



Health and rental housing

Shifting the dial on health outcomes and health service utilisation

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A home is the
foundation for a
decent life



Decent homes promote
mental and physical
health and wellbeing



Adequate
housing is
protective
of physical
and mental
health

Housing is a social determinant of health

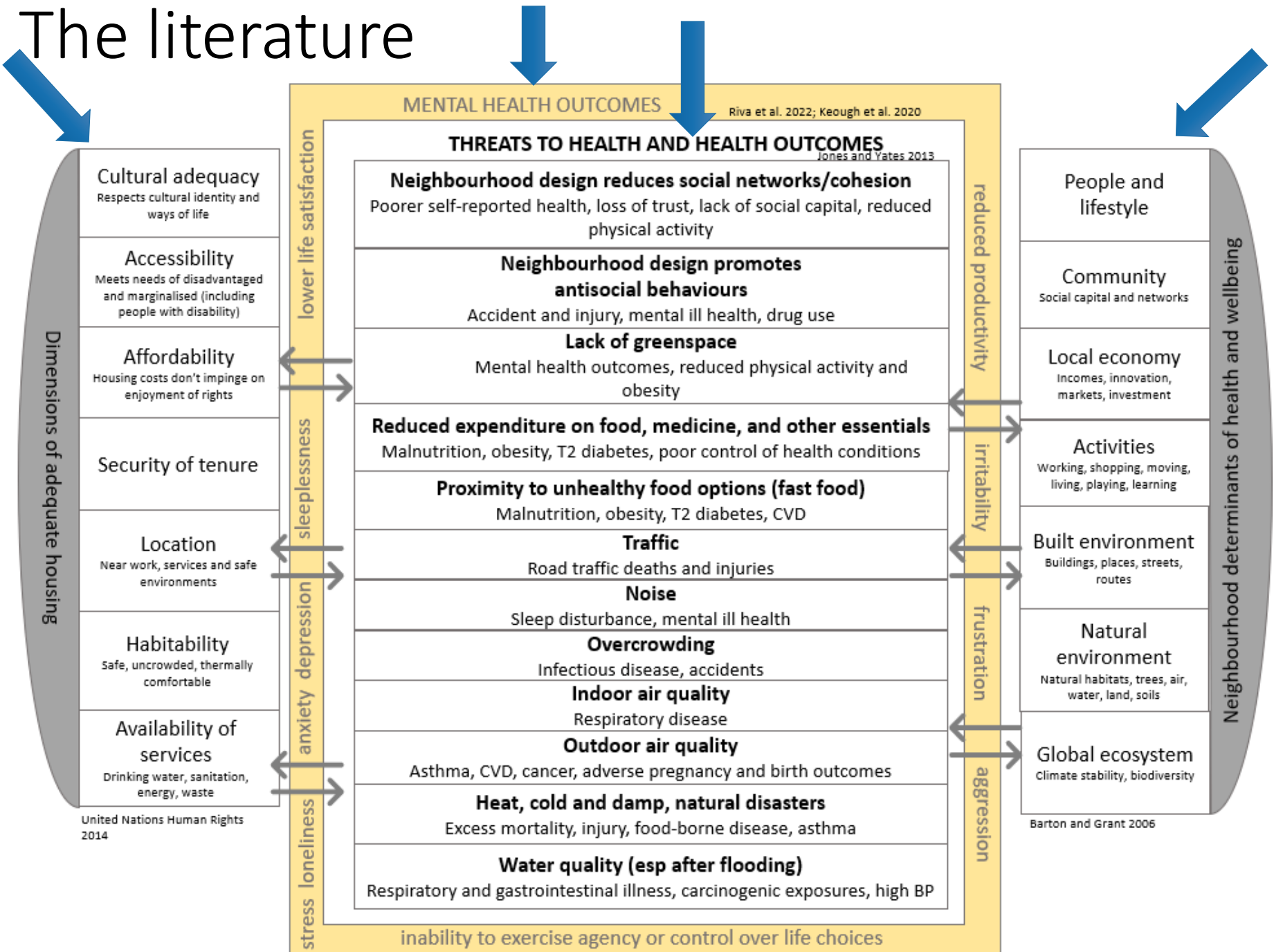
“It is not simply that good housing and good health are merely associated or go together. For people to attain and maintain sustainable housing they need adequate, coordinated and timely support for their health. Equally, to maintain good health people need to be in affordable, adequate, secure dwellings.”

complex
multi-directional
multi-dimensional



Housing
is a
human
right

The literature





South Australian data

Analysed data from SAPHS 2021 –
compared health outcomes and
healthcare utilisation of renters
(private and social) and homeowners

