Social Housing for Culturally Diverse Groups
A Users’ and Providers’ Perspective

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Traditionally the private rental market does not cater for people with high needs and who are on low income. The private rental market is often inappropriate for refugees and humanitarian settlers in terms of cost, size and location (San Pedro 2001, p. 4).

The rental market’s failure to provide housing for low-income immigrants now entering Australia has raised issues about their housing requirements and how these can be met. To date, only limited research into these needs has been undertaken in Australia (Beer & Morphett 2003) and overseas (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005); and most is directed at the broader social requirements of various groups. This thesis takes a more focused view of some of the physical issues implicit in understanding the housing needs of culturally diverse groups, such as the size of a house, its appearance, layout and other design aspects, and examines how effectively the standard Australian house meets these needs.

The study focuses on the social housing1 sector, which is a major provider of accommodation to high-need groups.2 This sector is currently the most appropriate body to address the needs of low-income migrant groups because of the private sector’s inability to provide the support the new settlers require (Alloush 2001; Kelly 2007). However, as the demand for social housing far outstrips supply (Burnley, Murphy & Fagan 1997, p. 89) many low-income migrants will still have no option but to enter the private rental market. Traditionally, the design of social housing in Australia has followed the common house archetype and there has been little attention paid to the more specific housing needs of new arrivals, despite the changes in immigration pattern to Australia over the last 30 years.

Whilst the thesis canvases a broad range of literature on the subject of housing for diverse groups from the UK, America, Canada and Australia few studies have broached the topic of the design issues of housing for diverse cultural groups. Detailed attention is given to two studies tackling the subject, in particular a design guide entitled *Accommodating Diversity*.

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1 For a definition of ‘social housing’ see page 9.
2 High-need groups include people with a disability, the homeless, those with mental health problems and those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CLBD)
produced by the National Housing Federation (1998) in the U.K. Housing authorities in that country use the guide to assess the design of housing projects for culturally diverse groups. Another study, undertaken in Australia by the Australian Housing Research Council (1985), entitled Multicultural Housing Preferences and prepared for the Victorian Office of Housing, is also frequently cited as it is one of the few attempts to investigate the housing needs of cultural groups in an Australian context. The literature examined in this study points to the importance of the social housing sector in taking the lead in the delivery and design of appropriate housing for culturally diverse groups because of its position in the high-needs housing field.

Research Question

To better understand the housing requirements of culturally diverse groups and the response from the government housing sector this study will address the question:

How are the housing needs of culturally diverse groups met by the practices and design of social housing?

The importance of the question is supported by the increasing diversity in population throughout Australia and the apparent lack of choice in housing for these varied cultural groups. This, it will be shown, is particularly the case with social housing which is a main source of accommodation for lower-income minority cultural groups (San Pedro 2001, Alloush 2001). The failure to meet the housing needs of cultural groups can lead to social exclusion and ultimately isolation of some group members from the broader community (Sim 2000). Housing may also affect cultural groups by helping to define their identity, an influence that Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2003) see as having a powerful effect on community building, and that is also examined in this study.

This research will assist the study of architecture of housing by providing insight into the architect’s role in designing for cultural diversity, while also giving a better understanding of the housing needs of various cultural groups to assist in the design of future housing. This will

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3 The Scheme Development Standards (SDS) are benchmarks for schemes to obtain funding from the UK Government. These standards give reference to specific design requirements for housing for diverse cultural groups (Housing Corporation 2003).

4 The cultural groups studied represented the migration pattern at the time and involved new arrivals from Turkey, Poland and Vietnam from where most migration has now greatly reduced.
add to the knowledge and approach provided in the guidelines produced by the NHF (1998) and also place the debate in an Australian context.

The research question also raises issues about the practices and policies of social housing providers in the planning and design of housing for culturally diverse groups. It also suggests the need to investigate the adequacy of current social housing to cater for culturally diverse groups based on the current standard housing archetypes.

This thesis will focus on the South Australian context as the author has broad experience and knowledge at management level in the design and delivery of new dwellings for the State's housing authority, HousingSA. However, it will not attempt to find a solution for the design of an ‘ideal’ house or houses for culturally diverse groups; rather it will give architects and housing providers a means by which they can consider existing and current house designs on the basis of the identified needs of the cultural groups interviewed.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

It is therefore the contention of this study that the housing providers, including their consultant architects, draw on the form and layout of the current archetypal Australian house to suit all of the people they house. The study reveals that this has led to a standard design process based around policies, design guidelines and building specifications that meet primarily the needs of the housing organisation resulting in a generic product that may not suit all. To highlight the differences between the housing needs of diverse groups and the needs of social housing providers is therefore a main aim of this study.

To achieve this aim the study will investigate the housing needs of diverse cultural groups residing in Adelaide, South Australia. The three groups chosen represent the major countries of origin of migrants entering Australia under the Humanitarian Program (DIAC 2007) and are therefore the most likely to fall within the high-need housing category. The groups interviewed are from Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq.

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5 HousingSA incorporates the housing construction and property management functions of the South Australian Housing Trust, South Australian Community Housing Association, and Aboriginal Housing Association.
6 The Humanitarian Program consists of the settlement of refugees referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and protection visa holders (DIAC 2007).
The other aim of this study is to examine the contemporary practices of a social housing provider through engagement with its professional and management staff to better understand their priorities in delivering housing for culturally diverse groups. This is achieved by interviewing consultant architects, managers and service managers working for HousingSA. The examination of HousingSA’s design process is also undertaken through the examination of policies and design material. Housing SA is chosen as representative of social housing authorities throughout Australia who share common goals, policy structures and funding regimes tied to both State and Federal government controls.

1.3 Methodology

The subjective nature of the study suggests the adoption of a naturalistic or qualitative system of inquiry to allow a broad perspective of the subject and to provide insight into the meaning of the constructs of social housing for the various groups. This requires a strategy or methodology based in the data about the participants’ views of the housing and their observation of how it is managed; therefore grounded theory was selected. Various methods were employed to obtain the data, including in-depth interviews, case study, and document analysis. Crotty’s (1998) string for the research approach is seen as Constructionist > Interpretivist > Grounded Theory > Interview, Focus Group, Comparative Analysis, Document Analysis.

The richness of data and story-telling from the interviews gives a ‘thick description’ of the phenomena and is particularly relevant to this study which aims to capture the views of a broad range of people with differing backgrounds whose interpretations of the meaning of the housing issues canvassed vary greatly. Three cultural groups who are the fastest growing minority communities in Australia today (ABS 2006) were chosen for this study for their representativeness of current likely demand for social housing.

To complement the interview findings, non-interactive methods were used to examine the social housing process and design from archival documentation. This mixed method approach allows the qualitative research data from the interviews to be combined with the interpretative data from the analysis of the social housing design process to give the appropriate cross checks of interview and archival data.
Each step of the research process is documented to identify the **conformability, dependability and credibility** of the study.

### 1.4 Discussion

The study refers to a number of basic concepts including cultural diversity, social housing, the archetypal Australian house and social housing policy, and these are now discussed here to contextualise the research and to provide a broad definition of terms used.

#### 1.4.1 Cultural Diversity

The ABS (2006) Census acknowledges that migration has an important effect on the diversity of Australia’s population (ABS 2006, p. 43). Between 1945 and the late 1960s most migration was from Western and South-Eastern Europe and the United Kingdom. These groups mirrored earlier migration patterns and their housing requirements were culturally similar, if not the same, as in their country of origin. The 1970s saw major changes in government immigration policy, brought about by significant economic change. The slowing of industrial economic growth saw a move towards a globalised context and, specifically, markets in Asia became more important in creating a broader, more inclusive immigration policy.

Unquestionably immigration had a substantial impact on Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth between 1947 and 1971 and has had a major impact on Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Canberra in the twenty-five years since 1971. The impacts were on population growth, household formation and population structure: directly, through the presence and contribution of immigrants and indirectly in the impact on their Australian-born children (Burnley, Murphy & Fagan 1997, p. 29).

These new immigration directions, including the abolition of the ‘**White Australia Policy**’

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7 ‘**White Australia Policy**’ is a term used to describe a collection of historical policies that internationally restricted non-white immigration to Australia from 1901 to 1973. For an account of the gradual dismantling of the policy from the post-war period see Mackie, 1997.
social and economic turmoil and often require support from Australia’s welfare system, particularly social housing assistance (Burnley, Murphy & Fagan, 1997; Beer & Morphett, 2002).

Jupp (1995) says that cultural diversity is often measured in terms of birthplace, language and religion. He states that the Census data of the mid 1990s revealed the importance of recognising diverse language requirements, since about 15 per cent of the Australian population spoke a language other than English (Jupp 1995, p.1). Little information about housing is available in a variety of languages, a problem particularly prevalent in the private sector, with Alloush (2001) citing the language barrier as being an important factor in migrants, particularly refugees, not finding appropriate housing (Alloush 2001, p. 15).

Jupp (1995) adds that data on birthplace and religion are also a measure of ethnic concentration and he emphasises that second-generation migrants also make an important contribution to the country’s continuing diversity (Jupp 1995, p. 13). Recent ABS (2007) statistics identify that almost 24 per cent of Australians were born overseas and this, the ABS observes, continues the historical trend of a high proportion of overseas born among the Australian population (ABS 2007, p. 43). This diversity is highlighted even more when it is considered that about two hundred different countries of origin are represented in Australia, with many languages spoken. The main stated religions are Christianity, Buddhism then Islam (ABS 2006).

The ABS (2007) also reported that the UK is still the origin of the largest group of overseas born among Australia’s population, followed by New Zealand, Italy, China and Vietnam. However:

Between 1996 and 2006 the proportion of people (as Australian immigrants) born in the UK experienced a steady decline. This was also apparent for persons born in Italy. Conversely the proportion of people born in New Zealand and China experienced steady increases while people born in Vietnam remained the same (ABS 2007, p. 44).

In addition to these shifts there were changes in the populations of minority groups living in Australia:

Between 1996 and 2006 persons born in Sudan had the highest rate of increase in Australia’s population (of the 50 top countries) with an annual average growth rate of 27%, however, this growth began from a smaller base. The next fastest increase over this period were people born in Afghanistan (up 13% per year on average), Iraq (10%) Pakistan and Zimbabwe (both 8% each) (ABS 2007, p. 44).
The Australian Government’s humanitarian programs are of particular note in bringing about ethnic diversity and have impacted significantly on the country’s population, bringing in almost 650,000 people since the end of the Second World War (DIMIA 2005, p. 5). The Indo-Chinese refugee crisis in the late 1970s prompted the Australian Government to introduce a more inclusive refugee policy in 1977 and, recognising that unlike other migrants refugees usually require assistance because of their special needs, it established a more comprehensive welfare system to meet these needs.\(^8\)

In 2006 around 12,000 people entered Australia through the Commonwealth Government’s current Humanitarian Program, in addition to more than 100,000 migrants in other categories, thereby actively contributing to cultural diversity (DIC 2007). Immigrants from Eastern Europe, Latin and Central America, and the Middle East dominated the Humanitarian Program in the 1980s, but in recent years there have been more people arriving from African countries. As most of these recent arrivals are in the high-need housing category it has become apparent that there are major shortcomings in the services and accommodation available for refugees. San Pedro (2001), Tuohey (2001) and Alloush (2001) all point out the significant lack of affordable appropriate housing for these groups. The responsibility for refugees, Tuohey (2001) says, rests with both the Commonwealth Government and State Governments. She also holds that, ‘in accepting refugees, the Federal Government must ensure these needs (housing) can be met by State housing authorities’ (Tuohey, 2001, p. 9).

There has also been some difficulty in quantifying the likely demand for housing resources from high-need groups and this presents challenges for those providing support who are often unaware of their requirements.

\[\text{It is, however, difficult to obtain data from public housing authorities on the birthplace and recency of arrival of immigrants on the waiting lists. Such data may be considered politically sensitive since immigrants could be portrayed as competing with the locally born population for an important but scarce resource (Burnley & Fagan 1997, p. 89).}\]

Information about housing demand and the special needs of cultural groups is important as most migrants, and many refugees, will seek accommodation in the private sector. San Pedro (2001) points out that this is a consequence of the decline in funding to public housing that has

\(^8\) Refugee Program entrants are provided with four weeks on-arrival accommodation. Special Humanitarian Program entrants are provided with accommodation by their sponsors (Foley & Beer 2003, p. 9).
forced them to seek alternatives. Private-sector accommodation and its system of management often present significant difficulties for new arrivals who find that communication problems become a key issue (San Pedro 2001, p. 4).

The number of people from non-English-speaking backgrounds already accommodated by housing authorities is a measure of the demand from migrant groups. In 2007 approximately 12 per cent of HousingSA’s tenants were from non-English-speaking backgrounds (SAHT 2007, p. 23). Further, in the last five years HousingSA has catered for a broad range of national groups from countries including Bosnia, Cambodia, China, Somalia, Ethiopia, Iran and Iraq (HousingSA 2008, p. 1). Meeting their housing needs has become a major challenge, particularly as some groups have specific religious and cultural requirements, and large extended families.

Since Australia’s current housing primarily reflects Western cultural influences, with few concessions to the values of other cultures, the question is whether such housing is appropriate for all new arrivals. It is therefore important to better understand how the needs of culturally diverse groups are met by the archetypal Western housing, in order to suggest how it might better accommodate a variety of cultural influences.

1.4.2 Social Housing

The Government of South Australia (GSA) defines social housing as ‘publicly funded housing stock which is provided to assist those individuals and households considered to be in housing need’ (GSA 2005a, p. 122). The Australian Federal Government (AFG) has been a major contributor to the funding of social housing since the 1940s, through an agreement with the various State Governments. The State Governments match AFG funding and are the major delivery agents for social housing, through their housing authorities. In South Australia the main housing authority is Housing SA, which is a division of the Department for Families and Communities (DFC), and is now almost exclusively a provider of housing to low-income families, chiefly those receiving welfare benefits (SAHT 2004a). An operational Structure Chart of the DFC showing all the divisions appears in Appendix 1 (p. 281).

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9 The Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement of 1945 provided funding to the States to develop a public housing sector (Paris 1993, p. 153).
HousingSA, at that time known as the South Australian Housing Trust, was established by Act of Parliament in 1937 and built its first homes in 1938. Its charter was to build rental housing for those on low income, particularly to assist the State’s ailing manufacturing industry by accommodating its workers. Marsden (1987) found this was also a response to the need for improved housing standards, as South Australia had some of the worst housing in Australia at the time. Similar public housing bodies were established in the other Australian States around the same period and have similar charters. SAHT (2007) currently has a stock of approximately 45,000 rental houses (SAHT 2007, p. 39) with about two-thirds, mainly family accommodation, built before 1975.

Marsden (1987) observed that by the 1950s the SAHT was building almost half of the State’s houses, some of which were available for sale. These were built mainly to accommodate families and were based on the accepted archetypal designs available in the private sector. Many of these houses were bought by post-war migrants and later on-sold to a new generation, then often modified and extended to meet the current style and spatial needs. The sale program ceased in 1983, although tenants could still purchase the house they were renting. This saw the SAHT reverting to its original charter of providing rental housing to low-income tenants, and since then it has become chiefly a welfare provider.

An indicator of the demand for social housing is the number of applications received. In June 2007 HousingSA had a waiting list of 22,000 applications, down from 24,000 in the previous year, with approximately 3,300 applicants from a Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Background (CLBD) 10. In 2006-2007 HousingSA was only able to house approximately 10 per cent of CLBD applicants, with most of the others being given Private Rental Assistance (PRA) to secure accommodation within the private housing sector (SAHT 2007). This demand places significant pressure on both the social housing authorities and the private housing sector, both in supplying the required number of dwellings and having appropriately designed housing to suit tenants’ needs.

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10 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background (CLDB) is the term HousingSA uses to identify the diversity of its tenants. Statistics are gathered from the principal tenant’s country of origin and from requests for interpreter and translation services (SAHT 2006). Another term for the same groups, used by agencies such as the Migrant Resource Centre, is Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD).
As Hugo (2005) indicates, there would appear to be no likelihood of demand lessening in the future. ‘The pattern of international migration has profoundly influenced the demand for housing and will do so in the future’ (Hugo 2005, p. 26).

As a consequence of this demand social housing will therefore remain one of the major sources of accommodation for low-income culturally diverse groups. Whether housing authorities can meet the needs of these groups is problematic, given the current high demand, and many who seek this form of housing will be required to find alternatives in the private sector.

1.4.3 Archetypal Australian House

The increasing diversity of Australia’s population has had a broad impact on the way we live today. Cultural diversity is expressed in many ways but perhaps least evident in our housing form where the archetype of the English cottage remains dominant, apparently meeting the needs of all groups. The design of domestic architecture in Australia shows some evidence of being influenced by cultural diversity and Lewis (2000) mentions Anglo-Celtic, German, Chinese and Afghan immigrants as being instrumental in shaping the form of early Australian housing. However he states that, ‘through all of the subsequent minor variations of plan and major variations of style, the Australian urban house remained essentially in the European sense a country cottage’ (Lewis 2000, p. 21).

King (1994) also observes early influences on the design of the Australian housing archetype through the legacy of the bungalow, a style and layout created mainly for Europeans in India and then translated to other western countries such as Australia. King (1994) quotes Freeland as saying that it was the ‘closest thing that Australia had ever come to producing an indigenous style’ (King 1994, p. 232). Prasad (2003) also notes this hybridisation of the local vernacular design for colonial requirements in India but this was not likely to occur ‘in reverse’ when new migrant groups from Asia and the Middle East took up residence in the UK (NHF 1998).

Boyd (1968) supports the European-centric view of housing design and asserts that the origin of Australian domestic architecture was in Europe and, in particular, reflected the English cottage house form. He further adds that there was little variety in the housing form as ‘there were no more than four or five types, within each of which were superficial variations like the individual contortions of the trees branches’ (Boyd 1968, p. 16).
Boyd (1968) also chronicles the development of style in the Australian house from its beginnings in Georgian England to the establishment of an almost characteristic Australian style or archetype by the 1950s and 1960s. He is at pains to point out that this new style was still highly influenced by Western ideas, but acknowledges that by the second half of the twentieth century there were other underlying influences, particularly that of Japanese design. He states that by the 1960s, ‘clinker bricks and pebbles and dark stain – sometimes even naked wood are making a remarkable change from multi-coloured paintwork’ (Boyd 1968, p. 297).

This change also heralded the wide use of the open-plan house, with less definition in enclosure and formality in the basic floor plan. By the 1960s houses were being oriented to achieve better light and sun protection, observes Boyd (1968) who further comments in the preface to his book, *Australia’s Home*, that the ‘small house probably more than anything else that man has done, has made the face of Australia and to an extent the faces of Australia’ (Boyd 1968, preface).

With this archetype of Western domestic architecture firmly established, both physically and within the common psyche, the current approach to housing design in Australia becomes of interest when considering the country’s changing cultural mix and the growth of a number of diverse ethnic minority groups, each with its own housing experiences. The post-war migrants’ acceptance of the archetypal house is to be expected as it was largely based on a European design but how well the archetypal house of today suits new residents from diverse cultural backgrounds is mainly untested.

Since the end of the Second World War, the housing authorities’ social housing programs have exerted a particularly dominant influence on the Australian housing market. Troy (2000) argues that, not only did these authorities lift the standard of housing for low-income households, but they also provided benchmarks for the general quality of housing in Australia (Troy 2000, p. 308). The sheer volume of dwellings they built makes them a major contributor to the evolution of the Australian archetypal house.

Housing authorities replicated dwellings in great numbers to address the migration boom. The standard house of the time generally had two or three bedrooms, a separate living room, an eat-in kitchen, and basic bathroom and laundry facilities. More recent houses have adopted open-plan, combined living and dining areas but still resemble the earlier form in layout and
style. Marsden (1986) observes that, of necessity, social housing has been more basic than that provided by the private sector, but this difference has been more in external embellishment than the floor plan and functional form (Marsden 1986, p. 142).

Further Marsden (1986) says that the design of early post-war social housing was constrained by the materials available, the capacity of the building industry and the overall cost dictated by the housing authority. Consequently, rents were fixed at modest rates, to be affordable for workers in industry. This austerity gave social housing a characteristic form that made it instantly recognisable, and even encouraged the perception that it was somehow inferior in design. Peel (1995) suggests this when commenting on the planning of Elizabeth’s semi-detached rental housing, and he highlights the South Australian Housing Trust’s (SAHT) practice of concealing it behind the larger, more desirable single houses. This, he says, allows main thoroughfares to be lined with single privately owned houses to present the passing motorist with a vista of normal suburban dwellings, rather than social housing. This perceived stigma is more likely to be attached to older social housing, as today’s examples of such homes are similar in form to private-sector dwellings. In fact, many housing authorities now purchase builder-designed houses from the range offered to private buyers.

A complicating factor seen by Peel (1995) and Stretton (1970) is that most post-war social housing was built in estates, often compounding the social problems of low-income tenants in later years when policy changes prevented a broader mix of tenants in these estates. According to Marsden (1987) almost 50 per cent of the SAHT’s existing houses were built in the early post-war period, and were characterised by the austerity of the times and modest living standards, this prompting the SAHT in recent times to target these areas for redevelopment (SAHT 2004a).

Figure 1. below illustrates the type of housing available to new migrants settling in South Australia in the 1960s; its form strongly influenced by European and American domestic design. It also suggests the likely origin of the occupants and the size of family.
Peel’s research provides a critical view of early the planning of Elizabeth, and the housing built there for migrants in the 1950s and 1960s:

Purchasers chose from a variety of Trust-built designs, mostly brick-veneer, with three, four or five bedrooms according to family size. There were also a few flats for young couples without children. During the first decade of settlement, the quintessential ‘Elizabeth house’ was a double unit\(^ {11} \) with party walls. Of the three and a half thousand completed in the five years (1954-55 to 1958-59) two-thirds were double units. By 1964, after a sustained detached-house-building program, they still made up half the stock. They were Spartan in the eyes of their designers and tenants were not encouraged to shape the dwelling to their own needs. But for many people, the semi-detached house with indoor toilet, bath and shower, laundry trough and proper sink, new stove and garden was a significant step-up from what they had known (Peel 1995, p. 109).

Similar dwellings are allocated to the new migrants arriving in South Australia today and the early semi-detached housing Peel (1995) describes above is often now combined to accommodate large families.

Change came to social housing design in the 1970s when the SAHT”s architectural design was in the hands of Newell Platten\(^ {12} \) and others focused on design innovation. Platten wanted to

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\(^ {11} \) Semi-detached housing.

\(^ {12} \) Newell Platten was the South Australian Housing Trust’s Chief Design Architect in the 1970s and early 1980s, influencing the design of housing estates and individual house design away from the more austere earlier planning.
move away from the years of austerity design but saw a number of barriers to this change:

**There is nothing society wants to see changed less than housing. The complexity and accelerated rate of change of contemporary life isolates ‘the home’ in an aura of traditional values and escapist illusion. The family home is a castle and to support its conservatism, society constructs a defence system against change (Platten 1974, p. 5).**

Platten captures the importance of the house as part of the Australian way of life but is disappointed in its form and sees progress in design entangled in bureaucratic process and vested interest. He adds:

**There are two various deterrents to innovation arising from within the building industry – from materials suppliers, unions, trade schools, building federations, all overtly opposed to real change and subvertly resisting even progress in design (Platten 1974, p. 5).**

Despite these setbacks, the 1970s and 1980s saw a time of considerable change in house and estate design in Australia, much of which was borrowed from Europe, principally the UK and America. Environmental initiatives were also seen as becoming increasingly important. More variety was achieved from the 1970s by introducing medium-density housing forms, reinforcing the view of SAHT Board Member, Hugh Stretton, that ‘there is certainly room for much more medium density and ‘mixed’ densities - courtyard, patio and terrace houses (which) mix well with standard gardens’ (Stretton 1970, p. 21). Stretton was an advocate of social mix and saw some benefit in providing opportunities for varied form and location in social housing. Today, approximately one third of all HousingSA’s metropolitan housing is medium-density (SAHT 2004a).

The social housing sector is now firmly focused on high-need groups including those with physical disabilities and mental health issues, the homeless, indigenous Australians, those fleeing domestic violence, and people from culturally diverse backgrounds (SAHT 2007, p. 23). Significant headway has been made in the area of designing accommodation for those with a disability, and the sector leads the way in introducing some of the requirements of the adaptable housing code into the design of new dwellings. Introducing a level of accessibility into new housing is one way to prepare for the future by ensuring that dwellings remain appropriate as their occupants’ needs change.
To a lesser extent, similar progress has been made in designing for other high-need groups: for example the South Australian Government, through its Housing Plan for the State, has now initiated measures to reduce homelessness and to design accommodation appropriate for this group (GSA 2005b). The situation is less clear about which design initiatives are being investigated for housing to accommodate cultural diversity. Most of the dwellings supplied for such groups, either through the private or public sector, are similar in form to that of the Australian archetypal house.

An ad hoc design system currently exists for providing housing for culturally diverse groups and their individual needs often strain resources, such as when large families must be catered for. HousingSA has developed a portable sleep-out of lightweight construction that can be relocated in rear yards to extend the capacity of a standard dwelling. Another solution is to make minor modifications, such as creating a doorway between a pair of duplex units to house a large migrant family. The housing authorities and migrant-assist groups also attempt to find accommodation for such groups near necessary facilities and services. These options will be further will be discussed in chapter 6 where housing practice is reviewed.

This study will show that, in the longer term, diverse cultural groups occupying housing of a standard archetypal design often indicate an underlying dissatisfaction with its layout and design.

1.4.4 Social Housing Policy

Social housing policy governing the physical design of dwellings generally has little to say about the needs of the culturally diverse groups for whom the sector caters. However, in South Australia the Department for Families and Communities (DFC)\textsuperscript{13}, has identified a commitment to emerging communities through its policy framework, ‘Connecting to the Future’ (GSA 2005c).

The DFC has a broad mandate to work with those who, through circumstances, may be poor, vulnerable, at risk of harm or isolated and disconnected. This mission is a privilege and a responsibility. It means working together with others to connect individuals, families and communities to choices and opportunities (GSA 2005, p. 2).

This commitment to providing services to the State’s emerging communities with refugee backgrounds is directly linked to the State Government’s key priorities in the South Australian

\textsuperscript{13} The Department for Families and Communities (DFC) includes HousingSA, together with FamiliesSA and DisabilitySA. See Appendix 1. (p...) for organisational structure of the DFC.
Strategic Plan. The DFC identifies housing as one of the services, together with health, education, training, employment and access to mainstream services, necessary to assist in the resettlement of migrants and community integration (DFC 2006).

As indicated, this is a very broad mandate, focused mainly on service delivery and coordination, but it does recognise the need for cultural sensitivity and consultation in the process. Part of this commitment is the establishment of a departmental committee to oversee the process of service integration. Further, HousingSA’s (2004) Housing Needs Study also identifies the increase in the number of groups from non-English speaking backgrounds and acknowledges that housing has an important contributing factor in the resettlement of refugees into the community. This study identifies that:

It is considered the design of supply strategies for refugees should ensure long-term sustainable housing outcomes by matching the supply assistance with the expected length and type of housing need and that such a strategy should incorporate a service to facilitate household community integration, aimed at accustoming the refugee household to their new community (HousingSA 2004, p. 13).

These broad policy initiatives are supported by procedures and processes embedded in the delivery of housing services and the design of housing. Recently HousingSA mounted a business case study to investigate the need for large dwellings to cater for African people seeking social housing. The study outlines supply and demand patterns for these groups in South Australia and at least represents a start in recognising the housing needs of culturally diverse groups (HousingSA 2008).

HousingSA also has specific policies relating to housing allocation and property management practices that give guidance on house size, occupancy, over-crowding, location of properties (HousingSA 2007), portable sleep-outs (HousingSA 2007) and house heating (HousingSA 2006) which cover some of the issues commonly encountered when dealing with culturally diverse groups.

The social housing policies that could possibly have the greatest impact on housing for culturally diverse groups are the Housing Plan (2005) provisions for sustainable communities (DFC 2008), and the resulting Housing Design Guidelines.\footnote{The Housing Design Guidelines contain seven sections covering aspects of land development and house design. Consultant architects and builders can access them by using the Web link: www.inside.dfc.sa.gov.au.}
The guidelines provide clear and consistent briefs outlining the HousingSA requirements for housing. They also assist staff in gaining a full appreciation and understanding of HousingSA requirements for housing, ensuring that these requirements meet the needs of HousingSA customers (DFC 2008).

However, these design guides focus on the delivery of a generic house for all social housing tenants and are based on stated physical and environmental standards that are highly cost-sensitive but, on the issues of housing for culturally diverse groups, the guidelines are silent.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 2 investigates the recent Australian and international literature on the subject of housing issues of culturally diverse groups. Firstly, the community needs of diverse groups are identified to allow the topics of service location, the neighbourhood, dwelling appearance and customs and religion to be examined in relation to housing choice for new migrants. Also explored here is the dynamic of new cultures in Australia and their adjustment to the Australian way of life.

Having established the broader context for housing culturally diverse groups this chapter also addresses what the literature has to say about the house itself including its layout and the various functions, such as eating and food preparation, that are performed there and notes any perceived differences between culturally diverse practices and mainstream processes. This will indicate topics to be researched to reach a greater understanding of the needs of cultural groups and identify changes that might be addressed in adapting the standard Australian archetypal house to suit these requirements.

The starting point has been the design guide, Accommodating Diversity, prepared by the National Housing Federation of the United Kingdom in 1998. Ten key factors thought to be important in the provision of housing for culturally diverse groups, and identified from this design guide, are used as topics upon which to base the literature search. These key factors were derived from the research carried out in the United Kingdom by a major social housing provider, together with members of the Black Society of Architects\(^\text{15}\) through an intense interview process with residents and providers and examination of typical housing projects. This design

\(^{15}\)The Black Society of Architects (SOBA) was founded in the mid 1990s in the UK as a not-for-profit organisation that promotes the contribution of minority ethnic professionals within the sphere of the built environment. www.divercity.com,SOBA/soba.htm
guide is also used by the Housing Corporation, the UK government funding body, to assess housing projects for culturally diverse groups.

Chapter 3 establishes the approach for the research to follow in order to determine the housing needs of culturally diverse groups and how these needs are understood by housing providers. The subjective nature of the study suggested the adoption of a qualitative system of enquiry to allow a broad perspective of the subject and to provide insight into the meaning of the construct of housing needs for cultural groups. The principal methods used were in-depth interviews with the three identified cultural groups (Afghan, Sudanese and Iraqi) and three provider groups (Architects, Managers and Service Managers). Both comparative and document analysis methods were also used to investigate the main housing options available to culturally diverse groups in the social housing sector in South Australia. This chapter also describes the process undertaken in the preparation of the interview questions, their piloting and observations on their delivery, the process of coding of the data and the selection of emerging themes.

Chapter 4 contains the research findings from the interviews with the three cultural groups. The early section of the chapter contains a short profile of each group and an account of their lifestyle in their country of origin. This is followed by the interview findings about their community and housing needs. Extended extracts from the interviews are given to indicate the importance of an issue. The groups interviewed identified fifty-two separate themes but not all groups may have shared all themes.

Each group’s responses are followed by a short case study derived from a question asking individual participants to draw the layout of their current house. An example of one house for each group is selected for the case study. This identifies specific issues and themes that not all participants may have raised but allows a thick description of the participant’s house and its surrounds. The chapter will identify the housing priorities of each cultural group for later comparison with the providers’ priorities and the archetypal house types reviewed.

Chapter 5 gathers the research findings from housing providers about the design and delivery of social housing for culturally diverse groups. This group included Architects consulting to HousingSA, HousingSA Managers and Service Managers working for HousingSA. Themes are drawn from the group’s perceptions of what they considered important in designing housing...
for diverse cultural groups. In a similar manner to chapter 4, extended extracts of these responses are used to support the thesis findings.

Chapter 6 firstly identifies HousingSA’s current options for housing people from culturally diverse backgrounds and then reviews the processes it uses, from site selection to house design. The chapter begins by exploring how the community aspects of housing are planned, then turns to the house design process and its relationship to the HousingSA design guidelines. Finally, a review is made of HousingSA’s housing design approach, gathered from documents and plans investigated, and the themes identified in the research findings from the cultural and the provider groups. This chapter will provide a basis for the comparison of the social housing archetype with the needs of all groups and the identification of gaps that exist between ‘how it is’ and ‘how it might be’.

Chapter 7 will show the strong preference of some cultural groups for maintaining the traditions and lifestyle of their country of origin and the way this directs their preferences in housing choice. The chapter will also comment on the mismatch between the housing needs of some cultural groups and the standard archetypal Australian house as typified by the social housing currently available and offer an opinion on whether this archetype is the ‘ideal’ of all cultural groups.

In conclusion, there is a discussion on the broader issues raised in the study about the housing experience of immigrants, their vision of their ‘ideal’ house and the reality that confronts them. In this way the study will have addressed the initial question:

**How are the needs of culturally diverse groups met by the practices and design of social housing?**
Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will investigate the housing needs of culturally diverse groups using the general and house design factors identified in the United Kingdom’s National Housing Federation (1998) design guideline, *Accommodating Diversity*. The key factors are first identified then the literature from a number of overseas and local sources is discussed under each factor to establish some of the perceived housing needs of culturally diverse groups. The NHF design guide (1998) has become a source of information for designers of social housing\footnote{Social housing is publicly funded housing stock which is provided to assist those individuals’ [sic] households considered to be in housing need’ (Government of South Australia 2005).} for culturally diverse groups. It has been incorporated into the United Kingdom’s Housing Corporation’s assessment and procurement process for accessing funding for new social housing for culturally diverse groups (Housing Corporation 2003) and it is also used to brief architects when preparing house designs and site layouts (Croydon City Council 2002).

Sunand Prasad, from one of the four firms of architects in the consortium who prepared the NHF (1998) design guide, explains that:

> It explored how housing designs can respond to a variety of lifestyles without being overly specific or restrictive to others. The guide’s emphasis was on understanding underlying functional considerations in different cultures – such as how a developing extended family may occupy a house over a period of time or how communal activities impacted on spatial needs. It encouraged a study of architecture from places of migration and included issues of form and meaning; but it also cautioned against the deployment of motifs and features (Prasad 2003, p. 28).

Members of the consortium and the advisory group who prepared *Accommodating Diversity* met again in 2003 to review its effectiveness. They concluded that an update was not necessary and that, although it was still relevant, there was a need for social housing providers, the Housing Authorities\footnote{Housing Authorities in the UK are the social housing providers.}, to employ strategies and policies to ensure the provisions of the guide were being met. They also noted that many Housing Authorities in the U.K. had become consumers rather than developers of housing and relied on private sector package deals to produce their houses. These might not meet all the customer’s needs and this made the design guide even more important in the assessment of housing proposals (Steering Group 2003, p. 3).
Literature and reports about the housing needs of diverse cultural groups are limited, particularly from a design perspective, and much work is focused on sociological or anthropological perspectives (Hadjyanni & Robinson 2003). Foley & Beer (2003) also found that there had been little research into the housing experiences of migrant groups and in particular the needs of refugees in Australia who were the group most likely to need social housing at some time in their housing career. They also found that international experience was mainly focused on the issues of social inclusion and homelessness (Foley & Beer 2003, p. i).

The increasing diversity of the population in Australia and other countries, has required governments and agencies to deal with housing needs by looking towards a more inclusive approach to the provision of housing for cultural groups (Cole & Robinson 2003; Beer & Morphett 2002; NHF 1998). The most diverse and perhaps the most vulnerable groups to enter Australia are those fleeing war and disaster as refugees and they have been the focus of much of the recent literature on the subject of housing needs of diverse cultural groups. Welfare agencies such as the Hanover Welfare Services in Melbourne and support groups for refugees such as Dar Al Shifah in Perth have been instrumental in researching the needs and requirements of several newly arrived groups and providing some insight into their housing needs. Much of this research to date has centred on refugee settlement and the adjustment such groups face in adapting to the new social and economic system (Kelly 2004; Aly & Gaba 2007).

Cole and Robinson (2003) see the design guide *Accommodating Diversity* as a starting point in all housing design for culturally diverse groups in the United Kingdom. The guide broadly addresses two areas of housing need; firstly the general design issues which include key factors specific to social and cultural needs of culturally diverse groups and secondly the key factors of their house design needs, including the internal arrangements of the house and its rooms (NHF 1998, p. 3).

For the purposes of this review of the needs of culturally diverse groups, ten key factors have been identified from the NHF (1998) design guide as follows:

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18 Clapham (2005) defines housing career or pathway is as 'the social practices of a household relating to housing over time'.

19 Social exclusion means in this case what Sim (2000) attributes to minority ethnic groups who lack access to good quality housing that fully meets their needs (Sim 2000, p. 93).
In addition to examination of the detailed text of *Accommodating Diversity*, and to seek further confirmation of the ten key factors the guide identifies as important in designing housing for culturally diverse groups, further reference has been made to information in literature and reports sourced from the United States, Canada and Australia. This includes the seminal research by the Australian Housing Research Council into the housing preferences of three minority migrant groups in Melbourne (AHRC 1985).

### 2.2 Housing Needs of Culturally Diverse Groups

Sim (2000) comments that housing not fully meeting the social and cultural needs of a group will lead to social exclusion. He says that culturally diverse groups have a long experience of social exclusion in housing, characterised by a number of factors including lack of choice in housing location, but he contends this is only part of the problem:

> Secondly, the average household size of many minority ethnic households is larger than within the white population and too large to be comfortably housed within much of the housing stock available. This mismatch between household and dwelling sizes creates difficulties of overcrowding and acts as a powerful deterrent against minority families seeking accommodation in the social rented sector. Thirdly the condition of much of the housing occupied by minority ethnic households is generally poor and this is particularly so in the private sector where minority home-ownership cannot necessarily be equated with prosperity. Finally for those who seek to buy their own home, there is clear evidence of discrimination within the system of housing finance and exchange, affecting estate agents, banks and building societies (Sim 2002, p. 93).
To this can be added the physical elements of housing needs such as internal layout and appearance which are also a powerful influence in defining the identity of the household through the opportunity to express culture and beliefs (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005; Greig 2000; Lawrence 1987; Rapoport 1969). Many of the elements of the typical Australian house are products of the dominant Anglo-Celtic and northern-European culture from the time of Australia’s settlement (Boyd 1968; Lewis 2000; Faull & Young 1986) and have little or no reference to today’s diversity of culture in the population.

Clearly it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between people’s social and physical needs in relation to housing as they are strongly interrelated but, by using the NHF (1998) design guide’s key factors for housing need, this review will provide a way to address the broader housing needs of culturally diverse groups.

2.2.1 Design: General Issues

Access to Services and Supports

The National Housing Federation (1998) design guide identifies location of services such as shopping, medical services and supports, together with good connection to these services, as being essential for new migrants. Location of the housing being offered often matters more to tenants or purchasers than how well it is designed or built. Finding the right location is the key to successful development for minority ethnic groups (NHF 1998, p. 8).

Tuohey (2001) feels that housing needs could, however, be better met by locating migrants in areas near specific services; for example in the case of Islamic groups, close to Islamic shops and cultural services. Proximity to public transport is also essential. It is her view that the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and the Office of Housing Victoria must develop a more co-ordinated response to refugee issues to ensure the appropriate settlement support services are provided (Tuohey 2001, p. 9).

In its refurbishment of high-rise accommodation in Collingwood, the Office of Housing in Victoria addresses some of the requirements of groups seeking inner city housing and access to services. This area is close to many of the services and supports Muslim people require and
improved security for the high-rise flats has made them more attractive for this group to take up residence (Hg & Field-Pimm 2001, p. 35).

Often, however, housing authorities do not differentiate between minority groups and other people they accommodate and so generate forms of exclusion, albeit unwittingly. (Sim 2000) cites the example of ‘linking all social rented housing applications for minorities to certain areas, restricting the choices of minorities as compared with other categories of applications’ (Sim 2000, p. 107).

In the AHRC (1985) report on three migrant groups in Melbourne; Turkish, Polish and Indo-Chinese 20, the locational preferences are for housing to be near employment, schools, community and retail services, and public transport. Often this is difficult to achieve, with private development competing for the inner suburbs where most services are located. Gentrification of inner suburbs, it is said, following the demolition of low-cost inner-city housing, is forcing migrant groups to seek accommodation in less convenient locations (AHRC 1985, p. 218). Respondents to the AHRC survey indicate that they would rather accept higher density accommodation if it were close to facilities with ‘accessibility’ 21 a highly valued feature of urban life and preferred to a detached house in a suburban location’ (AHRC 1985, p. 137).

Anglicare’s Tasmanian study of support services to newly arrived migrant groups finds that some have been placed in housing which is not only some distance from the city centre and TAFE but is also a long distance from shopping centres. This is seen as a particular disadvantage for these groups whose cuisines require extensive quantities of bulky items, such as meat, various flours, pulses, oil and vegetables, meaning that the capacity to transport volumes of shopping is a priority. Access to transport is therefore not simply an issue about maintaining access to settlement services and language tuition but is also critical for the daily basic needs of households (Flanagan 2007, p. 45).

Social housing is often remotely located on older estates on the fringes of cities and isolated from support services necessary to migrant groups. Goldflam (1992) observes that in Western

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20 The pattern or ‘wave’ (Jupp 1995, p 3) of immigration to Australia during this period was from these countries which today has stemmed.

21 Accessibility here means access to services, while elsewhere in this thesis the term is also used in relation to disabled access.
Australia social housing stock is often located on urban fringes where public transport facilities are inadequate and women in particular can be housebound and isolated (Goldflam 1992, p. 20). Kelly (2004) states that a reason for migrants to reject public housing is often their perception of safety risks associated with the location of housing, either in estates or areas unfamiliar to them in appearance and social composition. This requires housing providers to undertake an assessment that fully considers the needs of the family or person they are locating:

Refugees accessing public housing had less choice about the area and type of housing they live in, compared to private rental housing. It appeared that assessment processes among housing assistance services made little assessment of information about refugee and asylum seekers clients’ health, culture and settlement needs (Kelly 2004, p. 33).

Alloush (2001) from the Northern Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre in Melbourne identifies the lack of information about housing in the public and private sector as a major issue for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities. Information, she says, is often inadequate and does not reach those for whom it is intended. This extends to their rights in sourcing housing, and their legal rights and obligations as tenants, and she believes there is a need to educate those from CaLD backgrounds about the housing system in Australia (Alloush 2001, p. 14).

**Neighbourhood**

An important factor for migrants is to be near others of their community and background to provide support and minimise isolation, as the NHF (1998) design guide *Accommodating Diversity* indicates. Being aware of kinship networks and understanding how these help many households to survive is important to housing providers. For example, placing housing for both aged people and families in a group development could help preserve and strengthen kinship networks by allowing family members to live close by (NHF 1998, p. 9). Networks can also be created by locating migrants near services and facilities familiar to them and where community support is available:

Many migrants wish to be near other members of their community with specialist shops, places of worship, English classes for adults and children, child-care facilities, employment opportunities and ethnic welfare services within easy reach. For people

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22 CaLD: Culturally And Linguistically Diverse
who have not yet learnt English, travelling by public transport can be a harrowing experience (Goldflam 1992, p. 21).

Kelly (2007) suggests that part of the settlement process can be assisted by developing networks between people who share cultural backgrounds and the experience of torture or trauma, although she warns that this might not be a general rule as some migrants could choose to live away from their established communities (Kelly 2007, p. 71).

Further, Goldflam (1992) believes that clustering of migrants within a neighbourhood or a street might provide the networks and support of their own community and assist in settlement (Goldflam 1992, p. 21). Flanagan (2007) shares this view and thinks that living close to other community members is also important in addressing the social isolation migrants experience during settlement (Flanagan 2007, p. 65). However, the AHRC (1985) study sees some drawbacks, such as the highly visible presence of some groups when they are clustered (AHRC 1985, p. 186).

Perceived high levels of residential concentration of culturally diverse groups in towns in the north of England are seen to be contributing factors in the racial disturbances that occurred in 2001. Robinson (2005) highlights the UK government’s agenda on community cohesion23, a direct response to these disturbances, noting that the combination of housing conditions and the clustering of specific cultural groups is attributed as a key trigger (Robinson 2005, p. 1411). Reports on the issues arising from the investigation of these disturbances, Robinson (2005) says:

...drew attention to the fracturing of local communities and the perceived existence of ‘parallel lives’ whereby different communities and populations were seen to live, work and socialise separately (Robinson 2005, p. 1411).

The UK government’s response through the community cohesion agenda includes the review of community services and housing. This agenda, Robinson (2005) says, is flawed in that it is based on ‘disputed concepts such as ‘community and multiculturalism’ and draws on dominant

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23 Community cohesion (or social cohesion) is defined as an integrated agenda that incorporates, by striving to go beyond the concept of race equality, social inclusion and social mix, the stated aim being to help micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole.
discourses concerning key themes in contemporary public policy including social capital\textsuperscript{24} and the benefits of social mix\textsuperscript{25} (Robinson 2005, p. 1412).

Robinson (2005) goes on to challenge whether housing policy on the residential settlement patterns and cultural mix of neighbourhoods can effect the social change desired by governments, saying that:

\begin{quote}
If we want real community cohesion, it will take more than the promotion of residential integration and neighbourly interaction. Not only will collaborative structures and communication networks need to be created to improve understanding and appreciation (Robinson 2005, p. 1425).
\end{quote}

Commenting on the racial disturbances in the north of England and Macquarie Fields in Sydney, Hulse and Stone (2005) add to the debate on the fragile relationship between cultural diversity, poverty and social cohesion saying:

\begin{quote}
The case raises questions about the role of housing and housing assistance in contributing to or mediating potential community conflict or cohesion including in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. For example, what contribution, if any, did the estate design and housing type and form make to these events? Did aspects of public housing management play a role, for example, in allocating households to the estate? What effects positive or negative does tenure have on the community more broadly? What is the right mix of public tenants? (Hulse & Stone 2005, p. 16)
\end{quote}

In her study of the Somali community in Auckland, New Zealand, Lilley (2004) highlights the positive effect of culturally diverse groups clustering and maintaining strong networks. She concludes that although this group of migrants occupy housing at the bottom end of the market, often of low quality and in deprived areas, they have overcome that disadvantage principally by maintaining a strong cultural identity and networking through social and neighbourhood groups (Lilley 2004, p. 21). The Migrant Information Centre (MIC) (2004) report supports this view and states, ‘Community support and unity play a key role in the successful settlement of new arrivals and something many families value more than accommodation’ (MIC 2004, p. 9).

\textsuperscript{24} ‘Social capital firstly refers to ‘networks’, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within and among groups. Secondly it involves access by individuals to various types of resources which are embedded in social networks’ (Hulse & Stone 2005, p. 19).

\textsuperscript{25} ‘Social mix or social engineering is the planning of social changes according to a blueprint instead of allowing social institutions to develop in a haphazard manner’ (Bullock & Stallybrass 1977, p. 579).
A similar settlement pattern is experienced in Canada where Carter (2005) observes that immigrants are attracted to neighbourhoods where there are concentrations of a specific cultural group. This, he says, is having an effect on not only the social mix and but also the housing market in these areas (Carter 2005, p. 279).

In the AHRC (1985) study, members of the groups report experiencing social tension resulting from the concentration of disadvantaged households of different cultures, especially in high-rise housing. The poor living standard, the social stigma and crime rates in large public housing estates add to the pressure on migrants. Women in particular are concerned about their personal safety (AHRC 1985, p. 219).

Alloush (2001) notes that public housing estates on the fringe of city areas, where migrant families are often located because of the availability of larger houses, often lack the required supports:

Clients are placed in public housing where they are geographically isolated from extended families, their own ethnic communities, community services, schools, hospitals, employment and public transport. This limits their access to basic needs and restricts their opportunities to participate in social and recreational activities exacerbating other problems (Alloush 2001, p. 14).

Tuohy says:

Refugees are particularly disadvantaged because of their isolation particularly from family, information networks and language barriers. Many refugees rely on their own communities, the generosity of people they have contact with and church and community agencies, which receive little or no funding but try to fill the gap (Tuohy 2001, p. 9).

Another key requirement of migrant groups is to feel safe in their neighbourhood. Many migrants from Africa and the Middle East might have experienced torture or trauma before arrival and a safe and secure place to live will be important while they reorient themselves to a new living environment (Tuohy 2001, p. 9).

In their study of Muslim refugee women in Perth WA, Casimiro, Hancock and Northcote (2007) find that the women’s greatest concern is the substantial and increasing fear for their safety and security. Some of the participants in the study have experienced harassment from
their neighbours who use threatening and abusive language and are believed to demean Islamic beliefs (Casimiro, Hancock & Northcote 2007, p. 65).

Alloush (2001) and the AHRC (1985) study further stress this finding and concur that:

Many CaLD people are located in areas where they are subject to harassment and racism from their neighbours and other residents in the area (Alloush 2001, p. 14).

and:

Many participants in the study expressed concerns about burglary, assault, car damage, child surveillance (especially in high rise units), inadequate lighting and fear of crime generally (AHRC 1985, p. 162).

Security issues are a major concern for culturally diverse groups who are often the focus of harassment and violence. Many migrants occupy social housing in locations prone to such anti-social behaviour and seek accommodation providing a sense of physical safety (Flanagan 2007, p. 64). Hg and Field-Pimm (2001) point out that, by providing greater security in high-rise flats at Collingwood, the social housing authority have supplied accommodation that can now be accessed by varied cultural groups who require specific services within the inner regions of Melbourne (Hg & Field-Pimm 2001, p. 35).

The NHF (1998) design guidelines highlight the importance that the layout of a housing scheme can contribute to the feeling of security. They say that:

Layout and mix can be very effective in minimising vulnerability to the more common types of crime from burglary to theft to personal attack and racial harassment. They key principles to be followed include:
- overlooking of public spaces by surrounding houses;
- adequate fencing of private spaces, but without creating potential hiding places;
- no ambiguity as to what is private and what is public territory;
- avoidance ofalleys hidden from public gaze;

Further, Ziersch et al. (2007) find that studies indicate that communities with strong neighbourhood networks and high levels of social cohesion have lower levels of crime: also that fear of crime is seen to inhibit social interaction in neighbourhoods, and this is particularly relevant for migrants establishing in a new community. They therefore support the practice of
crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) which employs design methods to prevent crime through good urban design and community development, in preference to heightened police presence and other law enforcement measures (Ziersch et al. 2007, p. 558).

Beer and Morphett (2002) also find that kinship and community networks are very important to migrant groups and that their absence creates a greater reliance on government services. They therefore suggest that future policy development should examine ways to assist in establishing networks to better provide services for recent arrivals (Beer & Morphett 2002, p. 29).

Another growing issue for tenants within older social housing areas is the social impact of redevelopment and the consequent fragmentation of social networks (Arthurson 1998, p. 35). This has been highlighted in projects such as the Victorian Office of Housing redevelopment project at Kensington, an inner suburb of Melbourne. Hulse, Herbert & Down (2004) indicate in the social impact study that the redevelopment has required more than half the resident population of predominantly Vietnamese and African people to be relocated to other housing and that the process may have weakened community networks:

Current and former residents liked its (the estate’s) proximity to public transport, shops, facilities and health services and the people that lived there. Some residents of the neighbourhood streets liked the diversity the estate residents gave Kensington (Hulse, Herbert & Down 2004, p. xii).

Hulse, Herbert and Downs (2004) point out that the Victorian Office of Housing worked closely with the tenants to ensure they were relocated within five kilometres of Kensington and that suitable replacement housing was found. There were, however transitional issues particularly with families with children where school and support systems were disrupted:

For relocated tenants, moving meant a distinct lessening of social connectedness, both informal support and from community agencies and organisations. Some families continued to return to Kensington, particularly to see a family doctor or health service. Some friendships continue although people have been separated by the relocations. Public tenants remaining on the site reported lower levels of social connectedness than relocated tenants when they lived on the estate, perhaps because they were older and less likely to have children living with them (Hulse, Herbert & Down 2004, p. xiii).

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26 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED)


**House Style and Appearance**

Prasad (2003) notes that when people from diverse cultural backgrounds first arrived in the United Kingdom there was little choice available in housing form and layout that would support their traditions and therefore they needed to ‘make do’:

> Households of all ethnic groups were happy to adopt some elements of ‘Western’ differentiation of space – such as the arrangements of bedrooms and bathrooms (Prasad 2003, p. 25).

The situation of ‘one size fits all’ persisted until the growth of representational housing authorities for specific cultural groups:

> Those immigrant people in the UK dependent on public sector housing were unable to articulate any distinct functional requirements – let alone iconographic and formal issues - until the growth of housing organisations dedicated to minority ethnic groups (Prasad 2003, p. 25).

He adds that despite the diversity in culture in the United Kingdom there is little physical evidence of it on the landscape in terms of built form but this is not the case with the interior of the house. Here cultural groups will make changes to meet their specific household needs, such as the differentiation of men’s and women’s domains within a conventional Western-designed house (Prasad 2003, p. 25).

