

## [Reducing crime in public housing areas through community development: An evaluation of the High Density Housing Program in the ACT](#) [1]

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The High Density Housing Program (HDHP) is a collaborative program involving Reclink Australia, the Australian Capital Territory Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS), ACT Housing, ACT Health and ACT Policing. It involves the application of community development approaches to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour at Ainslie Avenue, a large public housing area in the ACT comprising six (previously seven) blocks. An on-the-ground manager (OTGM), employed by Reclink Australia, maintains a continuing presence across the site, coordinating existing services to residents and introducing new events, activities and programs that provide opportunities for resident interaction and relationship building and that address the needs of residents.

The HDHP draws on Australian research evidence that showed social approaches to crime prevention, including community development, can improve neighbourhood cohesion and are associated with reduced crime (Samuels et al. 2004). The HDHP has four primary objectives. It aims to promote community safety and security, prevent and reduce opportunities for crime in public housing sites and surrounding areas, develop pro-social and law abiding community engagement among residents and facilitate and support residents' access to health, mental health, education and employment services.

The evaluation of the HDHP employed a rigorous quasi-experimental design which enabled changes in recorded assaults and property crime, disturbance incidents and ambulance attendances at Ainslie Avenue to be compared with those of another public housing area that shared similar characteristics. This component of the evaluation also examined whether there had been any displacement or diffusion of benefit to surrounding areas. A cost-benefit analysis (CBA) compared the cost of the program with monetised benefits associated with changes in recorded crime rates. This was supported by analysis of data collected by the OTGM on program delivery and in-depth interviews with 15 residents about their experiences of the program and living at Ainslie Avenue. [Download the Research Report Here](#) [2]

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