Housing and Homes:
Understanding social support and ontological security among South Port Community Housing Group tenants
Housing and Homes:

Understanding social support and ontological security among South Port Community Housing Group tenants

2017

Shai Diner
Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the help and support of some key people and organisations. Firstly, I would like to thank Janet Goodwin, the CEO of South Port Community Housing Group and the staff for making this project possible and for their continued support.

I would like to thank the SouthPort tenants, whose participation made this project possible. I would especially like to thank those tenants and staff for their willingness to participate in the interview process and for their contribution to the research project. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Ralph Horne and Tony Dalton for their guidance and expertise.

I am grateful to Elizabeth Ryan and the UN Global Compact Cities Programme for the support and guidance provided during the writing up of the report. Thanks are also due to Nicole Pepperell for her continued support throughout this project.

I would like to thank Liz Atkinson for her work editing the report and Judy Hollander for using her incredible abilities to design the report, and for the support they provided throughout the project. Lastly, I would like to thank Julia Laidlaw, Alex Chorowicz, Alon Diner and Jerry Diner for the personal support and help they provided throughout the research process.

It has been an incredible journey working alongside such a variety of people. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible.

Shai Diner
Executive Summary

Homelessness is an ongoing concern in major urban areas around Australia. To combat this problem, in partnership with the Victorian State Government, South Port Community Housing Group (SouthPort) manages 283 affordable housing properties in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne, targeted at single homeless people who receive government benefits.

This research project seeks to answer three research questions, outlined below, through an analysis of a database; a review of finances; observations conducted over a seven-month period, and; 26 individual interviews.

Research question 1: What are the key features of SouthPort's current tenancy model which provides community housing to low income single people who were formerly homeless?

SouthPort’s housing portfolio comprises 22 rooms in a rooming house, 161 self-contained bed-sit units, 88 one-bedroom apartments, and 12 family properties. SouthPort takes its referrals from key homelessness agencies in the inner city including Launch Housing, Vincent Care Ozanam House and Sacred Heart Mission St Kilda. To assist people in maintaining local ties, it gives priority to homeless people from the City of Port Phillip. SouthPort's tenancy management involves collecting rent and managing antisocial behaviours. SouthPort’s management displayed compassion when managing rent arrears. Antisocial behaviours were managed according to the severity of the behaviours, with extreme forms of violence resulting in eviction.

Access to support services is important for people who were formerly homeless due to the difficulties they have previously experienced. SouthPort does not provide extensive support services to tenants; however, tenants are referred to appropriate services in the local area. External support services can prove difficult for tenants to access due to limited available resources, waiting times and their financial situations. One form of support SouthPort offers is recreational support, which involves social events and functions for tenants.

Management of SouthPort’s properties is pivotal to its tenancy model, which involves responsive, cyclical and structural maintenance and repairs. Responsive maintenance is the most common form of contact SouthPort has with tenants. When maintenance processes break down, these hinder the completion of maintenance and repairs at properties.

Research question 2: How do SouthPort’s tenants perceive and experience their housing?

The majority of tenants who participated in interviews perceived and experienced their housing positively. Tenants expressed more negative experiences in rooming houses compared to those in self-contained units. Tenants believed that the self-contained bed-sit units were small; however, tenants’ mental health improved due to the privacy and sense of ownership of their unit. Events that were run at and within SouthPort’s properties helped reduce isolation. Tenants participated in and enjoyed these events, and saw these as a means to socialise with staff and fellow tenants.

SouthPort displayed compassion and flexibility when managing rent arrears. This enabled tenants to feel a sense of security with their housing. Tenants expressed concern regarding the management of anti-social behaviours and noted that SouthPort is limited in its capacity, as the housing provider, to adequately cope with these behaviours. Mismanagement of anti-social behaviours led neighbours to have negative experiences of their housing.

Maintenance was viewed negatively amongst the majority of tenants interviewed. Although SouthPort outsources the majority of its maintenance and repairs, tenants blamed SouthPort for perceived delays or inadequacies in repairs. This led to negative contact between SouthPort and the tenants.

Research question 3: How is SouthPort effective in providing housing to low-income people who were formerly homeless?

Length of Tenancy analysis indicated that more than 35% of tenants have lived in a SouthPort residence for more than seven years. A further 19% have lived in a SouthPort residence for more than three years. This indicates that SouthPort’s housing model has allowed tenants to remain in its housing over significant periods of time. In turn,
this provides ontological security through the security of tenure provided to tenants. Tenants are able to develop a normal, stable and private daily routine. Activities such as drug dealing, drug taking, prostitution and violence, which are prevalent in some of SouthPort’s properties, hinder tenants’ ability to develop ontological security.

Tenants were able to develop a range of social supports through their housing. Tenants receive social support through contact with their neighbours and SouthPort staff, through the compassionate support provided by SouthPort, and through information-based resources. Social support allows tenants to feel a sense of belonging and enables them to develop further ontological security than was possible in their previously homeless environment.

Key Findings:

- The self-contained units at SouthPort provide for more effective routes to ontological security than the shared rooming houses, and this is likely to assist in sustaining exists from homelessness.
- SouthPort provides compassionate support to tenants, which aids tenants in their daily lives. This is an important element of SouthPort’s housing model.
- Tenants were able to build their social support and so rebuild their lives at SouthPort through contact with neighbours and staff.
- SouthPort’s maintenance practice is experienced as somewhat opaque and unpredictable by tenants.

Key Recommendations:

1. SouthPort should continue to advocate for self-contained units as these facilitated better outcomes than the rooming house arrangements for tenants who have experienced homelessness.
2. SouthPort should aim to maintain or increase the housing worker/tenancy ratio (1/70) as this allows for relationships to be maintained that are important in providing greater opportunities for ontological security and social support and avoiding tenants re-entering homelessness.
3. SouthPort should continue to provide informal compassionate support as it is viewed favourably by tenants, and provides them with an enhanced sense of belonging.
4. SouthPort should advocate for more support services to be funded in the area in order to increase long term support for tenants.
5. To reduce perceptions of favouritism, more transparent communication about why assistance might be given or withheld, could avoid the perception that staff’s decisions about whether or not to provide compassionate support are arbitrary or exclusionary.
6. SouthPort should advocate for the State Government and VCAT to develop a strategy to specifically handle illegal behaviours in community housing. Clearer processes in managing antisocial behaviours would help SouthPort to manage their tenancies more effectively.
7. SouthPort’s maintenance practice would benefit from a clearer, more structured and transparent process.
Community housing, I find that people, because they’re all, they haven’t got many friends anyway and that is circumstances, marriage breakups, addictions and that, but they end up getting little gangs of friends and they kind of – so, they try and keep the peace. Community – it’s community housing.

- Penny
# Table of Contents

**Introduction**  
14 - 16

**Section 1: Background**  
17 - 34

1.1 Historical Context  
1.1.1 Collective Based Action  
1.1.2 Adoption of a Formal Management Structure  
1.1.3 Housing Stock Transformation  
18

1.2 Current Context  
1.2.1 Properties  
1.2.2 Tenancy Trends  
1.2.3 Finance  
21

1.3 Homelessness and SouthPort Tenants  
1.3.1 Causes of Homelessness  
1.3.2 The Lived Experience of Homelessness  
30

1.4 Conclusion for Section 1  
34

**Section 2: SouthPort Tenancy Model**  
35 - 46

2.1 SouthPort Housing Provision  
2.1.1 Pathway of Tenancy  
2.1.2 Affordable Housing  
37

2.2 Tenants and Their Access to Services  
2.2.1 Support Services  
2.2.2 Community Housing Worker  
39

2.3 Tenancy Management  
41

2.4 Property Management  
2.4.1 Responsive Maintenance  
2.4.2 Cyclical Maintenance  
2.4.3 Structural Maintenance  
44

2.5 Conclusion of Section 2  
46

**Section 3: Tenants’ Experience**  
47 - 58

3.1 Housing Provision  
3.1.1 Size  
3.1.2 Modern and Clean  
3.1.3 Window Placement  
3.1.4 Kitchens and Bathrooms  
48

3.2 Tenants and Their Access to Services  
52

3.3 Tenancy Management  
54

3.4 Property Management  
55

3.5 Benefits of Stable Housing  
56

3.6 Conclusion of Section 3  
58
Figures

Figure 1: SouthPort Organisational Structure, August 2016 ........................................ 21
Figure 2: SouthPort Organisational Values ........................................................................ 22
Figure 3: SouthPort Organisational Outcomes .................................................................. 23
Figure 4: Total number of People Living in SouthPort Properties (Financial Years) ............. 26
Figure 5: Housing Program Income 2010-2016 ................................................................. 27
Figure 6: SouthPort Housing Program Expenditure 2010-2016 .......................................... 28
Figure 7: SouthPort Income and Expenditure, 2010 – 2016 ................................................. 28
Figure 8: Process of Tenancy at SouthPort. For a full explanation of each process, see Appendix D .......................................................................................................................... 37
Figure 9: Outsourced Responsive Maintenance Cycle ......................................................... 44
Figure 10: Length of Tenancy over a 12-Year Period ............................................................ 60
Figure 11: Gender Representation of Interviewees compared to all SouthPort tenants .......... 86
Figure 12: Age Representation of Interviewees compared to all SouthPort tenants ......... 87
Figure 13: Length of Tenancy Difference between Interviewees compared to all SouthPort tenants .......................................................................................................................... 88
Figure 14: Properties Representation of Interviewees compared to all SouthPort properties 89
Figure 15: Tenant Entries over a 12 Year period ................................................................. 90
Figure 16: Tenants Exiting the Housing Program over a 12 year period ......................... 91
Figure 17: Entry and Exits over a 12 year period .................................................................. 91
Figure 18: Gender Breakdown at SouthPort over a 12 year period ................................... 92
Figure 19: Age Breakdown at SouthPort over a 12 year period ....................................... 92
Tables

Table 1: Types of Accommodation  ............................................................ 24
Table 2: Properties Managed or Owned by SouthPort, August 2016  .......... 25
Table 3: Rent Arrears, 2014 - 2016 ............................................................. 43
Table 4: Summary of SouthPort Finances, 2010 - 2016 ............................. 93
Table 5: SouthPort Finances In Depth, 2010 - 2016 ................................. 94
Table 6: Rent Calculations per property for tenants receiving Disability Support Pension, Age Pension and Carers Pension ................................................. 100
Table 7: Rent Calculations per property for tenants receiving Newstart Allowance ........................................................................................................ 101

List of Abbreviations

Australian Bureau of Statistics  ............................................................... ABS
The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  .................................... AIHW
Community Housing Provider  ............................................................. CHP
Commonwealth Rent Assistance  .......................................................... CRA
Department of Health and Human Services ......................................... DHHS
Housing Provider Framework  ............................................................... HPF
The Housing Registrar of Victoria ......................................................... HRV
Journey to Social Inclusion  ................................................................. J2SI
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology .............................................. RMIT
South Port Community Housing Group .............................................. SouthPort
Victorian Civil and Administrative ...................................................... VCAT
Introduction

The homeless population within Australia has grown despite numerous government policies targeted at combatting the problem. Homelessness is a complex problem with many facets, including factors such as mental health, rising housing costs, relationship and family breakdowns, addiction and shrinking affordable housing options for people on low incomes. Support services and housing are provided to help homeless people transition into housing, although the quality and quantity of these remain key issues in addressing homelessness.

Housing is critical, not just for shelter, but for enabling a sense of autonomy, security and home. This research project focuses on South Port Community Housing Group (SouthPort), a Community Housing Provider (CHP) in Victoria. SouthPort provides housing to single people, specifically targeting individuals out of or at risk of homelessness. 271 single units of housing are located in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne area, with 12 family units located around St Kilda/Elwood. SouthPort housing enables tenants to develop ontological security and social support that allows them to remain in long term housing. Ontological security is consistency, trust, continuity and predictability in an individual’s life, providing the framework to feel secure in their place in society and within themselves (Giddens 1984, 1990).

This report draws on qualitative data, including participant observations and 26 interviews with individuals, to understand tenants’ perspectives on the housing provided and how effective SouthPort’s housing of low income and formerly homeless people is. Observations were conducted at SouthPort’s office between February and August 2016 (Wolff 2004). In addition to the researcher’s impressions of the workplace, these observations recorded the daily activities of the organisation, discussions amongst the staff, and situations that arose (Fetterman 2010; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Further, they enabled the researcher
to understand the delivery of the program, which in turn informed the design of the interview questions and the criteria used to assess the program. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 current tenants, one former tenant, four staff members and one community worker (Britten 2006; Holstein and Gubrium 1999; Hopf 2004). Participants were recruited through advertisements, the relationships established during the initial field work, and a snowballing technique in which participants already recruited, recommended further participants (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Mack et al. 2005). Interviews sought to complement the observations conducted by the researcher by capturing data on the lived experience of SouthPort’s tenants.

In order to ensure interviewee confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used throughout this report. In some cases, participants’ experiences have been amalgamated into a composite character, in order to further mask individual identities and ensure confidentiality (Lofland and Lofland 2006).

SouthPort collects information about its clients in a database named Chintaro. Access to the database was provided for the purposes of determining SouthPort tenants’ demographics, trends in occupancy and length of stay. Interviewee demographics were representative of the demographics of the overall housing program (see Appendix A).

SouthPort conducts tenant surveys, which provide quantitative data about its program, on an annual basis as part of its reporting requirements. This study sought to supplement this quantitative data with a more qualitative, experiential investigation to gain an in-depth understanding of how tenants experience their housing. The focus of this report is, therefore, on the lived experience of SouthPort tenants and the ways in which their experience enables them to overcome their previous homelessness.

The aim of this study is to document the model that SouthPort has adopted in its provision of housing, and to analyse how it is effective in providing long term housing that enables individuals to overcome their previous homeless status. To achieve this aim, the report sets out to address three questions:

Research question 1: What are the key features of SouthPort’s current tenancy model which provides community housing to low income single people who were formerly homeless?

Research question 2: How do SouthPort’s tenants perceive and experience their housing?

Research question 3: How is SouthPort effective in providing housing to low-income people who were formerly homeless?

In addressing these questions, the concepts of ontological security and social support are key analytical touchstones. Ontological security, the ability to develop and maintain routine, is often lost amongst homeless people due to uncertainty and unsafe environments. Social isolation is exacerbated through the lived experience of homelessness, therefore rebuilding social support can be incredibly influential on tenants (Ravenhill 2008). Understanding these two concepts provides a conceptual framework in which to analyse and understand SouthPort’s housing program.

This report is structured as follows. Section 1 provides a background on SouthPort. Section 1.1 summarises the history of the organisation, providing a brief snapshot of the organisation’s origins. Section 1.2 presents SouthPort as it currently operates, outlining staffing arrangements, the organisation’s values and outcomes, property lists and its financial status. Section 1.3 provides a snapshot of homelessness from the tenants’ perspective, looking into the causes and lived experience of homelessness. Section 1 thus provides the context and framework from which to analyse the organisation.

Section 2 addresses the first research question by providing an outline of SouthPort’s Housing Program. Section 2.1 articulates SouthPort’s provision of housing, outlining the cycle of tenancy and affordable housing calculations. Section 2.2 describes the tenants and their access to support services. Section 2.3 discusses the tenancy management processes adopted by SouthPort. Section 2.4 outlines the property management process, focusing on responsive, cyclical and structural maintenance. Section 2.5 thus clarifies the tenancy model and the processes for SouthPort programs.
Section 3 addresses the second research question, presenting findings that summarise the tenants’ experience of the housing program, and how they perceive their housing. Section 3.1 focuses on tenants’ experience of their physical environment. Section 3.2 discusses tenants’ perception and experience of support services. Section 3.3 seeks to understand tenants’ experience of the way in which SouthPort manages rent arrears and antisocial behaviours. Section 3.4 outlines tenants’ views of the maintenance process. Section 3.5 seeks to understand the benefits of stable housing from the tenants’ perspectives by analysing the outcomes tenants have achieved through their housing. Section 3.6 addresses what this data implies for SouthPort’s outcomes.

Section 4 assesses how SouthPort is effective in providing housing to formerly homeless people, as suggested by the data collected. Section 4.1 explores the length of tenancy in order to understand why tenants remain in their housing long term. Ontological security and social support provide a framework for evaluating the long term tenancy trends. Section 4.2 draws on the concept of ontological security to understand why tenants remain in their housing long term, and is related to their previous homeless status and their need to feel secure. This section explores security of tenure, affordability, normal routine, safety within the properties, and the presence of staff at the properties. Section 4.3 uses the concept of social support to understand why SouthPort is successful in providing long term housing to homeless people. Social support is explored in four sections: contact with neighbours, emotional support provided by SouthPort staff, compassionate support provided by SouthPort staff and tenant access to information-based support. Section 4.4 evaluates the implications of this data for the third research question.

Section 5 concludes by summarising the report, outlining the strengths and weakness of the housing program. Section 5.1 provides recommendations to SouthPort. Section 5.2 suggests potential future research that would extend understanding of community housing.

The limitations of the study are three-fold. Firstly, SouthPort’s Youth Support Program was not within the scope of this study. Secondly, the respondents did not include residents of the co-op flats SouthPort inherited in 2009, so findings cannot be confidently extended to these units. Thirdly, the mode of inquiry is limited to qualitative evaluation of the implications of the model upon aspects of residents’ ontological security and social support. As such, it is not representative of all SouthPort’s tenants nor of other housing for homeless services across the sector; rather, it is a ‘deep dive’ into the range of concerns and experiences that shape a particular selection of tenants’ housing experience.
SouthPort was established as a response to the growing homeless problem in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne in 1982. Beginning as a collective staffing model, SouthPort has undergone enormous change since its inception. This section aims to present a brief, yet holistic, understanding of the organisation. Section 1.1 outlines a historical account of SouthPort using its historical documents. Section 1.2 provides an overview of the current housing program, presenting the organisational structure, values and outcomes, followed by details of the properties supplied, tenancies over a twelve-year period and a brief account of the finances. This was achieved through observations, a database analysis and a review of SouthPort’s finances. Section 1.3 profiles the complex nature of homelessness in relation to SouthPort’s tenants using a mixture of academic literature and interviews. Section 1.4 summarises the key themes presented in this section.
1.1

Historical Context

SouthPort has been characterised by three periods since its formation. The first period can be distinguished by the Collective Based Action approach adopted in response to the growing homelessness problem in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne. The second period represents the organisation’s move to a Formal Management Structure reflecting growing trends and pressures within the sector. The third period can be characterised by a change to new housing stock - from rooming houses to self-contained units.