Although there might be inadequate housing choice for migrant groups, the NHF (1998) guidelines recommended that housing designed for them should not ‘stand out’, a response to the fear that distinctiveness might increase the threat of racial attack. The guidelines further acknowledge that, while some people might want to assert their cultural identity, architects needed to exercise some caution in their interpretation of specific vernacular styles:

> Motifs and features should enable people to identify with their houses and feel them to be special. However as yet there is insufficient information to assess this in the context of housing for minority ethnic groups. Moreover there is a significant weight of opinion amongst such groups against their houses ‘standing out’:

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27 Approximately 10% of all social housing providers or Housing Associations in England represent people from diverse cultural backgrounds or Black Minority Ethnic groups (BME). Included in the definition of BME include Asian, Caribbean, African or SE Asian ethnic groups. (Housing Corporation 2000)
Motifs and features evolve as expressions of a particular culture and even in the hands of artists do not reliably transfer to a different context. There is a danger of superficiality and needless expense. Principles can also be wrongly applied, but potentially bad results tend to be easier to detect early in the design. Best of all are designs that create harmonious and distinctive forms whilst efficiently and economically satisfying functional needs. If these forms subtly reflect some traditional shapes or figure then a further enriching layer of meaning will be added (NHF 1998, p. 12).

Achmadi (2003) observes that unless fully understood and executed, and unfettered by other influences, reproduction of vernacular style should be treated with caution. She sees indigenous architecture in Indonesia being constrained by politics through attempts to service an emerging identity and thus obscuring true cultural meaning:

Contemporary appropriations of indigenous traditions have in many cases been no more than the reproductions of traditional architectural ornaments in an unsatisfactory ‘cut and paste’ technique (Achmadi 2003, p. 32).

Burnley (2005) finds it difficult to trace the origins of cultural influence on outward housing forms in Sydney and thinks that cultural influences are more observable in interiors. However he does acknowledge that some earlier migrants from southern Europe used simple exterior ornamentation to display their newly acquired affluence (Burnley 2005, p. 340). However Lozanovska (1997) sees this ornamentation as a more deeply held form of individualising a house and imparting specific symbolism that asserts the position of the new arrival by confronting the established order and, in doing so, making meaning in a foreign landscape - an architecture of difference. She agrees with Burnley in seeing the exterior of the migrant house often hiding a more mysterious, although less understood, interior that is more reflective of individual taste:

Eagles and lions adorn gateways of the big migrant houses in a masculine gesture to fend off the enemy. But who is the enemy, what is being protected? What drives this extreme division between interior and exterior – ‘this wall of war’ architecture? (Lozanovska 1997, p. 108)

Burnley (2005) adds that migrants might prefer the apartment house form rather than the conventional Australian single house but this could be because of ‘youth and uncertainty’ rather than choice. He adds that in Sydney ‘all told 49 per cent of apartments in 2001 were occupied by overseas-born people compared to their share of the population count of 31 per
cent’. Referring to Mukherjee’s\textsuperscript{28} work he relays that ‘immigrants from the Middle East, Southeast and East Asia were more tolerant of apartment living than the Australian born’ (Burnley 2005, p. 338). However, studies often find this is not always what most migrants equate to a ‘home’, with strong preferences shown for the single detached house with its solid, secure appearance (AHRC 1985 p. 26).

The style of housing for affluent migrants has also caused some community concern in Canada in recent years, both for its appearance and the effect it has in overheating the real estate market. Carter (2005) describes the ensuing conflicts associated with the large suburban dwellings favoured by some Asian minority groups, that some people term ‘monster houses’ and consider to be architecturally unpleasant and environmentally destructive. He is quick to point out, however, that these are not the housing outcomes experienced by most migrants, but that they could demonstrate that some cultural groups might wish to display a different form of identity and expression in the community (Carter 2005, p. 281).

The NHF (1998) design guide suggests that an understanding of the home life of culturally diverse groups can be obtained from a basic knowledge of the traditional house forms in their place of origin, and how these forms accommodate the larger or extended family (NHF 1998, p. 50). The need for awareness of lifestyle in the design of housing for diverse groups is further reinforced by Cole and Robinson (2003) who recommend that:

\textbf{The development process must attend to culturally specific design considerations if new developments are to provide new housing opportunities for particular minority ethnic populations (Cole & Robinson 2003, p. 82).}

An understanding of the housing requirements of specific groups can often be obtained through working closely with them in a participatory design process. Martin and Casault (2005) describe such a project where a group of university students design a housing prototype for Amerindians in Canada. They find that when designing housing with the indigenous group, an understanding of their traditional requirements becomes more apparent:

\textbf{Some of the Inu also reminded students of their desire for a large, central open space where all members of a household could come together describing how they would often throw down mattresses in front of the television and fall asleep there, everyone in the same room (Martin & Casault 2005, p. 7).}

\textsuperscript{28}Mukherjee (2000), Immigration and Dwellings in Sydney, MA thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney.
They also discover that the group prefers designs that provide internally exposed roof structures, recalling their traditional tent and cabin interiors (Martin & Casault 2005, p. 7). Similar student projects at the University of Minnesota have provided insight into the needs of the Hmong and Somali people through culturally sensitive design (Hadjiyanni 2008, p. 4).

Alloush (2001) warns that care should be taken in allocating certain types and forms of houses to migrants who have been subject to torture and trauma before coming to Australia, and that some housing might be inappropriate in style or layout as it could trigger associations with past unpleasant events (Alloush 2001, p. 15).

Hg and Field-Pimm (2001) also note the limitations of the social housing system in currently providing for some groups. They consider that African people seeking accommodation in the public sector might often feel dissatisfied with the style and layout of social housing and have expectations way beyond what the system can provide. Conversely, they see that the providers can only work within the existing system, even though they may recognise that the current systems do not meet their clients’ needs (Hg & Field-Pimm 2001, p. 34).

The AHRC (1985) study finds that personalising the interior of the house is important for a tenant or homeowner, allowing them to have an influence over the appearance of their house:

> For migrants, especially for refugees, the process (of personalisation) is essential to soften the process of ‘grieving for a lost home’. As people grow older, too, the need to display mementos seems to increase, contributing to what is sometimes regarded as a ‘cluttered interior aesthetic’. The ritual act of personalising (often represented through scrubbing) is the first step in making a house one’s home (AHRC 1985, p. 160).

How this personalisation of the interior occurs will vary between groups but Lozanovska (1997) graphically describes the outcome when writing of the Southern European migrant house in Australia:

> ...the old culture erupts as ornament, the surfaces of walls, floors and furnishings are veiled with a myriad of thin coatings - embroideries, lace, photographs, books, clothes, mirrors, souvenirs. Shining technological objects are beside or underneath old memorial belongings (Lozanovska 1997, p. 117).

Shandy (2007) describes the social housing in the mid-west United States that is home to a migrant family from Southern Sudan, and the means by which the family personalise their
Western-style house. Despite the rather indifferent exterior of the housing block and the entrance, once inside, the unit takes on another appearance:

(It) reminded me of coming in off the dusty, hectic streets in Africa, cities like Addis Ababa or Nairobi to find soothing compounds, which lead to individual well maintained dwellings. Typical of many apartments I visited in various states this particular apartment had a kitchen, a bathroom and a very large living room, branching off to three bedrooms out of sight. The living room was dominated by large, seemingly new matching sectional sofas, decorated with purple-and-white hand crocheted antimacassars. There was a television and a rather sophisticated stereo that blasted Arabic-language music over the sound of the television. The walls had a picture of Tupac Shakur and several pictures of Jesus and were decorated at regular intervals along the top by crosses made from decorative wall border material. Perched on a shelf were a couple of sports trophies inscribed with a Sudanese name, the wall to wall carpeting, while not nearly as filthy as that in the corridor leading into the apartment, was unclean, and the Nuer family living there had covered it with a throw rug (Shandy D.J. 2007 p. 115).

Migrant groups might seek linkage and connection with their previous country through a preference for particular building materials for their house (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005). In a project to build a house for Hmong people in Minnesota29 the design process identified that this group prefer natural timber materials to conventional building materials such as plasterboard internal linings to walls:

The aesthetic closely relates to their prelocation housing material, plain wood and bamboo and taste for simplicity – Hmong traditional dwellings and artefacts use these materials in their natural state without additional colour or ornamentation (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 80).

The AHRC (1985) report emphasises that designers should make every effort to minimise the bulk of buildings and groups of flats, and to achieve a ‘domestic’ scale by siting and the choice of materials. This is particularly important with large-scale, highly visible medium- and high-density housing blocks on public housing estates:

Every effort should be made to reduce the ‘appearance’ of density through setbacks, use of warm ‘domestic’ materials, sensitive landscaping, small parking lots and so forth (AHRC 1985, p. 138).

29 The project was for the Amherst Wilder Foundation, a Minneapolis-based, non-profit foundation providing affordable housing. The project piloted the design and construction of two houses after a student project at the University of Minnesota collected information about the Hmong people from which the design was based. (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 73)
Family, Culture and Religion: Understanding Difference

*Accommodating Diversity*, the NHF (1998) design guide, draws attention to the housing needs of culturally diverse people and points out that current public- and private-sector design in the United Kingdom has inadequately catered for many households, from both religious and cultural perspectives. The design guide goes on to describe a process that redresses that inadequacy, using the basic premise that designing a house must start with those who will live in it, and also acknowledging that identifying cultural diversity is essential in the design process (NHF 1998, p. 1).

To promote better understanding of the needs of a variety of cultural groups residing in the United Kingdom, the NHF (1998) design guide provides brief background information about them to compare with mainstream social housing requirements. Most importantly, the design guide identifies that meeting cultural needs could encourage the expression of identity, promote inclusion and combat social exclusion (NHF 1998, p. 2).

In their report on housing for Somali people seeking accommodation, Cole and Robinson (2003) identify that social housing providers in the United Kingdom lack an understanding of the cultural and religious requirements of migrant groups. The report indicates that:

> Many social landlords showed a general lack of understanding about the experiences, requirements and preferences of Somali households. They tended to refer to minority ethnic households as a homogenous group. Monitoring of Somali experiences was relatively ad hoc and there was little evidence of any systematic attempt to collate and analyse data in order to learn key lessons and to review or improve practice (Cole & Robinson 2003, p. v).

Cole and Robinson (2003) further add that, given the lack of understanding of this group’s needs, there is a failure to provide the appropriate housing and services required or to deliver services in a culturally sensitive manner. A key factor in the process is the language barrier between the Somali group and the social housing provider, particularly as the relevant translation and interpretation services are limited or non-existent (Cole & Robinson 2003, p. v).

Family structure and size is an important issue for diverse cultural groups and impacts strongly on housing needs. The NHF (1998) design guide identifies the importance of distinguishing between large households and extended families, and suggests that their housing requirements
are different. Although the extended family could, like the large family, occupy a single house it might be possible to accommodate some family members in adjacent houses, a solution the guidelines call ‘sensitive allocation’. (NHF 1998, p. 14)

A recent report by Nasser (2007) on the CUDOS study in Birmingham indicates that the extended family is still a major characteristic amongst culturally diverse households, with often three generations occupying a house. This might be due to cultural preference but could also reflect that some members of the household cannot access other appropriate housing. The study points out, however, that among second and third generation groups the extended family structure is changing, with some forming smaller family units and moving out to more compact accommodation. This prompts the response that ‘it would appear from (this) study that the extended family phenomenon may eventually become a thing of the past’ (Nasser 2007, p. 20).

This has also led the Housing Authority in Birmingham to adopt a policy of ‘future proofing’ its housing to make it more flexible for a range of tenancies in the future:

The study reveals that more and more children from BME households are leaving the extended family home to start nuclear families. This will inevitably affect housing demand in the future and places huge importance on greater diversity in housing sizes. It also finds that the notion of extended families, although clearly still existent, is slowly being eroded (Morris 2008, p. 25).

In Newcastle UK the Guinness Trust (2003) finds that younger people are concerned that if they move away from their current home for educational or employment reasons, difficulties will arise for the adult members of the family who might have language difficulties and rely on their younger relatives for support (Guinness Trust 2003, p. 10). A study of immigrant groups in Bristol UK by Lambert and Razzaque (1997) identifies the most likely groups to leave the extended family for other accommodation as being single adults and couples with or without children. The main reasons given for fragmentation of the extended family were to escape overcrowding or to gain independence (Lambert & Razzaque 1997, p. viii).

In Australia, Kelly (2007) observes that inadequate housing size can also contribute to a migrant family being split up which can be culturally inappropriate: for example where the

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30 CUDOS is an acronym for Centre for Urban Design, Outreach and Skills which is a business unit of the Birmingham School of Architecture, Birmingham University, UK
oldest male in any dwelling must be responsible for the entire family in that house. Kelly (2007) notes that:

Splitting large families across more than one house structure and accommodation without a separate sitting room for the male and female is culturally inappropriate for some refugee and asylum seekers’ cultural backgrounds. The provision of culturally inappropriate housing was deeply offensive and increased the risk of family tension (Kelly 2007, p. 33).

Alloush (2001) identifies the size and layout of the standard Australian house as making it difficult for cultural groups to accommodate large families appropriately (Alloush 2001, p14). Hg and Field-Pimm (2001) also comment that many of the housing problems African families experience are increased because of their large family size and the difficulty in obtaining appropriate housing. They observe that:

Public housing has long waiting times with large families requiring 4-5 bedrooms looking at an average 4-year wait. Current policies in relation to housing allocations, design and location do not acknowledge the extended family commitments among African family groups. The strength of family is a fundamental structure within the various African groups. This generally extends to tribal connections as well (Hg & Field-Pimm 2001, p. 34).

Kabir (2004) indicates that with around 300,000³¹ members in Australia, the Muslim population makes up a large and distinctive group (Kabir 2004, p.334). Muslim groups have very specific requirements related to custom and religious practices which can affect house design (AHRC 1995; NHF 1998; Cole & Robinson 2003). Alloush (2001) observes, however, that among Australia’s diverse Muslim community, cultural practices are likely to vary between people from different ethnicities and according to how individuals practice their faith (Alloush 2001, p. 14).

Yasmeen (2007) explains that the primary focus of women in the Perth Muslim community is on the family unit, with networks of friends and acquaintances occupying a secondary place. She further states that:

The notion of the family unit rarely corresponds to the mainstream Australian definition of family. Instead of referring to a nuclear family, Muslim women’s idea of family includes members of an extended family as well as friends living in the house for an extended period of time (Yasmeen 2007, p. 45).

³¹ At the 2001 Census. This had increased to around 340,000 at the 2006 Census.
and:

The emphasis on nurturing also extends to caring for their elders instead of exploring alternative arrangements (Yasmeen 2007, p. 46).

Casimiro, Handcock and Northcote (2007) also identify the role and status of Muslim women in their country of origin as a major factor in resettlement in Australia saying that:

In general Muslim refugee women come from strong patriarchal societies. Husbands (and other male relatives) traditionally exercise considerable influence over the public activities of Muslim women. Traditionally family responsibilities structure the way in which Muslim women negotiate their religion, identity and the way they settle into Australian society (Casimiro, Handcock & Northcote 2007, p. 64).

Some insight into the cultural requirements of Muslim people living in Australia is gained in the needs analysis study of crisis accommodation prepared by Aly and Gaba (2007). The study highlights various etiquettes and dietary practices including the need for access to a source of halal meat and appropriate food preparation facilities. Etiquettes and practices demanded by their cultural and religious backgrounds also have implications for house design and the delivery of services by housing providers. Aly and Gaba (2007) list some major practices:

- In observing cleanliness some Muslim homes will require all visitors, Muslim and non-Muslim, to remove their shoes before entering the house.
- Hospitality is an Islamic requirement and all guests are treated warmly. It is common for visitors to be served with refreshments and food when visiting a Muslim home whether on a personal or business basis.
- Physical contact is not recommended when meeting a Muslim of the opposite gender.
- Do not enter the home of a Muslim without seeking permission.
- Make prior arrangements by making appointments when wishing to interview families so as to ensure both the husband and wife are present.
- It is not recommended that a man visit a Muslim home when a Muslim woman is alone in the house (Aly & Gaba 2007, p. 20).

The AHRC (1985) report identifies a number of specific needs for Islamic people relating to religious custom, prayer and body hygiene. Ideally, houses should be oriented so that one wall is at right angles to a radius oriented on Mecca (AHRC 1985, p. 114). Devout Muslims pray five times a day and wash their hands and feet before prayer. In the home, prayer is generally a private and individual activity and can take place anywhere. Men generally pray in the living room or ‘front’ room, women in the bedroom. Men also take part in collective acts of worship at the Mosque (NHF 1998, p. 23). In contrast, a study of housing needs in
Newcastle UK identifies that Pakistani, Bengali and Iranian people require a separate prayer room (Guinness Trust 2003, p. 9).

The importance of consultation for the design of housing projects is highlighted by Hg and Field-Pimm (2001) who describe how a housing working group, consisting of representatives of the various African communities, housing service providers and the Melbourne City Mission agency, was established to better understand cultural differences within Melbourne’s African community. The working group was involved with the Victorian Office of Housing’s Braybrook and Maidstone\(^{32}\) redevelopment program to provide appropriate housing for culturally diverse people:

The working group are supporting and encouraging the African Community to engage in the review of plans so that their needs for special types of housing are part of the plan. For example, 4-5 bedroom properties to accommodate large families, separate spaces to facilitate religious and cultural practices and the provision of community facilities within the estate (Hg & Field-Pimm 2001, p. 35).

Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) identify communication and consultation as forming an important step in the process of designing housing for diverse cultural groups. They assert that many architects cannot assume that they are conversant with the housing requirements of another cultural group, or that such needs can be readily learned from common texts, but instead must be involved with a specific group in order to understand their perspective before proceeding to design (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 71). A recent example where architects consulted with a culturally diverse client group is a project undertaken in Birmingham UK by the CUDOS group. Residents were asked to identify their specific requirements for their existing housing before it was upgraded:

The innovative design process intricately wove together professional expertise in architecture with in-depth understanding of the client’s cultural requirements. Positive engagement with the community has demonstrated that it is not an explicit design add-on but an inherent part of housing design made more adaptable and flexible to a wide range of social groups (Nasser 2007, p. 3).

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\(^{32}\) Braybrook and Maidstone are outer southwestern Melbourne suburban developments of the Victorian Housing Commission. Twenty per cent of the community is of a Vietnamese background and a smaller Dinka Sudanese community. (Pitts c. 2004, p. 59)
Family Culture and Religion: Buying and Renting a House

The social demographic and economic composition of migrant groups today, Wulff (2005) says, is determining the nature of housing demand in Australia and abroad, and this affects both the rental and home-buyer markets at the lower and upper levels. The demand for specific locations, she says, depends on ‘the extent that some migrant groups are attracted to particular neighbourhoods within cities, via the linkages with existing families and friends or the attraction of ethnic services’ (Wulff 2005, p. 258).

The Migrant Information Centre (MIC) (2004) identifies that traditionally the social housing sector has supported the needs of newly arrived migrants, but the critical shortage of social housing rental stock now makes these groups explore other housing options within the private housing sector. This poses problems for low-income migrants because of the lack of affordable properties on the market and their difficulties in dealing with private-sector landlords.

There is an expectation by migrant groups that they can expect to access public housing on arrival in Australia. Information about housing is often sourced from proposers, relatives and friends that they stayed with on first arrival. This information may still not be accurate and in particular there have been significant changes to benefits and housing opportunities that are now available to migrants and refugees. Housing assistance from governments is restricted to some refugee and asylum seeker groups which results in increased settlement difficulties and impedes participation in community life (MIC 2004, p. 16).

San Pedro (2001) points out that the private rental market traditionally does not cater for people with high needs, such as refugees, who might be facing language difficulties or torture and trauma issues. It also does not cater for people with low income and she adds that ‘the private rental market was often inappropriate for refugee or humanitarian settlers in terms of cost, size or location’ (San Pedro 2001, p. 14).

The aspiration to live in social housing is driven by affordability and the security of tenure it offers, although Flanagan (2007) discovers in her research that there is a poor match between the needs of refugees and social housing in Tasmania, both in terms of assessment criteria and housing stock. She identifies that available social housing stock is generally too small for large families, both inside the house and outside in the garden (Flanagan 2007, p. 69). Kelly (2007)
also comments that restricted eligibility for housing assistance has increased the risk of housing crisis and homelessness (amongst new arrivals) (Kelly 2007, p. 24).

Beer and Morphett (2003) state that international literature has described numerous obstacles that recently arrived refugees encounter in their search for affordable and appropriate housing which place them at high risk of becoming homeless. Their access to accommodation can be impeded by numerous factors they identify as:

- Financial Barriers
- Discrimination by Real Estate Agents
- Cultural Barriers
- Lack of Suitable Housing Options
- Lack of Familiarity with the Australian Housing and Legal Systems
(Beer & Morphett 2003, p. i).

Alloush (2001) remarks on the significant vulnerability of CaLD migrants and refugees in the private rental market, mainly because of a lack of information about their rights. She says that fear of losing accommodation may result in migrants paying more rent while landlords can take advantage of them over maintenance issues on the property. She goes on to say:

**Accessing housing within the private rental market proves difficult for many CaLD clients as they may not have the references required by the real estate agents to prove their reliability and may not be able to afford the initial bond and the rent of many houses. There are also communication barriers in that the real estate agents do not have the necessary information in different languages (e.g. property information and lease agreements) and do not use interpreters to communicate with people (Alloush 2001, p. 15).**

Despite most cultural groups preferring home ownership (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003) it is unlikely that lower-income migrants will achieve this in the short term and will instead need to look towards social housing options. Burnley (2005) adds:

**Housing affordability in real terms has fallen over the 30 years since the end of the post-war economic boom: it takes longer for more socio-economically disadvantaged immigrants to enter the owner-buyer market than a generation or so earlier (Burnley 2005, p. 338).**

Carter (2005) describes the rental housing market in most Canadian capital cities as being similar to that in Australia, with low-income immigrants prepared to accept lower-quality housing and families ‘doubling-up’ because of housing affordability, which later leads to
overcrowding. Quoting a study in 1999 by Ley, Carter (2005) states that ‘multi-family households (doubling-up) in Vancouver are also disproportionately associated with immigrants, particularly visible minorities’ (Carter 2005, p. 280). Studies cited by Carter (2005) indicate that it can take up to fifteen years after arrival for immigrant home ownership to exceed the Canadian average (Carter 2005, p. 283). In Australia the rate of overcrowding of accommodation is also increasing and it reportedly doubled in the four years between 1999 and 2003, rising from 0.7 per cent to 1.6 per cent (Ryan 2003, p. 4).

2.2.2 Design: The House

*Layout of the House*

London (2005) sees flexibility of layout and form as being essential to the design of housing to allow for alternative household structures, whether for smaller families or a number of generations living together. He identifies people from different cultural backgrounds, together with those with physical impairment, indigenous people, youth and the aged as groups whose specific needs are not being adequately met (London 2005, p. 3).

The NHF (1998) design guide, *Accommodating Diversity*, identifies a number of factors important in assisting the design of housing for culturally diverse groups, with major consideration being given to flexibility of the layout and use of rooms:

> An important feature of traditional housing in the places of origin of most minority ethnic groups is the flexible use of rooms. For example, sleeping can happen in a variety of places and not only in a dedicated ‘bedroom’. Of course some room use, such as kitchens and bathrooms, is fixed (NHF 1998, p. 27).

The design guide further acknowledges that, in the United Kingdom, the form and layout of the Western house with its defined living, sleeping and cooking areas, is accepted by most cultural groups today, although with important qualifications:

> There is a widespread demand for making the kitchen less a tightly planned room for the efficient production of cooked food by one person and more of a social space. There is a demand for two kinds of living/gathering spaces (NHF 1998, p. 27).

The requirements identified above are also reflected in Cole and Robinson’s (2003) study of the housing needs of Somali people in England which identifies the areas of concern for this group as the number of bedrooms, living space, kitchen design, cooking facilities and washing facilities. More specifically Cole and Robinson (2003) identify:

**Number of bedrooms (size of house);** Accommodation designed around the needs of the white-British nuclear family rarely provided adequate space or the required number of bedrooms.

**Living Space;** Preference for the living space to be divided into two living rooms (allowing men and women and old and young separate spaces in which to interact and relax).

**Kitchen design and cooking facilities;** The traditional social function of the kitchen as the hub of the household and cooking traditions were incompatible with small kitchens with limited storage space. Inadequate ventilation was also a problem.

**Washing facilities;** Preference for shower rather than bath.

**Accommodation for aged members of the family;** Both sheltered and supported accommodation was required (Cole & Robinson 2003, p. 59).

Kelly (2004) states that standard two- and three-bedroom Australian houses are unsuitable for large refugee and asylum-seeker families. She sees the scarcity and limited availability of suitably sized houses for large families as restricting and even excluding these groups from entering both the private and social housing markets. This might result in large and extended families sharing housing with sponsor families and friends, leading to overcrowded households or the separation of families (Kelly 2004, p. 71).

Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) in their work with the Hmong community in Minnesota also identify inappropriate size and layout of housing as being problematic for diverse groups with large families and say that it can limit cultural practices such as cooking:

**Often, however, entry spaces cannot accommodate an altar, standard American kitchens limit the type of foods that can be prepared because of space limitations and the smells that are generated; small social areas minimise the number of people who can be invited to celebrations as well as the timing of celebrations depending on the seasons (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 89).**

House size is an issue for cultural groups in Australia who are characterised by large and extended families and this has prompted some (AHRC 1985) to urge social housing providers to continue maintaining the supply of a range of rental housing options for a variety of household sizes and even to increase the number of four- and five-bedroom houses for larger
families. Further, provision of more flexible options is suggested, such as ‘granny flats’ that allow extended families to remain together (AHRC 2005, p. 102).

Brecknock Consulting (2006) in their study of Logan City, a culturally diverse social housing community in Queensland, remark that:

The availability of suitable size housing with sufficient space for large families is a determining factor for communities with extended families in establishing suitable suburbs in which to live (Brecknock Consulting 2006, p. 4).

Another major issue identified for culturally diverse groups is privacy, both from outside observation and within the house between family members, and between the family and visitors. The AHRC (1985) study finds that visual privacy is of particular importance to Muslim people while all groups want aural privacy. Identifiable territory for each member of the family is also important and this extends to the children who require relatively private space for doing their homework and other activities on a regular basis (AHRC 1985 p. 155).

Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) see dwelling privacy as important, particularly to those from more traditional cultures. They identify three categories of privacy that need to be respected in housing design:

1. Privacy in relation to others, such as neighbours;
2. Security against being watched; and
3. Privacy within the house (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 27).

The Turkish migrant group surveyed in the AHRC (1985) study indicate specific requirements in their need for privacy. For this cultural group, areas outside the house are seen as unclean and so they require a buffer zone between outside and the more formal confines of the house. The transition zone between public and private areas is generally an enclosed entry foyer where shoes are removed and visitors can be ushered into the house. Inside, the areas are zoned for family and non-family members and it is explained that:

Inside the Turkish house another set of zones influence daily life. The outer zone is the men’s area and the place (usually), the living room or parlour where non-related visitors are entertained. In the inner zone are found the women’s common area (ideally another living room), the kitchen, toilet bath and bedrooms. Only women’s friends and close male relatives are welcome in this area (AHRC 1985, p. 113).
Lozanovska (1997) describes the flexible use of the migrant house with the bedrooms, kitchen and living rooms forming a number of production sites. The rooms, and even the garden, are seen to be transformed to suit whatever use is required.

The kitchen is also used in productive ways, in addition to preparation of food – study, clothes making, translation, administration and official correspondence. These delineations are different to those in middle-class houses in which individual bedrooms are most important in the hierarchy of space (children in the migrant house typically share one bedroom) (Lozanovska 1997, p. 122).

Families ‘will use space differently at different times of the day (a room becomes a ‘private’ bedroom at night and reverting to communal use in daytime)’ (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 27). For some Muslim groups the living area of the house needs to be carpeted and capable of being subdivided by means of folding doors to better accommodate entertainment and daily prayer ritual (AHRC 1985, p. 102).

A recommendation by Cole and Robinson (2003) requires the development process to attend to culturally specific design considerations if new developments are to provide housing opportunities for particular culturally diverse groups. They believe such planning would increase these groups’ acceptance of housing and promote long-term positive housing outcomes. Further they see that:

The NHF’s Accommodating Diversity [would] provide a useful starting point for associations developing housing designed to meet the cultural requirements of the Somali population. Somali households interviewed in this research articulated a series of specific design features necessitated by cultural practices and religious protocols (organisation of living space, kitchen and bathroom arrangements). Developers need to be aware which requirements are essential and which are preferred. It is also useful to identify common needs among different ethnic groups, so that the future utility of accommodation for other population groups can be considered during the design process (Cole & Robinson 2003, p. 68).

Eating and Food Preparation

The kitchen is the area of the house that attracts the most interest and comment from cultural groups in the preparation of the NHF (1998) design guide. More floor space and storage, together with better cooking appliances, ventilation, sinks and taps and quality of finishes to the bench surfaces were the main concerns (NHF1998, p. 32).

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34 Development process refers to the statutory planning process of regulations and some design guides.
The Turkish women interviewed in the AHRC (1985) study raise the issue of kitchen size and state that their kitchens are too small. They highlight the importance of this room in the Turkish household and the need for kitchen space to accommodate a large number of people when socialising (AHRC 1985, p. 157). A recommendation of the AHRC (1985) study is that all kitchens in new or upgraded MOH\textsuperscript{35} housing with more than two bedrooms should be large enough to accommodate a table to seat at least five people (AHRC 1985, p. 159). However, not all culturally diverse groups like to combine the kitchen and the dining area, as they may want the kitchen and food preparation to be out of sight, although close enough for ease of access (Nasser 2007, p. 18).

Both natural and mechanical ventilation in the kitchen is seen as a major issue for cultural groups who have varied styles and methods of cooking (Penoyre & Prasad 1998; AHRC 1985; Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005; Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003). Some cultural groups may feel restricted in their cooking activities because of poor ventilation and the layout of their kitchen, and this in turn may curtail cultural activities such as entertaining large groups of guests.

Our interviewees, however, had difficulties cooking their traditional foods in open American kitchens as the smells from the frying and using spices permeated the rest of the house (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 83).

and:

Not being able to cook the foods that support their identity and culture added stress to the life of many of our interviewees (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 84).

The NHF (1998) design guide gives some insight into the cooking practices of culturally diverse groups in the UK:

Bangladeshi, Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Tamil and Vietnamese cooking all involve large amounts of fat and oil. Some Greek and Cypriot households may use a charcoal grill. Chinese cooking can involve simmering for seven to eight hours as well as stir-frying. In these cultures as well as others such as Somali, cooking for the family or as an act of hospitality is a large part of the life of the household (NHF 1998, p. 33).

The frequency of cooking and the large quantities of food that some cultural groups require necessitate significant additional storage space for bulk food items and large cooking utensils, and this space is often not available in standard social housing (NHF 1998; AHRC 1985; Ministry of Housing Victoria)

\textsuperscript{35} Ministry of Housing Victoria
Sarkissian & Stenberg (2003). Many households will need a large fridge/freezer or chest freezer, and storage space for large sacks of rice and root vegetables, and flour bins of plastic dustbin size (NHF 1998, p. 33).

The design guide notes that many groups require a mixer tap in the kitchen to provide a single stream of running water at a controlled temperature and that they also prefer a double sink with a swivel spout tap fixture to assist in meeting their cultural methods of food preparation and for washing large cooking pots. Kitchen units and appliances, and service fixtures such as meter boxes are not always at an appropriate height for some characteristically tall groups. A similar situation applies to bathroom vanity units and shower alcoves.

The height of [kitchen] units, fuses and filters should be set with regard to the heights of the likely occupants – for whom British anthropometric data may not be applicable (NHF 1998, p. 34).

Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) reinforce the view that many migrant groups use the kitchen as an important social space and they say that some cultural groups are more satisfied if kitchens are large enough to allow socialising while meals are being prepared, often by more than one person. They also mention the importance of circulation space in the kitchen:

The common error in Australian kitchen design of making the kitchen a thoroughfare between the living areas and the back door, resulting in a tangle of children underfoot should definitely be avoided (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 29).

and:

As the kitchen is in use most of the time cooking or talking, this is the most important room in the house. It is regarded as a family room which should be big and comfortable (NHF 1998, p. 32).

**Bathing and Bathrooms**

Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) stress that before undertaking any design of bathroom areas, it is critically important for cultural groups to be consulted about bathing requirements as not all groups had the same needs. They point out that this is particularly relevant for Muslim people who have specific requirements for additional bathroom fixtures and the availability of a single stream of running water for cultural and religious purposes (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 31).
With some groups preferring strict zoning of public and family areas in the house, the NHF guide notes that it is also desirable to have a toilet and washing facilities adjacent to a living room for the use of visitors, in addition to a family toilet located near the bedrooms or family areas of the house (NHF 1998, p. 40).

Most of the larger households in the AHRC (1985) study prefer a separate bath and shower room and a separate toilet and basin. It is also important to have a mixer tap on any basin to allow a single stream of water for washing. Where a basin cannot be installed in a separate toilet it is suggested that a water tap be provided adjacent to the toilet to allow washing after toilet use and this would require careful sealing of surfaces near these areas. If the social housing provider is unwilling to install this additional plumbing then the tenant should be permitted to undertake the work at their cost (AHRC 1985, p. 159).

People from minority cultural groups consider that proper hygiene requires washing in running water, as opposed to lying in a bath or washing from a filled basin. The preference for using running water requires increased water resistance of surfaces and detailing (NHF 1998, p. 37).

and:

[For Muslim people] Washing is necessary after toilet use, as a preparation for prayer and after sexual intercourse (AHRC 1985, p. 114).

Some Muslim households may consider it important to correctly orientate the toilet pan and the ideal positioning would be at right angles to the alignment with Mecca. Since many existing social housing properties would have the correct or near correct orientation of the toilet pan to fulfil this requirement, the ARHC (1985) study suggests that an audit of their existing properties be made and the appropriate properties noted on the social housing provider’s database for reference when letting. (AHRC 1985, p. 114)

The bathroom vanity unit and fittings, such as the bath and shower rose, should suit the height of the members of a specific household.

An association housing Sudanese people has found that many of the tenants find the standard bath too small. In this case rather than a ‘one-off’ solution of bigger baths a more general solution of installing showers permitting a high shower head position has been adopted (NHF 1998, p. 38).
Entertainment and Living Areas

The NHF (1998) design guide indicates that entertainment and living areas are often a compromise, with other areas of the house being transformed into an additional living room, thereby demonstrating the importance of such areas to the way diverse cultural groups live and provide hospitality. The formal dining room might ‘not accurately fit the room-use pattern of most minority ethnic groups’ so it is used as a family room or as a second living room which will also be used for eating (NHF 1998, p. 35). The way that living areas are used will vary with the cultural background of the occupants although they are usually linked to hospitality and entertainment.

In orthodox Muslim households the living room is generally a strictly separate men’s domain especially when guests are present;
In Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian households the living room provides a strong social focus, for example a ‘coffee ritual’ with many guests- the coffee being heated in clay pots and incense being burnt;
In some cultures – including Kurdish and certain Vietnamese ones – the celebration of festivals and lengthy entertaining of friends is most important;
In many Asian and Afro-Caribbean households the living room is used much as the traditional English parlour, i.e., kept immaculate for visitors (NHF 1998, p. 35).

The size of living rooms is important for culturally diverse groups, especially in large households where at least two living areas are usually required (NHF 1998; Hadjiyanni and Robinson 2005). There is a preference for these living areas to be linked, creating an even larger room when needed, thereby allowing for a large number of people to be entertained at times of celebration. Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2003) say, in the case of the Hmong in America, this large space is linked to the vernacular architecture of their homeland of Laos (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 83).

The CUDOS (2007) study in Birmingham finds that a reception or a guest room is very important to most culturally diverse groups and although it is often underused, the room is seen as a place to accommodate gender separation. Some groups also use the room for prayer. Others view the guest room as an ‘English parlour’, being closed off and kept clean, where the family displays its best furniture and ornaments. It is acceptable for this room to open into a less formal space, such as a family or dining room, through connecting doors (Nasser 1997, p. 12). The guest room is described as:
...an important room for large gatherings such as festivals, births and deaths. Preference for this room to be opened into a larger sitting room for those occasions where up to 40 guests may be present. Most wanted a large room to be located close to a large spacious hallway at the front of the house. The (guest room) was also used for prayer because it is a quiet and well cleaned part of the house (Nasser 2007, p. 12).

The house entrance is usually located close to the main living area and it is seen as good design to ensure that the entrance opens into an area that allows some privacy from the living rooms and the other areas of the house:

It is good design in any house for the entrance door to open into a decent sized space that allows one to pause, guests to be welcomed, coats to be taken off, pushchairs to be parked, bags set down or shoes exchanged for house slippers (NHF 1998, p. 30).

Other studies (AHRC 1985; Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003) recognise that most residents object to the design of houses that allow direct access to the living room from the front door. An enclosed entrance or lobby is seen to respect the requirement of many groups to separate their private life from outside public activities and also to provide an element of security (AHRC 1985, p. 183 and p. 146; Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 21).

Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) observe that for traditional cultures the house is often also a workplace and that the specific zoning of uses is not as rigid as in the layout and use of the typical Australian house (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 4). In the UK some benefits are seen for members of culturally diverse groups to be working from home:

The divorce of home and paid work can be very unhelpful to poorer families. Additionally people of minority ethnic groups often originate from cultures where the home is an economic unit. Thus there are good economic and cultural reasons for thinking in a more integrated way about home and workplace (NHF 1998, p. 18).

The NHF (1998) guidelines also point out that there have been successful developments in the UK that have combined homes and workplaces such as studios and small workshops. This is thought to be a strategy that could be important to culturally diverse groups (NHF 1998, p. 18).

Garden areas are seen to serve several functions for culturally diverse groups (AHRC 1985; NHF 1998; Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2003). Foremost perhaps is the use of such areas for socialising, easing the burden posed on the interior of the house during times of family entertaining and celebrations (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2003, p. 83). The back yard is the
preferred garden and entertainment area and, if fenced, it provides privacy and enclosure. The effectiveness of this space is dependent on a number of factors including its size, the solar orientation and outlook (AHRC 1985, p. 143; Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 12). There are also other more therapeutic and spiritual values in having a garden for ‘not only is it a safe place (especially from racial harassment) but it also provides a degree of independence in being able to move out of the house’ (NHF 1998, p. 44).

**Sleeping and Bedrooms**

Size of bedrooms and flexibility of sleeping arrangements are important in culturally diverse households (NHF1998; AHRC 1985). The NHF (1998) design guide indicates that there is often a mismatch between the way cultural groups want to have their sleeping arrangements and the house layout. By choice these families will often have three beds in one room, no matter how large the house and this will leave little room for accommodating other furniture (NHF 1998, p. 41).

The need for flexibility of bedroom size is also identified in the AHRC study, which recognises that sharing rooms with other family members may be a preference in some families:

> For large MOH\(^{36}\) units (4-bedroom or more) at least one bedroom should be large enough to contain a double bed and small bed or cot  (AHRC 1985, p. 160).

Also the NHF design guide indicates that:

> There is a preference among many groups for a mix of single and double bedrooms with relatively more of the latter. This allows flexibility, for example, in providing for children of different sexes or babies (NHF 1998, p. 41).

With hospitality and entertainment being an important part of life for diverse cultural groups, overnight visitors often need to be catered for. In addition, such groups often like to provide accommodation for members of their extended family, again requiring extra bedroom space (NHF 1998, p. 41).

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\(^{36}\) Ministry of Housing Victoria
In Muslim households there may be specific requirements for the layout of the bedroom. Jilalbhoy (1982) and the NHF (1998) design guide indicate that bedrooms are generally multi-purpose areas, often being used for prayer in addition to sleeping. The orientation of the bed is also important and the feet of the sleeper should not point towards Mecca (Jilalbhoy 1982, p. 105; NHF 1998, p. 41) but this can pose some problems with the positioning of services:

...while it may not always be possible to orient the whole house to take this [orientation] the position of sockets and the direction of opening the door should be thought through carefully to allow the most favourable orientation of the beds (NHF 1998, p. 41).

**Comfort**

The AHRC (1985) report recommends that all existing houses owned by the Ministry of Housing of Victoria be reviewed to assess their solar access and energy efficiency to achieve maximum winter and summer comfort and that, ‘All groups (surveyed) highly valued sun and light into rooms and private gardens, balconies, terraces and patios’ (AHRC 1985, p. 141).

Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) comment that migrant groups often highly value sun and light access to rooms, balconies and garden areas.

> For residents from Asia access to the morning sun will be important: a ‘lucky house’ may be one that faces east; sunrise and sunset are important times in many Asian cultures (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 18).

The AHRC (1985) study reveals that tenants in both social and private-sector housing in Melbourne consider heating of the house in winter to be their main concern. It states that there has been a general perception that heating the home is not an issue in Australia and then expresses some concern for the health of families as a result of this lack of heating, going on to recommend that subsidised heating should be provided. Most culturally diverse groups in social housing have to rely on welfare payments for their income and may find it difficult to fund heating and cooling of the house (AHRC 1985, p. 141). Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) also note that heating in winter is an important issue for people who come from warmer climates and that maintaining a constant temperature in the home may be important for child rearing activities (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003, p. 18).
2.3 Summary

The literature review has been qualified by examining a catalogue of issues raised in the NHF (1998) design guide, *Accommodating Diversity*. Consequently the range of literature examined and discussed is grounded in these issues for the purpose of informing the research of any areas not being fully met in current housing design for cultural diversity.

The possibility that needs are not being met is first highlighted through the guide’s discussion of general housing provision issues for cultural groups, where access to services and supports is vital and often linked to restricted housing choice (Sim 2000). Further, having the necessary supports and maintaining strong kinship relationships are important in the successful establishment of groups in a neighbourhood (MIC 2004; Hulse 2005; Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005). Linked to this is the necessity for safe and secure housing for culturally diverse groups who are generally highly visible and vulnerable in the community (Casimiro, Hancock & Northcote 2007; Alloush 2001; AHRC 1985). Housing that ‘stands out’ is identified as being of particular concern to some, although making one’s presence felt may be important to others, an apparent contradiction warranting further investigation (AHRC 1985; NHF 1998; Achmadi 2003).

The NHF (1998) guide identifies that understanding the part that family, culture and religion play in the provision of social housing for culturally diverse groups is a major issue. The need to consult with groups to discover more about their housing needs is an obvious starting point (Cole & Robinson 2003; Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005). As identified by Aly and Gaba 2007; Casimiro, Hancock & Northcote 2007, some specific groups such as those in the Muslim community may also have religious practices affecting their housing needs.

Various forms of housing tenure may be appropriate for cultural groups at different life stages and, while some might prefer to own their home (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003), significant barriers are identified to achieving this aim (Beer & Morphett 2005). This, Burnley (2005) points out, would direct migrants to the rental market initially, particularly in the social housing category, making the design of this accommodation an important issue for some groups.

More specifically addressing the design of the house, it is apparent that the Western-style house often lacks sufficient flexibility of layout to suit a variety of cultural needs (NHF 1998;
Kelly 2003). Cole and Robinson (2003) observe that this ranges across a whole gamut of issues from kitchen design, washing facilities and bedroom size. There are also different requirements for maintaining privacy from the outside and this also would need to be acknowledged as an issue in designing housing for diversity (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003; AHRC 1985).

The NHF (1998) guide and Hadjiyanni & Robinson (2005) identify entertaining, and having living rooms of an appropriate size to accommodate it, as a major lifestyle issue for most culturally diverse groups. Such activities might include cultural practices requiring separate rooms for different functions and extend to a need for space to work and study at home (NHF 1998). Some groups might also prefer large bedrooms to meet their specific lifestyle and family arrangements (NHF 1998; AHRC 1985).

The literature has raised a number of issues associated with housing for cultural diversity, an area of concern seen to arise from the migration policies of governments. Whether most countries can meet the housing needs of their new residents is debatable, leading to questions about whether the design of existing housing is appropriate or sufficiently adaptable to suit different cultural requirements. The migrant groups most in need, such as refugees, will look towards social housing providers to meet their needs, since affordable rents and the support services offered make this a desirable option for such groups. However, few are sufficiently fortunate to be housed by these organisations and must rely on the private sector.

The above issues have led to a line of research which seeks to identify some of the housing needs of new immigrant groups now settling in South Australia and to examine how social housing providers perceive these needs. In addition, the research studies the characteristics of some of the social housing options currently available to cultural groups, all modelled on the Australian archetypal house, the appropriateness of which is reviewed in the light of the key factors identified in this literature and the issues raised by the authors.

This examination and review provide a means by which the following research question can be addressed:

‘How are the housing needs of culturally diverse groups met by the practices and design of social housing?’
Chapter 3. Research Approach

3.1 Introduction

This study sets out to determine whether HousingSA’s social housing designs meet the needs of diverse cultural groups in South Australia. This will require an insight into the housing needs of a number of cultural groups living in South Australia and the housing providers’ perception of those needs, together with an assessment of the suitability of current social housing design. The investigation will require the adoption of a suitable approach or *System of Inquiry* (Groat and Wang 2002), together with a methodology and methods that can be used to answer the research question, and this will be the subject of the first part of the chapter. Secondly, it will detail how the selected approach has been applied to the study.

3.2 Theory

Traditionally architectural research may be seen to focus on the more objective aspects of enquiry and be concerned with quantifiable and measured outcomes related to the science of building, thereby directing the researcher to a more positivist and reductionist stance. Robinson and Hadjiyanni (2005), quoting Pavlides and Sutton about the architect’s approach, state:

> Architects and planners, however, by training, focus on the aesthetic qualities of the built environment, lacking specifically in their treatment of themes such as social and cultural values (Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005, p. 71).

The topic being researched raises issues about subjectivity, i.e. the preferences of cultural groups for a particular type of housing or neighbourhood in which to live. With house design also, there are the influences that the designer or the provider of the housing may bring to the research. These issues are not easily quantifiable for they are based on a number of factors, including the individual’s perception of the world, their education and experience in these matters, i.e. their values and biases.

The method of investigation for this study should therefore recognise that subjectivity will be a key factor in this research and that a suitable research paradigm, based primarily on qualitative methods of investigation, will be a major part of the approach taken. This is not to say, however, that some elements of the objectivist or positivist approach may not be engaged in this study, resulting in combined strategies and methods.
Unfortunately the quantitative/qualitative terminology, though beguilingly simple, places the emphasis on distinctions at the level of tactics, i.e. the techniques for gathering or interpreting evidence or data. But, distinctions between research methods at this level are often not clear-cut. Many research studies employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative tactics (Groat & Wang 2002, p. 26).

The combination of inductive methods of the qualitative and the deductive methods of the quantitative approaches may need to be used in a study to obtain a full and rich picture of the phenomena. For example, in addition to understanding the more subjective needs of the cultural groups, part of this research also involves understanding the house forms available and how they are designed using the various design guide standards, and this will require a quantitative approach.

Crotty (1998, p.4) defines the four elements required to establish a research proposal: methods, methodology, theoretical perspective and epistemology, and he assembles a representative sampling of each category in tabular form to give an understanding of how each element links together in the preparation of a proposal.

Table 1: Elements of a Research Proposal (Source: Crotty 1998, p. 5)

NOTE:
This table is included on page 57 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Crotty indicates this is not an exhaustive listing (1998, p. 5).
The chosen four research elements or ‘string’\(^{38}\) that flow across the table, Crotty says, ensure the soundness of the research and make the outcomes convincing. He adds that in adopting such an approach, ‘it constitutes a penetrating analysis of the process and points up the theoretical assumptions that underpin it and determine the status of its findings’ (Crotty 1998, p. 6).

3.2.1 System of Inquiry (Theoretical Perspective)

To choose a methodology and indeed the methods to investigate any phenomena from the outset might ignore the epistemological questions of what knowledge we seek from the research and this would be an oversight. As Crotty observes:

> Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. To ask about these assumptions is to ask about our theoretical perspective (Crotty 1998, p. 2).

If, as Crotty says, the epistemology of objectivism is tied to scientific knowledge purportedly being both accurate and certain, how does it fit with the opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions that are obtained in non-scientific ways and does this leave room for the subjective? He then seemingly answers this question:

> We should accept that whatever research we engage in it is possible for either qualitative or quantitative methods, or both, to serve our purpose (Crotty 1998, p. 15).

Even the goal to keep the research procedures devoid of the potential value influence of the researcher within a positivist paradigm is somewhat problematic, with the evolution of a post-positivist stance that now accommodates researcher subjectivity. The acknowledgement therefore that all research processes are value laden, both from the researcher’s and the participant’s viewpoint, is now central to any research.

> Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape enquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13).

\(^{38}\) Crotty describes a typical ‘String’ as Constructionism, Symbolic Interactionism, Ethnography, Participant Observation (1998, p. 5).
Denzin and Lincoln (2003) further argue that this approach will answer questions of how social experience is created and given meaning, contrasting with quantitative studies, the objectivist paradigm, that emphasise the ‘measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes’, and therefore is supposedly free from value judgement (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, p.13).

Patton (1987, p.39) points out that quantitative evaluation research of educational programs is largely of a technical nature and therefore may be considered simply as data collected by technicians without a regard for theory. This, he remarks, may be a response to what is required by the decision makers who have a narrow focus in ‘fine tuning’ such programs. He gives a checklist of questions that might be asked if a qualitative approach is to be considered in research and this includes the required individualised outcomes for the groups under consideration and the in-depth information required about the groups.

Therefore, when dealing with people and their perceptions of events, the qualitative paradigm is seen as more inclusive of human response:

**Qualitative methods are stressed within the naturalistic paradigm, not because they are anti-quantitative but because qualitative methods come more easily to the human-as-instrument (Lincoln & Guba 2003, p. 267).**

They further observe that this approach lets the ‘voice’ of the researcher and the participant be heard through the various methods employed in gathering information. Similarly it allows for reflexivity or the ‘process of reflecting critically the self as researcher, the human-as-instrument’ (Lincoln and Guba 2003, p.283).

This awareness of others and of self is a requirement when researching the meaning of phenomena and requires a suitable qualitative approach such as that of the naturalistic paradigm which Patton says allows a certain openness and permits the evaluator to be sensitive to the varied perspectives of the participants (1987, p. 35). Crotty (1998) supports this view saying, ‘The naturalistic or constructionist paradigm is the epistemology that the qualitative researchers tend to evoke’ (Crotty 1998, p.9).
The Naturalistic Paradigm, or the Constructionist Paradigm, accounts for the complexity of social relationships and the interpretation that might be placed on any enquiry pursued by the researcher. Crotty (1998) says of this paradigm:

What constructionism claims is that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world in which they are interpreting (Crotty 1998, p. 43).

and further:

From the constructionists’ viewpoint, therefore, meaning (or truth) cannot be described simply as ‘objective’. By the same token it cannot be described as ‘subjective’ (Crotty 1998, p. 43).

In accepting that meaning is constructed, it follows that, as Crotty (1998) observes, different people will construct meaning in different ways even for the same subject, such as housing (Crotty 1998, p. 44). On one hand there are the users of the housing who have come from varied backgrounds which would influence their views, and on the other there are the provider, the custodian and the designer of the housing, whose own experiences influence their views and perspective.

This research will involve interaction with several groups of people to generate findings. Since the participants are from either diverse cultural backgrounds or mainstream Australian backgrounds, there is a need to recognise that their view of housing may be widely divergent as a result of their varied life experience. That is to say, it is important to recognise that the responses given by participants will vary, based on their socially constructed realities of a particular situation identified in the interviews. Information gathered from these groups will be subjective and seen as a construct of their realities, and therefore forms an inductive process of inquiry. During the process of inquiry, the researcher also interacts with the groups and in a similar way the realities of the researcher impact on the outcome of the findings. The System of Inquiry will therefore essentially require qualitative strategies and tactics to explain the phenomena.39

39 The word ‘phenomena’ is used here in the context of the broader meaning of ‘housing’; i.e. the meaning of ‘housing’ as understood by the study participant.
3.2.2 Methodology (Strategies)

This study is about the way various groups perceive their housing, either as user or provider. In the previous section it was established that the most effective way of thinking about this phenomena was through a qualitative research approach. To obtain this understanding a suitable methodology, or ‘a way of thinking about and studying social reality’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 3) that allows a true picture to emerge of the requirements of the various groups and their housing providers, will be required. This will be obtained from the collection and analysis of a wide range of data.

*Grounded theory* is a strategy or methodology usually associated with the qualitative research approach being an open-ended iterative process. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) describe grounded theory as ‘derived from data systematically gathered and analysed through the research process.’ Groat and Wang (2002) see this approach as allowing the researcher to enter a setting without preset opinions or notions to allow the building of themes from the data collected. Patton (1990, p. 167) says that this methodology ‘takes the researcher into and close to the real world so that the results and findings are “grounded” in the empirical world’. Further, Strauss and Corbin (1998) say this grounding of the research in the data lends a greater ‘reality’ to the research which is more sound than theory based on experience or speculation.

Charmaz (2005) describes the way in which the process unfolds:

*Grounded theory studies emerge from wrestling with data, making comparisons, developing categories, engaging in theoretical sampling and integrating and analysis. But how we conduct all these activities does not occur in a social vacuum. Rather the entire research process is interactive; in this sense, we bring past interactions and current interests into our research and we interact with our empirical materials and emerging ideas as well as perhaps granting agencies, institutional review boards and community agencies and groups along with research participants and colleagues. Neither data nor ideas are mere objects that we passively observe and compile (Charmaz K. 2005, p. 510).

