'Taking our Houses': Perceptions of the Impact of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and New Migrants on Housing Assistance in Melbourne

A n g e l a   S p i n n e y *   a n d   A m y   N e t h e r y *

*Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology
E-mail: aspinney@swin.edu.au

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Deakin University
E-mail: amy.nethery@deakin.edu.au

The pressing issue of homelessness in Australia is largely caused by a shortage of affordable accommodation. Unexpected results from a study into the experiences of homeless families, however, revealed that many people held the perception that asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are given greater priority by welfare agencies for housing assistance. Analysis of the interview data is used to illustrate how public and political discourses circulating at the time of the interviews may have contributed to these views. The article also discusses the extent to which xenophobia in the Australian community has links with feelings of economic insecurity.

Keywords: Homelessness, housing, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees.

Introduction

Homelessness is a large and growing issue in Australia, with over 105,000 people classified as homeless in the last census (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2008). The primary reason for homelessness, particularly in Australia's major cities, is limited safe and affordable accommodation options. Increasing numbers of families are experiencing homelessness (Spinney *et al.*, 2010) and are competing with others for a limited stock of emergency, transitional and social housing solutions. This article reports on some unexpected findings from interviews with the heads of homeless families about their experiences of homelessness in the southern Australian state of Victoria and its capital, Melbourne. These interviews revealed that people were acutely aware that their needs were being assessed and ranked by housing authorities and service providers to create a priority list for housing solutions. Some raised concerns that the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants were given higher priority than the needs of 'Australians'. Others expressed concern that such groups compete unfairly with them in a very tight private rental market. Associated with these perceptions was a discourse that migrants and other vulnerable groups are 'taking our houses', accommodation that our interviewees felt should rightfully be made available to Australians. We argue that these comments are consistent with contemporary social and political discourse in Australia that attributes increased pressure in the housing market to population pressures in general and immigration specifically. Furthermore, this empirical evidence supports theories that hostility towards asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from within the Australian community can be attributed to a personal sense of economic insecurity.

The article is set out in seven parts. First, we outline the 'Families on the Edge' research project. Second, we describe the housing shortage problem in Melbourne and across Victoria to explain the difficulty in accessing safe and affordable housing for both Australian citizens and newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees, and go on to detail the actual situation that asylum seekers and refugees face in Australia. This is followed by a brief explanation of social constructionism and how the analysis of narrative data from interview transcripts can be used to reveal wider discourses within society and the broader social and political context. We then explore the unexpected finding of a 'taking our houses' discourse, which arose from our interviews with the heads of homeless families. Finally, we explain this emergent and growing discourse by demonstrating continuity in the discourse surrounding specific national and international events within the last decade.

Homelessness and citizenship

'Families on the Edge'[1] is a three-year longitudinal research project investigating the experiences of homeless families in the southern Australian state of Victoria. The project aims to provide new insights into the experiences of homeless families by investigating how rights, responsibilities, entitlements and obligations encountered as a consequence of homelessness affect the ability of families to engage as full members of society. It is intended that providing such an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of homeless families will assist governments and not-for-profit agencies to improve their policies and services. Research participants are made up of families who are, or have recently been, homeless. In Australia, such families are likely to be headed by a female lone parent, and are likely to be staying with friends and relatives, or to have put themselves (or been placed by welfare agencies) in marginal and insecure accommodation such as boarding houses, motels and caravans. Such families fall within the Australian cultural definition of homelessness. This acknowledges that those accommodated in less than the minimum community standard (i.e. what people have the right to expect in order to live according to the conventions and expectations of Australia) are homeless (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2008).

The interviews, which took place with adults, investigated changes in circumstances and daily life as a result of becoming homeless, and the nature and type of contacts with family, friends, neighbours, agencies and institutions. The interviews also explored perspectives on identity as clients and citizens during their periods of homelessness, the extent to which homelessness affects capacity to participate in all areas of their lives. Views on immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees were not specifically sought, and were therefore an unexpected research finding, leading us to seek to understand the reasons for the comments. It is important to note that not all of our respondents proffered their views on immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, but, rather, these sorts of comments were made by about one-third of our respondents. The following section outlines the accommodation shortage for those on low incomes in Victoria.

