



SSIIM UNESCO CHAIR

On Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants – Urban Policies and Practice

The right to adequate housing of migrants factsheets

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MIGRANTS' ACCESS TO HOUSING

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The right to adequate housing for migrants - factsheets

The right to adequate housing for migrants is a series of thematic factsheets on migrants' level of access to adequate shelter in different urban contexts. Written by academic researchers and experts solicited by SSIIM UNESCO Chair, the factsheets were aimed at providing background information for the 2010 Report of UN-Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Dr. Raquel Rolnik.

Besides presenting the picture of the overall housing situation of migrants in the concerned contexts, authors were asked to highlight what the conditions of international migrants (regular and undocumented) are with respect to

- access to public housing and/or government subsidies
- access to housing loans
- access to the private housing market (discriminatory attitudes)
- inclusion into regularization and land tenure policies (if any, highlighting whether it is a local or a central government policy)

Authors were also invited to underline whether differences in policies/attitudes between local (poor) population (including rural-urban migrants) and international migrants are put in place and if any particularly interesting policy is being implemented that could be pointed out as innovative example.

Through the network of the partner universities, research centres and other relevant actors, SSIIM UNESCO Chair on Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants - Urban Policies and Practices aims at:

- Identifying policies and practices that promote the urban inclusion of international migrants
- Supporting local governments in shaping adequate actions to foster effective urban governance and the social/spatial integration of international migrants
- Disseminating the experiences that can provide ground for effective policy exchange (good practices)
- Raising the awareness of policy-makers and the civil society at large, on the importance of international migrants' urban social and spatial inclusion

Introduction:

With regards to Housing portfolios, both Federal and State government at first glance appear to focus on the issue of homelessness – Kevin Rudd promised to eradicate homelessness in his pre-election promise of 2008.

The following summary regarding housing is based on newspaper articles, academic articles.

1. Migrants

With regards to migrants there is the ongoing issue of whether migrants form ghettos in Australia. Certainly there is evidence of ethnic concentration.

Traditionally migrants tended to settle in the inner city areas and it was the case that most migrants settled in urban areas of the major cities and less in regional areas (Burnley et al). As housing prices go up fewer migrants have settled in the inner city areas. Residential clustering is worked out along the lines of dissimilarity among those who settle in a particular area. Some, eg Birrell, believe that ethnic concentration has led to the formation of 'ghettos' and this brings with it social disadvantage and greater pressure on social services in that area. (Burnley p. 36)

An interesting aspect of migrants/refugees and housing gives rise to what sociologists have termed 'white flight', that is, the practice of white Anglo European families moving from those neighborhood schools perceived as having a great number of students in ethnically and racially different backgrounds which includes refugees. Peter van Vliet of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria spoke out against Laurie Ferguson (Present parliamentary secretary for multicultural affairs) when he suggested spreading refugees around suburbs in order to avoid 'white flight' (<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/white-flight-warning/2008/03/20/1205602581678.html>)

Bob Birrell, among others, has argued that escalation of housing prices and falling housing affordability is due to sharp increases in migration (Birrell and Healy 2003). The argument about population numbers, and population policy, is associated closely with the immigration debate. The above article explores housing boom, prices and affordability in Sydney and Melbourne and how they may be linked with population growth as a result of migration in the major Eastern cities, Sydney and Melbourne.

2. Refugees/Former Refugees: Little information was found regarding this group.

A report commissioned by the Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) written by Mansouri and Bagdas (2002) about the impact of Temporary Protection Visa found the policy to contribute to a number of problems one of which was housing (page 54). It was found 70% of the participants lived in short-term housing which added to a feeling of 'insecurity, anxiety and helplessness" (p. 54). Further the authors add that

".along with health care and language programs, housing is of critical importance to the long term process of adjusting and settling in the new society" (p. 54)

The Federal government literature mentions housing assistance regarding both Permanent Protection Visa (PPV) and Temporary Protection Visa (TVP)) This document discusses housing under Settlement Support. (see http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/face_facts_05/refugee.html-q9).