1.1.1

Collective Based Action (1982 – 1990)

The South Port Rooming House Committee (SPRHC) was formed to tackle the shortage of housing supply in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne. The SPRHC operated as a non-hierarchical collective, without a manager. The SPRHC began operations with two rooming houses, and adapted to various changes and challenges within the local area.

1982

The State Government established the Rooming House Program by leasing out properties to community groups to provide social housing. An agreement involving the State Government, the local Councils, and a local committee, resulted in two properties being let as rooming houses on the Emerald Hill Estate. The State and Local Governments endorsed the formation of a not-for-profit body to manage these two properties.

1983

The SPRHC was formed, consisting of three Board members. The SPRHC was granted two rooming houses to manage, and a third ‘holding’ house, managing a total of 21 rooms. Live-in caretakers were in charge of the day-to-day running of the properties, which were targeted at homeless people.

1985

Two new rooming house properties were leased to the SPRHC, bringing the total number of rooms to 64. The committee employed their first paid part-time project worker who was the secretary to the committee and managed the operation of the houses, including supervision of the resident caretakers.

1986

The committee became incorporated as a Registered Incorporated Association with the name South Port Rooming House Service (SPRHS). The Committee submitted a funding proposal for a Youth Housing Program.

1987

The SPRHS was allocated two four-bedroom youth share houses to accommodate homeless young people.

1988

The Youth Housing Program was set up by SPRHS and funded with the help of the State Government. Two youth housing workers were employed and three more youth properties were rented out. The State Government acquired a sixth rooming house, which was provided to the SPRHS.

1989

Three further rooming houses were acquired.

1990

A purpose-built rooming house was leased to the SPRHS. The Ministry of Housing (Victoria) granted Office accommodation to the SPRHS.

Beginning with three board members and live-in caretakers, the organisation expanded to include three workers, four youth houses and 10 rooming houses.
1.1.2
Adoption of a Formal Management Structure
(1990 – 1998)

By the 1990s, the SPRHS was well established in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne. This second period saw the organisation transform from a collective management structure to a more formal management structure, expanding the scope of its tenants and housing stock.

1991

The organisation changed drastically. The live-in caretaker position in each of the rooming houses was discontinued. In addition, SPRHS acquired two emergency housing properties and another rooming house, bringing the total number of tenants to 130.

Following a review of its operations, SPRHS changed its name to South Port Community Housing Group Inc. This reflected the three types of services provided: rooming houses, youth housing and emergency housing. Furthermore, SouthPort established its first Coordinator/Rooming House Worker position.

1992

SouthPort received funding for a part-time worker to manage the emergency houses. SouthPort’s first women-only house was opened after a renovation of one of its properties. SouthPort provided 171 rooms in total.

1993

A third part-time worker was employed. An additional property was leased to SouthPort and three properties were renovated.

1994

After an organisational review, SouthPort appointed a dedicated Coordinator to manage the organisation, thus moving to a formal management structure.

1997

The State Government Emergency Housing Program was discontinued and SouthPort was forced to hand back management of its emergency houses. The emergency housing worker based at SouthPort, was made redundant.

1998

SouthPort was under increasing pressure to merge with other local housing providers; however, SouthPort decided to remain an explicitly local service.

This period saw SouthPort transform itself from a collective to the adoption of a formal management structure. Beginning with 130 rooms in 1990, SouthPort managed 180 rooms by the end of this period.
1.1.3 Housing Stock Transformation (1999 – 2014)

This period is characterised by the change in SouthPort’s housing stock from predominantly rooming houses to mostly self-contained units.

1999

The Coordinator role was re-named Manager. SouthPort was successful in obtaining a tender to build 23 flats in South Melbourne, with extensive consultation occurring over the following years.

2002

While building of the flats commenced, this was halted due to problems experienced by the building company. Building recommenced in 2003.

2004

The State Government expanded the tender enabling SouthPort to build 40 flats rather than the original 23 flats agreed.

2005

The 40 new flats were completed, opened and tenanted with their current, long term tenants.

2006

One of the rooming houses was upgraded to include larger rooms, but remained a rooming house. While another rooming house property was converted from a rooming house into bed-sits (this project was completed in 2009).

2007

Housing Provider Framework (HPF) leases were introduced.

2008

There were major reforms in the community housing and homeless sectors in Victoria with the introduction of Housing Provider Registration and Homelessness Services Accreditation. The first initiative required organisations to become registered housing providers, which SouthPort achieved in December 2008.

2009

SouthPort was granted Accreditation as a Homelessness Assistance Agency. It assumed management of the St Kilda Rental Housing Cooperative, delivering SouthPort 12 family properties, following which it created the new role of Services Development Officer.

2010

SouthPort was granted Federal Nation Building Funds to upgrade and convert three rooming houses into bed-sit units and to build 40 new one bedroom flats. The one-bedroom apartment complex was the first SouthPort-owned property asset.

2011

Conversion of the rooming house properties was completed and the properties tenanted.

2012

Forty new one-bedroom apartments were completed and tenanted.

2013

Approval was given for four more rooming houses to be upgraded to bed-sit flats.

2014

SouthPort acquired a local property housing older people, making this the second SouthPort-owned property. The State Government contributed half the acquisition cost. Once acquired, SouthPort began upgrading the rooms, which resulted in the addition of 31 self-contained units.

This period saw a significant transformation in the housing stock SouthPort managed, with the majority of the properties being self-contained bed-sit units. Furthermore, SouthPort became a property owner, building one property and upgrading its second property.
1.2 Current Context

SouthPort has undergone considerable change since its inception. Currently, SouthPort provides two services: the Housing Program and the Youth Housing Support Program. SouthPort’s organisational structure, current properties managed and owned by SouthPort, tenancy rates and SouthPort’s financial situation are set out below.

SouthPort is a not-for-profit organisation managed by a CEO and employing 12 staff members, some of whom work part-time or casual (Figure 1). The Housing Program consists of a team leader who manages three staff members. The staff to tenant ratio is 1:70. Each staff member has a specific focus area as outlined in position descriptions for: Community Engagement, Maintenance and General Housing Worker. However, due to the nature of the work, there is a large cross-over between roles. SouthPort’s Strategic Directions and Priorities Plan 2015 – 2018 outlines the organisation’s values and outcomes, which govern its service provision (Figure 2 / Figure 3)

Figure 1: SouthPort Organisational Structure, August 2016
## Organisational Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair, transparent, non-discriminatory access and service provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We ensure fair, non-discriminatory service provision and access to services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are committed to housing the homeless and not rejecting people regarded as “hard to house” or “high risk” tenants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm, respectful, empowering and supportive tenancy management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We work with people in a way that is warm and respectful and encourages them to take responsibility for and control over their own lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We provide housing services of a supportive nature, with emphasis on maintaining tenancies of people with complex needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountable, ethical and high quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are accountable to and governed by members of the community including tenants/clients of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We maintain high professional standards, accountability, and ethical behaviour in governance, management and service delivery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courage to speak up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have courage to challenge things we see as wrong and stand up for things we strongly believe in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respect individual’s privacy and sensitive use of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We do not collect personal information unless it is directly necessary for our work with tenants and clients and funding organisations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement with community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We develop “community” that is based on good relationships among staff, committee, tenants, and neighbours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We encourage the local community and locally based businesses to share in the responsibility for tackling homelessness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Figure 2: SouthPort Organisational Values
(Source: SouthPort Strategic Directions and Priorities 2015 - 2018)
SouthPort Outcomes

A mix of affordable, innovative, community based rental housing options in the City of Port Phillip for single adults and young people

Our tenants feel safe, supported and secure in their homes and are aware of their tenancy rights and responsibilities

Our tenants engage in local community life and enjoy the benefits of inner-city living

We are significant voice in advocating for affordable renting and support service for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness

SouthPort is part of a connected network of affordable housing and support services

SouthPort is a respected organisation known for its compassion, competence and prudent use of public resources. It is financially viable and accountable

Figure 3: SouthPort Organisational Outcomes
(Source: SouthPort Strategic Directions and Priorities 2015 - 2018)
1.2.1
Properties

SouthPort manages four types of accommodation: rooming houses, self-contained bed-sit units, one-bedroom flats and family properties (Table 1). SouthPort manages a total of 283 dwellings, which includes 14 multi-unit properties and 12 family properties leased from the State Government, and two SouthPort-owned multi-unit properties. Table 2 provides details of SouthPort-managed properties (both State- and SouthPort-owned), including the types of accommodation provided, demographics, location, and the last year in which major works were undertaken.

SouthPort was established to manage rooming houses on behalf of, and leased by, the Office of Housing (Victoria) under the Rooming House Program. While State-owned properties are managed by SouthPort, structural maintenance (renovations, conversions and building) is the responsibility of the State Government.

In recent years, the tenant profile has become increasingly concentrated with people with more complex needs and issues, making it difficult for SouthPort to provide safe, secure housing to tenants. Concerned about tenants’ safety, SouthPort worked in partnership with the State Government to convert rooming houses into self-contained units or apartments. Since 1991, all SouthPort-managed State Government-owned properties have been upgraded to some extent or renovated, or new facilities built (Table 2). Rooming house conversions have made housing management easier and housing more stable for tenants. The renovation, upgrade and construction of 10 properties in the past 12 years have meant that these properties are of modern design and contain modern fittings, and deliver suitable housing for single people. In 2009, following a State Government restructure, SouthPort assumed the management of 12 State-owned family properties that were previously managed by the St Kilda Rental Housing Co-op.

SouthPort was active in using its accumulated funds to expand community housing stock in the local area through purchasing and building affordable housing in the local area. In 2011, SouthPort worked with the State Government and the Catholic Church to build 40 one-bedroom apartments. This was achieved by collaborating with the Catholic Church to lease land adjacent to the church in South Melbourne for 80 years, while capitalising on a grant provided through the Australian Government’s Nation Building Fund. The building was completed in 2012. In 2014, SouthPort acquired 31 self-contained bed-sit units to house people aged 55 plus. SouthPort received part funding from the State Government to purchase the land and used its own funds to completely renovate all the units.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1:</strong> Types of Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rooming Houses</strong> are buildings in which tenants are provided a single room with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bed-sits</strong> are self-contained, single room units, with a private kitchenette and an attached private bathroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One bedroom flats</strong> are self-contained apartments with a separate living/kitchen area and bedroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex Coop flats</strong> are self-contained houses or units with one or more bedrooms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Properties Managed or Owned by SouthPort, August 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Number</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Bed-sits</th>
<th>Flats</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Completion Year of Last Major Works¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2015 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2010 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male Only</td>
<td>Port Melbourne</td>
<td>2010 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male Only</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2006 Upgraded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>1993 Upgraded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>Port Melbourne</td>
<td>2009 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2015 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2014 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>Middle Park</td>
<td>1992 Upgraded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Women Only</td>
<td>Albert Park</td>
<td>2010 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>1991 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2014 Converted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>1993 Upgraded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2005 Built</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SouthPort-Owned**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Number</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Bed-sits</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Completion Year of Last Major Works¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Mixed Gender</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2012 Built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mixed Gender, 55+</td>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2016 Renovated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ex-cooperative Rental Flats²**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Number</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Bed-sits</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>St Kilda/Elwood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total           | 22    | 161      | 100   | 283         |

¹Conversion of properties indicates an upgrade from a rooming house to self-contained units. Upgrades are renovations conducted where unit sizes were changed. Renovations imply a modernisation of the units. Built indicates the building of the units.

²As stated in the introduction, due to participant involvement, these units are not the focus of this study.
1.2.2 Tenancy Trends

SouthPort has grown from 21 dwellings in 1983 to a total of 283 dwellings in 2016, and can now house the equivalent number of people. Tenancy turnover is a significant factor and, over the last 12 years, the number of tenants housed by SouthPort has ranged from 227 to 321 people per year (Figure 4). On average, over a 12-year period, 61 tenants took up residence in any given year, while 54 exited housing. On average, 20 people entered and exited housing in the same year. For full details of tenant movement in and out of housing and tenancy demographics see Appendix B.

Figure 4: Total number of People Living in SouthPort Properties (Financial Years)
1.2.3 Finance

SouthPort is a not-for-profit organisation whose main source of income is rent received from tenants. SouthPort also receives donations, grants and interest accrued, as a secondary form of income (Figure 5). The spike in financial income in 2011-2012 is due to SouthPort receiving a grant from the Australian Government’s Nation Building Fund, with which they were able to build 40 one-bedroom apartments. This apartment complex is now a SouthPort asset.

SouthPort’s expenses include administration costs (office expenses), staff payroll expenses, service fee costs (cleaning, maintenance and utility bills for all properties), and property and tenancy management. Tenancy management costs include furniture purchased and costs involved in taking cases to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). Property management costs include the Asset Management Fee, which SouthPort pays for leasing 15 properties from the State Government, and maintenance costs for SouthPort-owned properties, for which a long term maintenance schedule is in place.

Figure 6 details SouthPort’s expenditure over a five-year period. In 2016, the average cost to operate a single dwelling was $6772, which includes maintenance and repairs, cleaning services, utilities, payroll and administration costs.

Figure 7 shows that SouthPort has consistently maintained a surplus of funds, enabling resources to be invested in improving and expanding local community housing. These profits enabled SouthPort to acquire new housing in partnership with the State Government and the Catholic Church in 2010/2011 and 2014, while maintaining housing services.

SouthPort’s finances indicate sound financial management over the last 5 years. Sections 2.3 and 3.3 below provide further detail on how SouthPort has managed its property portfolio, income and expenditure, and remained in profit. See also Appendix C for full details of SouthPort’s finances from 2010 - 2016.

Figure 5: Housing Program Income 2010-2016
Figure 6: SouthPort Housing Program Expenditure 2010-2016

Figure 7: SouthPort Income and Expenditure, 2010 – 2016
1.3

Homelessness and SouthPort Tenants

Homelessness is a complex societal problem. Initially the term recognised only individuals who were sleeping rough. However, the definition has been broadened and now recognises different forms of homelessness (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2014). The most recent definition adopted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is based on the concept of being without a ‘home’ rather than without a ‘roof’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012; Somerville 1992). The ABS (2012:7) statistical definition is:

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

► is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
► has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
► does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations.

The following section focuses on the causes and the lived experience of homelessness, using SouthPort tenants’ experience to provide examples.

1.3.1

Causes of Homelessness

The causes of homelessness can be understood as a complex interaction between structural factors (macro) and individual circumstances (micro) (Fitzpatrick 2012; Johnson et al. 2015). Structural elements are external forces that contribute to an individual becoming homeless, such as: socioeconomic status, housing supply, unemployment, and housing policy (Elliott and Krivo 1991; Fitzpatrick 2005; Wood et al. 2015). Individual circumstances and actions are internal factors that also trigger homelessness, such as: mental illness, domestic and family violence, relationship breakdown, and addiction (Mallett et al. 2009; Mallett, Rosenthal, and Keys 2005; Zorza 1991). There is no single cause that leads to homelessness; rather, it is the result of a combination of diverse structural and individual circumstances (Adkins et al. 2003; Clapham 2003; Fitzpatrick 2012; Johnson, Gronda, and Coutts 2008; Johnson and Jacobs 2014). This complex interaction between structural and individual forces is evident throughout SouthPort tenants’ experience of homelessness. Tenant histories provide insights into the lived experience of homelessness and the complexity of their situation.

For example, Tyler migrated to Australia in search of a better life and had a job soon after arriving. However, Tyler was the victim of workplace bullying, which eventually led him to experience psychological stress and to lose his job. Tyler’s continuing poor mental health led to long term unemployment. This, in turn, resulted in low income and his inability to afford stable private accommodation. He couch surfed with friends and lived in rooming houses. Unemployment (structural force) coupled with poor mental health (individual circumstance) resulted in Tyler being homeless for more than seven years.

…although, I was fortunate enough to get a job, from pretty much from the beginning of the job, I was bullied by my manager. So over a period of two years that was from 2007 to 2009, I was under incredible stress and pressure, psychological pressure to the extent that I sought treatment and eventually my boss forced me out of the organisation which is why essentially, I don’t really have any money because I haven’t worked for seven years. And these last seven years, it has just been a real struggle to make sure that I kept a roof over my head… But fundamentally, the reason why I’m in this situation that I’m in is because I got bullied at work I got forced out of the organisation and then I didn’t have any prospects after that so it started off well, but then things just went downhill.

It was only after seven years of homelessness that Tyler found secure and affordable housing with SouthPort.

The complex relationship between structural and individual factors that contribute to homelessness can also be seen in Ariel’s situation. Ariel is a 55-year old man who spent
his life renting in the private market but then became unemployed. Ariel’s age made it difficult for him to find a new job and resulted in long term unemployment, which in turn undermined his mental health. The financial burden of not having a job, sort of pushed my drinking and my depression to a point when the doctor said I am going to put you on the DSP [Disability Support Pension]. You need to step away from obligations and start working on yourself. In Ariels situation, unemployment, a structural factor, was associated with deteriorating mental health and alcohol addiction. Unaffordable rent was the final element which led Ariel to become homeless (Jones and Petersen 2014).

It was very good rent and I knew that, well I suspected that I would get priced out eventually…they kept the rent well below market rates. But there was the evil brother, and I suspected that he would come into the scene at some point and low and behold he did, and I was given notice, not, I wasn’t evicted, just the final plan was they wanted to gut the place, tart it up and then be able to rent it out at a much higher rate.

Ariel had spent eight years living in this house before he was given notice. After spending a short period in the UK, where he attempted to find work, Ariel returned to Australia, and without a house he became homeless. Ariel’s situation illustrates the multifaceted nature of homelessness.

Rory was a home owner, working full time when she was diagnosed with leukaemia. In order to afford treatment, Rory had to move to her mother’s house in country Victoria and sell her own house. However, her mother died and she had nowhere to live other than in her car. Rory’s situation is the outcome of her illness, loss of employment, the death of her mother, medical bills and difficulties in accessing medical treatment.

