Community Housing Data Collection, 2017–18; Quality Statement

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Identifying and definitional attributes

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Data quality

Data quality statement summary:

Description

Data are provided annually to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) by jurisdictions and are sourced from community housing organisations (CHOs) and from the jurisdiction's administrative systems. The annual data collection captures information about CHOs, the dwellings and tenancy rental units they manage, households on the waiting list, and the tenants and households assisted. Limited financial information from the previous financial year is also collected.

Summary

- All states and territories provide the AIHW with community housing data from their administrative systems. The AIHW compiles their data for national reporting in the *Report on government services* (RoGS). The data are also published in AIHW reports.
- Additionally, unit record community housing data are collected from CHOs via an Excel survey tool managed by the AIHW. One jurisdiction, the Northern Territory, does not use the AIHW-managed survey and does not provide any unit record household data.
- Care is required when comparing outputs across states and territories. Differences in the data collected, including which records are included or excluded from a calculation can affect the coherence of the outputs. Coherence over time has been affected by changes in methodology (see 'coherence' section for details).

Institutional environment:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* (AIHW Act), governed by a management Board, and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW is a nationally recognised management agency. Its purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and welfare of all Australians.

The AIHW enables other organisations to improve their policies and services and achieve their goals by making better use of evidence—a fundamental requirement for good decision making. It collects and reports on a wide range of topics and issues, including health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, mental health, ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The AIHW also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The AIHW works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

Compliance with confidentiality requirements in the AIHW Act, Privacy Principles in the *Privacy Act 1988*, (Cth) and its data governance arrangements ensures that the AIHW is well positioned to release information for public benefit while protecting the identity of individuals and organisations. It also ensures that data providers can be confidents that the AIHW will adhere to data supply terms and conditions.

For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au.

The AIHW receives, compiles, edits and verifies the data in collaboration with states and territories. The finalised data sets are signed off by the states and territories and used by the AIHW for reporting, analysis and approved ad hoc data requests.

Timeliness:

Data are collected annually. The reference period for this collection is the 2017–18 financial year. The collection is mostly a 30 June 2018 snapshot, but also captures information regarding new households assisted during 2017–18. Limited financial information from the 2016–17 financial year is also collected.

Accessibility:

Data are reported in the AIHW's annual *Housing assistance in Australia* reports and the Productivity Commission's annual *Report on government services*.

Users can request additional disaggregation of data which are not available online or in reports (subject to the AIHW's confidentiality policy and state and territory approval) via the AIHW's online data request system at https://www.aihw.gov.au/our-services/data-on-request. Depending on the nature of the request, requests for access to unpublished data may also incur costs or require approval from the AIHW Ethics Committee.

General enquiries about AIHW publications can be directed to info@aihw.gov.au.

Interpretability:

Metadata and definitions relating to this data source can be found in the *Mainstream community housing data set specification 2013-*.

Supplementary information can be found in the housing collection data manuals which are available upon request.

Relevance:

The scope of community housing, for the purpose of this collection, includes all tenancy rental units under the management of a community housing organisation, excluding Indigenous community housing organisations. Dwellings are excluded where the tenancy is managed by the state/territory housing authority or by a specialist homelessness services agency. Additional jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions also apply. These jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions reflect a number of factors including differences in the definition of community housing across jurisdictional legislation; difficulties in identifying some organisations among those that are not registered or funded by the state/territory housing authority; and some inconsistencies in reporting, such as the inclusion of transitional housing and National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) dwellings.

The data collected by the jurisdictions conform well in terms of reference period. However, due to the jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions, the data do not conform well in terms of organisation coverage and reporting at a national level.

New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory supply unit record level data. These data include details on individuals, organisations, dwellings and associated tenancies of the organisations that responded to the survey. Queensland supply unit record data supplemented by aggregate administrative data for funded organisations, properties and current waitlist applications. The Northern Territory submits aggregate data, which includes dwelling- and organisational-level data, but not information on individual tenancies or persons.

The data are highly relevant for monitoring trends in the number of households assisted in community housing. The data are used for many purposes, including by policy-makers to evaluate both the circumstances of tenants in community housing dwellings and the amount of rent paid by tenants relative to their income; and to assess the efficiency of community housing organisations in providing dwellings.

