



McP

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Restorative design for affordable housing

McP ideas

Call for research partners

McP ideas is our dedicated, applied research lab, producing targeted investigations, analyses and guidance, focused on topics relevant to our partners' activities, and to contemporary urbanism.

We are actively seeking partners to work with us on this research into Restorative Design for social and affordable housing in Australia.

If interested, contact
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Is our push to accelerate housing production doing enough for the wellbeing of residents?

At **McP ideas**, we're exploring the field of neuro-architecture, which utilises neuroscience advancements to inform architectural and urban design. While urban environments and buildings often cause stress and mental fatigue, Restorative Design prioritises stress reduction, mental and physical health, and human flourishing.

The widely documented housing crisis affecting Australia and impacting globally is perhaps most acutely felt by those households residing in, or seeking, social housing.

Australia's waitlist for social housing is approximately 175,000 households, with most new allocations to tenants in the 'greatest need', including those with disability, poor physical health, mental illness, trauma, and risk of homelessness. Therefore, it is increasingly important that housing for those experiencing or impacted by trauma is designed to enhance occupant wellbeing and healing.

These design implications span the locality/precinct and site, the arrival experience and entry sequence, circulation, communal and garden spaces, and the dwellings themselves, from spatial layout and configuration, to outlook, materials, furniture, lighting and colour.

Restorative design is a human-centric approach that creates environments supporting mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Rooted in neuroscience, environmental psychology, and evidence-based design, restorative design works alongside biophilic, regenerative, and salutogenic principles to craft spaces that replenish energy, reduce stress, and enhance cognitive performance and human flourishing.

In tackling the housing crisis, Victoria's Big Housing Build is targeting over 16,000 social and affordable homes, while the federal Housing Australia Future Fund is aiming to deliver 40,000 social and affordable homes by 2029. While the numbers are challenging and aspirational, each dwelling will be home to a household in need of support, potentially responding to complex social and psychological needs.

It is vital, then, that the housing we develop is considered, responsive, sensitive and restorative. However, the combination of challenging housing targets and elevated construction costs may limit the opportunity to deliver the broader value of appropriately designed affordable and social housing.

Therefore, the measurable benefits of trauma-informed design is a relevant and essential factor for all new housing in Australia.

In this study, we propose to:

- Plan and focus the work to meet our partners' requirements, and learn from our partners and other participants.
- Investigate and outline the principles of restorative and trauma-informed design, with a focus on higher-density, social and affordable housing.
- Demonstrate how the layout and design of apartments and communal spaces can support wellbeing, psychological comfort and a sense of safety.
- Outline the process of design procurement for housing projects in Victoria and interstate.
- Analyse current buildings and/or plans for buildings in Victoria, to identify gaps, issues and opportunities.
- Establish parameters and criteria for Restorative Design in affordable and social housing in Australia.
- Demonstrate the measurable benefits and value of restorative design in housing.