Well, I’ve got leukaemia and I got diagnosed back in 2009 and I’ve been going to the Alfred every month ever since. I used to live up, I would say, up Wodonga way and I used to travel four hours to and from hospital each month. But then last year I got, or year before I got really sick, and I was in and out of the hospital on sort of five-to-ten-day stayovers and I had to start coming down to the hospital more regularly. So in between that, I sort of ended up sleeping in my car… when I didn’t have anywhere to go back to, I just stayed in my car. It ended up being three or four weeks.

Casey was chronically homeless, living on the streets for many years, and experienced drug addiction. He struggled against his addiction and had a desire to stop. Casey was in the perpetual cycle of homelessness,

I was an addict for many years and I was homeless and living on the streets and I used to go live on farms and clean myself up and come back to the city and it'll all start again and I just had this – this locked in cycle where I just didn’t really know how to get out. Casey needed stable housing so that he could access a methadone program, I needed some stability in my life so I can get it together. So I could go on a methadone program so I could slowly get well.

His lack of access to stable housing meant that Casey was unable to address his addiction by accessing support services.

Causes of homelessness are intricate and multifaceted. These examples demonstrate the complexity and diverse nature of the causes of homelessness. Every person was influenced by structural elements outside of their control and individual life circumstances, which ultimately culminated in their becoming homeless. There is no single cause that can be applied to all homeless people, as each individual has different circumstances. Consistent in each of their stories is the importance they place on stable housing and the effect this has had on their recovery from homelessness.
The lived experience of homelessness of SouthPort tenants provides insight into the importance of housing. Three areas are explored in this section: Lack of Housing, Rooming House Experiences, and Social Isolation. Lack of housing focuses on sleeping rough (visible homelessness) and couch surfing (hidden homelessness), while the rooming house experience focuses on tenants’ experience of living in rooming houses. Social Isolation provides a brief snapshot of tenants’ experience of being socially isolated due to their homelessness.

Tenants resorted to sleeping rough when their access to housing was limited. Sleeping rough is the most visible form of homelessness and often the most portrayed form of homelessness, although it constitutes the smallest percentage of homeless people (Parsell 2014). A City of Melbourne (City of Melbourne 2016) report noted an increase in the number of people sleeping rough within Melbourne over the last two years. A couple of the tenants interviewed recounted their experiences of sleeping rough when they had no access to housing. Hayden explained that when he didn’t have anywhere to go back to, I just stayed in my car. It ended up being three or four weeks. Hayden would drive into the countryside to find a space to sleep as he felt this was more secure than sleeping in the inner city. Lily slept rough, which led to a feeling of loneliness and heartbreak, affecting her mental health. I lived on the streets for 12 months. I’m on state trustee, so they put me up in accommodation where they could for hotels rooms and that for the weekend. It was horrible. Yeah, it was horrible. It was cold. It was lonely. It was heartbreaking. Lily spent 12 months sleeping rough before she was able to enter a rooming house. Sleeping rough meant that Lily’s mental health declined drastically during the year (Mcnaughton 2008:94). These examples highlight SouthPort tenants’ experience of sleeping rough and some of the difficulties they faced.

A lack of housing caused tenants to experience upheaval, turmoil and a lack of control over their living environment and lives. Rory not only had to worry about her illness, she was constantly on the move. I didn’t have anywhere else to go and I didn’t have any money and all of that. Couch surfing, a form of hidden homelessness, sees individuals move between people’s homes and living on a couch for extended periods of time (Johnson et al. 2008:70; Tually, Beer, and McLoughlin 2011). Stew couch surfed for over six months with friends. He said, although I am still friends with all the people, it wears out. They get fed-up having someone as a blotch on their landscape, or you, and you get fed up not having a proper bed, because I was literally sleeping on people’s couches and you don’t have any privacy. The lack of privacy and Stew’s constant need to be considerate of his hosts led him to feel a lack of control over his living environment (Moore and Landvogt 2016; Somerville 1992), and eventually saw Stew’s mental health decline.

Tenants reflected on their experience of living in a rooming house, one of the most common forms of accommodation for homeless people. Tenants are provided with a single room with a shared bathroom and kitchen facilities in a rooming house. Research into rooming houses in Victoria suggests that they can be safe environments in which to reside (Dalton, Pawson, and Hulse 2015). However, overwhelmingly SouthPort tenants recounted their negative experiences of rooming houses (Chamberlain, Johnson, and Theobald 2007; Mcnaughton 2008:89). SouthPort tenants did not distinguish between public and privately run rooming houses, therefore the discussion below simply outlines their overall experience of living in a rooming house. However, it is important to note that individuals living in privately operated rooming houses experienced higher levels of violence and abuse, and paid more rent (Gallagher and Gove 2007; Wylie and Canty-Waldron 2004). Tenants discussed various issues and difficulties with living in a rooming house, such as: having to share bathroom and kitchen facilities, the unsafe environment due to drugs, prostitution, theft and violence, and their consistent experience of fear.

Tenants described their experience in a rooming house as unsafe and violent (Adler and Barry-Macaulay 2009; Chamberlain et al. 2007). Penny aptly states, The boarding places were, well always unsafe. Oliver provides one reason that rooming houses can be unsafe. People used to shoot up heroin on the stairs. People used to shoot up in the back kitchen. I’ve seen a
blake break a blake's arm in the back – in the back kitchen. Jorge articulates the consequences of drug use within rooming houses. It's just unfortunate that by its nature, it attracted all of these drug dealing stuff which sometimes led to fights, knife fights, fist fights and the like, and the police would be called around to come and calm things down. Carol relays a negative experience of theft and assault that occurred while she was living in a rooming house. I was there for a year. It was hell at times. You know constant dramas between people going on. You know thieving, like stuff getting stolen from our room... I had quite a lot of things go missing and I had—I was assaulted there. The presence of violence can have serious effects on tenants’ mental health and their capacity to maintain stable housing.

Tenants expressed fear, anxiety and worry as a result of the violence present in the rooming houses. As Jorge explains, there was a lack of security, a loss of dignity and feelings of anxiousness, and worry and concern about what may happen, what harm may come or what sort of characters may be coming through. Due to the unsafe and violent environment Leo was afraid to use the shared facilities. I was too afraid to even use the kitchen, so I wasn't eating that much. I still don't eat that much. It was just, all in all, a very dehumanising experience. Living in rooming houses left tenants with a sense of discomfort as they found it difficult to control their environments. Jorge explains his experience in a rooming house, where he had to share a toilet. There was a sense of discomfort around having to go to the toilet late at night. So, you know, and also not knowing what sort of state you'd find the toilet in, whether even the door would be on the toilet. Fear and worry regarding safety was unfortunately a common theme throughout SouthPort tenants’ experiences of rooming houses (Chamberlain et al. 2007:28). Stable, long term housing with self-contained units can provide the security and safety homeless persons need to improve their mental health and ontological security.

Social isolation can be exacerbated through the lived experience of homelessness. Leo describes his experience of feeling isolated. There is an isolating feeling, particularly for someone like me who has had a lot of social problems all their life. Lily also expressed the difficulty of feeling isolated. Without any income or you know, any real friends or family or anything. It's just been very difficult. Suzie has no social network. I have no friends I can go out with, I have no social network, I have no cousins that I can see. Chronic isolation is common amongst the homeless population and has a major effect on individuals, leading to feelings of despair and hopelessness, self-blame, demoralisation, shame, low self-worth, anxiety, and frustration (Chamberlain et al. 2007; Goodman, Saxe, and Harvey 1991; Padgett et al. 2008). Housing, particularly community housing, has the capacity to develop social supports and networks in order to combat chronic isolation.
1.4 Conclusion for Section 1

This background section explored SouthPort’s history, its current operations and its tenants’ experience of homelessness. It provides the framework to understand SouthPort and its operating environment. Tenants’ experience of homelessness provides an understanding of the complex and diverse nature of the phenomenon. The causes of homelessness are complex, with individual and structural forces influencing individuals to become homeless, as evidenced by tenants’ stories of their experiences. Furthermore, the lived experience of homelessness provides an understanding of the unsafe and violent environment in which homeless people find themselves. This results in feelings of social isolation and lack of control, exacerbating mental and physical stress. Stable, safe and secure housing can enable people to improve their lives by developing ontological security and stability.
This section seeks to answer research question 1: What are the key features of SouthPort’s current tenancy model which provides community housing to low income single people who were formerly homeless? This section will explore the multilayer tenancy model that incorporates the organisation’s values alongside its leasing agreements. To answer this research question, four elements of SouthPort’s tenancy model will be analysed. Section 2.1 introduces SouthPort housing provision, focusing on the tenancy cycle and housing affordability. Section 2.2 focuses on tenants and their access to support services. Section 2.3 details SouthPort’s tenancy management including the way in which SouthPort manages tenancy issues. Section 2.4 covers SouthPort property management, focusing on the process of responsive, cyclical and structural maintenance. Section 2.5 provides a conclusion, drawing on the findings to answer the first research question.
SouthPort’s main function is the provision of housing for formerly homeless single people. SouthPort provides three different types of housing to single people: rooms in rooming houses, self-contained bed-sit units and one bedroom flats. State-owned properties leased to, and managed by, SouthPort are governed by the Housing Provider Framework (HPF). The leasing agreement stipulates certain criteria including the target population, housing maintenance, asset management, reporting, and insurance. These requirements set the foundation for SouthPort’s tenancy model. Furthermore, SouthPort-owned properties are managed in a similar manner, with the only variation being in asset management (as discussed in section 1.2.3).

SouthPort has three criteria for tenancy: tenants must be single, homeless, in receipt of government benefits and capable of independent living. SouthPort-owned property, purchased in 2014 (property 16), also requires tenants to be over the age of 55. However, tenancy is not contingent on current access to support services or prior rental history. SouthPort’s tenancy criteria are governed by the HPF target group specifications and SouthPort’s added specification of housing single persons; however, this does not include the 12 family properties SouthPort began managing in 2009, which have low turnover rates.
2.1
SouthPort Housing Provision

The HPF lease agreement stipulates that SouthPort must provide affordable housing to homeless people; however, SouthPort has chosen to focus predominantly on single people.

2.1.1
Pathway of Tenancy

This section focuses on the tenancy cycle, outlining the various steps the organisation and individuals undergo during tenancy (Figure 8). SouthPort takes its referrals from key homelessness agencies in the inner city including Launch Housing, Vincent Care Ozanam House and Sacred Heart Mission St Kilda. To assist people in maintaining local ties, it gives priority to homeless people from the City of Port Phillip.

Prospective tenants, or their case managers, must contact SouthPort to be placed on an open waiting list. This means that prospective tenants or their case managers must contact SouthPort on a regular basis. Prior to being registered on the waiting list, prospective tenants must participate in an intake interview so that their suitability and eligibility for tenancy can be assessed. On taking up tenancy, the tenant signs a standard tenancy agreement and receives a welcome pack, which includes information about resources available, and general household items. Once the tenant is placed into housing, they are expected to live independently. SouthPort conducts maintenance for tenants throughout the tenancy. Tenants are expected to pay their rent on time. If a tenant pays rent on time and behaves within the terms of the tenancy agreement, they are eligible for an internal transfer into better accommodation. This feature appears to be unique to SouthPort. However, if a tenant is in arrears or displays violent behaviours, SouthPort will breach the tenant or take them to VCAT. Tenants can leave housing at their discretion, unless they are evicted. Once they have vacated the premises, SouthPort completes any cleaning and maintenance on the property to get it ready for the next tenant.
2.1.2
Affordable Housing

SouthPort provides affordable housing and independent living in the City of Port Phillip for formerly homeless single adults and young people. In order to enter the program, individuals must be receiving full or part government benefits and sign a tenancy agreement. There is no bond charged, and only one week’s rent in advance is required.

SouthPort calculates rent for State-owned properties based on the Housing Provider Framework (HPF) lease. The HPF lease stipulates that the maximum rent payable by tenants is 25% of Assessable Income + 15% of Family Tax Benefits + Maximum Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). Because tenants are single, in all but the family properties, this means that the rent calculation is 25% of Assessable Income + Maximum CRA. SouthPort charges an addition service fee which covers the costs such as utilities, cleaning and some aspects of maintenance of the property. Complete rent calculations can be found at Appendix E.

Housing affordability is a household’s capacity, based on income, to meet housing costs. Households that are in the bottom 40% of income earners in Australia and are paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs, are deemed to be under housing stress (Yates 2007; Yates and Gabriel 2006). The 30:40 indicator is a common measure used to determine housing affordability and stress, and has been used for this research project, as SouthPort tenants are in the bottom 40% of income earners.

There are different measures of what constitutes housing affordability. Two common methods are issued by the Housing Registrar of Victoria (HRV) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The HRV is the registration body for CHP's in Victoria created in 2007 by amendments to the Housing Act 1983. The HRV specifies that rent is calculated as 25-30% of gross income and 100% of CRA, allowing SouthPort to charge an additional service fee (Housing Registrar of Victoria 2015, 2016). Because the service fee is not deemed to be rent, SouthPort’s rental charge is deemed affordable.

In contrast to the HRV definition, the AIHW includes the service fee in its cost of housing. This definition holds that households spending more than 30% of their income on the combined costs of rent and council rate payments (general and water), are under housing stress (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014). The SouthPort service fee incorporates council rates (property and water), utility charges (gas, water and electricity) and maintenance repairs, which makes it difficult to distinguish between rates (general and water), maintenance and utility costs. For the purpose of this research, rates will be understood to be the SouthPort equivalent of the service fee. Using this definition to understand affordability, SouthPort does not provide affordable housing, as tenants are paying more than 30% of their income in housing costs (See Appendix E for details).

The difference in calculations provides for an interesting contrast and insight into housing affordability. As SouthPort is required to calculate their rent based on the HPF lease and using the HRV guidelines, rent is deemed affordable. However, the AIHW method of calculation suggests rent is not affordable. This indicates that housing affordability is largely dependent upon the calculation used and may not be indicative of the real costs associated with housing. Section 4.2.2 explores tenants’ perceptions of housing affordability and suggests tenants receiving the Newstart Allowance feel they are under financial stress, regardless of the calculation. While SouthPort does not determine its method of calculation, the contrasting definition provides an insight into the use of a 30:40 indicator as a means to assess affordable housing across the housing sector.
2.2 Tenants and Their Access to Services

In order for people who were previously homeless to heal from their negative experiences, it is important that they can access support services. Previous housing models required tenants to access treatment before gaining access to housing. In recent years, there has been growing momentum within the homeless sector to adopt a Housing First Approach (Johnson, Parkinson, and Parsell 2012). Housing First’s main component is that tenancy is not contingent on receiving support services, but that tenants have clear and easy access to support services (Tsemberis, Gulcur, and Nakae 2004). In Melbourne, the Street to Home and the Journey to Social Inclusion projects have adopted a Housing First approach to combatting chronic homelessness (Johnson et al. 2011; Johnson and Chamberlain 2015; Sacred Heart Mission 2009). These programs outsource housing while providing case management and support services to individuals. Organisations, like SouthPort, are utilised to provide housing to these individuals.

Support services allow individuals to gain stability and routine to cope with the pressures that led to their homeless situation. These services include: Centrelink, medical and dental services, counselling, case management, education, drug rehabilitation, domiciliary services, and recreational services.

2.2.1 Support Services

Support services are important in ensuring formerly homeless people are able to develop the skills to live independently while coming to terms with their previous experience. SouthPort is linked in with local services and refers tenants to external support services on an ‘as needed’ basis. Furthermore, tenants can choose the services they access. One staff member articulated the support services in the area:

Some receive [services] like Royal District Nursing Service who come and work with them or support them on particular health issues and some have council support like home help, Meals on Wheels… Others get mental health services and outreach mental health teams. The main one around here is the community health centre’s mental health outreach team who are good.

One concern raised by staff regarding access to these services is the long waiting time, particularly for people with mental health concerns:

It is really, really hard to get access to those services because they have long waiting lists, so that’s a really big frustration because when we have a tenant who’s mental health takes a severe downward spiral and we can see that that’s what is going on, but you know, then they start doing behavioural things that starts to put their tenancy at risk.

Difficulty accessing support services was witnessed during the observation period. An example of this was when one tenant, who required counselling due to anger management issues, had to wait 13 weeks to see a counsellor. Due to the long wait, the tenant decided not to attend counselling. Although support services are there, they can be difficult to access, and this can hinder a tenants’ ability to cope with stresses relating to their tenancy or previous experiences.

Tenants often enter housing with SouthPort linked in with support services. Support services that involve case management, such as Journey to Social Inclusion or the Street to Home initiative actively help tenants to enter housing because they have links with support services, Tenant[s] come to us linked in with support services, whether they’re within the area or whether they’re within [another] area that they’ve come from. However, SouthPort staff expressed concern about the lack of continual support provided to tenants. Some of the services when the residents found housing, they can pull back, their service might last for an extra month or an extra three weeks or six weeks (and then stop). The lack of continuous support for some tenants can impact their ability to maintain housing and recover from homelessness.

One way to combat the withdrawal of support services is through the regular contact tenants have with staff. Staff feel as if they are well placed to help tenants find support
services. As one staff member explained, *We know our residents really well. And so we know that – generally who they may see in terms of their services, who they’re linked in with and we could tell, in speaking with them, – whether they have been keeping their appointments or keep seeing who they’re normally seeing.* Due to the regular contact, if staff notice a tenant requires additional support, they can help the tenant get the support they need, although this remains contingent on how long the wait for service might be.

Furthermore, the SouthPort office functions as a drop-in centre for tenants. Tenants are able to go to the office whenever they want and ask for help. This provides another avenue for referral, as Stew explains, *Staff* have a really good handle on other services around as well, to the point that making sure that I knew that if I needed stuff, like inner south and also all of the places that have free meals if I’m stuck, so no they are really friendly and helpful.

SouthPort provides recreational and compassionate support to tenants. To develop a sense of community and assist tenants to gain support, SouthPort provides recreational support services through events run by and within SouthPort properties (explored in Section 3.2). SouthPort helps tenants in a number of other ways, including helping tenants in daily life, transporting residents when they are unwell and providing advice and information (this will be explored in greater detail in Section 4.3.3). By showing understanding and compassion to tenants, staff can develop positive working relationships with tenants.