Housing shortages and homelessness in Victoria

There is a shortage of affordable housing in Australia, and particularly in Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city and the capital of the state of Victoria. Australia currently has

the least affordable housing in the world (Demographia, 2010). Since the late nineteenth century home ownership has been the dominant tenure; 67 per cent of households are owner-occupied, but accessing the market has become increasingly difficult as prices have risen faster than incomes over the past two decades (National Shelter, 2011). The numbers of people renting long-term rather than buying have increased in the last decade, with those on low incomes and single headed families particularly vulnerable in the current market where rents may comprise in excess of 50 per cent of the household budget. This problem is compounded by the fact that social (public and community) housing comprises only 5 per cent of the housing stock, one of the lowest levels of all advanced industrial countries. Families who cannot afford to buy have no choice but to rent privately, or to demonstrate that they have more need than others for the limited supply of social housing.

In Melbourne, as in other large metropolitan areas in Australia, higher-income households have tended to migrate to lower-income neighbourhoods over the last two decades. This gentrification process has resulted in increased competition for housing in these areas, particularly in central urban areas. Vulnerable low-income private renters have been forced out of their homes as rents have increased beyond that which they can afford (Atkinson *et al.*, 2011). This indeed was the situation of some of the recently homeless participants in our study, who had been forced out of the suburbs in which they previously privately rented quite successfully to the outer reaches of town. Thereafter, many found themselves in a situation where they could not afford to rent, even in the outer suburbs, for reasons such as relationship breakdown, unemployment, sickness or because they had been 'blacklisted' by private rental agencies for former rent arrears.

In Australia, difficulty in accessing, and sustaining, private rental accommodation contributes to low-income families experiencing considerable housing instability (Hulse and Saugeres, 2007), and there is severe competition for both affordable private rental accommodation and social housing. Social policy is based on self-reliance, and there exists no statutory duty either to provide short-term accommodation, or long-term housing, for homeless people. State-funded crisis and transitional (temporary) accommodation is available for some in need, but many more people are turned away without receiving assistance than are actually helped, especially in areas of high need. Those that are able to access short-term crisis accommodation are normally encouraged and enabled to re-enter the private rental sector by such means as assistance with rental bonds, Alternatively, they may apply for social housing which is allocated based on a combination of prioritisation of need and length of time on waiting lists. However, many applicants have no choice but to leave their temporary accommodation for a negative housing situation, such as sleeping in their car or having to stay with friends or family. These factors contribute to the short and long-term homelessness experienced by the families in this study. Low-income families are not the only group of people in competition for affordable housing, however, and the next section examines the housing challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees.

Housing assistance for asylum seekers and refugees

Asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees are among the most vulnerable in the Australian community and the issues associated with their resettlement are multi-faceted. In addition to social issues, including language barriers and psychological issues relating

to past trauma and the journey to Australia, they also face structural and social barriers to gaining secure and appropriate housing.

In order to understand these barriers, some clarification of terminology is required. In the language of Australian public policy, 'refugees' are people who have been successfully assessed under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 and have been brought to Australia for resettlement from refugee camps throughout the world. 'Asylum seekers' are people who have arrived in Australia and applied for protection from the government after their arrival. The treatment of asylum seekers under Australian policy is vastly different depending on their method of arrival. This article is primarily concerned with asylum seekers who arrive by plane with a valid visa (most often tourist, business or student visas), and who are allowed to live in the community while awaiting a final determination of their protection application. As of October 2010, there were between 8,000 and 10,000 asylum seekers living in the community (Liddy *et al.*, 2010: 19). Asylum seekers who arrive by boat without a valid visa are mandatorily detained in immigration detention centres until they are granted refugee status or are removed from the country, and therefore do not require housing support until after they are released from detention. These differences in mode of entry are not well understood by the general population, as is evident in some of the views expressed by the research participants.