This iterative data analysis process, Strauss and Corbin say, is concerned with the assembly of information from a variety of sources consisting of ‘interviews and observations but might include documents, films and videotapes and even data that has been quantified from other purposes such as census data’ (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 13). Breaking down the data to
establish concepts or central ideas from the texts or transcripts is achieved by means of conceptualising and assigning codes.

**Conceptualising is the process of grouping similar items according to some defined properties and giving the items a name that stands for that common link. In conceptualising, we reduce large amounts of data to smaller more manageable pieces of data (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 121).**

The methodology of this study also borrows from an interpretivist, phenomenological perspective, in that it aims to understand the ‘complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it’ (Groat & Wang 2002, p. 186). This allows the massing of information about each group to permit a ‘thick description’ of the context under discussion. Geetz (1973) refers to ‘thick description’ as a means of communicating the intentions and motivations behind an event, enabling the research to present a deeper and more meaningful description of the event. This approach avoids a possibly superficial observation about the event or events, or a ‘thin description’. For example, if an architect is asked what they think important in designing housing, they might reply that they follow established practice, whereas a ‘thick description’ would give details of the considerations and priorities the architect employs in designing housing.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) list the characteristics of the grounded theorist as:

- The ability to step back and critically analyse the situation;
- The ability to recognise the tendency towards bias;
- The ability to think abstractly;
- The ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticism;
- Sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents;
- A sense of absorption and devotion to the work process (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 7).

In addition to gathering data first-hand, this research also requires the interpretation of information about housing process and design from documents, including design guides, policies of agencies and housing plans. This non-interactive approach will produce data for reviewing and analysing the main housing options currently available for diverse cultural groups in South Australia. This combined strategy of using interactive with non-interactive methods will facilitate comparison of the groups’ needs with the housing forms now available, and examine the current process of housing production. Such an approach will also allow for
greater depth, and reinforcement of any weakness, in the data collected and will help to ensure credibility of the findings.

3.2.3 Tactics (Methods)

**Collecting information**

Qualitative research tactics (Groat & Wang, 2002) or methods (Crotty, 1998) are used both interactively by engaging in interviews with people and non-interactively through, for example, interpretation of written material or drawings. Tactics that could be involved in a qualitative study might include some of those listed below but these are by no means all of the tactics or methods that might be adopted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics (Method)</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Interactive/Active</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(unstructured)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(structured/unstructured)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Documentation</td>
<td>Archival interpretation</td>
<td>Non-interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefactual Documentation</td>
<td>Artefactual Interpretation</td>
<td>Non-interactive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patton (2002) identifies three kinds of qualitative data collection, ‘ (1) in-depth open-ended interviews, (2) direct observation and (3) written documents’ (Patton 2002, p. 20). For this research, extensive use is made of interviews and written documentation. As part of the case study, the house of one of the respondents was visited and observations made, and notes and photographs taken of the layout and use of the house.

**Interviews**

Achieving neutrality in interviewing, a tactic used significantly in qualitative research, raises issues with both the interviewer and those being interviewed:

*Increasingly qualitative researchers are realising that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but rather active interactions between two (or more) people, leading to negotiated, contextually based results (Fontana & Frey 2005, p. 698).*
The quality of information and the necessity to test methods for confirmability or neutrality are therefore significant. In-depth or open-ended interview questions allow participants to interpret them broadly and contextualise their answers using their specific experiences. This method allows greater reflection on the phenomena under investigation which can reduce biases. Patton (2002) feels that the in-depth or open-ended interview obtains the interviewee’s experiences and perspectives ‘in their own terms’, assisting at least in part to preserve neutrality.

Open-ended questions and probes yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge. Data consists of verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable (Patton 2002, p. 20).

Case Studies

Case studies or fieldwork utilise both in-depth interviews and written material, and are another method of qualitative research (Stake 2005; Patton 1998). This method allows the evaluation of an individual’s requirements and allows greater critical insight into phenomena. Groat and Wang state that:

The case study’s strength is its capacity to generalise to theory, much the way a single experiment can be generalised to theory which in turn can be tested through experiments (Groat & Wang 2002, p. 354).

Patton (1987) states that case studies are particularly useful where a problem or issue must be understood in greater depth and where cases can be identified that are rich in information (Patton 1987, p. 19). Such is the situation with individual interviewees in the cultural groups being researched who discuss specific needs for their housing, thereby revealing individual differences and variations.

Document Analysis

Archival material and artefactual information are also an important source of information that, when analysed, can provide insight into phenomena and, as Patton states, can preserve context (Patton 2002, p. 21). Qualitative research and interpretive historical research remain closely related, and are often combined. Insight into the social aspects of buildings may be achieved through the study of their form or style:
For example historical research may advantageously incorporate a focus on the social impact of a particular building, style or city form. Likewise, studies of contemporary environments may project from the analysis of historical archives and physical artefacts (Groat & Wang 2002, p. 180).

**Analysis of Information**

Qualitative research results in vast quantities of data from interview transcripts, observation notes and other material from document analysis. The major task in the analysis stage is to reduce the data to a manageable size and this is usually undertaken by using a coding procedure where placing data in categories allows themes to emerge from the transcripts and documents (Groat & Wang 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) observe that analysis is a two-way process between the researcher and the data, saying that:

> It is both a science and an art. It is science in the sense of maintaining a certain degree of rigour by grounding analysis in data. Creativity manifests itself in the ability of researchers to aptly name categories, ask stimulating questions, make comparison and extract an innovative, integrated, realistic scheme and masses of unorganised raw data (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 13).

Through this analytical process of breaking down the data and identifying concepts, themes can emerge, assisting in understanding the phenomena. Patton (1990) says *convergence* of data, or what fits together, leads to the development of a category system for the data. He further adds:

> The evaluator-analyst begins by looking for ‘recurring regularities’ in the data. These regularities represent patterns that can be sorted into categories. Categories should then be judged by two criteria: ‘internal homogeneity and external homogeneity’. The first criterion concerns the extent to which the data that belong to the certain category hold together or ‘dovetail’ in a meaningful way. The second criterion concerns the extent to which differences among categories are bold and clear (Patton 1990, p. 403).

The analyst is required to work back and forward between the categories to verify their importance and accuracy. Having done this the analyst is faced with the *divergence* of the data or identifying the categories in which to place the data.

> The analyst brings closure to the process when sources of information have been saturated so that new sources lead to redundancy. (Patton 1990, p. 404).
3.2.4 Measuring Research Quality

Practical standards that guide the quality of conclusions of any research study need to be considered from the outset. Miles and Huberman (1994) are of the view that qualitative studies take part in the real social world and can have real consequences on people’s lives. They have identified five main standards that should be considered in testing the trustworthiness and authenticity of research. For qualitative or naturalistic research these standards are confirmability, dependability, credibility, transferability and application (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 278). The table below gives an explanation of the terms and questions that the researcher might ask him/herself to achieve quality in the research.

Table 3: Quality Standards (Source: Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 278)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Standard</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Confirmability</td>
<td>Is there a description and record of the study’s methods and procedures?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Has the sequence of data collection and processing been identified?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have personal assumptions, values and biases been identified?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Has data been retained for future reanalysis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dependability</td>
<td>Are the research questions clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the role of researcher defined?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has data been collected across a full range of settings, times and respondents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have coding checks been made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have data checks for bias, deceit and informant knowledge been made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has a peer review been undertaken?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Credibility (Validation)</td>
<td>How context rich and meaningful are descriptions (thick description)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the account plausible and comprehensive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does triangulation assist convergence of findings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did the informants consider the conclusions to be accurate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transferability</td>
<td>Are the characteristics of the original sample of person, settings, processes fully described enough to permit adequate comparison with other samples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What limits were there to the sampling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there enough ‘thick description’ to assess the potential for transferability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the processes and findings generic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Application</td>
<td>Are the findings accessible to other potential users?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Will findings stimulate further action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the findings help to solve a local problem?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
My research aims to maintain quality in the conclusions by adhering to these five main standards. The following section on application of the chosen methodology outlines the steps taken to achieve quality in conclusions through:

- defining the role of the researcher and identifying bias;
- obtaining context-rich and meaningful descriptions from the interviews;
- documentation of the research process undertaken;
- checking of the dependability of the data through piloting the questions;
- obtaining feedback on respondents’ transcripts; and
- maintaining a database of information gathered.

A major technique for reducing systematic bias in data is **triangulation**. This technique involves checking findings against other sources and perspectives.

**Triangulation is a process by which the researcher can guard against the accusation that a study’s findings are simply an artefact or a single method, a single source or a single investigator’s biases** (Patton 1990, p. 470).

Patton (1990) identifies several kinds of triangulation that might be used in a qualitative study. The two most appropriate to this study in testing credibility and biases are *methods triangulation* and *triangulation of sources*. The former involves comparing data collected through qualitative methods with data collected through quantitative methods. It is more likely, however, that triangulation by qualitative data sources would be an appropriate choice for this study. Patton (1990) gives an example of comparing the perspectives of people from a specific group with those of persons outside the group.

Another means of undertaking triangulation in research is the use of multiple methods or combined strategies in one study:

**Because each method of conducting research brings with it particular strengths and weaknesses, many researchers believe that combined methods provide appropriate checks against the weak points in each, while simultaneously enabling the benefits to complement each other** (Groat & Wang 2002, p. 321).

Other techniques for enhancing the quality of analysis include the testing of rival explanations and identifying negative cases in the data. Also important in maintaining rigour in analysis is how the credibility of the researcher affects the way the findings are received. Patton observes that,
'because the researcher is an instrument in qualitative research, a qualitative report must include information about the researcher’ (Patton 1990, p. 472).

### 3.2.5 Ethical Considerations

The Code of Ethics of the Australian Anthropological Society is used as a basis for the process in undertaking this research. The code aims to exemplify the best standards of ethical practice and human rights. Its aims are:

- **Informed decision making (consent of participant)**
- **Communication of the position of the researcher to the parties involved.**
  
  *(Australian Anthropological Society, 2005)*

It was important therefore that all participants involved in the study were aware of the purpose and likely outcomes and were willing to participate. It was also central to the study that it was carried out by the researcher in a manner that was as far as possible independent and impartial. Interviews included the use of pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of participants’ identities and any material divulged during the interview.

Information provided to the participants complied with the requirements of the University of Adelaide Research Ethics Committee (AREC) Guidelines. For interviews this included use of a consent form and information sheet as outlined in the AREC Guidelines. The methods adopted in the collection of information for later analysis, and the restricted access by others to that data, guarded participants’ privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Research integrity and quality through the use of standards including conformability, dependability, credibility and potential transferability of the settings were maintained in the data analysis. This included using the techniques of triangulation and sample reference checking of the findings by participants.

### 3.2.6 Research Approach Taken

A combined or mixed-method approach was chosen to fully reflect the breadth of data available in this area of research. The three methods of data gathering used were:

1. Interview
2. Case study
3. Interpretation of archival/ artefactual documentation
The interviews were the primary source of data for the study, with open-ended questions allowing an in-depth insight into the needs of cultural groups and the requirements of their housing providers.

**Open-ended questions and probes are used to yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge. (Patton 2002, p. 1).**

Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasise the importance of the interviewer recognising the ‘voice’ of the interviewees in the research process.

**In qualitative research objectivity does not mean controlling the variables. Rather it means openness, a willingness to give ‘voice’ to respondents’** (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 43).

It was hoped that the importance of giving ‘voice’ to the respondents would be reflected in the ‘thick description’ obtained of their housing needs.

Case studies of a representative house for each cultural group interviewed added further depth and detail to the research. The investigation of a specific house allowed what Patton (1987) identifies as the ‘individual differences and unique variations that exist between one setting and another’ (Patton 1987, p. 19). Exploring differences in lifestyle and housing layout gave a better understanding of how individual preferences between cultural groups might be expressed and how strongly held they might be.

Examining a broad range of written material and other documents, relevant to the design of social housing, allowed the analysis and comparison of the housing options available to cultural groups and it also helped to contextualise the interview findings.
3.3 Application of the Methodology

3.3.1 Introduction

The research approach chosen aimed to identify both the cultural groups’ and the provider’s perceptions of their housing needs, and any gaps existing between these perceptions and professed actual needs of a selected group, thereby providing a means to address the main research question:

How are the housing needs of culturally diverse groups met by the practices and design of social housing?

The cultural groups were chosen from representatives of the Afghan, Sudanese and Iraqi communities in South Australia. The providers’ group had representation from HousingSA and two Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Anglicare and Red Shield Housing, and also included representatives of Consultant Architects who provide services to HousingSA.

3.3.2 Researcher’s Background

The researcher’s background is that of being a manager in the Asset Services Division of HousingSA who has been involved particularly in the procurement of services and the maintenance of quality control for the design of the organisation’s housing. Further, the researcher has formal qualifications in architecture and urban planning. It is therefore acknowledged that these biases will influence the research being undertaken.

3.3.3 The Interviews (Methods)

The main method chosen for the interviews of the three cultural groups and the housing providers was an open-ended questionnaire. The questions were based on the findings of research studies into the needs of culturally diverse groups, identified in the literature review (chapter 2). In particular, the ten key factors identified in the NHF (1998) design guide for the

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40 See Appendix 1 (p.) for Organisation Structure showing the relationship between the Department for Families and Communities, HousingSA and the Asset Services Division.
The provision of housing for culturally diverse groups in the United Kingdom were used to define broad areas for data collection. These key factors were:

Key Factor 1. Access to Services and Supports
Key Factor 2. The Neighbourhood
Key Factor 3. House Style and Appearance
Key Factor 4. Family, Culture and Religion
Key Factor 5. Layout of the House
Key Factor 6. Eating and Food Preparation
Key Factor 7. Bathing and Bathrooms
Key Factor 8. Entertaining and Living
Key Factor 9. Sleeping and Bedrooms
Key Factor 10. Comfort

Questions - Cultural Groups

The questions were open-ended and arranged in four parts. The first two parts provided the general characteristics of the group and an insight into their living conditions prior to arriving in Australia. This highlighted whether the respondents were living a traditional or Western-influenced lifestyle in their own country and, if the former, what adjustments, if any, might have been made since they came to Australia.

Parts 3 and 4 were based on the ten key factors identified in the literature review. Part 3 covered the way the groups live and their immediate environment and cultural characteristics. Part 4 related more specifically to the detailed aspects of the house, including the layout of rooms, and was approached from the stance of, ‘How would you change your current house, if you could, to better suit your needs’. This approach probed aspects that could be modified in their current home to improve it.

Two questions required pictorial identification and drawing. In the first of these questions, photos of five typical house types found in the Adelaide area were shown to the participants and they were asked to select the type of house that they currently lived in. The choice was limited to the common archetypes of the single house (two styles), duplex, townhouse and flat,
all common forms of social housing. This opened up questions about the house, such as its style, layout, the garden areas and home ownership.

In the other pictorial question the participants were asked to draw the floor plan of their house. This was a change in activity from the ‘question and answer’ format and also allowed them to think about the house layout. The sketch helped in the visualisation of their house when answering the later question, ‘Are there any changes you would like to make to the layout of the rooms in your current house?’

To reduce ambiguity and identify cultural sensitivities, the questions and information sheets were piloted with a representative of each group. Those participating were made aware that they were assisting in refining the questions and that they were not participating in the study at this stage.

_Piloting the Questionnaire- Cultural Groups_

To pilot the questionnaire, the Manager of the Refugee Branch of the DFCSA was asked to identify staff members from an Afghan, Iraqi and Sudanese background or those who had worked with these groups to comment on the questions and the information sheet. The three staff members selected provided detailed feedback on the language used and any culturally sensitive material contained in the questions, and this resulted in a number of changes, mainly to simplify the words used. For example, in the information sheet, ‘Your perceived housing needs’ was changed to, ‘The way you feel about your housing’. Similarly in the questionnaire, ‘What characteristics of the house were important to you?’ was changed to, ‘Describe the house you live in’.

Questions to the various groups were re-phrased in a more conversational way and allowed for greater depth in the answer. For example the question, ‘Where did you spend most of your life in your country?’ was replaced with, ‘In your home country did you spend most of your life living in a village, in a local town or a city?’

More sensitive issues were also raised, including the age of the participants. It was pointed out that some African people did not know their exact age or that it was somewhat unimportant to them and they might be indifferent to this question. Secondly it was also suggested that some
migrants might have lived in other countries prior to coming to Australia and this might have a bearing on how they answered the question on lifestyle and conditions in their country. This was particularly so with young people who might not remember their home country. Changes were made to the questions to determine whether they had lived in any other countries after their homeland. See Appendix 2 (p.282) for the questions asked of cultural groups.

**Questions - Provider Groups**

The questions put to the Consultant Architects, Managers and Service Managers were also open-ended and in four parts. The first two parts asked the respondents about their work and if they had designed for culturally diverse groups. Then they were asked about the housing design priorities for their organization. The other two parts were based on the general aspects and more specific housing factors identified in the literature review on the design of houses for culturally diverse groups.

**Piloting the Questionnaire – Provider Groups**

To reduce ambiguity, the questions and information sheets were piloted with a representative of each group. Those participating were made aware that they were assisting in refining the questions and that they were not participating in the study at this stage.

To pilot the questionnaire a Consultant Architect was chosen from HousingSA’s Asset Services Division’s pre-qualified consultants panel. A representative from the Division, with experience in providing consultants with architectural and planning briefs for new housing, was chosen to pilot the questions for the Manager’s group. Similarly, an officer with extensive experience in housing tenants and some experience in housing migrants was chosen to pilot the questionnaire for the Service Manager’s group.

This group preferred open-ended questions, such as talking about their job and how they experienced or envisaged the requirements of diverse tenants. It was anticipated that the Service Managers would be more likely to be familiar with diverse tenant groups and therefore aware of some of their needs. However it was thought that the Consultant Architects were unlikely to have designed for diversity at HousingSA’s request. As a result of these comments the questions were rewritten to provide an opportunity for all groups to talk more broadly
about their experience in designing houses, managing houses and generally what type of housing best suited their tenants. After this general discussion a series of further questions probed their perception of difference and commonalities that might exist in the design of housing for new migrant groups.

A copy of the questionnaire given to the provider groups appears in Appendices 3 to 5.

Selection of Participants - Cultural Groups

The principal sources for the selection of participants for the questionnaire were the DFC41 Refugee Program, DFC- HousingSA, Australian Refugee Association and the Migrant Resource Centre. A gender balance was a key requirement, to obtain a balanced perspective of the housing issues involved. Consequently, an approximate fifty-fifty male/female mix of respondents was achieved.

A schedule of interviews was prepared for all groups, and the interviews with 22 participants were conducted between 31 July 2007 and 25 September 2007. The schedule appears in Appendix 6 (p. 301).

Selection of Participants – Provider Groups

HousingSA and the major NGOs, such as Anglicare, are the major providers of social housing in South Australia, supplying a significant number of houses to culturally diverse groups.

Managers selected for interview were from the Asset Services Division of HousingSA, responsible for the administration of social housing projects, and most Service Managers were from the Housing Services Division of HousingSA, responsible for the provision of services and allocation of housing to applicants. Two Service Managers were from the NGO sector, Anglicare and Redshield Housing Associations, and were chosen as they undertake housing service delivery roles with culturally diverse groups, comparable to those of the Housing Services Division of HousingSA. The Consultant Architects were selected from HousingSA’s pre-qualified panel as they were directly involved in the design of social housing. Such housing

41 Department for Families and Communities
projects are generally medium-density layouts of four or more units, for which the Consultant Architect liaises directly with the HousingSA Manager when preparing the design.

A schedule of interviews was prepared for all groups, and the interviews of 20 participants were conducted between 3 July 2007 and 7 November 2007. The schedule appears in Appendix 6 (p. 301).

**Interview Methods - Cultural groups**

All of the cultural groups were interviewed on a one-to-one basis, except two groups of Sudanese respondents who were part of larger focus groups. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed.

**Interview Methods - Provider Groups**

All of the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis except for one interview that involved two participants from the same office. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed.

For both groups, no respondent refused to be recorded. About five to ten per cent of comment made in all of the interviews was inaudible. Some respondents were asked for clarification if it was thought the inaudible material was important to the context or information required.

**Conducting the Interviews (including participant observation) - Cultural Groups**

The interviews were mainly conducted in English, although two interviews with the Sudanese Women’s Group and the Sudanese Elders were conducted through an interpreter.

Most of the interviews with those representing cultural groups were conducted at the offices of the agencies involved and took about thirty minutes, although the longest lasted over one hour. The venues included:

- DFC Adelaide Regional Office
- Australian Refugee Association
- DFC Refugee Branch
The interviews with the Sudanese Elders and Sudanese women were conducted at the Sudanese School at Findon.

Although some of the Sudanese women spoke English, their preference during the focus group interview was to respond in their own language through the male Sudanese housing worker who translated. The interview was protracted because of the translation time required and lasted for approximately one-and-a-half hours.

The dynamics of the focus group were difficult at times and it was hard to concentrate on the set questions about the house and the area in which they lived. However, a good response was given to questions covering the changes they would like to make to their current house.

While the interview with the women was carried out in Sudanese through a male translator, it was considered that his answers were faithful to what was said. Although the women preferred to answer in the Sudanese language, most were able to speak some English which was demonstrated at the conclusion of the interview during informal conversation with the interviewer, the translator and the respondents. It was therefore likely that the women understood the question initially asked in English and that the Sudanese translation was for further elucidation and expansion.

Six Sudanese men were interviewed, three on a one-to-one basis and three together, with the group requiring a translator. The same translator was used as for the Sudanese women. Each of the six men had some education, with three indicating that they had attended a university either in Australia or overseas. The men were generally unfamiliar with issues relating to the kitchen as it was seen as the preserve of the female members of the family. The questions about this area were therefore not well answered by the men.

Both groups of Sudanese seemed to understand the questions and their answers were candid and frank. This was determined from the fact that questions did not need to be repeated or require further elaboration. Those interviewed indicated that they were happy to participate in the interviews and hoped that their contribution would assist in the design of better houses for
Sudanese people. This demonstrated that the group felt the research would have some application to, and outcome for, the housing of cultural groups in the future.

Two Afghan women and three Afghan men were interviewed in depth, all on a one-to-one basis. All of those interviewed were working within the Afghan community in Adelaide, having affiliations with the DFC, the Migrant Resource Centre or NGOs assisting migrants.

All participants were able to speak English and the questionnaire was conducted in English. The participants all had some tertiary education either obtained overseas or in Australia. It had been hoped that a focus group might have been possible with this group but finally the preferred method was in-depth interviews with individuals. Those interviewed were highly regarded figures in their community, being active in organisations representing Afghan people in South Australia. The reluctance to provide assistance with a focus group was seen to be, in part, due to the difficulties with interfacing men and women in a group and the perceived limitations of the language skills of some of the broader Afghan community.

It was important to try and obtain both a male and a female perspective throughout the interviews, as generally the men were not conversant with issues and matters associated with the running of the house and the domestic duties that might influence some of the house design. This approach gave a broader viewpoint to the research, allowing greater transferability of the findings to other similar groups.

Generally the Afghan people interviewed were supportive of the study as they felt it could contribute to better housing outcomes for Afghan people and other migrant groups. Also it was seen as possibly contributing to a better life for their children and subsequent generations.

For the Iraqi group the initial contacts were made through DFC-Housing SA who arranged for the chairman of MECSA (Middle Eastern Community of South Australia) to meet and discuss how best the interviews might be carried out. It was considered that focus groups would be difficult because of cultural conventions discouraging non-family males mixing with females and also the perceived language difficulties with the subject matter.
It was stated that about half the Iraqis in Australia have difficulty with the English language. It was therefore suggested that the interviews be carried out on a one-to-one basis with selected members of the Iraqi community who were English-speaking. This restricted the interviews to those who were well educated. It did however allow both male and female persons to be interviewed which might not have been possible with more traditional families.

Most people interviewed were enthusiastic to discuss how they had made changes to their homes or how they would like to change them to meet their specific needs. Some members of the group were very proficient in drawing their house plan.

**Conducting the Interviews (including participant observation) – Provider Groups**

The researcher shared some of the knowledge and experience of those in the provider group, being an employee of HousingSA. For that reason the interviews were carried out in a more conversational fashion to acknowledge this shared frame of reference between researcher and the members of this group. This allowed the participants to use technical or commonly used terminology to explain their roles and demonstrate their knowledge of the housing issues being discussed.

The interviews were carried out in the participants’ offices to provide a relaxed atmosphere where they felt comfortable with their surroundings and in control of the interview. It also allowed reference to materials at hand that the participant thought might be useful, such as design guides or plans, to expand upon a point they had made.

The questions were structured so that if a participant had little knowledge about a detailed area of enquiry, then a more general response could be sought to obtain the participant’s perception of an issue, rather than their experience of the issue. For example, the Consultant Architects were not involved in the selection of the sites on which they were asked to design a housing scheme and were therefore unfamiliar with the social and community factors involved in this process. A more general response was therefore sought from this group about their perceptions of the social and community requirements of culturally diverse groups.
Similarly, some of the Service Managers were not directly involved in the design of their housing stock but were able to provide feedback on how it was used, which could be directly related to design issues such as house size, house style and gardening practices.

The providers interviewed were relatively balanced in terms of gender, with nine women and eleven men. However, the Consultant Architects’ group comprised five men and one woman, reflecting the traditional gender bias among the more senior members of the profession. Conversely, seven women and three men made up the Service Managers’ group.

**Information to Participants**

Before the interviews, participants of all groups were provided with an information sheet that detailed the aims of the study and the way it was to be conducted. Contact details of the researcher and his supervisor were provided to each participant if further information was required, either at a later date or in confidence. When participants had read the information sheet they were each given a consent form and all signed. Copies of both the information sheet and the consent forms appear in Appendices 7 to 9.

**Follow-up on Interviews**

A copy of the interview transcript was sent electronically to all participants who requested it at the interview. Several of the participants were also contacted to discuss the findings of the questionnaire to provide feedback and clarification. Most of those who asked for a transcript replied, indicating they were satisfied that it was a fair representation of what they had said.

**Processing Data**

**Interviews**

The research endeavoured to collect information, firstly from a broad range of participants about their housing needs and secondly, about the way the housing is designed and administered by HousingSA. From this data a picture should emerge of the housing requirements of the cultural groups and what they and the providers believe to be important in
designing for diversity. In this way the data collected would be based, or grounded, on the responses provided by the participants.

Data about the housing needs of the three cultural groups was collected through questions delivered by the researcher at a face-to-face interview with each of the participants. The questions were open-ended and based on the perceived housing needs of the culturally diverse groups chosen. The perceived needs of the group were identified in the literature on design guides and studies, and reviewed as part of the secondary research. The open-ended format of the questions allowed each of the participants to broadly interpret the questions and contextualise their answers using their specific experiences. This in-depth method of interview allowed the development of a ‘thick description’ of the living conditions of the participants and their home living characteristics.

A similar interview approach was taken with the housing provider groups but the questions followed a structure directed at the participant’s knowledge of social housing requirements and the important factors to be considered when providing housing for culturally diverse groups.

Data Reduction

Groat and Wang (2002) observe that there is no single way to go about data reduction but that a common method includes coding the data into various themes. Coding was undertaken manually, directly from the verbatim transcript to a coding sheet. Both transcript and coding sheet were prepared as Microsoft Word documents and were opened simultaneously on a split monitor screen. Sections of the text were transferred to the coding sheet to condense into concepts and thematic statements. The data collected during interviews in recordings, transcriptions and later coding allow an ‘audit trail’ to be established that can be accessed by others if required, ensuring dependability of the data.

For the common questions on Community Needs and Diversity and Housing Design and Diversity, the emerging themes were grouped under one or more of the 10 Key Factors identified in the literature as important to culturally diverse groups, to allow later comparison for sameness and difference in views. Fifty-two themes were identified for all participants interviewed through the coding process and these are listed in the table below.
Table 4: Coded Themes from interviews with Cultural Groups and Housing Providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Factors</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Needs and Diversity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports</td>
<td>Location of Services&lt;br&gt;Connection&lt;br&gt;Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Networks&lt;br&gt;Security&lt;br&gt;Unfriendly/Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance</td>
<td>Integration&lt;br&gt;Traditional Housing&lt;br&gt;External/Internal Appearance&lt;br&gt;Policies and Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 4: Family Culture and Religion</td>
<td>Family structure&lt;br&gt;Practice&lt;br&gt;Understanding Difference&lt;br&gt;Consultation&lt;br&gt;Ownership of a House&lt;br&gt;Renting a House&lt;br&gt;Religion and Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Design and Diversity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 5: Layout of the House</td>
<td>Flexibility&lt;br&gt;Policy Guidelines of the Authorities&lt;br&gt;Plan Shape&lt;br&gt;Construction&lt;br&gt;Adaptability&lt;br&gt;Cost&lt;br&gt;Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)&lt;br&gt;Address and Approach&lt;br&gt;Custom&lt;br&gt;Zoning of House&lt;br&gt;House size&lt;br&gt;Privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation</td>
<td>Size and Layout&lt;br&gt;Outdoor Cooking&lt;br&gt;Social Place&lt;br&gt;Custom and Eating&lt;br&gt;Storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathing Customs&lt;br&gt;Bathroom Size&lt;br&gt;Visitors and Guests&lt;br&gt;Modifications&lt;br&gt;Laundry&lt;br&gt;Bathroom Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Factor 8: Entertaining and Living Areas</td>
<td>Hospitality&lt;br&gt;Entrance&lt;br&gt;Size of Rooms&lt;br&gt;Working/Study at Home&lt;br&gt;Outside&lt;br&gt;Guest Accommodation&lt;br&gt;Furnishings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not all participants identified the same themes as being important to them. The importance of each theme was determined by the frequency of the response from group members. If all members of a group identified a theme such as *connection*, it was ranked as very important and considered to be a common theme. If only a small number of the group identified the theme then it was considered a personal view and not included in the findings. Common themes from all cultural groups and provider groups are presented at the conclusion of chapters 4 and 5, and will be commented upon in chapter 7 that contains the synthesis and conclusions for commonalities and divergences.

### 3.3.4 Case Studies

In question 3.6 in the three cultural groups interviewed were asked to draw a plan of their current house to contextualise their housing. From the information provided by three of the participants in their sketch and interview, it was possible to present a case study of their house and its setting which extended the ‘thick description’ of the phenomena, thus giving a deeper understanding of the participant’s views.

This case study of a participant’s house was undertaken using the plan they drew, together with archival plans and photographs of similar houses and, in one case, a site visit. The data on the layout of the house and the size of the rooms was tabulated for comparison with the current HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to identify differences and similarities, and were referenced back to the participant’s requirements discussed in their interview. These case studies appear in chapter 4.

### 3.3.5 Archival/Artefactual Documentation

All the current social housing options for culturally diverse groups were identified from information obtained from HousingSA. Two of the houses, the Newbuild and Duplex Conversion, were identified by HousingSA as being the most widely used and appropriate options for culturally diverse groups and will therefore be reviewed in greater depth in this research.
This non-interactive research required searching for typical examples of house types, their plans, elevations and other data in HousingSA’s current House Design Portfolio for Newbuild options, and in HousingSA’s house database for the Duplex Conversion options. Reference was also made to the Housing Design Guidelines as the relevant design standards for all HousingSA’s new housing and as a benchmark for all upgraded housing. Information on the provision of community services and selection of existing housing for specific tenants was obtained from the HousingSA GIS database.

Two actual examples, one a completed Newbuild five-bedroom house and one a recently converted five-bedroom duplex house, both similar to housing provided to culturally diverse groups with large families, were selected for analysis to determine whether each type would meet the needs of cultural groups.

HousingSA house plans, Housing Design Guidelines, GIS data, information databases and policy documents were used to identify thematic characteristics that allowed the comparison of the two house types with the themes that the interviewed groups identified as being important in designing for diversity. For review of the Newbuild house and the Duplex Conversion, specific reference was made to the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines which are used in the design of all new housing and are referred to in the housing upgrade process as a benchmark for amenity standards. The Housing Design Guidelines requirements were aligned with the themes derived from the interviews with cultural groups and housing providers to identify what themes were addressed by the house designs.
3.4 Summary

The subjective nature of the research suggested the adoption of a naturalistic or qualitative system of inquiry to allow a broad perspective of the subject and to provide insight into the meaning of the constructs of social housing for the various groups. As this required a strategy or methodology based in the data about the participants’ views of the housing and their observation of the way the housing is managed, grounded theory was selected although multiple methods, both interactive and non-interactive, were used to assemble the data. Several tactics or methods were also employed to obtain the data, including in-depth interviews, case studies, and document analysis. Crotty’s (1998) string for the research approach was seen as \textit{Constructionist \hspace{1mm} > \hspace{1mm} Interpretivist \hspace{1mm} > \hspace{1mm} Grounded Theory \hspace{1mm} > \hspace{1mm} Interview, Focus Group, Comparative Analysis, Document Analysis.}

The richness of data and story telling can provide a ‘thick description’ of the phenomena and was particularly relevant to this study which aimed to capture the views of a broad range of people with differing backgrounds whose interpretations of the meaning of the housing issues canvassed varied greatly.

Each step of the research process was documented to identify the \textit{conformability, dependability, credibility, transferability and application} of the research. To provide for conformability, each step of the methods chosen, namely interviews, document analysis and case study, were discussed and details given on how they were used to collect the required data. Further, to achieve dependability, the questionnaires were piloted with representatives of the groups who were to be interviewed before finalising the approach and questions. Peer group checks were also used in formulating and structuring the questionnaire.

A representative range of interviewees was sourced from the respective communities of the three cultural groups, having been referred by their peer groups via agencies such as the Australian Refugee Association and Migrant Resource Centre. The Consultant Architects were selected from the HousingSA pre-qualified panel and the other provider interviewees were identified by members of HousingSA senior management as being representative of the group and as having knowledge and experience of social housing issues.
Chapter 4. Research Findings – Cultural Groups

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the findings from interviews with the three cultural groups, Afghan, Sudanese and Iraqi people. A short profile of each group and a brief description of lifestyle in their country of origin provide context to the following sections of the chapter which cover the findings from questions on community and housing design needs. The findings are described using the themes identified in my research which are grouped under the key factors derived from the NHF (1998) guidelines for designing for diversity. These are:

Community Needs and Diversity
- Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
- Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood
- Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance
- Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

Housing Design and Diversity
- Key Factor 5: Layout of the House
- Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation
- Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms
- Key Factor 8: Entertaining and Living Areas
- Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms
- Key Factor 10: Comfort

The relative importance of a theme to a particular group is indicated in the text, supported by extended extracts from the interview transcripts. In this study the groups interviewed identified a total of fifty-two themes, but not all groups shared all themes. Commonality of themes between groups will be explored in the chapter on synthesis and conclusions.

Responses from each cultural group are followed by a short case study derived from Question 3.6 in the questionnaire that asked the participants to draw the layout of their current house. This provided greater in-depth information about a respondent’s specific needs and helped to contextualise the findings. An example of one house is chosen from each cultural group for comparison with the minimum standards for social housing set by HousingSA’s Housing Design Guidelines.
4.2 Afghan Group

4.2.1 Profile (Q.1)

Although the group interviewed was small, the participants were identified by their community leaders as being representative of the Afghan community living in Adelaide. The open-ended questions allowed a broad interpretation of the participants’ views of their housing needs and those of the broader Afghan community. Three of those interviewed were men and two were women, ranging in age between 20 and 55 years. Residency in Australia was from two years to more than ten years for one respondent. Two of those interviewed were buying their house and the others were renting. One of the group was an unaccompanied single man and the others lived in family groups.

Two of the respondents had come to Australia as refugees and were initially housed in a detention centre. The other three had sponsors or relatives in Adelaide.

Rashid: My brother sponsored me. My parents and my brother and sister came before me. They have been here nearly 20 years. (AF5,P1,L22)

All of the respondents were employed in agencies, including the Migrant Resource Centre, Lutheran Community Care and DFC- Refugee Unit, providing assistance and support for Afghan and other migrant people. For the current location of the house of each group member see Appendix 11 (p.324).

4.2.2 Lifestyle and Living Conditions in your Country (Q.2)

A series of questions was asked about lifestyle and living conditions in Afghanistan, with two members of the group identified as being from the Tajik and the Pashtun tribes. The Pashtuns are the major tribal group in Afghanistan where there are also a number of smaller tribes and people from India and Pakistan. The Tajik tribe live in the North West of the country that borders Iran and Turkmenistan. The main religion in Afghanistan is Islam and other minor religions include Hinduism and Judaism.

The respondents had lived in major cities such as Kabul and Herat, and smaller towns in Afghanistan. One person had lived in a village in a rural location, describing his lifestyle as very basic with no modern facilities. One of the respondents had been required to flee Afghanistan and had lived in Iran for seventeen years before coming to Australia.
The housing of the Afghan people interviewed varied from apartments to large single-family houses. Modern housing in Afghanistan, in both city and rural areas, may maintain some elements of a traditional style of layout and form, and there are many examples of traditional houses with courtyards and domed or flat roofs that are designed to withstand the severe climate, with high winds in summer and snow in winter.

Rashid: It was different kind of building from here. When you enter the house you go through a door into a courtyard. In my house we have two kind of rooms because one was for winter, we live in two or three rooms on the (south) side of the house, because the sun comes here in winter. In summer we move to the opposite side of the house. (AF5,P2,L69)

The walls of the traditional house can be between eighty centimetres and one metre thick to withstand the variations of heat and cold. In the summer, prevailing winds are used to cool the house through roof vents. The roof is constructed of timber logs, covered with a mud and wheat-husk plaster which is renewed every two or three years to prevent water penetration. Construction techniques have changed in recent years and hollow concrete block is now the preferred material for construction because it is easier to make than the traditional block and simpler to lay.

Not all Afghan people living in Australia had experienced life in a traditionally-built house and pointed out that they had lived in Western-style housing and were familiar with its form and layout before coming to Australia. The Western-style housing in Afghanistan is mainly two-storey, with living areas on the upper floor as well as the ground floor, and bedrooms also on the ground floor, a different layout to standard housing in Australia.

Those interviewed indicated that, in their country, they lived as an extended family household, with several generations of relatives residing together in one house. When female children marry they generally leave their family home to live with their husband’s family. Often, however, family members will live in close proximity to maintain this extended family connection.

Rashid: We live [in our house] with parents, children and sometimes grandparents. We like to try to live nearby and we will buy a house nearby for a relative. (AF5,P4,L173)
4.2.3 Community Needs and Diversity (Q.3)

The Afghan group were asked about their lifestyle and living conditions in Australia and, from their responses, a number of themes linked to community needs and diversity were grouped under four key factors:

- Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
- Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood
- Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance (not mentioned as important)
- Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

Although the Afghan group, when interviewed, did not mention ‘Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance’ as being important for their housing, one of the participants commented that it was better if their house did not ‘stand out’ in the neighbourhood. A stronger response was given to the questions on security and neighbourliness that are linked to the idea of ‘inclusion’ or blending in to their surroundings.

**Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports**

**Theme 1.1 Location of Services**

The Afghan group felt that newly arrived migrants need to be located near support services and that these services were not accessible in some locations, particularly outer suburbs. For example, language services are required and are more likely to be located in major centres. Shopping and using public transport may be difficult because of coping with a new language and unfamiliarity with the location, and it was thought this could lead to a feeling of isolation, thereby disadvantaging the new arrival. Consequently, an education process is needed to assist new arrivals to access the services they need.

*Osman: A lot of problems with regard to shopping centres, finding the transport and talking to the people and understanding the way of life here. (AF4,P3,L125)*

**Theme 1.2 Connection**

An important theme expressed by all participants was community connection. Some expected that the various support agencies would provide the connection between the Afghan people and their service providers. It was thought that these agencies often had
workers who were from the same country as the new arrival and could translate and pass on information about their community here in Australia.

Osman: We've got these particular problems, for the new arrivals, those that came from Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan with no English and they came here and they are just living in a remote area. They don't have access to language services for example in the Afghan community, no interpreter and you are really discriminated against, they are disadvantaged, they don't know the services. (AF4,P3,L117)

Some of the new arrivals would have been sponsored by relatives or other community members and it was thought this connection may need to be maintained when finding new accommodation. These initial contacts could be important in helping to identify existing supports that can assist in this transition. Relatives or community members might also provide the necessary linkage in practice and customs that would help in the settlement of the recent arrival.

One of the Afghan community leaders in the group thought that their community was too dispersed throughout Adelaide and some country areas, and needed to be brought together in order to maintain their cultural links. He also considered that women would benefit from living in closer proximity as they might not have the same opportunity as men to socialise and meet others from their community. The formation of informal organisations was an important means of bringing the community together and maintaining customs and celebrations.

Babur: The Afghan community could be living closer together, so that they can come together and keep their culture [and] history. Especially it would be great if the [Afghan] women could come together. If you go to some of the parks [around Adelaide], Coca-Cola Park, [Bonython Park], Semaphore Park on a Sunday you will see Afghan families having a barbecue. (AF2,P5,L23)

There was a need for new arrivals to establish themselves quickly and the group identified education, housing and health services as priorities. Education, training and language skills were needed if adults were to find work, and were seen as important in planning for their children’s future. Maintaining the health of the family was also essential, so that early connection with health providers was required, particularly those offering services dealing with the trauma suffered by refugees. Housing was a high priority to permit a family to settle and establish a home, although it was pointed out that many of the Afghan community, who were unable initially to buy their own house, looked to the social housing sector for this stability in housing tenure.
Lala: It’s important for future generations to be able to study, continue with their education and bring up healthy families; they need to have good accommodation and it’s very important to live in a secure area, to live in a Housing Trust house when they can’t afford to buy a house, it’s more permanent. (AF1(I),P6,L272)

**Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood**

**Theme 2.2 Security**

Most of the Afghan group felt relatively secure in the areas where they were currently living, but they identified large social housing estates as being unsuitable for Afghan people for security reasons, citing stealing and damage to their property as being likely problems in such areas.

Babur: I feel secure in the community but sometimes there is violence, for example when my car in front of the house many times was broken into, and once it was stolen. (AF2, P3, L101).

Niki: They [HousingSA] offered my mother a house which was not in a very good area, it adjoined factories and when we went to look at the housing it was not a safe place especially for single parents, single mothers. There were drunk people, sitting there [outside] there were dogs running around, it not good. (AF3, P6, L267)

**Theme 2.3 Unfriendly/Friendly**

The group felt strongly that having friendly contact with their neighbours was important to Afghan people in establishing themselves in the neighbourhood. The group acknowledged that the neighbourliness they experienced in Afghanistan was not the same in Australia where customs, such as visiting each other’s houses, were different. Meeting and talking with neighbours was seen as an important means of building networks and sourcing information. This process might be difficult for Afghan people where language skills are poor and there is a feeling of cultural difference.

Osman: We have neighbours we say ‘hello’ we know each other, talk to each other, yes. Some people I’ve spoken to say they have difficulties with their neighbours, not necessarily Afghan people [can] be other migrant groups. It is a matter of communication. If you can't introduce yourself to your neighbour, with who you are, it is difficult for us for we are different. (AF4, P4, L167)

According to the group, unfriendly neighbours had a major influence on how Afghan people accept their neighbourhood. Large social housing neighbourhoods, or groups of social housing, may present difficulties as they might experience unacceptable anti-social and racial behaviour that could slow their settlement. Despite having experienced some
anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods, the Afghan group generally felt that they would not consider this to be symptomatic of the whole Australian community.

**Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion**

*Theme 4.2 Practice*

The group strongly agreed that the design of the standard Australian house might not be suited to the religious observances and rituals of some Afghan people. Preference for separate entertaining areas for men and women was cited as a provision often difficult to achieve in the Australian-designed house. Some of those interviewed also preferred the practice of entertaining within the house rather than informally outside. Most of the group agreed that their living space needed to be larger than that of the standard Australian house, to cater for the number of guests and family who might gather at one time.

*Lala: Australian houses are not designed for Muslim people, so they might have some problems. (AF1,1P3,L130)*

*Theme 4.6 Renting a Home*

The group stated that Afghan people might have to move several times after arriving in Australia and this can cause disorientation and make it hard for them to settle. They identified social housing as representing stable tenured accommodation that allowed them to establish themselves in the community. However, it was thought that social housing could be difficult to acquire because the Housing Authority did not consider Afghan people to be a priority. One participant observed that most Afghan families will need to find rental housing in the private market, and high rents might prevent them living closer to the facilities and supports they require.

*Lala: Housing Trust accommodation, to get one is not easy. Those that are in first category are waiting a year or two but not hearing anything from the Housing Trust. (AF1(1),P5,L227)*

*Theme 4.7 Religion and Prayer*

The group thought that religion and prayer was an important part of Afghan people’s lives, although they were divided on whether a specific area in the house was required for prayer. Some of those interviewed said that all that they required was a quiet and clean room in the house. However, some of those interviewed observed that there might be difficulties if
visitors are present at prayer time, since traditionally the genders should not mix during this ritual. As separate areas are necessary, the women often pray in the bedroom or the prayer times are staggered. For some Afghan people a prayer space can also be used for study, and often one of the bedrooms accommodates this purpose. However, the group agreed that more traditional Afghan people need a dedicated room for prayer.

**Niki:** Some people put a room aside for prayer and it's a quiet place and clean.  
(AF3,P3,L143)

Ritual washing was also identified as important to some Afghan Muslim people if they were devout. The standard Australian bathroom was not equipped for this practice as some saw the flat toilet or squat pan as being better suited for ritual washing.

**Lala:** For Muslim families, strict Muslim families, it’s very important, it’s one of their requirements, it’s very important for them. And I hear from Afghan, Muslim families, strict Muslim families, it’s very important, it’s one of their requirements... And I hear from Afghan families that they complain about [these toilets].  
(AF1(2),P4,L200)

However, one view was that most Afghan people were able to adapt the Western bathroom to meet their needs for washing before prayer.

### 4.2.4 Housing Design and Diversity (Q.4)

Each of the group was asked about their current house and changes they might make to it to improve it for them and their family, and a number of themes emerged which were grouped under the six key factors linked to housing design and diversity:

- **Key Factor 5: Layout of the House**
- **Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**
- **Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms**
- **Key Factor 8: Entertaining and Living Areas**
- **Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms**
- **Key Factor 10: Comfort** (not important to Afghan group).

In the interviews the Afghan group did not identify ‘Key Factor 10: Comfort’ as being important in their house, although two of the group expressed dissatisfaction with the floor finishes, ease of cleaning, and ventilation in their current accommodation.
Key Factor 5 Layout of the House

Theme 5.1 Flexibility

The Afghan group all mentioned the need for greater flexibility in the way rooms were arranged in their housing. The importance of having two living rooms, one for family use and another for visitors, was often identified as a requirement. The group also thought that the way these rooms were accessed was equally important, so that family areas were adjacent to bedrooms and not readily accessible to visitors.

Babur: In the Afghan community especially at the week ends they are involved with friends and families [getting] together. Therefore it would be good if the dining room and the living room could be larger. (AF2,P4,L150)

Theme 5.8 Address and Approach

The entrance to the Afghan house was identified as an important area where shoes were removed and stored. An entry porch or hall was seen to be necessary as a place to greet guests before ushering them into the lounge or, in the case of relatives, into the more private family room.

Osman: They [Afghan people] prefer that the entrance does not open to the living room or to the master bedroom and the family room. (AF4,P5,L240)

and:

Niki: When you come inside [my house] you come straight into the lounge so it’s better to have a hall there. (AF3,P4,L165)

Theme 5.11 House Size

House size was an important issue for all of those interviewed, since Afghan families can be large and need houses of five bedrooms or more, with spacious living areas. Difficulty can arise in renting houses of this size in Adelaide, as standard dwellings have a maximum of four bedrooms, although most have only three. This was seen as not just a problem for Afghan families, but for all large migrant families coming to Adelaide. Further, the group identified that there was not enough room in the living areas to accommodate all of the family and guests. They felt that the size of the standard Australian house restricted Afghan family life and prevented them offering the hospitality to others that was characteristic of their group.
Lala: Most of Afghan families have problems with Housing Trust accommodation because they're big families, families of seven, sometimes ten to twelve in one house, and the lounge room or the living room, sitting room is not quite big enough so you can’t accommodate the whole family together, you can but it’s very crowded. (AF1(I),P4,L156)

Of particular concern were the kitchen and family room where large families need room to prepare meals and for all the family to sit down to a meal together. The living room, as distinct from the family room, was the key area for entertaining guests and should be large enough for big gatherings.

**Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**

*Theme 6.1 Size and Layout*

Another important theme for the Afghan group was the size of the standard Australian kitchen which was seen as too small to cater for most large Afghan families who usually prepare meals at home, using large cooking pots and utensils. This is in contrast to the kitchen size in Afghanistan where a very large kitchen supports these activities. The Afghan people interviewed accepted that some change in their traditional cooking habits might be required in Australia as the lifestyle was different and, for this reason, entertaining of guests might now be scaled down.

Lala: A lot of Afghan women are complaining about the kitchen, because the kitchen is too small here. So because they are big families and they use those big dishes and they cook most of the time, they don’t go out usually, they cook at home, and it’s hard. (AF1(I),P4,L171)

*Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating*

Some of the group observed that the traditional custom requiring the kitchen and cooking activities to be separate from the family area might be changing in some Afghan families. The open-plan kitchen and family room was gaining acceptance and was seen to be improving the social connection of family members. The group noted, however, that not all Afghan families have taken this stance and some will continue to observe the traditional approach of separating the kitchen and food preparation from the dining area, to maintain the tradition of cooking being the preserve of the women members of the family.

Lala: We don’t like to have kitchen and living room together when you have guests there. Ladies in the kitchen and men in the kitchen when we're cooking, we don’t
like that. Like to have it separate, no one can see what we’re doing. (AF1(2),P5,L224)

For Afghan families the tradition of hospitality and preparation of food for a large number of guests continued in Australia. Whilst tradition required that the host still provided food, one respondent remarked that a guest’s length of stay might be curtailed as a recognition of the changed circumstances affecting the preparation of food, such as the smaller kitchen size.

Theme 6.5 Storage

Some of the respondents indicated that the storage of bulk food items, as necessary in Afghanistan, was not required to the same extent in Australia because the availability of basic ingredients and freshly prepared traditional food reduces the need to store bulk materials. Groceries, meat and bread were now becoming available in a number of specialist shops catering for Afghan people. Despite this view, overall the group thought that kitchen storage was important for Afghan families and that the standard Australian house often did not provide adequate space for their needs.

**Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms**

Theme 7.1 Bathing Customs

The group commented that in Afghanistan, both the traditional squat pan toilet and the Western-style toilet are used. Some Afghan people might prefer the squat pan or flat toilet suite and consider it more appropriate in the washing preparation for prayer, but there was no consensus on this issue.

Lala: Because the toilets are different or they [the Afghan people] are using those flat ones, because if you pray it is part of religion when you pray, nothing will touch your clothes or anything, very clean, spotless, but if you use this type of toilet [Western] you can’t wash yourself properly, that’s why the Afghans they have problems. (AF1(1),P3,L132)

The custom for Afghan people to wash after using the toilet was said to be important and a tap within the toilet area, or a hand-shower attachment, was required for this purpose.

Babur: Sometimes they wash themselves [after going to the lavatory] instead of using the tissue [toilet paper] so there are special toilets and they are able to wash themselves. (AF2,P4,L195)
Bathrooms were a more sensitive topic that included the process of ritual washing, so the specific requirements for these rooms were not discussed as fully in the interviews as were some of the other rooms in the house. However, the group did comment that, as a consequence of large family size and frequency of use, they preferred the bathroom and toilet to be separate.

**Key Factor 8: Entertaining and Living Areas**

*Theme 8.1 Hospitality*

Entertainment of guests and hospitality was considered to be very important for the Afghan people interviewed who saw the standard Australian house as not being large enough to accommodate these practices. The size of rooms, including small sitting and family rooms characteristic of the Australian house, was cited by some of the respondents as an important issue.

*Theme 8.2 Entrance*

The group preferred the sitting room to be located at the front of the house as it was used solely by men on formal occasions. The room occupied by women at such times was usually located at the rear of the house and could be the family room adjacent to the kitchen.

*Osman*: The preferred house layout is with two large living areas. These living areas can be used separately by men and women when entertaining guests. (AF4,P4,L189)

Although it was important for the respondents to have the living room at the front of the house, they liked a transition between inside and outside, with a separate entrance area or hall. Here the formalities of arrival, such as the removal of shoes, can be undertaken before the host directs guests into the living area.

*Babur*: In our country mostly we have an entry [area], then we took off our shoes there and then come into the main dining room or entertainment room. (AF2,P4,L163)

The group also indicated a requirement for privacy when entering the house and commented that in many standard house designs in Australia, the front door opens directly to the living room and the main bedroom is accessed from the living room, neither of which Afghan people like. The group thought it was important to have a porch or hall at the front of the house to create a transition from the outside to the inside. Further, they would prefer to zone
the house to maintain privacy, with living areas at the front and the private areas such as bedrooms at the rear.