### 2.2.2 Community Housing Worker

SouthPort employs one housing worker whose role is to engage within SouthPort and the wider community. Susan described her role at SouthPort and the importance of community engagement:

*I’m a community housing worker and my role has a focus on community development. [That includes,] promoting initiatives to try and get people better linked in with the community, to try to get people to increase their social inclusion, to increase their agency and to promote social connectedness.*

SouthPort’s Community Housing Worker is responsible for organising events and developing SouthPort’s newsletter. Although the newsletter was an element which two of the staff mentioned in their interviews, none of the participating tenants mentioned this. The Community Housing Worker engages tenants in social group events and services run by SouthPort and external organisations. This requires the worker to network with local community groups to spread awareness of these programs. SouthPort runs a gardening program, while the Social Meals Program is co-facilitated by the Port Phillip Council and SouthPort. *Voices of the South Side* and the *Social Health and Inclusion Port* (SHIP) are programs run by the Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre. The active involvement of the Community Housing Worker means that tenants have continual access to supports in the area.

Property meetings, attended by all tenants in a given property, provide a space for tenants to voice concerns and communicate with each other in a constructive manner. The Community Housing Worker facilitates these meetings. During the fieldwork stage of this research, SouthPort held one house meeting across all of its properties. The failure to conduct such meetings more regularly is a general reflection of the lack of resources and as a result of SouthPort’s major projects requiring management. Greater staff numbers would enable SouthPort to hold housing meetings more often and provide an opportunity for tenants to voice their concerns.
2.3 Tenancy Management

Tenancy management is governed by the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. SouthPort’s tenancy management involves signing up tenants, collecting rent and managing antisocial behaviours. SouthPort works with a vulnerable population who have a range of complex behaviours and mental illnesses. Appropriate tenancy management requires SouthPort staff to have an understanding of mental illness and tenants’ often complex needs, and to navigate tenancy management according to these behaviours. Staff undertake training in these areas. Non-payment of rent and antisocial behaviour are the two most prominent issues that occur with tenants. SouthPort has developed processes to manage these issues, which are dictated by the organisation’s values, one of which is compassion.

SouthPort’s aim is to provide housing to homeless people; so, to evict a tenant from housing would make them homeless. This puts the organisation in a difficult situation as they consistently try to avoid this eventuality. SouthPort has policies regarding eviction; however, due to each tenant’s unique circumstances, evictions are judged on a case-by-case basis. In practice, the two main reasons for eviction are severe rent arrears or violence. As Opal, a staff member states, *The main reason that we would evict anyone is for violence. The only other reason [would be] a severe failure to pay rent… [It’s a] clear legal issue that if someone commits any form of violence, we’re exposed as tenancy managers unless we do something.*

During the fieldwork for this project, three tenants living in a SouthPort rooming house were evicted due to extremely violent behaviour towards other tenants or staff members. Not only is violence a legal issue but violent behaviour negatively affects other tenants living at the property. If this occurs, SouthPort issues an immediate Notice to Leave; the eviction occurs after a subsequent hearing at VCAT, which relies on sufficient evidence and witnesses to support the case for eviction (VCAT processes are explored in greater detail in Section 3.3).

SouthPort staff are required to navigate tenants’ behaviours appropriately, taking account of their circumstances and those of other tenants. The researcher witnessed tenants harassing and verbally abusing staff. SouthPort staff are required to treat tenants with understanding and compassion, and give tenants who are in distress the space to vent their frustration; however, if tenants are aggressive
towards staff, they are asked to leave the office. Repeated aggressive behaviour can affect the mental health of staff and result in lost time at work.

Rent collection is imperative for SouthPort to operate and is a central function of tenancy management. Bonnie explains that, as a housing provider, they are guided by the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. The VCAT is used as a last resort, as SouthPort tries its best to work with the tenant to resolve issues. However, staff inevitably are required to attend VCAT hearings when cases of rent arrears and violent behaviour involving SouthPort tenants are presented for VCAT determination. As Bonnie explains, "But every now and then you do have a tenant that despite staff writing to or calling that person, speaking with that person over and over and over again and try to work with them to get their rent [paid], they must still go to VCAT."

A loss in rent places the organisation at risk of financial loss. Interviews and fieldwork observations indicate that SouthPort practice compassion and understanding regarding rent, and are willing to work with tenants to try to ensure they remain in housing. Staff at SouthPort emphasise the importance of leniency in rent collection; although Opal observes that it’s also a hindrance to the organisation:

*If a little bit of financial flexibility for a couple of months because some financial crisis has arisen, whether it’s drug-related or not, can help people stay in their housing rather than on the street, then I think we have a responsibility to do that, and I’m not sure that every community housing organisation sees things that way… I’m not saying it’s a good thing for the organisation. It’s probably not, but it’s a good thing for people who are facing homelessness."

During the research period, no tenant was evicted due to excessive rent arrears. In January 2016, 59 tenants (18% of all SouthPort tenants) were in rent arrears, equating to a total of $73,810 rent arrears (3.03% of Monthly Revenue). On average, tenants were in rent arrears for 46 days. This higher rate could be due to a period of the program being short-staffed. Since then, arrears have reduced significantly, as seen in Table 3 below. As SouthPort’s main source of income is rent, mismanagement of rent arrears could place SouthPort at a financial loss.
### Table 3: Rent Arrears, 2014 - 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total Amount in Arrears</th>
<th>% of Monthly Revenue</th>
<th>Number of Tenants in Arrears</th>
<th>% of Tenants in Rent Arrears</th>
<th>Average Days in Arrears per Tenant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30/05/2014</td>
<td>34,893.41</td>
<td>1.97%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/06/2014</td>
<td>28,668.50</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/07/2014</td>
<td>27,766.72</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/08/2014</td>
<td>26,247.00</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/09/2014</td>
<td>30,851.56</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/10/2014</td>
<td>34,668.47</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/11/2014</td>
<td>40,261.57</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/12/2014</td>
<td>47,242.21</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/01/2015</td>
<td>48,598.80</td>
<td>2.23%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/03/2015</td>
<td>45,790.44</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/03/2015</td>
<td>39,933.63</td>
<td>1.83%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/05/2015</td>
<td>42,290.89</td>
<td>1.94%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/2015</td>
<td>44,887.63</td>
<td>2.18%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/06/2015</td>
<td>48,732.48</td>
<td>2.24%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/07/2015</td>
<td>50,016.20</td>
<td>2.05%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/08/2015</td>
<td>50,318.61</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/09/2015</td>
<td>50,015.84</td>
<td>2.05%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/11/2015</td>
<td>58,369.04</td>
<td>2.39%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/11/2015</td>
<td>67,022.91</td>
<td>2.75%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/12/2015</td>
<td>68,489.19</td>
<td>2.81%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/01/2016</td>
<td>73,809.55</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/02/2016</td>
<td>65,814.12</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/2016</td>
<td>58,813.28</td>
<td>2.41%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/05/2016</td>
<td>61,819.74</td>
<td>2.54%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/05/2016</td>
<td>51,312.04</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Property Management

Property management is a key service delivered by SouthPort and forms part of the tenancy model. SouthPort is required to manage and maintain the properties. Maintenance can be categorised into three headings: responsive, cyclical and structural. As part of the HPF lease, SouthPort is required to ensure State-owned properties are kept in good repair by conducting responsive and cyclical maintenance. Within the HPF lease, housing providers have the option to have maintenance conducted by the Government (Option 1) or to conduct responsive and cyclical maintenance themselves (Option 2). SouthPort decided, in February 2015, to shift to Option 2, and is still developing best practise for maintenance processes. Good asset management of SouthPort-owned properties requires responsive, cyclical and structural maintenance repairs. Maintenance repair costs are incorporated into the rent charged to tenants, which means that tenants do not pay for individual repairs. This section outlines the SouthPort’s maintenance processes.

2.4.1 Responsive Maintenance

The most common form of contact tenants have with SouthPort is through tenants’ requests for responsive maintenance. Maintenance is conducted in-house by staff or outsourced to an external maintenance company.

Tenants call to log various repair jobs and SouthPort staff assess who is best-placed to conduct the responsive maintenance required. We have to decide whether it’s something that can be handled by our maintenance worker, or whether it’s something that our external maintenance company can respond to. The housing maintenance worker attends to minor maintenance repairs that do not require a tradesperson. Go around and do maintenance repairs that I can do like, changing light globe, fixing locks, changing locks, doing that sort of stuff… people ringing up for mouse traps and light bulbs not working.

If an external tradesperson is required, SouthPort staff log the repair with the outsourced maintenance company, which is given details of repair, the tenant’s name, address and phone number. The process for outsourced maintenance required is displayed in Figure 9. On occasions, the repair process does not flow smoothly. There are several issues that arise at stages 3 and 4. Often the tradesperson cannot contact the tenant to make an appointment or the tenant is not at the unit at the organised time. Tenants need to give permission for tradespeople to enter their unit if they are not present. If tenants do not give their permission, the repair is not completed. These factors delay the process considerably and sometimes the need for repairs is forgotten.

Further issues arise in stages 5 and 6. If the tradesperson cannot complete the repair on the first visit, as they need to obtain materials or equipment, sometimes they do not return to complete the job. Therefore SouthPort is not aware of whether jobs have been completed. Tenants are responsible for contacting SouthPort to complain that a job has not been completed. The lack of communication and transparency between SouthPort, the outsourced company and the tenant presents a clear problem in SouthPort’s provision of maintenance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Tenant reports maintenance issue to SouthPort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>SouthPort emails maintenance request to outsourced company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Outsourced company contacts tenant / SouthPort to schedule time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Tradesperson attends unit to do the repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Tradesperson follows up on repair with appropriate equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6</td>
<td>Maintenance completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Outsourced Responsive Maintenance Cycle
2.4.2 Cyclical Maintenance

SouthPort, as a housing provider, is required to conduct cyclical maintenance of its properties. Cyclical maintenance is planned and deliberate maintenance, which is initiated by SouthPort, and includes repainting properties, replacing floor coverings and appliances, and maintaining communal spaces.

The HPF lease requires communal spaces to be maintained on a weekly basis. SouthPort is required to keep the premises clean and free of waste, including maintaining the gardens. SouthPort employs a housing maintenance worker who is responsible for the general upkeep of the properties while contracting a cleaning company to clean the public areas of the properties.

SouthPort conducts maintenance and repairs prior to new tenants moving in. These repairs are initiated by staff: "When [some] people move out, they leave almost everything behind; [we have to go] through their stuff, cleaning, sorting it out, throwing [out] what needs to be thrown out. Once the dwelling is empty, staff conduct a maintenance report which outlines the works required for the dwelling to become liveable. The extent of repairs depends on the condition of the property and can involve painting the dwelling, replacing the carpet, repairing holes and damage to the walls, and replacing or fixing whitegoods. These repairs are outsourced to the maintenance and cleaning companies.

Cyclical maintenance is one function of property management SouthPort must conduct. Therefore tenants are provided with well-maintained and clean apartments (See section 3.1.2 for further details about tenants’ perceptions).

2.4.3 Structural Maintenance

Structural maintenance refers to renovations or upgrades to, or the building of, properties and differs between State-owned and SouthPort-owned properties. The State Government, as outlined in the HPF lease, is responsible for structural maintenance of State-owned properties. The State Government funded and organised 10 renovations, upgrades and building over 11 years. During this period, SouthPort was responsible for ensuring tenants remained housed for the duration of repairs.

SouthPort is responsible for structural maintenance in SouthPort-owned properties. SouthPort has undertaken two periods of structural maintenance, building 40 one bedroom apartments and renovating 31 units for the elderly. SouthPort built its first property in 2012, assisted by a professional project management company. When SouthPort purchased its second property, it conducted structural repairs on all 31 units, hiring a building company to complete the renovations. By working in collaboration with a building company to maximise space and design, SouthPort has been able to provide appropriate housing.
2.5 Conclusion of Section 2

The SouthPort tenancy model compromises four main areas; housing provision, tenants and their access to services, tenancy management, and property management.

Tenants access many support services through external organisations, involving a clear separation between housing and service provision. SouthPort has links with these services, which tenants can access on an ‘as needed’ basis. The availability of support services can be problematic for tenants. Greater resources and an improvement in access and continuity of service would benefit tenants living in SouthPort properties. While SouthPort provides housing, it also provides compassionate support to tenants who are unwell, and recreational support services for tenants through a range of events and functions, which help tenants to build social supports.

As a housing provider, tenancy management involves the collection of rent and managing antisocial behaviours. SouthPort manages tenancies according to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. SouthPort works alongside tenants to manage rent arrears. Overall, rent arrears levels fluctuate and significant effort is made to try to ensure that tenants are not made homeless due to rent arrears.

However, violent behaviour displayed toward tenants or staff results in an immediate Notice to Leave, followed by a VCAT hearing. If sufficient evidence and witnesses are present at the hearing, the tenant can be evicted.

Property management is another significant function of the SouthPort’s tenancy model. SouthPort is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the properties they manage. Responsive maintenance, where tenants report issues, requires more transparent and structured processes to ensure that maintenance is completed in a timely manner. Cyclical maintenance ensures that tenants are provided with modern, clean units upon entry into the program and ensures that public spaces are maintained.

SouthPort’s position as a local organisation enables it to provide a personalised service to tenants, and it has a commitment to improve tenants’ wellbeing through the provision of compassionate and targeted support.
This section explores tenants’ perception and experience of SouthPort housing, endeavouring to answer research question 2: How do SouthPort’s tenants perceive and experience their housing? In order to understand tenants’ experience, interviews were conducted with 21 tenants over a 7-month period. In answering the research question, this section will focus on five main themes: housing provision, tenants and their access to services, tenancy management, property management, and the benefits of stable housing.

Section 3.1 will focus on housing provision; exploring size, modernity and cleanliness, window placement and self-contained units as contributing elements to the perception of the physical environment. Section 3.2 focuses on the tenants and their access to services, investigating SouthPort’s role in support services and tenants’ participation in recreational support services. Section 3.3 examines tenants’ view of SouthPort’s tenancy management. Section 3.4 explores tenants’ perception of the maintenance process. Section 3.5 reviews the benefits of stable housing, investigating life changes tenants have experienced since entering SouthPort housing. Section 3.6 provides a conclusion to the section, bringing together the five components of tenants’ experiences to assess how they perceived their housing.
3.1 Housing Provision

Housing is important for a person’s wellbeing, and housing quality has a direct effect on a person’s experience of housing and their wellbeing. Therefore, it is important to provide housing that is well designed and high quality, as this improves tenants’ experiences. Housing, within this section, refers to the physical confines of the dwelling itself, its size and appearance. Overall, tenants were satisfied with their SouthPort housing. The tenants interviewed were positive about their modern and clean flats. They enjoyed having a self-contained unit with their own kitchen and bathroom. The self-contained units allow tenants to have their own private space in which to live with dignity and pride.

3.1.1 Size

The physical size of a unit affects the lived experience of a tenant, which was consistently mentioned throughout the interviews. SouthPort provides three types of dwellings for single people: a room in a rooming house, a self-contained bed-sit unit, and a one bedroom apartment. There are significant variations in sizes in rooms and bed-sit units: small sized units presented a problem for a number of tenants as they felt claustrophobic, while tenants in the larger apartments reported living comfortably.

Rooms in the rooming house range from 10m² to 18m² and have shared bathroom and kitchen facilities. SouthPort has one rooming house only, which consists of 22 rooms and two one-bedroom apartments. Interviewees in the rooming house did not mention the size of the rooms, which could be due to the small scale of the study.

Self-contained bed-sits are the most common form of dwelling SouthPort offers; however, the small size of the units can present a problem for tenants. Self-contained bed-sit units range between 20m² and 40.6m², that includes an open-plan kitchen, living and sleeping area with a separate bathroom. The majority of interviewees living in a bed-sit unit commented that their unit was small. As Shane explains, It’s really small, but there is only one person and I haven’t got much stuff, because I got rid of it all. Perceptions of the unit size depended on the individual and, while it was agreed that the unit was small, there was a variation in responses as to whether that was a positive or negative aspect. Ali enjoyed the small size of her unit, It’s a good size, if it was any bigger I’d probably stack it up with more furniture. Carol explained that it was a small space, but if you knew how to capitalise on small spaces, it was sufficient in its size. Yeah, it’s okay. Yeah, it’s quite good. You know, if you use the space wisely, that’s one thing about these spaces, you really got to use the space wisely. Not everyone believed that the size of the unit was adequate for living. As Riley articulates, Ideally, I’d like to have a room at least twice the size ‘cause I can’t fill my stuff in my room. Lily spends 22 hours a day in her unit. The size of her unit makes her feel claustrophobic, and she believes that a separate living area would allow for greater freedom. I like it but a separate lounge room and kitchen room would be nicer [...] because I spend so much time in here, sometimes I feel a bit claustrophobic. The studio element to the unit means that, for Leo, he cannot escape from himself:

Too small, too cramped, not enough space to get away from myself; I don't know if that makes sense, but you know, you live, eat, sleep, and work all in essentially one room because its, even though there’s like a loungey area, a bathroom area and a kitchen area, it’s just all sort of one big room. So, it just feels like you've got no escape from where you are.

One bedroom apartments are physically the largest dwellings and provide a sufficient space for tenants to live comfortably. SouthPort manages 88 one bedroom apartments, ranging in size from 40m² to 50m². One bedroom apartments comprise a kitchen and living area, a bathroom and a separate bedroom. For Victoria, who lives in a one bedroom apartment, the size of the one bedroom apartment is probably the best size that I think a single person kinda needs. Penny appreciates the design and size of her apartment, you’ve got sliding doors. So, you can save space. They've been designed excellently. It's only 50 squares, sorry 50 squares, yes, 50 square metres. Compared to the size of self-contained bed-sit units, the size of the one bedroom apartments demonstrates that larger living spaces enhance living.
3.1.2
Modern and Clean

SouthPort provides modern and clean units to incoming tenants. As discussed in section 2.3.2, SouthPort conducts maintenance repairs and contracts a cleaner before a tenant moves into the unit. It became apparent during this research that the housing team was dedicated to providing good quality and clean units to incoming tenants.

