

More older women facing homeless future

March 25 2014, by David Stacey



Researchers at The University of Western Australia have confirmed what advocates have been warning for some time - increasing numbers of older women are becoming homeless.

Professors Aviva Freilich and Eileen Webb, from UWA's Consumer Research Unit in the Faculty of Law, are researching the security of tenure for seniors in Western Australia.

"We are seeing a lot of women nearing retirement age who are experiencing increasing difficulty in finding affordable and secure housing," Professor Webb said.

"If there is insufficient superannuation, a partner dies or something goes

wrong financially, women are finding themselves in very dire circumstances. The private rental market is too expensive, there is a lengthy wait for public housing and emergency accommodation, such as a boarding house, is often unsuitable for women."

The research also suggests that, while accurate statistics are hard to come by, many older women are at risk and teeter on the brink of homelessness.

Professor Webb is also a board member of Shelter WA, the peak [housing](#) body for [affordable housing](#) and homelessness.

Shelter WA's Executive Officer Chantal Roberts said there were limited options for older women who had been in the private rental market, only to find they were unable to meet rising household expenses in Western Australia, including rental hikes, and face eviction and the prospect of homelessness.

The findings are topical given the recent discussions regarding the future of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and concerns that the Commission of Audit will lead to significant cuts to critical social programs in the coming budget.

Professor Webb said more resources needed to be directed towards the problem.

"We need to advocate for services that prevent [older women](#) from becoming [homeless](#) in the first place but we should also put in place services that respond quickly and effectively if they do become homeless," she said.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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