Asylum seekers, in particular, face a number of difficulties securing safe and appropriate housing. They are regularly denied access to housing services because of an incorrect understanding by some service providers that they are ineligible for housing assistance. For example, many asylum seekers in Victoria are denied access to the Housing Establishment Fund for assistance with the costs of housing because of the incorrect understanding that they do not have an 'exit option'; that is, that they will not be permitted to secure paid employment and eventually transfer to the private rental market (Burns, n.d.). Although McNevin (2010) presents some contrary anecdotal evidence that the Victorian housing authorities have used discretionary funding to provide housing outside of formal public housing allocations, these two examples point to the absence of a formal policy that ensures that asylum seekers have access to safe and secure housing.

As we discuss in this article, this was not the view of some of the participants in our 'Families on the Edge' longitudinal study on family homelessness. Rather, they represented an Australian discourse that claims that asylum seemers and those with mental health or substance abuse issues are given preference for housing assistance over 'true Australians'. The following section looks at how discourses such as these come into being and circulate.

Social constructionist research methodologies

The theoretical perspective of social constructionism challenges the assumption that there is a straightforward relationship between what is known and what is real (Hastings, 1999). In constructionist methodological approaches, the accounts that people give are interpreted as expressing one or more cultural and linguistic forms that are available to them, and the content analysis is concerned not just with the individuals themselves, but also with the context of the culture as a whole (Jacobs and Manzi, 1996). The research participants in the Families on the Edge study can be regarded as expressing their own attitudes and views, but also as being representative; that is as the channels through which discourses concerning the housing of asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups may

flow (Fairclough, 1995). In this article, we interpret the participants' interview data in terms of a relationship to wider social and political themes.

Our findings regarding a 'taking our houses' discourse

From our analysis of the interviews, it is clear that some participants who are finding it extremely difficult to access housing in the tight Melbourne market perceive there to be a list of criteria by which decisions for housing allocations are made. Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants form one 'category' on this list, which they perceive to receive higher priority than if the person in need is 'Australian'. New arrivals to Australia are not the only category on the list, which also includes people with mental health issues, people with disabilities, single mothers, people suffering from domestic violence, people with gambling, drug and alcohol addictions, people engaged in prostitution or people who were otherwise 'socially unacceptable'. All these categories, but particularly asylum seekers and refugees, are perceived to be unfairly competing for the same scarce resources, and people who did not fit into these categories believed they were therefore missing out on the assistance which they needed and they felt a sense of greater entitlement.

One interviewee explained that when they sought assistance, the service providers were explicit about there being a list of priorities:

> I went to another place and they said, 'No, we only help you if you've got drug and alcohol problems at home, or if you had a drug or alcohol problem we could help you.' Like because I don't have drug or alcohol . . . Everywhere I went I didn't quite fit into a thing and I didn't, yeah, like I didn't, I fell through the cracks . . . We went to [service provider] and said, 'Look, we're homeless.' They sort of did our charts and whatever, the higher number scorings, the more help you receive and the quicker you receive it. So because I don't have drug and alcohol issues, I'm not classed as high-up need, so if I took Propain I'd be up there, you know what I mean. (Family 12, headed by a female in her 20s, outer Melbourne suburb)

Some interviewees expressed the view that people new to Australia were unfairly given housing and assistance over 'Australians':

> And that's just what happens, because unfortunately, I don't mean to sound racist but it's been my experience that if you are black, if you have a heroin problem or if you have something that makes you socially unacceptable, you get all the help. Whereas because I have a job, I'm supposed to just look after ourselves and, magic, a roof over our heads. (Family 6, headed by a young couple in their 20s, outer Melbourne suburb)

This young couple also made specific reference to a family of Sudanese people who had been given access to temporary housing:

> I mean, a nice enough house, because that's essentially what it is, a three bedroom house that they have converted to be used by two families . . . that's what pissed me off so much about these fricking Sudanese people, because if it had been another white family we could have shared the house. Well it just pisses me off because I pay taxes . . . Well OK, at the moment I'm not, because I'm working cash in hand, but I've paid my fair share of taxes that I've worked and now that I'm in trouble, why does somebody who got off a boat get more help than I do? That's what I'm pissed off about, it's not because they are Sudanese, whether they come from

anywhere, but the fact of the matter is that we have got this influx of people that are taking away from the little bit of help that there is, and shouldn't we look after our own backyard first? (Family 6, headed by a young couple in their 20s, outer Melbourne suburb)

