UQ into a Data Report (“the Data Report”) which was submitted to BHC, CofCQ and DHPW in December 2016 (see Sections 1 and 2 of the Data Report for a detailed overview of the project’s origins and the research methodology). This Research Report builds on the UQ Data Report findings to construct an enhanced picture of the housing needs and aspirations of senior public housing tenants in Logan.
9.0 References


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BHC

BHC is an industry leader and innovator within the field of affordable housing.

A not-for-profit organisation, BHC’s vision is to create thriving, diverse communities via a unique business model which combines affordable housing with commercial product. This financially and socially sustainable approach enables BHC to create high quality, mixed tenure developments which incorporate elements of affordable housing, market for sale product, retail and commercial space.

With a portfolio of over 1,600 homes, across 38 developments, BHC are experts in their field, capable of managing every stage of the development process from concept through to completion. They also provide specialist property and tenancy management services through a dedicated operations team.

BHC developments place a high emphasis on design and liveability, choosing locations carefully and partnering with some of Australia’s most award-winning architects to create thoughtfully-designed, affordable rental and market for sale homes in key growth areas throughout Brisbane.

BHC strives to be an industry leader in the innovation and quality of affordable, mixed tenure and mixed use developments within Australia.

Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ) operates a range of missional and community care services to assist families, the elderly and people through our church communities and care service groups. Working with the support of government, private and community sector partnerships, we have been delivering quality seniors housing and care for over 85 years.

CofCQ’s innovative integrated communities model co-locates community housing, retirement living and residential aged care services which promote independent living. Residents can age in place with freedom, independence, privacy, dignity and security.

CofCQ is a leading provider of housing solutions for individuals and families facing housing stress and homelessness. Managing a portfolio in excess of 1200 properties across 14 local government areas, CofCQ is one of the most diverse providers in Queensland, with expertise in tenancy and property management, specialist support services, community development, asset management and property development. CofCQ’s homes are thoughtfully designed, affordable and in high amenity locations, enabling residents the opportunity to access employment, health and support services and engage in community life.
Building Housing Options

- Logan Village
- Mount Gravatt
- Cleveland
- Brisbane
- West End
- Acacia Ridge
- Logan
- Logan Village
- Gold Coast