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

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Abstract

At a time when Australia’s immigration policy encourages greater cultural diversity, significant gaps exist in the literature and practice governing the design of housing for culturally diverse groups in South Australia. Increasing migration from Asia, Africa and the Middle East presents a number of issues for social housing designers and providers who need to be aware of the diverse needs of these groups.

This study investigates the housing requirements of several cultural groups living in South Australia and compares these needs with currently available accommodation arrangements for new migrants who are dependent on the social housing sector. The study also examines how well the designers and managers of social housing understand the specific needs of these groups. In this way the concept of culturally appropriate housing is explored in the context of the norm, the South Australian archetypal house, although the findings may be utilised by other organisations in Australia and overseas. Using this comparative approach, both similarities and mismatches in design requirements for specific groups are identified. This information is then analysed to suggest appropriate policy changes for social housing providers that would better meet the needs of culturally diverse groups living in Australia today.

The range of current literature from the United Kingdom, USA and Australia, although limited in this area of research, is investigated critically to establish a means of identifying the key factors required in the design of housing for cultural diversity. The study then examines the housing needs of Afghan, Sudanese and Iraqi residents in South Australia. A similar study conducted with key members of HousingSA, who design and deliver social housing in the State, obtains an understanding of their awareness of the importance of design issues for culturally diverse groups. Finally, the social housing options available to culturally diverse groups in South Australia are investigated through an analysis of existing HousingSA house designs.

The findings give an insight into how current social housing in South Australia meets the needs of a range of culturally diverse groups, while also achieving the broad objectives of HousingSA. Areas needing attention are identified, in terms of the physical design of housing and the delivery process, as are possible changes to existing policies and procedures to assist architects, managers and service delivery professionals in providing social housing for cultural diversity. It is hoped that, through the study of housing needs and practice, this thesis will contribute relevant literature to inform housing policy makers and providers in this field.
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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university and that to the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Michael Findlay
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