



Belonging Begins at Home Research Summary

The latest research by Flinders University explores the housing and health experiences of people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, finding that it is difficult for many people to secure suitable and affordable housing in South Australia.

- Three quarters of research participants from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds experienced at least one problem in their current housing.
- People from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds should be eligible for public housing, due to a lack of housing affordability in the private rental market for people living on low incomes.
- An affordable and suitable place to call home supports overall health and wellbeing as well as mental and physical health.

The Flinders University researchers confirm that many people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds successfully navigate the complexities of our western housing system and are content renting privately in a suitable house in a safe neighbourhood. However, three quarters of research participants said that they experienced at least one problem in their current housing. Common issues include difficulty finding appropriate housing, poor quality, unsuitable layout, unaffordable cost of renting and an unsafe neighbourhood.

Housing policy makers and service providers were consulted by the Flinders University research team to formulate recommendations for consideration by Local, State and Commonwealth governments as well as real estate agents and community services. Affordable rent is essential to improve the housing experiences for all citizens living on low incomes but is particularly important for new arrivals, given that they may have escaped a war-torn country and experienced trauma. People from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds should be eligible for public housing, to give them access to affordable homes that are suitable for their families and to support their health and wellbeing.

It is critical that South Australia invests in social housing to increase the size of our current portfolio, rather than selling hundreds of properties every year, at the expense of taxpayers. The Housing SA private rental assistance program is also essential for people living on low incomes, who cannot afford to save for a bond to enter into the private rental market. Any measures to reduce government spending must not come at the expense of this critical assistance program, as people living on low incomes who are not eligible will face insurmountable barriers to achieving a private rental.

Research participants said that they experienced language barriers when trying to understand the complexities of the private rental market and this also negatively impacted their ability to achieve a private rental. Facilitating access to suitable housing and continued assistance in accessing the private rental market should be prioritised by real estate agents and other housing support services. Practical assistance to attend open inspections and apply for rental properties, such as transport, is also needed to help vulnerable new arrivals.

Flinders University partnered with Anglicare SA, the Australian Refugee Association, Baptist Care SA and Shelter SA for this research project.

[“Belonging begins at home: Housing, social inclusion and health and wellbeing for people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds”](#) by Anna Ziersch, Clemence Due, Moira Walsh, and Kathy Arthurson from Flinders University, explores the links between the housing experience and health for people from asylum-seeking and refugee backgrounds. Shelter SA and the Flinders University research team are working together to bring about change in this important policy area, to ensure people who are newly arrived to South Australia receive the assistance they need to settle here and contribute to our State.

Suggested annotation

Ziersch, A., Due, C., Walsh, M., Arthurson, K. (2017) *Belonging begins at home: Housing, social inclusion and health and wellbeing for people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds*. Flinders Press, Adelaide