Adjusted results for age, gender,
income and education



Renting is associated with poorer wellbeing and
mental health

Renting is a predictor of higher hospital service and
mental health service utilisation

Homeownership is a protective factor



SA Data – Health outcomes

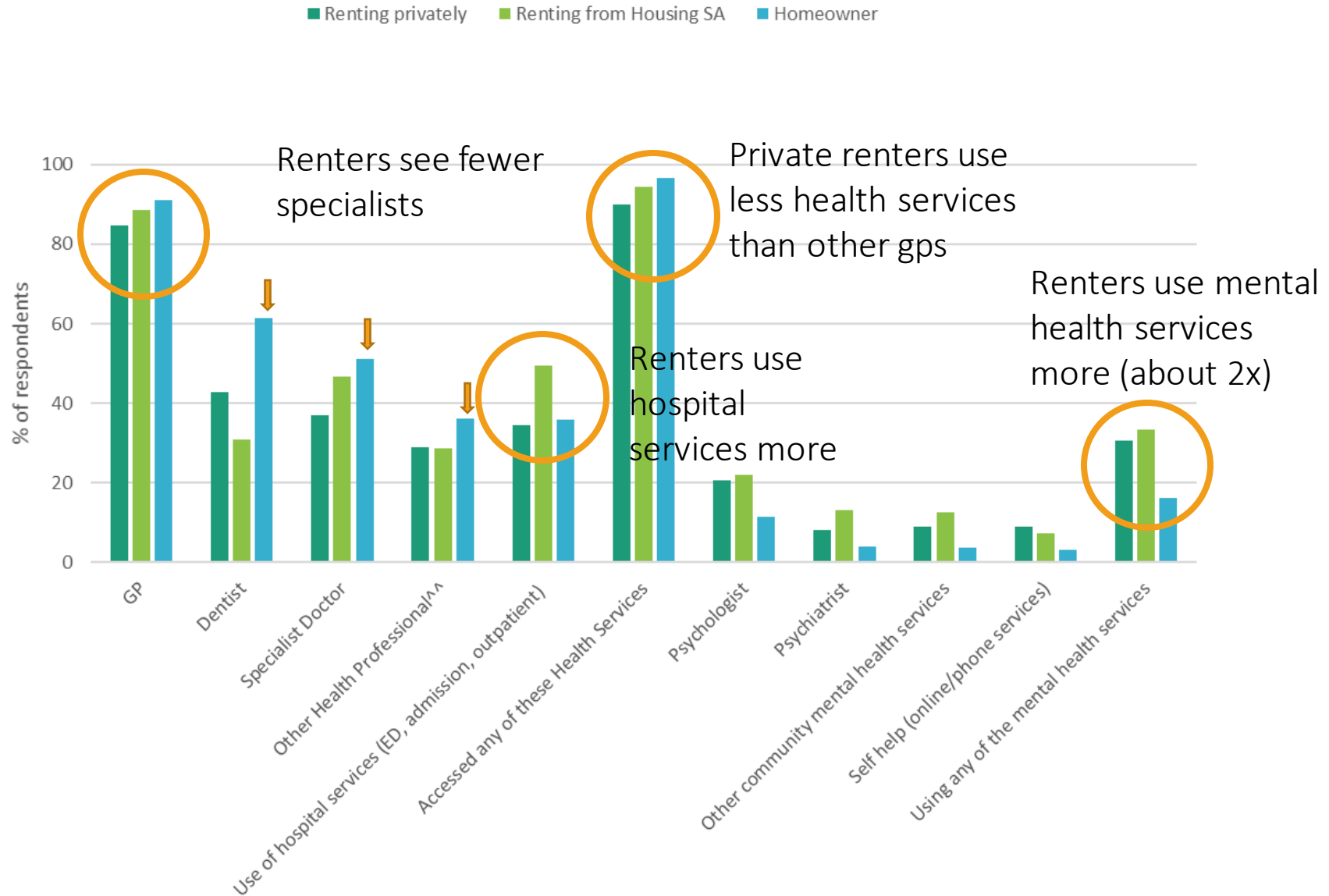


Adjusted results
for age, gender,
income and
education



Wellbeing is poor	37% private renters 47% social housing	1.6x worse	23%
Chronic health conditions	37% private renters 66% social housing	2x more likely	55%
Mental health condition	37% private renters 48% social housing	1.6x more likely 2-3x more likely	25%

SA Data – Healthcare utilisation



What renters in Adelaide told us

Security of tenure impacts on mental health and feelings of personal agency, safety and control over life circumstances

It's too easy for landlords to evict you and it's too hard for you to find another place, so you just put up with the intrusion. I feel trapped and have no power – I just have to put up and shut up and this is really bad for my mental health.