Osman: They prefer that the entrance does not open to the living room or to the master bedroom and the family room. They prefer that there be the lounge or the living area when you first enter. Then they prefer that the bedrooms be at the backside of the house, much important to them. (AF4, P5,L240)

**Theme 8.3 Size of Rooms**

All the respondents mentioned that a large entertainment room was necessary to allow other family members and friends to visit, and for cultural activities such as ceremonies and observances to take place.

Lala: As soon as they see small rooms designed for Australian families they say nowhere can we sit if visitors come, nobody will fit in the house. (AF1(1),P4,L181)

The group said it was important for Afghan families to have living and family areas big enough to seat large numbers of people. The more traditional people will occasionally sit on the floor of the living room but usually chairs were placed around the room.

Osman: [About the numbers that attend a gathering] It's hard to say, 30 or 40. When we have a gathering we use chairs, just for people to sit around [the room]. (AF4,P5,L235)

**Theme 8.5 Outside**

It was observed that Afghan families preferred to entertain guests and family inside the home rather than outside in the garden, although larger gatherings are held away from the house in neighbourhood parks. Custom amongst more traditional families still preferred men and women to be separated.

A small and manageable rear yard space was important to most of those interviewed, including a space for growing vegetables, fruit and flowers. One of the respondents remarked that, for some, this may continue the rural practices associated with life in their country of origin.

Osman: People that come from rural areas, they are professionals, they come from farms and they love to do that. If they come from the rural area, where their main job is planting and growing, working on the farms and they love to have something [growing] in their backyards, to grow vegetables. (AF4,P7,L303)
**Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms**

**Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size**

Some of those interviewed believed Afghan families consider it is important for same-gender children share a bedroom, and three or more children might need to occupy a room that is too small for the required number of beds and other furniture. The standard Australian house is designed with a large master bedroom and a series of smaller children’s bedrooms that are not adaptable to this practice.

*Babur: Mostly in our country the son, the boys are living [sharing a bedroom] together and the girls are sleeping together and their parents separately.*  
(AF2,P5,L204)

**4.2.5 Niki’s House (Q.3.6) – A Case Study**

One of the Afghan respondents was living in a HousingSA rental property with her mother and younger brother. The respondent was generally satisfied with the location of the house as it was near shops and good public transport, but there were some issues with the neighbours who were considered noisy and disruptive which was unsettling for the respondent and the other members of her family. However, she liked the location and the appearance of the house but felt a preference for detached housing.

*Niki: Yes actually, we like the outside [appearance of the units]. But single house is much better than a town-house for Afghans.* (AF3,P3,L114)

As part of the interview, the respondent drew the floor plan of her house which was used as a reference for the questions asked on house design.
Social Housing for Culturally Diverse Groups
A Users’ and Providers’ Perspective

Michael Findlay

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Adelaide
School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

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The house was identified by HousingSA as a two-storey attached dwelling which is more commonly referred to as a town-house. The units were built in 1983 of a combination of cavity brick and veneer wall construction with raked eaves and concrete tiled roof, presenting the house in a Mediterranean style. This house was part of a group of ten units adjoined in pairs or threes, each with a common party wall. Car parking for the respondent’s unit is located at the rear and is accessed by a private entry lane shared by several tenancies. The front of the unit faces a common open space with a pedestrian footpath connecting it to the public street. These units were originally intended for the private market but were purchased by HousingSA, then the South Australian Housing Trust, under its Design and Construct Program.
During the interview the respondent identified the following thirteen themes relating to the design of her house:

KF3 House Style and Appearance:  
  T3.1 Integration  
  T3.3 Internal/External Appearance

KF5 Layout of House  
  T5.11 House Size  
  T5.12 Privacy

KF6 Eating and Food Preparation  
  T6.1 Size and Layout  
  T6.5 Storage

KF7 Bathing and Bathrooms  
  T7.3 Bathroom Size

KF8 Entertaining and Layout  
  T8.2 Entrance  
  T8.4 Working/Study at Home  
  T8.5 Outside

KF9 Sleeping and Bedrooms  
  T9.3 Storage

KF10 Comfort  
  10.2 Services  
  10.11 Cleanliness of the House

The respondent was generally satisfied with the external appearance of the units although there were some concerns about the internal finishes relating to the dark coloured face brickwork in the bedrooms. It was thought that the dark brick gave a ‘gloomy’ appearance to the room and a lighter wall colour would be preferred. Also the floors in the upstairs bedrooms were difficult for the respondent to clean as they were exposed boards covered with non-fitted carpets.
In addition to house size generally, the respondent also had concerns about the kitchen and living room size and the layout and size of the upstairs bathroom. The main concern with the upstairs bathroom was the inclusion of the toilet in the same room as the shower and bath. Both the respondent and her brother were currently studying and required an additional quiet space for these activities. Interestingly, in her drawing she showed both her bedroom and her brother’s as considerably smaller than the main bedroom, currently occupied by her mother, but did not refer directly to requiring a larger bedroom.

Another related comment was made about the noise transmission from the bedroom of the adjoining property. This was particularly pronounced against her bedroom wall and at times made it difficult for her to study and sleep. There was also adverse comment on the lack of bedroom storage in the form of built-in wardrobes. The respondent did, however indicate that a separate room for study was desirable but there was no specific requirement for a dedicated space or room for prayer.

There were also comments about the heating and cooling of the house and it was reported that the upstairs bedrooms were hot in summer, often requiring the household to sleep downstairs. Similarly the lower floor was cold in winter and required significant heating to be comfortable.

The unit had a direct entrance from the outside to the living areas and this was not ideal as it did not provide the required privacy for the family. An enclosed porch or hall was preferred. Further, the rear yard was considered too small and the car parking difficult to access because of the narrow width of the space. The shared driveways had led to some of the conflict with neighbours, through occasional blocking of access.

Figure 5: Rear access driveway and garages of Afghan respondent’s house (Source: The Author)
House size was identified as being extremely important and the table below provides a comparison of the size of the respondent’s house with the current amenity standards used by HousingSA. It identifies any differences between the design standards and the size of the house occupied by the Afghan family studied.

Table 5: Comparison of room areas in Afghan respondent’s house and current HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Bedroom House (2-Storey Town House)</th>
<th>HousingSA Design Guidelines Requirements (m²)</th>
<th>Niki’s house (m²)</th>
<th>Difference (m²) +/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Area (m²)</td>
<td>121-132</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>-7 to -18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms Required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
<td>19.5 (3.60 width)</td>
<td>18.4 (3.3)</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining</td>
<td>9.9 (2.40 width)</td>
<td>12.2 (2.7)</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>9.0 (2.7 width)</td>
<td>8.5 (3.3)</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Bedroom</td>
<td>14.8 (3.6 width)</td>
<td>10.9 (3.3)</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other bedrooms</td>
<td>10.8 (3.0 width)</td>
<td>9.5 (2.7)</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>1.8 (0.9 width)</td>
<td>1.4 (0.9)</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptable</td>
<td>7.6 (2.7 width)</td>
<td>7.1 (2.4)</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom/WC</td>
<td>4.3 (1.80 width)</td>
<td>3.3 (1.8)</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>-6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs</td>
<td>11 - 12</td>
<td>5 (1.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Niki’s house was approximately ten per cent smaller overall than the standard housing provisions of the current HousingSA Design Guidelines, with this discrepancy being mainly in the bedrooms. The living-dining room and kitchen were closest to the current requirements in overall size and shape. The effective bedroom space was reduced as a result of the stairway causing the irregular shape of the rooms, and the upstairs bathroom was similarly impacted by the space required for the staircase.

The compact nature of the town-house type of development was characterised by small yard spaces and shared driveways. The units were orientated to the north to achieve good solar gain, so they were skewed through approximately 45 degrees on the site, resulting in a reduction of effective yard space. The location of the living areas did not fully utilise this orientation and the kitchen window, although facing north, was obscured by the laundry wall. Windows to all rooms were small and overhanging eaves shaded the north-facing bedroom.

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42 An allowance of an additional 10 per cent of floor area is made in a two-storey house for stairs.

43 Bathroom upstairs in a two-storey house is not required to be adaptable.
4.3 Sudanese Group

4.3.1 Profile (Q.1)

Those interviewed in this group were contacted through HousingSA and the Australian Refugee Association. The interviews included a focus group of Sudanese women who were contacted by the African community worker from HousingSA and interviewed by the researcher at the Findon Sudanese School. The focus group provided an additional women’s perspective of their housing in Adelaide and supplemented the male interviews. The Sudanese group consisted of six men and seven women, ranging in age between 20 and 55 years. Some were recent arrivals having lived for less than two years in Australia, but none exceeded ten years residency.

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 103 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.
Most of the respondents had lived in countries other than Sudan before coming to
Australia, with the majority saying they had lived in refugee camps in Kenya or Ethiopia for
periods of between five and eleven years. One respondent had attended a university in
Kenya for three years prior to arrival in Australia, a further respondent had lived in Egypt
and another had worked and lived in Baghdad, Iraq for 23 years. Respondents were from
the Southern Sudan and were forced to leave their country because of the conflict with
Northern Sudan.

The main reason given for coming to Adelaide was that the respondent had a relative
already living here and was able to enter Australia as a sponsored migrant.

Genet: Yes I came to this country because there are different visa categories and I
came through visa category 2 which is a visa that if you have a relative in Australia
he will propose you and definitely you will go to that place were the proposer is. My
proposer, proposed me to come to Australia, was in Australia and that's the reason I
came to Adelaide. I had a sister-in-law, a sister to my wife, so they proposed me to
come here. (S3,P1,L15)

A few Sudanese migrants might still come to Australia with refugee status and be issued
with a different visa category. They might not settle in the place were they were initially
sent by the Department of Immigration, but relocate to other parts of Australia for work or
other reasons.

Ashur : I didn't choose to come to Adelaide, I didn't choose to come to any part,
but I first came to Perth for one year then I went to Tasmania where I went to
University, stayed for three years. Last year I came to Adelaide because I got a job
here. (S2,P1,L19)

Those interviewed came from suburbs in the north, northeast and west of Adelaide. Most
of the suburbs were within close proximity to the city although one respondent was living
in a fringe suburb north of the city. All of the respondents were renting their housing in the
public or private sector. Three were renting from the South Australian Housing Trust and
one through Community Housing. Sponsored migrants are not eligible to access public
housing as a priority category (Category 1) although most of the respondents indicated they
had made applications for this type of housing. For the location of each group member’s
house, see Appendix 13 (p.326).

Most of those in the group were either unemployed or were receiving low wages and
sought access to welfare housing to achieve a stable tenancy at a low or subsidised rent.
They complained that much of the housing they could access in the private sector was old and poorly maintained, and they had issues with the land agents managing the properties.

### 4.3.2 Lifestyle and Living Conditions in your Country (Q.2)

Southern Sudan is a predominantly Christian area, in contrast to the Muslim north, and most respondents were either Anglican or Roman Catholic. Most of those interviewed had resided in the main towns in the south, Wau, Juba and Malual, although some came from the adjacent rural areas of this region and one had lived in Khartoum in the north after leaving the south.

**Kasim:** I was born in a village in southern Sudan and moved to Wau and then to Khartoum, then I went to Baghdad for 23 years. (S4,P2,L57)

Most of the group had been born in traditional housing and had lived there for some part of their earlier life. Most traditional housing was located in the rural areas adjoining the larger towns and was associated with mixed farming practices. The houses were circular and generally constructed with mud walls and a roof structure of timber poles, covered with grass thatch. Rather than a single house serving all living functions, a number of smaller units representing different uses were grouped together.

**Genet:** It was a single house but they are often grouped together. Here in Australia you have a living room together with a kitchen and a bathroom. In our country is separate, you have stores, where you store the grain, you have a [separate] kitchen. We have a separate guest building where the men can sit and talk. There is also a separate sleeping house. And if you are a well-off man, for families are different as well you may also have two or three living areas where ladies can sleep in one of the areas and the head of the family, the father and mother will have their own house and the kids will have the other house. Some families may have six [individual] houses [in a group]. The open area will be left in the middle for the family to sit in the evening. And also they have what is called a coral or lock [locan] where you keep the cattle. (S3,P2,L80)

In the larger towns, during the colonial period, the British built some masonry buildings in a form characteristic of the time. In recent years the housing in the larger towns and cities, such as Wau and Khartoum, was more likely to be constructed of concrete block and be more Western in layout and style.

**Kasim:** In the villages people live in traditional housing, but when [I] moved to Wau and then Khartoum, for my kids, I was living in a house of 4 or 5 bedrooms because I had a family, if someone is single they live in a 2 or 3 bedroom house. (S4,P2,L65)
As a result of the conflict in Sudan many people fled to adjoining countries, such as Kenya and Ethiopia, and have experienced living in various different types of housing. Some of the refugee camps are constructed in a similar way to the traditional housing found in the rural areas of Sudan. In larger towns such as Nairobi in Kenya, which was home for at least one of those interviewed, the construction style and layout of housing was similar to the typical Australian or Western bungalow house.

Kia: [I] lived in a camp and the housing I was living in there was transitional housing, like they are round single house and it's made of mud, its like traditional housing, with plastic sheeting on top. The [parts of the house] are separate, a sleeping area, kitchen, separate toilet and a store separate, [like] a traditional house. [I] also lived in Nairobi [Kenya] and lived there for a couple of years and the housing is no different there [than in Australia]. The only difference [from] Kenya is that the rooms were larger than here [Australia], and that is the only difference, the design was a bit O.K. but here they [the rooms] are small. (S5,P1,L16)

For most of the interviewees, the extended family was the standard unit in the villages of Sudan, with large families of ten or more sharing the house with cousins and older generations of the family. When male members of the family marry, they often build a house a few metres away from the main family home. Eventually the main house will pass to the youngest male child to maintain, together with the responsibility of caring for the elderly parents or grandparents. Family members who move out of the main house will periodically return for family visits and celebrations, a characteristic of the Sudanese lifestyle.

Genet: But the others come back as they consider it as their house and the youngest he is having a lot of responsibility, for those that move out come back any time and sleep there [and] he has to feed them as well. (S3,P3,L103)

4.3.3 Community Needs and Diversity (Q.3)

The Sudanese group were asked about their lifestyle and living conditions in Australia, and a number of themes linked to community needs and diversity were grouped under the four key factors:

Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood
Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance
Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion
Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports

Theme 1.1 Location of Services

Access to services and shopping was identified by those interviewed as an important issue when selecting the location of their housing. As most Sudanese people in Adelaide have a low income, it is important for them to be located close to shopping and facilities that cater for their needs. Some of the group have stated that they will travel to source cheaper food and bulk billing medical facilities but this might not be the case for all Sudanese.

Although initially Sudanese people might have settled in the inner suburbs close to supports such as the Migrant Resource Centre, it was pointed out that a few might choose to live in newer outer suburbs where shopping and other facilities are readily available and easily accessed by car. Other reasons given for choice of location could hinge on the proximity to employment. Choice of location, however, might be restricted for most Sudanese families who are dependent on welfare assistance and public housing or low-rental private-sector housing.

Abu: My wife teaches in a school that is only ten minutes from the house. So we just like being there. (S1,P3,L128)

Ashur: One of my kids goes to Enfield Primary School and one goes to Gepps Cross. Gepps Cross is not close to our place but the one in Enfield is a little bit closer. (S2,P4,L157)

Theme 1.2 Connection

In Adelaide, the group observed that Sudanese people might be dispersed throughout the suburbs and not need to be located close to their friends or relatives as is the case in their country of origin. Greater mobility through public transport and private motor vehicle ownership was also identified as allowing Sudanese people to maintain connection with family and friends in Adelaide. More importance might be placed on obtaining the right housing in terms of size and proximity to facilities, with Sudanese people being more prepared to travel further to meet and socialise with friends and relatives.

Genet: I don't have any relatives living near me, my neighbours are Australian. My sister-in-law is living in Edwardstown and I go there to see her at the weekends. We also visit other people at Kilburn and Salisbury and also down South. (S3,P4,L160)
The group believed that established networks and language difficulties restricted the movement of some people in sourcing facilities further afield and that they might prefer to remain in a familiar location. This, it was thought, could prevent some Sudanese people relocating to larger or a better standard of accommodation if it were available.

Kasim: I have decided to stay in that three-bedroom house because it is close to the Arndale shopping centre and I can walk across the road and buy things. I didn’t want to move away from these services. I don’t speak English and if I move away from the services what would happen to me? (S4,P2,L94)

Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood

Theme 2.2 Security

Security of the house was a very important issue for the group. The issues they discussed, such as unsecured rear yards where children cannot play safely or can be accessed by unwanted visitors, unsecured car parking and antisocial behaviour in some locations, were those shared by most Adelaide residents.

Theme 2.3 Unfriendly/Friendly

Another important social factor for Sudanese people interviewed would seem to be the friendliness of the area and the relationship with their neighbours. It was stated that Sudanese people find the Australian lifestyle different from their own and this sensitivity might make it difficult to achieve a friendly relationship with neighbours. Their neighbours in Sudan might often have been family members with whom they would exchange greetings. They have found that this is not always the case in Australia, as some of their neighbours are unsure of how to approach cultural differences. They are also hampered by language difficulties, which their neighbours interpret as unfriendliness.

It was thought that this perceived unfriendliness of neighbours was particularly prevalent in public housing areas, a feeling that might be further aggravated by unsociable behaviour such as alcohol and substance abuse by other public housing tenants.

Ashur: The neighbours are not friendly because we see their Australian life is different from ours, for when you see your neighbour, it’s like your family, but if you don’t greet each other it’s not the family for sometimes you go out [side] and they cannot greet you. And most of the people that live there are the Housing Trust tenants. Some people they drink and they take drugs and all that sort of thing. And sometimes you hear noise in the night, it’s not nice. (S2,P4,L151).
The group thought that large families, often with numerous children, might experience conflict with neighbours over issues of noise and privacy. This was particularly prevalent in the attached dwellings characteristic of public housing areas where many Sudanese families live, and can result in conflict with neighbours. In such cases it was reported that some Sudanese people might need to relocate to other locations to avoid unfriendly or hostile neighbours.

Genet: I had had enough problem where I came from [in Sudan] so I moved. But Magill is fine I love it. (S3,P5,L200)

**Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance**

**Theme 3.3 External / Internal**

The exterior appearance of the house was identified as important to the interview participants. In particular the women were attributed as the homemakers and were more likely to choose the house for the family. This might be based on the appearance, size or the convenience of maintenance. There may also be some significance in the appearance of the house from a symbolic standpoint, with some of the group identifying the exterior facade as a face that can be either smiling and happy, or otherwise, which could affect their choice.

The external appearance of the standard Australian house, and the materials from which it is constructed, was also observed as exerting a negative influence to Sudanese people. Some said they had lived in different types of houses in other parts of Africa and the Middle East, and found those better suited their needs.

Genet: If I was to own a house I’d like to have a different appearance to what I am living in at the moment, because the housing design is different [here in Australia] from Africa. (S3,P5,L209)

**Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion**

**Theme 4.2 Practice**

As entertaining is an important part of Sudanese life, most of those interviewed required a living room for visitors that was separate from the family area and kitchen. Cooking was identified as generally the preserve of the women of the family and male intervention was seen as an issue. Another cultural preference identified was for same-gender children to
share bedrooms, although the size of secondary bedrooms in the standard Australian house might restrict this practice.

It was observed that most Sudanese have large families, a characteristic which influences their needs and way of living, and for this reason it was important that their housing be large enough to meet their family needs.

**Genet:** There are those families who have more than 10 members family size and this is part of their cultural background. (S3,P7,L337)

**Theme 4.6 Renting a House**

Through the dislocation and upheaval experienced since leaving their country, many of the Sudanese people interviewed would have lost the security of owning a house or having a sense of ownership. Consequently the group saw the prospect of home ownership as a significant goal, although they also recognised that it might be out of reach of most in the short term because of monetary issues. Those interviewed believed the next best thing to owning a house was having a stable rental tenure, ideally of a social housing property. Social housing represented good tenancy management, support services and subsidised low rental.

**Genet:** If they can get HousingSA properties [to rent] it would be good for them because most of them are depending on Government benefits and half of that they are paying in rent to the private rental market. If they had Government housing they would only be paying 25% of their income and they could save for their future. So Government [rental] housing is an option. (S3,P8,L375)

Sudanese families, it was said, experienced difficulty in finding large houses to rent and those available were expensive, thereby forcing some to choose smaller accommodation and put up with overcrowding. A few in the community who had good employment might be able to afford the rent on larger houses but they were the exception. Some Sudanese people also found it hard to deal with real estate agents over private rental properties, although other benefits might come from renting, including assistance with maintenance on the property.

**Abu:** We haven’t done anything we got it just the way it is, when we have a problem we just call the man [owner]. (S1,P4,L170)
4.3.4 Housing Design and Diversity (Q.4)

Each of the group was asked about their current house and changes they might make to it to improve it for them and their family, and a number of themes emerged which were grouped under the six key factors linked to housing design and diversity:

- **Key Factor 5: Layout of the House**
- **Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**
- **Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms** (not important to Sudanese group)
- **Key Factor 8: Entertaining and living Areas**
- **Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms**
- **Key factor 10: Comfort**

The Sudanese group interviewed did not identify ‘Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms’ as important. Two of the group did, however, mention bathroom size as being important to them which corresponded to comments made by the Managers and Service Managers about the need for more space in the bathroom for this group and the need to take their height into consideration when positioning shower heads and other fittings.

**Key Factor 5: Layout of House**

**Theme 5.1 Flexibility**

The group observed that public- or private-sector landlords often did not give a Sudanese tenant any choice in the selection of a house. Layout of the house might be poor and present some cultural issues, such as the kitchen being adjacent to the sitting room.

\[\text{Kasim: We didn't want the kitchen to be near the toilet or a sitting room or lounge to be close to the kitchen. So the design [of my current house] is no good, but what can we do about it? The decision’s not in our hands. (S4,P4,L165)}\]

**Theme 5.11 House size**

Sudanese families often have ten or more members and the typical Australian house of three bedrooms is too small to accommodate them. Overcrowding, it was said, is aggravated as most Sudanese children tend to live at home until they marry and place a strain on the family to find enough bedrooms. House size was identified by the group as a problem for Sudanese people both in public and private sector housing.

\[\text{Ashur: For example we got Sudanese large families and the people that come here [to Australia] they have six, seven in the family also a ten [person family].}\]
Sometimes you get three bedroom [house] and it's very rare to get four bedroom. (S2,P7,L323)

Generally, the group agreed that the standard house needed to be enlarged to four or five bedrooms to suit the Sudanese family. Room size was also seen as a concern, in particular the bedroom and living areas. There was a preference for children to share bedrooms which should be larger to accommodate more furniture. In the standard Australian house only one bedroom was seen as large enough and was usually occupied by the adults of the family.

_Ashur: Lots of the rooms are too small, only one is large [main bedroom]. (S2,P5,L199)_

**Theme 5.12 Privacy**

Considering the noise generated by the children of a large family, the group thought it important that care was taken when selecting the appropriate house as to how it was placed on the block to reduce impact on neighbours. For Sudanese families, the duplex or attached house form might not have the necessary privacy for both the occupants and the neighbours because of noise transmission across the party wall and often shared service arrangements.

_Ashur: [In a duplex] It's because of noise and also when you have children they can annoy the other people who live in the other side, because if they talk too much, the other people can hear it and if they play something other people can hear it. (S2,P7,L310)_

**Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**

**Theme 6.1 Size and Layout**

The group agreed that cooking was a major social event in most Sudanese homes and was usually done by the women of the family. A conventional kitchen found in the standard Australian home was not large enough in which to prepare food for large gatherings of family and friends. These gatherings were usually catered for outside and prepared on barbecue-style appliances because of the lack of kitchen space indoors.

It was stated that more than one person was likely to work in the kitchen at the same time during food preparation, even for family meals, so separation of kitchen benches should be great enough to allow this. Sufficient bench space should also be allowed for large pots and pans and a larger stove might also be required.
Faizah: On the weekends, when we have a party. And the women come together and we cook in a big place [outside]. (S6,P5,L213)

Some of those interviewed thought that the separation of the kitchen and the dining area was not necessary if there was a separate living room for guests, the convenience of the combined kitchen and the dining area outweighing the cultural issues.

This group identified lack of space in the kitchen as making eating and food preparation difficult when entertaining large numbers of people, and so preferred to do this outside. It was said that Sudanese people might therefore need a cooker and a paved area outside to cater for large numbers.

Faizah: [Another] cooker can be outside, if there is concrete [paving] outside we can do the cooking in the open. (S6,P5, L209)

**Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating**

The group identified women as being most likely to undertake the cooking in the Sudanese household. There was a perception amongst Sudanese men in the group that the kitchen was the women’s preserve and that the house should be designed to separate the food preparation function from the living areas. Further, it was said that men walking through the kitchen to other rooms, or to the outside of the house, was not desirable.

Genet: The women they are the masters of the kitchen, if men go there they will tell them, ‘you know nothing about cooking’. And if I go into the kitchen my elder sister reports me to my mum. The kitchen and the toilet are the first thing that the Sudanese want to be designed, these are very important areas. (S3,P8,L389)

**Theme 6.5 Storage**

The group expressed a preference for buying foodstuffs in bulk which required additional storage space in the kitchen. Those interviewed indicated that the standard Australian house kitchen in both the private and public sectors is unlikely to provide the space required.

**Key Factor 8: Entertaining and Living Areas**

**Theme 8.1 Hospitality**

The Sudanese group expressed the need for a separate sitting room to be located at the front of the house for family and guests, in addition to the family and kitchen areas. The
front area of the house or the living room is important for them as it is where they greet and welcome visitors, both for entertaining and religious events such as Christmas when it is decorated profusely.

**Genet:** If you visit Sudanese families at Christmas time you would see how they decorate their houses. They put lots of things in the living room. They put lots of craft animals there to make it feel welcoming. (S3,P6,L271)

**Theme 8.3 Size of Rooms**

Sudanese families require large spaces for sitting and eating in their home, and the group thought a large dining or eating area would be necessary to allow for furniture placement and circulation. The living room should also be big enough to accommodate a large number of guests and the furniture they required.

**Theme 8.4 Working / Studying at Home**

A space and storage for a sewing machine and sewing materials, both for family use and for working from home, was important to some of the group and this could often be located in a bedroom. A bedroom could also be used for an office or a study if space was available. However, if bedrooms were shared with other family members the study space could be located in the living areas of the house.

**Theme 8.5 Outside**

The group thought that outside areas were important to Sudanese people as entertainment spaces and for children to play, and for this reason they should be of a sufficient size to meet such requirements. Outside living areas were also important, particularly if the house was small, to allow family members to escape cramped conditions inside, so a covered sitting area might also be necessary.

**Kasim:** They don't have a corridor outside [a veranda]. You always live inside the house and you can't sit outside in the shade. And if you sit in the backyard you are in the sun. I'm always in the house. I don’t like the shape and the design of the house. I prefer the Iraqi design where it can be a circle, with the middle part of the building is open. (S4,P3,L143)

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*This Sudanese interviewee had lived in Iraq for many years.*
**Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms**

**Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size**

The group pointed out that in Sudanese families, younger, same-gender children could share a bedroom but older children and adults needed a separate bedroom. The size of bedrooms in the standard Australian house generally prevented more than two people sharing a bedroom. Also, some of the Sudanese group thought that all bedrooms in the house should be located together near the parents’ bedroom to allow the supervision of children during the night.

Faizah: This 3-bedroom house will not be big enough for them, they need four or five bedrooms so the young ones can share a room and you can share a room with the little one [the baby], but the grown up ones need a room each. If it’s a three-bedroom house and the kid is grown up, let’s say it’s a boy [he] can share a room with another boy. Therefore she needs a four-bedroom house. So every kid can have their own bedroom for their own privacy. (S6,P1,L42)

**Key Factor 10: Comfort**

**Theme 10.2 Services**

It was important for the Sudanese group for there to be adequate heating in their houses, although it was usually not provided by a landlord, either in public or private sector housing, and was left to the tenant to provide. Some older houses let to Sudanese people were not well insulated or protected from drafts, and could be cold in winter. Comments from the group indicated that small rooms were hot in summer.

Ashur: It’s [the house] very small also it’s very hot. (S2,P5,L201)

4.3.5 Ashur’s House (Q.3.6) – Case Study

The respondent was working as a settlement officer for the Australian Refugee Association and was conversant with many of the issues facing Sudanese people seeking housing. He was a tenant of HousingSA and occupied a three-bedroom semi-detached house which he shared with his partner and two children. He had lived in the inner northern suburbs of Adelaide since his arrival in Australia. He pointed out that his current housing was not his choice but that it was close to most of the services that he and his family required, including schools for both his children. One of his main concerns was the neighbourhood
in which he lived and the perceived anti-social behaviour of some of the residents who he identified as being mainly Housing Trust tenants.

The respondent mentioned that the style and appearance of the house was important for Sudanese people but that it was more likely that the housing would be chosen by the women of the family, rather than the men, based on their perceptions of its suitability for the family.

Ashur: I can accept any house, but the lady is very hard. The lady will look for good house, outside as well as inside because the lady has to take care of the house. (S2,P4.L176)

As part of the interview, the respondent drew the floor plan of his house which was used as a reference in the questions asked on house design.

Ashur’s house was typical of the housing built throughout the metropolitan area of Adelaide by the South Australian Housing Trust (now HousingSA) from the 1930s to the 1960s. There are approximately 20,000 of this type of house state-wide and they are the main source of social housing for families. There are several floor plans and generally they are grouped together in estates such as the area where Ashur lives in Enfield.
The units are constructed of either clay brick or concrete block with a corrugated iron roof. Often the party wall does not extend to the underside of the roof sheeting, causing problems with noise transmission between units. Although some units have bulk insulation in the ceilings installed retrospectively, there is no wall insulation.

The respondent’s house was built in 1956 of clay brick. The three bedrooms opened into either the sitting room or the kitchen and the main entrance to the house led directly into the sitting room. The dining room ‘borrowed’ light from the adjoining kitchen and the laundry and bathroom were located at the back of the house. The back exit from the house was through the laundry. Below is the floor plan and elevation of the respondent’s house.

Figure 9: Plan and elevation of Sudanese respondent’s semi-detached house (Source: HousingSA, See also Appendix 14, p. 327 for more detail)
In the interview the respondent identified the following fourteen themes relating to the design of his house:

- **KF3 House Style and Appearance**  
  T3.3 External/Internal Appearance

- **KF5 Layout of House**  
  T5.1 Flexibility
  T5.11 House Size
  T5.12 Privacy

- **KF6 Eating and Food Preparation**  
  T6.4 Custom and Eating

- **KF7 Bathing and Bathrooms**  
  T7.2 Bathroom Size

- **KF8 Entertaining and Living Areas**  
  T8.1 Hospitality
  T8.2 Entrance
  T8.3 Size of Rooms
  T8.5 Outside

- **KF9 Sleeping and Bedrooms**  
  T9.1 Flexibility and Size
  T9.2 Cultural Practice

- **KF10 Comfort**  
  T10.2 Services
  T10.3 Cleanliness of House

The respondent had issues with the size of the house and also the flexibility of the layout to meet his family’s needs. The bedrooms having access directly off the sitting room and dining area made privacy difficult for members of his family. His daughters studied in their bedrooms off these living spaces where adults prepared meals and watched television, which he thought was a distraction for them.
The kitchen and dining room were combined and because of their relatively small area, by current amenity standards, it was hard to separate the cooking and eating functions which the respondent said his family required.

**Ashur:** The women say, in the kitchen, nobody can go there, you men you cannot go there. (S2, P4,L185)

Further, the size of the dining area did not provide sufficient circulation space around the dining room table. This ‘cramped’ situation restricted family and guests sharing meals in this area.

There was also a concern that the second and third bedrooms were too small for the children to use for study and play, which forced them to use the living room and led to some family conflict. Perhaps the only positive factor was the separation of the toilet from the bathroom. The respondent also complained about the heat inside the house during summer and the cold in winter as a result of poor ventilation and design of the house. Sound transmission across and over the party wall was also a concern.

There were a number of issues associated with the outside yard space including the lack of security and privacy from the neighbours. It was also seen as being too small for the respondent’s children to use as a play space. The respondent thought that some of the issues raised about the yard space would be better addressed in detached housing.

*Figure 11: Sudanese respondent’s yard space (Source: HousingSA 2009)*
House size was identified as being extremely important and the table below provides a comparison of the size of the respondent’s house with the current amenity standards used by HousingSA. It identifies any differences between the house size of the Sudanese family studied and the design standards:

Table 6: Comparison of room areas in Sudanese respondent’s house and current HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-bedroom house (Semi-detached)</th>
<th>HousingSA Design Guide Requirements (m²)</th>
<th>Ashur’s House (m²)</th>
<th>Difference (m²) +/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Area (m²)</td>
<td>110-120</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>-26.5 to 36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms Required</td>
<td>Room size</td>
<td>Room size</td>
<td>Room size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
<td>19.5 (3.6)</td>
<td>14.245</td>
<td>-5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining</td>
<td>9.9 (2.4)</td>
<td>9.0 46</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>9.0 (2.7)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>-4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Bedroom</td>
<td>14.8 (3.6)</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Bedrooms</td>
<td>10.8 (3.0)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.8 (3.0)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>1.8 (0.9)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptable bathroom/WC</td>
<td>7.6 (2.7)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>4.3 (1.8)</td>
<td>3.547</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>-22.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondent’s house was considerably smaller than the HousingSA Design Guidelines requirements, with all room sizes being smaller. Overall, the dwelling was 24 per cent less in area than current Housing Design Guidelines suggest for three-bedroom housing. The living and dining rooms were characterised by a corridor or access way that reduced the effective useful area of the room. In addition, the internal location of the dining room made it difficult to achieve adequate light and ventilation to the area. Further, the size of this area did not allow sufficient circulation space around furniture items, thereby restricting the family’s activities.

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45 Circulation space (corridor) not included
46 Circulation space (corridor) not included
47 Circulation space (corridor) not included
4.4 Iraqi Group

4.4.1 Profile (Q.1)

Those interviewed in this group were contacted through the DFC Refugee Unit and the Migrant Resource Centre. Although the group was small, the two organisations contacted identified those who participated as being representative of the Iraqi community in Adelaide. Further, the open-ended questions asked of the group on a one-to-one basis allowed a broad picture of the group’s housing needs to emerge.

Two men and three women were interviewed, and their ages ranged from 20 to 55 years. Although one had lived for less than two years in Australia most of the group had resided here for more than five years, and most had returned to their homeland to visit at least once in that time.

Everyone in the group had lived in other countries before coming to Australia, mainly in the Arab world including Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. The length of stay was for periods ranging from three months to two years, usually while waiting for immigration visas. All were able to recount their earlier life in Iraq.

When asked why they chose Adelaide as a place to settle the group gave two main reasons: firstly that they were encouraged by the Immigration Authorities and once settled they found that living in Adelaide met their needs and secondly, that they were joining other family members.

Leyla: My husband was here for about seven years, we were apart. I was the last member of my family to leave Iraq. We were six sisters and I was the last to leave with my children, my son and daughter. (I2,P1,L19)

Three of the respondents were buying their home, one was renting in the private market and one was renting from the Community Housing Sector (Anglicare). One of the group lived alone and the rest lived as families with two or more children. Most of those interviewed lived in the northern or north-eastern suburbs of Adelaide. For the location of each group member’s house, see Appendix 15 (p.328). All of those interviewed were tertiary educated and were employed in agencies providing services to migrant groups.
4.4.2 Lifestyle and Living Conditions in your Country (Q.2)

All of those interviewed came from major cities, such as Baghdad or larger towns in Iraq, although two had spent their childhood in a rural area in the north of Iraq. All had recently lived in modern-style housing as distinct from the traditional indigenous housing found in country areas of Iraq. They described this modern housing as characterised by a rendered concrete brick exterior, which has proliferated in the urban areas of Iraq because of the economy of construction. The houses are generally of a two-storey villa type, with the living areas downstairs and bedrooms upstairs. An open roof patio, used as a sleeping area in hot weather, is also typical. The style and technology of modern domestic architecture, while retaining some of the characteristics of the earlier traditional Iraqi designs, is now greatly influenced by Western culture.

Leyla: Most of the designs [could be influenced] by the West. They used to bring magazines and they teach them at university about Western design. We have a very famous woman Iraqi architect, Zaha Hadid. Her father was a very famous politician in the 1940s. I think she came from Mosul in the north of Iraq. She studied there and in England. (I2,P3,L109)

The villa style of house usually occupies a large single allotment of land, which is generally walled. An ornamental garden is established near the main entrance to the house, providing a welcoming aspect for visitors. These dwellings are influenced in part by the traditional Iraqi, Baghdadi and Shami48 houses in layout and form, but are characterised by Western influences in construction and amenity. Modern Iraqi houses have separate entries for visitors and the family, allowing the house to be separated into public and private areas.

Those interviewed mentioned the generous size of the house in which they had lived in Iraq and how this was linked to their lifestyle, particularly in hospitality and entertaining. In addition, the group emphasised that their families were often extended, thereby requiring larger living spaces. Family members, often married children or other relations, were most likely to visit and require accommodation for protracted stays.

Shada: My husband has 18 brothers and sisters. They live in different areas, Baghdad [and] north and south of Iraq. When they visit us they don’t visit for one or two days, they stay at least a week. I have a very special room for them when they come to stay. (I4,P5,L212)

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48 The respondent indicated that the term ‘Shami’ house referred to houses found in parts of the Middle East containing the traditional courtyard layout.
This required a guest suite, or at least a guest bedroom, for visitors. Generally the suite contained its own bathroom, was located away from the areas occupied by the resident family and usually situated on the lower level of the house, adjacent to the sitting room.

Other aspects of the house layout were dictated by the family’s activities and cultural preferences. The house was designed to separate public and private activities, with the public area being referred to as the ‘main hall’ and consisting of a sitting room and a dining room combined, with a provision to close either room off with sliding or folding doors. This area allowed a large multi-purpose entertainment space to be used by either family or guests.

A large kitchen with table and chairs was located adjacent to the ‘main hall’ but kept separate. The family entrance to the house generally gave direct access to the kitchen, with the location of meal preparation and the family eating area away from public rooms maintaining the custom of separating men and women when visitors were present.

Bedroom accommodation was located on the second level and was a totally private family area of the house. Bedroom sizes permitted same-gender siblings to share rooms. In the older houses there was only one bathroom but this has changed in recent years with greater affluence and now en-suite bathrooms are often provided for each bedroom.

Leyla: Sharing a bathroom within the family is O.K., but after the 1980s people became more wealthy [and] they have a bathroom for each bedroom. (I2,P3,L102)

Some houses accommodated both modern and traditional cultural preferences by providing both a Western and Middle-Eastern style of bathroom.

Leyla: We had two kinds of bathroom, they say the Eastern or oriental bathroom, the Iraqi bathroom and the other they call the Western bathroom for the guests. (I2,P5,L241)

Some interviewed felt that it was more important to embrace new ideas and the culture of their new home, and that they could accept the Australian house style. Some, however, felt that they would like to add some characteristics of the Iraqi house to their Australian dwelling, even to the extent of replicating an Iraqi house. They considered that the standard Australian house might not meet their needs, particularly in maintaining an intrinsic feeling of ‘home’.

Shada: But if I decide to buy a house here [I] would build a new house. I would not want the Australian design, because my design is different, what I want is my
4.4.3 Community Needs and Diversity (Q.3)

The Iraqi group were asked about their lifestyle and living conditions in Australia, and a number of themes linked to community needs and diversity were grouped under the four key factors:

Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood
Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance
Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

**Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports**

*Theme 1.1 Location of Services*

The group interviewed indicated that proximity to work, education and appropriate shops and community services were all important to Iraqi people settling in Australia. Some members of the family might not initially have access to private transport so it was emphasised that housing should be located close to public transport routes and to the local services required.

Many Iraqi people are Muslims who usually require regular access to Mosques within their area, so locating housing near these places of worship was important for the group. This would also assist in allowing new migrants to meet people of a familiar background with similar cultural needs and language.

*Theme 1.2 Connection*

Middle-Eastern grocery shops were now located in some suburbs and it was stated that access to these facilities could assist in providing not only the familiar grocery items found in their country but also centres of contact with members of the Iraqi community and other migrant groups who share similar experiences in settlement.
Zaid: [Having housing] near your friends, near your relatives, friendliness of suburb, access to study are all important, especially if [you] have limited English language and don’t have a vehicle for transport. (I1(1), P2, L87)

Some Iraqis said they had been sponsored to come to Australia through a relative and had lived with them for a period of time after arrival. They thought it was still important, even after finding their own home, to keep in touch with these family members for ongoing support and friendship. The group thought, therefore, it was important that their new home was located to maintain this linkage, and for the housing provider to be sensitive to these requirements when locating housing.

Location near relatives was not the only factor in house selection for Iraqi people, however, and the availability of appropriate housing in a good area was thought equally important, and that this might over-ride living close to relatives, even with its advantages.

Shada: No, there are no Iraqis in my area, but I’m happy with this house and it is in a very good area. (I4,P2, L95)

Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood

Theme 2.2 Security

The Iraqi group talked about the current situation in their country and the insecurity they had felt before leaving, and how this now affected them in Australia. However, most felt that security was not a major issue where they were now living.

Leyla: I lock both doors because in myself I feel insecure having come from an insecure environment [in Iraq]. (I2, P5, L210).

Zaid: Although I do not know my neighbours I feel secure where I live. (I1,P2, L92)

Theme 2.3 Unfriendly/Friendly

Although the group thought that knowing the neighbours was important, few of those interviewed knew their neighbours well and this was not an issue for them, despite having experienced strong community connection in their country.

Zaid: I like the neighbourhood and the proximity to the Middle-Eastern grocery shops and this is important in liking the area. (I1, P2, L95)
**Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance**

**Theme 3.2 Traditional Housing**

It was important for some Iraqi people living in Australia to want to maintain elements of their traditional housing style, and this could be seen as a means of cultural expression. The standard Australian house might not be acceptable in either layout or appearance for this group and so modifications could be made to meet their requirements. The group indicated that such modifications were more likely to be to the interior of the house than the exterior and be related to the entertaining, eating and sleeping areas.

*Zaid: The style and appearance of a house express[ed] my culture and personality.*
(I1(1) P3, L122)

The desire to replicate the traditional Iraqi house was strongly held by some of the group. For them, their current housing might be only a temporary measure, having been available and affordable at the time, but it might not fully express their housing needs.

*Zaid: My thoughts going back to probably one hundred or couple of hundred years. I just want a more traditional house [and] for me it's more culturally appropriate house for my needs. If I can afford one but that's question [is] ‘if’. (I1(2), P5, L208)*

**Theme 3.3 Internal/External Appearance**

Two of the Iraqi group talked about a ‘dream house’ which incorporated some of the internal and external appearances of their former housing in Iraq and said that the Australian house did not meet these requirements.

*Shada: If I decide to buy a house here [in Australia] I would want my design, not the Australian design, different, what I want is my design [of] house. (I4, P6, L287).*

*Zaid: A courtyard house with all the decoration, mosaics, and it’s a dream house. (I1 (1), P5, L204)*

**Key Factor 4 Family, Culture and Religion**

**Theme 4.2 Practice**

Iraqi families can be large, and also extended, and relatives often visit for long periods of time. Close relations such as brothers and sisters may be given a free rein of the house when visiting. Accommodation needed to be available for them, so in Australia a spare
room was usually kept for guests. Family size and the obligation to house visitors meant that the house must be large. Extending hospitality to guests and visiting family members was identified as an important part of the cultural practice of Iraqi people.

Shada: My brother he calls me, tomorrow he's coming from Sydney and for two years I don't see him. We have a spare room it is my daughter's room before she married. The room has a single bed and my brother can sleep there. My brother is free in my house, but this is a special room for him. This is an important thing. (I4,P5,L219)

The group identified that the practice of separating men and women in the Iraqi home when entertaining guests was common. The living room served a special function as it was separate from the family areas of the house. It was important that male guests in particular did not enter the family areas when visiting the house, so the living room was their preserve. Female guests who visited the female members of the household, however, might also need to be separated from the male members of the family.

Zaid: There are gender issues, when the visitors come, like male and female. And when the male members are at home and there are female friends of my wife coming over they like to have some privacy. (I1(1),P4,L194)

It was explained that separation of men and women might not be a requirement of all Iraqi people. Some are now more relaxed about this tradition and might be adopting some of the customs of Australian society. Older, more traditional Iraqis, however, might still observe these practices more strictly.

It can also be important to remove shoes in some Iraqi households before entering the house. This was not only seen as custom, but also for reasons of cleanliness. Non-Iraqi visitors to the house might not be required to remove their shoes.

Shada: I have a lot of Australian friends and when they come to the house they do not have to remove their shoes and if I know this person is very clean, doesn't have a dog or a cat in their house. (I4,P5,L202)

In addition to the bathroom being used for daily washing for personal hygiene and sometimes before and after eating, the group felt it might also be used for ritual washing. This, they said, could involve devout Muslims washing the hands, face and feet before prayer, up to five times a day. The group felt that their current bathroom met most of their needs, both in terms of personal hygiene and religious ritual.
Sabeen: For we wash just a few parts of the body, not the whole of the body. We wash our body once a day. Just washing the hands and the face and sometimes the feet. Yes not all the body. (I5,P5, L227)

Theme 4.5 Owning a House

Two of the Iraqis interviewed were renting their house, with the other three buying a house. The group thought that the longer-term aim of most Iraqis living in Australia was to own a home. The cost of renting was seen to be high in Australia, both in the private and the public sectors, but generally it was thought that purchasing a home was beyond most migrants and that they would remain in the rental market. One of the advantages of purchasing a house was that it could be adapted more easily to better meet their needs.

Theme 4.7 Religion and Prayer

Four of the Iraqi people interviewed were Muslim and one was a Gnostic Christian. All of the Muslims interviewed acknowledged the need for religious observance, but did not see themselves as particularly devout. The provision for Muslim worship raised two issues with those interviewed: firstly, the place of worship and secondly, ritual washing. Those interviewed indicated that Iraqi Muslims generally did not require a special prayer room in the house as that this would be costly and space consuming. Their preference would be for men to go to the Mosque to pray and the standard practice for women was to pray at home, often using the bedroom for this purpose.

Leyla : Because in our country Muslims don’t have a certain place to go to pray. Only in mosques if they want to pray, any place they can find. Yes clean and tidy, a small place. (I2,P4, L179)

Washing prior to prayer was said to involve the washing of hands and face and sometimes the feet. The extent and frequency of this washing would be dependant upon the devout nature of the person. It was thought that these religious practices might disappear over time as the younger generation adopt the new ways here in Australia. There were traditional Iraqis, generally in the older generation, who would be more avid practitioners.

Sabeen: .....it depends on the person, different people do it in different ways, there are the purists, who really wash hard and some people say you just have to put some water on you. (I5,P5, L243)
4.4.4 Housing Design and Diversity (Q.4)

Each of the group was asked about their current house and changes they might make to improve it for them and their family, and a number of themes emerged which were grouped under the six key factors linked to housing design and diversity:

- **Key Factor 5: Layout of the House**
- **Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**
- **Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms**
- **Key Factor 8: Entertaining and living Areas**
- **Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms**
- **Key Factor 10: Comfort.**

**Key Factor 5: Layout of the House**

**Theme 5.1 Flexibility**

The group thought that, to achieve greater flexibility in their current housing, it might be necessary for Iraqis to modify the existing layout of rooms and facilities. There could be constraints, however, to altering the Australian standard house to fully meet their needs, the most obvious being the cost. The group acknowledged that some compromise had to be made between what they wanted and what was achievable with the standard Australian house.

*Zaid*: I just finished the extension on my house. I added two bedrooms and a family room and bathroom and toilet. (I1/I, P3, L138)

**Theme 5.8 Address and Approach**

The group members recounted that the traditional Iraqi house had an entrance space or hall at the front of the house leading to the formal living room used by guests. A second entrance for family use was adjacent to the kitchen. This second entrance allowed the separation of the public and family areas, allowing women family members to come and go without coming into contact with male guests. It also gave access for shopping, hanging out washing and working in the garden, and it was considered that this layout might be necessary in their house in Australia.

*Leyla*: In our country, we have two doors. One from the kitchen if you want to bring the groceries [into the house] and the other door goes to the sitting room and the dining room. Someone comes, a guest, we have two doors always. (I2/P5, L212)
Space for shoes near both entries was seen as important for some Iraqi families as there would be a need for guests to remove their footwear on entering to protect the carpets and to keep the house clean.

Shada: In Iraq you have a special spot, when you enter through the kitchen. The kitchen has a lot of space to put shoes. The other rooms, the family areas have carpets and rugs and very expensive rugs and I have two of these rugs and I don't like anyone walking with shoes on them. I think it's very important. (I4,P4,L197)

The group felt that the special nature of the living room meant that it should be entered from a hall or porch to preserve its formality. The family and guests might observe other customs to maintain the formality of the room, such as removing shoes before entering.

Shada: A special room for my visitors. I don't like an entrance that goes directly into the living room. If the door is opened you see everything in the room. And I don't like people coming into the living room with their shoes on because I need this area to be very clean and tidy. This area shows me how I am clean. (I4,P6, L291)

Theme 5.11 House Size

The general feeling of the Iraqis interviewed was that their house was too small. They drew comparisons with their previous houses in Iraq which were larger and had a different internal layout. In the standard Australian house their main areas of concern about room size centred on bedrooms and entertainment or living areas. The need for visitors to be offered extended hospitality, and even housed overnight, required significantly large spaces. This was in addition to the space needed for family use.

One respondent remarked that, even though it could be difficult for the family, higher rents might be paid for housing that better suited a family’s lifestyle. Generally the group felt that larger houses were often needed and, although more costly to rent or buy, were seen as important in allowing a family to practice their customs, particularly related to hospitality and entertainment. Without such options, the group thought, isolation could become a problem.

Shada: It doesn't matter about the rent, it is more important that I am living in a big house. I can't live in a small house because I am just looking at the walls, because nobody is here, no relatives, no family to visit you only your family. A big house with a big back yard, I spend some time in the garden, it's good. (I4,P3,L108)
**Theme 5.12 Privacy**

The need for privacy was also a key requirement for Iraqis and the typical entrance to the standard Australian house might not provide it. The standard house often has direct access to the living areas, which might be unacceptable.

**Zaid:** The entry [to the house] is important, we need privacy. (I1, P4, L173)

**Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**

**Theme 6.1 Size and Layout**

The Iraqi group felt that that the kitchens in Australia were smaller than in their own country. The women of the household undertook all the cooking and food preparation, with much time expended on this function. Food was often prepared in large quantities, either for entertaining or made in advance and stored for family meals. Consequently there was often a need for bulk ingredients to be stored or frozen in or near the kitchen.

The standard Australian kitchen was perceived by the group to be too small for the Iraqi household where often more than one person at the same time did the cooking. The standard Australian kitchen had limited bench space and the cooker was not large enough for the cooking pots used in the preparation of meals.

**Shada:** If I compare my kitchen here to my kitchen in Iraq, no, here the Australian people don't spend much time in the kitchen. But they are big houses, but the kitchen is a small one. Yes I think this is not good. (I4, P4, L149)

The group thought that the small size of the Australian kitchen often meant that an Iraqi family needed to prepare food outside and this activity could be combined with entertainment and other social activities. The formal indoor kitchen would be supplemented with outside facilities such as a bread oven or barbecue when large numbers of guests attended.

**Shada:** If I have guests or visitors for lunch or dinner I cook outside because the kitchen is too small. (I4, P5, L232)

**Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating**

The kitchen was seen by the group as the women’s domain and men were generally excluded from this area and cooking activities. As eating was a whole-of-family activity, it was generally preferred that food preparation and eating areas were separate. Eating at
home could be seen as a means of bringing together the family as a social experience. Further, cooking was seen as very important for Iraqi people and was a major home activity for women, reflecting regional cooking practices and styles.

Sabeen: [Cooking and eating] is very important for the Middle-Eastern people because the cuisine is very important for them, they don’t like to eat away from home [and] they don't like to eat a small amount. So they do a big amount of cooking every day and at home. So homemade cooking [is important]. (I5, P5, L205)

Although Iraqi women might spend considerable time in the kitchen, the group felt that this situation could be changing as many Middle-Eastern women were now working. This might restrict the social aspect of cooking to certain times of the week. Further, most Muslim Iraqis would require a source of halal meat, sometimes on a daily basis, and being near a supply was important.

Theme 6.5 Storage

Storage for bulk materials and cooking utensils was seen as inadequate in the standard Australian kitchen and Iraqi families might have to resort to finding other areas in the house for that purpose. One household interviewed used the garage.

Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms

Theme 7.2 Bathroom Size/ Theme 7.3 Visitors and Guests

The location of bathrooms in the house was important to Iraqi people. Visitors and guests should not be required to go through the family room or bedrooms to access a bathroom. In the Australian house the positioning of bathrooms near bedrooms, or even as en-suites, might cause some difficulties for Iraqi families when male guests needed to use the bathroom, and could cause embarrassment or inconvenience to the family. Two bathrooms were preferred, with one located near the living room and the other adjacent to the bedrooms. The bathroom near the living room could be accessed by guests for washing their hands before eating.

Zaid: It's always good to have two bathrooms and toilets in the house, one close to the front of the house and the other at the back of the house close to bedrooms. (I1(I), P4, L189)
Iraqis might have experienced both a Western and oriental style of bathroom in their country. They would therefore be familiar with the layout of the bathroom in the standard Australian house.

