planning Culturally

RESEARCH REPORT 4:

Culturally Appropriate Housing:

Planning and design of housing for cultural diversity

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Contents

Key Words: Culturally appropriate housing, Planning Culturally, Cultural Literacy, Urban Planning, Architecture, Urban Design.

The Author:

Richard Brecknock MPIA, MA (Cultural Policy) is a retired Cultural Planner with over thirty years of experience collaborating with communities and cities across Australia, NZ, and England. Richard is the author of '*More than just a bridge: planning & designing culturally'* (2006) and the www.planning-culturally.com website. He has presented papers at 70 conferences and lecture events on a wide range of relevant topics at conferences across Australia and overseas.

Since the early 2000's one aspect of his consulting and research has focused on Cultural Literacy being essential for Planning Culturally. Richard believes that all urban planning decisions will have either a positive or negative impact on our increasingly culturally diverse communities. Therefore, he has prepared this Research Report to focus on the need for greater "Cultural Awareness" of the housing requirements of our culturally diverse communities and First Nations People, to be part of standard planning and architectural practice. The report provides a review of academic, and sector writing on the subject and outlines potential opportunities relevant to the urban planning and design of domestic architecture.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI	Australian Housing & Urban Research Institute
AIA	Australian Institute of Architects
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AITSIS	Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies
CALD	Culturally And Linguistically Diverse
NHSAC	National Housing Supply and Affordability Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
PIA	Planning Institute of Australia

1. Introduction

My focus during the last thirty years of consulting practice and my current independent research has been on the role of culture and creativity in the context of urban planning and the development of culturally rich public places and built infrastructure (Brecknock 2006). In my work promoting the notion of "Planning Culturally" I have argued that all planning and design decisions have a cultural dimension, for example every built environment practitioner brings their own 'cultural world view' or Planning Culture, in addition to their professional training and skills to every project. We must also acknowledge that here in Australia with our First Nations culture and increasingly culturally diverse population every decision and intervention in the urban fabric of our cities will potentially have an impact on multiple communities of interest. These impacts may have either a positive or negative effect on the communities' ways of life especially in relation to the design of domestic housing. Therefore, I believe we need planners and architects who are 'Culturally Literate' and sensitive to our diverse community's built-environment needs in terms of the design and configuration of both public and private domestic housing.

In my 2024 article *Planning Culturally: The theory & practice for Urban Planners & Designers*, I wrote about the importance of urban professionals gaining Cultural Literacy and proposed that:

> *The expectation is that the knowledge gained provides the skills to work with ethnically diverse and First Nations communities to draw out the various cultural values and behaviours that are relevant to the urban environment and planning challenge being considered. For example, when planning and designing residential buildings it would be important to establish the patterns of spatial use by the different groups, such as understanding their cultural requirements of housing stock in terms of food preparation areas; living spaces to meet the needs of cultural practices, intergenerational and extended families; and importantly the building orientation etc.* (Brecknock 2024:5).
> www.academia.edu/125949553/Planning_Culturally_the_theory_and_practice_for_urban_planners_and_designers

To reinforce this issue, I quoted Vivianne Milligan et al, from their 2011 Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, (AHURI) report *Urban social housing for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders: respecting culture and adapting services*. They remind us that:

> "*Indigenous housing is a complex, messy problem that is highly contextual: one where solutions will differ depending on local conditions and the cultural norms and lifestyles of Indigenous clients in specific local contexts."* (Milligan, V. et al 2011:33)

My research into housing and cultural diversity has identified a range of academics, practitioners and journalist who have contributed to the knowledge base associated with general housing needs and specific cultural behavioural patterns that influence culturally appropriate dwelling configurations. I am therefore indebted to the writing from Amos Rapoport, Paul Memmott, Vivianne Milligan, Iasef Rian, Michael Findlay, Arijit Sen, Edgar Liu & Hazel Easthope, John Fine, Christina Ho, Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz, Gemma White, Iderlina Mateo-Babiano and Kelum Palipane, Zulkeplee Othman, Elle Davidson, Kim Sinclair and Wan Norisma Wan Ismail et.al. I also found that AHURI is a valuable resource of research reports and articles of relevance to this discussion.

NOTE: This Research Report is the fourth in the series on the theme of Planning Culturally, (All the Reports are available on www.planning-culturally.com and www.richardbrecknock.com). The report brings together some of the academic discourse and relevant industry polices, guidelines and design recommendations relating to the issue of delivering culturally appropriate housing for culturally diverse communities.

2. Culture and the Built Environment Context

Throughout history and across the globe, culture has acted as an influential sculptor, shaping how we design and build our dwellings. Cultural influences extend far beyond mere aesthetics. They encompass the social fabric, traditions, beliefs, and environmental realities that define a way of life. (Number One Property Blog 2024: Cultural Influences on Housing Design and Architecture)

A culturally appropriate dwelling is therefore essential in all communities especially in culturally, ethnically, or religiously diverse communities. Suitable housing can help in the role of identity formation, cultural continuation, and transformation, and for migrants it can assist the integration into a new community. The dwelling is an important medium through which diverse communities can sustain cultural traditions and practices and thereby maintain their sense of cultural identity. Architectural design for housing that takes a culturally appropriate design approach, promotes well-being by supporting the cultural beliefs and practices of its users in the physical environment thereby reducing the stress of adapting to an alien-built environment.

Unfortunately for many new arrivals they are placed within public housing which does not always recognise the diversity of cultural practices in terms of spatial layout, room sizing, privacy, or function. Generally public houses have been designed for the dominant culture and notions of the nuclear family seeking social support from the relevant local or state government. Housing diversity should be considered to assist migration settlement programs to support the migrant's experience of transitioning from one cultural context to another, while attempting to retain much of the immigrants' own cultural identity.

In Australia where there is a significant housing supply crisis there is an emphasis on delivering as many new homes and apartments as possible to meet demand. I believe it is important that we must not only provide more housing stock, but we should take the opportunity to ensure there is a diversity of house typologies to address the needs of our complex society. We live in a society that includes many different lifestyles, family sizes, structures, and cultural backgrounds, all of which effect the community's ways of life and therefore dwelling requirements. Therefore, it is critical that planners and architects address the housing needs of our increasingly culturally diverse communities and that they learn to understand the diverse cultural influences and work towards delivering outcomes that address the community needs.

As the writer of the 2024 *Number One Property Blog* reminds us:

> *Architecture transcends mere functionality; it is a powerful language that speaks volumes about a culture's cultural values and artistic traditions. Symbolic elements are woven into the fabric of buildings, imbuing them with deeper meaning. In Chinese architecture, the principles of Feng Shui dictate the placement and design of buildings to achieve harmony with the natural environment and promote good fortune. Similarly, Vastu Shastra, the ancient Indian architecture system, emphasizes balance and incorporates symbolic elements to create a dwelling that fosters the well-being of its inhabitants.*

And:

> *By understanding these cultural influences, architects can create buildings that are not only environmentally responsible but also reflect the values and lifestyles of their inhabitants. They must act as cultural stewards, balancing the need for innovation with the importance of preserving tradition. This*

> *fusion of tradition and innovation holds the key to building a future where everyone feels a sense of belonging within the built environment.*

In culturally diverse countries like Australia where most of the housing stock is built by private sector developers to meet a perceived community norm based on a traditional nuclear family consisting of two parents and their children living together in a freestanding suburban house. This leads to dwellings that do not reflect any variable options to address culturally diverse ways of living and forcing people to either adapt to the norm or self-build to achieve the culturally appropriate outcomes they need. The delivery of uniform and utilitarian apartment buildings is increasingly a choice for families who cannot afford to buy a detached home or prefer the idea of inner-city apartment dwelling.

However, as Iasef Rian remind us in his conference paper titled *Multicultural Flexible Housing: Addressing the Need and Scope of Flexible Housing in Cosmopolitan Indian Cities*:

> *"Every culture does not fit into typically designed space configuration of the apartments. Thus, it results in space-user conflict*" (Rian, I. 2011).