Housing affordability directly impacts people's health, forcing them to choose between paying for rent or medicine/care and limiting access to healthcare

Most of my money goes on rent. I don't have much money for medical issues ... I can't go to the GP because it's hard to get bulk-billing. Also, it's hard to access mental health services ... the free sessions have been reduced and paying the gap is too much. Online health services are inaccessible if you don't have access to a computer or internet, and it costs money on your mobile.

Habitability of housing also exacerbates existing health conditions and increases reliance on hospital services

My son has had ten hospital admissions because of his breathing reaction to mould – the place is damp and there's mould on the walls and carpets. I can't find anywhere affordable to live and so, sadly, his health is suffering.

What renters in Adelaide told us

As rentals have increased, I've had to move further out – where transport is worse and costs more. This means I've lost contact with friends and family and the church I used to go to...if you can be part of a community, you feel so much better and your kids do better as well.

Poorly located affordable housing breaks health-protective social networks

Now that I have finally found a rental – even though I can't afford it – I'm not going to raise stuff with the landlord because, being an Aboriginal woman, I know how hard it is to get a look-in for a rental. They take one look at me, ignore me or turn me away. It's a double-whammy and makes finding a place so much harder.

Racism and discrimination makes finding and keeping affordable adequate housing even more difficult.

Health impacts of unaffordable housing

You can't live a healthy life in a private rental. I mean, who can live a good life when you're paying 85 per cent on rent? I can't afford to eat properly...I also can't afford my medication or even the Medicare gap...I've been hospitalised twice in the last year for asthma, I couldn't breathe and had to get an ambulance.

Fewer habitable rooms

Crowding

Reduced privacy

Increased risk of infectious diseases spreading

Increased household conflict

Exacerbation of respiratory conditions

With so much money going on rent and trying to feed our kids good food, we get really stressed...We can't afford to get outside those four walls. This is not good for our mental health, or our physical health. It stresses everyone's relationships in the family.

Reduced earning capacity especially if employed casually



Impacts of poorly located housing

To find a rental that I can manage on my pension, I have to live in this industrial area. I live opposite a brickworks place. There's so much dust and it's made my asthma worse and, since I had COVID, breathing is often very difficult. Not only that, I have to keep my doors and windows closed because of the dust and noise – this makes my place hot and stuffy. It doesn't feel good and I can't afford to use the air-conditioning or put a fan on.