**Key Factor 8: Entertaining and Living Areas**

*Theme 8.1 Hospitality/ Theme 8.3 Size of Rooms*

The group saw the living room as the entertainment centre for visitors and guests. It was considered a special room and could be compared to a parlour or best room that is on display to visitors and decorated to reflect its importance. Of necessity, it was a large room as Iraqi people entertain a lot of people at one time. The group also thought that the living room could double as a family space when not being used to entertain guests, and include a TV set for the family.

Custom might require the living room to be reserved for the male guests when entertaining, with the women using the family area of the house. This custom might be changing, with some contemporary Iraqi people mixing men and women at functions in the home.

*Sabeen: Our friends are all welcome either together as a family or by themselves, we will be all together. (I5,P4, L173)*

Hospitality could extend to offering overnight accommodation in some cases and the standard Australian house layout might not be large enough, or have the facilities for house guests, particularly males. The group thought the standard house with its main bathroom adjacent to the bedrooms might not provide sufficient separation between family and guest areas. The layout would require the family to share the bathroom with guests, unlike visitor accommodation in an Iraqi house which was located away from the family areas, providing sufficient privacy for the family and observance of customs.

*Shada: [In Iraq] for the guest people we have very big room with a bathroom and everything and a separate entry, separate from the family area. (I4,P3,L135)*

**Theme 8.5 Outside**

Although the Iraqi group wanted an ornamental and kitchen-garden type of garden there was a concern about the size and the ongoing maintenance of the area. Although growing produce could be a means of stretching the family budget for a few families, sometimes only a small space in the rear yard was required.
Shada: I planted some vegetables because I have a big yard, what do I do with this one? You save money for the family if you have a lot of vegetables because you don’t need to go to the shop to buy. (I4,P6, L274)

**Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms**

**Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size**

There was a consensus among the Iraqis interviewed that bedroom size in the standard Australian house was too small. This limited the use of the rooms by preventing the sharing of bedrooms by same-gender siblings which some Iraqi families prefer.

Leyla: The bedrooms are too small, but if we had two sons they could share a bedroom. (I2,P5 L246)

**Theme 9.2 Cultural Practice**

Separate guest accommodation away from the family area was also important to Iraqi people as some friends and relatives stay for long periods. The bedroom size and location in the standard Australian house might not be suitable for guest accommodation and could cause some dissatisfaction with the house form.

**Key Factor 10: Comfort**

**Theme 10.2 Services**

In terms of comfort, the group’s main concern was about the provision of heating in their housing. Some had provided spot heating to rooms, with a few families installing reverse cycle air-conditioning to meet their heating requirements. However, those who rented their house were concerned that the landlord was unlikely to assist with heating or cooling.

Shada: It is a very modern house but unfortunately there is no heating or cooling system. If you want an air conditioner you put it in yourself. (I4,P6,L225)

**Theme 10.3 Cleanliness of House**

The group felt that cleanliness of the house could be a sign of status and pride. The living room was the showplace of many Iraqi homes and it was important to keep this room clean and tidy at all times. It was usually the women’s responsibility to maintain the required state of cleanliness. In an Iraqi house, family members and guests remove shoes for hygiene and cleanliness reasons.
Shada: The cleanliness of this room [lounge] shows how I manage my house, if the area is dirty that reflects on me. If visitors come to this area [living room] and say it’s very dirty, the family is dirty, but if I keep this clean, maybe my bedroom is not clean or tidy but they are thinking this area is clean and tidy [therefore the family is clean]. (I4,P6, L295)

4.4.5 Zaid’s House (Q.3.6) – A Case Study

The respondent occupied a four-bedroom house with his wife and two children. He worked for the Department of Families and Communities in the Refugee Branch. One of the reasons for choosing the location was the relative proximity to his work at Netley. The respondent was a trained civil engineer, although he was currently employed as a youth worker, and because of his former training was able to draw a detailed plan of his house to illustrate some of its features. Zaid also provided a detailed layout of his sitting room, showing the layout of the furniture, which he said was designed in the Arabian style.

Zaid: This is after the Arabian style, like Kurdish and Arabian, they are very similar, cushions around [the room] and settees. (I1(1),P3,L1350)

After the interview, he invited the researcher to his house to photograph the changes he had made and see the way he had decorated the house to meet his and his family’s needs. His house was a 1940s hip-roofed brick bungalow in the ‘Austere Style,’ built during or just after the Second World War when there were limitations on the materials used and the area of the house. The original house had four main rooms of brick, and the kitchen and utility areas at the rear were of lightweight construction. It had a total area of 110 square metres, the maximum allowable area at that time due to wartime restrictions. As he was purchasing the house, he was able to undertake major renovations and extensions to the basic form to better suit his family’s needs.

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49 See Presse & Rose (1981) for a description of the Austere style of wartime and post-war housing in times of building material restrictions.
Figure 12: The Iraqi respondent’s drawing of the floor plan of his house including detail of living room

Figure 13: Exterior of Iraqi respondent’s house (note stone stacked outside to be used to face house) (Source: The Author)
In the interview with the researcher the respondent identified the following themes relating to the design of his house:

**KF3 House Style and Appearance:**
- T3.2 Traditional Housing
- T3.3 External / Internal Appearance

**KF5 Layout of House:**
- T5.1 Flexibility
- T5.8 Address and Approach
- T5.10 Zoning of House
- T5.11 House Size
- T5.12 Privacy

**KF6 Eating and Food Preparation:**
- T6.1 Size and Layout (of Kitchen)
- T6.2 Outdoor Cooking

**KF7 Bathing and Bathrooms**
- T7.2 Bathroom Size
- T7.3 Visitors and Guests

**KF8 Entertaining and Living Areas:**
- T8.1 Hospitality
- T8.3 Size of Rooms
- T8.5 Outside
- T8.7 Furnishings

**KF9 Sleeping and Bedrooms:**
- T9.1 Flexibility and Size

**KF10 Comfort**
- T10.2 Services

The external appearance of the house was to be addressed by facing it with imported stone to provide a finish similar to that found in the respondent’s country. Having a traditional appearance to his house was very important for him, both externally and internally. The entry to the house was decorated in a traditional fashion and provided a wide hall that allowed visitors to be met and directed to the lounge or family area at the rear of the house. The house was set out in a series of zones influenced by cultural practice, with the family areas located at the rear to maintain privacy and the visitor area at the front of the house. The influence of traditional decoration was demonstrated in the lounge or men’s room, where wall hangings and other traditional objects were displayed.

Rooms were added to the house to increase the area from the original size of 110 square metres to approximately 160 square metres which addressed the requirement for greater house size, an important issue raised in the interview. In particular, this increased the size of the entertainment areas (lounge room) and the bedrooms, and a very large family area was also added. A compromise was made with the positioning of the bathrooms which were both accessed through the family areas of the house, one being an en-suite and the
other located adjacent to the children’s bedrooms. Guests had to access the bathroom through the kitchen and family room, which for some Iraqis might not be acceptable in terms of custom and culture. Zaid conceded that, although this arrangement was not ideal, the cost of the plumbing was a major reason for the location of the bathrooms in the new house layout.

Figure 14: Entry hall and living room showing traditional decoration in Iraqi respondent’s house (Source: The Author)
Similarly the kitchen was considered to be too small and not ideally located but this had been a result of the existing floor plan and the plumbing arrangements. Its internal location and the need to use it to reach rooms at the rear of the house were not ideal. It was felt that the kitchen would not be large enough for some Iraqi families. Some outdoor cooking was done, particularly bread making, and a space and oven were located in the rear yard for this purpose.

![Kitchen and outside cooking area of Iraqi respondent’s house](image)

**Figure 15: Kitchen and outside cooking area of Iraqi respondent’s house (Source: The Author)**

The main bedroom was located at the front of the house with its own en-suite bathroom and walk-in robe. In contrast, the second and third bedrooms currently occupied by his two children were located off the family room at the rear of the house.
These bedrooms had access to a second bathroom which also served the family room. The smaller bedrooms still provided enough area for two single beds which allowed the cultural practice of having same-gender children share a room. Some members of the family used a smaller room off the family room either as a study or for prayer. This room was counted as a single bedroom in the later calculation of floor areas.

Figure 16: Study is also used as prayer room in Iraqi respondent’s house (Source: The Author)

Figure 17: WC and hand-shower in Iraqi respondent’s house (Source: The Author)
House size was identified as extremely important and the table below provides a comparison of the size of the respondent’s house, from his drawing, with the current amenity standards used by HousingSA. It identifies any differences between the house size of the family studied and the design standards.

Table 7: Comparison of room areas in Iraqi respondent’s house and HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Bedroom House</th>
<th>HousingSA Design Guide m²</th>
<th>Zaid's House m²</th>
<th>+ / - m²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total living Area (m²)</td>
<td>145-155</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>+5-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms required</td>
<td>Minimum floor Area m²</td>
<td>Floor Area m²</td>
<td>Difference m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining</td>
<td>10.6 (2.4w)</td>
<td>13.3 (3.7w)</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
<td>25.7 (4.5w)</td>
<td>13.3 (3.7)</td>
<td>-12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>11.9 (2.7w)</td>
<td>35.3 (5.5w)</td>
<td>+23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>10.8 (2.7w)</td>
<td>7.6 (2.1w)</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Bedroom</td>
<td>14.8 (3.6w)</td>
<td>20.0 (3.7w)</td>
<td>+5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Bedrooms</td>
<td>10.8 (3.0w)</td>
<td>11.0 (3.0w)</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.8 (3.0w)</td>
<td>9.5 (2.7w)</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.8 (3.0w)</td>
<td>7.3 (2.0w)</td>
<td>-3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>1.8 (0.9w)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom (not adaptable)</td>
<td>6.5 (2.4w)</td>
<td>7.5 (2.5w)</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom 2 Adaptable with WC</td>
<td>4.5 (2.1w)</td>
<td>4.0 (2.0w)</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>5.4 (1.8w)</td>
<td>4.2 (2.0w)</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124.4</td>
<td>133.0</td>
<td>+8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The house had the same number of rooms as that of a standard HousingSA four-bedroom house. Interestingly, under current HousingSA policy, a four-person family is more likely to be allocated a three-bedroom house which is 25 to 35 square metres smaller in area. The fourth bedroom of the respondent’s house was used as a study, being considerably smaller than the second bedrooms in HousingSA houses, and would probably be designated as a study area in privately-built houses. The major size difference between the respondent’s house and the HousingSA house is the large family room which is more than three times

50 Additional meals area in family room
51 Corridor in kitchen and family room not included in area
52 Main bedroom has walk-in robe giving larger area
53 Used as a study not a bedroom
54 Bathroom is not adaptable
the size of the minimum area recommended in the HousingSA Design Guidelines. This is, however, partly offset by the smaller living area.

Bathroom areas in this house generally met the HousingSA Design Guidelines but neither bathroom was likely to meet adaptable standards, although this is not yet a requirement in private homes. Simple modification to the bathroom was made to allow a hand-shower adjacent to the WC to meet cultural requirements and this type of modification could be requested in the case of a HousingSA tenant with similar needs.

The two house areas were not dissimilar, with the respondent’s house having a larger area given over to circulation and possibly a greater wall perimeter. The older house was more generous in the entry area and the main bedroom, which accounted for some of the difference. The HousingSA house was also designed to minimise corridor space and wall perimeter, also accounting for some of the differences in area between the two houses.

The more interesting feature of this house was therefore not the size, but the way in which it was configured to meet the family’s needs. This was principally achieved by zoning the house into family and non-family areas, and demonstrated the extent to which the standard Australian house can be adapted to meet the needs of this cultural group without making significant changes.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the key findings of the interviews undertaken with representatives of three cultural groups living in Adelaide, the Afghan, Sudanese and Iraqi people. The research was from the viewpoint of ‘how it is’ for them in terms of lifestyle and living conditions in Adelaide.

The following table provides a summary of the themes thought to be important, very impotent or extremely important\textsuperscript{55} to the three cultural groups in the provision of their housing.

\textsuperscript{55} A ranking of ‘important’ required three respondents to concur with the finding, ‘very important’ required four respondents to concur and ‘extremely important’ required five respondents to concur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Afghan group</th>
<th>Sudanese group</th>
<th>Iraqi group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Needs and Diversity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF1: Access to Services and Supports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 1.2: Connection</td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1.1 Location of Services</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF2: Neighbourhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 2.2: Security</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 2.3: Unfriendly /Friendly</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF3: House Style and Appearance.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 3. 2: Traditional Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 3.3: External / Internal Appearance.</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF4: Family Culture and Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 4.2: Practice</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 4.5: Owning a House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 4.6: Renting a House</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 4.7: Religion and Prayer</td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Design and Diversity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF5: Layout of the House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.1: Flexibility</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.8: Address and Approach</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.11: House size</td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.12: Privacy</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF6: Eating and Food Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.1: Size and Layout</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.4: Custom and eating</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.5: Storage</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF7: Bathing and Bathrooms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.1 Bathing Customs</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.3 Visitors and Guests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.2 Bathroom Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Afghan group</td>
<td>Sudanese group</td>
<td>Iraqi group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF8: Entertaining and Living Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.1: Hospitality</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.2: Entrance</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.3: Size of Rooms</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.4: Working/Study at home</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.5: Outside</td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF9: Sleeping and Bedrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 9.1: Flexibility and Size</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 9.2: Cultural Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF10: Comfort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 10.2: Services</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 10.3: Cleanliness of House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(KF indicates Key Factor, T indicates theme)

Twenty-nine themes were considered *important, very important and extremely important* to the three cultural groups, although not all groups shared these themes. Fourteen themes were shared across all groups as being important or of greater importance and they were:

1. Location of Services (T1.1)
2. Connection (T1.2)
3. Security (T2.2)
4. Friendly/Unfriendly(T2.3)
5. Practice (Cultural) (T4.2)
6. Flexibility (of House Layout) (T5.1)
7. House Size (T5.11)
8. Size and Layout (of Kitchen) (T6.1)
9. Custom and Eating (6.4)
10. (Kitchen) Storage (T6.5)
11. Hospitality (T8.1)
12. Size of Rooms (Living Areas) (T8.3)
13. Outside (Front and Rear Yard) (T8.5)
14. Flexibility and size (of Bedrooms) (T9.1)
Several themes were mentioned by only one or two of the group and so have not been included in the previously described findings, or this summary, as they do not represent a consensus of three or more participants. However some of these themes have been considered in the case studies of participants’ houses, if a respondent has indicated they are important, since they assist in presenting a personal view of individual housing requirements.

The next chapter will present the research findings from the groups of Architects, Managers and Service Managers in the social housing area who are either delivering, managing or administering housing for culturally diverse groups. The method of research for the following chapter is also based on the reports from the literature review for delivery of social housing for cultural diversity. This next chapter will also explore ‘how it is’ from the perspective of these three groups.
Chapter 5. Research Findings – Consultant Architects, HousingSA Managers and Service Managers

5.1 Introduction

This section of the study gathered the views about the design and delivery of social housing from HousingSA Managers, Service Managers and Consultant Architects.

A short profile of each group is provided for background information, together with the three groups’ perceptions of what social and design factors they thought were important in the provision of social housing. These questions contextualised the later questions about designing for diverse groups and identified the priorities of the housing organisations. Each participant was then asked what they thought was important in designing for diverse cultural groups, from which a number of major themes emerged that were grouped under ten key factors derived from the NHF (1998) design guidelines as being important in the design of housing for diversity. The key factors were:

Community Needs and Diversity
- Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
- Key Factor 2: The Neighbourhood
- Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance
- Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

Housing Design and Diversity
- Key Factor 5: Layout of House
- Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation
- Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathroom
- Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Area
- Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms
- Key Factor 10: Comfort

An indication of the importance of the theme to a group is given in the text, together with extended extracts from the transcripts of the interviews to support the finding. Forty-two themes were identified by the groups interviewed in the study but not all groups shared all themes. Commonality of themes between groups will be explored in the chapter on synthesis and conclusions.
5.2. Consultant Architects

5.2.1 Profile (Q.1)

Five of the Consultant Architects (Architects) interviewed were male and one was female. All respondents were senior architects or directors of a firm, and had key design roles in the carriage of social housing projects. All but one had more than ten years of experience in the design or management of projects for the social housing sector.

All respondents acknowledged that they had no direct experience in designing for the three cultural groups being studied, i.e. Sudanese, Afghan or Iraqi, although some had designed housing for other cultural groups, such as the Vietnamese community. Two respondents, when asked if they were aware of any of the requirements for housing culturally diverse groups, replied:

Sam: Not a clue, nothing. I would like to do some of that work but I’d have to be advised earlier on and I’d love to do some reading. (AR3, P5, L231)

Duncan: Yes, not a specific design for a cultural group, we did a project, however for Aboriginal housing a while back in the APY lands. (AR2, P1, L39)

All Architects said they worked closely with HousingSA staff and management, and conformed to HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines that outlined the standard of design and siting of housing. Most Architects interviewed felt that the guidelines inhibited their scope to design, emphasising that the focus was more on cost issues than good housing outcomes.

Duncan: I think we follow the Housing Trust [HousingSA] guidelines. If we are doing a little development of attached houses or similar, we’ll be given the parameters to work to and it’s usually about maximising the returns. (AR2, P2, L60)

The group indicated an ‘arm’s length’ involvement with the social or community factors in the selection of locations for social housing. However a knowledge of, or at least empathy with, the process involved in the social considerations of designing for culturally diverse groups was evident through prior knowledge, generally at an early stage in the Architect’s formal education.

Sam: I remember attending lectures in the early 1960s and the lecturer had been in Timbuktu living with the Dogon tribes and they had some very interesting philosophies about the [design of] the village. (AR3, P6, L259)
5.2.2 Designing Social Housing (Q.2.2 and Q.2.4)

The Architects were asked what they thought were the most important factors when designing social housing. The group indicated that they had no involvement over the selection of specific sites and therefore did not influence the social outcomes directly.

Peter: We do feasibility studies to make sure how many will fit on the site, if say we can only fit one three-bedroom house on the site the Authority might decide to do something different with their site. So we have a bit of say, in a way, what the site's about. (AR5, P2, L95)

Duncan: Big picture stuff, we've never really been asked to get involved in that. We're just dealing with quite small things, probably 6, 10 or 12 units, a really big one might be 20 units and that's really it and the focus is always on maximising return, and that's the clear message we're getting all the time. (AR2, P2, L181)

For the Architects, the public and private areas of the house and their interface with the neighbourhood were an important consideration in house design: in particular the passive surveillance of the entrance to provide safety and security for the family through the siting of the house.

Another important requirement in the design process that the Architects identified was to engage with the client to determine for whom they were designing and their particular housing needs. Requirements could vary for different groups and it was important to consider the needs of a range of people from young to the aged.

Flexibility of the floor plan was a priority for most of the Architects interviewed. This included efficient floor layouts that take into consideration energy consumption and adaptable (mobility) requirements. There was also a general view that the open planning of areas, such as the combination of the dining room, living room and kitchen, was a design requirement of today and accepted by most groups seeking housing. Some of the group saw this aspect of house design as being market-driven and as not necessarily overriding the importance of discrete spaces for private or quiet activities.

Duncan: I welcome open plan because I think it makes it a much more contemporary house and that's the way that people live. For quite a while we've tended to have the kitchen and living/dining separate and in fact that's still a requirement for some HousingSA house types. But if you look at what's provided in the market, in their houses, you'll see that it's almost universally, a kitchen, dining, living room [together]. And it does mean that what's a relatively small space at least looks a bit generous when you walk in. (AR2, P3, L133)
The Architects also prioritised the reduction of circulation space such as corridors and the opportunity to combine uses wherever possible. This was also seen to result in an overall reduction in the cost of constructing the house.

**Sam:** Efficiency of the layout is always important and if it can be efficient then more area can be given to the living components of the house, because we’ve had to minimise the area of the house to minimise the cost. So to minimise the area we create general open space and we remove corridors and the ability to create separation and discrete areas. (AR3, P3, L145)

HousingSA was seen as being too focused on cost consideration in its design, forcing a certain geometry and predictable outcome on housing form and layout. This ultimately inhibited the design process for social housing, with architects being less likely to explore alternatives.

Although the Architects saw some negative aspects in having strict design guidelines, at least the guidelines had made HousingSA builders adopt the concepts of adaptability and energy efficiency in house design and were instrumental in capping construction costs, although perhaps stifling design innovation in social housing.

The Architects emphasised the kitchen as an area where family could come together not only to eat but also to interact socially. The kitchen and an adjacent family room could allow a number of activities to be carried out simultaneously, such as homework supervision while cooking, and could also connect with outside areas for entertaining and children’s play.

Studying in the family or living areas of the house with access to the family computer was considered preferable to it being done in areas such as bedrooms. However separate areas were seen as being necessary for adult activities. For that reason a living room separate from the family area was needed in large family housing. The group saw the living areas as one of the most important factors when designing a house, in particular their solar orientation and relationship to the outside living space and kitchen.

**John:** I always think that the living areas are the most important. You've got to get the orientation so that you get the sun and living areas that open up into personal areas like private yards like that. (AR4, P2, L106)

The group thought that bathroom areas should be more flexible with the toilet separated from the bathroom, so that household members could access bath and toilet facilities at the same time. This was seen as particularly important for large families.
The standard house design with a larger master bedroom and smaller bedrooms for family accommodation was not the best layout for culturally diverse families, according to the Architects. Greater flexibility could be achieved if the bedrooms were of equal size and larger in area. Larger equal-sized bedrooms allowed family members to share and often freed a bedroom for another use, such as a study room or play space.

Duncan: I think we make a mistake in making second and third bedrooms too small. I think that really affects the flexibility of houses. (AR2, P3, L148)

HousingSA’s energy sustainable housing design requirements were contained in the *Housing Design Guidelines* and all of the Architects were committed to this approach. They thought that insistence on sustainable design, initiated by HousingSA, might now have influenced them in the way they designed housing for private sector clients, creating a flow-on of these practices. They said that this was an indication of the influence that HousingSA has had on the building industry as an innovator and in progressing the sustainability agenda in the community.

5.2.3 Community Needs and Diversity (Q.3.2)

The Consultant Architects were asked a series of questions about how important they thought social and community factors were when designing for culturally diverse groups. A number of themes emerged which were grouped under four key factors. The key factors were:

- **Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports**
- **Key Factor 2: The Neighbourhood**
- **Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance**
- **Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion**

**Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports**

**Theme 1.1 Location of Services**

Generally the Architects thought that most people expected appropriate services to be available wherever they lived and considered that obtaining employment in the locality would be a major priority, particularly for new migrants where locality would be a major factor in them accepting social housing.
Arthur: Proximity to appropriate facilities is quite important and it should be considered in the planning of new social housing. (AR1 P.2, L.83)

Theme 1.2 Connection

Transport was also seen as an important requirement, whether public or private, providing connection to services and supports. Further, location of support services and an established community would affect the success of social housing by building linkage and connection.

Arthur: Location and connection are the critical things for social housing. Connecting to facilities, connection to each other and the sense of community that generate a sense of connection and it’s critical. (AR1, P2, L90)

There was an awareness and sensitivity to the negative impact that the lack of services, such as distance from public transport, could have on social housing tenants. It was agreed that the location of services could lead to the success or otherwise of the housing provided to the tenant. Outer suburban development, with more affordable housing, often restricted access to appropriate services and could disadvantage groups with minimal resources.

Sam: The outer areas with lower land values, there was a bit more freedom, but in my view in those outer areas people were more disadvantaged, there was greater journeys to work and in terms of access to services. (AR3, P2, L73)

Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood

Theme 2.1 Networks

The Architects were aware that it was important for culturally diverse groups to maintain networks that often tended to cluster and create distinct communities. However they also recognised that such groups would not favour social housing if the accommodation offered was located in low socio-economic areas associated with antisocial behaviour, harassment and lack of opportunities to improve their lifestyle.

Duncan: Interestingly all the refugee people I know were offered Housing Trust [HousingSA] housing and had it for a while and they've since gone into the private rental market and the reason for doing that they realised that the Housing Trust housing they were offered was in a very low socio-economic area and they were very focused on being successful and getting themselves out of [these locations] as quickly as they possibly could. There's nothing wrong with the Housing Trust [HousingSA] accommodation: it's very respectable but it's the area, if they're put in an area like the Parks they know this is an area with problems and as soon as they've been able to afford it, they've got out. (AR2, P5, L200)
Theme 2.2 Security

One group member said that for some culturally diverse groups security could be achieved through a connection with the street, and knowing and engaging with their neighbours. The group felt that a well-established community where neighbours were known could assist in creating a secure living environment, assisted by appropriate design and siting of housing.

Arthur: Yes, the design guides [HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines] that we have to work to, talk about passive surveillance and ‘eyes on the street’ and such things. Not always achieved as well as they could be. (AR1, P3, L108)

Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance

Theme 3.1 Integration

The Architects saw the style and appearance of a house as being important to diverse cultural groups and making a significant contribution to their sense of place and belonging in a new country. The group felt, however, that social housing for diverse cultural groups should integrate with other housing in the street to prevent it ‘standing out’ and being seen as different. They were also aware that housing integration is a policy of HousingSA and that influenced the way they designed social housing and its resulting external appearance.

Arthur: Yes, precisely, they wanted [their house] to blend in, to fit right in. (AR1, P3, L128)

One architect thought that it must be reassuring for social housing tenants to feel that their house was similar to others in the street or neighbourhood and this added to the feeling of inclusion or belonging.

Sam: I think there’s a degree of social comfort that exists with people living in something which they think a house should look like. (AR3, P3, L103)

The Architects considered that there should be different house types and layouts to cater for culturally diverse people. It was also recognised that, although these groups were often associated with large families who required large housing, single, aged and disabled people were also represented.

Duncan: There’s a lot of different housing types [required]. At one end there’s the small unit that the elderly might occupy, the single older person, and at the other end you’ve got the housing for large families and it’s really quite different. (AR2, P3, L112)
Theme 3.3 External/Internal Appearance

The style of a house was not a major consideration for the architects when designing houses for culturally diverse groups, and they only made minor internal modifications for specific groups if requested.

John: I think for that community the only thing I can recall that was a bit different was that they said they liked a little area, I think it was the Vietnamese community, where they could put a little statue or shrine. They wanted a bit of a shrine area or a nook or somewhere they could put their little shrine. I can’t recall whether it was a Buddha or what. But they wanted a little area, they wanted that situated, but that was the only [thing] that was different from standard housing. (AR4, P2, L87)

Theme 3.4 Policies and Guidelines

The Architects emphasised that they believed HousingSA policy was to build standard social housing, both internally and externally, irrespective of the client group. They identified social housing for cultural groups as usually being a three-bedroom single house, with only minor modifications made through consultation with HousingSA, and it was unlikely the designer knew who would occupy the dwelling. The architects thought they might approach house design for culturally diverse groups differently if HousingSA asked them to be involved, but it was currently not within their general brief.

Peter: We would and we could [design for cultural difference] if we were asked for something a bit different. (AR5, P7, L316)

Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

Theme 4.1 Family Structure

The Architects thought that the composition and size of migrant families coming to Australia might have changed and extended families would be common. Families were often separated with only the men or women members coming to Australia and they might be unrelated but still seek the protection of a family structure.

Duncan:..... but you have to remember that the family structure, it might have been broken up [since coming to Australia]. (AR2 P4, L192)
Theme 4.2 Cultural Practice

It was thought that migrants coming to Australia could have lived in a variety of housing and have been influenced by other cultures, and so might want to be selective in what they kept of their original culture and practices. They might not consider some elements of their former lifestyle appropriate to their new way of life and the type of housing in which they now live.

Arthur: People may not want to replicate what they have come from. They may be ready to start afresh or pressures may have caused changes [to their traditional way of life]. It's that background information that is critical to be able to establish the design function. (AR1, P4, L189)

The Architects recognised that there were additional factors they needed to consider in designing houses for culturally diverse people, but as some were unsure of specific needs, they required a knowledge of the practices and preferences of specific groups, such as religious observation and customs associated with washing and bathroom practices.

Duncan: I don't really know to tell you the truth. I've never asked them the question. In their houses they are usually pretty conventional. You have a bathroom, sometimes two, separate toilet, usual Australian type of thing, never heard any complaints. (AR2, P6, L276)

They also recognised that hospitality was important for most culturally diverse groups and this might also influence the design of the house.

Duncan: There's a formal side of the house and the hospitality [side]. And the private side, there's a lot more separation of those two than you get if you're designing a contemporary Australian house. (AR2,P6,L262)

Theme 4.3 Understanding Difference

HousingSA’s current design process does not brief Architects about the community and social needs of culturally diverse groups, and the group thought this needed to happen if they were to be more fully involved in designing for diversity. The housing needs of such groups, once identified, could be evaluated against HousingSA’s current design criteria. The group acknowledged that there was a need to better understand culture and customs in the house design process and that this should be incorporated in the design brief when required. One Architect felt, however, that the resulting design brief would not differ greatly from that catering for all other people housed by HousingSA.
John: I think the general feeling is, most cultures will have the same requirements [for housing]. (AR4, P2, L58)

Arthur: I think there are lessons to be learned from new tenants. It’s something you would seek more information about. (AR1, P4, L183)

Theme 4.4 Consultation

The Architects’ group saw the need for HousingSA to consult more about the needs of culturally diverse groups and pass on any relevant information to the architect. It was thought that the architect’s more proactive involvement in this process would produce better housing design.

Peter: If I was designing a house for tenants from a culturally diverse background, I would ask the question ‘is there any other requirements that you can see that would need to be over and above what normally we do’. And if they say yes then rattle off some options and we’d have to evaluate them and see if they fit into the criteria [set by the social housing provider]. (AR5, P4, L172)

Theme 4.7 Religion and Prayer

Some of the architects had previously worked on projects for diverse cultural groups and were aware of some religious requirements, most of which were considered achievable within the current social housing design standards.

Duncan: More of the people we’ve been in contact with are strong Muslims, they’ve got a Muslim background but it’s not a big part of their life. (AR2, P6, L280)

5.2.4 Housing Design and Diversity (Q.3.4)

The Consultant Architects were asked a series of questions about the importance of the house layout and interior in the design of housing for culturally diverse groups. A number of themes emerged which were grouped under six key factors. These key factors were:

Key Factor 5: Layout of House
Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation
Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathroom
Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Area
Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms
Key Factor 10: Comfort
Key Factor 5: Layout of the House

Theme 5.1 Flexibility

The Architects thought the layout of the standard Australian house, as outlined in the HousingSA guidelines, might not be appropriate for culturally diverse groups, as some required defined public and private zones for different activities.

Duncan: If you go to their house, [migrant groups] which is only a conventional private rental house, you can see that they’ve almost zoned their house into a public zone and a private zone. (AR2, P4, L178)

In addition, they believed greater flexibility of the house floor plan could assist cultural groups to accommodate large families and cater for cultural requirements. This could be achieved by modifying the house to allow living spaces to be opened up when entertaining large groups of people.

Arthur: Rooms that could be subdivided easily with screens, rooms that can be opened to the outdoors and a veranda. Things that may better assist in meeting some of the cultural conditions of the residents. (AR1, P4, L159)

Theme 5.2 Policies and Guidelines of the Authorities

The architects felt that the style and layout of the standard HousingSA house was designed primarily to meet its cost and tenancy objectives.

Peter: Cost constraints but also that the house might need to be converted back to a normal [standard] residence later on. (AR5, P7, L326)

Theme 5.3 Plan Shape

The Architects said they designed houses for HousingSA using open-plan principles for the living areas, primarily for space efficiency and cost, but also to conform to private-sector housing style and layout.

Duncan: I welcome open plan because I think it makes it a much more contemporary house and that’s the way that people live. If you look at what’s provided in the market in their houses you’ll see that it’s almost universally, a kitchen, a dining and a living room together. (AR2, P3, L133)
Theme 5.5 Adaptability

The Architects were acutely aware of the HousingSA requirements to design housing to Adaptable standards. They thought this was a major priority, perhaps even greater than designing for diversity.

Sam: One of the good things about the design guides is that they are forcing builders to consider issues of room size, disability access, door widths and access requirements. (AR3, P4, L162)

Theme 5.6 Cost

Cost considerations were seen as significant in designing HousingSA housing and this, the group said, constrained and dictated the final layout. Rising land costs were seen to affect the overall budget and dictated the maximum house cost. To make a project feasible, development was limited to suburbs on the fringe where land costs were lower.

Sam: I think that the cost has been affected by perceived maximum budgets of house and land. The outer areas with the lower land values - there was a bit more freedom but in my view in those areas people were more disadvantaged. (AR3, P2, L73)

Shannon: It's more about how many you can get to fit on the site and the planning regulations. (AR6, P3, L108)

Theme 5.7 Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD)

The Architects acknowledged that the use of good ESD practices in designing social housing were important for comfort and reduced heating and cooling costs.

John: If you design it to good ESD principles the house will take shape itself. (AR4, P2, L123)

Sam: Simple issues of basic orientation in relation to climate orientation and so on. (AR3, P4, L162)

Theme 5.10 Zoning of the House

Division of distinct areas for living and sleeping was important to the Architects when they designed social housing. This, they said, combined activities such as eating and cooking and allowed for privacy, with the added advantage of energy conservation when areas not in use were closed off.
Sam: I believe that a house could be divided into two compartments, sleeping area and living area, different climatic and environmental conditions relating to them and also the way the house relates to its neighbours or the garden. (AR3, P3, L113)

**Theme 5.11 House Size**

The architects thought both the number of occupants and the activities undertaken dictated the size of the house. They also believed that diverse cultural groups were likely to entertain frequently at home, often for large numbers, and this should be reflected in the size of the rooms. There was recognition that the living rooms in the standard three-bedroom house might not be large enough for these activities.

Arthur: There is a requirement to accommodate large numbers. (AR1 P5 L241)

Duncan: I think that it really affects the flexibility of houses. If you go back to the old villa design with four rooms, 13 feet by 13 feet this was a flexible arrangement. (AR2, P3, L148)

**Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**

**Theme 6.1 Size and Layout**

The architects thought that cultural groups might find traditional cooking practices difficult in the standard Australian kitchen, as the size was often insufficient and the layout inappropriate.

John: They may have different requirements for a kitchen, rather than our little U-shaped kitchen they may enjoy the wood oven style of cooking. (AR4, P5, L210)

**Theme 6.2 Outdoor Cooking**

They believed that on some occasions cultural groups might prefer cooking outdoors, or in semi-enclosed areas such as a veranda, when preparing meals for large numbers of people for special occasions.

Duncan: They're quite happy to cook outside, every party, festival celebration I've been to there’s always been outside cooking. Just a barbecue not fire pits. But they also cook inside, the salads are prepared inside in a conventional kitchen. (AR2, P6, L269)
Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating

The Architects saw food preparation and eating as an important part of a diverse cultural life and thought that some cultural groups might have special requirements for meal preparation and preferences for the layout of cooking and eating areas that related to their individual cultural practices. Such practices might include the separation of the living area and kitchen for privacy during meal preparation.

Peter: They [Sudanese people] wanted the kitchen to be separated from the living areas. They wanted it to be closed off, so that when there were people over for a social occasion, the men could be in the lounge and the women in the kitchen area, there’s a tradition of theirs that they can’t see each other. Or something like that. (AR5, P4, L196)

Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms

Theme 7.1 Bathing Customs

The Architects stated that they were not conversant with the bathing habits of cultural groups although there was a general consensus that the standard bathroom in social housing would meet most cultural needs. Large families would need a separate toilet or possibly two toilets.

Duncan: I don’t really know [about bathrooms] to tell you the truth. I’ve never asked them the question. In their houses they are usually pretty conventional. You have a bathroom, sometimes two, separate toilet, usual Australian type of thing, never heard any complaints. (AR2, P6, L276)

John: I don’t know if they prefer the bidet style of toilet. I’m not sure if they would prefer a shower to bathing, whether it would be similar [to other Australians]. (AR4, P5, L220)

Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Areas

Theme 8.1 Hospitality

As the Architects identified hospitality as being an important part of the lives of most culturally diverse groups they believed it was important to provide living areas within the house that supported these customs and activities.

Duncan: Hospitality is really important and food is always associated with that, you can’t go into one of these houses and not have a meal. (AR2, P4, L180)
Theme 8.5 Outside

They also thought outside areas were important to cultural groups as they were often linked to entertainment and cooking. One of the architects had designed housing for Aboriginal people that included outdoor cooking facilities.

John: An outside area would be important to them as well. A family area that opens out to an outside living area. (AR4, P5, L204)

Duncan: [for] Aboriginal housing we designed a little fire pit outside. (AR2, P4, L185)

Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms

Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size

The Architects had limited experience in what bedroom space cultural groups required and generally believed that the standard three-bedroom house, with a main bedroom and two smaller bedrooms, was adequate. However, one Architect remarked that the typical Australian practice of designing a house with a large main bedroom and smaller secondary bedrooms might not suit some diverse cultural groups. It was suggested that in catering for large families, equal and larger sized bedrooms would allow sharing and might also provide greater flexibility of room use.

Duncan: I wonder if the best way to design for diversity is to build more flexibility into what we have, those things like having larger equal size bedrooms, having larger spaces that can have multiple uses and the bedroom that isn’t always a bedroom that can be something else if you’re able to do that. (AR2, P7, L309)

Key Factor 10: Comfort

Theme 10.1 Sustainable Practice

Site characteristics and orientation of the house to achieve good thermal comfort were mentioned as important design considerations and seen as a major consideration when designing for HousingSA as they were central to its design guide requirements.

Peter: One of the biggest criteria is the site itself. Depending on the shape of the block and the layout of the site, the aspect to the street and where north is probably the most important factors in designing HousingSA housing. (AR5, P3, L100)
5. 3 HousingSA Managers

5.3.1 Profile (Q.1)

Five of the HousingSA Managers (Managers) interviewed were male and one female. All interviewed held senior positions in HousingSA and had been working in their current positions for an average of seven years, while one had worked for HousingSA for 39 years. The role of the Managers varied from hands-on preparation and updating of the design guides used by Consultant Architects to managing specific housing construction programs.

Matt: I am responsible for the management of design guides, overview of design outcomes and assessing projects from a design point of view. I also assist staff in briefing our Consultant Architects and in the acquisition of architectural and other design services. (M1, P1, L19)

The Managers said that they engaged Consultant Architects for the design of all new HousingSA housing. Although they noted there were one-off designs that had been produced for a specific group, they said housing was not specifically designed for cultural groups but rather on a generic basis.

Andrew: If there is a specific client that has a particular need there will be some consideration for that need but there is still an overarching issue of saleability of housing. (M3, P2, L82)

A few projects had been designed or houses modified for cultural groups, including refugees, but the number was small. This included housing for Sudanese people but there was no recollection of any being designed specifically for Afghan or Iraqi people. HousingSA had, however, built large generically designed houses that were later rented to groups from culturally diverse backgrounds.

5.3.2 Designing Social Housing (Q.2.2 and Q.2.4)

The Managers, when asked what they thought were the most important factors in the design of housing for their clients, said that they firstly considered social and community aspects. They also used GIS mapping to identify existing facilities and public transport connections before choosing locations for new housing sites.

Emily: So it's really connection to all your support services that are the most important. (M4, P2, L73)
Security inside and outside the house was also seen as very important in the design of social housing and the Managers used the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to outline the strategies to be used by the Consultant Architects in designing to minimise risk.

The group considered the appearance of social housing to be mainly cost driven and for this reason there were unlikely to be major variations in house designs. However, a range of elevations was used to blend HousingSA housing in with the adjacent dwellings. The Managers wanted to avoid creating social housing stereotypes that had a negative effect on how an area was perceived and stressed that HousingSA houses should be indistinguishable from others in the street, usually conforming to the ideal of the standard Australian single house. This was a major HousingSA policy, contained in its Housing Design Guidelines.

Emily: I suppose the main thing about appearance is it doesn’t stand out and that’s how we design anyway, and that it fits in with the surroundings. (M4, P3, L101)

In relation to house layout, Managers mentioned the desirability of separating the sleeping and living areas into separate zones to minimise large areas requiring excessive heating and cooling. However, they had to consider the possible future sale of houses to the public and this could dictate the inclusion of larger open-plan living areas, thereby reducing the energy efficiency.

The amenity level of new housing, including natural light and ventilation, was considered important, as was meeting the minimum spatial standards. HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines included amenity standards for new housing to assist in maintaining cost controls.

Managers considered house size to be an important factor in the design of social housing. This was dictated by family size and they observed that accommodation for single persons or couples usually had a combined kitchen, living and dining room, a bathroom incorporating a laundry, and one or two bedrooms, the second being smaller than the main. Houses for larger families had a separate bathroom and laundry, and the toilet was separated from the bathroom. Current social housing practice was to provide two toilets in a house of three bedrooms or more.

Matt: As the household increases in size the bathroom facilities get separated from laundry facilities and eventually toilet facilities. Current practice is to keep a toilet in the bathroom area in addition to a separate toilet in larger housing. (M1, P3, L116)

The Managers said that social housing had to be flexible to accommodate a range of tenancies and this had led HousingSA to adopt a generic layout and form for its housing.
Solutions allowing the interior to be altered for different tenancies have been tried, including the removal of partition walls to reconfigure the living rooms into one large room. In addition, where a disabled tenant needed unrestricted access to a toilet, a wall was removed to create a combined bathroom and toilet. HousingSA had also developed a range of housing types and floor layouts to give tenants choice in meeting their requirements.

The Managers’ group identified safety factors in the kitchen as important, including the need to avoid walk-through kitchens where children may come in contact with the stove. The kitchen had to work as the centre or hub of the house, with easy access to the laundry and dining room, and be planned to reduce distance between appliances and work surfaces.

Andrew: The cupboard spaces need to be well arranged so that you’ve got the triangle in terms of the sink, refrigerator and the stove. (M3, P4, L195)

Two bathrooms and two toilets, located close to the bedrooms, were required in four-bedroom houses. Importantly, the second bathroom should not be an en-suite as this restricted use by the whole family. Safety features in the bathroom included non-slip tiles on floors and a separate shower alcove in preference to a shower over the bathtub.

It was not considered practical at present to provide the additional rooms for study or home office activities often seen in private sector house designs. Instead, tenants were required to use a bedroom or the family room for these functions. One of the Managers remarked that demand was growing for such dedicated areas and they may become standard in future social housing.

The Managers thought the relationship between the inside and outside living areas was an important design consideration for social housing, with a rear or side yard aligned with the living and dining areas of the house, connected by a sliding door. Where possible these living areas were orientated north for the best solar presentation.

They reported that single-bedroom housing had proved unpopular with singles and couples who required an additional room for a variety of other uses including visiting family members, carers or for a storage or work room. This had prompted HousingSA to build two-bedroom accommodation as it was more responsive to these needs and suited a broader range of tenancies.

Passive heating and cooling was a design requirement for social housing. This included wall and roof space insulation, and orientation of houses to achieve the best possible solar gain in
winter and reduced solar gain in summer. The Managers indicated that HousingSA required a five-star energy rating for its new housing, consistent with government legislation.

Matt: For environmental reasons and savings on energy we prefer our housing to be designed to be passively heated and cooled. What this means is a greater reliance on the insulation of walls and roof space and positioning of windows for maximum solar gain in winter and through excluding direct sun in summer. And in providing for window openings in such a way that breezes can be captured in the hot weather and all windows can be closed off in the cold weather to retain heat. (M1, P3, 125)

Covered car parking was thought important by the Managers and was usually provided for all social housing. It could also be used as an undercover play space for children and as an entertainment area for adults. The allotment of land was minimised to reduce land cost which also meant there was less yard space to be maintained. The Managers also thought security aspects of the yard were important, particularly in the design of the front entry to the house and the oversighting of backyard space.

Managers believed that designing a house to be adaptable was important to meet the high demand from disabled groups, many of them wheelchair-bound. For this reason HousingSA’s standard specification incorporated Adaptable Housing Standards to acknowledge this requirement and allow for future needs.

Emily: We have a lot of wheelchair tenants in our housing and obviously we design for them. (M4, P3, L124)

Ease of maintenance of the dwelling fabric was also identified as an important design factor, both from a recurrent and a capital cost viewpoint. Finishes and details that provided longevity with minimal maintenance were important in reducing costs. Linked to this was the robustness of the house fabric to resist impact from heavy usage, a particularly important factor in dwellings for large families and disabled groups where wheelchair damage to finishes was common.

Emily: The actual robustness of the house is really imperative for maintenance [we’re] very specific about the type of finishes, you know hard floor surfaces, extra framing to strengthen the walls, thicker plasterboard. (M4, P3, L130)

5.3.3 Community Needs and Diversity (Q.3.2)

The HousingSA Managers were asked a series of questions about how important they thought social and community factors were when designing for culturally diverse groups.
A number of themes emerged which were grouped under four key factors. The key factors were:

- Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
- Key Factor 2: The Neighbourhood
- Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance
- Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

**Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports**

**Theme 1.1 Location of Services**

The Managers thought it was very important for social housing for cultural groups to be located close to services appropriate to them and used GIS information from Planning SA, in addition to local knowledge from HousingSA regional staff members, to determine what appropriate facilities were available near new social housing sites. Proximity to schools was a factor considered when choosing sites to house families, together with closeness to shops and other supports.

*Emily: Established communities and proximity to appropriate facilities is very important when planning housing for culturally diverse groups. The community housing organisations would establish these criteria. (M4, P4, L185)*

**Theme 1.2 Connection**

Location of housing close to public transport routes was also a major consideration. While the Managers recognised that most new migrants ultimately aimed to have their own transport, this was often not possible on arrival. Further, private transport might only be available to certain family members, making shopping trips or taking children to school difficult, and possibly leading to isolation.

*Andrew: ......we've got to start from the position that some of these groups will not have access to cars and need to get to public transport easily, or minimal car use and we need to consider where their support points are. (M3, P6, L261)*

**Theme 1.3 Practice**

The Managers identified that it could be too costly to build larger housing within inner suburban locations and that housing in fringe suburbs might be the only option for large families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Another option was two-storey accommodation built on small allotments of land in inner suburban locations where services were more readily
available. The Managers thought this could be more acceptable to some cultural groups who had been living in a similar housing form in their own country. Having the sleeping areas upstairs would provide separation from the living areas and might be more acceptable for some cultural groups who demand separate public and private areas of the house.

Matt: It would depend on the culture of the persons, [and] you've indicated a number of places these people come from and I expect their attitude to two-storey housing would depend on what they were used to in their own environment. One thing two-storey housing does do, it often elevates sleeping areas and provides for all living on the ground floor. (M1, P6, L259)

**Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood**

**Theme 2.2 Security**

The importance of neighbourhood security was seen as being the same for cultural groups as for other groups living in social housing. Managers identified site issues, such as the overlooking of driveways, presence to the street, security behind fences and overlooking from windows as issues that were addressed in planning new houses. Other specific modifications for security could be made to a house on an individual needs basis.

Andrew: Security to me is all about protecting the individual in the house or in their yard. Security measures are enshrined in policy and standards. (M3, P3, L154)

**Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance**

**Theme 3.1 Integration**

The Managers supported the HousingSA design policy of making its new housing indistinguishable from other dwellings in the street or neighbourhood to help tenants ‘blend in’ to the neighbourhood.

Matt: Well, style and appearance are important. Our houses should look no different than the neighbourhood houses. It’s a policy view that our housing is no different and it is indistinguishable [from mainstream housing]. (M1, P2, L76)

**Theme 3.3 External/Internal Appearance**

Managers thought house style and appearance could be important to some cultural groups as a means of retaining some of their cultural characteristics, but also considered that others might reject the old customs in favour of a new lifestyle. Meeting specific cultural
requirements for some groups would be difficult and challenging as HousingSA provided all its tenants with a generic type of house based on Western designs.

Andrew: Some groups come to this country to get right away from their culture and to start a completely new life, and others come here and hold on to their culture strongly and in fact want to emulate what they think has happened in their own homelands. But I don't know what the mix is of these two views but for those that want to retain their culture and for that to be reflected in their housing, then that's the challenge for an organisation like this to either provide what they're looking for or to provide something that is able to be modified to suit their needs, but then be modified back to suit a more generic nature. (M3, P7, L301)

The Managers also felt that exterior modifications to suit cultural practice would be difficult to achieve, given the planning dictates of Council regulations. In addition, HousingSA policy prevented houses looking substantially different from others in the street. This meant that, by default, social housing would take on the characteristic Australian house form of a particular era. The Managers felt, however, that changing the internal layout of a house was probably more important to cultural groups and that policies to promote personalisation of the interior were more relevant.

Matt: Decoration can be personalised but the actual structure and colour and window arrangements is generally a planning [regulation] dictate, that is determined by locality rather than instead [of] use. (M1, P4, L190)

Gavin: No, I think design of the interior of the house is more important than the [external] style. (M2, P5, L211)

Theme 3.4 Policies and Guidelines

HousingSA's policies and guidelines on form, size and layout, to be used by Architects when designing social housing, were seen as important design aids that helped to produce a generically designed house, including ESD and Adaptability requirements.

Andrew: As long as we don’t loose the sustainable aspect to the house design, I don't have a problem. (M3, P4, L170)

Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

Theme 4.1 Family Structure

Understanding the family structure of a cultural group was important to the Managers in assisting in the design of houses for the group. However they were not knowledgeable about the practices and family preferences of the cultural groups residing in Adelaide.
Matt: It's a good idea, that community and social needs of occupants are considered when designing for cultural diversity, however, our houses are in-the-main generically designed, and at the time of design and constructing the house it's not usual to know as to what type of person or what the background of the person might be and even what the nature of the family arrangements might be of the person to be housed. Those matters are more down to allocation of the housing by the appropriate regions [HousingSA Regional offices]. (M1, P4, L158)

Theme 4.2 Cultural Practice

The Managers thought that having knowledge of cultural practice and the extended family lifestyle was very important when designing for culturally diverse groups. They considered that HousingSA’s Adaptable Housing designs were particularly relevant to accommodate extended families and also catered for the needs of aged family members who might be disabled.

Theme 4.3 Understanding Diversity

There was an acknowledgement that cultural groups had a variety of housing needs that were not catered for by the standard dwelling. The Managers believed that these should be better understood and that prior knowledge of a tenant’s requirements could assist in house design. Information about specific requirements for various cultural groups was obtained by the Service Manager and then relayed to the Architect.

Emily: A process to determine the specific requirements of a diverse group is established by the [Service Managers] and the information relayed to the consultant designing the housing. Diverse cultural groups may be quite specific about their requirements. (NS, P4, L189) (M4, 4, L195)

However, the Managers’ response to the needs of cultural diversity was based on HousingSA’s capacity to deliver the desired housing, both in terms of knowledge of specific needs and the cost. The constraints on HousingSA funding affected the response that could be made and the design outcome.

Andrew: I don’t think you can design housing for culturally diverse groups unless you are getting a clear understanding of what the culture is, what their needs are, what the capacity of the organisation to respond to those needs and the future use of that property. (M3, P5, L243)

The Managers noted that HousingSA’s Amenity Standards were silent on the needs of cultural groups. There was a perception, although not all Managers agreed, that the standard of housing in Australia was much higher than in Africa and the Middle East and that its higher amenity made it easier for cultural groups to adapt to a new life in Australia.
Gavin: Some of the people who have come through Sudan or the Middle East or Africa, the level of accommodation of most have lived in over there is a very low standard, some have lived in flat type accommodation. I suggest that they can cope, [or] that they will adapt to living [in housing] that we will produce. (M2, P5, L216)

This was not the view of some cultural group members interviewed who frequently pointed out that their housing in the country of origin was not only larger but more solidly constructed than their current accommodation in Australia. Most of those interviewed had held responsible positions in their country, such as teachers, engineers and administrators, and would have experienced a good quality of housing commensurate with that status. However, in the interviews they generally spoke for their broader community when identifying their housing requirements.

**Theme 4.4 Consultation**

Although there was a general perception that the standard Australian house would suit all, the Managers retained the view that consultation with diverse groups was the means by which the best housing outcomes could be achieved. Some Managers thought in particular that the Service Managers had a ‘hands on’ involvement with cultural groups and indicated they would design to meet their needs if these are identified.

Matt: When I was in private practice I had an opportunity to design for particular groups - housing for the then, SACHA [now HousingSA]. They actually did have particular groups in mind for their housing. Some of these groups [were] sponsored by churches and housing was built on church land. Other groups, one I recall was for Australian indigenous people. It was known up-front they would be key tenants and particular considerations were taken into account for those people. And the houses were large, by the very nature that their families were sometimes extended, visitors were frequent [and] added to the household on a temporary basis [including] brothers and sisters. (M1, P6, L267)

**Theme 4.7 Religion and Prayer**

The Managers had little first-hand experience in commissioning designs for Muslim people and were not familiar with the specific requirements the group might have for prayer and related customs. It was perceived, however, that an enclosed or dedicated space, possibly in a bedroom, might be required for prayer.