Indeed, as Michael Findlay suggests in his 2011 article *Social housing for cultural diversity*:

> *New migrants may have no other option but to accept housing that is 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 move in because of lack of options to enter the housing market themselves. Kelly (2004) confirms this, observing that this situation often leads to severe overcrowding and ultimately homelessness for some family members who can no longer tolerate the tight living conditions.* (Findlay, M. 2011:5)

2.1 The Need for Culturally Sensitive Housing

I strongly believe that our houses express our culture, whether through the architectural design approach and symbolism, or cultural behavioural patterns expressed through everyday use. Indeed, I agree with architectural theorist Amos Rapoport who believes that "*building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organisation are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs*." (Rapoport 1968:46)

In his 2015 paper *Redefining architecture to accommodate cultural difference: Designing for cultural sustainability,* Paul Memmott also quotes Rapoport (1990) who *proposed "a theory of the built environment as consisting of fixed feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, etc.), semi-fixed feature elements ('furnishings,' interior and exterior of all sorts), and non-fixed feature elements (people and their activities and behaviours)."* (Memmott 2015:17)

Therefore, we need to consider how these "*fixed feature elements*" associated with different house typologies, and their internal configurations, are either supportive or disruptive of the culture i.e. the" non-*fixed feature elements"* of the occupants. A key factor in this issue is the comparison between the ability to be involved in the design and construction of the fixed features of a purpose-built home or the need to adapt or reconfigure semi-fixed features of an existing house to meet the cultural needs of the occupants.

Given Australia's past and ongoing commitment to immigration and the resulting cultural diversity it is important to consider the challenges of providing housing stock that can meet the diverse needs of our society. Culturally sensitive housing is as Michael Findlay proposes in his 2011 article *Social housing for cultural diversity*, essential in supporting the settlement and establishment phases for culturally diverse communities. Finlay highlights the fact that:

> *This is particularly the case with social housing, a main source of accommodation for lower-income minority cultural groups (San Pedro, 2001; Alloush,2001). Failing to meet the housing needs of cultural groups can lead to social exclusion and ultimately isolation of some group members from the broader community* (Findlay, M. 2011:2)

According to Arijit Sen, in his conference paper, titled *Making Sense of the Architectural Production of 'Others': Architectural Design and Multiculturalism* (2010) it is important to acknowledge that:

> *… migrants occupy preexisting buildings and landscapes carved by preceding residents. The built environment therefore becomes a log of continuous interaction and engagement between buildings, material objects, people, practices, resource flows, environment, and politics.*

And

> *… Amos Rapoport reflects on the importance of flexible and accommodative design strategies that allow different groups and individuals to modify spaces. He cautions us that cultural responsiveness is not "universal architecture," a one-size fits all norm or the erasure of all difference that has been the product of the modern movement in architecture and planning. According to Rapoport, "responsive environments are those which can be manipulated as culture changes, i.e. open ended, flexible and adaptive environments."* (Sen, A. 2010)

There is no question that across Australia most of the housing stock would not meet the responsiveness criteria highlighted by Rapoport, rather it is a "one-size fits all" product. One critical aspect that the mass produced "Cookie Cutter" housing development approach does not deliver is the flexibility to meet diverse cultural influences and especially diverse family structures such as large family sizes and multi-generational living.

This is by no means an Australian problem, writing on the American *ProBuilder* website, Susan Bady, wrote:

> *Racial and ethnic diversity will continue to grow and define the United States population into the future. According to the Pew Research Center, by 2055 the nation will not have a single racial or ethnic majority, and most of the population growth is expected to be linked to new Asian or Hispanic immigration.*
>
> *This isn't a pattern that home builders and designers can afford to ignore. Right now, the influx of multicultural buyers is most noticeable in major urban centers such as Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. Pew indicates that Asia has replaced Latin America, including Mexico, as the biggest source of new immigrants, a fact borne out by the sources consulted for this article. (The term "Asian" is used here to connote Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, and similar origins, while "East Indian" encompasses Pakistani and other South Asian nationalities.)*

> *New homes must offer flexible floor plans that allow buyers to assign specific purposes to their living space. Options for such features as prep kitchens and full multigenerational suites are essential.*

Multi-generational housing

AHURI data shows that the age structure of multi-generation households is quite distinct from those of most other household types in Australia. Of special note is the concentrations in the young adult (18–19 and 20–24 years) and pre-retirement (45–54 and 55–64 years) age groups. The high concentration of young adults in these households resonates with much Australian and international research that the growth of multigeneration households is due to the delayed home-leaving, "Boomeranging" back home of young adults. In contrast, the proportion of children (0–14 years) and older people (65 years or older) in multi-generation households are comparatively lower than the national averages. This suggests that three-generation households consisting of grandparents, parents and young children are still a relatively uncommon phenomenon, with most multigeneration households comprising just two generations—pre-retirement age parents and their adult offspring.

Of course, it is not just the multicultural community that may have requirements for homes that can accommodate multi-generational living. Increasingly families are facing the pressure of housing affordability that result in adult children living in the family home for longer than in the past and for the need to accommodate aging grandparents due to the cost and lack of suitable care options. The specific needs of multi-cultural inter-generational households was the subject of a report for AHURI by Edgar Liu and Hazel Easthope.

LIU, E. & EASTHOPE, H. (2012) *Multi-generation households in Australian cities,* AHURI Final Report 181.
The report finds that for many multi-cultural communities multi-generational living is an accepted practice and indeed a cultural expectation. Edgar Liu & Hazel Easthope remind us that this is a traditional practice in cultures such as many Middle Eastern, East Asian, and Chinese cultures. In Australia, the post-world war two migration from Southern and Eastern Europe led to many multi-generational households, a practice that has weakened over time. Liu and Easthope refer to this evolution in the European diaspora and suggest that:

> *Their dominance, however, is slowly waning; by the 2000s Australia's multi-generation household landscape was increasingly dominated by households of North African, Middle Eastern, and East Asian background. In 2006, more than one-third of Australians born in North Africa and the Middle East lived in such an arrangement. In Sydney, where overseas-born residents dominate (ABS 2008), the most common regions of birth for people living in multi-generation households were North Africa and the Middle East; while in Brisbane, South-East Asia (not including Japan, which is classified under North-East Asia) was the most common origin).* (Liu, E. & Easthope, H. 2012:6)

Liu and Easthope provide the following statistics:

- *Most multi-generation households live in dwellings with three bedrooms or more. Nearly half (44.0%) live in three-bedroom dwellings, a proportion that is marginally higher than compared to all household types (41.3%).*
- *More multi-generation households that live in four-bedroom dwellings (35.6%, compared to 25.9% for all households) and dwellings with five bedrooms or more.*
- *More multi-generation households in Sydney residing in three-bedroom dwellings.*
- *More multi-generation households in Brisbane residing in four-bedroom dwellings.*

- *Some multi-generation households (though a very small minority) live in small dwellings with one or fewer bedrooms.*

AHURI is a valuable resource of relevant housing studies, especially about First Nations People and their housing requirements, both in remote and urban communities. In 2007 AHURI published a Position Paper by John Fien et al, titled *Flexible guidelines for the design of remote Indigenous community housing,* which includes a section on 'Culture and Design'. The authors remind the reader that many customary behaviours and cultural practices have impacts on the design, and therefore the costs, of building housing in remote Indigenous communities. Fien et al highlight some of these cultural practices and note that:

> *It is not appropriate for elderly Indigenous people to live separately from their families in old people's homes. Thus, while it is not necessary to go to the additional costs of providing such facilities, it is necessary to provide additional bedrooms in family homes to provide appropriate living arrangements for elderly people. (*Fien, J et al AHURI 2007:41)

2.2 The Need for Cultural Awareness & Competency

In my 2024 article *Planning Culturally: The theory & practice for Urban Planners and Designers*, www.academia.edu/125949553/Planning_Culturally_the_theory_and_practice_for_urban_planners_and_designers
I wrote about the importance of urban professionals gaining Cultural Literacy and proposed that:

> *The expectation is that the knowledge gained provides the skills to work with ethnically diverse and First Nations communities to draw out the various cultural values and behaviours that are relevant to the urban environment and planning challenge being considered. For example, when planning and designing residential buildings it would be important to establish the patterns of spatial use by the different groups, such as understanding their cultural requirements of housing stock in terms of food preparation areas; living spaces to meet the needs of cultural practices, intergenerational and extended families; and importantly the building orientation etc.* (Brecknock 2024:5).