No local greenspace

Poor outdoor air quality

Nowhere pleasant to walk and reliant on car for mobility

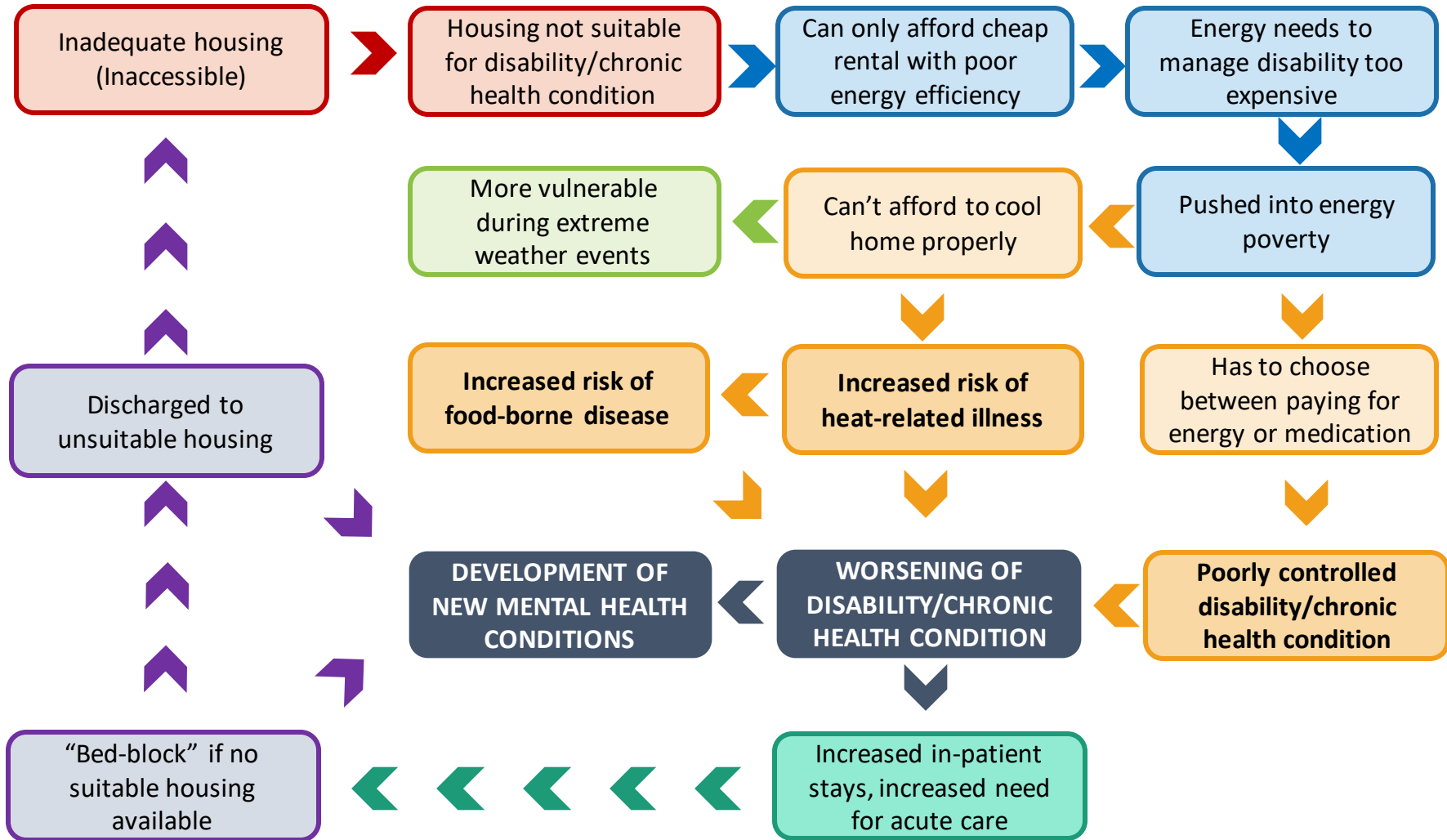
Increased risk of obesity and diabetes

Risk of respiratory disease, CVD, cancer

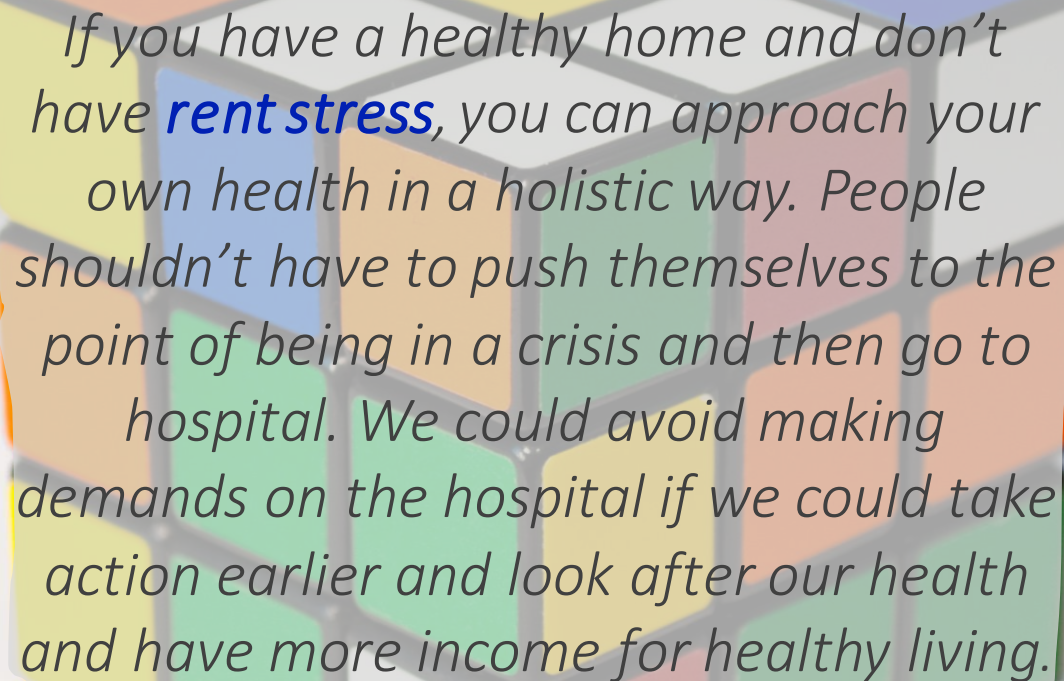
Unlikely to receive preventive interventions in acute care setting

For my faith, as a woman, it's not right for me to walk alone and it's a distance to the local play park so I can't often take my children there. We don't have a proper yard at home for them to play in and there's no childcare facilities nearby ... so my children are forced to be inside, in a congested space, with small rooms that have no aircon or heating.

