Emma Baker
The Australian Rental Housing Conditions Data Infrastructure

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Evolution of a 2015 pilot

- Collegial community of urban and housing researchers
- Research focussed on making policy arguments
- Some very good datasets (e.g. HILDA, Census, but always limitations and 1999 was the last housing conditions survey)

- *"…imagine if we could know what was behind the front door of Australian houses now?"… "what if we could build a big national dataset ourselves"?*

- LIEF program at the time had been used by some researchers from the humanities and social sciences, but not this

The Australian Housing Conditions Dataset

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October 2019

Australian Rental Housing Conditions Data Infrastructure (an example)

Responded to a genuine need for data

Overarching aim:

- To collect and then provide access to a robust data infrastructure for the research and policy community.

- National extent

- 15,000 surveys of rental housing in Australia

- Survey and tools are designed by the research and technical team

- Commission a professional survey provider (this largely represents the infrastructure we are purchasing)

- Make the data (and the tools to create more data) an available ongoing resource.

(an example cont.)

Team

- 11 CIs from 6 Universities and 4 states

- An intentional mix of established, mid career and early career

- Broad CI expertise across many possible data uses:
  - housing, urban and regional research, behavioural economics, construction, health, vulnerable populations, housing economics, architectural science, and spatial science

- A strong demonstrable record of collaboration

- What each will do was explicit in the proposal (a group of lifters)

"All CIs will actively collaborate in equal measure to inform the content of the Data Infrastructure"

(an example cont.)

A technical reference group

- 4 national and international policy/research leaders.

- Provide guidance on:
  - Technical and data issues;
  - Protocols around data access and ethics; and
  - Strategic advice on developing and advancing the Data Infrastructure to be national and ongoing

5 named research streams (e.g. Affordability and System Change)

- Dedicated 1.5 pages to describing this (to demonstrate plans for ongoing benefit)

- Named Lead Investigators

- Example supported grants

- Useful for demonstrating 'national-ness', collaboration and use

Australian Rental Housing Conditions Data Infrastructure (an example cont.)

Budget

- Relatively simple

- Demonstrable buy-in from the unis

- A Technical Officer (opportunity for capacity building of an ECR) and a small administrative role.

- All CIs were allocated in-kind time allocation for geniune participation

- Included an allocation for activities like: package of access protocols, dataset access and deposit, a ground-truthing process, one face to face survey development workshop

- Keep in mind that ethics will take time and thought

- Data-user launches in 3 states.

- We did preliminary work speaking to data providers – named provider.

Some reflections on narrative

For every one 🧍 Australian homeowner who…

		renters
lives in a flat or apartment 🏢	there are ………………………	🧍🧍🧍🧍🧍 renters
is unable to keep cool in summer ☀	there are ……………	🧍🧍🧍🧍 renters
is unhappy with the condition of their dwelling 🏠	there are ..	🧍🧍🧍🧍 renters
has been injured by poor dwelling condition 🧍	there are ……	🧍🧍🧍 renters
is unable to keep warm in winter ❄	there are ………………	🧍🧍🧍 renters
feels insecure in their home 🔒	there are ………………………	🧍🧍🧍 renters

- Make the case that the time is right - and providing this infrastructure will help Australia address a pressing issue.

- Why what we have isn't good enough for international class research and policy

- How the research community will access and use it

- *"We're good, but we could be even better if we had this…"*

- <u>Important to be outward looking</u> - not just about us (and our individual research quests)

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"Everyone's a winner!"

- Building a story about:
  - Leverage of existing investment (esp. ARC)
    - Name the grants and the people, say how.

  - Building a base for future benefit
    - How will research and policy benefit – and individual Australians?

  - Bringing together Organisations AND Individual data users
    - e.g. how will the infrastructure help partner unis with their strategic aims?

Some reflections on collaboration

- Worth remembering that this isn't a research grant, so the team you choose will be different…
  - Team research track record is important, but also perhaps skills in facilitating research, delivery, getting support, bringing in partners, being future champions for the infrastructure.
  - They must bring actual and in-kind $ (supportive unis) *Side note: Allow time for unis to be supportive*

- Our responsibility to bring up ECRs and this is one perfect vehicle
  - 20% investigator weighting
  - Plus a team where capacity building also occurs ticks the 'evidence of research training, mentoring and supervision' box

- Demonstrate that you have the perfect team who will work well together
  - Show previous collaboration across grants, publications, PhD supervision, industry funding, etc.

- Commit to all CIs being users of the infrastructure

- Great to cross beyond university and state boundaries…even better to (genuinely) bring in industry and policy

Some reflections on sustainability

- Embargo?

- What can you do in 1 year?

- What happens after 1 year?
  - Who will maintain the infrastructure?
  - Who will respond to questions?
  - How will you keep track of who uses it?

- What's the next one going to be?

Some reflections on regional and national benefit

- Considerations of broader benefit will shape the design of the infrastructure. (e.g. baseline random vs. targeted sample)

- Demonstrate national gains and how it will help Australia to lead the world

- Benefits to the non-academic world – industry, policy, NGOs, etc.

- How will this infrastructure make Australian research internationally competitive?

- And again, its not research, so build in some ways to create benefit – e.g. run data launches
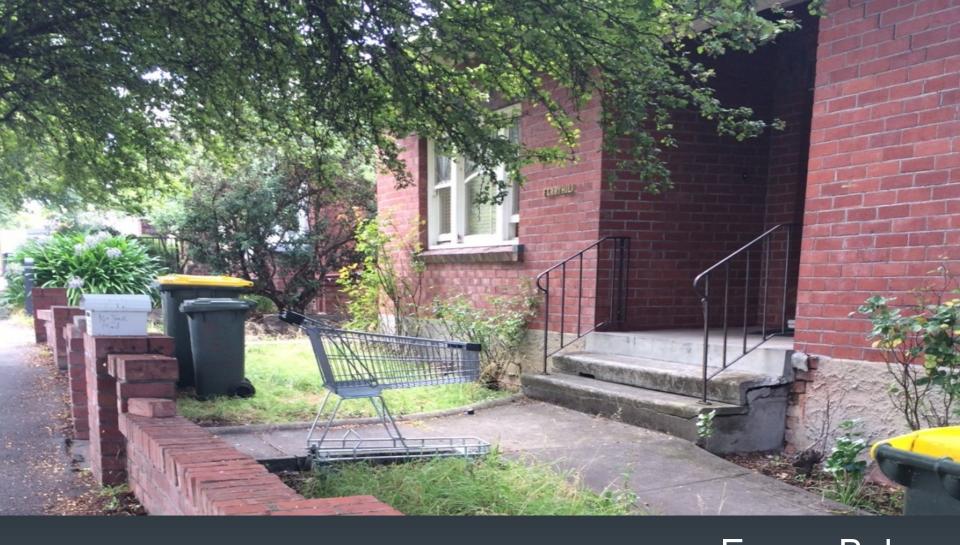
Some parting thoughts

- Starting small is sometimes good

- Make the case for why ARC LIEF is the only/best way to create this infrastructure.

- We're cheap! Potential for big bang for buck.

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