Accuracy:

The information was sourced by state/territory housing authorities from community housing organisations and/or from administrative records held by them. Data are incomplete for some jurisdictions due to non-reporting or under-reporting by CHOs. The response rate differs between jurisdictions—as outlined below:

State/territory	Coverage
New South Wales	Of the 147 community housing organisations, 34 completed the survey tool accounting for 91% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents an increase from the 89% coverage rate in 2016–17.
Victoria	Of the 90 community housing organisations, 69 completed the survey tool. This was an increase from the 64 community housing organisations who responded to the survey in 2016–17. Information regarding dwellings for which the organisation did not provide unit record data was not reported for 2017–18 so the coverage rate cannot be calculated by the AIHW.
Queensland	Of the 143 community housing organisations, 100 completed the survey tool accounting for 96% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents an increase from the 89% coverage rate in 2016–17.
Western Australia	Of the 33 registered community housing organisations, 32 completed the survey tool accounting for 99.8% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents a slight increase from the 99.5% coverage rate in 2016–17.
South Australia	Of the 42 community housing organisations, 40 completed the survey tool accounting for 99.8% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents a slight decrease from the 100% coverage rate in 2016–17.
Tasmania	Of the 57 community housing organisations, 34 completed the survey tool accounting for 95% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents a decrease from the 96% coverage rate in 2016–17.
Australian Capital Territory	All of the 7 community housing organisations completed the survey tool covering 100% of the total dwelling portfolio. The same coverage rate was observed in 2016–17.

Northern Territory	Only administrative data was provided for 33 community housing organisations. This is a slight decrease from the 34 community housing organisations that provided administrative data in 2016–17.

There are some accuracy issues with the data collected, more specifically:

- The community housing organisation and state/territory housing authority administrative systems from which this collection are drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data, inconsistent data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.
- Not all organisations capture and report all data items—data may not be collected and reported in a manner consistent with national data definitions.
- For some organisations, some information may be self-identified and not reported under eligibility requirements for some programs (for example, Indigenous status and disability information).
- The sum of 'tenancy rental units by remoteness' may differ to 'total tenancy rental units' due to missing postcode information, the exclusion of postcodes belonging to PO boxes, mismatches between postcode and remoteness concordance files and proportioning of postcodes across remoteness areas (as many postcodes belong to more than one remoteness area).
- There are inconsistencies across jurisdictions in the reporting of National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties managed by community housing organisations. Data for these properties are unavailable for Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.
- Waitlist data are reported separately for each social housing program. Where states and territories have an integrated waitlist (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory), applicants are generally counted once irrespective of the number of programs for which they are applying. In some states and territories, CHOs may additionally maintain and allocate housing to households on their own waiting list. In New South Wales, waitlist information for all social housing programs is reported in the Public Rental Housing (PH) & State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) collections.

State- and territory-specific issues:

New South Wales

- Data quality submissions vary across data providers. Data mismatches between files relating to the same concept are a significant data quality issue.
- The number of New South Wales tenancies is likely to be undercounted because of unknown number of tenancies assigned, number of tenancies, tenantable vacancies and untenantable vacancies.
- Data quality for income in comparison to rent charged continues to be a significant issue.
- Improved data quality resulted in an increase in total rents charged.
- New South Wales do not supply waitlist information in the CH collection. All social housing waitlist information is reported in the PH & SOMIH collections.
- For transitional housing, the smallest unit of rentable space is a bed rather than a room. Therefore transitional housing permits multiple tenancies to a bedroom.
- New South Wales does not consider boarding/rooming housing and joint venture program types and therefore do not supply data against these programs.

Queensland

- Since 2016–17, data have only been provided for current tenancies and households as at 30 June. Thus care is advised when comparing data for 2016–17 onwards with that of previous years.

Western Australia

- Care is advised when reviewing data for overcrowding due to inconsistencies in the data reported.

- Care is advised when reviewing data for rent charged as some CHOs charge a flat fee for board or lodging and may include support care, utility and communal costs.

South Australia

- There are a number of applicants waiting to have their greatest needs eligibility assessed, as a result there are fewer greatest need applicants for 2017–18. Caution is advised when interpreting this variable.

Tasmania

- Survey data received from CHOs contained a large number of errors and a high proportion of 'unknown' data. While substantial data cleaning was undertaken, it is likely that data quality issues still exist.

Australian Capital Territory

- Integrated waitlist data are unable to differentiate between new applicants and applicants requesting a transfer. The use of separate community housing organisation managed waiting lists has grown over time. Consequently, some households on a waiting list may be counted more than once.

Coherence:

Data for individual states and territories may not be comparable across reporting periods, nor with other social housing sectors due to variability in the state and territory government programs reported in the community housing data collection; coverage and completeness rates; and other data quality issues. Differences between states and territories concerning incomplete or missing information, out-of-date information and coding errors can affect the coherence of the outputs.