Impacts of inaccessible housing



Solutions?

A 3D rendering of a Rubik's cube, slightly out of focus, with a text overlay. The cube is composed of many small colored squares (red, yellow, green, blue, orange, white) arranged in a 3x3x3 grid. The text is centered on the front face of the cube.

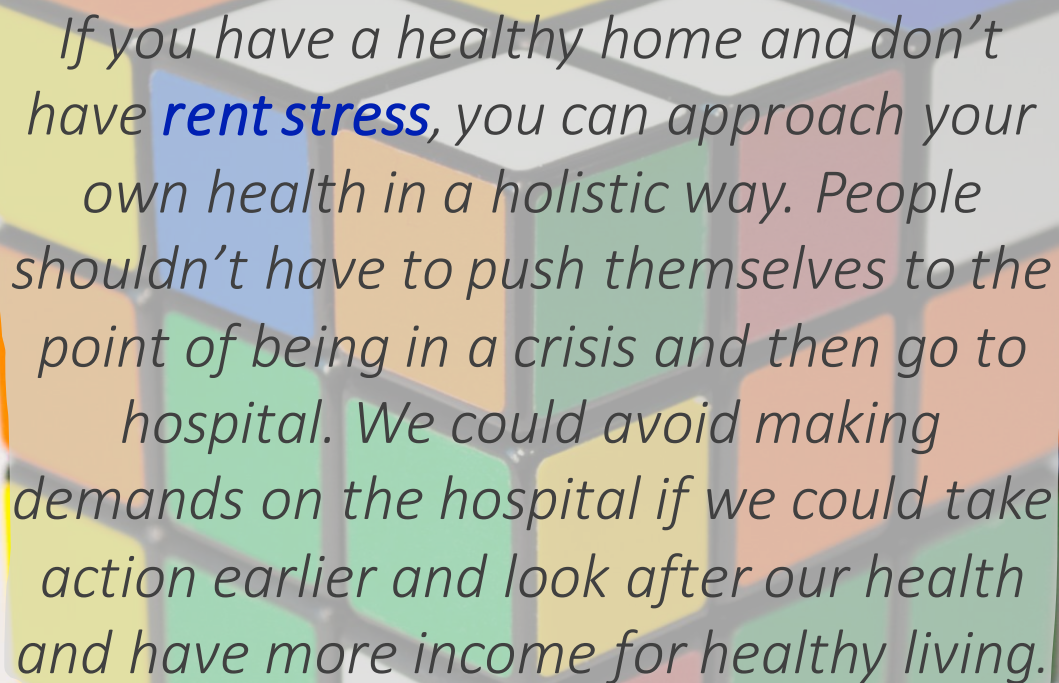
*If you have a healthy home and don't have **rent stress**, you can approach your own health in a holistic way. People shouldn't have to push themselves to the point of being in a crisis and then go to hospital. We could avoid making demands on the hospital if we could take action earlier and look after our health and have more income for healthy living.*

Solutions?

Reduce rent stress

Build better neighbourhoods

Address income support



*If you have a healthy home and don't have **rent stress**, you can approach your own health in a holistic way. People shouldn't have to push themselves to the point of being in a crisis and then go to hospital. We could avoid making demands on the hospital if we could take action earlier and look after our health and have more income for healthy living.*

affordability

security of tenure

safety

thermal comfort

Increase supply of social and affordable housing

Improve habitability



Residential Tenancies Act Review

Immediate/Short term

- Allow rental price cap and introduce one
- Disallow rent bidding
- Cap rental bond amounts
- Allow longer tenancy agreements (5yrs)
- Disallow no-cause evictions
- Allow tenants to make minor modifications
- Improve tenancy application and agreement forms
- Allow pets

Medium/Longer Term

- Strengthen and apply minimum housing standards
- Augment and strengthen maintenance requirements
- Register and license rooming houses
- Introduce minimum energy efficiency standards
- Change rules for water bills
- Require deep cleaning of rentals between tenancies

It's a no-brainer! If you want to sort out people's health and not have us knocking on hospital EDs, just provide people with a decent and stable ongoing place to live. We all know that if you feel safe and secure where you live, so many other parts of your life can be sorted more easily – at least you'll have a solid base to work on all the other stuff that affects your life, including your health.

Thank you!

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