Gavin: A space for prayer doesn’t need to be a specific room; it just has to be an enclosed area and it can be a bedroom or something like that. (M2, P7, L302)
5.3.4 Housing Design and Diversity (Q.3.4)

The HousingSA Managers were asked a series of questions about the importance of the house layout and interior in the design of housing for culturally diverse groups. A number of themes emerged which were grouped under six key factors. These key factors were:

Key Factor 5: Layout of House
Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation
Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathroom
Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Area
Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms
Key Factor 10: Comfort

Key Factor 5: Layout of the House

Theme 5.1 Flexibility

For the Managers, flexibility of the layout was a key requirement to ensure the house was suitable for a variety of tenancies. This had lead to the development of a generic design for HousingSA social housing characterised by a layout with a clear separation of sleeping and bathroom areas from food preparation, eating and living areas. In smaller houses this resulted in an open-plan design, but in larger housing a separate living room was included for adult and family living. Zoning the living areas of the house in this way allowed for more efficient heating and cooling of the house and reduced issues of noise and privacy.

Matt: There’s also the advantage [in designing houses for] flexibility that rooms and spaces can be compartmentalised for sound attenuation and efficient heating and cooling. (M1, P5, L242)

Some of the Managers saw a disadvantage in providing separate living areas in larger social housing layouts, in that it could affect the general market appeal of a house since large open-plan living areas are currently popular.

Theme 5.2 Policies and Guidelines of the Authorities

The group thought that the HousingSA guidelines and policies should take into account the needs of cultural groups. Some of those interviewed stated that HousingSA had no specific policies or standards on designing for cultural diversity and focused on housing for generic
tenants, based on overall current demand. Managers saw the necessity for more specific references in the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to cover the needs of cultural groups.

Andrew: There need to be some specifics in their [HousingSA] policies and guides for different cultural groups and it scares me when I think that because I don’t think there’s an easy answer without producing a house that is specific to cultural groups. (M3, P8, L376)

One Manager pointed out that the large houses that HousingSA now builds for deinstitutionalised groups had two living areas that would suit most large families. This would also meet the needs of some cultural groups who preferred separate living areas in the house for men and women.

Theme 5.3 Plan Shape

The Managers felt that the open-plan layout of living areas was important to their tenants as it accommodated the Australian lifestyle. One of the group saw this type of layout as promoting the activities of family living for some cultural groups as the large family areas allowed people to sit down and eat together. Another view was that two separate living areas were required to meet privacy needs in large families.

Emily: Open plan, yes that’s what they [our tenants] like and they like the living space at the rear of the house. (M4, P3, L139)

Gavin: A different style of three-bedroom house where we have two living areas. (M2, P6, L236)

Theme 5.5 Adaptability

Managers considered that building adaptable houses was very important for HousingSA to meet the needs of its diverse tenant base, including disabled and aged people.

Emily: Well adaptability to meet the changing needs, we have a lot of housing we provide for the aged and it’s a common request that it’s adaptable and for disability. (M4, P3, L124)

Theme 5.6 Cost

Although some of the Managers pointed out that cost dictated what they could build, they also recognised that some housing might need to meet cultural requirements and thought that on some occasions this could be achieved at little additional cost to the standard house.
Gavin: Two rooms rather than open plan that's one of the things that could be done at little or no cost to currently what we’re doing. (M2, P6, L243)

*Theme 5.7 Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)*

There was a concern that the need to design social housing for possible later sale on the private market, with emphasis on the physical appearance of the house, might compromise the environmental objectives embodied in the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines.

Andrew: I think there's a tendency to produce designs that pander a bit to the market and finish up with some very unenvironmentally sustainable outcomes. (M3, P4, L168)

*Theme 5.9 Custom*

Some minor design changes to HousingSA housing had been made in the past to meet the requirements of some cultural groups. Generally, however, the Managers thought that a specific house design would be difficult to achieve, given that all HousingSA houses were designed to a generic standard for a broad range of tenancies. This meant that some social housing offered to culturally diverse groups could be rejected on the grounds that it was culturally inappropriate. This raised issues with the Managers of how modifications could be achieved within the current policy framework.

Andrew: In fact housing has been rejected [by some tenants] because it is culturally inappropriate in layout, and these are important factors, but how far can we accommodate them? (M3, P7, L335)

*Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation*

*Theme 6.1 Size and Layout*

The Managers admitted they were unfamiliar with the cooking and food preparation requirements for all cultural groups, although they acknowledged that the typical kitchen design in social housing might not suit all people.

Andrew: For example Asian families and the way they cook. Whether the facilities we provide at the moment are sufficient, some people prefer to cook outside, so do we provide sufficient outside covered external space to do that? (M3, P7, L342)

However, the Managers identified that more space in the kitchen and eating areas was a necessity, particularly for Sudanese people. In one case, the type of appliances provided for a Sudanese group included a larger than standard gas hotplate and a heavy-duty exhaust fan.
For many cultural groups, including Sudanese people, the option of a gas service was often preferred as the element in electric stoves often burnt out from overuse.

**Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating**

The ability to maintain their traditional style of food preparation was thought to be particularly important for cultural groups and the Managers highlighted that facilities in the standard Australian house were generally inadequate to cater for these activities.

Andrew: In Asian cooking the pungent smells that can come off that cooking and our [inadequate] exhaust fans. (M3, P7, L348)

**Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms**

**Theme 7.2 Bathroom Size/Layout**

The bathing and bathroom requirements of diverse cultural groups were not well understood by the Managers. They did agree, however, that the Adaptable bathroom provided in new social housing would suit most cultures. The larger than average family size of some groups was also seen to place pressure on bathroom facilities, and two toilets would be required.

**Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Areas**

**Theme 8.1 Hospitality**

Managers believed that the size of living rooms was an important factor for cultural groups as their entertaining and family activities often required larger spaces than were commonly found in the standard Australian house. They also identified that a separate living room was needed in addition to a family room in large family housing, a feature provided in some HousingSA house designs.

Gavin: We will separate the living and dining and we'll have a specific large room at the front of the house as opposed to one at the rear, it depends on the [house] design and the [shape of the] allotment, but generally in a four or five bed, we will have a large living space and to the rear or the side there will be a family /dining/kitchen area. (M2, P6, L275)

**Theme 8.4 Working/Studying at Home**

It was the view of the Managers that work or study was most likely to be done in a bedroom or a living area rather than in a dedicated space. One Manager felt, however, that family
requirements were changing in respect to study and working from home, and some provision in social housing might be considered in the future.

Matt: Often a bedroom will be located in such a way that it is at the front entry [of the house] and doubles as an office. However it wouldn't be normal. However we have built homes for the private market in the past for sale on the private market with a study (M1, P3, L139)

Theme 8.5 Outside

Outside areas were mentioned as being very important entertainment spaces that could be accessed directly from formal family or living areas of the house and were considered an extension to these areas. It was observed that people from culturally diverse backgrounds were making increasing use of outdoor areas to entertain and cook, and therefore paved and covered outdoor areas could be considered for these uses.

Matt: Our design guides require a private open space, usually a back yard, co-located with a living area or dining/living area. (M1, P4, L148)

Managers saw garden size and maintenance as other important issues for cultural groups. It was noted that social housing now utilises smaller allotments of land and correspondingly smaller yard spaces, which were more manageable for the tenant while still providing space for outdoor entertainment.

Matt: For our clientele our allotment sizes are smaller than they have been in the past. (M1, P5, L230)

Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms

Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size

The Managers thought it was important that bedrooms were larger for culturally diverse groups. Smaller bedrooms in the standard Australian house did not hold more than two single beds and did not cater for the larger households of some cultural groups who preferred to have three or four same-gender children sharing a bedroom. One Manager thought that some family members could also use the bedrooms for other activities such as prayer, so additional space might be required.

Adam: One of our houses the people [Sudanese] would probably sleep 3 or 4 to a bedroom. (M5, P5, L217)
**Key Factor 10: Comfort**

**Theme 10.1 Sustainable Practice**

The Managers pointed out that sustainable house design, particularly in relation to heating and cooling, was a major priority for HousingSA.

*Matt:* For environmental reasons and saving on energy we prefer our houses to be designed to be passively heated and cooled. (M1, P3, L125)

**Theme 10.2 Services**

The Managers indicated that HousingSA did not provide heating and cooling in its housing except in special circumstances. In new social housing, connections were provided for the installation of heaters and air conditioners at the tenant’s cost and some further subsidies were available for the purchase of such appliances. One Manager thought that some assistance might be given to those coming from warmer countries. It was noted that electricity and gas consumption was likely to increase greatly over the winter period, and there was evidence that some groups were using ovens for heating.

*Gavin:* With Aboriginal people we do include heating because they are sensitive to the cold, there may be some issues to look at [other] groups who do have that problem. (M2, P7, L307)

**5.4 Service Managers**

**5.4.1 Profile (Q.1)**

This group was more likely to have had direct contact with the people being housed and had arranged and overseen the services the groups required.

Seven of the Service Managers (SMs) interviewed were female and one was male. All held senior positions in either HousingSA’s Housing Services Division or were Managers in Anglicare Housing or Redshield Housing Association.

*Emma:* We are responsible for the day-to-day running of the [HousingSA] region and the decisions made in the region about eligibility for housing services. We make a lot of links and networks with other organisations in Adelaide, we have really strong working relationships with agencies and set up protocols with them to assist in streamlining services for our customers and clients. (SM2, P1, L24)
All of those interviewed had held their current position for approximately five years, although most had been in their organisation for longer periods in the same or similar roles. The SMs had all housed people from culturally diverse backgrounds, although those working for HousingSA were more likely to have housed all three of the cultural groups being interviewed. Anglicare Housing had housed groups from both Africa and the Middle East, and the Redshield Housing Association had assisted people from African countries.

Most HousingSA housing for culturally diverse groups was concentrated in the city, and the north eastern and western suburbs of Adelaide. The SMs indicated that the country of origin of the groups coming to Adelaide had changed over the past five years in line with immigration trends.

Chloe: Sudanese make up about fifteen to twenty per cent of our client applicants coming through here [Adelaide office] and that's been the case for the last five years. We probably have about five per cent Iraqi and the same Iranian. When I first started here we were seeing a lot of Afghan refugees but that's slowed down a bit, the Sudanese are by far the biggest percentage together with Indigenous people. (SM3, P1, L29)

5.4.2 Designing Social Housing (Q.2 and Q.2.3)

The Service Managers (SMs) were asked what they thought were the most important factors in the design of housing for the people they assisted. The group emphasised the importance of locating new housing within established communities and close to facilities. The SMs indicated that they had the task of trying to match tenants to a suitable location with the required supports. It was pointed out, however, that the best outcome might not always be possible and depended on the housing available at the time. It was a general perception of the group that most social housing was located at least near facilities such as shops as this requirement was part of the initial design process.

The SMs saw the development and ongoing maintenance of networks with other service providers as a key to settlement of new migrants, although this was difficult when staff moved between agencies and the linkages were lost. The success of a tenancy was the result of finding a good fit for the tenant with the established community and the available support services. The proximity of similar cultural groups within a suburb was an important factor.

Emma: Well I would say that it's probably one of the most important things that we need to consider, who they're close to, where their communities are. (SM2, P2, L65)
Migrants were often reliant on public transport and the SMs identified easy access to these services as another major requirement when allocating a house.

**Ella:** If it [the house] is further out and the bus stop was further away we may not choose that house for that reason. (SM6, P2, L86)

Some SMs were concerned they might not get a choice about where some of the houses were located and this could create difficulties later in allocating housing to cultural groups. Security issues were also seen to be associated with the location of some properties that lacked safety features such as adequate fencing and security screen doors and could lead to a prospective tenant rejecting such a property. Style and appearance of a house was also considered to be important and the SMs thought that if a property looked attractive it might have a ready appeal to the prospective tenant.

**Kylie:** Because, if anything, people look at it [the house] and if it doesn’t look good, then that’s depressing. (SM8, P3, L135)

Several SMs thought that the older style homes built in the 1950s and 1960s by HousingSA (formerly the SA Housing Trust) were less popular with prospective tenants than newer houses. They believed that earlier styles of social housing were seen to stereotype social housing tenants who didn’t want to be identified as such and that this type of house was strongly identified with negative welfare housing issues of the past. Newer HousingSA housing was seen as being more similar to contemporary private-sector designs and to fit better into the street and neighbourhood, thereby helping to reduce any stigma attached to social housing.

Family size was also seen as an important issue for the SMs, as large families were difficult to house appropriately since three-bedroom accommodation was often the only housing available. This could lead to issues of overcrowding and was seen as setting a tenant up for failure. They believed that large families could strain relationships with neighbours through excess noise and disruptive activities, and this could also lead to tenancy management issues.

When the SMs were asked what they considered the most important factors in the design and layout of housing for their clients they partly dismissed the question as being outside their area of expertise. One of the group felt that perhaps the tenants themselves would be in a better position to answer the question. From the Service Managers’ perspective generally it was considered that the solutions to any design issues would come from the Architects and Managers.
There was some indication, however, that in the past the SMs had been involved in the house design process through identifying client needs, although this involvement had been reduced in recent years.

Ella: Once there was scope for having a lot more input and then it became more streamlined, so that you have a choice rather than an input. It was this one or this one, rather than tell us what you want. (SM6, P3, L136)

The level of their involvement in the design of housing was highlighted by a project of four houses that had already been designed by a Consultant Architect. Before construction began, some SMs had been given the opportunity to suggest changes to the kitchen to better meet the needs of their tenants.

Kylie: An architect has gone and done what he thinks, and we've said, we want to change the kitchen bench, we didn't want the stove and sink in it. We wanted the sink under the window and a stove, fridge and everything on the other side so that they have a whole bench. (SM8, P4, L198)

5.4.3 Community Needs and Diversity (Q.3.2)

The Service Managers were asked a series of questions about how important they thought social and community factors were when designing for culturally diverse groups. A number of themes emerged which were grouped under four key factors. The key factors were:

Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports
Key Factor 2: The Neighbourhood
Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance
Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

**Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports**

**Theme 1.1 Location of Services**

The SMs thought that services and supports were an important consideration when choosing a housing location for culturally diverse people. They believed they could play a part in familiarising new migrants with the area and introducing them to service providers such as doctors and dentists.
Ella: I think it’s one of those things when you're looking for housing is the closeness to public transport, schools, shops. Walking distance to those things. (SM6, P2, L86)

**Theme 1.2 Connection**

SMs saw public transport as an important means of connecting new arrivals to the supports and services they required. One of the first things a group would aspire to after they acquired a house was a car. Large families needed a car to take children to school and do the shopping but many groups initially relied on public transport.

Chloe: In the early days it [public transport] was really important because all they had was their feet and the bus and being able to navigate around the city was quite hard for them. (SM3, P3, L125)

**Theme 1.3 Practice**

The SMs thought it was very important that policies were in place to ensure that housing was located where appropriate services were readily available.

Lilly: That is one of our principles, making sure our housing is located in a good location with access to public transport. (SM4, P2, L161)

**Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood**

**Theme 2.1 Networks**

Grouping together people from similar backgrounds was seen as positive in the development of networks for new migrants However, there had been some friction within neighbourhoods where the difference of a large group of new arrivals was too pronounced for the existing community. When a number of Afghan families were located in the same street in Elizabeth, some issues developed with the neighbours because of the large number of these people and their noticeable style of dress.

Lilly: We had a situation ... out north where there were streets particularly with Afghan families, they were experiencing some negative responses from the neighbourhood, such as racial tension. Yes we had to find some other houses pull them out and put them somewhere else. So [we] were aware that [we] couldn’t put the [Afghan] families there. (SM4, P3, L103)

The SMs pointed out that areas such as Kilburn and Blair Athol in Adelaide’s north-western suburbs had a supply of larger houses located close to services and convenient transport links to the city area. These areas had become a major locality of choice for migrant groups, with
many asking to settle there on arriving in South Australia. Some difficulties had been experienced in recent times when some residents were required to relocate to make way for HousingSA’s redevelopment program which disrupted established community networks.

Kylie: We housed a lot of people in Prospect [Kilburn] and all of a sudden they [HousingSA] decided to redevelop and some people had to move and so some of the systems that were set up there, some of the tenants that didn’t move wanted to move [because] they no longer had the supports. Merely by other families being around and catching buses together, eating together. (SM8, P6, L257)

A Sudanese support group had now established in the Kilburn and Prospect areas and groups such as these assisted their community both formally and informally in developing networks for new arrivals. The SMs also thought that the services and supports now provided by local Councils could help groups establish themselves in an area. This also helped to attract some groups into areas they might not have chosen initially and attract others who saw members of their community living away from the initial settlement areas.

Ella: [Salisbury] council’s really supportive and they do all sorts of things for new or emerging communities, so the difficulty is seeding a new community in new areas, because people do tend to want to live close to other [groups of] people. (SM6, P4, L185)

If networks and supports were not established for migrant groups in the community it could lead to them becoming isolated as many of the women in particular had poor English language skills and would be reluctant to leave the home during the day.

Emma: ...the large groups that come over here they feel so isolated and cut off from their families and that sort of support that they get [in their country]. They have been so close to other people in their community and it’s extremely important to them. So I would say that it’s probably one of the most important things that we need to consider, who they are close to [and] where their communities are. (SM2, P2, L65)

Theme 2.2 Security

The SMs considered that for most culturally diverse groups neighbourhood security was very important. Some migrants might have been assaulted or abused in the past or their housing might be in locations that posed security issues, either from high crime rates or neighbours who lacked understanding or tolerance to diverse cultural practice. This was particularly prevalent in some social housing estates.

Sophia: One of the things I try to get is security doors to all of my clients’ properties because of the safety issues, apart from just the normal safety issues you have in
Australia, these people have been through an horrendous time and they need to feel safe and secure. (SM5, P4, L190)

**Theme 2.3 Unfriendly/Friendly**

The group felt that some of the large social housing areas that new migrant groups had in the past perceived as unfriendly, were becoming more acceptable as the mix of cultures changed and new housing became available through redevelopment. The advantages of good facilities in these suburbs and their proximity to the city were being realised and they were in high demand by culturally diverse groups.

Chloe: From our point of view they’re good areas because they’re close to the city, reasonably close to the city, but they’re perceived through the press and the media as not being salubrious. A lot of crime/break-ins those sorts of things but a lot of that is tailoring out [sic] as the communities become more settled and people understand that they are close to services. It's actually quite a good area, the schools are good. Blair Athol School for instance has quite a good refugee program. And so people are starting to accept that these are areas, places they can be housed very quickly and they are reasonably close to communities, churches and that sort of thing. (SM3, P2, L57)

**Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance**

**Theme 3.1 Integration**

The SM group thought that style and appearance of a house was not initially important to a new migrant, for whom the greater urgency was to be housed. One SM said that new migrants who came from refugee camps or detention centres often saw no importance in what the house looked like, particularly if rejection of what was offered might lead to a withdrawal of support from the housing provider. This would naturally influence choice.

Chloe: If you come in from a detention centre you don’t really care too much about the housing in the first instance, but as you stay, as your children settle, you start to think about what you want your future to be. (SM3, P6, L261)

For reasons of security and to feel part of a neighbourhood, the SM group felt that new migrants might not want their houses to ‘stand out’ or to be identified as different. A criticism of social housing in the past had been that it was identifiable and that it stigmatised those who lived there.

Kylie: I think just to blend in, so that it's not a cheap house [for example public housing]. (SM8, P7, L333)
New arrivals might also have been given a false impression of what housing would be like in Australia, or at least what might be available to them, from the information they were given before migrating. This material, the SMs felt, gave an unreal picture of what could be provided in terms of the standard of social housing and consequently disappointed the cultural groups on arrival.

Chloe: They used to show them videos and a lot of them picked Australia as a lovely country because the photos of the housing, the videos, new housing, beautiful blue skies, green grass and when they arrived it was quite a shock. I used to think these agents showing them these pictures and picking a country by the style of housing was a bit of a risk. (SM3, P6, L270)

After a period of time in their new country, it was thought that cultural groups might be more concerned about the appearance of their house, perhaps demonstrated by the changes some people made to their housing. The SMs had seen many examples of changes made to the interior of the house, often of a temporary nature, to meet individual needs.

Ella: We've seen dining rooms converted to bedrooms and kitchens with the curtain [drawn] across, so it doesn't encroach on the living space. But other than that [not much else]. (SM6, P6, L250)

Some cultural groups might also have preferences about how their housing was constructed, presumably influenced by the accommodation in their country of origin. Often a group would reject a house that was not of masonry construction.

Sophia: Well the Iraqis and Iranians come from stone-built housing with lots of granite, so they have an issue with wooden houses and surprisingly the Sudanese don't like them either. (SM5, P5, L206)

Most of the SMs thought that, because of policies now limiting the cost of HousingSA’s building and ongoing maintenance programs, the range of housing designs previously available to choose from was now reduced.

Ella: There’s limited choice that you can have with [an] allocation. It’s sort of, this one or this one and it’s got to come within the budget anyway, so there’s not a lot of room to influence a design in that way [external appearance] (SM6, P5, L238)
Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

Theme 4.1 Family Structure

The SM group emphasised that family structure was a most important factor when considering housing for culturally diverse groups. Most cultural groups had large and extended families, with up to eleven or twelve members not uncommon. Family structure, however, differed in many cases from how it had been in the country of origin. Male family members were often not resident in Australia, many having been lost in war or in overseas detention. Many African families now had a female head of household who received support from a male elders group in their community, as was the case with many of the Sudanese people in Adelaide.

Chloe: Some of the African families struggle because of the number of people, you know there might be a mother and a sister with a few children between them but they also tend to have the care of nieces and nephews as well. Their extended families sometimes they might have children that are the cousins, the children of cousins for example because they will come, they sometime bring the cousins as they don't have parents any more. Their parents are missing so it's hard. (SM3, P4, L177)

One of the SM group indicated that a different situation was encountered with the Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian people coming to this country who generally arrived as single males and who were later joined by family members. HousingSA had provided single-person accommodation for Afghan and Middle-Eastern men in groups of walk-up flats in the inner city.

Theme 4.2 Practice

The traditional Australian family house based on the Western nuclear family’s needs was not always suited to a large and extended family with a culturally different lifestyle. The SMs referred to the standard practice in Muslim families where men and women were often separated when visitors were present and made the point that this was difficult to achieve in the standard Australian house layout.

Emma: ..........especially with the people of the Muslim faith, because they have and I don’t understand all the intricacies of it, they have very set ideas about the way the house should be laid out, like women especially, if they’re in the house and fairly house-bound because they have very young children, if the husband is at home and he has a group of male visitors come to visit him they can’t mix, and if we’ve got the traditional double unit where you walk into the lounge room there's no place for the women. So they take themselves off into the bedrooms, there's no living area that gives them the opportunity to move freely around the property and that’s a really big
issue for a lot of [Muslim] women. And they can't be seen uncovered by anyone, except their family members, so that's always very difficult for them. (SM2, P3, L140)

The SMs also had the perception that the women of the family made the major decisions about the selection of the house as they were responsible for running the household on a daily basis. Therefore it was most likely that the women would make the decision about the suitability of a particular house for their family. Factors such as location close to schools and shopping, and the appropriate house layout, were seen as being important in the selection of the house.

Chloe: ...it feels that they are very much the controllers of the home, and what the family's future will look like, and quite often in those [housing] interviews men [are] passive in the interview, and it's usually the women who are fighting for the best deal. (SM3, P3, L103)

Theme 4.3 Understanding Diversity

The SMs identified the importance of having some knowledge of the tenant’s background and they mentioned enlisting the help of an interpreter to gain more information about a client’s housing needs if required. Similarly, it was important to know what different cultural groups, tribes or religious groups people belonged to.

Lilly: We need to be careful when talking about Sudanese people [as] you're talking about a variety of people and that's where the MRC [Migrant Resource Centre] [are helpful]. Using those people who know where the groups come from. If they come from another area it will be another [tribal] group. (SM4, P3, L141)

The communication process was vital in tenancy administration to allow maintenance work to be undertaken on the house as required. Often small issues such as leaking taps went unattended and this caused major water damage over time. One SM pointed out that some people might not trust government workers as they have had difficulties with officials in their own country and could be reluctant to maintain the required links. Often a tenant might be unsure of what their tenancy agreement required of them and it was important for relationships to be maintained to ensure that the tenant’s obligations were fulfilled.

Lilly: I think the worker needs to be confident about the issues of cultural difference for if they're not then the point of contact becomes more difficult, the outcome of that is that people get scared, they don't pay their rent, things go wrong in the house, they don't let you know, they don't want to bother you. Whereas if you've got a good working relationship, that allows things to be done and responded to, as quickly as possible. (SM4, P5, L237)
Ella: Response face-to-face stuff, so letters they don’t really matter or phone calls even [as] they don’t like you to talk to them. Often it’s a language thing as well. It’s hard even for a support worker to go in and say let me look at your cupboards. It’s that privacy thing. (SM6, P9, L399)

Service Managers observed that some recently arrived migrants who did not know how to use various household appliances, such as the stove or the hot water unit, would require assistance from the tenancy support area. They might also need an explanation about how to heat and cool the house to ensure that the passive energy features were being used to the maximum benefit.

Jerry: My past experience has been trying to adapt them [culturally diverse tenants] to a modern property and making sure that they understand the modern appliances. (SM1, P4, L166)

The SMs also emphasised that a sensitive approach was required when visiting homes of culturally diverse groups to undertake maintenance, and that it might be necessary to have an interpreter or community member present to explain the purpose of the visit. It could be inappropriate to visit or send a tradesperson to a house during the day when the women of the family were alone and so a prior appointment should be made. There might also be difficulties under occupational health and safety regulations for tradespersons to remove shoes on entering the house and this needed to be explained. Similarly there could be occasions, such as religious days, when it was inappropriate to make inspections of the house or to carry out routine maintenance work.

Ella: I think we decided we don’t do inspections during Ramadan. You have to be pretty sensitive because if the woman is home alone it may be that it’s not OK to invite you in even if you do have an appointment for an inspection. So you have to be sensitive where the male and the female are and their culture. You don’t send a tradesperson to a home where a woman’s on her own or something like that. (SM6, P12, L548)

Theme 4.4 Consultation

The SM group felt that HousingSA’s resources and policy would dictate what could be provided to a tenant and it was necessary to work within these constraints whilst trying to meet the tenant’s needs. Consultation with the cultural group was important from the outset to establish their needs, determine what kind of help could be provided, and to set the limits of the assistance that HousingSA could give.

Emma: The most important thing is that we ask them what they want. They are the people who know what they want, people can be unrealistic and they can want all
sorts of things, though we can all talk about cultural things, religious taboos, all that sort of stuff but we really need to talk to the groups themselves about what they need, and certainly not to say that you can have what you want, to make them comfortable, to assist their resettlement and to keep their families together. (SM2, P6, L264)

**Theme 4.6 Renting a House**

According to the SMs most newly arrived culturally diverse families would prefer to purchase a house but until they were established this could be unrealistic. The alternative was to obtain rental housing. Many low income migrants now coming to South Australia would not be eligible for HousingSA priority housing status and would need to access the private rental market, although most would be eligible for Rental Assistance from HousingSA. The SMs observed that cultural groups often disliked renting privately as they did not receive the level of support services available in the social housing system. Further, the affordable rental of social housing was a major incentive for large families with low income.

Chloe: Security of tenure is a big issue for them and they want to feel that they've got that because it's very hard for them if they haven't got good English for them to secure private rental, there's a lot of discrimination out there in the private rental market against anyone who looks slightly different to anyone else. (SM3, P4, L174)

**Theme 4.7 Religion and Prayer**

When visiting Muslim households the SMs had observed that areas in the house were often allocated for prayer or religious observance. Tenants did not usually identify this as a need before being housed but managed to set aside the areas through their own initiative.

Kylie: They just set up their little shrines in their lounge rooms, and I assume they have it facing Mecca or whatever they have to do, but I've never had any queries with it. (SM8, P9, L415)

**5.4.4 Housing Design and Diversity (Q.3.4)**

The Service Managers were asked a series of questions about the importance of the house layout and interior in the design of housing for culturally diverse groups. A number of themes emerged which were grouped under six key factors. These key factors were:

- Key Factor 5: Layout of House
- Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation
- Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathroom
- Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Area
Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms

Key Factor 10. Comfort

**Key Factor 5: Layout of the House**

**Theme 5.1 Flexibility**

The SMs felt that because social housing met a wide range of tenancies it had to be generic in form rather than designed for a specific tenant, although some internal modifications would sometimes be made on a needs basis if requested. If a house was not of a generic design, the group was concerned that it might not suit future tenants and not be easily let.

Jerry: When a family moves out, if a house is adapted to a particular need, such as cultural need, it might be vacant for a while, losing rental income and this is not acceptable. If it’s adaptable [flexible] a smaller sized family could occupy the house for a while. (SM1, P6, L288)

**Theme 5.2 Policy Guidelines of the Authorities**

HousingSA’s policies and guidelines were seen by some of the SMs as being restrictive and providing limited choice to tenants. Earlier processes for house design and selection had been more consultative.

Ella: Once there was scope for a lot more input to design and then it became a lot more streamlined, so that you have had choice rather than an input. (SM6, P3, L136)

**Theme 5.3 Plan Shape**

Although the SMs favoured an open-plan house design with a combined kitchen and family area, it was observed that this was not always the preferred layout for culturally diverse groups. In particular some groups did not like the kitchen and dining room combined and they would try to separate the areas with curtains to prevent the male members of the family viewing this area while the women were preparing the meals.

Sophia: A lot don’t like open plan. Mum in the kitchen and dining room was one example. I know some of the Africans like a room to set up for visitors where the chairs are all around the walls, so if it opens out into another area because they’re very social people they like a room they can close off. Afghans they like a room they can close off. So they like a closed room. (SM5, P6, L259)

Ella: Open plan kitchens don’t work for some cultures. So we’ve been stringing up curtains to block off kitchens, so the men can’t see the cooking. (SM6, P8, L352)
Theme 5.9 Custom

The SMs identified a number of customs that had implications for the layout of the house. These included the removal of shoes on entering and the ritual of receiving guests once they had entered the house. Large or extended families needed additional space, laid out in a different format than was usual for a Western nuclear family. Separation of men and women on some social occasions was also recognised as affecting the house layout.

Emma: If the husband is at home and he has a group of male visitors come to visit him they can’t mix and if they’ve got a traditional do where you walk into the lounge room there’s no room for the women. (SM2, P3, L140)

Theme 5.11 House size

The SMs felt that small house size was a major issue with most cultural groups and many preferred the older houses in the western suburbs because they had larger rooms. The new four-bedroom house built by HousingSA was often considered less appropriate than these older three-bedroom houses because it had smaller living areas and bedrooms that were often only large enough for a single bed. They also observed that construction of housing for large families might also need to be more robust to cope with heavy usage. Wall linings required reinforcement and fittings needed more frequent replacement which added to ongoing cost of maintenance.

Lilly: I suppose from a built form point of view we are more mindful that it’s not just a nuclear family that it’s going to be an extended family with a large number of children, who will be cousins or whatever, which means you’re building a much more robust house, hopefully, to cater for that volume of people who often have been living in camps which are often tents. (SM4, P4, L166)

The SM group thought that large families had difficulty in finding appropriately sized accommodation in the private sector and that social housing might be too small, leading to issues such as overcrowding. High rents and the reluctance of landlords to rent to large families with young children for fear of damage to the property forced some families to choose smaller and less appropriate accommodation.

Emma: It’s impossible for them, almost, to get private rental in those numbers even with the programs that we’ve got with the PRO [private rental housing officer] having great difficulty finding private rental for those families. And we have a lack of housing that’s appropriate for them as well because the majority of housing that we could access would be 3 bedroom double units, but you can’t put 11 people in a 3 or 4 bedroom house it just sets up people to fail. It’s overcrowding right from the start. (SM2, P3, L101)
Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation

Theme 6.1 Size and Layout

The SMs said that the standard social housing kitchen layout might not be large enough for culturally diverse groups with many family members. Two or three people could occupy the kitchen at one time during meal preparation, making circulation difficult. Some of the groups used large stockpots, needing two or three of these on the stove at one time, so the conventional cook top was often too small. Similarly the large platters on which food was served restricted bench space in many of the conventional kitchens in social housing.

Sophia: The kitchens are very small. When you have a large number, especially Africans, they do big pots of everything. So they'll have two or three big stockpots on the stove with rice and they're preparing on the big platters because the food gets served up on big platters. So there's a lot of bumping and juggling in the kitchen because there's no room. (SM5, P6, L287)

Large families needed large spaces in which to eat and the areas had to be flexible in their arrangement to allow everyone to be seated at meal times. Placement of furniture in rooms for large numbers of people had to be considered when selecting a house for a large family.

Sophia: So everyone eats together and they eat around a table. So it's very hard to find a dining area that's big enough to fit a dining table for a total of eight people on it. (SM5, P7, L299)

The SM group observed that as culturally diverse groups liked to cook often and in quantity, they also shopped frequently for ingredients and purchased food items in bulk, including large bags of rice and tins of oil. The standard pantry was therefore unlikely to have sufficient space and additional kitchen storage was required.

Ella: They do a lot of cooking and a lot of shopping, yes, they do need a lot of cupboards in the kitchen because big bags of rice, they're really big oil tins, you wouldn't want a standard shelf pantry, you want something with quite a large capacity. (SM6, P8, L388)

Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating

Most of the SMs agreed that cultural groups might initially have difficulty in understanding how the Western kitchen functioned. Some diverse groups could be unfamiliar with kitchen appliances or cause damage to kitchen surfaces with their cooking practices. It was important, therefore, that the workings of the kitchen were discussed with the tenant. Outside cooking
on barbecues or open fires would also allow for traditional ways of cooking which the SMs thought might be more acceptable to some groups.

Emma: Also a lot of Africans are very unfamiliar with our cooking methods and if you just put them in a house with a little stove, you know [there's] not much room to move [and] we have families that prefer to cook outside. They'll go outside and convert an old barbecue or have a fire in the backyard, and they might have 3, 4 or 5 different pots going at the same time, and the traditional cooking, there's no room in our kitchens and they find that very difficult as well. (SM2, P5, L211)

Ella: We've had people that have been here for a long time, they have been using their stove as a heater. And putting heat beads on the top of the stove probably wasn't a good choice. We had the big pots being taken off the stove and put on the floor or the bench tops. So having tiled floors or a very solid bench top would be really good for the number of brand new homes that have got [a] burnt vinyl floor covering and benches. (SM6, P8, L366)

Customs associated with cooking and eating were an important part of life for cultural groups and in some cultures only the women of the household would prepare food and cook, and these activities would need to be undertaken separately from eating or entertaining. The SMs noted that these customs had a major impact on the way the kitchen functioned and having a direct access route through the kitchen to the outside areas was a particular problem in some households.

Sophia: Basically a male cannot watch a woman preparing food. She needs a kitchen that's closed away so if someone's sitting in the dining area they can't see what's happening. (SM5, P6, L267)

Sophia: Another thing, that I only found out recently is that with certain structures, with the way the houses have been designed, having a kitchen/dining area often creates problems with Afghan women. Because an Afghan single girl is not allowed to be seen preparing food because she moves too much. So she needs to be in a separate [room], the kitchen needs to be completely separate. (SM5, P5, L209)

**Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms**

**Theme 7.1 Bathing Customs**

The SMs thought that the location of the bathroom in a house was important to some cultural groups who did not like to access the bathroom from family or eating areas. In particular the SMs pointed out that some cultural groups preferred not to have the en-suite type of bathroom off a main bedroom as visitors and other family members could not use this facility as the bedroom was regarded as a private space.

Damage to bathroom surfaces from heavy family usage, washing practices and the limited tiling to bathroom floor and wall areas was also seen as a maintenance problem in social housing.
Ella: And the problems we've had in the bathrooms because wetting everything prolifically is that if there are [areas] that are not sealed properly in the bathroom, the bench tops [vanity tops] are splitting and lifting. (SM6, P9, L411)

Although most social housing had a standard exhaust fan in the bathroom, the SMs were concerned that some cultural groups caused damage to ceiling and wall linings by showering or bathing without turning on the fan.

Ella: Exhaust fans, they don’t use them and if they don’t work they don’t report it. So you might not find out that until the ceiling is bubbled or covered in mould. (SM6, P4, L417)

Theme 7.2 Bathroom Size / Layout

There was a preference for having a separate shower alcove and bath rather than the shower being over the bath, a feature often found in older houses, although a bath was still required for the bathing of children. The SMs agreed that housing for larger families should have two bathrooms and two toilets, with one of the toilets being separate from a bathroom. This arrangement was often available in private-sector housing but many large families found it difficult to access this type of housing as landlords perceived them to be a high risk.

Emma: Some of the big four- and five-bedroom properties that you get in private rental where they have two living areas and two toilets would be ideal for them but they won't be accepted into those properties because there's probably six, seven or eight kids in the family, that's exactly the sort of thing they need but they won't get them because the land agent/land lord won’t put a large family into those properties. (SM2, P5, L225)

Several of the SMs remarked that many African people were taller than average and the design of bathrooms (and kitchens) did not always accommodate their physical requirements. The SM group thought that consideration should be given to the positioning of fixtures such as shower roses and wash hand basins in bathrooms to allow for a person’s height. They also thought there was an argument for modifications to be made for larger people where fixtures and bench heights were adjusted for a particular client.

Jerry: Yes, some of them, they have a shower and the shower is at their chest, all of us, we get our head under the shower and stand there where they don't. So it's really adapting the property in design to the characteristic of the person you're dealing with. Africans are tall, Afghanis are a lot shorter. (SM1, P4, L194)
Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Areas

Theme 8.1 Hospitality

The SMs agreed that when service providers visited the house of an Afghan or Middle-Eastern family it was the male role to extend a welcome to the visitor. The visitor was seen as a guest in the house and it would be very important to extend hospitality even though the family had very few possessions or resources. Most diverse cultural groups required large open areas within the house for entertaining their guests and family activities.

Kylie: When they [culturatively diverse people] get together they like to be all in the one room and so the houses we’re getting at the moment are perfect. Lounge, dining and family all in the one, and they all fit and works in well, when they [have a gathering] of 20, then the designs, the big square area of the kitchen, that’s perfect. (SM8, P5, L247)

The SMs thought that it was becoming more common for some cultural groups to entertain their guests outside in the garden or on back veranda areas. However, some Middle-Eastern people might still prefer the more traditional approach of entertaining inside the house in preference to the garden.

Ella: Afghan and Iraqi, the inside is immaculate but they’re not too fussed about the outside, everything happens inside, including kids playing, you don’t see a lot of kids’ toys outside. (SM6, P10, L479)

Sophia: Africans in particular, they like to entertain with their whole house, so if you go to visit someone they’ll be outside, they’ll set up chairs and a lot of loud music and dancing. (SM5, P8, L384)

Theme 8.4 Working/Study at Home

The SMs believed that for most culturally diverse families education was important, both for adults and children, and family goals usually involved children being educated to equip them for the future and to ensure they had a better life than their parents. Consequently, making room in the house for study was important and so younger children might all sleep in one room to allow an older child to have a bedroom dedicated as a study.

Emma: They’d rather that six sleep on the floor in one room so that the eldest person can study in peace and quiet. I don’t know if I’d call that a cultural thing, I don’t know it’s a choice and an issue for lots and lots of families. (SM2, P5, L243)

With as many as ten people sharing a house it was unlikely to be a quiet place, with most of the family in the living or family rooms making these areas difficult to use for study.
Jerry: There seems to be a need for a study type room and if you've got ten or twelve people in a house it's not going to be quiet, and they're all going to be in the living areas and the eating areas. (SM1, P5, L214)

Theme 8.5: Outside

The SM group felt that, although it varied between different tenancies, garden maintenance was a major issue for most cultural groups, and most preferred a smaller, more manageable space than the larger conventional single-house yard. Some groups had vegetable gardens in the rear yard but the cost of maintenance and watering, and the need to acquire tools such as a lawn mower, were generally disincentives. One of the SMs felt that some might need initial help from support groups in establishing and maintaining their gardens.

Kylie: They haven't had a garden, they don't know what to do, and it's weeds. It starts off as sandy soil and ends up as weeds. (SM8, P9, L425)

Jerry: I think education is a key here because we expect them to know, when they don't know [what to do]. Part of our job is when you put them in the property. If we don't have the expertise, then go through [enlist the] support agencies, just to keep that tenancy successful. (SM1, P6, L276)

Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms

Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size

The SM group thought the Australian practice of having a large main bedroom and smaller secondary bedrooms might not be acceptable to some culturally diverse groups who preferred equal sized bedrooms that could be shared. Older-style housing with larger bedrooms might better meet the requirements of some culturally diverse families. The older three-bedroom houses often had larger bedrooms and were better suited to large families with a culturally diverse background than the new four-bedroom designs with a master bedroom suite.

Sophia: Bedroom size is always an issue. What we find is that most properties have what's called a double bedroom, a master bedroom and the other two bedrooms are generally quite small. When I'm looking for a three-bedroom property I'm looking for up to seven people going into that property. So I need three double bedrooms. The large families that are coming through, the children will want to stay with each other, they're highly, highly traumatised. Rooms need to be a large standard size. (SM5, P7, L314)
Theme 9.2 Cultural Practice

The SMs observed that the sharing of bedrooms by siblings and other family members might free up a bedroom for other uses such as a study, dining room, children’s play room or prayer room. Carpeted bedrooms were seen to be more flexible and could be used to accommodate a number of people as some family members preferred to sleep on a mattress on the floor.

Sophia: Sometimes they’ll double children up into a room and use the [spare room] for prayer or they’ll use the dining area. The family I just mentioned they have that separate dining area but that room is also used for prayer. (SM5, P8, L354)

Key Factor 10: Comfort

Theme 10.2 Services

The SMs agreed that HousingSA needed to provide information to new tenants from diverse cultures about how to keep the house warm in winter and cool in summer, and this should be made available in the appropriate language. They said that tenants should be made aware of any design features of the house that could help better environmental performance. Closing doors in winter to enclose spaces and opening up the house in summer at night to allow cooling would be important to reduce expenditure on heating and cooling. Some cultural practices for heating were very inefficient and some education in energy-efficient practices could reduce the cost of power for these people. As HousingSA did not provide any mechanical heating or cooling to their houses it was the tenant’s responsibility to provide these appliances and to fully utilise the passive features.

Sophia: Depending on the type of heating there is, all of our clients are cold, particularly the Africans. And what the Africans will do is have the heaters on, on a day it’s 24 degrees with the windows open, because they like the fresh air. Older houses usually have the heater in the lounge room and it's trying to teach people to open and close doors to heat or cool different areas. Most of them if they have air conditioning will leave it on 24 hours a day. A lot of time you’ll walk into a house and be hit by a wall of heat. (SM5, P8, L360)

Jerry: They [African people] leave the windows open, they leave the heating on 24 hours a day. We would just heat the house up and turn it off, if we go out we turn it off. It's about education of moving from one culture to another. (SM1, P5, L238)

The SM group considered the maintenance of housing for large households was very significant where children and other family members created a lot of wear and tear to the fabric of the house. This damage could be much higher than in other social housing tenancies.
and required additional expenditure both in the design of the house, such as reinforced wall
cr~struction to withstand damage, and for repair and painting on vacancy.

Ella: A huge amount of maintenance comes out of the big families, because they've
got lots of kids, there's a lot of high wear and tear on the property, much higher than
the traditional size household. Generally if your painting schedule is for seven years
you'd be lucky if three [years] you would need to replace your window screens, if they
last for twelve months with some of them. And bench tops. (SM6, P8, L372)

Keeping the house clean was also a major issue for some of the groups. Middle-Eastern and
some African people removed their shoes before or on entering the house to maintain
cleanliness. Polished floorboards were not a popular floor finish with groups preferring
carpet, vinyl or ceramic tiles. African people often sluiced down floors with water, which
damaged floor coverings and the floor structure.

Emma: Also a lot of people hate [bare or polished] floor boards, I don't know why, but
we have polished floorboards [in some houses] but it's something that detracts from a
property for large families and the African families they like lino or carpet [When]
you've got ten kids running through the house. I don't know, and a lot of Middle-
Eastern people, make and weave [carpets] and a lot of their livelihood is [associated
with that stuff]. Yes those sort of things and they don't like the cement floors and the
red polished wooden floors like we have in the old DUs. (SM2, P6, L249)
5.5 Summary

This chapter presented the key findings of the interviews undertaken with representatives of the three provider groups, the Consultant Architects, the Managers and the Service Managers.

5.5.1 Designing Social Housing

In answer to the general question about how they believed social housing should be designed, the three provider groups considered twenty-eight themes to be important although not all groups shared the same themes. The three provider groups were unanimous in identifying six themes as being important in the design of social housing. They were:

- Security
- Flexibility of Layout
- Adaptability
- Cost of Construction
- Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)
- House Size

These themes were of a general nature and would apply to all groups for whom social housing is designed, without reference to any special needs. A more comprehensive list of the themes identified by the groups is located in Appendix 16 (p.329).

5.5.2 Designing for Diversity

The following table provides a summary of the main themes that the three groups thought were important in the design of social housing for diverse cultural groups.
## Table 9: Summary of themes from interviews with Provider Groups

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<th>HousingSA Managers</th>
<th>Service Managers</th>
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<td>Community Needs and Diversity</td>
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<td>KF1: Access to Services and Supports</td>
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<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.9: Custom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.10: Zoning of the House</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.11: House size</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5.12: Privacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF6: Eating and Food Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.1: Size and Layout</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.2: Outdoor Cooking</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.3: Social Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6.4: Custom and eating</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF7: Bathing and Bathrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 7.1: Bathing Customs</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 7.2: Bathroom Size/Layout</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 7.4: Modifications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 7.6: Bathroom Style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF8: Entertaining and Living Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.1: Hospitality</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.4: Working/Study at Home</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8.5: Outside</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF9: Sleeping and Bedrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 9.1: Flexibility and Size</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 9.2: Cultural Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF10: Comfort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 10.1: Sustainable Practice</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 10.2: Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forty-two themes were considered Important, Very Important or Extremely Important to the three provider groups in designing for diversity although not all groups shared these themes. Twenty themes were shared across all groups as being Important or Very Important and they were:
• Location of Services
• Connection
• Practice (Cultural)
• Networks
• Security
• Integration
• External/internal Appearance
• Policies and Guidelines
• Practice
• Understanding Diversity
• Consultation
• Religion and Prayer
• Flexibility
• Policies and Guidelines of the Authorities
• Plan Shape
• Size and Layout (of Kitchen)
• Custom and Eating
• Hospitality
• Outside (the House)
• Flexibility and Size (of Bedrooms)

A number of themes were mentioned by only one or two of the group and so have not been included in the previously described findings or this summary as they did not represent a consensus of three or more participants.

The next chapter will investigate the options available to social housing providers in housing culturally diverse groups and how these options rank against the themes raised by the cultural and provider groups.
Chapter 6. Practice – Social Housing Designs for Culturally Diverse Groups in South Australia

6.1 Introduction

First, from the reports, guidelines and plans provided by HousingSA, this chapter will identify the options the organisation currently uses for housing people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Two of the options will then be reviewed in detail to determine the extent to which the houses meet the themes raised by the cultural groups and the providers interviewed. This review will cover the ten Key Factors identified in the NHF (1998) design guidelines as being important in the design of housing for cultural diversity, linking these factors to the themes identified in the interviews with the cultural and provider groups.

There are several housing options available for large and extended families, with smaller families and singles being accommodated in one- and two-bedroom housing, including walk-up flats. The major options HousingSA uses for housing diverse cultural groups focus on house size. Three options currently being used for large and extended families are:

- conversion of duplex housing to single housing (Duplex Conversion);
- addition of portable sleep-outs to existing houses; and
- building of new houses of four or five bedrooms (Newbuild).

Housing for smaller families and single persons from diverse groups is addressed through a range of smaller accommodation including walk-up flats and new houses of one and two bedrooms. The following is a brief outline of these various options.

6.2 Housing Options

6.2.1 Conversion of Existing Duplex Housing Stock

The Duplex Conversion \(^\text{56}\) is by far the most common response to providing housing for large families including migrant groups. The housing begins as two three- or four-bedroom units divided by a party wall. The conversion starts with the party wall being breached by a doorway or archway to create one large dwelling. Other works may be carried out including:

- removal of the second kitchen;
- upgrading of both bathrooms (this may include the removal of a bathtub);
- closing off one front door;

\(^{56}\) HousingSA officers often refer to the Duplex as a double unit or DU.
• combining the metering of the electrical, water and sewer services to allow single utility billing;
• painting and decorating the dwelling and making good where walls have been removed and kitchen removed; and
• removal of all division fences in the yard.

Apart from these alterations the dwelling remains relatively unchanged in its outward form and appearance. The cost of the conversion can be as much as $30,000\textsuperscript{57}. A typical exterior of a duplex converted for large family tenancy is shown below.

![Figure 18: Exterior of a Duplex Conversion (Source: HousingSA 2006)](image)

The main disadvantage of the Duplex Conversion is that works are seldom quick as, in addition to the physical alterations, often two sitting tenants must first be relocated to provide a vacant property. The uncertainty of the works also makes them hard to schedule. For example, asbestos sheeting was often used as floor-covering underlay and this is not identified until the floor covering is removed, inevitably leading to an additional cost. Another disadvantage is that once the work is done, it is costly to revert the large house back to two dwellings. Figure 19 shows the plan of a typical Duplex Conversion for a large occupancy.

\textsuperscript{57} Current estimate at June 2008
Kitchens and living rooms are often poorly positioned relative to one another, reflecting the difficulty of converting the housing to suit the needs of the new group. Also kitchens are often small with little storage and are not suited to meal preparation for large households. Small eating areas often prevent the household sharing a meal together which is often an important activity for culturally diverse groups.

Emma: It's just impossible in our DU’s\(^5\)\(^8\) and they'd probably need to eat in shifts. I'd say, three or four at a time that's the sort of thing. (PA, P3, L 209)
The living room layout in the Duplex Conversion might also restrict cultural lifestyle as its layout may lack the necessary separation and privacy required by some cultural groups.

Emma: .....If we've got the traditional double unit where you walk into the lounge room there's no place for the women. So they take themselves off into the bedrooms, there's no living area that gives them the opportunity to move freely around the property and that's really a big issue for a lot of [Muslim] women. (SM², P3, L145)

Bedroom size in the Duplex Conversion may also be an issue for culturally diverse groups who may have a preference for their children to share bedrooms.

Emma: .....the bedrooms are very small in the DU, very small, especially if you've got a three bedroom house and eight kids, what can you do? (SM², P.5, L233)

The floor area of the two- and three-bedroom duplex when converted to a single house may not meet the current standards set by HousingSA for a four- or five-bedroom house. The table below indicates that by converting a pair of two-bedroom units to a single four-bedroom house the conversion may only result in a house size of 130 m² which is smaller than current standards of 145 to 155m². Also the layout of the unit may not have the flexibility seen in purpose-built houses and have under-utilised space resulting from the modifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House Type</th>
<th>Floor Area (m²) Pre-1967 Housing</th>
<th>Floor Area (m²) 2008 Housing Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat (1 bed)</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>55-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex/SU (2 bed)</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>65-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex/SU (3 bed)</td>
<td>85-90</td>
<td>110-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex/SU (4 bed)</td>
<td>110-120</td>
<td>145-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex/SU (5 bed)</td>
<td>120-135</td>
<td>170-180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The appearance of older housing stock is often an issue for Service Managers as it is often identifiable as social housing and may carry a stigma.

Kylie: ..... a Housing Trust house you can pick them a mile off and so people have an attitude to them instantly. (SM8, P.4 L151)
6.2.2 Portable Sleep-outs

HousingSA has used the transportable unit, or sleep-out, for the past 30 years as a temporary solution to larger family accommodation as it gives the house a further bedroom when required. HousingSA policy does limit the use of the unit to older children of the same gender (if sharing) so it is not always a solution for some families.

These units are placed in the rear yard of a dwelling and can accommodate up to two persons, usually teenage family members. Although preliminary plans have been prepared for a unit with an en-suite bathroom to allow greater flexibility, this option is yet to be tried and would be costly. The current stand-alone unit is not physically connected to the existing house so this solution is generally applied to an older dwelling with a large rear yard space and side access to allow easy placement of the unit.

This option for larger family housing has attracted criticism as it separates some members of the family from the main house, which can be culturally inappropriate for some groups. One of the Service Managers interviewed remarked:

Emma: ..... but we've got houses where we've got a three- or four-bedroom house with a portable sleep-out but the African families won't let the children sleep in a sleep-out, they actually all sleep in the house and they won't let (especially) girls, are not allowed to sleep outside the family circle, and even the big properties with sleep-outs. To them that's not a secure environment, they won’t actually use them. We've found that time and time again. (SM², P3,L129)

The sleep-out unit measures 10.3 m² in floor area, marginally less than the current minimum second bedroom size (of 10.8 m²) for family housing, so it is also not consistent with the standard of amenity required by the current HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines (see Appendix 10, p. 309). An example of the current sleep-out is seen below in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Standard portable sleep-out
(Source: HousingSA, 2008)
6.2.3 Newbuild - Family Housing

A range of housing types is built for the HousingSA Newbuild Program that would generally be used to accommodate families from culturally diverse backgrounds. In the five years since 2003 HousingSA has run a construction program building approximately 300 new houses annually including a mix of two-, three-, four- and five-bedroom family houses, mainly on single allotments, although some family-sized two-bedroom housing is located within group housing sites. Approximately five per cent of the HousingSA Newbuild Program are four- or five-bedroom houses and are therefore suited to larger families. The number of five-bedroom houses is, however, small and generally built for high-need programs, thereby being unavailable for general allocation. Under HousingSA’s current amenity standards the four-bedroom houses can accommodate up to six children and the five-bedroom up to eight children, in addition to the adult members of the family. Living areas of houses and appropriate occupancy numbers used by HousingSA are given in the following table:

Table 11: Adaptable House Accommodation Schedule (HousingSA 2008, p.16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House Type (by Accommodation)</th>
<th>Living Areas Limited to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-bedroom housing (Single/Couple only)</td>
<td>55 to 65 m² area*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom housing (Couple only)</td>
<td>65 to 75 m² area*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom housing (Couple and one child only)</td>
<td>75 to 85 m² area*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-bedroom housing (Family with up to 4 children)</td>
<td>110 to 120 m² area*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-bedroom housing (Family with up to 6 children)</td>
<td>145 to 155 m² area*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-bedroom housing (Family with up to 8 children)</td>
<td>170 to 180 m² area*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Floor areas exclude carport/garage, porches and verandahs, but include all walls

A typical larger house built by HousingSA usually features two bathrooms, one of which may be en-suite to the main bedroom, a separate WC and separate lounge and living (family) rooms. Appendix 17 (p.332) provides further information from the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines on space requirements for typical 4- and 5-bedroom houses.