Tenants reported that their bed-sit units were modern and clean when they moved in. Stew recounts his first inspection of the property,

I was very happy… because they were clean, they were bright, they had been renovated, own kitchen, own bathroom… Coming into a place that was new, and fresh, and clean, enough storage for what I’ve got. Stew appreciated the modernity and cleanliness of his unit, and felt positive about moving into his unit. Recent property upgrades at SouthPort meant Oliver was able to move into his own bed-sit unit. The modernity of the unit resonated with Oliver,

It's actually real nice. Like I said, it’s a little bit small, but it’s heaven. I’ve got everything. It’s got fully furnished, it’s beautiful. It’s all brand new. Tenants benefited from moving into a unit that was clean and of modern design, which can engender a sense of ownership.

The modernity, design and newness of the one bedroom apartments was viewed positively; however, a couple of tenants mentioned bad workmanship. Victoria was fortunate enough to obtain one of the new apartments built in 2005, which was incredibly exciting for her.

Well, I moved into it as a new – brand spanking new flat. So it was very exciting at first. Although she was happy to have moved in, over time she began to believe that there were issues with the building. Mine is not too bad but there are areas where the workmanship is extremely shoddy. Gary also expressed similar beliefs about the workmanship. Penny moved into one of the SouthPort-owned units built in 2012, which she believes was of excellent design:

Kitchen suffice(s), double-glazed windows, it’s very private, solid doors, cupboards are great. Well, you know, pretty good. You can walk around the whole flat, in the design is excellent. It’s all in the design. So, I think the design is excellent for a single person… What I like about the hallways, is like when you go out my door, there’s an air gap. It’s not all sealed in, so the apartment isn’t like kind of air-proof. So, you get a bit of a flow of air through the whole place. It’s a great idea.

A common theme throughout the interviews was the importance of modern, clean and well-designed units. Modern and clean environments enabled tenants to establish their own home and take ownership of the place. Tenants appreciated the upgraded or newly-built units, expressing their happiness at living in such a modern unit. There were concerns about the workmanship of the 2005-built apartment block. SouthPort-owned flats are well designed, utilising outdoor hallways to enable air to flow through, while the flats themselves capitalise on space very efficiently and enable tenants to have a clear distinction between living and other areas. If tenants take pride in their units, they are more likely to take care of their units and ensure they are maintained to a high standard.
3.1.3 Window Placement

The placement of windows within the dwelling was a concern for some tenants. Leo does not open his blinds due to the large size of his windows, which face the street. This makes him feel trapped within the confines of his unit, as he explains,

[quote]
the fact that there are no windows in the thing except for the big one at the front which, you know, has to stay closed otherwise everybody walking past would look in. So, there’s that sense of being trapped in there because there’s no actual natural light. That makes it difficult.
[quote]
This presents a problem for Leo in the way he uses his unit. The mixture of size and lack of natural light makes him feel claustrophobic. Oliver's unit has large windows which are close to his front door, and many people knock on his windows to gain access to the building, which frustrates him.

[quote]
There shouldn’t be clients coming here, waiting outside, knocking on my window. The placement of windows and access to natural light influenced how tenants use their units. Many SouthPort properties are heritage listed properties; therefore, SouthPort is limited in its capacity to change the size or layout of the unit. To provide tenants with more access to natural light, while maintaining privacy, SouthPort could consider different window configurations or different blinds.

3.1.4 Kitchens and Bathrooms

Self-contained units allow individuals to live independently in a private space. For formerly homeless people this is incredibly important in establishing a sense of self. Tenants expressed the importance of self-contained units, comparing the issues with shared facilities. As Carol illustrates, Not having to share – because when you’re sharing bathrooms and things like that, you get to rely on other people to do the right thing. As Lily recounts, you can do what you want. You’ve got your own kitchen. You’ve got your own bathroom. You’ve got your living space. You can’t ask for nothing more than that. Overwhelmingly, tenants view self-contained units as crucial in regaining their privacy and dignity. Jorge clarifies, I’m just pleased to have my privacy back, a sense of dignity back and a sense of, ‘This is my home, this is my unit’. And I don’t have to share it with anybody else so there’s no risk of conflict. Furthermore, self-contained units enable an individual to feel secure and safe in a stable environment. Victoria experiences a sense of safety because she has her own flat. Because I’m in a flat, I actually feel safer, in that flat. Even though there’s a lot going on outside. These experiences demonstrate the importance of self-contained units for tenants; tenants viewed their units positively because they had their own space.

Staff at SouthPort are aware of the importance of self-contained units. Opal commented on the importance of privacy, just that fact that you can come home and shut the door and you don’t have to go out and sort of mingle with other people to use the bathroom or use the kitchen. Turnover rates between self-contained units and the rooming house rooms were starkly different. Rooming house vacancies occurred multiple times during the field research, while very few self-contained unit became vacant. The change in turnover rates was obvious to staff member Bonnie, And I suppose the evidence is clear that the high turnover of tenants that we used to have in the rooming houses, we don’t have any longer. The change in turnover rates has changed the nature of the service provided by SouthPort; however, it is indicative of the importance of self-contained units.

Tenants consistently expressed the importance of having their own kitchen and bathroom. It enabled them to live a private life, have a sense of pride, dignity and ownership over their space, and ensured that they felt safe within their unit. The issues experienced in rooming houses are diminished by providing self-contained units.
I’m just pleased to have my privacy back, a sense of dignity back and a sense of, ‘This is my home, this is my unit’. And I don’t have to share it with anybody else so there’s no risk of conflict.

- Jorge
3.2 Tenants and Their Access to Services

Tenants access support services through external organisations. As discussed in section 2.2, tenants use their discretion in accessing support services. SouthPort staff expressed problems regarding access to external organisations because of the long waiting periods and support being reduced over time. Support services involve case management, counselling, health, education, and recreational services. These services provide tenants with the support necessary to live independently. This section focuses on tenants’ experience of and participation in the recreational and compassionate support services provided by SouthPort, and externally provided support services.

During the interview process, participants were asked whether they believe SouthPort should provide support services to enable easier access to these services. Tenants’ responses varied. Carol had previously lived in accommodation that provided support services, which made access to such services easier.

You've got to seek it out. Here [at SouthPort], you got to seek things out, yeah, find them off your own bat, whereas at the [Rooming House], things would come there which made it so much easier. However, the majority of participants disagreed, believing that SouthPort should remain as a housing provider. Hayden explained that as the services exist within the area SouthPort does not need to provide them. Like what we do at Neighbourhood Centre, we have counsellors, and legal aid and various other things down there for people but we don’t provide the housing. We provide the schooling and education and help, and information on where to get different things.

Gary argued that they are not equipped to provide services and they should remain as a housing provider. I don’t think they were set up to do anything more than that, you know, like I think they get — I think they have — think it should probably — should stay as external — they’re — it’s — they’re a whole new field in themselves. Although support services are important for tenants in community housing, a majority of tenants did not believe that SouthPort needed to provide support services, as there was sufficient access to services in the area.

Social functions and events are run by, and within, SouthPort, and are a form of recreational support services that tenants have access to. The most prominent events and social functions include social meals, Christmas parties, the Annual General Meeting, a street party, and casual barbecues. Social functions reduce isolation by allowing tenants to interact with their neighbours and SouthPort staff (Dail 1992; Lin 1986). Jorge believes that SouthPort undertakes more than the provision of housing by describing the importance that social events have in his experience of SouthPort and how they reduce isolation:

And then it’s not just the practical and maintenance side of things, it’s also looking to help people to be, to not get lost in social isolation so there’s various events that are put on from time to time such as fortnightly meals where people can get together, such as barbecues. There’s an annual general meeting, which tenants are welcome to come along too as well so they can get a sense of what the whole organisation does rather than just from their own perspective if they’re interested in that.

Social events enable connectedness between tenants. Steve views these events positively, as they display a form of compassion. Christmas time they looked after us. They gave us a barbecue. You know what I mean? They had a street party. I mean they’re very thoughtful to us. I think they were very good. It also provides a space in which staff can interact with tenants in a social setting, rather than a housing setting. Hayden was able to meet staff through these social events.

I don’t know all of them. I’ve met quite a few of them out there at the various barbecues and stuff that I’ve been able to get to and they all seem quite nice and friendly and helpful. Furthermore, these events can provide enjoyment and an escape from tenants’ units. Lily enjoys the events that SouthPort organises as it allows her to meet people in a similar situation to herself. They have a Christmas party, too, and they invite everyone and you win prizes and stuff, and it’s really good …Yeah. That’s great doing those things. I love that sort of the things. Activities are fantastic. Because it gets you out and you get to talk to other people that live like you, so it’s good.

Lily looks forward to these events as it gives her a reason to leave her unit, where she generally spends most of her time.

In August 2016, SouthPort organised a street party to raise awareness of, and prevent, homelessness. The event was part of Homelessness Week. SouthPort staff organised an
all-day event for SouthPort tenants, homeless people and the wider community. Lily enjoyed the street party, They have homeless functions sometimes at the front of SouthPort, the office. I pop down there too. We get a scarf or something. You get clothing, You can get a jacket. And you meet people too, which is a big thing. The event was free with a live band, a range of games and art activities, and free food, drinks and clothing. The event was a huge success with more than 120 people attending throughout the day. Furthermore, many local businesses contributed to the event. The event enabled tenants to feel part of a larger network of people and displayed SouthPort’s commitment to provide recreational support.

Tenants’ participation in events is dependent upon their desire to participate. However, a tenant’s decision not to participate may hinder his or hers capacity to build social networks. Victoria respects the people in the community but does not want to be a part of it. If I was someone that had no interests, no, you know whatever, then maybe I’d need to join, to make the community. Participation is dependent upon the individual; however, it functions as a tangible service that enables tenants to build a wider social network and fulfils the basic human need for food and company.

Social meals are another recreational support service available to tenants. The Social Meals Program involves preparing and sharing a meal with tenants. The program allows people who live in the same property to meet each other and to have social contact with staff. The Port Phillip Council partners with SouthPort to run social meals in two of the SouthPort’s properties, alternating between properties on a bi-weekly basis. Ethan enjoys the social meals and has become an active member of them.

They have social meals every two weeks and – yeah. The woman who runs it, sometimes picks me up and we go shopping at the market. We help prepare the meals and – and we ring a bell for everyone who wants to come down can come down. And then we clean up and it’s good – that’s on every Wednesday, every second week. It’s – yeah – I look forward to it….it’s just something different, you know, better than just doing nothing. I can, you know, talk to a few of the residents and the staff, and get a good meal at the same time.

The Social Meals Program is not the only meals program provided in the Port Phillip municipality. Charity organisations operate in the neighbourhood and provide low-income people with a hot meal. Jorge explains, These are social meals that are run by churches and they’re essentially designed for people with low income and they’re free of charge…. So it happens on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Ali appreciates the support within the area, knowing that the community will provide support if needed. The community, South Melbourne has been very good for community. If I run out of money I’ve got nothing to worry about just get on the tram down to Sacred Heart and get something to eat down there. Access to these support services allows the tenants to feel part of a supported community while providing access to basic food services.

Access to support services is important for tenants’ capacity to remain long term in housing. SouthPort does not provide support services; however, tenants access these services through external organisations. Tenants did not believe that SouthPort should provide these services. However, tenants enjoyed and saw value in the recreational support services provided by, and within, SouthPort.
3.3 Tenancy Management

SouthPort’s tenancy management manages rent arrears and antisocial behaviours. Section 2.3 discussed SouthPort’s processes to combat rent arrears and antisocial behaviours. This section focuses on tenants’ experience of these issues.

SouthPort manages rent arrears sensitively to ensure that tenants can retain their housing long term. Gary, for example, was a tenant who was always behind with his rent. By talking things through with Gary, staff worked hard to keep him in SouthPort housing. Sometimes I get really behind on my rent, but that – I’d always – we’d work a plan out and I’d get caught up. SouthPort literally saved my ass actually.

Although compassion is used, rent arrears can be a distressing and confusing experience for some tenants. Sally had a negative experience when she got behind with her rent. Sally went to SouthPort to pay her arrears but there was some confusion. I wanna pay to catch up. They tell me I’m ten days in front. Now, I went up there to find out where am I – they tell me I’m 385 [2 weeks] behind... one week I’m behind, one week I’m in front, one week I’m behind, one week. The calculation of rent was confusing for Sally and she did not feel supported during this time. Instead she decided to cut my Centre pay because I think I don’t get receipts for it. Clearer explanations regarding rent arrears would benefit tenants’ understanding of the process.

In its role as a tenancy manager, SouthPort manages antisocial and illegal behaviours. As discussed in Section 2.3, SouthPort tenants often have complex needs and mental illness, which can impact their relationships with staff and potentially result in eviction. Illegal and violent behaviours can affect other tenants’ stability (as will be explored in section 4.2.4). As a housing provider, SouthPort tries to manage these behaviours to ensure all tenants live in a safe and secure environment. However, SouthPort is limited in its capacity to do so as it needs a VCAT Order to evict a tenant. VCAT’s strict requirement for evidence can be problematic for SouthPort. Firstly, tenants are often scared of the ramifications of testifying against another tenant, as they do not know how that tenant will react. This was observed during the research phase of this project. Secondly, obtaining evidence of certain behaviours can prove difficult; for example, if a tenant is using drugs inside their unit or using their unit for prostitution. Video surveillance in common areas of the properties does not capture these behaviours resulting in insufficient evidence to take to VCAT. SouthPort finds violence the easiest behaviour to obtain evidence for as there is often a corresponding police statement to support the claim.
3.4 Property Management

Maintenance is one of the key elements of property management and facilitates most of the contact between tenants and SouthPort. The maintenance process was discussed in section 2.4, which explained the three forms of maintenance (responsive, cyclical and structural) SouthPort conducts. Section 2.4 outlined how problems within the responsive maintenance cycle impact the completion of maintenance. In this section, responsive maintenance will be explored from the tenant’s perspective, discussing the impact breakdowns in processes have on tenants’ lives.

Thirteen tenants, from all three types of housing, perceived property maintenance and response times negatively. As SouthPort is the primary point of contact for maintenance, slow or unfinished maintenance reflects negatively on SouthPort. Tenants identified the response time and completion of maintenance as the two key elements. Regarding the response time Carol said, ‘When you want to get - need things done, sometimes it takes them a while to get off their backsides.’ Riley experienced stress because an ongoing maintenance problem was not repaired: ‘I rang them about – at least ten times. I’ve written – I even emailed them a letter and put it in writing and, like, I would have thought – OH&S they’d go and get if fixed. And they haven’t … It’s stressful. Like, if you want anything done here… That stressed me right out. I even went to a psychologist about it.’

Oliver had a negative experience when he reported maintenance problems. ‘I can’t open my windows ‘cause they got no fly screens… I’ve complained about a couple of things at SouthPort, nothing happened. A lack of response or incomplete maintenance can cause tenants to view SouthPort as hostile or unresponsive. Riley used to view SouthPort very positively, often defending SouthPort; however, after her recent experience with them over maintenance, her view has changed: ‘Residents that I’ve spoken to always bagged them out on how they don’t like the office people. I used to think they were pretty rotten about it really… But now, I know why… Yeah, with the recent experience I’ve had, like, I understand why because I was just like this is ridiculous.’

Tenants do not distinguish between different forms of contact with SouthPort. Therefore problems with maintenance reflect negatively on SouthPort and can strain the relationship from a tenant’s perceptive. Some of the negative perceptions about maintenance could reflect the previous maintenance system (Option 1 of the HPF lease, Section 2.3) where SouthPort had to negotiate with the State Government before repairs were undertaken. As discussed in section 2.3, the maintenance process is still undergoing development since SouthPort became responsible for the maintenance process in February 2015. As it currently stands, the process lacks transparency and consistency, and affects tenants’ experience of their housing; although this may not be the reality from an organisational perspective.

Some tenants’ experiences of repairs and maintenance were positive. A couple of tenants said repairs were made promptly. When Stew first moved in, he requested a fly screen so that he could open his window. ‘A man turned up, and I wasn’t here and he left a note in the letter box and then I got a call and then they came and measured up… They seem pretty attentive.’ Stew’s experience is in stark contrast to Oliver’s, who felt ignored and has yet to get fly screens installed on his windows. Hayden also said maintenance was conducted promptly. ‘If there’s ever been a problem, they’ve been here sort of pretty much straight away and fixed it. Both Hayden’s and Stew’s repairs were fixed promptly and therefore they view SouthPort more positively.’
3.5
Benefits of Stable Housing

Tenants’ benefits from stable long term housing include improvements in mental health, overcoming addiction and the opportunity to be creative. This section focuses on tenants’ reflections on the importance of stable SouthPort-provided housing, and the diverse effects stable housing has on their mental health and lives.

Tenants said their housing represented a place of security, stability and safety. Gary explains that, *A lot of people complain about having a room. I didn’t ‘cause I knew what it was like not have a room. I knew having a room is better than not having a room.*

For homeless people, stable and long term accommodation can often seem out of reach. A space that is their own can provide security and stability to tenants, as Oliver explains, *To me, it gives me security. It makes me feel secure that if I want to go hide somewhere or be miserable, or cry, or rejoice, or be happy, I’ve got a place to go... no need to do anything stupid.*

The lack of security and stability was a common theme amongst tenants. The self-contained units, in particular, enabled tenants to gain stability. For Jorge, his self-contained unit provides a space to re-evaluate his life:

*I’m not sleeping on the streets. I’m not in a rooming house. I’m in a unit. I’m in my own unit, my own home. And while it’s not the biggest place, I have my bed, I have my kitchen and I have my bathroom. And at the moment, that’s what I really need while I just go and work out, over the next year or two, workout what my options are for going forward. So it’s safe, it’s secure, I have my privacy. I have my dignity.*

Homelessness can exacerbate a person’s mental illness, while stable and secure housing has the capacity to improve tenants’ mental health. Stew explained that when he entered the housing program he was heavily depressed because of financial stresses, being homeless and couch-surfing for more than six-months. When he moved into a self-contained unit, his mental health began to improve. *The very dark depression that I was feeling and had been feeling for some time dissipated, and to some degree my anxiety levels dropped which makes sense feeling a bit more secure, having a roof over your head.* Lily had a tumultuous year before she moved into the housing program, losing her partner, and experiencing states of depression and uncertainty. Housing allowed her to gain stability. *I’m settled now. I was going crazy there for a while but I’m more settled and stable.*

Stable housing also enables tenants to access the types of support services homeless people need. Karl had spent more than a decade living on the streets. Battling a long term addiction, Karl had difficulty remaining in one place for long. However, SouthPort housing allowed him to regain control of his life, quit drugs and begin to help himself. *You know, it’s – ever since I’ve had these – been in SouthPort, my life has just – it’s not been quick – it’s been really slow, but I’ve just got better and better, and better, and better. So it’s been a real help for me.*

The provision of stable housing was effective for Karl as it allowed him to access recovery rooms and support networks.

