

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

DATE: THURSDAY 5 JUNE 2008

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Tasmania's public housing needs attention and investment

A new report into public housing has called for more investment in the sector to target a wider cross-section of the community and tackle the poor public perception of public housing.

The report, *Public Housing in Australia: Stigma, Home and Opportunity*, has been compiled by researchers from the University of Tasmania's Housing and Community Research Unit and will be launched today during a Hobart symposium, A Public Conversation about Public Housing.

The report focuses on the need for increased investment in public housing and the expansion of public housing in general, but also calls for a more viable and effective form of public investment to ensure a better economic and social return.

"We have lost sight of the need for quality, affordable accommodation to be provided to low and moderate income earners in order to provide opportunities and security," the report says.

"As the sector has been neglected and under-invested over time, public perceptions of the sector also have become more negative," it says.

The report says the targeting of only those households with low incomes and high needs has reduced revenues for public housing nationally and also produced a problematic sector to administer.

"Without additional investment public housing will continue to be associated with poverty and policy failure, rather than as an element of public governance that is both a source of pride and a commitment to create...pathways for low and moderate income households," it says.

One of the report's authors, Dr Rowland Atkinson, said public housing in Tasmania and across Australia was run on a principle of minimal investment, but that this model, in the long run, had proved to be very expensive.

“The Tasmanian Government spends 0.45 per cent of its overall expenditure each year on a sector that is declining, without considering how a little money could go much further in addressing the housing problems in the State,” he said.

Co-author Dr Keith Jacobs said increased investment and attention to a greater spread of affordable tenancies across Tasmania would not only help to boost the reputation of public housing, but would also enable tenants to access education and health services, and help in terms of job opportunities.

“Instead of working towards new possibilities we are overseeing significant decline and an accentuation of the problems faced by the some of the most disadvantaged in our society,” Dr Jacobs said.

Among the report’s recommendations are that funding be made available for an immediate construction program, and a public housing “future fund” be established to manage a longer-term investment program.

Background note:

In 2006-2007:

The Tasmanian government received \$33m from the Commonwealth government. Of this, is spent \$3.9m on Housing Tasmania and \$21.4m repaying Commonwealth State Housing agreement debt.

The total expenditure for the State was recorded as \$3.62 billion for 2006-7.

This means that \$16.5m - or 0.45 per cent - of all State expenditure was for public housing purposes.

For further comment and interviews:

Dr Rowland Atkinson is available after 1pm today on (03) 6226 7604

Dr Keith Jacobs is also available after 1pm on (03) 6226 2928.

Information Released by:

Media Office, University of Tasmania

Phone: (03) 6224 2196 Mobile: 0417 517 291

Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au