To reinforce this issue, I am requoting Vivianne Milligan et al, from the Introduction, as their 2011 AHURI report *Urban social housing for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders: respecting culture and adapting services*, remind us that:

> "*Indigenous housing is a complex, messy problem that is highly contextual: one where solutions will differ depending on local conditions and the cultural norms and lifestyles of Indigenous clients in specific local contexts."* (Milligan, V. et al 2011:33)

Michael Findlay in his (2011) article exploring *Social housing for cultural diversity*, states that:

> *Managers and service managers generally agree (Findlay,2009) that a knowledge of family structure and the role of men and women within specific culturally diverse groups are important in the design and provision of social housing. However, these providers often do not understand how families of cultural*

> *groups are structured, so it is apparent that a greater knowledge of some of their circumstances, customs and practices is necessary to assist in the housing process.* (Findlay, M. 2011:4)

And that:

> *There is little collective knowledge of the specific housing needs for cultural diversity amongst architects and managers involved in the design of social housing although service managers are more conversant with specific tenant requirements (Findlay, 2009). The design process of social housing providers also does not require the consultant architects to have a direct involvement in designing for diversity, but rather specifies 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 omission in the house design process leads to the continuation and reinforcement of the generic house type.* (Findlay, M. 2011:6)

It appears that at a time of crisis in terms of housing supply, that social housing authorities and agencies are focused on the design of the generic house for cost and delivery reasons, as it suits the needs of today's average Australian family. The assumption that 'one size fits all' raises issues about 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. In Australia, the average floor area of a new house is close to 230 square meters, which by comparison is more than double the size of houses built in the 1960s. The desire for four-bedroom houses has resulted in some of the bigger houses built in Australia, this trend is despite the fact that data from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) shows that the average family size is in the order of 2.5 persons and there is a decline in families with dependent children but an increase in couple-only families, especially older couples. Indeed, AIFS data shows that "Households have become smaller, with more than one in four households being occupied by one person."

Ultimately, however architects and providers must be able to create the spaces for the many different cultural groups who are currently in need of social housing in Australia. Turning spaces (the house) into a home (the place) will be the responsibility of the individual householder. The inclusion of other cultural influences, or at least the potential to do so, through responsive design will enhance the Australian house by contributing to a living place that has greater meaning for many, as well as providing the basic requirements of comfort and enclosure. (Findlay, M. 2011:10)

Paul Memmott has contributed several important articles re this subject and in his 2003 article *Housing Design in Indigenous Australia,* proposes that:

> *The challenge for architects, and others, has been to provide for those functions that can best be catered for within conventional building forms while also enabling culturally specific uses of space to continue. In an open camp situation featuring smaller scale structures, all movement in the social space can be observed and personal space maintained. Footprints in the sand reveal the movement of people and animals around private and public spaces. Early knowledge of certain people's whereabouts means they can be avoided. The conventional house offers no such convenience. The doors and walls can cause surprises, doors require locks for privacy and security, and no telltale footprint can be left in vinyl or concrete surfaces.*

> *Within this cultural context, designers have to pick their way through the process of developing housing and settlement plans for client groups or individuals. Culture will vary between individuals and their affiliated groups where acculturation has caused change to people's expectations and responsibilities. Understanding some of the aspects of regional social histories is an important part of the design process, as these can help identify the adaptations and modifications to ways of living preferred by a particular client group.* (Memmott, P. 2003:22)

Referring to what I call Cultural Literacy, Memmott states that:

> *… architects cannot successfully design housing and plan settlements for Aboriginal people unless there is an understanding of their everyday behaviour. The customary use of domiciliary space supports distinct types of household groups and sub-groups, typical diurnal/nocturnal behaviour patterns suited to different seasonal periods, as well as characteristic socio-spatial structures. Culturally distinct behaviour includes set forms of approach and departure, external orientation and sensory communication between domiciles, different concepts of privacy and crowding, sleeping behaviour and sleeping group composition, cooking and use of hearths, and storage of artefacts and resources.* (Memmott, P. 2003:36)

Memmott provides a significant contribution to the cultural housing needs of First Nations people and clearly argues for the need for greater cultural awareness among the design professions. It is important to remember that this is a challenge for planners and designers working with First Nations communities as there is considerable diversity within the communities across Australia, and therefore practices and values need to be understood from community to community and between those living in remote as opposed to urban environments.

Further Reading: In my Research Report 2: Cultural Competency & Urban Planning, I provide an overview of the cultural competency models provided by theorists such as American sociologist Milton Bennett and the Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice (CCPEP). I also outline my approach to the stages of achieving Cultural Literacy in planning and design practice.

Research Report 2. can be found in the Resources section of www.planning-culturally.com

3. Housing Context

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the 2021 Census shows that of the 10,852,208 private dwellings counted 70 per cent were separate houses, 13 per cent were townhouses and 16 per cent were apartments.

Discussing the issues associated with apartment living Christina Ho in her article, *Higher density and diversity: apartments are Australia at its most multicultural*, (2018) reminds us that:

> *Apartment residents are very diverse culturally. Across Australia, more than half of apartment residents – 56 percent, compared to 33 percent of all Australian residents – are migrants. Of these, the biggest group (26 percent of apartment residents) are migrants born in Asia.*
>
> *Nationwide, only 7 percent of Australian-born people live in apartments. For those born in northeast Asia (including China), the figure is 31 percent. And for those born in southern and central Asia (including India), it's 26 percent.*
>
> *Looking again at Greater Sydney, housing density and cultural diversity are clearly correlated. The Sydney suburbs where more than 90 percent of residents live in apartments also have high concentrations of overseas-born migrants.* (Ho, C. et al. 2018)

It is also important when discussing housing needs of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to acknowledge the age-related needs. Gemma White, from the Housing for the Aged Action Group, reminds us that:

> *Older people from CALD backgrounds make up around 25 per cent of all older people in Australia. Though older CALD communities face many of the same barriers to housing experienced by the older population as a whole, such as inappropriate, insecure and unaffordable housing, they are also more likely to encounter additional challenges. Making sure that these vulnerable seniors have access to independent and culturally and linguistically appropriate information, advice and advocacy is crucial if they are to avoid homelessness.*

The Housing for the Aged Action Group services and resources can be viewed at: www.oldertenants.org.au

3.1 Australian Housing Supply Issues

It is clear from the evidence that Australia's existing housing affordability "crisis" will continue to worsen over the next few years as there continues to be a "significant shortfall in supply" according to government and non-government reporting. Peter Mares in his 2018 book *No Place Like Home: Repairing Australia's Housing Crisis*, provides a valuable overview of the history of public and private housing supply since the end of the second world war and provides a context for the current housing supply crisis from both a policy and economic perspective. He also discussed the changing socio-cultural underpinning of home ownership and community housing needs, especially the notion of the "dream of home ownership."

