

Housing shortage one of many barriers for migrants

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Competing in the private rental market is a challenge that becomes all the more arduous for newly arrived refugees and migrants.

[Language barriers](#), unemployment, a lack of rental history and racism – compounded by an acute shortage of private rental stock in South Australia – are among the many significant barriers faced by

humanitarian migrants when trying to secure tenure in the private rental market.

This very issue is now the focus of a new study by Flinders University PhD candidate Nicole Harb.

During the next three years Ms Harb will document the experiences of migrants in the private [housing](#) sector and explore opportunities for greater housing assistance for new arrivals through collaborations with [real estate](#) agents, governments and the not-for-[profit sector](#).

The School of Social and Policy Studies student will survey humanitarian migrants, real estate agents, landlords, governments and social welfare agencies in the Playford and Salisbury Council areas, with the focus of her research including a case study on large migrant families.

"Larger families from refugee backgrounds have a particularly hard time securing private rentals because the housing stock in Adelaide doesn't offer many suitably-sized properties, and the houses which do have four or more bedrooms are usually too expensive for these families to afford," Ms Harb said.

"Real estate agents are also often reluctant to offer rental properties to this group of people because of the [negative stereotypes](#) associated with large families in private housing," she said.

While most humanitarian migrants have access to temporary housing upon their arrival, Ms Harb said they had little support in the years after resettlement.

"The first six months are relatively fine for most refugees because the government ensures that housing is made available to them but following

that they're supposed to access private rentals – and that's when the problems begin.

"Without transport or proficient English language skills many refugees find it hard to attend open inspections and apply for properties.

"It's also very hard to get long-term leases so even though they're supported at first, housing stress and homelessness can still arise later on because of the lack of security in tenure."

Ms Harb, whose supervisors are Dr Keith Miller and Dr Anna Ziersch, said the main aim of her study would be to determine how the public, private and not-for-profit sectors could work more closely to support humanitarian migrants.

"In SA there are very few agencies that have a dedicated role in this area.

"Based on what I've seen happening in the community, there's a great opportunity for government, real estate and resettlement agencies to forge more formal relationships.

"Sharing resources, offering mutual training, supporting agents with access to interpreters and making the transition from on-arrival accommodation housing to private rental housing more streamlined are some areas in which we could see improvement through enhanced collaboration.

"At the end of the day, adequate shelter is a human right and humanitarian [migrants](#) need housing stability so that they can build a secure future here in Australia."

Provided by Flinders University

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