



## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 18 – August, 2007  
ISSN 1832-2379

Our stated mission is “to develop a leading edge Home Modification information clearing project designed with the assistance of, and accessible to, the full range of industry and consumer target groups.”

### **Findings from, and evaluation of, the HACC MDS program**

By Lisa Hodges

You may have been wondering what happens to the information you provide to HACC about the home modification and home maintenance jobs you do. Well, each state and territory collects information about the services that receive funding under the HACC program and records the data in a Minimum Data Set (MDS). Each state and territory's information is then entered into the HACC National Data Repository System.

HMinfo requested access to each state and territory's MDS relevant to home modifications and home maintenance from 2001/2002 to 2005/2006, and conducted some statistical analyses on available data. Some results of the preliminary analysis are listed:

#### **Who accessed the services?**

All states and territories recorded that the most common age group to receive HACC funded home maintenance were people 75 years plus. The only place where results differed was the Northern Territory, where people aged 18 to 64 had the highest level of service use.

This difference in distribution of service use may be explained by the higher proportion of indigenous Australians living in the Northern Territory compared to the National population (ABS, 2001a). Aboriginal Australian people have been to have a younger than average mortality age, compared to other Australians (ABS, 2001b). All states and territories that provide HACC funded home modifications data noted a similar age distribution (although it should be noted that the Northern Territory and Victoria did not provide such data).

New South Wales accounted for the greatest proportion (47%) of HACC funded home modifications, as recorded by the 2005/2006 HACC MDS - whereas both Victoria (36%) and Western Australia (21%) accounted for a greater percentage of HACC funded home maintenance than New South Wales (19%), as recorded in the 2001/2002 to 2005/2006 HACC minimum data sets.

Further analysis of the 2005/2006 HACC MDS suggested that the presence of other HACC funded services could predict the likelihood of use of HACC funded home modification and home maintenance. Home modification was best predicted by the presence of/ provision of “other goods/equipment” (see the HACC Data Dictionary (Home and Community Care, 1998)) or, if this service was absent, the presence of support and mobility aids, or the absence of home maintenance.

Home maintenance was predicted by the absence of home-based nursing care and centre-based allied health care services or, if nursing care at home was present, the presence of domestic assistance and meals provided to the home. This was not to say that the presence or absence of these other services conclusively predicted home modification or home maintenance, rather, there was a correlation between services.

#### **Was there great variation across time?**

When exploring trends over time, some jurisdictions appeared to have increased or decreased at a greater proportion, compared to other jurisdictions. For example, New South Wales did not deviate

greatly in the amount spent on home modifications across time, however Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania all displayed greater variation.

## What was being measured?

The results of the data analysis showed many marked differences between jurisdictions and raised questions as to the cause of the differences. New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory have recorded spending significantly more than other jurisdictions on home modifications consistently across the time period examined. This raises the following questions: is this difference the result of many more complex home modifications being HACC funded in these jurisdictions, or was there a difference between jurisdictions as to how modifications were recorded? Did all jurisdictions record the costs of both materials and labour, or rather one or the other? Did they record only the HACC contribution, or the entire cost of the work?

## Issues of data quality

Issues of data quality were noted in the increasing number of miscoded data, for example, missing gender information has increased markedly across the time examined. Also, the presence of improbable or impossible variables was noted, for example, users aged 0 to 17 who were recorded as receiving an Aged Pension.

### Upcoming Publications:

- ▶ Modification or Relocation: Summary Bulletin
- ▶ Home Water Management: Summary Bulletin
- ▶ Gardening at Home: Summary Bulletin
- ▶ Research on the cost-benefits of caring at home
- ▶ Research on environmental determinants and interventions in the home pertaining to aggressive and self-injurious behaviour of people with a cognitive impairment

### Go to the Resource Library to view these publications

- ▶ Home Modification Information Clearinghouse Annual Report 2005 – 2006
- ▶ Understanding Aboriginal Australians for More Effective Provision of Home Modification Services

## Conclusion

The HACC MDS can provide a great deal of information about who is accessing HACC funded home modifications and home maintenance. At a policy level, however, fine tuning the cohesion of data collection between jurisdictions could only serve to paint a more detailed and comparable picture. The issues of data quality, and of possible inconsistencies in definitions across states and territories, could be minimised by producing nationwide guidelines for definitions, data entry and coding, and by providing thorough training as to the procedure of data recording. At a service level, ensuring that all requested data is both provided, and correctly coded and entered, will help ensure that the HACC MDS is accurately informing those that dictate policy as to what is really occurring in the field.

## References

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- Home and Community Care. (1998). *HACC data dictionary*. Version 1.0. Retrieved 25 July 2007. from [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/hacc-pub\\_mds\\_gdd.htm/\\$FILE/mds\\_guide.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/hacc-pub_mds_gdd.htm/$FILE/mds_guide.pdf).
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## Publication Review: National Indigenous Housing Guide

By Tanja von Behrens

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the National Indigenous Housing Guide, 2003, provides a set of useful guidelines to support the production and development of houses for Indigenous people. This small reference book is designed to improve the living environment, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. The text contains one chapter of guidelines relating to electrical, gas, fire and other safety issues, in addition to nine chapters covering

such major important health practices as washing people, clothes and bedding, removal of waste, improving nutritional practices, crowding reduction, insect, animal and vermin reduction, dust reduction, temperature control and reduced risk of traumatic injury as a result of poor design.

The publication provides statistics and survey data relating to 787 houses. Each section/chapter of this text has a short summary of the importance of each of the above areas for health. These sections are then broken down to address design, quality control and sustainability issues related to all of these major health practices.