Coherence over time has also been affected by changes in methodology:

- For the 2017–18 collection, remoteness area (RA) is determined using a concordance between 2017 postcodes and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 RA classification. Care is therefore required when comparing remoteness data across time.
- Comparisons of waitlist data prior to 2010–11 should not be made with data from subsequent years due to the implementation of integrated waitlists in some jurisdictions. In May 2009, Housing Ministers agreed to integrate public and community housing waiting lists in all jurisdictions by July 2011. New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory each have integrated waiting lists. In Tasmania, the 4 main Better Housing Futures community housing providers use a shared Housing Register (public and community housing) to select tenants. The other smaller providers have no requirement to use this register and therefore may have their own waitlists. In Victoria, community housing organisations may fill some vacancies using the public housing waiting list.
- Measurements using low income cannot be directly compared with low income measures produced prior to 2013–14 due to a change in methodology. From 2013–14 onwards, low income cut-offs were obtained from the biennial ABS Survey of Income and Housing (SIH). Low income cut-offs for 2017–18 are based on 2016–17 SIH results. Care is required when comparing low income measures over time.

State- and territory-specific issues:

New South Wales

- From 2013–14, New South Wales have provided unit record data. Data prior to this is therefore not comparable.
- New South Wales reported NRAS dwellings for the first time in 2015–16.
- For 2015–16 and 2016–17, NRAS dwellings were excluded from the calculation of the occupancy rate.
- Data for additional affordable housing properties have been included for the first time form 2016–17.
- In 2017–18, 'Total other community housing program dwellings' are reported for the first time. In New South Wales, 'other' refers to non-NRAS affordable housing.

Victoria

- In 2016–17, reduced survey returns from CHOs resulted in a decrease in net recurrent costs per unit and total rents charged. Thus, care is advised when comparing data for 2016–17 with previous years.
- Community housing applications are being transferred to the Victorian Housing Register which will integrate public and community housing waiting lists. A review of current housing applications (which commenced in 2016–17) to remove those that are duplicates, inaccurate or out of date continues. This could have contributed to the decrease in waitlist numbers in 2016–17.

Queensland

- Changes in methodology in 2012–13 have resulted in improvements in the identification of households containing a member identifying as Indigenous, and/or having a disability and/or from a non-English speaking background.
- From 2013–14, Affordable Housing Program data has been provided. These data were not available in prior collection periods.
- Queensland provided unit record data for the first time in 2015–16. This was supplemented by aggregate administrative data for funded organisations, properties and current waitlist applications. Data prior to this are therefore not comparable.
- From 2015–16, CH program administration and regulation costs were included. Previously, only rates and maintenance paid by the Department of Housing and Public Works were reported.
- In 2016–17, due to a change in policy, all applicants on the housing waitlist for social rental housing were counted, whereas in previous years only those listed for community housing were counted. Thus data for 2016–17 onwards are not comparable with that of previous years.
- In November 2017, Queensland adopted a new administrative system for property management. As a result there has been a considerable amount of data cleaning, resulting in an overall reduction in numbers.

Western Australia

- From 2014–15, methodological changes have resulted in a better identification of households with Indigenous members.
- Errors have occurred when Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) has been considered as household income and used in the calculation of rent. This issue has been compounded when CRA has not been able to be separated from either household income or rent charged. While this has improved since 2014–15, some organisations are unable to separate CRA from household income, therefore caution should be taken when interpreting data pertaining to rent charged and gross weekly income.
- A new organisation responded to the survey for the first time in 2017–18, contributing nearly 600 additional applicants to the waitlist.
- Due to turnover of staff at some CHOs, some program types and dwelling types have been reclassified in 2017–18. Thus care is advised when comparing data with previous years.

South Australia

- Prior to 2012–13, the waitlist data reported were based solely on the Community Housing Customer Register. Applicants for National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties were registered on a separate waitlist and not reported. Since 2012–13, waitlist data have been reported for the total number of applicants for community housing and affordable housing.
- From 2014–15, methodological improvements have resulted in better identification of households with Indigenous members.
- In 2016–17, a single housing register was implemented for public and community housing resulting in an increase in the number of applicants on the waiting list. Thus, caution is advised when comparing data from 2016–17 onwards with previous years.

Tasmania

- From 2015–16 onwards, waitlist data represents information captured by the CHOs and not the shared waitlist. Thus, care is advised when comparing waitlist data from 2015–16 onwards with that of previous years.

Northern Territory

- A review of portfolios in 2014–15 resulted in better identification of community housing dwellings.

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

Related metadata references:

Supersedes Community Housing Data Collection, 2016–17; Quality Statement
AIHW Data Quality Statements, Superseded 02/01/2019

Has been superseded by Community Housing Data Collection, 2018–19; Quality Statement
AIHW Data Quality Statements, Superseded 14/12/2020