Innovation in Social Housing: Tenant Workshop Report
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Background

The Innovation in Social Housing Project

Delivered by the Office for the Ageing the project aims to:

1. Identify potential housing models for older Housing SA tenants that meet a diversity of support, care and lifestyle needs as they age.
2. Identify higher density housing and precinct design requirements for older persons that can cater to diverse support, care and lifestyle needs, and support independence and engagement in community life.
3. Inform the development of a design brief for a higher density housing development to be constructed by Renewal SA as a demonstration project.

The outcomes of this project will help inform future housing developments undertaken or commissioned by the South Australian government and be made available to inform the wider housing sector.

The project involved three key workshops:

• **Tenant workshop engaging with older South Australian Housing SA residents** to investigate how housing and precinct design can respond to their needs, enabling designed-for-purpose living that can cater to diverse support, care and lifestyle needs as they age

• **Industry workshop engaging with industry and sector experts** to explore housing and precinct design for older persons and potential housing models for older Housing SA tenants

• **A co-design workshop with Housing SA tenants and industry/sector experts** to develop options together

This report is a summary of outcomes of the Tenant workshop.
The Australian Centre for Social Innovation

TACSI, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, is a not-for-profit dedicated to developing, testing and spreading innovations that change lives.

Ageing is one of our three focus areas for impact. The Tenant workshop was conducted building on insights we have uncovered regarding the role of home as we age. These insights were developed through co-design research with older people as part of our wider Innovation Age work.

The Innovation Age is a multi-year initiative (in partnership with JO & JR Wicking Trust managed by Equity Trustees) aimed at accelerating the next generation of services, supports and policies that enable all Australians to age well.

We are tackling this big objective through 3 interconnected streams of work:

1. **Rethinking Home as we Age**: Co-designing and testing services, supports and policies around home and housing.
2. **Collective Innovation**: Building a national impact network of innovators and innovations from across sectors whose shared vision is for all Australians to age well.
3. **Scaling Solutions**: Testing what it takes to scale good innovation, starting with open sourcing our own solution Weavers - peer to peer support for family carers.

Our perspective on the role of home as we age:

Our co-design research in home and housing has identified three core ways in which home and housing are critical to helping people age well.

**Home as an ASSET**

We now understand that Secure Tenure (‘I can wake up here tomorrow’, ‘I have control over when and where I move’), not home ownership, plays a fundamental role in providing a sense of stability, self determination and belonging as we age. This challenges the ‘Great Australian Dream’ of home ownership and broadens our understanding of what home really is.

**Home as a GATEWAY**

We learnt that home is the access point that connects us to others. Our home is the gateway to our community and enables us to receive support and access social networks as and when we need them. In our homes, we find a critical way to nurture and foster important relationships. How people are able to regulate the flow of relationships through the gateway of their home opens up possibilities for innovation.

**Home as an EXPRESSION**

We learnt that people saw their homes as an expression of their identity, and as a space in which their identity can continue to develop as they age. Many Baby Boomers spoke of becoming ‘invisible’ as they got older, eroded by a diminished capacity to express themselves and share their stories. Identity development is never concluded and the continuation and flourishing of this as we age is a space full of possibilities for innovation.
Diagram 1 – Redefining ‘home’ for the Innovation Age
How we conducted the Tenant workshop

Melding our existing insights from the our co-design research in home and housing and the objectives of the project, we facilitated a session with 25 tenants that involved generative activities that deepened and contextualised the role of home as an older Housing SA tenant.

Each tenant worked through three stations:

Station 1: Home as an Asset
This station surfaced perceptions of design aspects (of the built form) that have positively and negatively contributed to the experience of living in previous and current houses. We then used these perceptions as a basis for anticipating future design needs for tenants as they age.

On a paper-based timeline, tenants plotted previous and current houses they lived in, recording specific aspects of each house that contributed positively and negatively to their experiences living within them. Building on these responses, tenants then completed a mind-map of their anticipated future housing needs (as they age).

![Timeline of previous and present housing](image_url)
Mind-mapping chart for future housing needs
Station 2: Home as a Gateway
This station was designed to surface needs and desires relating to social mix, density, proximity to services and facilities and transitions in and out of the community.

Tenants created a map of their ‘ideal’ community, where they plotted the services, facilities, organisations, and social contacts that would construct this community. Tenants organised these contacts in relation to desired distances from their home and also the transport options they envisaged that would be necessary for them to access each one.
Station 3: Home as an Expression
Tenants completed 2 tasks at this station, both designed to surface how the design of the built form can respect and grow individuals identity and sense of belonging and purpose.