Discussing the housing supply issues the ABC report that:

> *Australia's housing supply is low by international standards.*

The government has pointed out that Australia has fewer dwellings per 1,000 people than the OECD average.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) housing data for 2022, Australia's level of housing supply was 420 per 1,000 people in 2022. (OECD average is 480 per 1,000 people)

In Budget strategy and outlook: budget paper no. 1: 2024–25 the Australian Parliament says that:

… the government attributes the housing affordability crisis to an undersupply of houses, stating that 'Australia has a housing shortage. There are not enough homes being built in the right areas to meet the needs of our communities' (p. 121). The government asserts that, by OECD standards, the supply of housing in Australia is low (however, it is important to note that population and housing demand pressures vary greatly across the OECD).

Budget paper no. 1 ascribes Australia's housing supply issues to 3 main factors (p. 121):

- *planning and land release practices that 'are often slow and are not effectively factoring in urgent need for housing in suburban areas.*
- *industry capacity that has been hampered by 'a lack of essential infrastructure in greenfield developments, a critical shortage of skilled labour and falling productivity in the sector.'*
- *long-term, chronic under-investment in social housing.*

The government's plan is to 'build more homes for Australia' (p. 121). It claims its plan will require 'concerted, cooperative and substantive efforts from all levels of government,' with the Commonwealth providing leadership through measures such as the National Housing Accord (the Accord) and the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF).

A 2024 article in the Guardian, quoted the chair of the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council (NHSAC), Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz, as saying Australia is in "a longstanding crisis, fundamentally driven by the failure to deliver enough housing of all types – from social housing through to market home ownership". Lloyd-Hurwitz was also quoted as saying that:

…the "deep-seated" issues with insufficient supply had become more acute due to the spike in migration, "rising interest rates, skills shortages, elevated construction company insolvencies, weak consumer confidence and cost inflation."

The report found that housing affordability "deteriorated significantly for mortgage holders" due to interest rate rises. Rents were up 35% since 2020 and 8% in 2023, with a vacancy rate of 1.6% making it increasingly difficult to find a rental home.

"Current market supply of new housing is low," it said. "Only 172,000 dwellings were completed in 2023 – the lowest annual number of completions in the past decade."

It noted that social housing had declined as a share of the housing stock for three decades, down from 5.6% in 1991 to 3.8% in 2021.

Over the next six years, net new market housing supply is expected to be 1.04 million dwellings but demand will total 1.08m new households, the report projected.

> *"There will be a significant shortfall in supply relative to new demand in the 2023–24 financial year and smaller shortfalls in the following two financial years."*

www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/may/03/australias-housing-crisis-to-worsen-with-significant-shortfall-in-supply-labors-expert-council-says

3.2 Housing Typologies

The architectural design and resource website Archipro (https://archipro.com.au/article/types-of-houses-australia) states that:

> *Australia's residential landscape is a reflection of its rich history and evolving environmental, social, and economic conditions. The diversity in house types across the country encapsulates a journey through architectural changes. Each period, from the early colonial days through to the Federation era, and onto the modern day, has contributed distinct styles and innovations. This evolution has resulted in a variety of homes tailored to Australia's unique climate and lifestyle.*

It lists the following houses typologies.

> 1. Detached Houses, 2. Townhouses, 3. Apartments, 4. Duplexes, 5. Queenslander Homes, 6. Beach Houses, 7. Barn Houses, 8. Cottages, 9. Villas, 10. Passive Houses, 11. Terraced Houses, 12. Heritage Homes, 13. Bungalows, 14. Tiny Homes, 15. Cabins.

Perhaps a rather eclectic mix of building types but it does remind us that we are considering a range of houses and apartments (or units) types that might be constructed as semi-detached or duplex homes, stand-alone villas, terrace houses and / or townhouses. According to ABS 2021 census data shows that of the 10,852,208 private dwellings counted 70% were separate houses, 13% were townhouses and 16% were apartments. Obviously, the vast majority of households continue the Australian dream of living in a detached house on a block of land, which today is likely to be in an outer suburban residential development such as those being rolled out in Melbourne's Outer West, such as Melton or in Adelaide's Mount Barker growth area. It is also worth noting that the ABS found that:

> *The average floor area of new residential dwellings has remained similar between 2002-03 to 2021-22. Despite this, average floor area sizes increased in the interim years between 2005-06 to 2011-12. The average floor area of new houses increased to a maximum of 245.9m² in 2008-09, whilst the average floor area of other residential dwellings peaked in 2009-10 at 146.6m².*

The ABS also remind us that these large houses are being built on smaller blocks, especially in the outer suburbs, for example the ABS statistics show:

> *The average site area of new houses in Australian capital cities has decreased by 13% (64 square metres) over the last ten years, from 496 square metres in 2012 to 432 square metres in 2021.*

Looking at the growing demand for apartment living within the multi-cultural community, especially those residents from Asian countries, Christina Ho in her article, *Higher density and diversity: apartments are Australia at its most multicultural*, (2018) states that:

> *While apartment living is unfamiliar to many Australian-born residents, Australian apartment lifestyles and norms can be even further from what migrants are used to. Our research, based on interviews with Sydney-based strata managers, shows that social and cultural differences can contribute to tensions within apartment buildings. These might be about shoes left in common areas, or washing hung on balconies, or "offensive" cooking smells wafting beyond kitchen walls.*
>
> *Tensions between residents with different lifestyles are not limited to residents from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Tensions also arise between residents of different ages, different household types and with different working schedules. Cultural difference is but one of many factors that can contribute to tensions in apartment buildings.*
>
> *While multicultural apartment blocks may pose challenges, they also offer opportunities for residents to enjoy the richness of a diverse and cosmopolitan environment. This is one of the enormous attractions of urban life. For many apartment residents, it's available on an everyday level. With growing numbers of urban residents living in apartment buildings that are also culturally diverse, more efforts to foster co-operation and understanding are vital for realising the potential of these urban spaces to become productive hubs of everyday multiculturalism in Australia.* (Ho, C. et al. 2018)

In addition to the traditional notion of an "Appartment Building" we have seen the evolution of a new model of high quality architecturally designed medium-density housing as delivered by Nightingale Housing. The Nightingale approach of designing medium density buildings which are affordable and sustainable, at the same time having a social focus on building a sense of community. These projects are focused on inner-city living, close to public transport and services provide an attractive alternative model for apartment living.

3.3 First Nations People: Housing Needs

Writing about the need for culturally appropriate homes, in 2019 Kim Sinclair, then CEO of SEARMS Aboriginal Corporation, wrote in an online article titled, *In need of culturally appropriate homes,* in which she states:

> *I find housing policy generally to be patriarchal, non-cohesive and disengaged from the communities it is supposed to be delivering housing to. The housing system is complex, with Federal and State/Territory governments making numerous attempts to address home ownership and affordable rental housing barriers – some successfully, others not so. Layered on top of the general housing policy are the Aboriginal housing policies –again a piecemeal approach, designed and implemented by non-Aboriginal people. My short answer is that Aboriginal housing policy is not fit for purpose and does not have enough input from the community that it is serving.*
>
> *A one-size-fits all approach doesn't allow for appreciation of how deeply connections to country and kinship groups affect improving outcomes for Aboriginal families. There is so much diversity within the Aboriginal nations of Australia that an umbrella policy will not cover it all. Any policy framework to improve key outcomes for the Aboriginal community needs to be flexible enough to be localised and that has not been the case. (Sinclair 2019)*

Once again, I shall quote extensively from Paul Memmott's 2003 work to contextualise the issues associated with the need for culturally appropriate housing for the First Nations community and specifically the role of the design and planning professions, when he states that:

