The Relocation Tool Kit project
Policies to enhance residents' health, wellbeing and social inclusion

As in other developed countries, large public housing estates in Australia were mainly built in the period following the Second World War. Since then, underinvestment and limited funding for new housing have led to the deterioration of housing stock. The need to manage housing with decreased funding has motivated state housing authorities to participate in urban regeneration projects. This usually means trading off stock numbers for fewer housing units of improved quality (Arthurson 2001; Baker 2008). In Victoria, 12 estates are currently undergoing redevelopment to improve their physical assets and neighbourhood environment (Office of Housing 2011). Such projects often involve the forced relocation of tenants to other public housing estates. The impacts of this process are not well identified in Australia and the topic is under-researched, despite its importance for achieving successful relocation (Baker 2008).

The Relocation Tool Kit project is following public housing tenants relocated due to redevelopment of the Carlton Housing Estate. It aims to conceptualise the impact of relocation and to evaluate the relative importance of key factors that change during the process. These factors might include changes to quality of housing, employment and social networks (social capital, family, friends), neighbourhood environments (reputation, social mix, access to services, crime) and the management model utilised during relocation (resident involvement, community consultation processes).

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has undertaken research on public housing issues since the 1940s. Early research focused on homelessness, housing standards and the role of public housing in the redevelopment of inner-urban areas. In the 1960s it shifted to exploring the problems engendered by public housing authorities' high-rise building policies. Recent research has continued into housing affordability, the interaction of housing and other aspects of inclusion or exclusion in Australian society, and innovative projects focused on public housing tenants (BSL 2009, p.6). The current study, led by Dr Kathy Arthurson and Dr Anna Ziersch from the Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity at Flinders University, is a partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and VicHealth. The Relocation Tool Kit project is funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant and VicHealth, and is managed by Dr Iris Levin, a post-doctoral research fellow based in the Research and Policy Centre at the Brotherhood.

The study will produce a tool kit that will assist policy makers and practitioners involved in tenant relocation to maximise the potential for positive impacts in terms of health, employment and educational opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged population groups in Australian society.

The rationale for the study
Tenant relocation policies have potential impacts on social, economic and health inequities for disadvantaged groups. Three key aspects identified in the literature are the quality of housing, local support networks and access to local services.

Relocation provides an opportunity to improve the *quality of housing*, which can improve mental health and general health outcomes (Kearns et al. 2006). However, the US literature suggests that if relocation is not done well moving home can cause grief; and affordability and security can be compromised, leading to greater hardship for already disadvantaged population groups (Popkin et al. 2004).

It is thought that the process of relocation may also disrupt or improve access to *local support networks*, along with the employment resources gained through these networks. Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups appear more reliant than others on these networks for maintenance of their health and wellbeing (Ziersch 2005). Where supportive networks exist, there is some evidence that moving groups of residents together can substantially reduce the loss of these social networks and overall dissatisfaction with relocation (Arthurson 2002). Conversely, some research suggests that the establishment of new bridging or more diverse networks is also beneficial as it may provide access to resources not previously available, such as information about employment opportunities (Briggs 1998; Ziersch & Arthurson 2005).

While accessing *local services* seems more important for public housing tenants, given their limited financial resources and low levels of car ownership, only a few studies have investigated whether in fact relocation alters service accessibility (Fuller 1995). Internationally, some studies have found that services are often more expensive after relocation, and sometimes unavailable (Atkinson & Kintrea 2004). In some situations, levels of health care declined as it was more difficult to access doctors and hospitals (Ambrose 2000).

The research project adds to this body of knowledge by broadening the conceptualisation of relocation processes beyond these three principal factors. It also explores other factors including socioeconomic mix and neighbourhood reputation.

The tool kit will assist policy makers and practitioners involved in tenant relocation to maximise the potential for positive impacts in terms of health, employment and educational opportunities.

Increasing socioeconomic mix, for example, has become a popular strategy in the United States, and recently in Australia, to address place-based disadvantage. Its benefits in enhancing social inclusion, however, are largely unsubstantiated. In some housing estates strong cohesive communities existed prior to regeneration and thus the need for social mix has been questioned (Arthurson 2002, 2010). In addition, there have been few studies on the experiences of residents once they have moved back to the new mixed housing developments. One study of a new mixed-income development in Chicago reports that overall satisfaction among all income groups is quite high but there are barriers to interaction, such as physical design, stigma and assumptions based on housing, class and status (Joseph 2008).

Context and methods

The Carlton Housing Estate has been selected as the research focus. According to a baseline survey undertaken by the Office of Housing in 2006, the buildings in the Carlton Estate have not been upgraded since their construction apart from undergoing periodic maintenance. The redevelopment was prompted by the poor condition of the housing stock, mismatch of existing units with current and future client needs, inefficient use of the open spaces and ground-level parking, safety and security concerns, the area's bad reputation, and the need to address these issues while minimising government capital expenditure (Office of Housing 2009). Relocation of the tenants was completed in 2006, followed by the demolition of the 'walk-ups' (four and five-storey apartment blocks in the estate). Tenants have been moved to different locations around metropolitan Melbourne, with some staying in the estate's high-rise buildings. Redevelopment of the site started in 2009 and the three new precincts will contain 246 public units and some 300 private units. The whole redevelopment includes new public parks, gardens and local services (Office of Housing 2011). The focus of this research is the first precinct, located between Lygon and Rathdowne streets, which includes 84 new public housing units and 90 private units.

The data collection component includes interviews with tenants, other stakeholders and policy makers; a focus group with surrounding residents; and a roundtable with policy makers to develop the Relocation Tool Kit. At this stage we have completed the literature review. Interviews will start before the end of the year with both tenants who have already returned to the new buildings in the redeveloped estate and tenants who have chosen not to return. The project started in April this year and is due to be completed at the end of 2013.

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