• Tenants brought an item from their home used to expresses a part of their identity. At the workshop, they wrote on a card the significance of this item in their lives and the role and purpose it had within their home.
• Tenants completed a worksheet based on the concept ‘if you looked in through my window, what would you see?’. Tenants wrote a description of what someone looking in through their door or window would be able to tell about them based on what they saw.
Outcomes from the Tenant Workshop

Key Themes

Five key themes were apparent across all stations of the workshop, each sharing an interdependent relationship with others:

Each of these is discussed in more detail below.
The ability to express one’s identity through the home has a significant impact on emotional well-being, and is ultimately about:

- **Being able to personalise the space** (to connect to personal histories)
- **Using the space for hobbies/ activities** (that support/ reinforce identity)

**Some design implications:**

- Need to be able to **display personal artefacts**
- Provision of **natural light** - facilitates optimum environments for undertaking identity-supporting activities
- **Minimise dead/ wasted space** - feels like ‘wasted opportunity’
- **Soundproofing** - keeping internal sound in is just as important as preventing external sound
- **Don’t want a ‘disability looking’ house** - can feel depressing
  - *but many acknowledge it may need to function like one*

“Having my keepsakes around me brings a measure of love into my home and memories of value where I live”

“Having my paintings with me I felt back together again with my reality”
Many tenants displayed a high awareness of having and needing their own ‘personal space’ and ‘getting the most’ out of the space they had:

- This is reflective of a generation used to quarter-acre blocks
- ... and some find the concept of high-density housing threatening as a result

Many tenants actively seek to minimise ‘wasted space’

- Conscious of arrangements of corridors vs. rooms; doors
- Some perceive front yards as squandered opportunity
  - Feel insecure/ too exposed to the outside world
  - Would prefer this space ‘transferred’ to the back (with house brought forward on the block)

Some design implications:

- Preventing ‘infiltration’ of smoke from smoking neighbours
- Soundproofing - trapped from the inside-out and the outside-in
- Desire access to private internal and external space (i.e., house and garden)
- Need space to undertake hobbies/ expressive activities
- Need to feel secure (in their space)

“I want to live in a separate dwelling, not a box in the sky. With everyone so close to you [in high density housing], people won’t have space to live the way they like to. People will end up pissing each other off”
Nature is therapeutic in and of itself, and also has a significant impact on emotional well-being:

- Public nature is important, even if not used all the time - just having it there makes a significant difference
- Many desire to bring the outside into the home
  - Putting plants inside
  - Spending time in rooms with an outside window/ natural light
  - Screen doors
  - Leaving back door open (if they feel safe/ secure in their neighbourhood)
- Desire public and private access (e.g., private gardens vs. public parks)
- Nature facilitates community - where they connect with people
- Nature facilitates expression - gardening/ exercise/ walking

Some perceive the concept of high density housing fundamentally threatening their access to nature (both publicly and privately)

“I live near the parklands and even though I don’t use them all the time, knowing they’re there helps me feel relaxed”

“When I moved in I couldn’t take my whole garden, but I needed to be able to create one”
Community directly impacts day-to-day living on multiple dimensions

Generally, people want to live amongst diversity

- Surrounded by people of various ages/life-stages/family make-ups/cultures/etc
- Especially within a mix of public and private housing
  - (not amongst concentrations of public housing only)

Who surrounds them fundamentally affects perceptions of safety (both in their house and within the community)

- This is ultimately about the nature of individuals (not broader demographics/groups)

Access to public (nature) spaces facilitates community

- It is where many do community

Access to ‘multiple communities’ important

- Enables residents to ‘choose’ which ones they partake in, maximizing successful integration
- Facilitates personal expression

“Who you choose to associate with is one way you express yourself”

“A house may be your home, but your home is not necessarily just your house”
Increasing perceptions of vulnerability as people age drives a heightened awareness of personal security

This is impacted by:

- **The built form**
  - Provision of locks; doors; position of windows; fencing; etc.
  - Position of rooms (e.g., bathrooms and bedrooms near the front of the house/ front door can make some feel more exposed/ less secure)
- **Who they’re surrounded by** (community)

Residents also desire greater control over energy management in order to minimise costs associated with daily living

- Solar panels
- Water tanks
- **Ceilings fans** in bedrooms - minimise reliance on a/c while sleeping
- **Skylights and large windows** - natural light reduces reliance on artificial lighting/ electricity
- **Screen doors allow breezes** (reducing reliance on a/c)
  - ...but also need to provide adequate security
Turning these outcomes into inspiration

We have formulated the following questions based on the outcomes described above, to act as sources of inspiration in the design of future public housing for older tenants.