For others, stable housing has allowed them to rediscover old passions. Mia explained that since she moved into SouthPort housing, she has written three songs. *I’ve been doing that song-writing – done three songs, and I play – and I sung them at the RSL. It’s a bit of fun.* For Linda, it has meant that she has been able to go back to her roots, rediscovering her passion for drums. *It’s just given me the ability to get back to my roots. And you know I’m a lucky bastard physically. It’s like an opportunity to actually do what I wanted to do, you know, fucking 30 years ago, yeah, to be stable, to have a, you know, solid place.*

The ability to rediscover old passions provides a sense of normality in their lives. Expression through music is clearly linked to mental health and tenants’ ability to practice their music improves their mental health and helps them regain their sense of self.

Leo, who lives in a SouthPort-managed rooming house, did not regard moving into housing as a positive step in...
his life, merely a transitional phase. His mental health has not improved, largely due to the dynamics of his living conditions and the constant drug-taking that occurs there. I can’t say that it’s better. I’m seeing it as a transitional phase. This is just a place to restore myself until, you know, I can return to the human world and live like a normal person again. So, all I see it as is a place to try and survive until I can get the treatment I need. Leo struggles on a daily basis and it appears that SouthPort housing has not helped his mental health. Leo was the only tenant to express this view; however, this demonstrates that SouthPort housing, and a rooming house in particular, is not appropriate for all tenants.

That tenants were stigmatised based on their housing was a surprising finding of this research. This can have a negative impact on their mental health and affect their views of supported housing. Victoria explains that she has been stigmatised because she lives in social housing. The stigmatisation of living in social — social housing is awful. And the assumptions that the general public make about people that might live in social housing. Jackson also experienced being stigmatised by the general public. But if you tell someone you live in this building, they definitely know what building you’re talking about but it’s not a bad thing either. Tenants who live in social housing experience being stigmatised because of their housing (Hastings 2004; Palmer, C., Ziersch, A., Arthurson, K., & Baum 2004). Being stigmatised could prevent tenants remaining long term in social housing and has the potential to influence tenants’ mental health.
3.6 Conclusion of Section 3

In order to answer research question 2, how do SouthPort tenants perceive and experience their housing? This section explored tenants’ perceptions and experience of their housing. To understand tenants’ perspectives five areas were explored: the physical environment, access to services, tenancy management, maintenance processes, and the benefits of housing.

Housing provision was explored first, providing a context for tenants’ perceptions and experiences of the housing provided. Tenants were positive about the modernity and cleanliness of units upon entry into housing, which enabled them to enter good quality housing where they could have a sense of ownership of their home. The size and placement of windows were a concern for some tenants as they can cause tenants to feel claustrophobic. SouthPort should consider different curtain dressings to enable tenants with large windows greater privacy and natural light. The size of the units in State-owned properties is difficult for SouthPort to control. SouthPort should advocate for larger units in future acquisitions and renovations to enhance long term living. Self-contained units appear to enhance long term tenancy; therefore, SouthPort should continue to supply self-contained units and advocate the State Government to upgrade its last remaining rooming house.

Tenants access the majority of their support services through external organisations. Tenants preferred SouthPort to remain a housing provider and for them to access support services through external organisations. SouthPort and charities provide recreational support services for tenants, enabling tenants to socialise and develop social networks.

Tenancy management is a key function of SouthPort, which sensitively manages rent arrears and works with tenants to reduce rent arrears and avoid eviction. However, greater transparency and more explanation would enhance tenants’ understanding of the rent arrears process. SouthPort is limited in its capacity to manage illegal behaviours due to the need for evidence. However, when evidence is available, SouthPort ensures that action is taken.

Maintenance and property management are important and daily activities SouthPort conducts. The most common reason tenants have contact with SouthPort is to request maintenance. Tenants’ perceptions of responsive maintenance, and SouthPort, was overwhelmingly negative. Tenants stated that they had long waits for maintenance to be undertaken or it was never completed. An improvement in maintenance processes would improve tenants’ perception and experience of SouthPort housing.

Tenants consistently expressed the benefits that SouthPort housing has had on their lives. A striking feature of the interviews conducted, was that nearly half of the tenants had had a positive life change as a result of their housing. Tenants continually expressed the importance of providing self-contained units to tenants and the positive impacts these had on their lives and mental health.

Being stigmatised was a surprising aspect of the research. This is important because it shows that even though tenants are no longer homeless, they are still being stigmatised. This suggests that housing by itself is not effective in removing the stigma associated with being in a lower-socio economic bracket.

Tenants’ transformations in life are vitally important in understanding their perceptions and experience of housing. Even though tenants had expressed explicit and consistently negative feedback about their housing and maintenance, they felt their lives and mental health had improved as a result of SouthPort housing. For people who have experienced homelessness, improvements in their mental health enable them to progress in life, and tenants’ mental health improvements is one of the benefits of long term housing.
This section endeavours to uncover elements of SouthPort that enables long term tenancy, seeking to answer research question 3: How is SouthPort effective in providing housing to low-income people who were formerly homeless? Effectiveness for this project is understood to be SouthPort’s ability to house formerly homeless people long term. Tenancy trends indicate that SouthPort residents remain in housing long term. In exploring long term tenancy, this project uses the theoretical concepts of ontological security and social support to understand how SouthPort is effective in providing long term housing to people who were previously homeless. Tenants’ capacity to develop ontological security through housing is one explanation for SouthPort’s effectiveness. A secondary explanation is tenants’ development of social support through contact with neighbours, SouthPort and the wider community.

Section 4.1 investigates tenancy trends over a 12-year period, establishing whether SouthPort’s tenants remain in housing long term. Section 4.2 explores the home as a source of ontological security and its capacity to develop routine. Section 4.3 examines the influence of social support in maintaining long term housing. The development of social support provides an insight into tenants’ desire to remain in SouthPort housing. Section 4.4 concludes by answering research question 3, indicating that the development of ontological security and social supports are key factors which contribute to long term tenancy.
4.1 Length of Tenancy

SouthPort’s main purpose is to provide long term housing to people who were previously homeless, thus achieving the organisation’s strategic directions and policies as described in Figure 2. Tenancy trends indicate whether SouthPort is effective in housing formerly homeless people long term and provides a basis for understanding how SouthPort is effective.

An analysis of SouthPort’s tenancy over a 12-year period indicates that formerly homeless people remain in SouthPort housing long term (see Figure 10). Linear line 1 shows a reduction on short term tenancies. Linear line 2 shows a consistent rise in tenants remaining in SouthPort housing for more than seven years. In 2016, 37% of tenants had lived in SouthPort housing for more than seven years, while 19% had remained for three to six years. Twenty-one per cent of tenants have lived in SouthPort for one to two years and 23% for less than one year. It is important to note, that the increase in length of tenancy coincides with the development of one bedroom apartments and self-contained units. Furthermore, there has been a decline in people entering and exiting housing in a given year since individual dwellings were added to the housing stock (see Appendix B). The consistent rise in long term tenancy, alongside the development of self-contained units indicates that SouthPort tenants are remaining long term.

Figure 10: Length of Tenancy over a 12-Year Period
4.2 Ontological Security

The experience of homelessness will often lead to a lack of ontological security, as individuals do not have the capacity to sustain a normal routine in a regular environment. Ontological security refers to an individual’s ability to maintain consistency and predictability within their daily life. SouthPort’s housing provides people who were previously homeless to regain ontological security, as this provides a stable, safe and private environment. This section explores the links between ontological security and SouthPort housing to understand how SouthPort is able to retain tenants on a long term basis.

The term, ontological security, was first used by Laing (1965), and later developed by Giddens (1984, 1990) who defined ontological security as:

"Ontological security is one form, but a very important form, of feelings of security in the wide sense in which I have used the term earlier. The phrase refers to the confidence that most humans beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security; hence the two are psychologically closely related. (Giddens 1990)"

Ontological security allows the individual to have a sense of control over their lives and provides a space in which the individual can understand their position within society (Giddens 1990). Saunders (1984) states that ontological security can be achieved through home ownership. Dupuis and Thorns (1998) advance this understanding by arguing that the home and home ownership can be, and is, a source of ontological security, outlining four conditions which enable ontological security:

- Home is the site of constancy in the social and material environment
- Home is a spatial context in which the day to day routines of human existence are performed
- Home is a site where people feel most in control of their lives because they feel free from surveillance that is part of the contemporary world
- Home is a secure base around which identities are constructed (Dupuis and Thorns 1998:29)

Dupuis and Thorns’ (1998) understanding of ontological security is conceptualised in reference to home ownership. Home ownership can enable ontological security; however, with increasing housing prices and housing stress within Australia, the capacity for home ownership has lessened (Berry 2003; Karamujic 2015:89). Furthermore, homeless people are not in a position to gain home ownership; however, long term rental housing, with security of tenure, can provide tenants security and a space to develop ontological security (Fitzpatrick and Pawson 2013; Hiscock et al. 2001; Hulse, Milligan, and Easthope 2011; Robinson and Walshaw 2014). The concept of the home as a source of ontological security is employed by McNaughton (2008), Padgett (2007) and O’Campo et al. (2009) to address the importance of providing housing for homeless people and people with a mental illness.

The lived experience of homelessness can lead to a lack of control over a person’s life and low levels of ontological security. This is as a result of the lack of structure and routine, constant upheaval, a lack of privacy, fear and worry, and general uncertainty due to their living environment (Johnson and Wylie 2011; McNaughton 2008). Homelessness can exacerbate mental illness, creating further instability and negative health impacts on individuals (Koegel and Burnam 1992; Shaw 2004). The lack of ontological security for homeless people can have a drastic effect; however, access to a ‘home’ can provide an individual with the necessary requirements to establish their ontological security (Padgett 2007). Long term housing is thus a key component in establishing routine and overcoming the trauma of being homeless. Therefore, the home as a site for ontological security is one element that explains how SouthPort is effective in maintaining long term tenancy.

The following sections focus on how SouthPort provides a space for ontological security to develop, which, in turn, enables long term tenancy. Firstly, affordability and
the security of tenure is compared to home ownership in providing the space to feel ontologically secure. Tenants’ normal routines are explored, reviewing the importance of self-contained units. This is followed by an examination of safety within the proprieties, and the presence of staff at the properties.

4.2.1 Security of Tenure

Housing security is important in ensuring that tenants have the capacity to break the homeless cycle, remain in housing long term and regain ontological security. There was a discussion of SouthPort’s sensitive management of rent arrears and antisocial behaviour, which enables tenants to remain in housing long term, in section 2.3. This section explores tenants’ perceptions of security within their housing, and for home to be a place that provides ontological security.

SouthPort’s housing can provide tenants with the reassurance they have secure housing. As a senior Australian, Stew was priced out of the private rental market; with very few options available, he resorted to living in a rooming house. As a senior, he found this experience difficult and, after living in a self-contained bed-sit unit at a SouthPort property, he believes he will spend the remainder of his life there. Knowing that he has shelter is reassuring. From the point of view of here, it makes me feel very content, that you know, I’m secure financially ... it’s reassuring to know that you have got a roof over your head.

Jorge understands the situation, explaining that, as long he is not violent, he will be able to remain at SouthPort for as long as required:

So there’s a sense of security around that, knowing that I’ve got this unit for as long as I need to have it. And unlike private rental, there’s no risk of eviction unless I behave really badly and that’s not going to happen. So you have to behave really badly to get evicted, I mean really badly. And even then it’s still quite a long process.

Jorge clearly understands what behaviour is appropriate for tenants and the role he plays in remaining at SouthPort. Armed with this knowledge, he has stability and consistency. SouthPort provides stable long term accommodation to individuals who cannot afford to rent in the private market due to high rental prices. SouthPort’s housing provides tenants a sense of tenure in their housing, allowing individuals to establish routine and consistency. Ontological security normally focuses on home ownership; however, this is out of the reach of low-income earners. Access to low cost, long term accommodation provides tenants an equivalent element of security (Hiscock et al. 2001; Robinson and Walshaw 2014).

4.2.2 Affordability

Housing affordability enables tenants to stay long term without being under housing stress. This ensures that tenants are able to develop their sense of ontological security, through security of tenure and affordability. Affordability was explored through two different calculations in section 2.1.2, concluding that SouthPort housing is affordable. In this section, tenants’ perceptions of affordability are explored to understand how affordability can impact a tenants’ capacity to remain long term at SouthPort.

Housing affordability is pivotal to tenants’ capacity to remain long term at SouthPort and regain ontological security. Tenants’ responses to questions about affordability were dichotomous. Tenants expressed their belief that rent was cheap and were positive about the inclusion of bills in rent. Penny stated that, for the one bedroom apartment she lives in, housing costs are incredibly inexpensive.

Piece of piss mate, easy…. It’s only two hundred and three dollars a week, a fortnight. Sorry, a week…No bills. No bills, no electricity, gas, washing machine, laundry shit, you know. It’s totally kosher.

Jackson was also of the belief that the housing is affordable, especially considering the inclusion of bills. Yes, it’s definitely affordable. Because you’re paying your rent and that pays your water, gas, electricity for now so, you know, that’s pretty good. Although Leo also thought the rent is reasonable, he stressed that, for someone on Newstart Allowance, nothing is affordable.

Well, it’s reasonable, I think given for what it is, you know, but when you’re on Newstart, you know, nothing is affordable really. However, not all tenants agreed that the housing was affordable. Gary explained that rent has increased significantly since
he moved into SouthPort. The rents have really – they – they’ve doubled in ten years. That’s a lot. Carol believes that, for a self-contained unit, the rent is too high. Yeah, rent is going up again. I think rent should be cheaper… when you’re renting a room, just a room, I think the rent is too high, I really do. I think it should be cheaper. This dichotomous view can be understood through the manner in which calculations are made and whether rent comprised a service fee or not. What is evident is that people living on Newstart Allowance are still under financial stress regardless of the calculation used.

Housing affordability is one element that enables tenants to remain long term in housing. Although a couple of tenants said the housing was too expensive, the majority of those interviewed believed that the rent was reasonable for the location and condition of the place. The inclusion of utility and maintenance costs was viewed positively. Affordability alongside security of tenure enables tenants to experience their unit as a home – an environment that is constant.

4.2.3 Normal Routine

Housing, and the ability to establish a stable home, enables people to develop their ontological security as it provides them a place in which to go about their regular day-to-day routines (Dupuis and Thorns 1998). Self-contained units allowed tenants to gain control over their environment without the need to rely on other people to maintain their living standard.

Shared facilities, in contrast to self-contained units, hinder tenants’ abilities to exert control over their living environments while. One of the most prominent negative aspects of shared facilities is the inability to control cleanliness and the use of shared space, which was discussed in section 1.3.2. Self-contained units remove the need to rely on other people’s good behaviour in common areas. Lily said, You know your own standards and you don’t have to amalgamate with someone you don’t want to. Like you don’t have to wait on someone to cook something or you don’t have to wait to use the toilet, or worry if it’s going to be dirty. Self-contained units give control back to the tenant, with the standard of cleanliness being at the tenant’s discretion. Ali said, You wash your floor when you want to, you don’t have to worry about it. There’s a lot to be said having your own kitchen and bathroom. You make the mess in your own bathroom, you are forced to clean it up. The ability to cook or use the toilet when they want to enables tenants to have control over their lives, which is impossible when facilities are shared, and gives tenants a sense of ownership of their living environment.

The ability to exert control over their living environment allows tenants to develop routine according to their lifestyle. Lily spends the majority of her day in her unit and has a flexible routine. A normal day, wake up, clean up, shower, go out, come back, and I spend time with another woman so, yeah…. I spend about 22 hours a day in here…. I just listen to music, find something to do, wander around. Her unit provides consistency in her life and is at the centre of her social and material world. Victoria’s routine consists of self-care, control over her environment and going on adventures to get exercise. I like to do a lot of self-care. So, you know; I have a reasonably clean and tidy flat. And try and make sure that I get maybe a massage or, you know, something good a week. I exercise, not every day, but most days. Maintaining her unit is important to Victoria. It provides a stable place to be. The routine of keeping their units clean and tidy expands tenants’ capacity to develop other forms of routine and normality, such as attending social meals in the area. Jorge said he attends social meals at least four times a week. So basically making sure I’m out there eating with others. I walk quite a bit. Jorge attends these meals to get a free meal and to socialise. Jorge structures his week around social meals. Craig’s self-contained unit provides a stable place where he can write. Craig is attempting to write a novel now, but was unable to do so previously because of the instability of the rooming house in which he lived. This meant that when he moved into a self-contained unit he was able to develop a daily writing routine. A normal week would be – mostly it’s around writing. I do quite a lot of writing. The stable home environment means that tenants are able to build routine into their lives, which enables ontological security to be re-established in their lives.

Although self-contained units provide tenants with consistency, noise levels within the properties can hinder their ability to establish routine and normality, or to regain ontological security. Leo finds the noise in his block of units particularly problematic to his mental health.
Other than having to constantly hear the noise and some sounds that they make like when they’re on drugs, they can yell and scream, and so it all just what goes on. High noise levels make Leo feel incredibly uncomfortable and anxious, and make it difficult for him to feel in control. Dylan gets incredibly frustrated by doors being slammed constantly, as it disturbs his sleep. Door slamming, all fucking night, mate – fucking – like – I can hear it in here. The lack of sleep means that Dylan cannot develop a routine. High noise levels were not representative of all housing sites, as Jorge explains. The other people who are in the block, they’re just peaceful and quiet. And I think also the fact that they’re separate units as well, that helps with the soundproofing. This suggests that levels of noise are dependent on the activities of tenants within a particular building. As will be seen in section 4.2.4, illegal behaviours can cause high levels of noise and affect tenants’ abilities to live normal lives.

