Scaling Australia's social housing construction:
Barriers and opportunities

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Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University.

RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

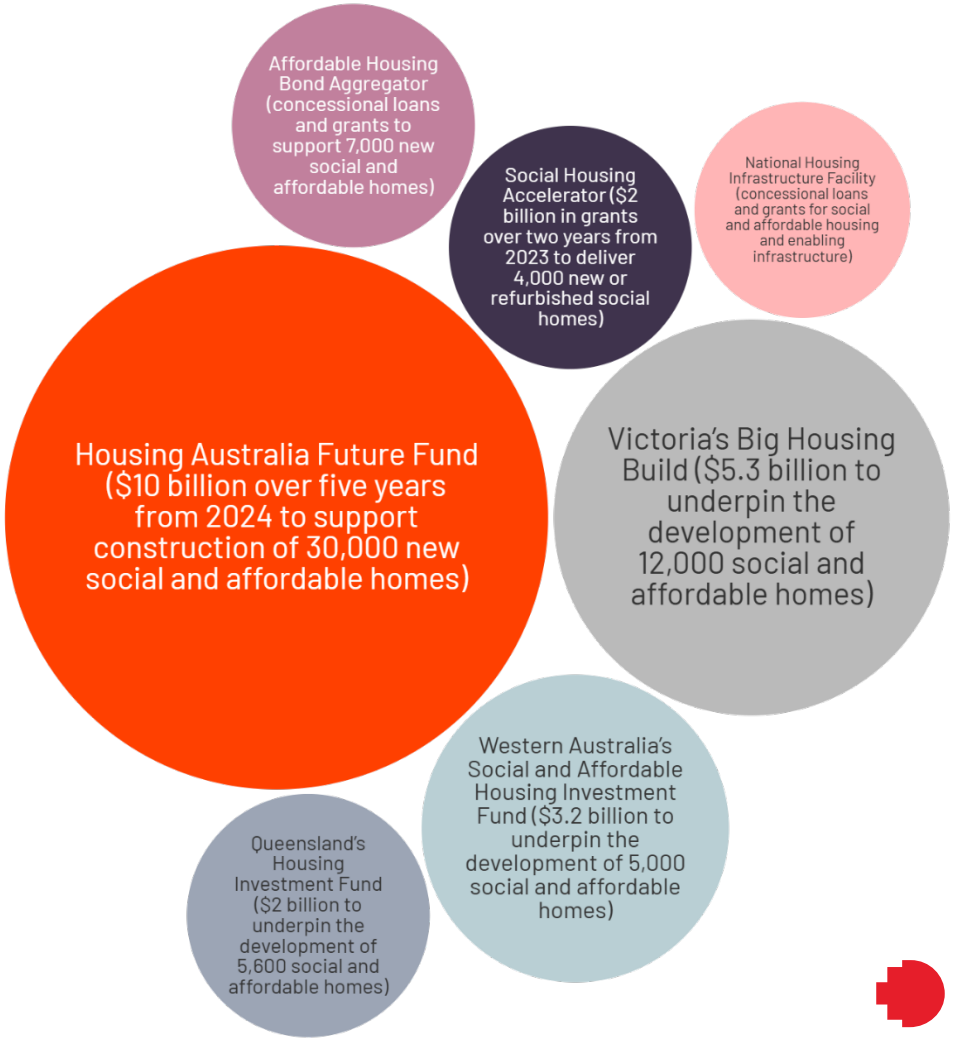
Artwork ‘Sentient’ by Hollie Johnson
Hollie is a Gunaikurnai and Monero Ngarigo woman from Gippsland who graduated from RMIT with a BA in Photography in 2016.

Background

Social housing in Australia is facing a critical shortage

Recent federal, state and territory initiatives signal a renewed investment commitment.

Yet significant delivery challenges persist!



Research Aim

Translating the increased funding commitments into proportional increases in social housing supply requires enhanced **scalability**.