The denial of a racist ideology was a common feature of interviews where participants discussed the housing of asylum seekers and refugees. Furthermore, the argument that asylum seekers and immigrants do not pay taxes is incorrect. Everyone who makes purchases pays goods and services tax (GST), much of which is distributed between the states for services such as housing assistance. It is also important to note that the overwhelming majority of Sudanese people come to Australia as refugees as part of the onshore resettlement program, or as sponsored migrants. What we see here is a conflation of migrant categories so that all new arrivals to Australia are considered 'boat people'. A similar conflation is again evident here:

Like I say, I'm not prejudiced but, yeah, when you see the people that come from overseas and they get housed and they've got a couple of families in one house, and we're from this country, this is our country and we can't even get housed ourselves, I think that's really unfair. But again I don't know their circumstances and why they're having to do what they've got to do, so I can't really make that judgement but, yeah, it does feel sometimes that we've got the rough end of the stick . . . You see people that have got a Chinese restaurant and they've got whatever and then they leave here and they're living in a Housing Commission. Well, to me, where's the Housing Commission's brain? If they've got their own restaurant, they should be able to afford private rental. I can't even get a look in at private rental. (Family 19, headed by a female in her 40s, outer Melbourne suburb)

One strong theme that emerged from the interview data is the notion that housing assistance is rightfully 'ours'; that is, a right of those with Australian citizenship or at least permanent residency. This is factually incorrect because in Australia, unlike countries such as the UK, there has never been a right to housing assistance for those found to be homeless or in housing need. Instead, Australia has always adopted policy approaches based on the principle of self-reliance. To these interviewees the provision of housing support to people that are not 'Australians' breaches the rules of fairness, and also indicates a lack of understanding about the principle of self-reliance and that this principle extends to everyone.

Moreover, it is important to note that the image of 'us' in these interviews is a racialised category. The Sudanese family and the people who own a Chinese restaurant in the interviews above might well have been Australian citizens. This is further evident in the interview with Family 6 above, where the respondent explains that priority to housing assistance should go to 'Australians' because 'we' pay taxes. Similarly, another respondent expresses concern about the effects of what is seen as unfair prioritising:

But you get all these refugees moved in, and they're taking all the housing, the public housing and stuff like that. I'm not racist, but it's just not fair on us. You know, if you're going to let people into our country at least make sure they've got homes to stay with or something. Don't move them all into our place and take all our places where we could be living, people with kids, people that are pregnant, especially girls. Like it's not fair on us that these people are moving into our country, taking our houses, like our public housing, when there's teenage girls

that are pregnant living on the street, getting raped and stuff like that. Like it's not fair. (Family 17, headed by a teenage female, Melbourne suburb)

Other interviewees expressed the perception that any form of migration to Australia was putting added pressure on the private rental market, which has repercussions for the community more generally:

And in that way, it's making me racist. And I have never had a racist bone in my body. I mean, I'm a migrant myself, so I know that when you go to private rentals you find all these other people, Indians again. OK, there's four, five of them and they'll all put their name on the application and they'll get the house. Whereas me, having four children. If it was me on my own and I had to sleep in the car, I would do it without a second thought, and actually I've done that in the past with the kids when they were smaller. And I've done it in this journey as well because I've had no other option. And that's what's making me feel, 'Hang on a minute'. I didn't have a choice to come here . . . As an Australian who's, OK, we're prepared to take all these people and we're prepared to help them and I'm glad that we're doing that. It needs to happen. And I'm not for a second taking away from that. What I'm saying is that by the same token you have your own people. Because the Australians that need help will forever grow. (Family 32, headed by a female in her 40s, Melbourne suburb)

One respondent offers an alternative perspective regarding meeting the needs of people new to Australia, arguing that social networks within migrant communities offer much more support than 'Australians' who do not support each other.