Self-contained units, compared to rooms in rooming houses, provide the privacy and stability to develop routine. Tenants expressed their sense of pride in and ownership of their unit, as they were in control of their environment. Although noise can hinder this, it is largely dependent upon the property. The capacity to develop ontological security in self-contained units indicates two important elements: (1) self-contained units are more beneficial in developing ontological security; and (2) tenants’ capacity to develop a normal routine is one indicator of how SouthPort is effective in maintaining long term tenancies.

4.2.4 Safety

The lived experience of homelessness is often an unsafe experience, as was explored in Section 1.3. As such, the provision of safe housing is one element that can contribute to the development of a form of ontological security (Shaw 2004). Safety is an implicit component of ontological security. A safe environment, free of violence, allows tenants to have a secure base in which to exert control over their environment and establish routine (Padgett 2007). A lack of safety disrupts daily life and consistency. Safety is a key element to developing ontological security and can provide an understanding as to how SouthPort is effective in providing long term housing to homeless people (Padgett 2007).

The perception of safety was a contentious issue amongst the tenants interviewed and is largely dependent upon the tenants’ specific property. Carol demonstrates that every property is unique regarding safety concerns. For Carol, the type of door is irrelevant as she leaves her door open or unlocked. Like here, I can, you know most of the time, leave my door unlocked or open, like I have trust here. My trust has been kind of brought back… Because it makes it feel like a home, like a proper home, not to have to—every time you come in and out, you have to lock your door. This demonstrates that Carol feels safe within her property, which makes it feel like her home. This indicates that safety is largely dependent upon other tenants and their behaviours.

The researcher observed that certain properties were safer than others, and data collected during the interview process supported this view. Safety was viewed by tenants through various lenses: the security of doors and locks, illegal activities and movement in pursuit of illegal activities on and within the properties.

The installation of fire-proof doors was viewed as a positive element to safety within the unit. Gary felt safe in his apartment because of the fire-proof doors installed. You can’t get in here. I saw the fireman trying to get a door down once and it took them a while. It meant that people were not able to come in and steal the telly or the computers or whatever. Penny agreed, saying that I used to feel very unsafe with not having proper fucking doors… It’s got a steel door frame, so you can’t—I mean if you had half an hour with a sledgehammer but someone’s going to notice. The simplicity of a fire door enables these tenants to feel safe within their units, which enables them to establish a routine without fear of disruption.

Electronic key systems were viewed as both positive and negative elements in enhancing safety. The State Government funded a new electronic key system across the majority of SouthPort properties, which gave SouthPort greater control over the locking mechanisms and improved security for tenants as the electronic keys can be cancelled immediately when lost or stolen. The new security system makes Jackson feel safe, With the security system that they’ve got here, it’s pretty good because it does stop people from coming in. While SouthPort has greater control, it makes Riley feel unsafe. I don’t like the new keys. They’re not safe at all like anyone can
just go and get in the door, open the door, which is really – I find it – I'm tempted to move out now, because of it. Although Riley's impression is that the new locking system is unsafe, the electronic keys provide greater security for tenants.

Due to gates, locks and doors, the majority of interviewees felt safer within their property and viewed the property as considerably better than previous places in which they had lived. The people interviewed who felt safe within their dwelling and building, describe an environment that is conducive to establishing routine and where the home functions as a form of ontological security.

Tenants raised serious concerns regarding safety and illegal activities, such as drugs, prostitution and violence, which are still prevalent in some of the properties, and which tenants felt compromised their safety. Leo, for example, lives in a property that has a high level of drug activity. Although he keeps to himself due to his anxiety, he is able to hear a lot of the activity inside his unit and he often feels unsafe. Generally, I feel a very low levels of safety and high levels of anxiety. It's basically a fearful place for me. It is hard for Leo to establish routine and normality in such an environment. He is restricted to his room out of fear, and therefore is unable to develop his sense of ontological security.

Fred has very little trust in people due to his previous experiences and the current situation in the property in which he lives. It is because of this that if there's a bang on my door, people will say – I do grab a knife and look at my door, answer my door in case there are people that I cannot handle. This is not helped by the constant activity in Fred's building in which there are tenants who are taking and dealing drugs and who use their units for sex work. [Tenant A], all right, is on ice every week. [Tenant B] is on ice every week. They both threaten me. Generally, I feel a very low levels of safety and high levels of anxiety. It's basically a fearful place for me. It is hard for Leo to establish routine and normality in such an environment. He is restricted to his room out of fear, and therefore is unable to develop his sense of ontological security.

Some tenants leave on the weekends. I've got four people – three people that don't stay at weekends 'cause they say it's shit. They don't wanna stay on weekends. The fact that the situation is serious enough for tenants to leave over the weekend is a significant hindrance to tenants' ability to establish routine. They either leave or have to lock themselves in their units for 2-3 days per week. These experiences reflect the broader literature, which suggests that people living in social housing are exposed to higher levels of unsafe environments (Hiscock et al. 2001; Wiesel et al. 2014). The lack of safety within properties hinders tenants’ ability to maintain consistent and predictable routine and prevents the home becoming a source of ontological security.

As discussed in sections 2.3 and 3.3, SouthPort is limited in its capacity to deal with illegal behaviours within properties due to VCAT’s requirement for evidence and witnesses. During the research for this report, staff dealt with multiple instances of prostitution and drug dealing but were unable to mount a case for eviction due to the limited evidence available.

Safety was a contentious issue amongst interviewees and was heavily dependent upon the property in which the individuals were living. The mix of people in each property determines the elements of safety. While many viewed their properties as safe, there are clear concerns regarding illegal activities. These behaviours demonstrate an infringement on people's ability for the home to function as a site of constancy and the ability to develop day-to-day routine. SouthPort is limited in its capacity to deal with antisocial and illegal behaviours. These areas needs to improve in order for tenants to maximise the home as a foundation for the development of ontological security and are a barrier in providing effective housing for formerly homeless people.
I’m not sleeping on the streets. I’m not in a rooming house. I’m in a unit. I’m in my own unit, my own home. And while it’s not the biggest place, I have my bed, I have my kitchen and I have my bathroom. And at the moment, that’s what I really need.

- Jorge
4.2.5 SouthPort Presence at Properties

Privacy and lack of surveillance are important in ensuring ontological security (Dupuis and Thorns 1998). Both allow tenants to exert control over their environment without fear of retribution. In practical terms, this means that SouthPort, as a housing provider, is not to infringe upon their tenants’ lifestyles through surveillance. Tenants described how SouthPort’s presence at the properties is not intrusive. As Stew explains, There is a sense that without having them peering over your shoulder at every move but there is a presence of them which is I don’t know, reassuring. Mia explains that, as long as you are not doing anything wrong, you are left alone. Yeah, they don’t harass you. That’s good. Like if you’re not doing anything wrong, you’re not getting in trouble for nothing wrong which is really good. Tenants have autonomy in their lives and the freedom to do what they choose. Staff presence at properties acts as a means of contact between SouthPort and tenants, yet the tenants do not feel they are under surveillance. Although there is video surveillance in the public spaces of properties, participants did not mention this as a problem. This demonstrates that tenants have the capacity to exert control over their environment without fear of surveillance.

SouthPort is required to conduct house inspections, which could be interpreted as invasive and a form of surveillance. This is a necessary part of their role as it ensures properties are maintained while providing a means to check in with tenants. Tenants’ experience of house inspections was divided. Steve believes that inspections need to occur more often. I think they only inspect[ed] it once ever since I was there but I think they should really inspect places every six months. While Victoria is happy they are doing fewer inspections, They’ve also backed off on the number of inspections and stuff that used to be. First few years living in the flat it was just constant. This is largely dependent on the tenants and it seems that an inspection a couple of times a year would be of most use.

Overall, it appears that SouthPort has reached a balance which allows them to have a presence at the properties and inspect properties without being intrusive on the tenant’s life. This mixture ensures that all parties are happy. Furthermore, it means that tenants’ homes give them the freedom to live their lives in the manner they choose, free of surveillance. Therefore, the home functions as a space for ontological security.
4.3 Social Support

Social networks and support are vital in ensuring individuals have the protective resources to overcome life stresses (Cobb 1976). Social isolation and exclusion can be exacerbated by homelessness; with people sleeping rough, people with a mental illness and people with disability the most isolated (Goodman et al. 1991; Lam and Rosenheck 1999). This culminates in a lack of social support and a reduction in individuals’ mental wellbeing (Solarz and Bogat 1990). To combat this form of isolation, homeless people may establish social supports with other homeless people. However, homeless people may lose this support when they enter housing, thereby impacting their ability to remain in housing (Ravenhill 2008:193/194). The ability to receive social support and rebuild social networks is crucial to a person’s ability to overcome their previous circumstances and remain in housing (Chamberlain et al. 2007). Tenants are more likely to remain long term in housing if they perceive that social support is available (Stone and Hulse 2007:25). Community housing can function as means to rebuild a social network and reduce isolation.

In exploring social support amongst SouthPort tenants, three elements of social support - emotional, informational and instrument support - are used.

Emotional support consists of caring, empathy, love, trust, and a sense of belonging (Cobb 1976; Langford et al. 1997). A sense of belonging is incredibly important to an individual’s mental health as it allows them to feel valued, needed and accepted (Hagerty et al. 1992; Vandemark 2007). A sense of belonging can be defined as ‘the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that people feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment’ (Hagerty et al. 1996:236). Emotional support, within the context of this research, focuses on contact between neighbours and staff alongside tenants’ involvement within their property, SouthPort and the wider community.

Informational support is the provision of information-based resources to individuals [both physical and verbal] (House 1981; Wilcox and Vernberg 1985). This level of support is important in helping individuals through stressful situations. Informational support is analysed by focusing on SouthPort’s provision of resources to tenants.

Instrumental support is the provision of tangible services and assistance to individuals (Langford et al. 1997; Taylor 2011). Tenants have various ways in which they can access instrumental support through living in SouthPort housing: through the community engagement officer, events and social functions, the compassionate support provided by SouthPort, and external support services available in the area.

This section explores SouthPort housing as a source of social support and how this is an effective means in retaining tenants’ long term. Tenants’ capacity to build social supports can be a contributing factor that assists them to remain long term in SouthPort housing.
4.3.1 Contact with Neighbours

Contact between neighbours is one way in which tenants can develop social supports. Contact with neighbours in a property was a consistent topic discussed in the interviews. Although the majority of participants lived in self-contained units, it became apparent that contact with neighbours was pivotal in their experience of their housing and how the property functioned. The breadth of contact varied between participants and was largely dependent on the individual, their neighbours and the property. Contact with neighbours has the ability to build emotional supports and a sense of belonging, and can help tenants remain in housing long term.

Contact with neighbours is largely dependent on the individual’s willingness to engage with their neighbours, and supports the notion that, in order to achieve a sense of belonging, individuals must have the energy for meaningful involvement and have shared and complementary characteristics (Hagerty et al. 1996). Fred has no desire to socialise with people in his building, mainly due to his lack of trust in people. So I try to keep away from everybody. I don’t trust nobody, right, for the simple reason I’ve been burnt too many times. I’ve been lied to too many times. His desire not to socialise with other tenants means that he has consciously made the decision not to build social networks in his building. Gary has minimal contact with his neighbours, preferring to keep contact to a minimum. I’m really good at keeping to myself. I actually don’t really talk to many people in the place. If I do talk to them, it’s really superficial. This is indicative of Gary’s past and his desire not to associate with people who currently use drugs. Leo does not trust the people around him either, as they are not the kind of people he would normally associate with. They’re not the sort of people I would want to be associated with… people have – the certain socio-economic statuses don’t – they just get up my goat, I suppose, this whole, “Oh, poor me,” crap that they carry on with and just, it frustrates me. Leo’s outlook on socialising with neighbours indicates that he believes that he does not have shared interests and characteristics with other tenants. The lack of willingness to interact with their neighbours hinders residents’ ability to develop social networks and receive the emotional support that will help them reduce isolation within the confines of community housing.

Social isolation is evident amongst the homeless population, and Carol believes that it’s not good to spend too much time by yourself, to be just cut off from people. I’ve got to have contact with people, yeah. Carol makes it clear, however, that it all depends on who’s living in the house at the moment. Stew supports this idea: living in a different property, he explains The vibe is really nice….. I probably know half a dozen… I like knowing people I like or people I get along with um, I’d rather have that then know 6 people I despise or that we fight. Furthermore, contact with neighbours can largely be a practical element of the need to socialise. Riley hasn’t seen any of my old friends or anything these days. I just don’t have the time. The close proximity that people in community housing have with each other enables them to develop these social networks.

Tenants’ desire to participate in meaningful engagement can often lead to the development of very clear emotional supports and feelings of a sense of belonging. Contact with neighbours is incredibly complex and multifaceted, and there are varying degrees of contact that tenants experience within their housing, from simple greetings in the hallway to established friendships with and support from their neighbours. Suzie has minimal contact with her neighbours, limiting her contact to hallway encounters. I was walking past and had a bit of chat to him for about five minutes,”How’re you doing?” “Well, fine,” you know. We have a bit of a talk. However, there are tenants who have much stronger relationships and friendships with other tenants even though they can be considerably complex. Lily articulates the complexity of contact with neighbours, expressing that she has made good friends at the property but it is important to keep her distance. I’ve made some good friends here too. I keep my distance from them but when they need me, I’ll be there, you know. Best way to be. Seeing you’re not in each other’s faces all the time, you know. Steve was a tenant who enjoyed the company of his neighbours, explaining:

You make friends there, and there’s some good friends there. I mean there was a lot – there was about half a dozen of us there, eight of us I suppose we used to always sit in front of my place every afternoon and have a yak, it was really a nice feeling, you
know, ‘cause it was becoming a little community. And it was really nice to do that and I had the privilege of doing a lot of things for different people.

The ability to make friends within the confines of their property enabled the tenants to feel a sense of belonging and to gain emotional support, which they would not have been able to obtain otherwise. This can be seen in Jackson’s experience of his housing.

Jackson was hospitalised a few weeks prior to participating in an interview for this project. He collapsed in his apartment while he and one of his neighbours were having coffee together. Having few social supports in place in the South Melbourne area, Jackson noted how his neighbours have supported him throughout this process. I’ve got at least three, four of the girls that check on me every day. Every day they come to my front door or they ring me, message me, see if I’m alright, and it’s not their job to do that. This has made Jackson appreciate the people in his building and made him feel supported and able to develop a sense of belonging. It’s made me feel a little bit secure living here, like knowing that I’ve got more of a chance [because] everyone that’s here [is] helping me out. Jackson describes other ways in which his neighbours support him and how surprised he is to have such support from his neighbours. They’ll go up the street and buy food for me, and bring it back, you know. You don’t expect that from, coming from a homeless situation to what I was in. I was in a pretty scary situation when I first moved in here. One of Jackson’s neighbours recalled the experience. He got sick, so I watch over him. Because we were hanging out, and then something went wrong, and then he ended up in the hospital, so I like to make sure he’s okay. His neighbour felt an obligation to make sure that Jackson was looked after, and this support enabled Jackson to have a sense of belonging and worth; he understood that the people around him were looking out for him.

Emotional support from neighbours was evident in other properties as well. Steve has become friends with a few people in his building, but the support extends to those in his entire property. Most of people, if we haven’t seen someone for a couple of weeks or a week, we generally go to the office and say someone that haven’t been around at least they do follow it up and that was a good thing. Ali, had an interesting perspective regarding support as she doesn’t really socialise with them, but there’s half a dozen here I can smile and say “hello” and “how are you” and the couple of them I’ve had in for a cup of coffee. Yet, she went on to explain that, Here, we look after you, we look after each other, I do what I can for everybody I can do, but very few take my advice because I’m a tough old bird. This was an interesting contrast. What these examples say is that tenants can get social support from contact with their neighbours where there is common interest and a desire. This support has proven to be incredibly important for tenants as it improves their wellbeing and self-worth and provides incentives to remain in community housing.

Unfortunately, not all contact with neighbours is positive, and social support was demonstrated to go awry on occasions with some tenants having negative experiences. Oliver has had particularly negative experiences with his neighbours. Although he tries to keep to himself, tenants harass him. Stop being on my back, stop treating me like a piece of shit, stop coming to bang on my door, stop coming and ask. Furthermore, Oliver finds that tenants rely on him as a support, yet he doesn’t want the responsibility. I don’t own Southport, all right. I’m not the manager here. They tell everybody I’m the manager, that’s why I chase everybody, right. [a tenant], soon as there’s a fight, she comes running to me all the time, all right. Oliver doesn’t like the responsibility as he prefers to keep to himself. However, he finds that tenants consistently rely on him to deal with other tenants’ negative behaviour. Steve enjoyed the friends he had made in his property and found that tenants consistently relied upon him.

I mean I had a lot of people knock on me door there. We’ve got a bloke in that place there, he can’t do much for himself at all. He used to always come and get me to do things, change his channel, do this, do that but I sort of probably miss doing that ‘cause I’ve got nothing much to do in here. I used to whinge about him sometimes.

Although contact between neighbours can be positive, it is not always well received by other tenants. Tenants rely on their neighbours for support even if some neighbours don’t want to provide the support expected. The contrast between the high level of support received from some neighbours and the lack of support by others is indicative of the general social norm.
Contact with neighbours and the development of social networks enable individuals to feel a sense of belonging and gain emotional support. Tenants within SouthPort properties said they get emotional support from their neighbours and feel a sense of belonging. This could be explained by the small size of properties, with properties ranging from 5-40 units. The social networks that exist within a property allow SouthPort to be effective in providing housing.

### 4.3.2 SouthPort Emotional Support

Tenants have contact with SouthPort through tenancy management, property management and general everyday interactions. Tenancy management was explored in sections 2.3 and 3.3, with a focus on the manner in which SouthPort sensitively manages antisocial behaviours and rent arrears. Section 3.4 focused on contact with SouthPort regarding maintenance, which tenants viewed negatively and therefore perceived SouthPort negatively. However, it became apparent during the research that SouthPort staff provide elements of informal emotional support as part of their role as tenancy and property managers.