> *The cultural design paradigm involves the use of models of culturally distinct behaviour to inform definitions of Aboriginal housing needs. Its premise is that to competently design appropriate residential accommodation for Aboriginal people who have traditionally oriented lifestyles, architects must understand the nature of those lifestyles, particularly in the domiciliary context. This knowledge also increases understanding of the needs of groups who have undergone cultural changes, including those in rural, urban and metropolitan settings, by helping to identify those aspects of their customary domiciliary behaviour that have been retained.*
>
> *Generally Central Australian Aboriginal people request that their houses look like standard Western housing. They make a reasonable assumption that if this is the preferred housing for non-Indigenous people then alternatives may be inferior. Rarely do town campers feel the need to use the appearance of their houses to make a statement about Aboriginal identity; this may be because traditional culture is still vibrant and Western buildings are seen as having little relevance to its continuance. Many residents move frequently between the town and bush, town camps, and houses. An individual house may have little significance to its residents other than as a place to seek shelter, security and useful services.*
>
> *Designing housing for traditionally oriented Aboriginal people requires an understanding of how they use their environment in and around their dwellings. Complex, sometimes conflicting, cultural, behavioural and climatic factors need to be considered. Western-style houses need to be flexible and robust enough to accommodate extended family groups and fluctuating populations of visitors without causing undue stress. Housing aspirations continually change as more houses become available and residents gain greater experience, so well designed houses should be adaptable to future needs.* (Memmott, P. 2003:46)

Further to Memmott's writing above, AHURI's (2007) Positioning Paper No. 98, titled *Flexible guidelines for the design of remote Indigenous community housing* states that:

> *While Indigenous culture is dynamic and has accommodated many aspects of western lifestyles, many customary behaviour and cultural practices also remain and have impacts on the design (and costs) of housing in remote Indigenous communities. These include: large and complex households, mobility, a desire for wide sight-lines from a house, different seasonal use of spaces, outdoor-indoor living, outdoor cooking and socializing and what Memmott and Moran call "culturally distinct behaviours in domiciliary environments", including: "forms of approach and departure behaviour, external orientation and sensory communication between domiciles, sleeping behaviour, cooking behaviour and other hearth-oriented behaviours, and particular storage techniques for artefacts and resources". (*AHURI 2007:41)

Some practical guidance on design approaches can be obtained from government sources such as AHURI and the *National Indigenous Housing Guide* (1999-2002-2006), Health Habitat for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers' Working Group on Indigenous Housing, Canberra.

> *The guide provides practical advice on the design, selection, installation, construction and maintenance of "health hardware" in houses and other aspects of environmental health, such as dealing with dust, insects and dogs. It was intended as a practical resource for people involved in providing housing to Indigenous people, including community councils, Indigenous housing workers, council chief executive officers, architects, project managers, tradespeople and government officials.*
>
> www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/housing_guide_info_intro.pdf

4. Culturally Appropriate Housing

This research has identified extensive references addressing important considerations in terms of the location and setting of culturally appropriate housing for both First Nations People and migrant communities who have settled in Australia, especially since the Second World War.

In her 2012 PhD thesis *The Adaptable Dwelling*: *a response to cultural diversity*, Celia Holmes, writing about the housing needs of the culturally diverse community and the migrant house experience from a New Zealand perspective, suggests that:

> *The house both encloses space (the physical building) and excludes space (everything outside it). The house therefore nicely reflects how a person sees themselves. Claire Cooper (1974), comments that most of us have had the experience of moving from one house to another, and of finding the new dwelling initially strange, un-welcoming, and perhaps even hostile. There becomes a greater disconnection for immigrants when the context they are moving into does not reflect their culture and spatial needs in relation to privacy and size.* (Holmes, C. 2012:12)

This statement clearly acknowledges the challenges and emotional upheaval faced both during the process of changing homes and the increased pressures of migrating to new cultural environments with unfamiliar building fabric such as new housing typologies. I shall return to Holmes highly relevant Thesis in later sections.

The writing quoted in this section include but is not limited to the following authors:

- Amos Rapoport, his 1969 book *House, Form & Culture* is a seminal discussion on the need to understand the relationship between a people's culture and the dwellings they live in.
- Michael Findlay, his 2011 research and article in the Australian Planner focused on the provision of Social Housing for diverse communities.
- Kelum Palipane and Iderlina Mateo-Babiano, from the University of Melbourne, their 2021 article focusses on designing for migrant communities.
- Paul Memmott edited the 2003 Housing Design in Indigenous Australia publication published by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.
- AHURI's 2007 Positioning Paper No. 98, titled *Flexible guidelines for the design of remote Indigenous community housing.*
- Ella Davidson's 2009 Thesis titled, *The Relevance of Traditional Practices in Planning for Discrete Aboriginal Communities*, University of Queensland, Aust.
- Zulkeplee Othman's 2017 article by titled, *Privacy, modesty, hospitality, and the design of Muslim homes: A literature review*, published in Frontiers of Architectural Research. Vol. 4.
- Wan Ismail. et, al, published the 2017 guide to designing for Islam, titled *The Establishment of Islamic Dwelling Principles for the Malaysian Communities.*

4.1 Location & External Issues

Rapoport proposed a theory of the built environment, suggesting it "consists of fixed feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, etc.), semi-fixed feature elements, and non-fixed feature elements" here we consider Rapoport's fixed feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, etc.) and how they impact on the cultural appropriateness of the dwelling. This section considered the cultural needs of the Australian culturally diverse population and the specific cultural needs of our First Nations People in relation to the location/setting of a house and the external aspects of the dwelling. In both cases consideration will be given to both the negative and positive impacts on cultural life of setting and external features of dwellings.

A. Culturally Diverse Community considerations

In *The Adaptable Dwelling*: *a response to cultural diversity*, Holmes writes about locational issues to consider and suggests that:

> *The exterior becomes important as it is where the wider perceptions of the inhabitant are negotiated and should be designed with careful consideration of the surrounding context.*
>
> *However, it has also been noted that limiting symbolism creates barriers to integration within the community, as focus is placed on the interior with little interaction with the external. Rapoport (1981) comments that identifying elements immigrants may add to their new homes are thus concentrated to the dwelling's interior in the form of an 'aesthetic complex'3.* (Holmes, C. 2012:12)

Indeed, growing up in outer suburban Melbourne around Oakleigh in the 1950s where there was a concentration of recent Italian and Greek migrants, I am well aware of the desire to personalise the very basic building stock of the area with cast concrete Doric, Ionic or Corinthian columns either side of the front door and or concrete "Greco/Roman" statues on the front lawn. That is if the front lawn had not been turned into an extension of the backyard "veggie-patch."

Later waves of migrants from Viet Nam were also great decorators of their home's exterior with ethnically appropriate iconography. However, not all migrant groups have been so ready to advertise their ethnicity in this way, rather maintaining anonymity, and maintaining the existing suburban appearance, while concentrating their cultural symbolism to the interior of the house.

Acknowledging that there are important questions to be considered in terms of location are highlighted by Michael Findlay who has a focus on the provision of Social Housing in South Australia.

Michael Findlay in his 2011 article *Social housing for cultural diversity*, states that:

> *When allocating housing to migrant groups, providers identify the integration of housing within the neighbourhood as a key issue. The need for social housing to 'not stand out' from other dwellings in the street or neighbourhood is also a common theme in literature on migrant housing (NHF,1998; Social Planning Consortium [SPC],1985) and in South Australia this has resulted in the housing for culturally diverse groups being indistinguishable from the standard Australian house.*

And

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While many migrants may not want their homes to stand out from their neighbours, they may want neighbours who have similar backgrounds and lived experiences that help build a sense of shared community during the resettlement process. This is a theme picked up by Palipane and Mateo-Barbiano in their 2021 paper.

Kelum Palipane and Iderlina Mateo-Babiano in their 2021 article *Designing-in difference*, report that:

> *Australia's post-war migration policies brought war refugees from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the former Yugoslavia; but also encouraged immigrants from Malta, the Netherlands and Greece to start a new life in the Lucky Country.*
>
> *Many of these migrants chose to settle in areas where people from their home country already lived or that were relatively close to government-provided temporary hostels or their first place of accommodation.*
>
> *As a result, ethnic clusters sprung up in several suburbs around Melbourne including Brunswick, Coburg, Thornbury and Oakleigh.* (Palipane, K & Mateo-Babiano, I. 2021)

The positive benefit of ethnic clusters is that it is often supported by culturally relevant local retail outlets, community services and places of worship. Unfortunately, in some of the world cities, such ethnic-clusters have become ethnic-ghettos with the associated negative connotations. Ted Cantle in his 2008 book *Community Cohesion: a New Framework for Race and Diversity* explores many of these issues, especially in the context of British cities.