Us white Australians, we're this little group of people who should be doing better for ourself because we've had all the opportunities, whereas people from other countries can come here and get decent jobs and own their home and car and do the right thing. But then those people that network with other people that are already here, it's been that way since [they] come here in the sixties and fifties or whatever, groups of people always help . . . I mean, the only homeless people you see are virtually white people . . . If you walk through the city and the homeless people, the winos, they're all, and the fact they probably have a family who don't give a shit. And that's what's wrong with us as a culture in Australia, right, because people say we have no culture but we do, it's just a rotten one, you know what I mean. (Family 20, headed by a male in his 40s, outer Melbourne suburb)

From these data, we can see the existence of a perception that asylum seekers and refugees are to blame for both a tight housing market, and the perceived unwillingness of service agencies to assist the research participants' families. In the next section, we explain how this perception resonates with broader discourses surrounding housing supply and the resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees in Victoria.

'Taking our houses': Insecurity and the emergence of a discourse on asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants

While other Western nations have suffered periods of economic instability and recession over the last two decades, Australia has enjoyed extraordinary economic growth, avoiding even the worst effects of the global financial crisis in 2008–09 (Megalogenis, 2010). Official economic statistics, however, have not translated into a corresponding sense of stability and security in the lives of Australians. Cost of living pressures, housing

shortages and work insecurity are compounded by a growing sense that the nation is being bombarded with outside pressures, including economic liberalisation, immigration and terrorism. This has resulted in what Pitty and Leach (2004) call a mood of 'regressive nationalism', with Australians psychologically retreating from the outside world.

One area where this can be witnessed is in the overwhelming support for punitive measures against asylum seekers and refugees. From the mid-1990s, consecutive Australian governments have introduced increasingly tough policies aimed at deterring and denying the entry of asylum seekers arriving by boat (Crock and Berg, 2011). These policies were brought dramatically into community consciousness by the *Tampa* episode in August 2001, when the government refused entry to a freighter that had rescued asylum seekers from a sinking vessel. A month later, terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York. A sense of bombardment from the outside world contributed to a general sense of insecurity and gave rise to xenophobia in some pockets of the community (Pitty and Leach, 2004). Polls conducted around the time of the *Tampa* incident indicate that the support for the government's approach to border protection was anywhere between 75 per cent and 90 per cent (McNevin, 2007). The Coalition government led by John Howard was re-elected three months later in November 2001, when prior to the *Tampa* episode polls had pointed to defeat. Subsequent policies, such as punitive immigration detention (Nethery, 2010) and the 'Pacific Solution', received much media coverage and were supported by a large proportion of the community.

More recently, at the time many of these interviews were conducted the 2010 federal election campaign was in full swing. The conflation of economic stressors on the community and immigration was a central theme in both the Labor and Liberal-Coalition campaign strategies. The main Labor advertising campaign on television and print media grouped together pressure on housing supply, overcrowding on roads and public transport, with the issue of border security and the need for 'sustainable population'. As journalist Peter Mares (2010) observed:

> The first Labor Party campaign spot I saw on television featured footage of a customs vessel and Julia Gillard talking about her commitment to 'stronger borders' and 'cracking down on people smugglers'. Then it cut to footage of busy freeways while she talked about the need for 'a new approach to population'. Get the message? Keep those asylum seekers out and the traffic will flow more smoothly.

The Liberal-National Coalition campaign gave the same message in a simpler format. Opposition leader Tony Abbott featured in television and print media advertisements in front of a succinct list of four dot-point priorities: 'End wasteful spending; stop Labor's new taxes; pay back Labor's debt; and stop the boats' (Mares, 2010). Both of these messages overstate the impact of boat arrivals to Australian society. Most importantly, however, both of these campaigns implicitly link boat arrivals – and in the case of Labor, migration more generally – with the everyday economic stresses felt by the average Australian citizen.