- How might we enable flexibility in the utilisation of internal space, while still adhering to structural requirements?
- How might we enable residents to personalise their houses towards supporting them to feel valued, recognised and with self-worth?
- How might we use space to enable residents to partake in activities that support the expression of their identities?
- How might we design homes that support the needs associated with the inevitable reductions in personal (physical) ability in ways that don’t make residents feel like they have a disability?
- How might we facilitate the development of multiple communities so residents can choose the right one(s) for them?
- How might we facilitate the perception of having personal space within higher density housing to maximise emotional well-being?
- How might we enable access to public and private nature to facilitate thriving in other domains of life?
- How might we enable flexibility in the utilisation of internal space, while still adhering to structural requirements for people to continue to connect with nature in public and private spaces?
- How might we provide homes that allow natural light and connection to the outside world, whilst still maintaining people’s privacy and sense of security?
Examples from each workshop station

Station 1: Home as an Asset

Activity 1: Housing journey mapping

Participants were guided through a journey mapping exercise, detailing the various housing forms they have resided in across the course of their lives. Participants were able to use sticker images (figure 1) or write freely to chronicle this.

Participants were then asked to reflect on the following questions as part of their journey;

How did various housing experiences “anchor” specific chapters in their lives?
What did it enable in their life?
What worked and why?
What didn’t work and why?

Housing options and associated experiences clearly reflected the family, economic and social situation in which the individuals found themselves. Many reported divorce and the breakdown of family relationships as key triggers to a change in housing circumstances.

Housing options described by participants clearly matched to the reported opportunities, social roles and circumstances in the chapters of their lives.

“Our first house was an old weatherboard Mum rented from her sister. You could see the sunrise through the walls. We had no hot water the bathroom was under the house but it was home

“Mum and Dad’s first home was a small split house through Housing Trust. When I was 12 our family moved to a rural house, I enjoyed that place a lot. After I left home, I must have stayed in more than 20 different flats and shared houses. Later in life I bought a home with my partner. We then separated. I was homeless for sometime before securing public housing”.

“When I remarried, we moved into his house. I left two years later after the domestic violence became too much… I was in a halfway house in six weeks before moving to a two bedroom flat with my two children”.

Participants were able to clearly describe the limitations and strengths of their current dwelling and also appeared to be realistic about the expectations about change in the future.

“My house is old with no real heating or cooling. It gets damp and musty. However, it has a good big backyard and large rooms with good airflow. I like it because it’s pet friendly and has good community connections”.

“My current home has been mine for the last 45 years. I have a lovely big backyard which I have filled with trees, shrubs and flowers. My home is an older “trust” 2 bedrooms, which is very close to public transport, shops, hospitals and the City. I am very happy with my home and will miss it - the garden and the proximity to everything. Sometimes the neighbours can be a bit troublesome, but I endeavour to get along with everyone”.

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Activity 2: Housing mind map - Designing my future home

Activity 2 saw participants guided through a mind mapping exercise to ‘design their future house’. This exercise was to look deeper into the ‘why’ of their built form needs as they age. Again, participants were able to use sticker images to prompt their thinking and engage in a creative way with the content. Table 1 below outlines some of the core needs that we heard expressed;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>- A toilet close to the main bedroom&lt;br&gt;- Minimal glass for safety&lt;br&gt;- Enough space for accessibility and storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrooms</td>
<td>- A second bedrooms for grandchildren or visitors&lt;br&gt;- A second bedroom/hobby space/office for working from home or creative endeavours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchens</td>
<td>- Adequate and flexible storage&lt;br&gt;- No wasted space such as corner cupboards.&lt;br&gt;- Pull out drawer storage for accessibility as people age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy efficiency</td>
<td>- Natural light solutions to be secure and throughout the house&lt;br&gt;- Fans in bedrooms&lt;br&gt;- Insulation&lt;br&gt;- Solar panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden spaces</td>
<td>- Raised garden beds&lt;br&gt;- Front yards not popular due to privacy and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>- Easy access to clothes line&lt;br&gt;- Own clothes line is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>- No ‘juliet’ balconies&lt;br&gt;- Adaptable spaces&lt;br&gt;- Minimal steps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“An extra space—either as a bedroom or studio/office. It also, can be used if anyone needs to stay over in case of illness”.

“... how about for parking a Gopher near the door...”

Examples of completed mind maps
**Station 2: Home as a Gateway**

Tenants created a map of their ‘ideal’ community, where they plotted the services, facilities, organisations, and social contacts that would construct this community. Tenants organised these contacts in relation to desired distances from their home and also the transport options they envisaged that would be necessary for them to access each one.