B. First Nations Community considerations

It is important to address the locational considerations in giving housing options to First Nations People with the awareness that location must consider issues for both remote and urban housing. While many of the issues listed below are particularly relevant in remote settlements, on Country or in rural towns, the are deeply held and equally relevant in urban settlements.

Paul Memmott in his 2003 article, *Housing Design in Indigenous Australia,* states that in traditional settlement gatherings:

> *A complex set of spatial rules based on kinship is expressed in the arrangement of a customary camp or settlement, and designers need to understand the relevant socio-spatial behaviours enacted in Indigenous households. In traditionally oriented communities, avoidance rules applicable to adult brothers and sisters, parents-In-law and children-in-law, need to be strictly observed. Feelings of tension and stress can be created by poorly designed room layouts and lines of vision.* (Memmott, P. 2003:29)

Memmott and Alison Page in their 2021 book *Building on Country*, also provide deep insights into kinship and community behavioural considerations and consultation protocols that can inform planners and Architects on culturally appropriate layouts for dwellings and internal spaces.

AHURI Positioning Paper No. 98: *Flexible guidelines for the design of remote Indigenous community housing* Reinforces the Memmott statement regarding the need to understand socio-spatial behaviours in First Nations housing, and states that:

> *The need for clear sight-lines from and to houses, for example in response to certain avoidance behaviours, privacy of access to toilets, rules against certain people using the same toilets, and the need for separate accommodation for young unmarried men and women are significant outcomes of moiety and inter- and intra-generational relationships to which housing designers needs to respond. The fluid use of outdoor spaces for cooking and socializing is another cultural more to which designers must respond for houses to function successfully. This may necessitate alternative house designs, responses to aspect and breezes and allotment spacings. It may also involve designs that challenge western notions of what a "house" is by proposing living environments composed of bedrooms isolated from, but surrounding, a centralised kitchen-storage-ablution (*AHURI 2007:41)

Elle Davidson, in her 2009 PhD Thesis, *The Relevance of Traditional Practices in Planning for Discrete Aboriginal Communities*, identified that a key issue in planing First Nations settlement is the application of the traditional grid structure layout of Western planning and its failure to respond to "Country". Davidson argues that there is a lack of consideration of existing domiciliary practices of the Aboriginal people, therefore she states that:

> *… Aboriginal people are required to affirm their relationships through certain deeds and living in close proximity to close kin is essential to ensure that they can be carried out effectively. Without being able to decide who lives in a neighbouring property causes difficult situations where a kinship network is usually broken up within a settlement.* (Davidson, E. 2009:49)

And

> *Due to the lack of interrelations between allotments introduced with European Planning mechanisms, neighbouring properties are unable to decide who lives in close proximity to their domiciliary space. This has created tension, as not only are kinship networks broken up, people residing next door may be from a language groups that the residents should not have been affiliated with in a traditional sense. It is therefore appreciated that a great deal of tension would exist between these two dwellings, which would have immense effects on the relations between residents.* (Davidson, E. 2009:72)

Voices such as Davidson and her colleagues, members of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) "Planning with Country Knowledge Circle" are important in raising awareness of the issues and providing guidance in the way that planning and design professionals can engage with First Nations People to gain understanding of the locational issues and relevant project specific cultural protocols required.

4.2 Internal Issues

As Rapoport *proposed in addition to "fixed feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, etc.) there are semi-fixed feature elements ('furnishings,' interior and exterior of all sorts), and non-fixed feature elements (people and their activities and behaviours)."*

Rapoport builds on the "semi-fixed" elements in his book, *House, Form & Culture*, when he reminds us that a communities' different world views and ways of life influence the *furniture we use and how we use it, the food we eat and how we prepare it, and consequently the houses and settlements in which we live and how we use them. (Rapoport, A. 1968:49)*

It is the internal house environment where cultural influences are played out in relation to the semi-fixed and non-fixed features of the home. It is also the environment where cultural groups express their cultural and religious behaviours and practices through displays of their arts and religious iconography.

> *Research indicates that the internal space is most important for cultural symbolism, it is where the ideas of cultural traditions can be illustrated without outside negative perceptions. However, for a dwelling to do this, it must consider systems of beliefs imbedded in different cultures*.
>
> *It is the interior that should allow for cultural continuation. The interior is where the immigrant is able to express cultural symbolism, memory and ritual without judgement. Dawson (1998) comments that the interior becomes an environment that allows for immigrants to maintain traditional practices and routines that make them feel most at home. The interior should be thought of as the space which provokes cultural meaning and symbolism, linking the immigrant to their cultural background.* (Holmes, C. 2013)

It is important to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of cultural meaning and symbolism. It might be applied to the type and arrangement of furniture installed in the home, the way family functions relate to the use of internal spaces for family gatherings or personal worship etc. Many of the religious groups resident in Australia have strict requirements around food groups permitted and food preparation practices that impact on the layout and design of food preparation areas in the home, especially relating to Islam and Judaism.

A. Culturally Diverse Community considerations

The extent of culturally diverse practices that need consideration presents a major challenge for housing providers who are not building a home for an individual client, where the architect can be briefed to meet the specific cultural practices and required internal configurations. Michael Findlay has written specifically about the challenges of delivering Social Housing for culturally diverse migrant communities. Findlay suggests that:

> *Social housing providers have acknowledged (Findlay,2009) that some migrant groups might require a different house layout and recognise their preference for some internal rezoning to separate men and women when entertaining. Entrance or address and approach to the house and the way it maintains privacy from the outside world are also very important for some cultural groups who want the opportunity to screen visitors and direct them to specific areas of the house (SPC,1985; Sarkissian and*

> *Stenberg,2003). Many new houses have front doors opening directly into living areas, a layout that does not respect this custom.* (Findlay, M. 2011:5)

Zulkeplee Othman and colleagues have focused specifically on the internal requirements of a Muslim household. They name three main principles to be adhered when designing the Muslim home. There are: *privacy, a safe and private place for personal and family's sanctuary; modesty, a home with spaces for religious rituals and activities, further defined by humility in design through economical and sustainable designs, and; hospitality, a dwelling with opportunities to extend hospitality to neighbours and enhance relationships with the society.*

In *Privacy, modesty, hospitality, and the design of Muslim homes: A literature review* Zulkeplee Othman et.al. outline the religious requirements for a Muslim home, such as:

> *In Muslim homes, privacy is the main factor that shapes how Muslim home dwellers "plan, build, perceive, and use their interior home spaces". Privacy in traditional Islamic homes involves four main layers of privacy: (a) privacy between neighbors ' dwellings, (b) privacy between males and females, (c) privacy between family members inside a home, and (d) individual privacy). Such privacy requirements are usually met through careful design by ensuring the safety of the family and separating the private life from public association.*
>
> *The domestic domain of a Muslim home is regarded as a female space (Sobh and Belk, 2011). Women in the Middle Eastern countries embrace gender-segregated spaces that are enforced by the social system and turn these spaces into their respective domains. (*Othman et.al 2017)

For those looking for a more detailed description of requirements for the Muslim home, Wan Ismail. et, al, published the 2017 guide to designing for Islam, titled *The Establishment of Islamic Dwelling Principles for the Malaysian Communities.*

The guide details the requirements in relation to the following principles:

- *Orientation - Qiblah Direction*
- *Space Configuration (Zoning)*
- *Privacy – Visual - Acoustical - and Sense of Smell*
- *Internal Layout - Main Entrance - Living & Dining – Bedroom - Prayer Room - Kitchen*

Ismail et al state that Islam requires that homes be built:

> *… in accordance with these principles and therefore designers should treat these principles as guidelines of their dwelling design. It is clear here that the design of a Muslim dwelling should be the product of the Islamic beliefs and values of the inhabitants*. (Ismail, W. et, al. (2017)

This raises the question how do families adjust their cultural lifestyles and behaviours when adapting existing western designed houses?

