

How Are Seniors Living In Public Housing Coping With Ageing Dwellings?

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Session Overview

- » My involvement and interest
- » Context and significance
- » Project objectives and literature review
- » Project scope and research design
- » My findings, participants comments, and integration
- » Conclusions and research opportunities

Definitions

- » How are **SENIORS**
(tenants over 55 years of age)
- » living in **PUBLIC HOUSING**
(state owned and managed dwellings)
- » coping with **AGEING DWELLINGS** ?
(constructed up to c1985)

Definitions

Coping: *‘application of personal effort invested by someone to mitigate a stressful or unwanted situation’*

(Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010)

Personal Interest

- » 20 years construction industry experience
- » 10 years Public Housing Planning and Project Development
- » Environmental Science studies
 - » Planning required to consider multiple drivers
 - » Working theoretically in desktop environment
- » Balancing physical, natural & departmental environments to deliver in the social...

The Issue

- » Ageing dwellings impacts seniors physical and emotional health
- » Health impacts well studied and results in improved housing design standards for seniors and others
- » Public Housing is 'housing of last resort' for vulnerable client groups
- » Increase in demand by seniors on an ageing public housing portfolio

The Literature

Typical areas of research;

- » Public housing asset management, maintenance or regeneration
- » Public or Social housing policy
- » Comparative research of ageing dwellings by tenure type
- » Environmental health of older persons relative to housing

The Literature

World Health Organisation determinants of health

- » the physical environment
- » the social and economic environment
- » the person's individual characteristics and behaviours

(World Health Organization, 2016)

Emotional well-being / subjective well-being

History of public housing programs in the Northern Territory

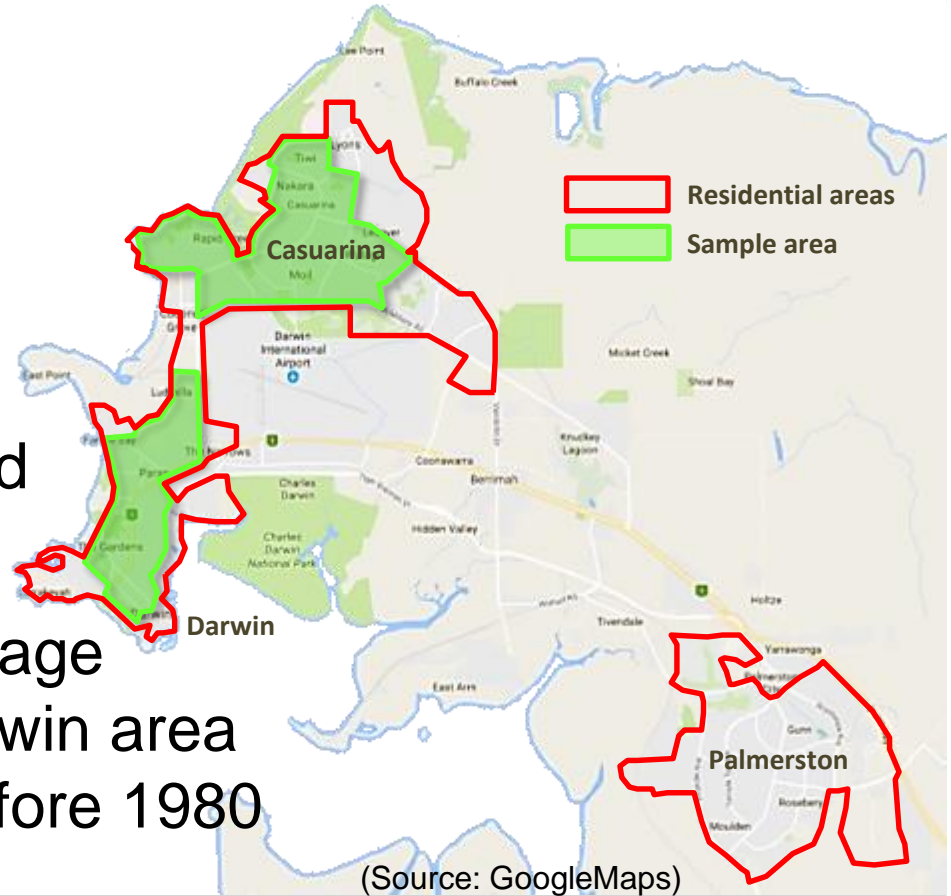
The Aim

To explore the relationship between seniors in public housing and their ageing dwelling.

- » How are they coping?
- » Impact on health and well-being?