PPV are eligible for the following:

"Access to full range of DIMIA settlement support services including the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). Receive 13 weeks initial accommodation and bond assistance. Eligible for rent assistance"

TVP on the other hand have access for much less:

"Not eligible for most DIMIA funded services such as Migrant Resource Centres and ethno-specific community welfare agencies. Can use Early Health Assessment and Intervention Programs. Limited access (12 sessions) to torture and trauma counselling. Eligible for rent assistance. No initial accommodation offered or bond assistance."

3. International Students

Following a series of racially motivated attacks, some of them fatal, on Indian students, in Melbourne in 2009, much more focus was given to the problems faced by this group of temporary residents. Indians were thought to be targeted, because of their visibility. Housing emerged as an issue as many of the students in this group lived in outer city areas and their safety was compromised when travelling home alone at night from the station. One of the reasons students tended to concentrate in outer city areas was due to the high rental costs in areas closer to universities. In 2009 the Human Rights Commission set up a communiqué regarding human rights and international students in which it mentioned access to housing as one of its concerns.

'Commissioners at the annual Australia and New Zealand Race Relations Roundtable, held in Sydney this week, view recent instances of racial harassment, abuse and violence directed at international students as symptoms of a whole range of human rights issues that need to be addressed, including their rights to non discrimination, equality of treatment, security of the person, access to justice, housing, information, freedom of religion and culture, and labour rights.'

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2009/107_09.html

International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) president Stephen Connelly stated that whilst international students, who make up the third largest export service. (for a table of other exports see Bradley Review p. 88 which I have attached) At the end of 2009 there were 203,000 international students in Australia with this industry earning more than tourism at an estimated \$17 billion per annum were treated as a 'cash cow'. He called for the government to address issues of housing and transport as matters of priority (The Age, 23/5/10, p. 13 (<http://www.theage.com.au/national/students-from-abroad-treated-like-cash-cows-20100522-w31k.html>))

Following pressure from the Greens and student bodies, a Senate Enquiry into International Education was launched by the Minister Julia Gillard in June 2009 stated that

- a) The roles and responsibilities of education providers, migration and education agents, state and federal governments, and relevant departments and embassies, in ensuring the quality and adequacy in information, advice, service delivery and support, with particular reference to:
 - Student safety;
 - Adequate and affordable accommodation;
 - Social inclusion;
 - Student Visa Requirements;
 - Adequate international student supports and advocacy;
 - Employment rights and protections from exploitation;
 - Appropriate pathways to permanency(<http://www.ieaa.org.au/NewsArticles/NewsArticle.asp?articleNo=38>)

Stephen Connelly through the IEAA has advocated for international student's rights

'IEAA strongly supports initiatives by institutions and by various authorities to strengthen support for international students to better enable students to make informed decisions about their education, their interactions with the Australian community, their safety and their freedom from exploitation by unscrupulous landlords and employers. '
<http://www.ieaa.org.au/NewsArticles/NewsArticle.asp?articleNo=41>

An online survey was conducted by Victoria University for the Community Safety of International Students in Melbourne (2010). This report found that safe affordable housing (along with unemployment and poor transport) was one of the factors that contributed to the feeling of lack of safety. (see attached report Babacan et al)

In more recent work the academic Simon Marginson (The Age 28/5/10) reports that

'shortage of affordable housing is serious in Sydney and Melbourne. Many students crowd in groups of 10 to 20 into three and four bedroom houses, often in unsanitary and unsafe conditions" (<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/international-students-left-in-the-shadows-20100527-whj1.html?comments=12>) In his book housing was identified as one of the 25 areas into which students' rights were considered to be inferior. More information on this can be found at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/forum/20100412_racism_students.html

Also of interest regarding the issue of housing and international students is that the provision of housing that has resulted by the increasing presence of this group. The housing market has responded to the presence of this group by providing housing targeted to this group.

4. Temporary Tourist Visa/Working Visa:

Little attention is given to this group of temporary residents. Often referred to as 'backpackers' who have filled seasonal labour needs in urban and rural areas. In this category of visa applicants were eligible to apply for a further year's stay if they could show they had worked in rural settings for a minimum of 88 days. The following investigative ABC Radio National program investigates claims of fraudulent offers of work where backpackers are lured to rural areas with the promise of well paid and secure work but who end up being exploited as they pay for accommodation whilst the promised work never materialises.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/backgroundbriefing/stories/2010/2902697.htm>

Other related References and links

<http://www.enhr2010.com/index.php?id=22>

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