HousingSA provides Newbuild housing for cultural groups and the house shown below is typical of the housing currently being constructed. In this case there are two bathrooms, each incorporating a WC. In other designs the WC will be separate from the bathroom and include a wash hand basin. This house also has a large family, dining and kitchen area

59 In 2007/2008 HousingSA constructed 316 Newbuild dwellings of which 256 were retained for rental (HousingSA 2008).
separated from the formal living room that meets the HousingSA Amenity Standards and would fulfil the requirements of some cultural groups for separate family and guest entertainment areas.

Other family housing built by HousingSA includes both two- and three-bedroom forms that accommodate between one and four children in addition to adult members of the family. Smaller-sized family housing generally has an open-plan living and dining area adjacent to the kitchen, a combined bathroom and toilet facility and a separate laundry. Three-bedroom accommodation has a second separate toilet. All new housing built by HousingSA is designed for adaptability (disabled access) with wider doorways and stepless entry to the house to give greater flexibility in future tenancing.
To date HousingSA has not built any new houses for the needs of a specific cultural group through its Newbuild program, although there are some examples of ‘one-off’ houses for specific groups, particularly in the Community Housing sector as noted above. Most HousingSA housing is of a generic design to suit a standard household in South Australia.

**Matt:** .....our housing is designed in a generic way and we offer a range of housing for larger and smaller family units. (M1, P2, L53)

### 6.2.4 Housing for smaller families and single persons

HousingSA accommodation for singles and couples, in addition to one- and two-bedroom single houses, includes flats, townhouses and maisonettes. Most groups of flats built by HousingSA date from before 1967 and are of the two- and three-storey walk-up style. These older walk-up flats are still one of the major sources of one-and two-bedroom accommodation available to HousingSA, particularly in inner-suburban areas. Bathrooms are located off the bedroom in the single-bedroom units although the kitchen and living room are separate. Access to flats is by a common stair, with shared laundries and car parking in open shared parking areas. Walk-up flats in the Brooklyn Park area of Adelaide have been allocated to young single Afghan migrants and the grouping of these migrants has allowed the development of support networks in the area.

Since 1998 HousingSA has built small adaptable single houses for one- or two-person occupation, mainly in small groups. This house type has been an alternative to the walk-up flat. Current standards of design for these houses provide for larger floor areas and a higher level of amenity than the walk-up flat, particularly in relation to kitchens and bathrooms. The floor area of older flats and smaller duplex units is approximately 50 m².
and in the non-family Newbuild house this has increased to approximately 65m². To help minimise the floor area the laundry and bathroom are combined and the second bedroom is designed for single occupation only. These smaller houses are usually placed at the rear of group sites as indicated below in Figure 24.

![Figure 24: Newbuild two-bedroom non-family house (Source: HousingSA 2008)](image)

The integration of dwellings into the streetscape is an important factor in the design of social housing. Standardisation of such dwellings to fit with existing adjoining houses has been a key objective of both HousingSA and local councils. Figure 25 shows the study of a streetscape for a project demonstrating to the local council how smaller group housing will integrate with other houses in the street (the house on the right is an existing structure).

![Figure 25: Social housing integration in the streetscape (Source: HousingSA 2006)](image)
6.3 Analysis of Housing Options for Diversity

In this section two of the housing options available to HousingSA, outlined above, will be reviewed against the main themes identified in the interviews with cultural and provider groups, as reported in chapters 4 and 5 of this study. The themes are grouped under the ten key factors (KF) identified in the literature considered to be important when designing for diversity. They are as follows:

Community Needs and Diversity

   Key Factor 1 (KF1) Access to Services and Supports
   Key Factor 2 (KF2) Neighbourhood
   Key Factor 3 (KF3) House Style and Appearance
   Key Factor 4 (KF4) Family Culture and Religion

Housing Design and Diversity

   Key Factor 5 (KF5) Layout of the House
   Key Factor 6 (KF6) Eating and Food Preparation
   Key Factor 7 (KF7) Bathing and Bathrooms
   Key Factor 8 (KF8) Entertainment and Living Areas
   Key Factor 9 (KF9) Sleeping and Bedrooms
   Key Factor 10 (KF10) Comfort

This review has used house plans, GIS data and Housing Design Guidelines, all sourced from HousingSA, and firstly considers the community needs factors and secondly the housing design factors. As the design and planning approach in three of the community needs factors, KF1, KF2 and KF4, are similar for both of the houses studied, these factors will be discussed together. The key factor, House Style and Appearance, and the six housing design factors are discussed for both houses in turn, in terms of the themes identified by the cultural and provider groups, to establish how well they are addressed in the two house designs being reviewed. Reference is also made to the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines where they directly influence the house designs. The key factors and the requirements of the design guidelines are then aligned in the review. The two housing options chosen for this analysis are the five-bedroom Newbuild house and the Duplex Conversion as they are most representative of the housing currently being used to accommodate culturally diverse households.
6.3.1 Community Needs and Diversity

This section will involve a review of four of the key factors relating to the community and social needs of culturally diverse groups as identified in the interviews.

**KF1 Access to Services and Supports**

*Theme 1.1 Location of Services, Theme 1.2 Connection, T1.3 Practice*

In the site selection process HousingSA Managers use on-line geographic information services (GIS) from the Department of Families and Communities to source data about the location of services available to future tenants. In addition to providing information about housing stock type and size, this service gives a graphical presentation of the location of shopping, medical services, hospitals, schools and other educational facilities, aged care facilities and their supports, places of worship, utility services and transport routes.

Service providers working with cultural groups seeking new housing also use anecdotal information and local knowledge to assemble a picture of the distribution of services and their proximity to the housing or development site under consideration. Connection to the required services, however, can be compromised by the location of available social housing as appropriate locations may not be available at the time of allocating a house.

The requirement for good access to services and supports is generally being addressed by the current practices of social housing providers.
Another GIS tool used to select development sites is the land ownership database that shows existing social housing in a specific location. It also identifies all community housing and housing let to non-government organisations (NGOs) such as Anglicare, giving information about its type, size and condition. In areas of high social housing concentration land is more likely to be sold to private buyers to encourage a more equitable social mix, a major policy objective of HousingSA.
Difficulties can arise in maintaining the social and community networks of specific cultural groups as the process relies both on a Service Manager’s knowledge of the group being housed and the availability of housing in the most suitable area to support the appropriate network for that group.

Figure 27: Social housing mix by type of housing (Source: HousingSA 2005)

**Theme 2.2 Security**

Security issues associated with the design of the house and its surroundings are covered in the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines.

‘Natural’ strategies using principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) are designed into the site, including natural surveillance, natural access control and territorial reinforcement. Front fencing is kept low-level and transparent, generally enhancing the street frontage, while rear yard fencing is 1800mm high to ensure the household’s privacy from overlooking neighbours.

It is not always possible to apply the CPTED requirements to existing housing, such as the converted duplex, because of its design and siting on the allotment so other measures are employed such as installing additional security screens to doors and windows, and redesigning garden areas to allow views from the house to the street.
Theme 2.3 Unfriendly/Friendly

The extent to which tenants find their living environment unfriendly or friendly will rely on how the Service Managers select the housing. For example, conflict with neighbours will arise if large families are located adjacent to dissimilar tenancies where the likely noise and nuisance may lead to disharmony. Similarly, some locations are known to be associated with racial harassment and other antisocial behaviour towards minority cultural groups and would present serious obstacles for these groups to overcome in settling into such neighbourhoods.

**KF3 House Style and Appearance - Newbuild Housing**

To review the key factor, *house style and appearance*, a standard house type from the HousingSA portfolio has been chosen. It is of the ‘colonial’ or ‘ranch’ style (Persse 1981) currently popular with Adelaide builders and is an example of the archetypal Australian house. The house is of brick veneer construction and the main brickwork has contrasting banding at the base. Roofs, gutters and downpipes are of Colorbond steel and windows in powder-coated aluminium. The gambrel-style roof evokes the appearance of the Federation bungalows of the 1920s with a relatively high roof pitch of about 22.5 degrees. Despite this attempt to vary the style, its facade gives it away as being the conventional modulated house, with standard openings for doors and windows which accentuate its generic construction form, based on cost-reducing mass production methods.

*Figure 28: Typical elevation of 5-bedroom Newbuild house (Source: HousingSA 2008)*

*Figure 29: Presentation to the street of typical 5-bedroom Newbuild house (Source: The Author)*
The following table shows how the design of the five-bedroom Newbuild house addresses the themes identified by the cultural groups and providers during the interviews. These themes are aligned with the relevant sections of the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to establish whether these standards address the requirements.

Table 12: Newbuild House Review – House Style and Appearance (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KF3 HOUSE STYLE AND APPEARANCE**

1.1 House Design Guide
   - Neighbourhood Amenity (p. 5)
2.2 Design Guidelines for Site Layouts
   - Guideline design principles (p.11)
2.4 Environmental Sustainability
   - Built Environment – Streetscape (p. 31)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines have no specific provision for cultural influences on the design of the house exterior.

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
   - Built environment – Streetscape (p. 31)

1.1. House Design Guide
   - Neighbourhood Amenity (p. 5)

Theme 3.1 Integration
The house is not readily distinguishable from the other houses in the street, having a similar form and setback from the street. Roof pitch and building materials are also similar to adjoining houses, most of which are privately owned.

Theme 3.2 Traditional Housing
The house type is of a standard Australian archetypal design and does not owe any of its form to minority cultural influences.

Theme 3.3 External Appearance
The house fits into the street, maintaining the existing streetscape and protecting the amenity of the adjoining properties, without identifying the house and its occupants as being ‘different’.

Theme 3.4 Policies and Guidelines
The style and appearance of all new housing is covered in the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, resulting in a generic house form which does not consider cultural diversity.

**KF3 House Style and Appearance – Duplex Conversion**

The house reviewed is a typical duplex built in many Adelaide suburbs between the 1940s and 1950s by HousingSA (then the South Australian Housing Trust). Initially two houses, this duplex was converted and refurbished to create a single five-bedroom house. It is similar in design to other duplex houses in the street, being of red brick masonry construction with a corrugated iron roof. During the refurbishment the roof was re-clad with Colorbond sheeting. There was little alteration to the elevation of the house except for the addition of shade canopies over the windows, a verandah and a ramp for disabled access, and one of the front entrance doorways was replaced with a new window. Despite
the modifications being designed to suggest the ‘Colonial /Federation’ style of the Newbuild house reviewed earlier, this house retains its distinctive form of 1950s austerity, characterised by a steep hip roof and a remaining chimney, and the symmetrical placement of windows and doors in the facade. Windows are characteristically smaller than in the newer-built dwelling and have distinctive brick sills.

![Figure 30: Typical elevation of 5-bedroom Duplex Conversion (Source: HousingSA 2008)](image)

![Figure 31: Presentation to the street of typical 5-bedroom Duplex Conversion (Source: The Author)](image)

The following table shows how the design of the five-bedroom Duplex Conversion addresses the themes identified by the cultural groups and providers during the interviews. These themes are aligned with the relevant sections of the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to establish whether these standards address the requirements.
Table 13: Duplex Conversion House Review - House Style and Appearance (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESS 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KF 3 HOUSE STYLE AND APPEARANCE

1.1. House Design Guide
- Neighbourhood Amenity (p. 5)
2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Built Environment – Streetscape (p. 31)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines have no specific provision for cultural influences on the design of the house exterior.

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Built Environment – Streetscape (p. 31)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific mention of cultural diversity in relation to house style and appearance of existing houses. Policies for upgrading are confined to the upgrade of kitchen, bathroom and laundry areas.

Theme 3.1 Integration
The house is located adjacent to similar houses built by the (then) South Australian Housing Trust in the 1940s.

Theme 3.2 Traditional Housing
The house is a standard social housing archetype of the 1940s and 50s.

Theme 3.3 External Appearance
The front facade of the house has been modified to change its appearance and provide greater variety in the streetscape.

Theme 3.4 Policies and Guidelines
HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines governing renovation of houses leads to a generic housing outcome for upgraded houses. There are no guidelines for upgrading housing to suit cultural diversity.

KF4 Family, Culture and Religion

Theme 4.1 Family Structure, Theme 4.2 Practice (Cultural), Theme 4.7 Religion and Prayer

Data available to service providers about family culture and religion is not comprehensive although information about a tenant’s cultural background is now collected through statistics on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse tenants (CLDB). The HousingSA tenant database also provides details about family size and composition. More specific information about cultural characteristics and the housing needs of cultural groups is mainly anecdotal from service providers working within HousingSA who are in contact with these groups. The service delivery group is also most likely to have regular contact with support groups in the community such as the Migrant Resource Centre, Australian Refugee Association, and immigration professionals. HousingSA also maintains a link with a pool of interpreters and community leaders who can assist with new arrivals. However, service providers are not generally aware of specific housing requirements that culturally diverse groups may have, particularly relating to religion and prayer.
Theme 4.3 Understanding Diversity, Theme 4.4 Consultation

The Service Managers have the closest links with the cultural groups in the housing process and during the interviews all indicated the importance of understanding difference and conducting extensive consultation in this process. HousingSA has an interpreter and translation service to assist in the process and in at least one regional area has provided an African liaison officer where there is a strong demand from African people for social housing.

Theme 4.5 Owning a House, Theme 4.6 Renting a House

Information is available to agencies seeking social housing for culturally diverse groups through both printed material and on the HousingSA website. This ranges from details on how to apply for housing to tenants’ rights and tenancy requirements. People on low incomes may apply to purchase surplus social housing through the Affordable Homes Program via the HousingSA website and housing finance information is available through the South Australian Government’s home finance agency, HomeStart Finance.

The process of meeting the community needs of diverse cultural groups is deficient in a number of areas. Some difficulties are experienced in matching tenants to appropriate locations where necessary supports are available because of the lack of suitable properties in those areas and this is compounded by housing providers’ lack of knowledge about the needs of culturally diverse groups.

In designing social housing for community needs and diversity the four key factors of

- Access to services and supports
- Neighbourhood
- House style and appearance
- Family, religion and culture

are generally addressed. However, there is no direct reference in the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to the consideration of cultural practice, including religion and prayer, leaving these matters either for the tenant to address or for their Service Manager to interpret and implement on their behalf.

60 The Affordable Homes Program is an initiative of HousingSA to increase the supply of low-cost homes in South Australia. The program is targeted at moderate to low-income house buyers (HousingSA 2008).
6.3.2 Housing Design and Diversity

This section first reviews the five-bedroom Newbuild house and then the Duplex Conversion to determine whether the themes identified in the interviews with the cultural and provider groups are addressed in the design of each house.

Review of Newbuild Five-Bedroom House

Larger HousingSA Newbuild housing types are frequently provided for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. A typical five-bedroom house is reviewed to determine how it addresses the needs of these groups.

Figure 32: Floor plan of typical 5-bedroom Newbuild house (Source: HousingSA 2008. For more detail see Appendix 18, p. 334)

- Gross floor area 180.6 m²
- Carport 21 m²
- Porch 5.6 m²
- Total area 207.2 m² (for more detail see Appendix 18, p. )
- Five bedrooms with main bedroom and four smaller bedrooms
- Two bathrooms
- Zoning of smaller bedrooms
- Containment of living/dining and kitchen areas
- Minimisation of corridor space

Figure 33: Site layout of typical 5-bedroom Newbuild house (Source: HousingSA 2008)

- Setback of 6 m to street to allow for additional carparking space
- Setback matches adjoining housing
- Allotment area 638.1 m² - rectangular
- Private open space 283.4 m²
- Parking for 2 cars (one under cover)
- Orientation of one living area north-east
- 1800mm fencing to side and rear of house
- Conventional sense of address to the street similar to other houses in the street
The following tables show how the design of the five-bedroom Newbuild house addresses the themes identified by the cultural groups and providers during the interviews. These themes are aligned with the relevant sections of the HousingSA Design Guidelines to establish whether these standards address the requirements.
### Table 14: Newbuild House Review - Layout of House

(See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>(See Figure 1. in Appendix 10, p.311)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### HOUSE DESIGN

1.1. House Design Guide
- Internal Living Spaces (p.9)
- Circulation (p. 11)
- Outdoor/Indoor Space (p. 6)

2.3 Design Criteria for Adaptable Housing
- Corridors (p. 9)

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Internal Layout and Zoning (p. 18)

1.1 House Design Guide
- Shape of Housing and Sites (p. 7)
- Single Lot Housing Siting (p. 7)

#### THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

1.2 Amenity Targets
- ‘...modest level of comfort and convenience to the occupants.’ (p. 3)

#### Theme 5.1 Flexibility
Living and sleeping areas are separated to provide privacy, and heating and cooling efficiencies. There is ready access from the dining space to the kitchen and, although there is a clear definition of spaces, they are not separated by a wall. This may not meet the needs of some cultural groups. There is a separate living room in addition to a family room combined with the dining space. The layout of internal areas provides the necessary circulation space to meet adaptability requirements. There is a strong relationship between outdoor and indoor living spaces at the rear of the house to allow easy surveillance, access opportunities and a sense of space.

#### Theme 5.2 Policies and Guidelines of the Authorities
The shape and configuration of the house is determined by the maximum allowable site density established by local planning requirements which has impacted on the size of house footprint.

#### Theme 5.3 Plan Shape
The open-plan style design for living spaces makes best use of all available space and also allows light to penetrate easily and air to circulate freely around the dwelling. This layout may not meet the traditional living and eating customs of some cultural groups.

#### Theme 5.4 Construction
Although of brick veneer, the house has the appearance of solid masonry construction which is often a requirement of culturally diverse groups, giving them a feeling of safety and security.

#### Theme 5.5 Adaptability
The house has been designed for disabled access with wider doors, stepless entry and bathroom and kitchen accessibility considered.

#### Theme 5.6 Cost
The design of HousingSA housing is highly cost sensitive. This influences the design outcomes of social housing and promotes the generic house form, thus restricting design to suit specific groups.
2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Internal Layout and Zoning (p. 14)
- Passive Solar Design (p. 10)
(See Figure 2. in Appendix 10, p.311)

1.1. House Design Guide
- Sense of Address (p. 6)
- Entrance verandahs and porches (p. 11)
- Entrance porch area – 2.6 m² area, 1.6 m width (p. 23)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provision for cultural practices.

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Internal Layout and Zoning (p. 18)

1.1. House Design Guide
- House Area - ‘Living area of 8-person 5-bedroom house is 170 m² to 180 m²’ (p. 23)

1.1 House Design Guide
- Privacy (p. 6)

Theme 5.7 Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)
North-east orientation to outdoor private open space is achieved, minimising overshadowing to these areas from neighbouring buildings. This design also achieves a north-east orientation to living rooms which open directly to private open space.

Theme 5.8 Address and Approach
The house has a major street frontage, with a distinct front entry that can be easily identified by visitors.

Theme 5.9 Custom
There is no specific provision for cultural diversity in the design of this house type although the size of house and separation of living areas would suit some cultural groups.

Theme 5.10 Zoning of the House
The dining/living room is located on the northern side of the dwelling. Most of the sleeping and service areas such as bathrooms and laundries (used for short periods) are located on the western side of the house. The grouping of rooms into similar use patterns or zones allows heating and cooling resources to be focused on specific areas.

Theme 5.11 House Size
The house has been designed for a family with up to eight children and living areas can accommodate a number of visitors.

Theme 5.12 Privacy
Some privacy to rear yards is obtained by the use of high fencing, avoiding overlooking from adjacent properties. This often a requirement of cultural groups. Privacy at the front of the house would be compromised for some cultural groups because of large windows and direct access from the outside to the living room.
## KF6 Eating and Food Preparation - Newbuild

Table 15: Newbuild House Review - Eating and Food Preparation (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### KF6 EATING AND FOOD PREPARATION

1.1 House Design Guide
- Kitchen (p. 10)
- Kitchen area – 10.8 m² area, 2.7m width (p. 23)

1.2 Amenity Targets
- Kitchen Design (p. 4)
(See Figure 5. in Appendix 10, p.315)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provisions for outdoor cooking.

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provisions for the kitchen as a social place.

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provisions for cultural practices.

1.1 House Design Guide
- Kitchen design dimensions (p. 10)

1.1 House Design Guide
- 5-Bedroom Adaptable Dwelling (p. 23)
2.3 Design Criteria for Adaptable Dwellings
- Kitchens (p. 14)

Theme 6.1 Size and Layout
The layout of the kitchen allows for easy movement between refrigerator, cooking space and sink. There is also ready access to the dining space from the kitchen. The kitchen is set out in a simple U-shape. The kitchen size would not meet the requirements of some cultural groups who require more bench space. The space between the bench cupboards would assist in allowing several people to prepare food at the same time, which is often a requirement of cultural groups.

Theme 6.2 Outdoor Cooking
The householder would be required to make their own provision for outdoor cooking, which is often a requirement of culturally diverse groups.

Theme 6.3 Social Place
The kitchen is adjacent and open to the dining area which may facilitate family interaction and socialising at meal times. There is no provision to separate the kitchen from the dining area or for the installation of a table in the kitchen which may be a requirement for cultural groups when socialising.

Theme 6.4 Custom and Eating
There is no recognition of cultural diversity in the design of the kitchen area in this house design.

Theme 6.5 Storage
Overhead cupboards supplement storage. Built-in cupboards and drawers, bench tops with inset sink and drainer, and a pantry are provided. There is no provision for the storage of bulk food items which may be a requirement for culturally diverse groups.

Theme 5.5 Adaptability
There is a minimum circulation space of 1500mm between cupboards allowing for wheelchair access. HousingSA will adjust bench height if requested and service connections are flexible to allow lowering of benches if required.

Theme 2.2 Security
Surveillance of children in the primary outdoor space is possible from the kitchen and living area.
**KF7 Bathing and Bathrooms – Newbuild**

Table 16: Newbuild House Review - Bathing and Bathrooms (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KF7 BATHING AND BATHROOMS**

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provisions for cultural practices.

1.1. House Design Guide
- Bathroom and WC (p. 11)
- Floor Area - Bathroom (not required to be adaptable) 6.5 m² area, 2.4m width. Second adaptable bathroom with WC – 4.5 m² area, 2.4m width. Separate WC – 1.8 m² area, 0.9 m width. (p. 23)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provisions for cultural practices.

4.1 Housing Modifications
- Preamble (p. 4)

1.1. House Design Guide
- Laundry (p. 11)
- Laundry area - 5.4m² and 1.8m width (p. 23)
- Storage – 500mm x 500mm utility cupboard located in laundry. Linen cupboard 1500mm x 500mm located in laundry or passage.

Theme 7.1 Bathroom Customs
Provision for the bathing customs of some cultural groups is not considered in this design although a handshower can be requested.

Theme 7.2 Bathroom size and Layout
Two bathrooms and three WCs are provided and are located away from living spaces, close to bedrooms and on an external wall. An exhaust fan to each bathroom is vented to atmosphere.

Theme 7.3 Visitors and Guests
A bathroom is located adjacent to the lounge and could be used by visitors and guests without entering the bedroom areas of the house.

Theme 7.4 Modifications
Modifications to the bathroom areas can be requested by the tenant. Some culturally diverse groups may require bathroom modifications linked to their customs.

Theme 7.5 Laundry
The laundry is a separate room and naturally ventilated and would cater for a large family. There is direct access to the outside via a door which may be the ‘back door’ of the house.

Theme 7.6 Bathroom Style
There is no choice in the style of fittings and finishes in the bathroom, with standard items chosen to maintain low cost and serviceability.

Theme 5.5 Adaptability
The bathrooms are built in an adaptable form so that the only changes required to convert them for disabled use would be the installation of grab rails and removal of the shower screen.
### KF8 Entertainment and Living Areas – Newbuild

Table 17: Newbuild House Review – Entertainment and Living Areas (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN 5-Bedroom Newbuild House (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED 5-Bedroom Newbuild House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines** make no specific provisions for cultural practices. | **Theme 8.1 Hospitality**  
The lounge room is large enough for entertaining up to twelve people. |
| **1.1 House Design Guide**  
- Sense of Address (p. 6)  
**2.2 Design Guidelines for Site Layout**  
- Design Considerations for front Entrances (p. 13) | **Theme 8.2 Entrance / T5.8 Address and Approach**  
A formal pathway and porch lead to the front door of the house and identify the entrance. Entrance to the living room is directly from the outside. Cultural groups often prefer an entrance hall. |
| **1.1 House Design Guide**  
- Living Room Size – 13.5 m² area and 4.5m width (p. 23)  
- Family Room Size - 13.5 m² area and 2.7m width (p. 23)  
- Internal Living Spaces (p. 9) | **Theme 8.3 Size of Rooms**  
The living room provides sufficient space for soft seating for twelve people and space for a coffee table, TV, sound system and side tables. The family room is combined with the dining area and kitchen, with soft seating for five people and space for a coffee table, TV, sound system and side table. A separate living room is provided, together with an additional family room combined with a dining space. A separate living room is often a requirement of culturally diverse groups. |
| **2.2 Design Guidelines for Site Layouts**  
- Guidelines Design Summary (p. 13)  
**1.1 House Design Guide**  
- Private Open Space (p. 13)  
(See Figure 12. in Appendix 10, p.320)  
- Solar clothes drying (p. 15)  
- Garages and carports (p. 12) | **Theme 8.4 Working/ Studying from Home**  
Some culturally diverse groups interviewed required space for working or studying from home. Although there is no specific provision for these activities, the family room or bedrooms are often used. |
| **HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines** make no specific provisions for this requirement. | **Theme 8.5 Outside**  
A private open space area is located on the northeast and northern side of the house to maximise solar orientation. |
| **1.1 House Design Guide**  
- 5-bedroom Adaptable Dwelling (p. 23) | **Theme 8.6 Guest Accommodation**  
No specific guest accommodation is provided in the house design. |
| **HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines** make no specific provisions for this requirement. | **Theme 8.7 Furnishings**  
General policies allow the tenant to personalise the house. Room sizes in Newbuild housing will allow larger furniture items to be accommodated. |
2.3 Design Criteria for Adaptable Housing
- Living rooms, Dining Rooms and Family Rooms (p. 9)

4.1 Housing Modifications
- Doors and Doorways (p. 9)

Theme 5.5 Adaptability
In the living area, space for a wheelchair turning circle of 1500mm is accommodated. The dining room has a sliding door to an external living area. The door is set down into a rebate to allow wheelchair access.
**KF 9 Sleeping and Bedrooms – Newbuild**

Table 18: Newbuild House Review - Sleeping and Bedrooms (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KF9 SLEEPING AND BEDROOMS**

1.1 House Design Guide
- Bedrooms (p. 9)
- Main Bedroom Size - 14.8m² area, 3.6m width (p. 23)
- Other Bedroom Size - 10.8m² area, 3.0m width (p. 23)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provisions for cultural practices.

2.3 Design Criteria for Adaptable Housing
- Bedrooms (p. 15)

**Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size**

The smaller bedrooms are located close to each other, creating a sleeping zone. Some separation by the bathrooms and laundry provides aural privacy.

A wardrobe measuring 1200mm x 1500mm x 600mm is provided in the main bedroom for clothes storage.

The main bedroom provides space for a queen-size bed, two bedside tables and a dressing table and chair.

Three of the four other bedrooms have space for two single beds, two bedside tables and a dressing table and chair.

**Theme 9.2 Cultural Practice**

The bedrooms are of unequal size which may not meet the requirements of some cultural groups who may prefer that children share rooms to allow some bedrooms to be used for other activities such as a study or guest room. The smaller bedroom is of a size to still allow for some sharing.

**Theme 5.5 Adaptability**

A wheelchair turn of 1500 width can be achieved in the main bedroom.

A bedroom windowsill has been provided 750mm above floor level to allow outlook from the bed. In living rooms it is 450 to 600mm above the floor to allow vision from a seated position.

![Wheelchair turning (HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines 2008, p. 15)](image_url)
**KF10 Comfort – Newbuild**

Table 19: Newbuild House Review – Comfort (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Newbuild House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF10 COMFORT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Energy Efficiency (p. 7)
- Passive Solar Design (p. 10)
- Sun shading (p. 12)
- Water Conservation (p. 19)
- Building Construction and Waste Management (p. 23)
- Built Urban Environment (p. 25)
- Landscaping (p. 20)

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Passive Solar Design (p. 10)

1.2 Amenity Targets
- Heating and Cooling (p. 5)
- Rainwater Tanks (p. 6)
- Electrical (Utility) (p. 5)

1.2 Amenity Targets
- Kitchen (p. 4)
- Bathroom (p. 4)
- Internal Finishes (p. 4)

**Theme 10.1 Sustainable Practice**
Northeastern orientation of living areas, reduced window areas facing west and 600mm roof eaves assist in providing energy efficiency. There is insulation in walls and ceiling to reduce heat loss and gain.

A 1000-litre gravity-fed rainwater tank is plumbed to one of the toilets in the house with automatic top-up from the water mains.

Drought-resistant plants are established in the front garden to reduce water consumption.

**Theme 10.2 Services**
Hard-wired smoke detectors, locks to external doors and safety screen doors have been provided. Earth leakage circuit breakers are also installed. No mechanical heating or cooling is provided although a circuit is installed for a reverse-cycle air conditioner.

**Theme 10.3 Cleanliness and the House**
Laminate bench finishes to kitchen, laundry and bathroom are installed for ease of cleaning. There is a vinyl floor in the kitchen, a tiled floor in the bathroom and the choice of vinyl or carpet in living areas. The finishes would not withstand some of the cooking practices of some culturally diverse groups.

*Left: Rainwater tank connected to WC*  
(Source: The Author)
The design of the five-bedroom Newbuild house reviewed meets some of the needs of cultural diversity or can be adapted readily to meet these needs. The main living area of the house is large enough to entertain twelve or more guests and is separated from the family areas of the house, often a requirement of culturally diverse groups. There is also an adjacent bathroom to this main living area that can be used by guests without entering the family areas of the house. Larger families are often a feature of culturally diverse groups and there can be considerable demand placed on bathroom and toilet facilities. This house design has two bathrooms and three WCs that would cater well for such families. Flexible family areas are a key feature of the house and would assist family gatherings at mealtime and help maintain some traditional customs. A requirement by some groups for a larger kitchen may have been met in this house, as its kitchen is sufficient for several persons to be involved in food preparation at the same time. The bedrooms also follow the standard archetypal layout of main parents’ room and smaller rooms for children, an arrangement not always favoured by culturally diverse groups who often prefer children to share a room. The house design also provides for adaptability and environmentally sustainable living, making the house comfortable for most households.

**Review of Duplex Conversion**

The conversion of duplex housing into a single dwelling has been one of the most frequently used methods of accommodating large families, in particular those from culturally diverse backgrounds. It should be noted that the Housing Design Guidelines were not in use when this duplex housing was first built.

![Figure 35: Typical floor plan of 5-bedroom Duplex Conversion](Source: HousingSA 2008) For larger version of plan, see Appendix 19(p. 335)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Description</th>
<th>Area (m²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross Floor Area</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carport</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porch</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Area</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following tables show how the design of the five-bedroom Duplex Conversion addresses the themes identified by the cultural groups and providers during the interviews. These themes are aligned with the relevant sections of the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines to establish whether these standards address the requirements.
### KF5 Layout of the House – Duplex Conversion

Table 20: Duplex Conversion House Review - Layout of the House (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### KF5 LAYOUT OF THE HOUSE

1.1 House Design Guide
- Internal Living Spaces (p. 9)
- Circulation (p. 11)
- Outdoor/ Indoor Space (p. 6)

4.2 Generic Design Guidelines for House Renovations
- Kitchens (p. 6)
- Bathrooms (p. 9)
- Separate Toilet (p. 11)
- Laundry (p. 12)

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Internal Layout and Zoning (p. 18)

#### Theme 5.1 Flexibility
The bedrooms are divided between two sides of the house although each bedroom area is self-contained. This makes zoning or compartmentalisation of areas difficult. Circulation patterns through the house have significantly reduced the area of the living rooms. Similarly access to the utility area and rear access is through the kitchen. The dining room is accessed from the kitchen through the lounge and the family room.

#### Theme 5.2 Policies and Guidelines of the Authorities
The wet areas and kitchen of the house have been upgraded to meet maintenance standards. The house siting and the relationship of the interior living areas to the outside are of an earlier planning period and do not meet current requirements of providing for connection.

#### Theme 5.3 Plan Shape
The living and family areas are partly open-plan which has been made possible by the removal of some of the walls and the second kitchen. This may not meet some of the requirements of cultural groups who traditionally separate family and living areas.

#### Theme 5.4 Construction
The house is constructed of solid masonry, meeting most of the construction requirements of culturally diverse groups.

#### Theme 5.5 Adaptability
An access ramp has been added to the front entrance and in one bathroom the bath has been removed and replaced with a shower to assist disabled access.

#### Theme 5.6 Cost
Conversion work has been constrained by cost, with some modifications for adaptability and diversity not being undertaken.

(See Figure 3. in Appendix 10, p. 313)
housing or carry out appropriate modifications to suitable existing housing. In modifying existing housing the DFC will endeavour to provide essential modifications, which are those required to ensure an appropriate amenity to sustain the tenancy, resulting in the customer maintaining independence.’ (p. 4)

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Internal Layout and Zoning (p. 18)
- Passive Solar Design (p. 10)

1.1 House Design Guide
- Sense of Address (p. 6)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no specific provision for cultural practices.

2.4 Environmental Sustainability
- Internal Layout and Zoning (p. 18)

1.1 House Design Guide
- House Area - 170 to 180 m² (p. 17)

1.1 House Design Guide
- Privacy (p. 6)

Theme 5.7 Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD)
The generous size of the allotment prevents overshadowing from adjacent properties. The rear of the house faces south and a pergola has been added although not required on this face for shade. The family and lounge room face north but there is no opportunity to open these areas into the garden space to maximise on this orientation. Sun shading has been provided to the north facade through the addition of a verandah and sun shades.

Theme 5.8 Address and Approach
One front door is converted to a window although two driveways remain. A low front fence delineates the property boundary and the front door is accessed via the driveway and perimeter paving, providing a distinct entry to the house.

Theme 5.9 Custom
Although there is no specific provision in the layout for cultural diversity the large kitchen and entertaining areas may meet some cultural requirements.

Theme 5.10 Zoning of the House
Remodelling of the floor plan has created a large living area that requires additional heating and cooling. The bathroom is near the bedroom area but the WC is located at the rear of house adjacent to the laundry. Light penetrating to the dining and kitchen areas is borrowed from adjacent rooms.

Theme 5.11 House Size
The house, even after conversion, is smaller in floor area than the current 5-bedroom Newbuild house. This may not provide sufficient living and bedroom area for some cultural groups.

Theme 5.12 Privacy
The house is set back from the roadway and the rear yard is fenced, preventing some overlooking from the neighbouring properties. Smaller windows at the front may provide greater privacy for some culturally diverse groups.

Theme 2.2 Security
Side gates and rear fencing enclose the rear yard. Low fencing to the front yard provides territorial reinforcement. Screen doors are also provided to the front and rear.
## KF6 Eating and Food Preparation – Duplex Conversion

Table 21: Duplex Conversion House Review - Eating and Food Preparation (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### HOUSE DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1 House Design Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Kitchen (p. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kitchen Surveillance (p. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Floor area - 10.8 m², 2.7 m width (p. 23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2 Generic Design Guidelines for Home Renovation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Options and Choices (p. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearances (p. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alternative Layout and Circulation (p. 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See Figure 6. in Appendix 10, p.315)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 6.1 Size and Layout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to outside is through kitchen and laundry areas, reducing kitchen space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work triangle of stove, sink and fridge meets requirements although the stove is located within an old fireplace, reducing bench space on either side. Fridge space is less than 900mm wide and may be restrictive. Bench space exceeds the 4 metres in length required for a 5-bedroom house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single-bowl sink is shown on plan although a 1¾ bowl is standard for a 5-bedroom house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a servery between the kitchen and dining room and access is gained through the lounge and family area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The floor area exceeds the minimum requirement of a Newbuild house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 6.2 Outdoor Cooking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An outside rear verandah is provided with access from the house via a sliding door. The verandah could be used to accommodate a barbecue for outdoor cooking which is a requirement for some culturally diverse groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 6.3 Social Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is some connection between kitchen and dining room for serving food and this allows interaction between those cooking and eating. Kitchen space can accommodate a table and chairs, often a requirement of cultural groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 6.4 Custom and Eating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The kitchen is separate from the dining room, and would meet the requirements of some cultural groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 6.5 Storage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A pantry and overhead cupboards are provided but are unlikely to meet the needs of culturally diverse groups for the storage of bulk food items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 5.5 Adaptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benches are more than 1500mm apart although movement would be restricted if a table is located in the kitchen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for outdoor cooking.

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for specific social requirements of tenants.

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for cultural practice.

1.1 House Design Guide

| Storage (p. 10) |

4.2 Generic Design Guidelines for House Renovation

| Alternative Features – Breakfast Bars and Overhead Cupboards (p. 7) |

4.1 Housing Modifications

| Kitchen Facilities (p. 24) |

(See Figure 4. in Appendix 10, p.314)
### KF7 Bathing and Bathrooms – Duplex Conversion

**Table 22: Duplex Conversion House Review - Bathing and Bathrooms (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion  
(from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008) | 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion |

**KF7 BATHING AND BATHROOMS**

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines have no provision for cultural practice.

1.1 House Design Guide
- Bathroom and WC (p. 11)
- Floor Area – bathroom (not required to be adaptable) 6.5 m² area, 2.4 m width  
  Second adaptable bathroom – 4.5 m² area, 2.1 m width (p. 23)

HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines have no provision for cultural practice.

4.1 Housing Modification
- Shower Facilities (p. 19)
- Doors and Doorways (p. 9)
- Grab Rails and Ambulant Users (p. 28)
- Toilet Modifications (p. 21)  
  (See Figure 8. in Appendix 10, p.317)

4.2 Generic Design Guidelines for House Renovations
- Bathroom facilities (p. 9)
- Clearances (p. 10)
- Vanity cabinet (p. 10)  
  (See Figure 10. in Appendix 10, p.318)  
  (See Figure 11. in Appendix 10, p.319)

Theme 7.1 Bathing Customs
A bath in one of the bathrooms has been removed to create a shower alcove which may be better suited to cultural practices associated with washing in running water.

Theme 7.2 Bathroom Size and Layout
Bathrooms are located away from the living areas and close to all but one of the bedrooms. The WC is separate from the bathroom and is remote from four of the five bedrooms. Two bathrooms and 2 WCs are provided.

Theme 7.3 Visitors and Guests
There is no specific provision for bathroom facilities for visitors and guests.

Theme 7.4 Modifications
Removal of the bath in one of the bathrooms would assist a disabled occupant. Also doors open outward to assist wheelchair access. A solar tube is provided in the bathroom and the WC has external windows for ventilation.

Theme 7.5 Laundry
The laundry area has direct access to the rear yard and the clothesline. The laundry space is also used to access outside from the kitchen and accommodates one of the WCs.

Theme 7.6 Bathroom Style
Although some builders contracted to HousingSA may use their own selection of bathroom tiles and fittings they are generally chosen from a limited range based on cost.
2.3 Design Guide for Adaptable Housing

- Bathroom and toilets (p. 10)

Theme 5.5 Adaptability
One of the bathrooms is not adaptable.
### KF8 Entertainment and Living Areas – Duplex Conversion

Table 23: Duplex Conversion House Review - Entertainment and Living Areas (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for cultural practice. | Theme 8.1 Hospitality  
The open space living/family/dining area would allow entertaining and hospitality extended by most cultural groups. |
| 1.1 House Design Guide  
• Sense of Address (p. 6) | Theme 8.2 Entrance  
The living room is directly accessed from the outside, a feature not suitable for most culturally diverse groups. |
| 1.1 House Design Guide  
• Internal Living Spaces (p. 9)  
• Floor area – living room 25.7 m², 4.4 m width. Family room 13.5 m² area, 2.7 m width (p. 25) | Theme 8.3 Size of Rooms  
A separate living area is not provided. Living room, lounge and dining rooms are all open-plan. Diagonal traffic through these rooms characterises the new layout, reducing the useable space available.  
There is no means of compartmentalising any of the living spaces, making heating and cooling difficult. |
| HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for working or studying from home. | Theme 8.4 Working/Study at Home  
A small study is provided away from the living rooms but may also be used as a small bedroom. |
| 1.1 House Design Guide  
• Outdoor and Indoor Spaces (p. 6)  
• Privacy (p. 6)  
2.2 Design Guidelines for Site Layouts  
• Active Spaces (p. 11) | Theme 8.5 Outside  
The rear yard and front garden area are larger than currently provided in Newbuild housing and may be difficult for the tenant to maintain.  
A sliding door is provided from the sunroom to the back verandah and yard space but the inside/outside relationship is not fully developed. |

*A home work room (Source: The Author)*
HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for cultural practice.

### 1.1 House Design Guide
- 5-Bedroom Adaptable Dwelling (p. 23)

### 1.1 House Design Guide
- Thoroughfare (p.9)

### 4.1 Housing Modifications
- Comment on Australian Standards (p. 4)
  (See Figure 13. in Appendix 10, p.321)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 8.6 Guest Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One of the bedrooms or the sleep-out may be reserved for visitors but this may not be sufficiently separate from family areas for some cultural groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 8.7 Furnishings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The size of rooms may make it difficult to accommodate tenants' furniture. Policies provide for some personalisation of the house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 5.3 Plan Shape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The useable space in the living room is reduced by diagonal through traffic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 5.5 Adaptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair access would be restricted in family and living rooms and unlikely to allow 1500mm clearspace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24: Duplex Conversion House Review - Sleeping and Bedrooms  (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</strong> (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</td>
<td><strong>5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF9 SLEEPING AND BEDROOMS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme 9.1 Flexibility and Size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 House Design Guide</td>
<td>The house has two sleeping zones resulting from combining two single houses. A small corridor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bedroom Location (p. 9)</td>
<td>allows the separation of the bedrooms from the living areas and maintains aural and personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Main Bedroom Size – 14.8 m² area, 3.6 m width (p. 23)</td>
<td>privacy to the sleeping and bathroom areas. This is not the case with bedroom 5 that opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other Bedroom Size – 10.8 m² area, 3.0 m width (p. 23)</td>
<td>into the 'sun room', an extension to the dining room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines make no provision for cultural practice.</td>
<td>There is no provision for built-in wardrobe storage in the main bedrooms. Four of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Design Criteria for Adaptable Housing</td>
<td>bedrooms could accommodate a double bed or two single beds. Bedroom 5 would only fit a single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bedrooms (p. 14)</td>
<td>bed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 9.2 Cultural Practice
Bedrooms are graded down in size from the main bedroom. This prevents sharing of some rooms with other family members, a practice often preferred by culturally diverse groups.

Theme 5.5 Adaptability
None of the bedrooms would have the circulation space required for wheelchair access.
### Table 25: Duplex Conversion House Review – Comfort (See Appendix 10 for more detail on HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE DESIGN 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion (from HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines, September 2008)</th>
<th>THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS ADDRESSED 5-Bedroom Duplex Conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2.4 Environmental Sustainability**  
• Energy Efficiency (p. 7)  
• Sun shading (p. 12)  
• Water Conservation (p. 19) | **Theme 10.1 Sustainable Practice**  
Bulk insulation is provided in the roof space. Two rainwater tanks are located in the rear yard but not plumbed to the inside. |
| **1.2 Amenity Targets**  
Heating and Cooling (p. 5) | **Theme 10.2 Services**  
No mechanical heating or cooling is provided although a power circuit is provided for installation of an air conditioner or heater and, where gas service is available, there is also a connection for a gas heater. |
| **1.2 Amenity Targets**  
Kitchen (p. 4)  
Bathroom (p. 4)  
Internal Finishes (p. 4) | **Theme 10.3 Cleanliness and the House**  
Kitchen benches and the bathroom vanity unit have laminate tops. There are timber floors throughout the living areas with vinyl covering in the kitchen. The bathroom has a suspended concrete slab which is tiled. Most culturally diverse groups consider cleanliness in the house to be important and the finishes provided help to achieve this. It is unlikely, however, that these standard finishes would withstand some of the cooking and washing practices of some culturally diverse groups. |

The origin of the Duplex Conversion as two dwellings is apparent and significantly affects its layout. The bedroom areas are split between two parts of the house, an arrangement that may not meet the needs of cultural groups. Living areas do not provide the level of separation available in the Newbuild house, with most of these rooms being used as thoroughfares to access other parts of the house. The relationship between the kitchen and eating areas and the laundry are also problematic for some cultural groups as the laundry and outside areas are accessed through the kitchen. The overall floor area does not meet the current HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines specifications for a 5-bedroom house.
6.4 Summary

6.4.1 Community Needs and Diversity

HousingSA’s process of locating and accessing sites was reviewed against the themes identified in the interviews with cultural and provider groups. The themes were addressed, partly addressed or not addressed.

Table 26: Community Needs - Themes Addressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community/Lifestyle Themes</th>
<th>HousingSA Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF1 Access to Services and Supports</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.1.1 Location of Services</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.1.2 Connection</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1.3 Practice (Professional)</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF2 Neighbourhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.1 Networks</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.2 Security</td>
<td>Addressed (Duplex – Partly Addressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.3 Unfriendly/ Friendly</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF3 House Style and Appearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3.1 Integration</td>
<td>Addressed (Duplex – Partly Addressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3.2 Traditional Housing</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3.3 External/Internal Appearance</td>
<td>Addressed (Duplex – Partly Addressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3.4 Policies and Guidelines</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF4 Family, Religion and Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.1 Family Structure</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.2 Practice (Cultural)</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.3 Understanding Difference</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.4 Consultation</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.5 Owning a House</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.6 Renting a House</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.7 Religion and Prayer</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KF = Key Factor, T = Theme

While house location factors are addressed in the process of providing housing for culturally diverse groups, knowledge of their cultural practices is not widespread. This exposes issues with the development of networks and neighbourhoods in some locations.

6.4.2 Housing Design and Diversity

In the following table the two house types are reviewed against the important themes identified by the cultural and provider groups in the interview. Themes were addressed, partly addressed or not addressed.
Table 27: House Design - Themes Addressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>5-BED NEWBUILD HOUSE</th>
<th>5-BED DUPLEX CONVERSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF5 Layout of House</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.1 Flexibility</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.2 Policies and Guidelines of Authority.</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.3 Plan Shape</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.4 Construction</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.5 Adaptability</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.6 Cost</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.7 ESD</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.8 Address and Approach</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.9 Custom</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.10 Zoning of house</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.11 House size</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.12 Privacy</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF6 Eating and Food Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.1 Size and Layout</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.2 Outdoor Cooking</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.3 Social Place</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.4 Custom and Eating</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.5 Storage</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF7 Bathing and Bathrooms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.1 Bathing Customs</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.2 Bathroom Size and Layout</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.3 Visitors and Guests</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.4 Modifications</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.5 Laundry</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7.6 Bathroom Style</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF8 Entertainment and Living Areas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.1 Hospitality</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.2 Entrance</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.3 Size of Rooms</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.4 Working/Studying from Home</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.5 Outside</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.6 Guest Accommodation</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.7 Furnishings</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF9 Sleeping and Bedrooms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9.1 Flexibility and Size</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9.2 Cultural Practice</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KF 10 Comfort</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10.1 Sustainable</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10.2 Services</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10.3 Cleanliness and the House</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KF = Key Factor, T = Theme**

The following table provides a summary of themes addressed by each of the two house designs:
Table 28: Summary of themes addressed by Newbuild and Duplex Conversion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Fully Addressed</th>
<th>Partly Addressed</th>
<th>Not Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Newbuild</td>
<td>Duplex</td>
<td>Newbuild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Needs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Design</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Duplex Conversion, which is the most frequently used option to accommodate large culturally diverse families, fully addressed fewer of the themes raised by these groups. A total of eight themes were fully addressed in the design of the Duplex Conversion while twenty-four themes were fully addressed in the Newbuild house. The difficulties experienced in the conversion of the duplex dwelling, such as existing layout of rooms and location of services, affected the scoring. The relatively high scoring of the Newbuild house indicates matches between the various groups interviewed and the requirements of the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines.

The next chapter will discuss the mismatches between the social housing investigated and the requirements of cultural groups, and provide further synthesis and conclusions about how social housing meets their needs and what actions might be taken to address the differences identified.
Chapter 7. Synthesis / Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw together and discuss the findings of my study, organised by themes raised by the cultural and provider groups interviewed, and the key factors identified from the literature. This synthesis will address the research question:

How are the housing needs of culturally diverse groups met by the practices and design of social housing?

The chapter’s first section will list the themes and identify those common to each of the cultural and provider groups, then highlight any gaps that may exist. The second section will draw the themes together for discussion under the key factors. A third section will discuss the review of the house types and how well they address the themes, and finally the conclusions will comment broadly on the outcomes and the way forward, identifying what further research could be undertaken.

7.2 Themes Identified by Cultural and Provider Groups

From the interviews with the three cultural and three provider groups, forty-six themes relating to housing needs were identified as being either ‘important’, ‘very important’ or ‘extremely important’ by one or more of the groups (see Table 29, p. 243). All three cultural groups identified fourteen common themes as being important for them in the design of housing. The three provider groups identified twenty themes that they all thought were important when designing housing for culturally diverse groups. Some other themes were considered important by one or more of either the cultural or provider groups, but were not thought important by others. For example, the Iraqi group believed that traditional housing was important in housing for diversity but none of the provider groups agreed. The following table summarises all groups’ responses to the themes:
Table 29: Synthesis of important themes identified by cultural and provider groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Afghan</th>
<th>Sudanese</th>
<th>Iraqi</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Service Manager</th>
<th>Common Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Needs and Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF1: Access to Services and Supports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1.1 Location of Services</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td></td>
<td>V. Imp.</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>V. Imp.</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1.3: Practice</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>V. Imp.</td>
<td>V. Imp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF2: Neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.1: Networks</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>Ex.Imp.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.2: Security</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>V. Imp.</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
<td>Imp.</td>
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<td>T 5.6: Cost</td>
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<td>Imp.</td>
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<td>Arch. &amp; Mng.</td>
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<td>V. Imp.</td>
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<td>Imp.</td>
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<td><strong>KF7: Bathing and Bathrooms</strong></td>
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In the following section of the chapter all the themes identified as important, very important or extremely important to the three cultural groups will be discussed to confirm each group’s housing needs. This discussion will also include comment on the extent of the provider groups’ awareness of the housing requirements for various cultural groups. Reference will be made to the literature examined earlier. This synthesis will also identify any areas that should be addressed in the delivery and design of social housing to make it better suited to the needs of culturally diverse people.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Afghan</th>
<th>Sudanese</th>
<th>Iraqi</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Service Manager</th>
<th>Common Themes</th>
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7.3 Housing Needs of Cultural Groups

Key Factor 1: Access to Services and Supports

The NHF (1998), Tuohey (2001) and AHRC (1985) all identified location of services (T1.1) as a key consideration for culturally diverse groups. This was confirmed from the interviews which revealed that knowing whether tenants were reliant on public transport was important when Service Managers chose housing to allocate. Proximity to services such as shopping centres and schools was also important, as some family members might not have access to private transport, particularly during the day. Flanagan (2007) pointed out the difficulties some groups in Hobart experienced when shopping for large quantities of groceries, as shops were located some distance from their homes.

Being connected (T1.2) to the services cultural groups required, such as English language centres, was important although the provider groups pointed out that finding houses in a location having these services was not always possible, as their choice was limited to the housing stock on offer at the time. Frequently the only available social housing was located in outer areas on large estates, remote from the supports necessary to culturally diverse groups. My study also identified that such dispersal of the members of a specific cultural group was a deterrent to the establishment of a cohesive community which often depended on social links being supported by proximity to others of the same background.

