

Rethinking Social Housing

By

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Why do we need a house? It beats sleeping in the street. Yes, but it also means we are healthier so we need less hospital and medical care; it means we work better and can contribute to the economy, and our family and community life is likely to be much improved. How much is all that worth? We intend to find out in a new piece of research with Australia's Sustainable Built Environment National Research Centre (SBEnc: www.sbenrc.com.au).

How much is social housing worth? It's obviously more than shelter, but how much? This project, Rethinking Social Housing, aims to identify and count the benefits, with a particular focus on determining the productivity benefits to individuals and the broader community from the provision of secure housing. It starts this by mapping all the benefits through the development of a Framework that covers the benefits to tenants, to the broader economy, to governments through extra revenues, and to the environment and community (see below).

In the past social housing provision has been seen as just an ethical issue, it's the right thing to provide as much as possible. But why not be ethical and show the productivity advantages at the same time? Especially if it makes the case more persuasively.

The Framework being developed by this project is responding to industry needs and requirements. The partners are from the Western Australian Department of Housing, the National Affordable Housing Consortium (QLD), Griffith University (QLD), Curtin University (WA) and Access Housing Australia (WA) and the project is chaired by long-term housing policy expert Dr Owen Donald.

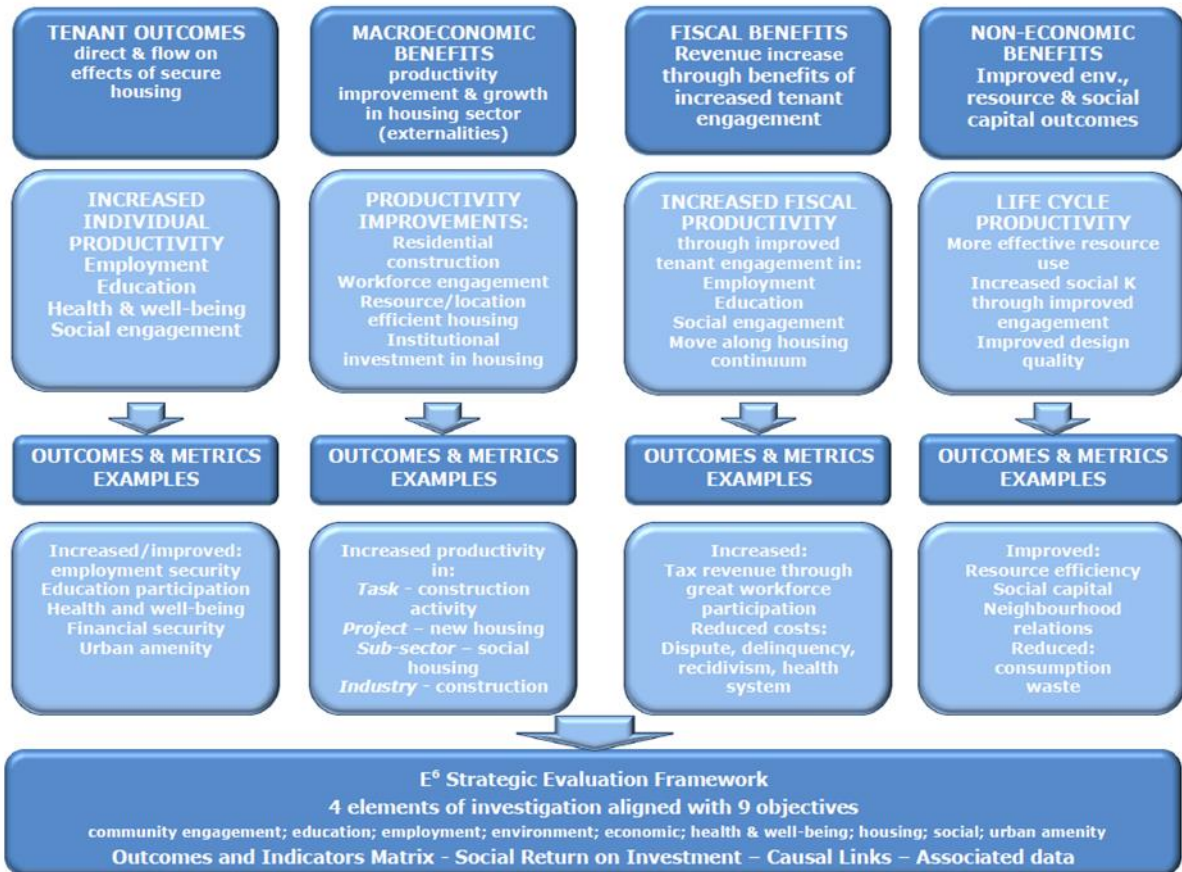
The long term goal of the project is to develop a national set of indicators based on the Framework that aim to measure the broader impact of social housing and, by so doing, substantiate the case for greater investment.

The first stage of the research has been to think through how to measure these benefits. The next step is to test this in two case studies (one in Western Australia and one in Queensland).

A key challenge for this research is to find indicators e.g. hospital visits, criminal activity, incarcerations, poor educational achievement, unemployment, underemployment, anti-social behaviour, substance abuse etc, at a household or individual level, and then relate these to relevant housing characteristics. Does the lack of housing contribute to these and how much?

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This research seeks to provide a broad-based rationale for social housing investment and assist governments to evaluate various forms of housing assistance. For many people providing more social housing is obvious; but this research will show why it's good for individual and national productivity.



For further information, see our project website: <http://www.sbenrc.com.au/research-programs/1-31-rethinking-social-housing-effective-efficient-equitable-e3/>