

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Joint study to tackle Aboriginal homelessness

The University of Tasmania, in collaboration with two other universities, has received \$1.15 million funding from the National Housing Research Program to investigate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Chief investigator for the project Dr Daphne Habibis, senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Tasmania, will develop the study's theoretical framework and contribute to the documentation of the findings. She is collaborating with researchers from the University of Queensland's School of Architecture's Aboriginal Environment Research Centre and Curtin University.

The project, "Aboriginal Lifeworlds, Conditionality and Housing Outcomes", will contribute to reducing Aboriginal and TSI homelessness by informing national and state housing policy.

"This three-year project will examine the relationship between cultural difference, welfare contractualism and housing, with the aim of developing new approaches to how housing services are delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," Dr Habibis said.

"It will improve housing access, tenancy sustainability and other aspects of housing provision for Aboriginal people. The idea of intercultural practice will be used to help housing managers bridge the cultural divide between Indigenous and mainstream ways of living."

The importance of the role of Indigenous cultural and social norms, including kinship, will be considered in developing approaches to improving housing outcomes. The study will test the hypothesis that an 'intercultural recognition space' is required, involving mutual recognition of the moral relationships of duty and care between housing providers, Indigenous community leaders and tenants.

Comprising five case studies, the project will be staged over three years in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia, covering remote, regional city and metropolitan settings.

"This report will have multiple products through the duration of the study's timeframe. An initial paper will be completed by the middle of next year, which will look at how conditionality has operated in the housing sector for Aboriginal people, and the policy learnings gained from that, with interim reports in 2014,

and a final report in 2015, as well as policy workshops running throughout the study,” Dr Habibis said.

A key feature of the study is to engage with policy makers and provide findings to inform policy and programs. There will be active engagement with the indigenous communities in the case study areas, including the dissemination of findings to Indigenous community organisations and government housing personnel at the regional, state and national levels.

Project funding is managed by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), whose southern branch is based in the University of Tasmania. Dr Habibis is an associate staff member of the Housing and Community Research Unit, which is an affiliate member of AHURI. Her research interests are Indigenous issues, and housing and homelessness.

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