How has it come to be that asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are perceived as a threat to personal and national economic security? Anxieties about migration and subsequent competition for scarce resources – be they economic, social or environmental – is a perennial issue in a migrant society such as Australia. Indeed, the White Australia Policy, the first act of the new Australian parliament in 1901 which effectively restricted immigration to white British subjects until the 1950s, was the political legacy of Australia's

strong nineteenth-century labour movement (Tavan, 2005). While it has been noted that anxiety about migration is more acute in times of economic downturn or scarcity (see Banton, 1983), there is strong evidence that these concerns have been prominent during the last two decades, during which Australia has enjoyed an economic boom.

In her analysis of the response to the detention of asylum seekers, McNevin (2007: 611) applies to Australia the idea of the 'liberal paradox'. Coined by James Hollifield, this describes the trend in contemporary Western nations to a greater transnational openness in the economic arena, but a corresponding pressure for domestic political closure. McNevin draws on surveys from the late 1990s and the early 2000s to assess the feelings of financial wellbeing. She found widespread feelings of economic insecurity and anxiety among working-class and middle-class families. The economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s resulted in nearly two decades of financial growth in Australia. Yet rather than reporting feelings of being better off, respondents reported the sense of a broken contact, alienation from the workplace, stress and higher demands from the workplace for lower rewards. Higher rates of under-employment, casualisation and contract work, and an increasing gap between high and low incomes, meant that the reforms had not resulted in a widespread sense of being 'relaxed and comfortable'. In addition, there was a sense that economic reform was global and inevitable, and therefore, to a certain extent, out of the government's control.

In the late 1990s Pauline Hanson's One Nation movement responded to these feelings with economic policies favouring national protection over globalisation, and voicing complaints that Indigenous people and migrants were being unfairly advantaged by the economic conditions (Leach *et al.*, 2000). These broad feelings of uncertainty and insecurity, McNevin (2007) argues, contributed to the support for the Howard government's tough response to the *Tampa* and other asylum boat arrivals. While open economic borders may have been inevitable, closing borders against unwanted migration was well within government control. By closing the borders to asylum seekers, the government presented to Australians a solution to concerns about loss of control of borders more generally, and redirected anxieties about economic insecurity to irregular migration. In this way, asylum seekers became the scapegoat for economic insecurity in general. Furthermore, closing the borders against unauthorised migration would ensure that only Australians (although not Indigenous Australians) were to share in the country's finite resources. McNevin (2007: 622) explains:

> [The Coalition government's] defence of territorial integrity in this arena countered a more general anxiety about increasingly open borders. In contrast to the notion of a globalised market to which there was no alternative, the rhetoric of border protection reified a bounded national community that defended its sovereignty *despite* its integration with transnational legal regimes. Indeed, asylum policy practice resurrected the *possibility* of territorial closure that had been denied by justifications for economic policies. Precisely because of this contradiction, asylum policy assuaged some of the disaffection born of economic reform and generated support for the government on the basis of a return to the territorial closure abandoned elsewhere. [author's emphasis]

It is not important, however, whether or not the sense of financial insecurity was justified. As McNevin (2007: 616) argues, 'what is most important for this discussion is the *perception* of unfairness and *feelings* of anxiety about rapid economic and social change'

(author's emphasis). This regressive nationalism, coupled with the lack of affordable accommodation in Victoria, has worked together to create the growing influence of a 'taking our houses unfairly' discourse against asylum seekers and refugees in Australia over the last decade. This discourse has been revealed by the analysis of the interview data from our research participants.

Conclusion

Housing stress, exacerbated by the additional stressors of migration on a limited housing market, is a problem in many countries (see, for example, Dwyer and Brown, 2005). In Victoria, Australia, the situation is particularly acute. Our interviews with the heads of homeless families revealed that people in housing stress considered the added pressure of migration on the housing market was one important factor in their not gaining housing security. In developing their explanations, many of our respondents conflated categories of migrant, asylum seeker and refugee, and engaged in processes of 'othering' based on racial appearance rather than citizenship status. Ultimately, the comments reveal a sense that access to housing is distributed unfairly, and explanations for this unfairness tapped into broader discourses about competition between the needs of poor 'Australians', and the resettlement needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

This research provides important empirical evidence supporting the theory that resistance to migration, and resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees specifically, is more acute when people feel economically insecure. It also demonstrates the expediency of political discourses that tap into long-term fears about migrants competing unfairly for scarce resources. While there is a lack of transparency and understanding about the processes by which housing decisions are made, any perceived inconsistency with the principle of fairness will result in people feeling neglected by the state.

