



Curtin University



Faculty of Business and Law

2020 Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships

Strategic Project Profile

PROJECT TITLE: Residential mobility and housing tenure decisions among older Australians

FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE: 1402

PROJECT SYNOPSIS: Population ageing is a significant and lasting demographic shift that will usher in major economic and social transitions globally. The oldest of the baby boomer cohort born during 1946-1965 turned 55 years old at the beginning of this century and the youngest will turn 55 years old in 2020. Hence, an ageing population will undoubtedly exert growing influence on the directions of public policy goals nationally and internationally. Importantly, the residential location and housing tenure decisions of older Australians will increasingly affect the geography of service provision in cities and regions as large numbers of Australians transition into retirement.

Although older Australians often express a desire to 'age in place' that is, grow old in their own home or community, not all older Australians will do so. The housing experiences and aspirations of older Australians are diverse, the tenure in which they reside is likely to shape their choices in later life, including their patterns of residential mobility. Some may choose to downsize into smaller homes, while others may choose to move in retirement to amenity-rich locations on the coast. There are others that may find themselves forced to move

through the loss of home ownership or as a result of a lack of tenure security in the private rental sector. Evidence has shown an increase in the number of older households entering retirement with a mortgage or residing in the private rental sector. These cohorts face housing costs which are traditionally unaccounted for under the Aged Pension which, when coupled with the lack of tenure security, are likely to influence residential mobility patterns among older Australians.

This project will explore the interactions between residential mobility and housing tenure among older Australians aged 55 years and over. The project is underpinned by a number of aims:

- To deliver a nuanced understanding of the geographic mobility and housing tenure decisions of older Australians across geographical jurisdictions and over time;
- Uncover locations where there is significant churn within the housing market or where specific tenures are congregating – and the extent to which these patterns have changed over time;
- Identify how patterns of residential mobility among older persons differ across household characteristics and housing tenures;
- Contribute to an understanding of the key factors which are driving residential mobility and tenure patterns, and the ways in which the two interact;
- Investigate the implications of these residential mobility and housing tenure patterns for local communities in terms of essential services such as housing and health for example as well as meeting the needs of those in specific tenures.

This project will provide a much needed structural and numerical update to the geographical locations attracting older people and while also advancing the understanding of ‘ageing in place’ by identifying where older people are moving locally, or creating churn, within the housing market. The focus on tenure will contribute a much needed understanding of who is moving, to capture those who are likely forced to move and not doing so by choice.

The methodology will require the use of quantitative analysis and modelling on nationally available data, which allows researchers to analyse residential mobility by tenure and age as well as the frequency and reasons for these moves. The project will also use qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups to explore the decision-making process of these moves and the housing market factors driving mobility. Hence, the project will offer extensive training on both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The project findings will inform housing and urban development policies seeking to facilitate and respond to population change in Australia. It will provide new information on the residential mobility trends of older Australians across geographic jurisdictions, location-specific drivers (such as housing stock accessibility and diversity, access to services, access to job opportunities) and personal factors involved in the decision-making process. In doing so, the findings will generate an extensive evidence base that speaks to a global priority to create age-friendly environments promoting social and economic contributions by older residents.

FEASIBILITY AND RESOURCING – DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT THIS PROJECT WILL RECEIVE:

The project will receive essential infrastructure from the Faculty of Business and Law. This includes computing equipment, shared workspace, and research culture and seminar support. The project is highly feasible as it sits at the interface of two areas of key research strengths of the School - housing economics and population ageing. The project will be supervised by two researchers who have expertise that straddle these two areas. In addition, the research office will provide research support funds and conference support funds. The university provides software, internet and library facilities needed to complete the project.

WHAT MINIMAL ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS EXPECTED BY THE CANDIDATE BE COMPETITIVE:

Honours I or higher. Some research experience with a first author output.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT/ PROGRAM FOR THE ENROLLING SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION:

The project sits at the interface of two areas of research strengths in the Faculty of Business and Law - housing economics and population ageing. The Faculty currently hosts various prominent and active research centres and institutes that offer extensive expertise across one or both of these areas of research strengths. These include the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute – Curtin Research Centre, the Curtin University node of the ARC Centre for Excellence in Population Ageing, and the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre. The project is highly applied and is expected to engage the interest of WA and national policymakers and industry.

Students are advised to contact the Project Lead listed below prior to submission of their scholarship application to discuss their suitability to be involved in this strategic project.

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