Scalability is defined as the ability of a system, network or process to handle a growing amount of work gracefully, or its ability to be enlarged to accommodate that growth.

(Bondi, 2000)

The project aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of scalable delivery of social housing projects.

Theoretical Lens

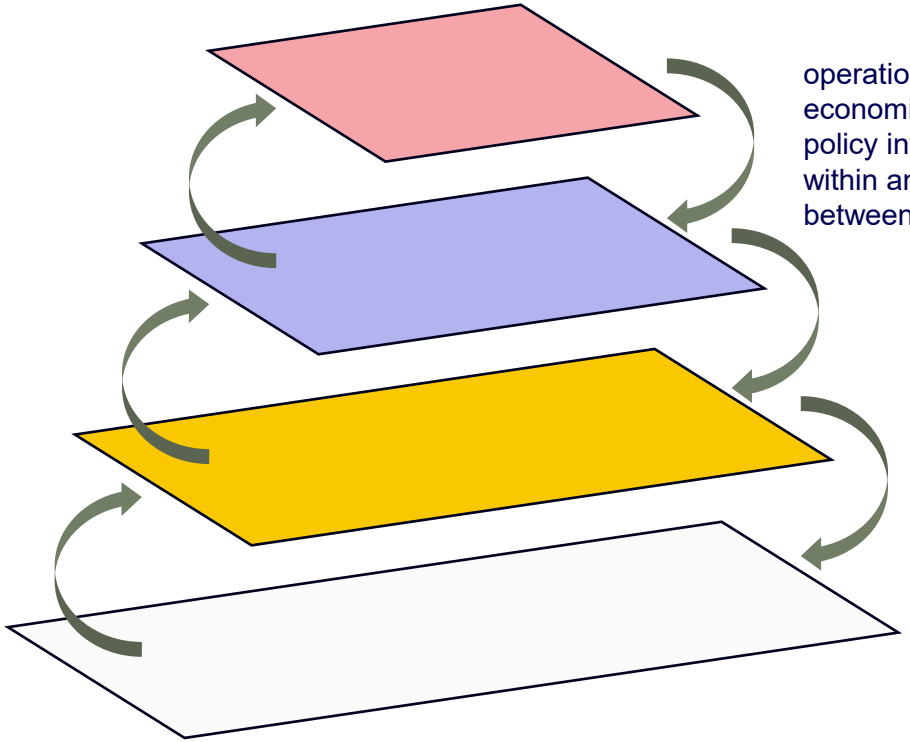
Social housing construction as a system-of-systems:

Sectoral level
broader social housebuilding sector

Organisational level
builders, CHPs, manufacturers, suppliers, government bodies and financial institutions

Team level
engineering, design, transportation and assembly teams

Individual level
engineers, designers, labourers, decision-makers and end users



operations, economics and policy interactions within and in between levels

Preliminary Findings

Operations

- One-off project-based delivery
- Fragmentation
- Low innovation
- Skills shortage
- Workforce issues
- Materials shortage

Productivity Commission (2025), Woods and Houghton (2025), Khan et al. (2024), Productivity Commission (2024), Islam et al. (2023), Raynor and Coenen (2022), Zolghadr et al. (2022), Kraatz and Jayawardena (2020), Mostafa et al. (2020), Milligan et al. (2017), Ariffin et al. (2016), London and Siva (2011), Watson (2007)

Economics

- Budget constraints
- Short-termism
- Layered funding

Raynor and Coenen (2022), Pawson et al. (2019). Raynor (2019), Milligan et al. (2017), Gilmour and Milligan (2016), London and Siva (2011)

Policy

- Decentralised regulatory system
- Overregulation
- Changing regulatory requirements
- Adversarial relationships
- Contract structure
- Resistant to change

Productivity Commission (2025), Schnabel and Souris (2024), NHSAC (2023), Bowles and Morgan (2016), Dalton et al. (2013), London and Siva (2011)

Thank You!

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