As with the designing of a Muslim Home, creating a space that reflects cultural heritage and religious values is deeply important for many Jewish families.

> *In every Jewish home, the design choices tend to blend practicality with symbolism, enriching daily life with reminders of faith and community. From the display of heirloom menorahs to the placement of kosher kitchen appliances, these elements serve a dual purpose of functionality and spiritual significance. The dining room is often the center stage for observing the Sabbath and festivals, where family and friends gather around a thoughtfully set table, highlighting the importance of hospitality and shared memory in Jewish culture.*

In designing a Jewish home, certain architectural features are integral for embracing religious traditions. These features are particularly important in the Kosher Kitchen design for Meat and Dairy Separation, involving sinks, countertops, utensils, cookware, and storage solutions.
https://houseofcoco.net/design-elements-of-a-jewish-home/

These brief examples of some cultural impacts on the design of housing for diverse communities highlight the fact that even Culturally Literate planning and design professionals cannot be expected to have in-depth cultural awareness of the specific cultural needs of every group in the population. Therefore, requiring meaningful consultation with community members to develop clear design guidelines to, where possible, deliver culturally responsive housing outcomes.

B. First Nations Community considerations

The research has shown the needs of large families and accommodating visitors being key factors in the internal layout of First Nations homes. Once again Paul Memmott offers valuable insights into the interior house requirements of First Nations Peoples, based on traditional ways of life and especially the impacts on housing in relation to visiting family and friends through kinship obligations. Memmott reminds us that due to elaborate kinship practices homes are often crowded with visitors putting excessive pressure on space and services. Bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms need to be better designed to accommodate these practices. Memmott suggests that *strategies that have been developed by architects include the provision of generous verandas and equipping yards with facilities like properly drained taps, toilets, and shade.* (Memmott, P. 2003:31)

Also, in relation to housing in remote settlements Ali Rajabipour et, al. in their 2023 *Factors to be considered in the design of indigenous communities houses, with a* focus *on Australian first nation housing in the Northern Territory* report suggest that it could be beneficial if designs decentralised the essential components of a house to allow for expansion and reconfiguring over time as required. Other design considerations include the interrelationship of family members within the house layout to avoid family disputes and consider the placement of elders in proximity to carers, but away from busy and noisy areas of the house.

Rajabipour et, al *suggest that homes should be designed around a* central open or covered cooking area as *closer to traditional food preparation methods is preferred in remote communities. In general, an open living plan with suitable shade, which reduces heat and protects residents from rain, is more consistent with Indigenous people's lifestyle.* (Rajabipour, A. 2023:7)

Once again it is obviously exceedingly difficult for large First Nations families to accommodate traditional patterns of behaviour and kinship obligations if required to live in a standard three-bedroom suburban home, be it private ownership or government social housing.

Davidson sums up this situation and suggests that:

> *By not considering Aboriginal preferences throughout the planning process, Government officials are causing undue stress and are requiring the Aboriginal people to constantly adapt to unfamiliar environments. With careful consideration and community consultation, discrete Aboriginal settlements can be planned and designed to permit traditional practices whilst delivering the basic standard of living expected by all Australians*. (Davidson, E. 2009:84)

Given the incredible diversity of Australia which is reported to have not only the world's oldest continuous culture but also non-Indigenous Australians who identify with over two hundred different ancestries. Therefore, it is clearly impossible to meet all the diverse cultural needs of this sector of the population, however planning and design practitioners can seek to improve their Cultural Literacy and especially their awareness that culture matters in the design of dwellings for our diverse communities.

6. Conclusions

In summary I believe that on the evidence presented in this Research Report that there are three key areas to focus on, if planners and architects are to achieve the aim of providing culturally appropriate housing for our diverse communities, these are:

1. getting recognition of the cultural housing needs of our diverse communities,
2. getting culturally appropriate housing needs on the national and state housing policy agenda,
3. getting culturally appropriate new housing designed and built and acknowledging the challenges of adapting existing housing stock to meet the diverse cultural needs.

6.1 Recognising culturally diverse needs

My literature review for this research paper has established that there is a range of valuable articles, books and PhD Thesis addressing issues around the concept of culturally appropriate housing. For example, architect Amos Rapoport was an early champion of considering the relationship between culture and housing, his 1969 book "House-Form-and-Culture" provides a compelling argument for the need to build greater cultural awareness within the architectural profession.

In addition to the academic literature mentioned above, research institutions such as AHURI, AIFS and NHSAC are important sources of data and research in the housing field. Writing for AHURI and independently both Paul Memmott and Elle Davidson have made a significant contribution to raising awareness of Fist Nations Peoples cultural housing needs. The contribution from Michael Findlay is valuable in terms of addressing the Culturally And Linguistically Diverse People (CALD) in Public Housing, a critical entry point for many recent migrants, highlighting not only the importance of understanding housing needs but giving practical examples of how public housing providers are addressing these needs.

On the negative side the current housing supply crisis overshadows the need to accommodate socio-cultural considerations. While it is not surprising that the need to provide housing for a growing population and help homeless people to find a place to live takes a priority with policy makers. However, we need to argue that not just First Nations and CALD people, but all people have a cultural lived experience that should be taken into consideration when planning and designing housing options.

The 2019 South Australian Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Policy Discussion Paper, *People and Neighbourhoods* makes only five references to culture and they are mainly in reference to cultural heritage, the document does suggest that there is a need to provide the flexibility to develop a range of housing types to respond to demographic trends, but unfortunately does not provide a discussion or actual strategies in reference to the need for culturally appropriate dwelling forms.

Also in South Australia, SA Government's *Our Housing Future 2020-2030* strategy, proposes to place the customer at the centre of its housing strategies and of relevance to this report it does make reference to "cultural inclusion" including stating that: *This strategy aims to provide a housing and support system that benefits all, while recognising there are unique needs and specific challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*. However, despite the cultural inclusion

reference, apart from Key Strategy 3.8 which suggests that the government will address the: … *particular disadvantages faced by Aboriginal South Australians through the delivery of an Aboriginal Housing Strategy,* there are no strategies referencing developing housing designs to meet diversity of cultural needs.

More recently, in 2024 the current SA Government released a "Housing Roadmap" that aims to ensure that "all South Australians have housing that meet their household's needs". Although the Roadmap refers to supplying a "diversity of housing stock to meet diverse and evolving needs of South Australian families", once again there are no actual strategies or discussion regarding the cultural needs when housing CALD or First Nations peoples.

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6.2 Policy and Planning Strategies

Urban policies mainly focus on structural issues such as transport, infrastructure and housing markets, others seek to address social, economic, and environmental issues. Addressing cultural issues at a planning and policy level is a complex task, especially in a culturally diverse population such as found in Australia, but I would argue that we cannot develop sustainable housing policy without addressing the patterns of cultural behaviours that constitute the lived experience of our diverse people. The 2020 AHURI discussion paper *Building cities whose form reflects the cultures, lifestyles and future needs of Australians* suggests that the cultural dimension needs to be strengthened in relation to developing built-environment policy.

The PIA 2023 report *Planning for the housing we need: Ten ways planning can support housing affordability and diversity*, fails to make any reference to culture or cultural diversity, it does refer to designs that *satisfies occupant needs.* The report suggests that diversity needs to be considered by noting that *"demographic change means demand for affordable and diverse housing will persist.* And that *Planning codes and assessment pathways promote housing which satisfies occupant needs and incorporates sustainable design principles".* (PIA 2023:5).

