

# Housing and children's development and wellbeing: a scoping study (AHURI Final Report No. 149)

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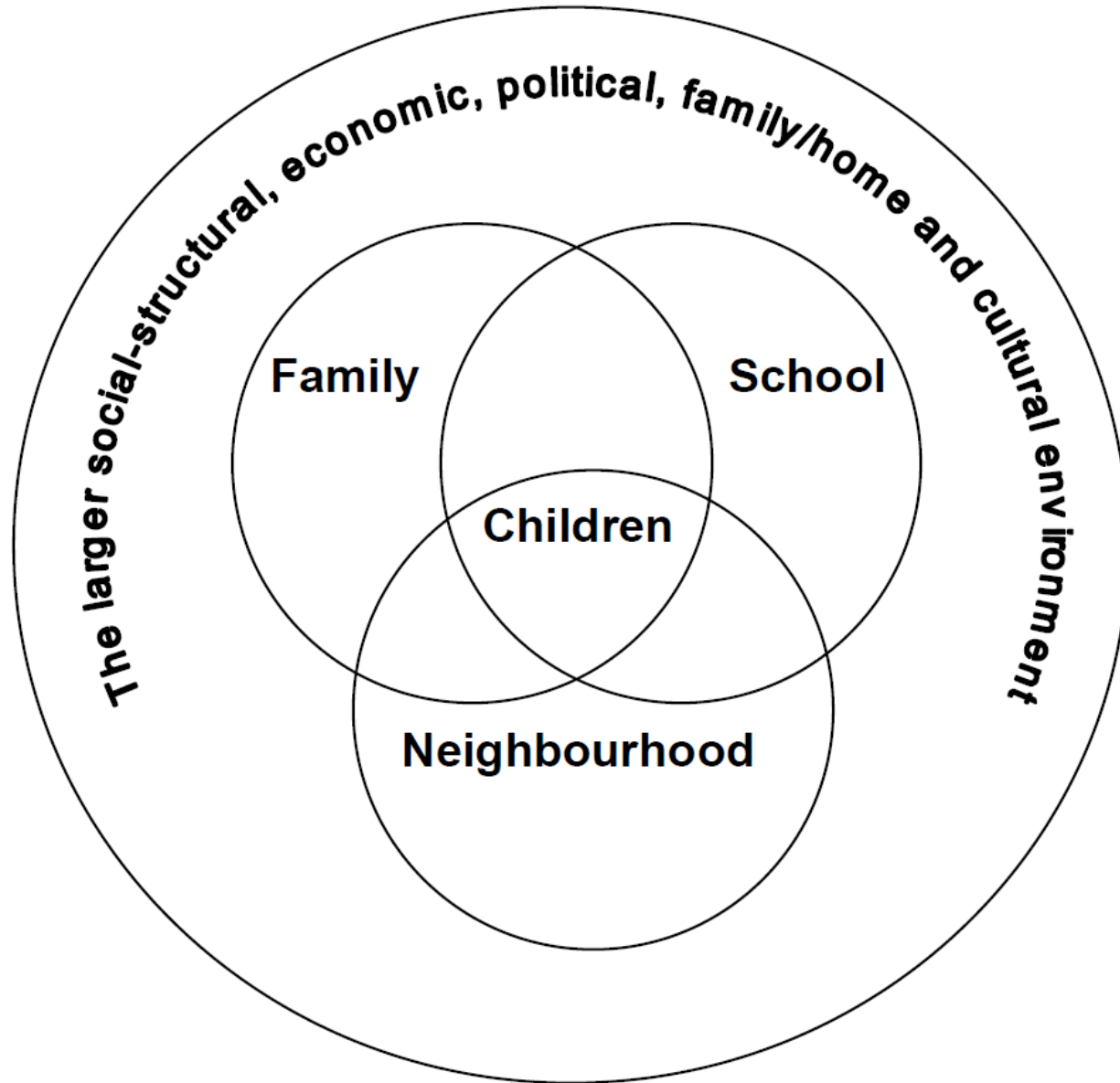


# Outline

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- The conceptual frameworks the project team considered to be most valuable
- Categorisation of the key aspects of housing that influence child wellbeing
- Limitations of existing evidence
- Potential areas of policy priority
- Methodological challenges for informing policy
- The way forward ...
  - Audit of available datasets
  - Proposed future research

Figure 1: Ecological contexts shaping child development



Source: Modified from Jessor (1993)



# Key housing aspects that influence child wellbeing

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- environmental allergens
- toxicants
- cleanliness, housing disrepair and safety
- building height and opportunities for outdoor play
- crowding
- housing affordability
- homeownership
- frequent residential moves
- homelessness
- neighbourhood characteristics