The provider groups identified practices (T1.3) that had been established for matching prospective tenants to housing options. These included consideration of the distance to public transport and other services. Similarly, when selecting new sites for social housing, they used GIS databases to identify the local services available before committing to develop a specific type of housing: for example, they ensured that large social housing developments were located near schools. However, the GIS information was of a general nature and did not necessarily include details about the more specialised services that diverse groups might be likely to need. In this instance it would be up to the providers to identify from their own local knowledge whether appropriate services existed in the locality. Consequently, it is of concern that housing providers responsible for offering accommodation to newly-arrived migrants might not know about their need for specific and easily accessible services such as support groups, places of worship and specialised food outlets. Using policies of restrictive choice (Sim 2000) in locating culturally diverse
groups might lead to their exclusion or isolation if the required supports and services cannot be sourced.

**Key Factor 2: Neighbourhood**

Goldflam (1992), Flanagan (2007) and Lillie (2004) all saw some advantages in the traditional clustering of cultural groups in a particular locality to provide them with the necessary informal **networks (T2.1)** and self-assist mechanisms. The providers, while partially agreeing with this view, saw at least two disadvantages. Firstly, the visible nature of distinctive groups in a locality could bring negative attention (Casimiro, Handcock, and Northcote 2007). Secondly, as Hg and Field-Pimm (2001) highlighted, the limited supply of suitable social housing in the inner suburban areas favoured by cultural groups would curtail their choice of housing options while fulfilling their desire to be close to other members of their community. The latter point raised a dilemma for social housing providers who might have suitable housing in an outer suburb where newly arrived migrants did not wish to live. My study, however, identified that this situation was changing, with some outer suburban local government authorities in South Australia beginning to provide migrant assistance. In addition, several relevant support agencies were expanding their operations into outer suburban areas, thereby breaking down traditional migrant reliance on inner city housing locations.

Service delivery managers also saw social housing redevelopment practice in some estates as detrimental to ‘neighbourhood building’ and said that greater consideration should be given to the value of established communities with concentrations of cultural groups where community networks were highly important. This supported the views of Hulse, Herbert and Downs (2004) who saw the social impact in the Victorian Office of Housing redevelopment at Kensington from the fragmentation of established groups, many from diverse cultural backgrounds. Relocation to other sites, although sensitively handled, still meant residents took some time to readjust to their new housing and needed continued support to give closure to the process.

The issue of **security (T2.2)** was a significant theme identified by the cultural and provider groups interviewed and was also strongly indicated in the research by Casimiro, Handcock, and Northcote (2007), Alloush (2001) and AHRC (1985) who all noted that diverse cultural groups were highly susceptible to harassment and other antisocial behaviour, and that their need for household security was a priority. Ziersch et al. (2007) noted that new housing was designed using the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)
methods of passive surveillance that allowed an unintrusive form of security application to be observed in a community. The providers pointed out that they currently used this approach in the design of their new social housing although it was not readily applied to older dwellings where only the more conventional methods such as security doors and window locks were employed.

The friendliness or unfriendliness (T2.3) of neighbours affected the feeling of security for all cultural groups interviewed. In particular, they expressed concern at the lack of friendliness on large social housing estates where new migrants found it difficult to settle into the neighbourhood and obtain any necessary assistance from neighbourly contact. The cultural groups felt that language limitations and their difficulty in understanding the Australian lifestyle were not helped by un-neighbourly attitudes. This was not the case in areas with little social housing where some of those interviewed had good relations with their neighbours although they might not have known them well.

Service Managers found a particular challenge in locating households from a diverse cultural background in housing situations that would assist in the neighbouring process and also prevent conflicts. They also noted that the large families associated with cultural groups were often linked to conflict relating to noise, lack of privacy and other nuisance. Cultural groups interviewed commented that the close proximity of neighbours often suppressed their activities such as entertaining, as was noted also by Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) who, in their work with the Hmong, observed a similar situation where identity and culture were suppressed because of housing design and siting.

**Key Factor 3: House Style and Appearance**

The provider groups interviewed all identified that integration (T3.1) of housing for culturally diverse groups was important and part of existing social housing design policy. The need for social housing to ‘not stand out’ from other housing in the street or neighbourhood was also a common theme in the literature (NHF 1998; AHRC 1985) and in South Australia this has resulted in the housing for culturally diverse groups being indistinguishable from the standard Australian house. Specific groups thus have little choice in the selection of house style and there is some indication from the literature (Prasad 2003; Lozanovska 1997), and judging by the changes some South Australian cultural groups have made to their houses, the ‘one size fits all’ policy does not fully cater
for their needs. Other studies (NHF 1998; Achmadi 2003) warned against well-intentioned adoption of motifs and features from another culture without understanding their meaning.

Some Iraqi migrants in the study felt very strongly that elements of their traditional housing (T3.2) form, both internally and externally, should be maintained in this country. However, as Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2003) observed, the extent to which the external style and appearance could be replicated in social housing, given the current policies and cost constraints, was doubtful, even though this might constrain the group’s cultural expression. Further, architects and social housing providers could misinterpret vernacular cultural elements, resulting in the features having very little meaning for those for whom they were intended (NHF 1998).

My study revealed that, for Sudanese people particularly, external and internal appearance (T3.3) was a major factor in their selection of a house and they considered that some styles provided by social housing authorities were inappropriate for them. They saw some external features, such as large windows, as representing an insecure dwelling where they could be observed from the outside, or considered that lightweight construction suggested a temporary or insubstantial structure, unsuitable for fulfilling the need for their home to offer them security and protection. Returning to the literature, this might explain why some migrant groups, such as the Asian community in Canada (Carter 2005), often favour building a substantial, ‘monster house’ to meet their needs.

Some studies (AHA 1985; NHF 1998) have identified personalisation of dwellings as being important to culturally diverse groups, an observation substantiated by the findings of my study. This could well be undermined by the social housing provider’s existing policies and guidelines (T3.4) which create a generic house based on cost constraints and assumptions about the standard profile of the Australian tenant, rather than addressing what the occupants really need. The Architects interviewed therefore had little incentive, nor opportunity, to suggest changes or to research the groups who were being housed but did concede that these guidelines had improved the design of the standard house. Managers and Service Managers on the other hand took the stance that the standards found in the design guides reflected the requirements of their agency and regulated the cost of building and maintenance.
Key Factor 4: Family, Culture and Religion

The Managers and Service Managers thought that a knowledge of family structure (T4.1) and the role of men and women within specific culturally diverse groups was important in the design and provision of social housing. However, generally providers did not understand the way families of cultural groups were structured, so it was apparent that a greater knowledge of some of their circumstances, customs and practices was necessary to assist in the housing process. For example, some refugee families could be fragmented. In particular, Sudanese people in Australia were likely to have a female head of household with an affiliation to a group of male elders who provided advice and support, while Middle-Eastern people generally had a different and often extended family structure. Providers also recognised that cultural practices were often varied within the same cultural groups and for this reason they acknowledged they needed greater awareness and training to allow them to better understand how housing for diverse groups could be designed and delivered to satisfy the broad variation in needs.

Large families were often a characteristic of culturally diverse groups and both the cultural and provider groups interviewed identified that an insufficient supply of appropriately sized houses was a major issue, confirming comments by Kelly (2007) and Hg and Field-Pimm (2001). House size alone, however, was not the only issue with large families, some of them comprising a broad range of relatives of various ages living together, all having their own specific housing requirements. Such a profile would be far removed from the nuclear family for which many Australian houses are designed.

Members of the Managers’ group stated that they first became aware of the different needs of cultural diversity when these groups began to demand larger housing, but neither they nor the other provider groups understood how to respond to these needs by adapting the layout of the houses they were providing. This is an area of knowledge that should be expanded to assist in future delivery of more appropriate houses.

A need to consider how cultural and religious practice (T4.2) should affect the design of the house was strongly voiced in the interviews by Iraqi and Afghan people who belonged to the Muslim faith. The NHF guidelines (1998) and CUDOS study (2007) both indicated that standard housing might need some modifications to accommodate groups from the Muslim community.
The two Muslim cultural groups interviewed indicated that for some families in Australia cultural practice was becoming more relaxed. Customs such as regular prayer sessions and separation of men and women at gatherings might not necessarily be a requirement in some households. This view was supported by the surveys in England (Nasser 2007; Morris 2008; Guinness Trust 2003) where it was observed that many cultural groups were resigned to changes they needed to make in their new country and had modified their living style to accommodate them. This had significant implications when providing housing for culturally diverse groups where customs were generally thought to strongly influence house design. Similarly, large families might be a thing of the past, according to Nasser (2007) and Morris (2008), and new ways of providing housing for groups could be required. For example, the NHF (1998) design guidelines suggested a process of ‘sensitive allocation’ where members of an extended family could be located in close proximity to provide mutual support, while living in separate houses that allowed independence and had, where necessary, features such as adaptable design to assist the aged or disabled.

Understanding diversity (T4.3) of cultural groups was therefore important when designing or selecting a specific house and this was an aspect of housing delivery that all the provider groups identified. There was, however, little or no formal mechanism to acquire this knowledge and if some individual providers had gained experience in this area, they did not relay it to others such as the Consultant Architects. Neither was there a willingness to include recognition of cultural needs within the design and implementation process for new housing in a similar way to that in the NHF (1998) design guidelines. Cole and Robinson (2003) in their report on the Somali people in the UK indicated that most attempts to monitor Somali peoples’ housing experiences were ad hoc and that an opportunity was lost to better understand the needs of this group. This reflected the case in Australia where these processes were generally left informal and not written into guidelines or policy.

Hg and Field-Pimm (2001) and Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) highlighted the need for consultation (T4.4) with users about their cultural needs in relation to housing. My study confirmed this by revealing that the most effective way of achieving feedback from potential or existing tenants was through the Service Managers’ group. They were best placed to set up the appropriate dialogue with groups, whether formally or informally, to obtain the necessary information about housing needs. Many of the Service Managers relayed from personal experience the issues that cultural groups had in using their housing, such as difficulties with cooking appliances, cleaning the house and visits from maintenance people. This group, and to a lesser extent the other provider groups, highlighted how a greater awareness of cultural
practice and a better understanding of diversity was necessary for all involved in housing these groups.

However, the current consultation process was still difficult and a more coordinated effort will be required to determine the true needs of the diverse groups now seeking accommodation. Housing Authorities have taken major steps by providing interpreters to assist migrants in understanding the processes involved in acquiring housing and also by maintaining links with agencies such as the Migrant Resource Centre which offer help in understanding cultural difference in the delivery of housing. In addition, some Housing Authorities now have staff members who come from varied cultural backgrounds who act as liaison officers to assist in the housing process.

My study revealed that the main aim of Iraqi people was to own their own home (T4.5), even if rental was the only option available to them on first arriving in Australia. They saw home ownership as providing greater permanency and allowing them greater freedom, as the AHRC (1985) report said, to personalise their house through decoration and alteration to suit their needs, without restrictions by landlords. As Burnley (2005) observed, it often took most cultural groups considerable time to enter the home ownership market and initially they would need to rely on rental accommodation.

Access to affordable rental housing (T4.6) was an issue for the Afghan and Sudanese people interviewed. These groups saw the social housing agencies as the main source of accommodation, particularly in the early stages of settlement, but there were difficulties with agency eligibility criteria and appropriately sized dwellings. The shortage of suitable large family housing was a major problem for the Sudanese group and has been linked to overcrowding and a number of social issues for these families, including difficulties with children’s sleeping arrangements and lack of space to study. The social housing authorities have a limited number of houses that would meet the needs of large culturally diverse families and this is an area that needs to be addressed.

The social housing available to new migrants, particularly the older-style duplexes, might not be up to the standard that these groups expected. In addition, some families did not qualify for social housing on the basis of their immigration status, yet still found it difficult to meet private-sector rents, particularly in the more desirable inner suburbs with better support services, as discussed earlier. In spite of this, some groups chose to remain in the inner suburbs, occupying housing of a lesser standard of amenity that were often
overcrowded. It is therefore desirable that HousingSA provides a stock of social housing suitable for large migrant families both in the inner suburbs and those outer areas where migrant support services are available.

Finding appropriate housing was often difficult for some cultural groups who also wanted to retain practices of a more formal nature that impacted on the layout of the house, such as the Muslim community’s specific requirements for **religion and prayer (T4.7)** and their traditional separation of men and women when entertaining (AHRC 1985; Guinness Trust 2003; Aly and Gaba 2007; Casimiro, Handcock, and Northcote 2007). Traditionally, homes in their country of origin would have had a prayer room or an appropriate space for this practice and some older family members might still expect this (Guinness Trust 2003). However, most of the Muslim people interviewed in my study felt that these requirements could be, or were currently being, met in standard housing, albeit with a few modifications. All the Muslim interviewees felt that an area for prayer could be accommodated in a bedroom, formal living room or a study, if available.

**Key Factor 5: Layout of the House**

The layout of the typical Australian house, it was revealed in my study, was not ideal for many cultural groups, an observation supported by the AHRC (1985) study. In maintaining their lifestyle and cultural practices, migrant families needed rooms that could be used with greater **flexibility (T5.1)** for purposes and in ways not initially envisaged by the designers. Cole and Robinson (2004) indicated that migrant groups required larger than average rooms for living, meal preparation and sleeping. This often did not fit the formula of the Australian house with its three bedrooms and open-plan living and dining area, a standard that social housing providers followed closely, both in their cost parameters and general client profile. The cultural groups interviewed saw the need for housing authorities to plan for greater flexibility in their housing and one way was to build more four- and five-bedroom dwellings to cater for the high demand from large low-income migrant families.

My study found that the provider groups interviewed understood ‘flexibility of a house’ to mean that the house was suitable for a variety of tenancies without needing to be altered in form or layout when tenancies changed, a view that has led to a generic form of dwelling which offers little more than a standard house. The providers observed that their planning for current demand was influenced mainly by demographics showing that most Australians now lived in smaller family units, so that most new social housing had only two bedrooms. This
focus has obviously obscured the parallel need for larger family housing for low-income groups. The cultural groups did not wholly share these views and emphasised that the standard house was not always what they required to accommodate their way of life.

Housing authorities’ policies and guidelines (T5.2) placed controls over the layout of a house that dictated the relationship and size of rooms in an attempt to maintain the desired generic house form. Since these guidelines did not acknowledge cultural difference and the need to design housing to suit a range of cultural groups, any attempt to cater for specific needs became a ‘one-off’ process that did not examine the commonalities that might exist between different groups, and so failed to recognise that some of these modifications could be incorporated into a broader design framework. This in turn limited the options that would be available in the general provision of social housing for cultural diversity.

The providers did acknowledge that they were aware that some migrant groups might require a different plan shape (T5.3) and recognised their preference for some internal rezoning to separate men and women when entertaining. However, there was a general perception that the current layout of most social housing, apart from open planning and a lack of floor space, would meet the needs of most cultural groups. The service provider groups based this view on observations made when visiting the houses of various cultural groups, although no post-occupancy studies had been done with targeted groups to investigate their specific needs or assess their satisfaction with the housing.

It also appeared that, because of its open-plan design, the layout of the small house might also be inappropriate for smaller families and singles from a culturally diverse background. The designs followed the generic style and their compressed space raised issues of privacy and other concerns for culturally diverse groups. For example, small accommodation often had a bathroom accessed through a living area, or located as an en-suite and accessed through a bedroom, that culturally diverse groups would not consider acceptable for guests to use.

House construction (T5.4) was a theme raised by some of the Sudanese group who were concerned that the common method of building houses in South Australia used brick veneer. This was seen as unsuitable both from the stance of security and their perception that damage could ensue from climatic elements. Another issue was how well the lightweight internal walls could withstand the wear and tear from heavy use by large families. This was not an issue that was widely discussed by the cultural groups although some mentioned their preference for solid masonry construction. This was further
illustrated in the case study of Zaid’s house where he proposed to add external cladding to create the impression of a house reminiscent of his homeland.

**Adaptability (T5.5)** was an important consideration for the Managers and Consultant Architect groups when designing new social housing. They noted that HousingSA, in common with most social housing authorities, had developed design standards to allow its housing to be easily modified for tenants with special needs, thereby allowing greater flexibility in who occupied a house built to these guidelines. This would be particularly important for extended families, common among culturally diverse groups, where it was more likely that an elderly family member had limited mobility. This approach also ensured the minimum number of structural alterations needed to make the building suit special needs, thereby reducing costs to the landlord. Modifications of this type could also be made to older houses but structural changes such as widening doors were often difficult and costly. The cultural groups did not identify this aspect of house planning as being important, possibly because most of those interviewed were in a younger age group or did not have elderly or other family members with reduced mobility.

Consultant Architects engaged to design new houses for social housing authorities said that they had to contend with **cost (T5.6)** constraints placed on them by HousingSA’s Housing Design Guidelines and the Standard Building Specification. This tended to restrict scope for innovation and the result was often a generic house that met the needs of a ‘standard’ tenant but precluded the design process being focused on a tenant’s particular needs, an essential approach when considering cultural diversity.

Both the Consultant Architects and the Manager groups saw **environmentally sustainable design (T5.7)** as an important part in the design of social housing and acknowledged the benefits of passive solar design in providing comfortable conditions for the householder and in reducing house running costs. However, the Managers did have some concerns that the current policy of building affordable housing for sale might lead to compromise in this aspect of house design. The cultural groups did not directly refer to this aspect of design but there were comments about heating and cooling during discussion about comfort in their home, suggesting that it was of some importance and required attention in the future design of housing for these groups.

AHRC (1985) and Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) observed that the entrance or **address and approach (T5.8)** to the house and the way it maintained privacy from the outside
world was very important for some cultural groups who wanted the opportunity to screen visitors and direct them to specific areas of the house. The interviews confirmed that this was important to both the Afghan and Iraqi groups who had some concerns with houses where space was limited and living areas were entered directly from the outside. They preferred a house to have a dedicated entrance hall, with rooms leading off it and screened from public gaze. The standard Australian house with its informal open planning might not provide the necessary transition from the public world outside to the very private interior of the Afghan or Iraqi house. The ritual of entering the house and removing shoes, with a place to store them in the hall, was also important to the groups interviewed. The Consultant Architects believed that if they knew in advance about housing issues arising from cultural customs (T5.9) they could factor some of the requirements into the design of a house. For example, the usual open-plan living areas could be designed as two separate rooms that could easily form one large space when required, thereby giving the house sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of a range of tenants. In addition, the Consultant Architects felt it was important that the house should be zoned (T5.10) for different activities to assist energy conservation and for privacy reasons.

My study found that the lack of choice in house size (T5.11) and layout, in both the public and private sectors, gave many cultural groups in Australia a sense of powerlessness in the selection of their house and, not finding familiar features in the dwellings offered, they often chose one with an inappropriate layout or form. This led to what Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) observed as an inability to express their culture through the religious and cultural celebrations that formed part of their lifestyle. The cultural groups interviewed indicated that, because they had no other option, families would accept housing that was too small and then be faced with the practice of ‘doubling-up’, also described by Carter (2005), when other relatives, friends and even marriage partners of adult children moved in because of lack of options to enter the housing market themselves. This was confirmed by Kelly (2004) who observed that this situation often led to severe overcrowding and ultimately homelessness for some family members who could no longer tolerate the tight living conditions.

Since privacy (T5.12) within the house was also seen to be very important, some consideration should be given as to how people in large families occupying overcrowded houses could achieve a reasonable level of privacy. The Sudanese group pointed out that this was particularly important in cases where family members had been traumatised and required quiet space in which to withdraw. A bedroom was often the only retreat but, if
shared, might not be appropriate when others were present. Consequently, other options for solitude were required: perhaps a sheltered outside area such as a rear verandah.

There were also privacy issues with the type of housing often allocated to large Sudanese and Iraqi families, such as duplex, terrace or group housing forms. Such dwellings had common walls where unwanted noise transmission was a frequent problem. Living in close proximity to other people could also mean that the house and garden areas were more likely to be overlooked by neighbours. The AHRC (1985) report confirmed that overlooking of garden areas and the possibility of neighbours or passers-by gaining views into the house from outside was a particular cultural issue with Muslim people.

**Key Factor 6: Eating and Food Preparation**

The cultural groups interviewed indicated a need for the size and layout (T6.1) of their kitchen to allow several people to prepare food together and some members of all groups said they preferred the kitchen to be separate from the eating area, since they regarded the kitchen as the women’s domain. However, my study also noted that some cultural groups were prepared to have a combined kitchen and dining area, and further revealed that the size and layout of the dining area was also an issue if it was not large enough to accommodate all family members eating together, and that dining areas in older houses were often too small. However, the NHF (1998) design guidelines pointed out that eating did not necessarily occur in the dining room and could be undertaken elsewhere, often in the living room. The Service Managers’ group had observed that, in some houses they visited, open-plan dining areas were partitioned off from the kitchen with curtains or temporary screens to maintain privacy between the two areas.

My study revealed that some groups supplemented kitchen space in the house with an outdoor cooking (T6.2) area when catering for large gatherings but others, particularly Afghan people, indicated a preference for entertaining inside, the traditional practice in their homeland. The Consultant Architects and the Managers’ group identified that outside areas were currently considered an important aspect in the design of a house and that they should link to indoor spaces such as the kitchen and family room. For very little cost, a small paved outdoor space adjacent to the family room could assist in meeting the needs of some cultural groups who reverted to cooking outdoors to relieve congestion in the kitchen.
Sarkissian and Stenberg (2003) and Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) indicated that cooking was a major cultural activity and the kitchen was an important social place (T6.3), bringing the family together, a theme echoed by the members of the three cultural groups interviewed. Since communal meal preparation assumed such great importance for cultural groups in maintaining links with family and visitors, closer investigation of the particular requirements of this practice seems warranted.

The Service Managers also indicated that kitchens often sustained damage from the volume of cooking associated with the customs and eating practices (T6.4) of some cultural groups. Most kitchens were not designed for such a level of use and generally failed to cope with the amount of cooking undertaken. Service Managers also reported complaints about poor ventilation, lack of bench space and damage to work surfaces from hot utensils. Most of these problems have been documented in various studies (NHF 1998; AHRC 1985; Cole and Robinson 2003) and identified as maintenance issues by housing authorities, but were unlikely to be addressed when allocating a house to tenants from a culturally diverse background. The provider groups also acknowledged that standard kitchen bench heights might not be suitable for certain cultural groups who were taller than average.

My study found that for some cultural groups whose customs dictated that men should not see women cooking, maintaining privacy during meal preparation was particularly difficult in some older-style houses where the rear yard could only be accessed through the kitchen and laundry areas.

Studies (NHF 1998; AHRC 1985; Sarkissian and Stenberg 2003) indicated that most cultural groups purchased food in bulk and consequently required more storage (T6.5) than was usually available in the standard Australian kitchen. From what the cultural groups indicated in the interviews, space was needed to house freezers for storing large quantities of meat and large pantries were required for sacks of rice and other raw materials used in traditional food preparation. Storage space was also necessary for large pots and pans and other associated cooking equipment, together with the extra items used when catering for large numbers at celebrations.

**Key Factor 7: Bathing and Bathrooms**

For Afghan people interviewed, their bathing customs (T7.1) were important and some concerns were raised in relation to the Western-style toilet pan. Although such groups
might prefer to use a traditional squat pan, retrofitting these items in the Australian house would incur additional costs and was an unlikely to be an option for landlords. Where the cost of installing a bathroom fitting was reasonable, for example a trigger-nozzle spray or tap next to the WC as suggested in the NHF (1998) guidelines, the housing authorities could generally accede to such a request. Authorities should also make allowance for heavy use of the bathroom areas, particularly by large families, by installing additional tiling and thoroughly sealing these areas against water damage.

The provider groups interviewed appeared to have a fairly limited knowledge about any specific bathroom requirements for culturally diverse groups. In general they were not aware of any needs that would dictate changes to the standard bathroom facilities in an Australian house and thought that catering for diverse groups should not present social housing authorities with any major issues in this area. It was observed, however, that some consideration should be given to the bathroom size and layout (T7.2), particularly in the placement of fittings such as shower heads, and raising the height of the vanity bench unit to suit taller African people.

Muslim people in particular considered that it was important to have a bathroom adjacent to the main living room for visitors and guests (T7.3) to use, a factor also identified in the NFH (1998) design guidelines. This was often not possible in the standard Australian house where bathrooms were usually located adjacent to bedrooms and away from the living areas. En-suite bathrooms were also considered not to be ideal for guests who had to enter the host’s bedroom to use the facilities. My study indicated that ideally, most Muslim families wanted both a family and a guest bathroom, although a separate guest toilet and washing space might be acceptable.

**Modifications (T7.4), laundry (T7.5) and bathroom style (T7.6)** were all raised by individual group members but there was no consensus on the importance of these themes from a specific group. Modifications made to the standard house to cater for disabled persons were discussed earlier under Theme 5.5 (Adaptability).

**Key Factor 8: Entertainment and Living Areas**

The cultural groups all indicated that hospitality (T8.1) played a significant part in their lifestyle and in catering for this, the size and layout of the living areas of the house were important. Both the CUDOS (2007) study and the NHF (1998) design guidelines identified a
requirement for a front room or ‘parlour’ to provide a formal space in which to entertain guests. All of the cultural groups interviewed mentioned needing a formal living room for ‘best’, to be kept clean and tidy for visitors, as an area for the display of treasured possessions and to suggest the cultural identity of the family. My study also revealed that this area could have several functions and was often used in the Muslim household as a prayer room for the men, as well as being a television room and dining area. The groups also said that the formal living room’s other major function was to accommodate cultural activities such as celebrations and rituals.

For Muslim people the formal living room was seen as an additional living area essential to preserving the traditional separation of private and public areas in their home. The family room, often adjacent to the kitchen, was the private domain of the house for the cultural groups studied and was generally not accessible to friends, although some groups indicated that other close family members would be welcome in this area. The standard Australian family house with four or more bedrooms generally had a formal living area near the front entrance, in addition to a family room, and would therefore meet the formal and informal entertaining arrangements of most culturally diverse families. The Consultant Architects and Managers interviewed also noted that most social housing with more than four bedrooms had two separate living rooms, as all larger families generally required this extra space.

The entrance (T8.2) to the living room was of particular importance to the Afghan group and their preference was for it to be located at the front of the house for the purpose of receiving guests. Access to other rooms, particularly bedrooms, through the living room was also an issue for this group who saw it as compromising the family’s privacy. Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2005) and NHF (1998) observed that issues with the size of rooms (T8.3) for entertainment arose when large celebrations and family gatherings were held, so that smaller rooms needed to be linked together to accommodate the guests. Some of the cultural groups indicated in the interviews that their gatherings could involve up to forty people and that the standard living room would not cope. One solution would be designing the house layout to allow the living room to open into another living area such as a dining room via sliding or concertina doors. However, a problem could arise for some cultural groups if the only area available into which to expand the living space was the family room, as this would deny women an area of retreat during gatherings. Some consideration should be given to the arrangement of rooms to allow a greater floor area for entertaining, thereby helping to maintain cultural practices.
The culturally diverse groups interviewed considered that **studying (T8.4)** at home was a very important activity and believed it to be a major means of acquiring the necessary skills to better their position in Australia. Consequently, space was necessary for this activity, often undertaken by both children and parents. Small children’s bedrooms, often shared, might not provide sufficient room for study and the provider groups recognised that this should be discussed with the household as part of the allocation process. Similarly, open-plan living areas were not always suitable for quiet study and so social housing providers should consider the need for a separate study, as is often found in private-sector housing.

In their country of origin some culturally diverse groups used their house as a place of **work (T8.4)** to supplement income (NHF 1998; Sarkissian and Stenberg 2003) and might wish to continue these practices in their new country of settlement. A most common practice among the Sudanese group interviewed was sewing and dressmaking for the family, and also for payment, so space to use a sewing machine and a storage area for materials was important. For the provider groups interviewed, there was an important relationship between the indoor living space and adjacent **outside (T8.5)** areas that could be used for living and entertaining. They understood that planning a house with at least one living room opening to a private area in the garden at least offered the potential to expand the living space of the house if necessary. In the standard Australian house this space is usually a well-used family room adjacent to an open kitchen, but for some cultural groups it might not be a suitable place for entertaining guests who would need to pass the private areas of the house, such as the kitchen, to reach the outside space.

Some sources (Sarkissian and Stenberg 2003; NHF 1998) indicated there were advantages in having a private garden space but my study revealed that the service providers had major concerns about the management of such areas and thought that smaller compact garden spaces were more appropriate for tenants from diverse cultural backgrounds. Both Managers and Service Managers identified that most cultural groups looked for easier garden maintenance, and while some were able to manage more conventionally sized gardens, results varied with individual skills and preferences.

**Guest accommodation (T8.6)** associated with entertaining and living areas was only raised by individual group members, providing no consensus on this theme. However reference was made in KF7 (bathing and bathrooms) and KF9 (sleeping and bedrooms) to a requirement for guest accommodation.
All the cultural groups identified that their living room was too small to hold the furnishings (T8.7) they required. Some groups preferred to use Western furniture and accommodating their large lounge suites and numerous chairs placed heavy demands on the size of the room, often interfering with circulation space. A common practice in Afghan households when entertaining was to place kitchen chairs around the room for guest seating. More traditional living room arrangements included placing cushions on a carpeted floor around the room, often the layout seen in the Iraqi ‘best’ room. The NHF (1998) guidelines and AHRC (1985) report noted some Middle Eastern groups’ preference to sit on cushions and commented on the positioning of window sills at a lower height to allow people a view to the outside when seated in a low position. The design guides and space standards of social housing authorities only allow for the placement of average-sized furniture that, together with circulation patterns, dictates the size of the room. As they do not consider any other type of furnishing layout, problems can arise when tenants wish to introduce more or larger furniture.

Key Factor 9: Sleeping and Bedrooms

Bedroom size and flexibility (T9.1) in the standard Australian house was an issue for all groups interviewed. The practice of having a large main bedroom and other smaller bedrooms was based on the needs of the Australian nuclear family and was often unsuitable for cultural groups. My study indicated that bedrooms of equal size, as found in some older houses, might be a better solution for diverse groups where cultural practice (T9.2) was often to have same-gender siblings sharing a bedroom to allow a spare room to be used for guests or other general household needs. However, this became less practical as children aged and needed privacy and somewhere quiet to study. The Sudanese group also preferred all bedrooms to be located together to allow parental supervision of children, particularly at night. In designs for some larger houses the main bedroom, usually occupied by the adults, was often located at a distance from the smaller children’s bedrooms, an arrangement unsuitable for such groups. Some cultural groups often used the bedroom for prayer or study, in addition to the primary function of sleeping.

The Consultant Architects interviewed felt that social housing for all groups should be designed with bedrooms of equal size, similar in area to the main bedroom of the standard Australian house, to provide greater flexibility of use.
Key Factor 10: Comfort

The Consultant Architects’ group identified that environmentally sustainable design or sustainable practices (T10.1) incorporating passive methods of energy conservation, such as solar orientation of the building, wall and roof insulation, and appropriate roof overhangs to shade windows, were very important in the design of all new housing. In addition they thought that zoning the house into separate living and sleeping areas would support more efficient heating and cooling practices and help social housing tenants to control their energy consumption. However, my study identified that occupants might also benefit from an education program to ensure that they did not compromise the passive heating and cooling capabilities of the house. The service providers indicated that, as some cultural groups were not familiar with the local climate and did not understand how to use the features designed to assist in keeping the house comfortable, they often left doors and windows open in winter, making areas difficult to heat.

The Sudanese group in my study had a major problem with services (T10.2) such as heating the house in winter. This issue was also raised in the AHRC (1985) report where most respondents complained about difficulties in heating their homes. The providers and cultural groups interviewed said that landlords often did not provide heating in the house and that tenants had to acquire appliances at their own expense. Most installed inefficient heating and consequently were faced with higher than necessary running costs. The providers interviewed stated that in new houses they installed an electrical circuit on which to run an air conditioner, and a connection for a gas heater where a gas supply was available, but usually did not retrofit these services to older dwellings. Equally, some cultural groups living in older social housing with smaller rooms and often poor ventilation complained about the difficulty of cooling the house in summer. The AHRC (1985) report identified that issues of heating and cooling the house should be addressed through the preparation of written material in appropriate languages for cultural groups, giving information about fuel costs and efficient methods of heating and cooling.

Most of the cultural groups interviewed mentioned cleanliness of the house (T10.3) but for the Iraqi group this was a major concern, linked to how they were viewed by their community. Customs such as the removal of shoes when entering the house were maintained to separate the clean inner sanctum of the house from the outside world which some groups saw as unclean (AHRC 1985), and some preferred loose-fitting floor coverings such as rugs that could be removed for cleaning. The Service Managers observed that some
cultural groups still used cleaning methods that they had traditionally employed, such as washing down floors with large quantities of water, although these were unsuitable for the standard Australian house and would damage floor finishes and other parts of the house fabric. It was therefore important to discuss house-cleaning methods with cultural group members at the commencement of their tenancy, as this was often an important aspect of their lifestyle.

7.4 Review of Social Housing Designs

The fourteen themes identified unanimously as ‘important’, ‘very important’ or ‘extremely important’ in the interviews with all three cultural groups have been aligned with the results of the review of the two HousingSA house types commonly used to accommodate migrant groups, the five-bedroom Newbuild house and the Duplex Conversion, to identify aspects of the house designs that did not address the needs of the cultural groups. Only one of the themes was fully addressed in the planning and design of both house types. The results are given in the following table:

Table 30: Themes addressed in typical designs of HousingSA houses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Newbuild 5-Bedroom House</th>
<th>Duplex Conversion 5-Bedroom House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KF1 : Access to Services and Supports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1.1 Location of Services</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1.2 Connection</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF2 : Neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.2 Security</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2.3 Friendly/Unfriendly</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF4 : Family, Culture and Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4.2 Cultural Practice</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF5 : Layout of the House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.1 Flexibility</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5.11 House Size</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF6 : Eating and Food Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.1 Size and Layout</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.4 Custom and Eating</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6.5 Storage</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF8 : Entertaining and Living Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.1 Hospitality</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.3 Size of Rooms</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8.5 Outside</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF9 : Sleeping and Bedrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9.1 Flexibility and Size</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
<td>Partly Addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The themes are discussed below under the corresponding key factors to highlight areas that have been addressed and to identify gaps where themes were only partly or not addressed by the two house designs.

**KF1: Access to Services and Supports**

The location of services (T1.1) for tenants of both Newbuild houses and Duplex Conversions was addressed through current HousingSA planning processes which ensured that the housing was within proximity of general services such as shopping, community services and public transport routes. Adequate provision of the more specific requirements of diverse cultural groups, such as access to places of worship and language services, relied on the service providers’ knowledge of these needs and the availability of suitable housing in a specific location at the time of allocating a house.

Connection (T1.2) to the required services and to other members of a specific community who were essential to provide support to their fellow migrants might be compromised by these larger house types often being located in outer suburbs. This mismatch could lead to the requirement only being partly addressed.

**KF2: Neighbourhood**

Security (T2.2) was addressed for the Newbuild house through the adoption of the CPTED principles of design provided in the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines. Since some of the provisions of CPTED could not be fully translated to the existing Duplex Conversion, the theme was therefore only partly addressed, particularly in relation to siting the house on the street to provide natural surveillance. However, fencing and garden planting could be adjusted as required to maintain an outlook to the street. Security screen doors and window screening could be made available for both house types, either as a mandatory provision or at the request of tenants.

Friendliness or unfriendliness (T2.3) in the neighbourhood would depend strongly on whether the allocation of housing was culturally sensitive, with the individual Service Managers ensuring there were no poor matches with existing neighbours. The location of older social housing stock in larger estate-type developments might restrict neighbourly relations for some minority cultural groups. The complexity of this process and the lack of appropriately located housing meant that this theme was only partly addressed.
KF4: Family, Culture and Religion

To better understand their clients, HousingSA collected data about them such as their country of origin, family size and composition, and age groups, but did not extend to obtaining details about diverse cultural practice (T4.2). The application of this information to the design and provision of housing for cultural groups was more problematic. The Newbuild house was designed to suit a generic Western household and the Duplex house for the generic customer of the past, and neither gave reference to the differences between culturally diverse groups. Therefore the design of both housing types only partly addressed varied cultural needs. However, HousingSA and other agencies actively assisted in the settlement process by providing language and interpreter services, and ethnic support officers which went some way to better understanding the cultural needs of those it housed.

KF5: Layout of the House

The need for flexibility (T5.1) of house layout was indicated as a high priority for the cultural groups interviewed and was only partly addressed in the house designs reviewed. Both the Newbuild house and the Duplex Conversion provided the separate living and family areas cultural groups often required. However, the Duplex Conversion presented a number of issues including an inefficient layout and a lack of privacy. For instance, the living areas were accessed through other rooms and the bedrooms were divided and placed on opposite sides of the house, rather than being located together for privacy. The layout of the Duplex Conversion was indicative of the difficulty in converting two houses to one and the cost constraints involved. There was no specific reference in the layout of either house to the needs of cultural diversity, but some aspects of the designs could address these requirements. However, the study clearly showed that the extent to which the rooms of both dwellings could be made to support a range of cultural activities would be limited. For example, the interviews with the Service Managers revealed that, in both new and older dwellings, cultural groups had often erected temporary screening to separate areas for particular family need, thereby indicating a possible lack of flexibility in the house layouts.

Although the Newbuild house size (T5.11) addressed the requirements of the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines (2008), the floor area might not be large enough for some cultural groups to accommodate very large gatherings when entertaining. However, the dining arrangement was sufficient to allow eight people to be seated at meal
times and a large separate lounge was available for entertaining guests. The design of the Duplex Conversion did not address house size as well as the Newbuild house. For example, the dining area was smaller than the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines required and would present some problems for large families who wished to eat together.

**KF6: Eating and Food Preparation**

The size and layout (T6.1) of the kitchen in both houses was only partly addressed in catering for diversity. The Newbuild house met the floor area requirements of the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines and the 1500 mm. separation of the kitchen benches, designed for adaptability (disability access), also allowed for more than one person at a time to use the kitchen, often a requirement of culturally diverse groups. Although the kitchen layout in the Duplex Conversion was not designed to adaptability standards, it was large enough to accommodate a small kitchen table. Insufficient bench space, inadequate air extraction and inadequate storage (T6.5) for bulk food items were other concerns that were not addressed in the kitchens of both houses. With the size and layout of the kitchen in both houses representing the standard Australian archetype, it is most likely that these rooms would not meet the specific requirements for cooking and storage revealed in the interviews.

My study found that among the three cultural groups there was a preference for socialising in the kitchen and that the preparation of meals was an important function of their lifestyle. For this reason their needs in relation to custom and eating (T6.4) were not addressed in the Newbuild house, where the kitchen was part of an open-plan space for cooking, eating and family activities. This layout, it was revealed in the interviews, was often an issue for some groups who required an enclosed kitchen where food preparation was removed from family and entertaining areas. Consequently, the Duplex Conversion, which partly addressed these concerns by having a separate kitchen, might be more suitable for some cultural groups.

**KF8 Entertaining and Living Areas**

My study found that providing hospitality (T8.1) to friends and members of the extended family was a major requirement of all cultural groups interviewed. Both the living areas and the outside areas of the house were used for these activities, often having to accommodate large numbers of people. This was addressed in the Newbuild house that provided a large separate living room and also featured a bathroom that visitors could easily access without
entering the bedroom or family areas. The Duplex Conversion only \textit{partly addressed} these cultural requirements in its design, as the result of difficulties in combining the two semi-detached dwellings. Here the original living areas were combined into a ‘walk through’ layout that did not provide family privacy when entertaining and also reduced the effective area of the rooms.

The \textit{size of rooms (T8.3)} was adequate for entertaining in the Newbuild house that provided a lounge with the capacity to seat at least twelve people and so \textit{addressed} most entertaining requirements for cultural groups. The fragmentation of living areas in the Duplex Conversion meant that this house type only \textit{partly addressed} these needs.

My study indicated that al fresco eating and entertaining was acceptable to some groups and therefore suitable outside areas could provide the necessary additional space for entertaining or expanding the living areas for family use. The Newbuild house \textit{addressed} this need by providing direct access to an \textit{outside (T8.5)} space from the family and dining area. In the Duplex Conversion the main living areas were not well linked to the outside spaces that could only be accessed through the laundry or a small sunroom. Consequently, the Duplex Conversion did \textit{not address} this theme.

\textbf{KF9: Sleeping and Bedrooms}

The \textit{flexibility and size (T9.1)} of the bedrooms to suit the needs of cultural groups was only \textit{partly addressed} in the design of both the Newbuild house and the Duplex Conversion. The bedroom planning for both houses was based on the standard generic house designed for the Western nuclear family, where the large main bedroom and smaller children’s bedrooms might not suit the family practices of some cultural groups where children often shared bedrooms to make space available for other activities including study and work.

\textbf{Summary}

This analysis has covered the fourteen themes, unanimously rated by all of the cultural groups as being important in the design of their housing, against the characteristics of two larger house types provided by social housing authorities. It has rated the houses for their capacity to address these themes and identified some of the gaps that exist. A further twenty-five themes were identified by either one or two of the cultural groups interviewed and these were also aligned with the results of the review of the two houses in chapter 6. This
alignment further indicated existing gaps, highlighting the requirements of specific cultural
groups that should be considered in future when designing social housing for diversity.

7.5 Conclusions

This thesis set out to improve the understanding of the social housing requirements of
culturally diverse groups recently arrived in Australia, and was inspired initially by the
realisation that limited literature was available on the topic. To date, the study of the needs
of culturally diverse groups in their countries of adoption has been limited to social and
anthropological studies, according to Hadjiyanni and Robinson (2004), Beer and Morphett
(2002), Shand (2007) and Kent (1993), with little emphasis on the physical design of
housing for cultural groups in the context of a country foreign to them. A few exceptions
to this are available, notably the report prepared by the National Housing Federation
(NHF) in the UK (1998). This document was used in this study as a starting point in
recognising the housing needs of cultural groups and helped to identify factors to be
considered when designing housing for diverse communities. The NHF (1998) report was
also the basis for structuring interviews with cultural groups and representatives of social
housing providers in Adelaide.

The continued cultural diversity brought about through current Australian immigration
policy is providing a major challenge to social housing authorities and agencies, not only in
supplying the volume of housing required but also in determining its appropriateness for
some cultural groups. The characteristic pattern of migration for those most in need is
likely to continue in ‘waves’ (Jupp 1995) with specific cultural groups dominating a
particular period in time. This poses a dilemma for social housing authorities in any
forward planning and it would be easy to dismiss ‘designing for diversity’ as unwarranted
because of these uncertainties. Not considering such needs would result in the generic
house being maintained as the preferred option for social housing when clearly my study
has shown there are significant issues for some cultural groups if generic housing is the
only choice available.

Preferences in house layout and form can also change over time, as revealed in the Bristol
and Birmingham studies (Lambert and Razzaque 1997; Nasser 2007), requiring house
design to be more flexible as cultural groups assume new lifestyles in their country of
adoption. For these reasons there is a need for further research to track such changes and
to identify those needs that are enduring and that should be retained as part of the brief for any new housing design.

The South Australian approach to producing accommodation for culturally diverse groups is similar to that of other Australian states (AHRC 1985; Tuohey 2001; Hg & Field-Pimm 2001; Flanagan 2007), where no specific provision is made for housing groups from diverse backgrounds. However, there have been some past attempts by social housing authorities to work with specific communities to determine housing needs, often as a result of issues arising during the settlement process. For instance, Hg & Field-Pimm (2001) cite a case in Victoria where working groups were established to identify specific housing needs of culturally diverse people when conflict with other groups in the community was linked to poor social housing options in large estates and inner-city high-rise flats. Nevertheless, this approach seems limited among Australian social housing authorities and usually has been in response to a specific situation, such as increased crime rate or anti-social behaviour (Hg & Field-Pimm 2001; Flanagan 2007; Hulse & Stone 2005) rather than being part of an ongoing program to cater for diverse housing needs.

Housing authorities have a general perception that standard social housing of a generic form is appropriate, or in some instances can be modified, to meet most of the needs of cultural groups. The UK system is revealed mainly through the design guides adopted by different social housing authorities (NHF 1998; Croydon People’s Housing Association 2003) and the detailed studies of cultural groups and their housing needs (Cole & Robinson 1993). The very existence of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) social housing organisations catering for and managing diverse cultural groups is illustrative of the involvement of these social housing providers in specialist housing. However, there is little evidence that this has led to significant changes to the architecture or layout of dwellings for these groups (NHF 1998; Housing Corporation 2003; Cole & Robinson 2003). Similarly, the study of housing provided by a non-government organisation in Minnesota, USA also suggests that it is focused on an archetypal approach, although sensitive to the needs of specific cultural groups (Hadjiyanni 2004; Hadjiyanni & Robinson 2005). This is indicative of the building industry in most countries being geared to a specific product which meets general needs and satisfies the market.

In my study, the existing situation was emphasised in the interviews with the South Australian social housing providers whose view of the nature and priorities of designing social housing focused on the generic style of house because it met the general requirements
of their mainstream client groups. The Consultant Architects and Managers in particular accepted that they had little knowledge of the specific housing needs for cultural diversity although the Service Managers were more conversant with specific tenant requirements. The process also did not require the Consultant Architects to have a direct involvement in designing for diversity, but rather specified that they work to a generic house brief, contrary to the more traditional client relationship where architects identify user needs as a basis for their design. This indicated a gap in the knowledge that should be addressed.

The relatively minor involvement of Service Managers in the design of social housing might be construed as a general failing in the design process. Although their ‘hands-on’ knowledge of client groups was identified as being important, the interviews also revealed that there was no clear understanding of how this knowledge could be interpreted and used in the design process. The ‘go-between’ Managers who engaged and briefed the Consultant Architects focused on the narrow parameters of cost and serviceability of the housing, obscuring any insight from the Service Managers that could have enriched the final product. In order to bridge this gap in the housing design and delivery process, some mechanism is required to give voice to those who will later make the houses their homes.

My study has questioned the design approach taken by housing authorities, particularly their use of prescriptive design guidelines, and has identified some of the standards applied to social housing design and the gaps that exist between them and the requirements of diverse cultural groups. The findings indicate where architects might begin to engage with the concerns of similar groups when embarking on designing housing for cultural diversity. The themes identified in my study are by no means exhaustive but provide a starting point for a consultative process that apparently does not currently exist in the design for Australian social housing. Although this study borrows from the approach taken in the NHF (1998) guidelines, it has a particular relevance to the Australian context, hitherto only briefly visited by earlier studies (AHRC 1985) and even more current works (Sarkissian & Stenberg 2003).

Recognition should also be made of the resource constraints within which social housing authorities operate which require them to adopt the generic approach to design. Consequently, there is a need for further research into how the cost and management practices of these authorities might best be maintained while at the same time addressing the requirements of cultural diversity. During the interviews the Managers and some of the Service Managers defended their policies as providing for the best use of resources,
although they conflicted with the best housing outcomes envisaged by the Consultant
Architects. The Consultant Architects interviewed demonstrated that they brought
significant resources to the design process in areas of spatial and environmental planning
required by social housing authorities. However, they questioned the restrictive nature of
the authorities’ design guides, policies and practices, claiming that these curtailed their
freedom to design social housing. The Consultant Architects’ inability to engage with client
groups prevented the identification of any specific housing needs and also represented a
lost opportunity to introduce a level of variety and interest to the design of social housing.

This often reduced the challenge for the Consultant Architects in designing social housing
who were resigned to the continued production of the generic or standard Australian house
for all groups, with particular focus on the cost, including maximising the number of
houses on a site and limiting the construction form. They saw such restrictions as
significantly influencing and determining the outcome of social housing at the expense of
the broader qualitative factors involved in the design for diverse cultural groups.

The interviews drew out more than fifty themes about housing needs and the responses
varied in some areas between the cultural and provider groups, indicating their different
orientation or emphasis on specific issues. The cultural groups generally had a stronger
focus on family and religious practices that influenced both the provision of community
services and housing design. Provider groups, however, were focused on the delivery and
design of housing within the framework of their policies and guidelines.

The differences in stance between the cultural and provider groups on designing for
diversity clearly indicated their diverging priorities for house design and highlighted areas of
mismatch between the two groups. They also identified the tension existing between the
policies of housing authorities and the needs of specific groups they housed. This
mismatch of priorities and the implication for future housing policy will require further
investigation. To bring about change in the way housing is designed for cultural diversity
would also require an education process extending not only to Managers employed in social
housing organisations but also the Consultant Architects they contract.

My study also provided the benchmark from which to investigate more appropriate
housing for culturally diverse groups through a review of existing social housing options
available in South Australia. From this it became evident that the most important concerns
of the cultural groups interviewed were not being addressed fully by the current social
housing options generally available. Although in many instances only small changes would be needed to make a significant difference to how well housing suited its culturally diverse occupants, identification of their requirements would need to employ the sensitive design approach outlined by Hadjiyanni & Robinson (2003). Their work revealed that many areas of concern in the design of housing for culturally diverse groups could be remedied by a more sensitive or consultative approach that acknowledged a greater awareness of cultural diversity. Methods of promoting a closer relationship between the housing provider, architect and the cultural group, not currently demonstrated in the South Australian social housing design process, would bear greater investigation. Further, my study indicated that architects and social housing providers were very willing to better understand the housing needs of culturally diverse groups and it is surprising that little attention has been paid so far in Australia and other Western countries to addressing this obvious gap.

Current policies and procedures of social housing authorities assume a general view of those seeking their housing which does not account for the specific requirements of cultural difference. This generalised approach to the design of social housing has lead to the adoption of a generic house and raises questions about the appropriateness of such accommodation, given the cultural diversity of groups that may occupy it. Apparently housing authorities and agencies are focused on the design of the generic house for cost reasons as it suits the needs of today’s average Australian family. The assumption that ‘one size fits all’ raises issues around the homogeneity of households and whether the generic house is a suitable archetype or paradigm for all who live in social housing. It also subscribes to the notion that the general perception of the ‘ideal house’ is that of the standard Western archetype.

My study found that not all cultural groups seeking social housing shared this general view and that the ‘ideal home’ for some cultural groups differed in form and layout from the standard Australian archetypal house. The research did, however, show that some aspects of the archetypal house could meet some cultural requirements and that, with greater attention to cultural practices, the remaining mismatches could be better addressed.

The current design of social housing in South Australia is focused on the needs of a broad tenant base. The techniques and process of this housing delivery are based on a body of knowledge anchored in the European culture on which Australia was founded (Boyd 1967; Lewis 2000). However, this perspective has mainly focused on the technical aspects rather than the social, as illustrated in the adoption of standards such as the HousingSA Housing Design Guidelines (2008) that make no mention of conceding to the needs of cultural
groups demonstrated in my study, a shortcoming that will require considerable rethinking and adjustment. Consequently, the current social housing archetype now meets the requirements of governments who seek to improve agendas for housing sustainability and adaptability, but falls short in recognising differences in culture, with this viewpoint supporting little exploration of the social aspects of housing in a changing world of cultural minority groups.

In this way the social housing process ignores the broader implications for the development of a truly Australian house in preference to the established archetype and it will require considerably more effort on the part of social housing organisations to address this situation. In fact, this is a subject possibly more directly suited to development by design professionals to whom the responsibility should belong and emphasises the need for them to be closely involved in all future residential development. This is also an area for further research and policy development for social housing authorities.

Since a broader housing choice is not available to them for a variety of reasons, many cultural groups’ dependence on the social housing sector, particularly in the first years of arrival (Beer & Morphett 2002; Carter 2005), can be linked to high levels of dissatisfaction and turnover in residential tenancies when the accommodation is culturally inappropriate. Cole and Robinson (2003) also found in their study of the Somali community in the U.K. that culturally inappropriate housing was a contributing factor to overcrowding and homelessness, and this may also be the situation for some migrant groups in Australia.

The cultural groups interviewed in my research indicated a strong preference for home ownership to allow them freedom to personalise their house and to reinforce their self-expression, a result that confirmed findings in the AHRC study (1985). As the pathway to home ownership for many lower-income culturally diverse groups would seem only a dream for the future, it is important to determine how they might have some scope to ‘make their mark’ on their current housing which is often provided by the social housing sector. Given the importance that culturally diverse groups attach to home ownership and its subsequent benefits, this is an area requiring further investigation.

My study demonstrated the value of examining the needs of specific cultural groups to give social housing providers an understanding of how housing design could be used to better meet the needs of their present and future clients. It explored the complexity of the issues involved and found that, whilst current social housing design and practice went some way
towards supporting cultural diversity, there was a need for further and ongoing research to review these practices and policies in the light of a better understanding of cultural needs, so that the areas of shortfall may be addressed.

Ultimately, however, architects and providers will only be able to create the space for the many different cultural groups who are currently in need of social housing in Australia. Turning these spaces (the house) into a home (the place) will be the responsibility of the individual householder. My study did however highlight how cultural difference might be accommodated within current Australian social housing where the basic building form has been the European archetype. The inclusion of other cultural influences, or at least the potential to do so, will enhance the Australian house by creating a living place that has greater meaning for many, as well as providing the basic requirements of comfort and enclosure.

My study has been directed by the original research question, ‘How are the housing needs of culturally diverse groups met by the practices and design of social housing?’ to gain insight into the many processes involved and to reveal what Australia’s newest migrants really want in their residential environment. In bringing together the views of the providers and their clients, it is to be hoped that the findings of my study will contribute to the debate for change and ultimately assist in changing the practices and design of social housing to better reflect the needs of diverse cultural groups.