In addition to developing policy that address cultural diversity and housing supply, the planning and design of housing for First Nations People has been an ongoing challenge for the planning and architectural professions. It is good to see there have been recent advances in raising professional awareness of relevant cultural issues. For example, the PIA have set up a "Planning with Country Knowledge Circle" and states that; "PIA remains committed to working towards creating better outcomes for Country and community, rethinking planning practice and decolonising planning systems."

Also, the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) have set up an online "First Nations Resource Hub." The Hub provides educational materials, architectural guidelines for creating buildings and spaces appropriate for First Nations cultures, and relevant cultural protocols for engaging with First Nations communities. The AIA also provides a First Nations Professional Development program including a Belonging Series which the AIA states "explores the concept of a diverse people, a great place and how and where we create spaces to come together".

6.3 Delivering culturally appropriate housing.

As discussed, there are policy, planning, and design challenges in providing culturally sensitive housing in the context of the housing supply crisis. However, given Australia's diverse population, the education and professional development of built environment professionals should focus on training planners and designers to plan and design culturally. Key to being culturally responsive to the diverse needs of the population is to gain Cultural Literacy and the skills of Intercultural Dialogue in order to understand the diversity of needs and then to have the skills to deliver housing that is responsive to cultural needs, especially dwellings that have a internal layout that allows flexibility for different cultural groups to adapt to their specific needs.

6.3.1 Cultural Literacy, Intercultural Dialogue and The Cultural Brief

In terms of planning and design professionals gaining cultural literacy competency, it needs to be acknowledged that it is impossible for individual practitioners to be culturally literate about the hugely diverse Australian population, especially given the diversity of First Nations People and multiple migrant communities. What is important is that practitioners gain the confidence to enter intercultural dialogue with relevant community members to explore cultural practices and iconography that will impact on the choice of housing forms and configurations.

An important task for practitioners is to find key community stakeholders who can tell them about gaps in service delivery and help to understand the issues facing the community. Stakeholders can include religious or community leaders, community organisations, ethnospecific organisations, larger multicultural organisations, or multicultural peak bodies. It is also important to avoid the local community "Gate Keeper" who might dominate and provide a biased interpretation of community needs. Therefore, practitioners need to find out which individuals and or organisations have the most contact with the residents' practitioners are planning and designing with.

The use of consultation strategies such as First Nations "Yarning Circles" or the "Intercultural Listening & Learning Circle" which I have described in detail in my 2007 book *More than Just a Bridge: planning and designing culturally*, and on the www.planning-culturally.com website are valuable processes through which to:

A. listen to the community and learn about the cultural practices and needs of community members,
B. consider the implications of addressing these needs in planning and design terms,
C. reporting back to the community on the issues raised and potential design or planning responses to deliver on or mitigate impacts on the identified cultural needs.

When working directly with a client of client group, in addition to general discussions about their cultural and religious background, it can be a valuable activity to work with them to develop a "*Cultural Brief*". A cultural brief should detail the cultural behavioural patterns and visual symbolism required in the design of homes for the client. The brief should identify the specific outcomes required to make the home's external and internal design culturally appropriate.

Another approach would be a "*Cultural Needs Check List*," which may include but not be limited to, questions such as:

- Are there design features associated with the external appearance and or orientation of the house that should be considered?
- What cultural considerations need to be addressed in designing the entry threshold and arrival experience to make family and visitors welcome?
- What type of spaces and movement flow patterns between these spaces are appropriate?
- What special cultural requirements are there to maintain separation between family only areas and space to entertain visitors?
- What materials, textures, colours, and cultural/religious symbols are appropriate?
- What specific cultural food storage, preparation, serving, and consumption need to be designed for?
- What special spaces are required as places of worship?
- What is required in connecting the inside to the outdoors?

6.3.2 Flexible Design Options

The notion of flexibility has existed in architecture for generations, today ideas of internal movement, and flexible spaces has led to the open-plan home, which it is believed is more able to respond and adapt to different occupants' needs in terms of spatial planning and room functionality. Modern construction techniques and materials should provide for a more fluid and transformable space, more responsive to cultural needs. Flexibility can be determined in two ways, first the capability to have different uses, and secondly the capability of different arrangements, meaning space could be designed to be suitable for multiple functions and or provide the potential to rearrange the internal configuration of spaces.

Therefore, flexibility can be embodied in the design through initial planning and design of the dwelling and or using flexible elements and partitions to reconfigure space as required. Adaptation might be to maximise cultural or religious requirements of daily activities and or events such as accommodating visitors, gender separation and food preparation etc.

"While the immigrant contribution to nation-building (in Australia) in cultural terms is well-known", say the authors of *Immigrant Industry Building Post-war Australia*, "Its everyday spatial, architectural and landscape transformations remain unexamined. This is reflected in the physical houses we can buy. Once we can buy property or own a home, the desire to see one's culture in that home rises to another level."

As previously discussed, the majority of Australia's existing housing stock has been designed for a typical western style nuclear-family and is poorly suited to the needs of contemporary families with diverse cultural needs. It is therefore no surprise that cultures who have vastly different values and family structures find these dwellings a poor cultural fit and can struggle to adapt their lifestyle to the limitation of the dwelling spaces.

Final Comment

It is hoped that by bringing together the preceding academic and industry discourse that this Research Paper can contribute to raising awareness to this especially critical issue. I acknowledge that in the current housing crisis, it is not possible to deliver culturally appropriate housing for all of Australia's diverse communities,

however I encourage planners and designers to seek better culturally sensitive dwelling outcomes wherever possible, especially when delivering homes for First Nations People.

Authors Note:

This Research Report is the result of independent research without support from any institution and therefore has been limited to academic open access literature available on-line and published books and journals. It is therefore acknowledged that while the findings have been limited to the available sources of information and perspectives it is hoped that the overview provides a balanced and thoughtful perspective on the issues associated with developing culturally appropriate homes in contemporary Australia.

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Relevant Websites:

The following URLs are a selection of relevant sites to visit during this research, but not necessarily references. These websites have been included for those who wish to undertake further reading regarding housing issues.

Academic, Government & Policy

ANU Kim Sinclair: https://cbe.anu.edu.au/news/2019/need-culturally-appropriate-homes

SA Housing Roadmap: www.housing.sa.gov.au/about-us/SA-Housing-Roadmap

SA Our Housing Futures: www.housing.sa.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/our-housing-future

Built Environment Organisations

AIA: www.architecture.com.au/advocacy-news/policy/first-nations-resource-hub

American Institute of Architects: www.aiany.org/membership/oculus-magazine/article/summer-2019/op-ed-architecture-for-a-multicultural-society/

PIA: www.planning.org.au/pia/policy-advocacy/knowledge-circle

Royal Institute of British Architects: www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-horizons-2034-designing-for-an-increasingly-diverse-population?srsltid=AfmBOoove5sDo7cmwxgJJHI8R3pi

Industry sites

Architecture Au: https://architectureau.com/articles/the-shrinking-dream-household-diversity-and-changing-house-designs/

Architectural Practice: www.hamessharley.com.au/knowledge/cultural-diversity-in-design

Architectural Review: www.australiandesignreview.com/architecture/navigating-nationality-australias-multicultural-built-landscape/

Building for the Multicultural: www.planetizen.com/node/39956

Building for Multicultural community: www.southernurbanism.org/p/design-building-for-the-multicultural

Designs for multicultural living: www.nytimes.com/1999/04/03/style/IHT-designs-for-living-in-a-multicultural-society.html

Jewish Home Design: https://houseofcoco.net/design-elements-of-a-jewish-home/

Multicultural Modernism: www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/architectural-styles/an-overview-of-multicultural-modernism/

Muslim Home Design: https://medium.com/@seembu/designing-an-islamic-home-ddc5a2964bde

Number one property site: https://numberoneproperty.net/en/news/cultural-influences-on-housing-design-and-architecture

South Asian Home design: https://saaricollective.com.au/culture/blog/reclaiming-south-asian-culture-in-modern-home-design/