These findings also have significant implications for policy. Clearly, increasing the housing supply must be a priority for governments, as it has a much broader social impact than merely providing suitable accommodation for the thousands of people experiencing homelessness, whether born in Australia or newly arrived. In the meantime, introducing small changes such as increased transparency in decision-making about housing support may help to alleviate accusations of unfairness. More generally, discourses that link the arrival of migrants with economic insecurity should be identified as false, and confronted if there is going to be a greater acceptance of people arriving in the country.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 The project is funded by the Australian Research Council and conducted by Swinburne University and Hanover Welfare Services. There are 57 families participating in the study, which involves three waves of in-depth qualitative interviews over an eighteen-month period.

188

References

Atkinson, R., Wulff, M., Reynolds, M. and Spinney, A. (2011) *Gentrification and Displacement: The Household Impacts of Neighbourhood Change*, Final Report no. 160, Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Banton, M. (1983) *Racial and Ethnic Competition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, J. (n.d.) *Locked Out: Position Paper on Homelessness of Asylum Seekers Living in the Community*, Melbourne: Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, http://www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/locked-out.pdf [accessed 01.02.2011].

Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. (2008) *Counting the Homeless*, Canberra: Australian Census Analytic Program, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Crock, M. and Berg, L. (2011) *Immigration, Refugees and Forced Migration: Law, Migration and Practice in Australia*, Sydney: Federation Press.

Demographia (2010) *Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey: 2010*, http://www.demographia.com/dhi.pdf [accessed 15.10.2010].

Dwyer, P. and Brown, D. (2005) 'Meeting basic needs? Forced migrants and welfare', *Social Policy and Society*, 4, 4, 369–80.

Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, Harlow: Longman.

Hastings, A. (1999) 'Discourse and urban change: introduction to the special issue', *Urban Studies*, 36, 1, 7–12.

Hulse, K. and Saugeres, L. (2007) *Home Life, Housing and Work Decisions*, Research Report No. 7, National Research Venture 1, Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Jacobs, K. and Manzi, T. (1996) 'Discourse and policy change: the significance of language for housing research', *Housing Studies*, 11, 4, 543–62.

Leach, M., Stokes, G. and Ward, I. (2000), *The Rise and Fall of One Nation*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.

Liddy, N., Sanders, S. and Coleman, C. (2010) *Australia's Hidden Homeless: Community-Based Approaches to Asylum Seeker Homelessness*, Melbourne: Hotham Mission Asylum Seeker Project.

Mares, P. (2010) 'Talking about our population', *Inside Story*, 1 September.

McNevin, A. (2007) 'The liberal paradox and the politics of asylum in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 42, 4, 611–30.

McNevin, A. (2010) 'Border policing and sovereign terrain: the spatial framing of unwanted migration in Melbourne and Australia', *Globalizations*, 7, 3, 407–19.

Megalogenis, G. (2010) *Trivial Pursuit: Leadership and the End of the Reform Era*, Quarterly Essay 40, Melbourne: Black Inc.

National Shelter (2011) *Housing Australia Factsheet*, Sydney: Shelter NSW.

Nethery, A. (2010) 'Immigration detention in Australia', Ph.D. thesis, Deakin University, Melbourne.

Pitty, R. and Leach, M. (2004) 'Australian nationalism and internationalism', in P. Boreham, G. Stokes and R. Hall (eds.), *The Politics of Australian Society: Political Issues for the New Century*, Sydney: Pearson Education, pp. 93–108.

Spinney, A., Hulse, K. and Kolar, V. (2010) 'Reframing family homelessness: a citizenship approach', *Parity*, September.

Tavan, G. (2005) *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia*, Carlton: Scribe.