Aggregated responses to this task were as follows:

**CLOSE TO HOME**

*Approx. 0 – 2 Km from house*

- **Doctor/Medical Services**
- **Parks/Nature/Walking Trials**
- **Local Shopping**
- **Pharmacy**
- **Church**
- **Dog parks/walking spaces**
- **Post Office**
- **Community Activities** *(e.g., groups, centers, etc.)*
- **Restaurants/Cafes**
- **Fitness Options** *(e.g., gym, pool, jogging, etc.)*
- **Family**
- **Friends/Good Neighbours**

**Key Transport Needs:**
- **Walking** *(e.g., access to goods/safe pathways)*
- **Public transport** *(especially easy access to/from the home)*

**Also of relevance:**
- **Wheelchair/grocery – need path/s in good condition with good access**
- **Car pool/evan**
- **Taxi/Uber**
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MEDIUM DISTANCE
Approx. 2 – 5 Km from house

- Community Activities (e.g., groups, centers, etc.)
- Restaurants/Cafes
- Fitness Options (e.g., gym, pool, jogging, etc.)
- Family
- Friends
- Shopping Centre/Supermarket
- Gallery
- Entertainment
- Library
- Dentist
- The City
- Beach
- Educational Opportunities

Key Transport Needs:
- Taxi/Uber
- Public transport

Also of relevance:
- Car (self-driven)

FURTHER OUT
Approx. 5+ Km from house

- Major Hospitals/Medical Specialists
- Airport
- Major Shopping Centers/Malls

Key Transport Needs:
- Taxi/Uber
- Public transport
- Especially easy access from the home

Also of relevance:
- Car (self-driven)
Some specific examples:
Station 3: Home as an Expression
Tenants completed 2 tasks at this station:

- Tenants brought item from their home used to expresses a part of their identity. At the workshop, they wrote on a card the significance of this item in their lives and the role and purpose it had within their home.
- Tenants completed a worksheet based on the concept ‘if you looked in through my window, what would you see?’ Tenants wrote a description of what someone looking in through their door or window would be able to tell about them based on what they saw.

Examples of items and associated written explanations:

"My coat hanger represents my love of Op Shopping. I love browsing and finding bargains, I call them treasures. Nice quality clothing and bric a brac for small cost. This helps the environment, helps charities and also helps me. I get a lot of enjoyment from treasure hunting."
“What does this item mean to me? It is a form displaying my inner self, my reality”
Examples of the *if you looked in through my window/ door* exercise:

- Easy access to all doors and street
- Wide doors accessible with security locks
- Wide entrance ways and no long or narrow hallways
- Accessible light switches
- Accessible phone points
- Multiple hardwired smoke alarms
- Air-conditioning with insulation
- Large open plan lounge and kitchen
- Wall space for pictures
- Access to multi-media
- Large yard for pets and entertaining
- Parking for friends
• Seperate private laundry
• Small private outdoor area
• 2 bedrooms or 1 bedroom with a studio/office area
• Large shower alcove

• Cupboards in laundry and bathroom - storage for extra purchases of essential items, e.g., loo paper, washing power. This is essential when older and unable to shop often.
About TACSI

TACSI, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, is a not-for-profit dedicated to developing, testing and spreading innovations that change lives.

Over the last 6 years we’ve conducted design research with families engaging with child protection services in every state and territory, worked with child protection service across Australia, developed and spread the Family by Family program and through a lot about Innovation in this space.

Based on these insights and our CEO’s 12 years of child protection experience we felt it was time to broaden our focus, set out our stall and find the partners that we can build a future system, one build with a new perspective and through a new approach.

We work across systems

Innovations
We develop insight into problems that are unsolved by learning from people in their own context. We test and spread solutions to Australia’s toughest social challenges in the areas of Ageing, Disability and Child Protection.

Innovating Organisations
We don’t believe we should be the only ones innovating – we support organisations, programs and systems to build their innovation and co-design capabilities.

Innovating Systems
We design strategies and approaches to connect actors within larger systems to harmonize for impact.
We take a rigorous approach to innovation

We use a rigorous innovation process that helps us reduce unknowns and increase knowns over time.

What’s the opportunity? What helps and hinders people? Why?

What are possible solutions?

How do solutions work in context? What’s the evidence base that this works?

How do we scale and spread solutions for impact?

We draw on diverse expertise

Our tools and team come from a diverse set of backgrounds and perspectives. To gain a holistic outlook on problems and possibilities we bring together experts across disciplines.