Project Scope

- » Qualitative approach
- » Purposive sampling method
- » Criteria:
 - Tenant over 55 years of age
 - Living in the greater Darwin area
 - Dwelling constructed before 1980



Project Scope

- » Estimated sampling frame of 200 households
- » Interviews transcribed and coded using a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006)
- » Themes & sub-themes allowed to emerge from coded text

Sample Characteristics

- » Seven participants in six households
- » Mixture of gender and heritage
- » Average length of tenancy - 44 years
- » Three and four bedroom dwellings, average age of 50 years,
- » Five participants in house since new, two participants were second tenancy
- » Majority of single person households
- » All in good health (self assessment)



Key Themes

- » The house
- » Family and community (social interaction)
- » Neighbourhood amenity
- » Household finances
- » Relationship with the Department

“Operating environments”

Key Themes

Physical environment

The house

Neighbourhood amenity

Social and economic environment

Family and community

Household finances

Individual characteristics & behaviours

Relationship with the Department

(and methods of coping with the above key themes)

The House

Mixed reaction:

“Alright, it's very good. There's no complaints in other words”

(Participant 3)

“the managers that come out and look at the place all go ‘oh my God, it's shocking - you know we need to do something about this’.., every year when they come out to do an inspection. Every year and nothing happens”

(Participant 7)

Social Interaction

“...my husband built that BBQ down the back, he built that and we've used that over the years; we've used that so often and when he died, it's just been laying there - it's sitting there idle all these years - we've never lit it up in 16 years.

So they bought all the wood over, invited all the family over here... and they lit up the barbeque, and for my little great-grandson to be able to, you know, see the barbeque lit... just makes it all more personal.” (Participant 1)

Social Interaction

I've got a grandson from my son who wants to come up and stay. Now I know that some of them may want to stay and come up, and they may want to stay longer, right? (Participant 4)

“They are all good neighbours; and all these people here, I'm like a father to them.” (Participant 2)

Neighbourhood Amenity

Place attachment:

- » Beach visits with three generations of children
- » Convenient access to shops, public transport
- » Peaceful location
- » Memories of walking children to school

Neighbourhood Amenity

Place attachment:

- » 1.7 km from birthplace (home birth)
- » 1.7 km from spouse in full time aged care
- » 600 m from public infrastructure bearing family name

Thoughts on relocating...

“Well I haven't thought of that and I don't want to be.., because if I do it's going to break my heart.” (Participant 2)

Household Finances

Mixed reaction:

- ✓ Affordable & easy to pay rent
- ✓ Peace of mind

“...I found that they've been great to me; I mean as long as you keep paying your rent you know, you've got to keep that up.”

(Participant 1)

Household Finances

Mixed reaction:

- ✘ Could not afford to purchase
 - ✘ Were not allowed to purchase
-
- » Regret
 - » Social incompetence & powerlessness

Reminiscing in later years required for self-affirmation and positive mental health (Hyer and Sohnle, 2001)

Departmental Relationship

Maintenance issues largest source of disappointment with the Department.

“I call them up and get on to the urgent minors and they send someone around here straight away.” (Participant 2)

“Our gut feeling.., is that they're waiting for us to die, to move out of it.., that's what I feel; that they're waiting for us to die and they'll just sell it.” (Participant 5)

Sub-themes

The House	Family and community	Neighbourhood amenity	Household finances	Departmental relationship
Stress of Maintenance Issues	Degree of Integration	Sense of Place	Regret	Generally Satisfied
Assisted by NGOs, others	Sense of Place	Relocation Concerns	Generally Satisfied	Stress of Maintenance Issues
Relocation Concerns	Sense of Security	Generally Satisfied	Stress of Maintenance Issues	Relocation Concerns
Self-efficacy	Assisted by NGOs, others	Degree of Integration	Assisted by NGOs, others	Sense of Security
Physical Health Concerns	Generally Satisfied	Caregiving to Others	Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy
Mobility, Access, Falls, Hazards	Relocation Concerns	Exercise	Relocation Concerns	Assisted by NGOs, others
Sense of Place	Respect and Rapport	Assisted by NGOs, others	Tenant Alterations	Regret
Generally Satisfied	Caregiving to Others	Self-efficacy	Degree of Integration	Physical Health Concerns

Conclusions & Future Research

- » Ageing dwellings do impact on health and well-being of seniors in public housing
- » Physical stressors handled well
- » Emotional stressors linked to sense of place and social relationships
- » Ideas for future research include;
 - *Identify key social / support networks*
 - *Consolidation of NTG human services departments*
 - *When does 'space' become 'place'*

How are seniors living in public housing coping with ageing dwellings?

...by relying on a significant sense of place, established over 30 to 50+ years, that allows seniors to suffer difficult housing conditions, in order to safeguard their self-identity.

Also noted is the impact that a lack of cultural safety has upon the well-being of seniors in public housing.

Thank you

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Thank you

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Thank you

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