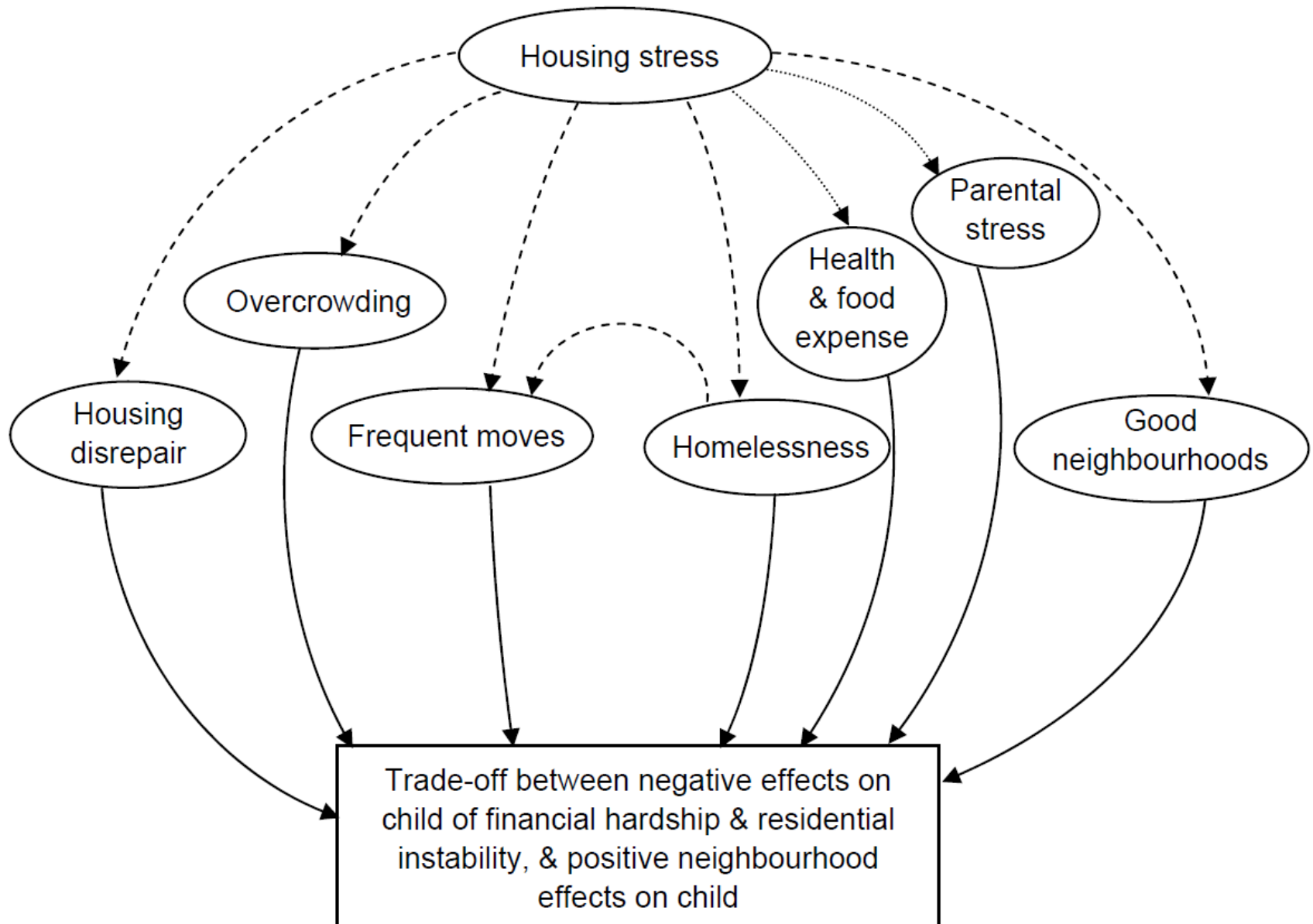


# Limitations of existing evidence for policy

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- Housing variables clearly exert a strong influence on child wellbeing and development outcomes, but ...
- Majority of existing evidence based on overseas studies
  - Do they translate to the Australian context?
- Magnitude vs. incidence vs. causality
  - Factors shaping child outcomes are complex and inter-related
  - Insufficient Australian evidence to prioritise potential policy interventions

**Figure 3: Interrelationships between housing affordability and other variables**





# Key areas of policy concern/ research priority

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- Statistical data shows that children make up a significant proportion of the homeless in Australia.
- The housing experiences of Indigenous children are significantly worse than those experienced by non-Indigenous children.
- Housing stress is particularly prevalent among households with children in Australia.
- Socio-economic gradients, neighbourhoods and intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.



# Methodological challenges – establishing causality

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- Factors shaping child development and wellbeing are complex, often interrelated and frequently multiplied by coincident factors
  - Socio-economic status
- Variations in effects of housing characteristics at different life stages
  - eg. neighbourhood effects in early childhood vs. adolescence
- Often no clear-cut temporal relationship between housing circumstances and outcomes
  - effects may materialise with a lag or cumulate gradually over time
    - link between contemporaneously measured housing and outcome variables somewhat tenuous
  - Negates the usual econometric advantages of longitudinal data (associated with repeated observations)
  - Advantages of longitudinal data more related to superior measurement of housing histories and outcomes over time





# Data Audit

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- Ideally, seeking data sets which:
  - Have large representative samples
    - of population or a specific target group
  - Have good measures of housing variables
  - Have good measures of child wellbeing and development outcomes
  - Have good controls for confounding factors
    - especially parental socio-economic status
  - Are longitudinal



# Data Audit

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- National longitudinal surveys
  - Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC).
  - Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY).
  - Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA).
- Indigenous specific surveys
  - Footprints in Time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC).
  - Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS).
  - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS).



# Data Audit

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- State-based child health and wellbeing surveys
  - New South Wales (NSW) Child Health Survey.
  - Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey (VCHWS).
  - Tasmanian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey (TasCHWS).
  - Western Australian Child Health Survey (WACHS).
  - Western Australian Pregnancy Cohort (Raine) Study.
- Upcoming surveys
  - Peel Child Health Study.
  - New Victorian Child Surveys.



# Future Research

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- Stage 1: Analysis of inter-relationships between housing, child outcomes and socio-economic status using LSAC and LSIC.
  - Highlight the potential role of housing factors
  - Identify key relationship between housing variables and various dimensions of child development
- Stage 2: Explore identified research priorities using other datasets
  - WAACHS – Indigenous health
  - Toxins – Raine Study, Peel Health Study
- Look for 'natural' experiment opportunities created by policy changes
- Important limitations – inability to assess prevalence and impacts of periods of homelessness.