The Indigenous housing guide is clearly set out, with each chapter and it's associated sections labeled point-by-point in a contents page listing. This book is designed to be used as a reference text, and has clearly marked tabs which enable the user to thumb through easily and find the most appropriate reference section. The guidelines provided in the guide book can advise as to the most appropriate placement of furniture and heating mechanisms, while precautions for fire safety and water temperature to prevent scalding are considered.

This document does not cover in great detail the impact of cultural practices on the design of homes for Aboriginal people, or the damage that occurs to homes as a result of their being used in a particular way. Minimal cover is provided to address how to best communicate with indigenous people when considering undertaking any improvements to the home. Statements such as 'consult residents about the interaction between cultural traditions and location of wet areas in the house' are the only clues provided to inform users of the most appropriate way to approach and communicate with Aboriginal people when visiting to provide modifications work in the home.

Aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultures differ in many respects, and communication regarding religious and cultural beliefs, health belief systems and living practices would be of use to home modification providers in order to make their work in indigenous communities easier. Indeed, this comment could be extended to an understanding that any culture different to that known and experienced by the health care practitioner may have beliefs and practices that differ to their own. To increase understanding with respect to Indigenous Australian cultures, the Clearinghouse has produced a document titled 'Understanding Indigenous

Australians for more Effective Provision of Home Modification Services'.

This bulletin lets home modification providers know who to approach in the community when home mods work is being done, areas to be aware of regarding health, disability, care and access to services, how to understand and approach aboriginal people, modes of communication that may differ from those used in non aboriginal cultures, and alternative approaches to the care provided in non-aboriginal communities.

This document has been reviewed by a number of Indigenous Studies experts, including the NSW Aboriginal Community Care Gathering committee. The research is published on the Clearinghouse Website, <http://www.homemods.info>, and the document is clearly broken down into headings and subheadings, with each section addressing a separate aspect of culture and cultural practice. The information provided in the summary bulletin is by no means designed to be exhaustive, however the content is designed to communicate ideas in a clear and open fashion, and provide a springboard for further interest and interaction. Used in conjunction with the National Indigenous Housing Guide, it is hoped that the bulletin 'Understanding Indigenous Australians for More Effective Provision of Home Modification Services', will assist in improving cross-cultural communication, leading to more effective provision of health services to aboriginal individuals and communities.

The publication of this bulletin follows on from the launch of a prototype bathroom/kitchen area, designed specifically to cater to the needs of Aboriginal families. To find out more about this bathroom/kitchen area, contact the Ian Buchan Fell Housing Research Centre, on [fell@arch.usyd.edu.au](mailto:fell@arch.usyd.edu.au).

### Upcoming Training and Events...

HMinfo Clearinghouse Advisory Committee Meetings – 23 August / 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007

7<sup>th</sup> Argentinian/Latin American Congress of OT  
13-15 September 2007

40<sup>th</sup> National Gerontology Conference; BeyOND  
2007 - Ageing: Evolution and Revolution. 21<sup>st</sup> –  
23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007

## Featured Web Site: <http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/index.ph>

By Tanja von Behrens

Creating healthy, affordable homes for better living...

The Smarter Homes website, which aims to assist consumers to create healthy, affordable, smart homes for better living, was created for the NZ Ministry for the Environment. This new website has a broad range of easy-to-access information regarding home building, renovation, retrofitting and design.

Most applicable to home modifications is the small section of the website relating to adaptability, (<http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/design/making-your-home-adaptable/>), which provides a checklist of considerations necessary when planning any new build, or planning modifications to your existing home. Questions prompted by the website regarding your new home or retrofit include;

- Who will be living there?
- What are their current needs?
- What might their future needs be?

The main website is divided into six key areas. These areas are varied and cover a broad range of considerations, including Design, Energy, Water, Siting and Landscaping, Materials and Construction. These areas may assist you to make informed choices about the techniques and products you use when building or modifying your home.

There are a number of interesting features on the home mods website, including a tool known as a 'homesmarts' calculator. This tool allows you to investigate how your home rates with regards to such things as energy usage and insulation. Just how smart is your current home, and how can you make it 'smarter'/more efficient in meeting your needs, while considering the environment? In addition, the website contains case studies relating to energy efficiency in design, tips on all aspects of property purchase and maintenance, and a 'latest news' section. The website has attractive visuals and layout, and an easy to use search function, to enable you to find the information that you are looking for at the touch of a button.

To access the main website, go to [www.smarterhomes.org.nz](http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz)

Users must keep in mind that the information provided relates to New Zealand. Therefore, the building codes that relate to materials and construction may differ. Some standards are joint standards across Australia and New Zealand. Those outside of either of these places must consider how the information applies within the context of their own standards and building codes.

### HMinfo Background

Our team brings together a broad range of experience. The Directors are; Catherine Bridge from the Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney and Peter Phibbs from the Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney. Katrina is our librarian.

Lisa, Stephanie and Tanja are our Research Assistants. The Clearinghouse has recently welcomed Maree Porter and Lyndal Millikan to the team. Maree has taken the bull by the horns with all things administrative, and Lyndal is our resident Occupational Therapist, with over 10 years experience working for Liverpool health. The team has taken on a new lease of life, with many interesting office conversations surrounding creative OT interventions. Lawrence and Gordon are our web programmers. Brian Cooper has recently finished working on the statistical analysis of the HACC MDS for the team, and may be returning in future in a contract capacity.

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