

Research – Executive Summary

Guiding Principles

In agreeing with the concept that “action needed to be informed by sound research” and recognising the importance placed on research by participants in the development of the social housing strategy, the research working party established a set of principles which could be used to prioritise the research work needed by the social housing strategy. They were that research should have:

- Policy orientation and usefulness;
- Significant utility for policies that contributed to positive social and economic change;
- Practicality and feasibility (in terms of researchers, finance, complexity and scale);
- A strong action orientation and an evidence base;
- Outcomes that could inform other areas of research;
- Support for crosscutting issues (gender, culture and assistance for people with special needs).

Research would be most effective if it were properly integrated into the social housing strategy to ensure that research outcomes were made available in a timely fashion (to support actions that were being developed or implemented) and at an appropriate level of quality. This means that a strategic research plan must be developed as an integral part of the strategic plan for social housing and designed to provide the evidence and information that would assist judgements about social housing policies. For it to be effective therefore, the research plan would have to incorporate the priorities and timetable established for the implementation of the social housing strategy.

Key Outcomes

Apart from the achievement of planned, high quality and relevant research, the key outcome that will point to the success of the research contribution to the social housing strategy is the completion of the research needed, with outcomes and timeliness that support the implementation of the strategy itself.

Key Issues

The key research issues will be established after the priorities for the social housing strategy have been agreed and before detailed strategic planning for the strategy has been carried out.

The working party carried out a preliminary analysis of the issues and thought that the following research areas were critical:

- Healthy housing;
- Affordability of accommodation options;
- Tenure questions (surrounding home ownership and rental);
- Market dynamics (housing demand and interconnections with labour markets and transport);
- Housing partnerships;
- Targeted research (on matters relating to Māori , Pacific Peoples, women, people with special needs or on issues that are spatially oriented);
- Built environment (a more efficient and appropriate built environment to support the social housing sector).

There are a number of gender issues that need further research and although the working party included gender as part of the targeted research that needed to be carried out, some matters needed special recognition and prioritisation. They include:

- Accommodation for older people (older women are particularly vulnerable to poor accommodation options);
- Declining home ownership trends and the impact on women;
- Appropriateness of housing design and suitability of housing for single parent families;
- Housing for at-risk groups (safety of female members of these groups is a major concern) and shelter accommodation.

Goals

The goal of the working party is that research makes a significant contribution to the success of the social housing strategy and the achievement of social and economic benefits for a vulnerable and important cohort of the New Zealand population.

Objectives

The main objective of the working party is to ensure that priority research needs are identified and integrated into the social housing strategy strategic plan and that achievable and evidence-based research is carried out in a timely fashion and to high standards of quality.

Action Plans

The action plans of the working party are dependent on the priorities and timetables established for the social housing strategy.

The immediate need is to identify, with the strategy secretariat, the priorities for action under the social housing strategy (possible timing – 18 October 2002). This will then be followed by:

- Establishment of research needs based on strategy priorities (31 October 2002);
- Development of research timetable (8 November 2002);
- Analysis of social housing research priorities and fit with Housing Research Centre research plans to ensure research synergy and complementarity with other research (15 November 2002);
- Design of research projects to be implemented in second half of 2002/2003 and during 2003/2004 (20 December 2002);
- Secure funding packages for priority research projects (20 December 2002);
- Initiate research projects according to an agreed plan and carry out longer-term research in accordance with a planned and agreed timetable.

The above indicative timetable covers the immediate research needs of the social housing strategy and will depend on the early definition of clear priorities.