Jorge expresses SouthPort’s commitment to compassion. I think, when I think of the Southport Community Housing Group, the first word that comes to mind is compassion… There’s a desire to help and to assist people who fall on unfortunate times… the other word that comes to mind is understanding. Stew compares his experience of different housing organisations, saying the organisation seem to be much more approachable than the other two housing associations that I contacted during that process. Stew said the SouthPort was not only approachable, but they displayed understanding. I’ve found them generous um the sense that if I was really stuck and in need of something I could probably go up and say, “hey, I’m really skimped”. Well I know for a fact, I’ve seen people do it. Gary agreed with Stew. I find they’re pretty approachable, SouthPort, if I find – if I’ve got an issue, most of the time they’ll bear me out. This was incredibly important for Gary who had often fallen behind in rent. If SouthPort was not approachable and understanding, he would have ended up back on the streets. They’ve gone out of their way to help me. In fact, they’ve bent over backwards to help me really ‘cause I was – I was pretty feral at one stage. SouthPort’s approachability and understanding enabled these tenants to feel valued. Being valued can lead tenants to receive informal emotional support and perhaps through this develop a sense of trust and belonging.

As Gary explains, When you’ve got a manager … [who] knows everyone there, she knows people by name and I think that’s very important ‘cause when you get a bit older I think you know it’s nice to have people who know you who work in the office. However, in other cases, some tenants who were interviewed felt as if they had not been heard and not listened to. Victoria described her experience. You tell them something. They just don’t handle it and they need to be trained in – get some training in listening so they actually hear what you’re saying and they just spaced out or I don’t know. Victoria, therefore, feels ostracised and finds it difficult to go to SouthPort with issues that arise. This has hindered her ability to feel part of the community or to access support from SouthPort staff. Riley described the negative tones that she experiences from SouthPort staff. If you bring up or ask them for anything, they’ve got a – they give you a bad tone of voice … do anything they didn’t like. And they try to throw you off all the time, yeah, when you ask for anything.

There are a number of reasons why tenants may experience their contact with SouthPort staff negatively. (1) As discussed in section 2.3, many tenants living in SouthPort properties have complex needs and mental illness, which can lead tenants to display negative behaviours towards staff members and, in turn, affects staff reactions to tenants. (2) SouthPort may be perceived as displaying favouritism to certain tenants, thereby providing emotional support to some tenants but not others. (3) SouthPort has limited resources and staff are not always able to give tenants the help or attention they would like. Regardless of the reason, some tenants feel they are not receiving adequate emotional support from SouthPort staff, and this can impact the tenant’s sense of belonging.
Variability of this service led to perceptions of favouritism. Chloe had an injury and asked SouthPort staff to drive her to the doctor. Her request was repeatedly rejected. I can name everyone here who’s got a lift from SouthPort, everyone. Name me one time I got a lift from there, one time. I can tell you I’ve asked three times, and I’ve got three big fat no’s, all right. As a result, Chloe felt unsupported. Riley does not try to access these services and feels that SouthPort staff pick on her. They just wanna pick at me all day just to — I don’t know. I think they think I’m trying to be a pain in the ass but I’m not. Suzie was considerably more explicit about favouritism within SouthPort.

I think there’s maybe a — an issue of possibly — a bit of favouritism that occurs at times. The perception of favouritism for some tenants gives others the impression that there is a lack of support for them, which indicates that some tenants have a perception that they are not able to access the instrumental support they would like from SouthPort.
4.3.4 Information Based Support

Informational support is the provision of information based resources to individuals. This is important in helping individuals through stressful situations. Tenants can access informational support at SouthPort through the resources provided in the welcome pack and the office functioning as a drop-in centre. When entering the program, each tenant is provided with a welcome pack which includes their tenancy arrangement and information regarding the services available in the area, which can help in times of crisis. As one staff member explained, *It's just a matter of fact of you know reading in our booklet when they sign up with us there are a fair few services around the area.* The welcome pack mainly provides information about services rather than information on how to cope with a stressful situation. However, the office has various materials which tenants can access, such as booklets on various mental illnesses, various programs in the area, and how to access a certain service. Utilisation of these resources was not explored in the interviews and therefore conclusions about the level of support cannot be made. However, the provision of resources indicates that tenants have access to such support to help them in stressful situations.
4.4 Conclusion of Section 4

This section explored how SouthPort was effective in housing people who have been homeless, using ontological security and social support as a framework for analysis. SouthPort provides long term housing to people who were homeless, as demonstrated by the length of their tenancy. Currently, more than one-third of their tenants have lived in a SouthPort property for seven years or more. The average length of tenancy increased with the development of self-contained units, suggesting that these are a more suitable form of accommodation for tenants. To understand and explain why tenants remain in SouthPort long term, housing as a means of ontological security and the importance of social support was explored.

Housing as means to ontological security proves to be a complex issue. SouthPort, through its compassionate management of issues and provision of stable and affordable housing enables tenants to develop routine and feel a sense of security. Tenants have a sense of ownership over their self-contained units and can control their environments. SouthPort provides the privacy required for tenants to escape their formerly public life as a homeless person, while maintaining a presence should people need support. Concerns about the public areas of the property and safety highlight the limited capacity SouthPort has in ensuring that individuals feel ontologically secure. Overall, SouthPort housing and tenants’ ability to establish a home, function as a source of ontological security. The home provides constancy and control, enabling tenants to develop daily routines. Housing provides the basis to form identity. Ontological security can be developed by having a secure, stable home and provides an explanation of how SouthPort effectively provides housing to formerly homeless people.

Overall, it appears the tenants who live in SouthPort housing have the capacity to establish social support. Contact with neighbours provides close and immediate emotional support while SouthPort also provides some emotional support. Emotional support is contingent on the individuals’ desire to participate and the neighbours in a specific building. Although not all tenants interviewed developed emotional supports through their housing, the majority of tenants were able to access emotional support within their properties, leading to feeling a sense of belonging. SouthPort and external support services play a crucial role in providing instrumental support to tenants. This is achieved through events and social functions, the Community Engagement Officer, compassionate support, and referral to external services. Although external services could be improved, SouthPort tenants can access them if needed. Information is provided in the welcome pack and tenants can also access information through the office. Tenants’ ability to establish social connections indicates a second reason why tenants remain in SouthPort housing long term.
Conclusion
Homelessness is a multifaceted issue within the Australian context. The rise in housing prices and the reduction in affordable housing across the country have seen homelessness remain a concern for Australia. The lived experience of homelessness represents a period of instability, insecurity and isolation for those individuals.

Pathways into homelessness are a combination of structural forces and individuals’ circumstances. This was confirmed by tenants residing at SouthPort. Through exploring their experiences, it became apparent that providing shelter alone was not adequate in helping people to exit homelessness. Tenants’ negative experiences of living in rooming houses detailed the unsafe, violent and insecure environments which hindered their capacity to develop routine and exit homelessness. Therefore, it is evident that housing must be secure, safe, supportive, and long term for tenants to be able to exit homelessness and address mental health and other concerns.

Community Housing Providers (CHPs) have the capacity to provide the stable, safe and secure housing that is required to help people exit homelessness. Trends in the social housing sector are moving away from housing that is contingent on access to support and treatment services. Housing First approaches have gained traction in Australia, with programs such as Journey to Social Inclusion and Street to Home operating in Victoria. These two programs provide the support to help people to exit homeless but rely on social housing to house their clients. In an Australian context, CHPs are becoming more prominent in the social housing sector.

This research project sought to understand the model that SouthPort, a CHP, has adopted in its provision of housing, and how this model was effective in providing long term housing, and enabling individuals to overcome their previous homeless status, by understanding the tenant’s experience. The project set out to address three research questions:

**Research question 1:** What are the key features of SouthPort’s current tenancy model which provides community housing to low income single people who were formerly homeless?

**Research question 2:** How do SouthPort’s tenants perceive and experience their housing?

**Research question 3:** How is SouthPort effective in providing housing to low-income people who were formerly homeless?

Sections 2, 3 and 4, each explored one of the three research questions, seeking to gain a holistic understanding of SouthPort and the model adopted. SouthPort provides housing to single people who receive government benefits and who have been homeless. SouthPort follows a clear tenancy process to ensure people have a positive tenancy experience. SouthPort provides affordable housing across 22 rooms in a rooming house, 161 self-contained bed-sit units, 88 one bedroom apartments and 12 family properties. SouthPort is connected to the various support services in the local area and refers tenants to these services on a needs basis. External organisations, such as Inner South Community Health, provide services including medical and dental services, counselling, case management, education, drug rehabilitation, domiciliary services, and recreational services. SouthPort provides some recreational support services through events and social functions. Tenancy management at SouthPort involves managing rent arrears and antisocial behaviours. SouthPort manages properties through responsive and cyclical maintenance. SouthPort employs a maintenance worker and engages contract cleaning and maintenance companies. In addressing the research questions, important components of SouthPort model emerged that could be replicated in other organisations. SouthPort is active in housing people who were homeless. SouthPort has remained a local organisation, working in
the municipality of Port Phillip for more than 30 years. SouthPort’s delivery of housing has key strengths that provide tenants the stability, security and safety to remain in housing long term.

Self-contained bed sit units and one bedroom apartments provide the privacy and stability that rooming houses fail to do. SouthPort’s willingness to work with the State Government to convert the majority of their properties to self-contained units has had an extremely positive effect on tenants’ experience of housing. Self-contained units provide the stability and privacy for tenants to live independently without the need to rely on other tenants. They provide a space over which tenants can exert control and have a sense of ownership. This was helped by SouthPort’s dedication to providing clean and modern units to incoming tenants. These elements can improve tenants’ wellbeing and mental health, as control and ownership are often lost when they are homelessness. Some tenants indicated that, due to the small size of the units, they may be not a long term housing option. However, given that more than 50% of SouthPort’s tenants have lived there for more than three years, indicates that these units, although small, provide a space where tenants are able to regain stability and access support services before they decide to move into larger accommodation in private or public housing. Greater investment in self-contained units would assist individuals to exit homelessness.

Tenants’ ability to develop social supports within SouthPort housing proves to be an influential factor in tenants remaining in housing long term. Homelessness can exacerbate social isolation, and individuals often lose their social networks. Tenants described an environment where they were able to build social supports through contact with their neighbours, if they wanted to. The capacity to rebuild social supports and networks within housing provides incentives for tenants to remain in housing long term so they can access supports and feel a sense of belonging. Their capacity to build social networks can be explained for a number of reasons, which are important to note for future development of community housing. Firstly, the small size of the properties, with a minimum of five and a maximum of 40 dwellings means that tenants do not have to navigate a large number of neighbours. Smaller sized properties provide a more intimate setting and are less intimidating for people. Secondly, SouthPort’s involvement in recreational support services (social functions, events and the Community Housing Worker) is an active way to enable social support and networks to be established. Tenants who attend these events described their enjoyment of and benefit from attending them. Establishing and developing social supports provides incentive for tenants to remain long term in housing.

SouthPort’s commitment and ability to enact the organisations values allow tenants to feel valued and understood by their housing provider. The compassion, understanding and approachability that SouthPort continuously displays to staff and tenants, is the cornerstone to their service provision. Staff are often subjected to verbal abuse and harassment due to the array of complex needs and mental illness present within their tenant group. Their commitment to the organisation’s values allows staff to adequately cope with these behaviours, and this benefits the tenants while providing a support network for staff. Furthermore, this was seen in the sensitive manner in which SouthPort manages rent arrears. Although the organisation could face financial loss, SouthPort continually displays understanding and willingness to work with the tenant to overcome rent arrears issues. This issue also highlights the difficulties of living on government benefits and the financial pressures this can cause tenants, regardless of an accepted calculation of affordable housing. The capacity for SouthPort to work with tenants to collect rent arrears provides tenants security of tenure which could be difficult to find in private housing.

As a small, local housing provider, SouthPort enables staff to provide support to tenants, which helps the tenants remain at SouthPort long term. SouthPort’s staff to tenant ratio (1/70) allows staff to provide a reasonably bespoke and tailored service. Staff at SouthPort know the tenants by name and have developed professional support relationships with longer term tenants. Informal compassionate support is valuable and allows tenants who are sick or elderly to remain in independent housing by helping them with transport, to which they may not otherwise have access. Compassionate support was viewed positively by tenants, as it makes the tenants feel valued and supported.
Tenants also expressed concerns. SouthPort has a commitment to evicting tenants who display violent, antisocial or illegal behaviours. However, due to VCAT’s strict requirements for evidence, SouthPort is often unable to evict these tenants. While this is largely out of SouthPort’s control, it can hinder other tenants’ capacity to live privately and safely. Tenants also expressed concern regarding the responsive maintenance process. This impacted tenants’ perception of the organisation and hindered some tenants contact with SouthPort. Improvement of the responsive maintenance process would allow greater positive contact between tenants and staff.

In conclusion, SouthPort, as a local CHP, with commitment to housing people coming from homelessness, in housing which is of high density, takes on an extremely difficult challenge. There are inherent conflicts in two key objectives of the organisation- to house those most in need and to remain financially viable. The statistics show that SouthPort’s tenants tend to remain long term. This is achieved through the provision of self-contained units which provides a space for tenants to develop routine, gain stability and build social networks. SouthPort is an active housing provider, as evidenced by the compassionate support it provides tenants. SouthPort adheres to the organisation’s values, which enables tenants to feel valued and understood. Tenants benefited greatly from the housing provided, through improved mental health facilitated by the development of social support.
5.1 Recommendations

1. SouthPort should continue to advocate for self-contained units as these facilitated better outcomes than the rooming house arrangements for tenants who have experienced homelessness.

2. SouthPort should aim to maintain or increase the housing worker/tenancy ratio (1/70) as this allows for relationships to be maintained that are important in providing greater opportunities for ontological security and social support and avoiding tenants re-entering homelessness.

3. SouthPort should continue to provide support as it is viewed favourably by tenants, and provides them with an enhanced sense of belonging.

4. SouthPort should advocate for more support services to be funded in the area in order to increase long term support for tenants.

5. To reduce perceptions of favouritism, more transparent communication about why assistance might be given or withheld, could avoid the perception that staff’s decisions about whether or not to provide compassionate support are arbitrary or exclusionary.

6. SouthPort should advocate for the State Government and VCAT to develop a strategy to specifically handle illegal behaviours in community housing. Clearer processes in managing antisocial behaviours would help SouthPort to manage their tenancies more effectively.

7. SouthPort’s maintenance practice would benefit from a clearer, more structured and transparent process.

5.2 Further Work

- Further research could focus on SouthPort’s Youth Support Program, and attempt to understand how SouthPort helps young people combat the complexities of homelessness.

- This report was not able to capture whether SouthPort is a significant voice in advocating for affordable housing and support services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Future research could focus on this.

- A longitudinal study of SouthPort housing, over, for example, a 5-year period, would capture variations and changes within the program, providing a greater insight into tenancy trends and the effectiveness of the organisation.

- A comparative study allowing a comparison with similar programs in the area could provide insights into the tenancy management model adopted by SouthPort and whether it is effective compared to other programs.
References


Appendices
Appendix A
Interview Demographics

Of the tenants interviewed, 7 (33.3%) were female while 14 (66.6%) were male. The representation of genders in the interviews is indicative of the balance of gender within SouthPort properties at the time that fieldwork was conducted. Figure 11 provides a visual representation of the gender comparison between interviewee and all SouthPort tenants.

Figure 11: Gender Representation of Interviewees compared to all SouthPort tenants.
The age of interviewees in the study ranged from 33 to 73, with the average age of participants 53 years old. Figure 12 compares the age of interviewees and all tenants housed in SouthPort properties at the time of fieldwork. The age range of the study was not representative of all SouthPort tenants due to limited capacity in the recruitment phase.

Figure 12: Age Representation of Interviewees compared to all SouthPort tenants.
Figure 13 displays the tenancy length of interviewees and all SouthPort tenant at time of fieldwork. The length of tenancy varied greatly between participants and all SouthPort tenants during fieldwork. Therefore, it was not a representative sample of tenants’ length of stay, however the overall spread of time spent in SouthPort housing allowed for an interesting comparison and contrast.

![Figure 13: Length of Tenancy Difference between Interviewees compared to all SouthPort tenants.](image-url)
Figure 14 represents the percentage of tenants from the three different types of units provided at SouthPort. Comparing the overall properties provided by SouthPort in 2015 – 2016, to the property types that participants in the study lived in. This does not include the co-op properties.

Figure 14: Properties Representation of Interviewees compared to all SouthPort properties.
Appendix B
Tenancy Trends and Demographics

This section aims to provide an indication of tenancy trends and demographics of the organisation over a 12 year period. These figures were sourced from the SouthPort database, Chintaro and incorporate the total number of tenants living at SouthPort during a financial year. This does not represent number of units or number of tenants living at SouthPort on a given day, rather it encompasses all individuals who resided in a SouthPort property during a single financial year.

Figure 15 displays tenants who entered the program in a given year, those who entered and exited the program in a given year and tenants who were already living in SouthPort housing prior to the year beginning. Figure 16 represent tenants who left the program in a given financial year, those who entered and exited in the same year and tenants who were still residing in a SouthPort property at the end of the financial year. Figure 17 displays tenants who entered the program in a given year, tenants who left the program and those that came and left in the same year. The Linear line indicated tenancy trends for individuals who entered and exited the program in a given financial year. Figure 18 displays the gender breakdown of the organisation over a 12 year period, suggesting that consistently roughly 2/3 of tenants were males and 1/3 females throughout the 12 years. Figure 19 shows the breakdown of tenants by age category, showing majority of tenants are aged between 41 and 69 years of age, with a slow increase in over the year in tenants age 70+.

Figure 15: Tenant Entries over a 12 Year period.
Figure 16: Tenants Exiting the Housing Program over a 12 year period

Figure 17: Entry and Exits over a 12 year period
Figure 18: Gender Breakdown at SouthPort over a 12 year period.

Figure 19: Age Breakdown at SouthPort over a 12 year period.
Appendix C
Summary of Finances

Table 4: Summary of Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Received</td>
<td>$1,510,538.02</td>
<td>$1,579,161.75</td>
<td>$1,723,157.98</td>
<td>$1,767,479.53</td>
<td>$2,038,031.65</td>
<td>$2,393,490.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
<td>$3,031,537.68</td>
<td>$8,455,910.29</td>
<td>$736,570.77</td>
<td>$129,783.62</td>
<td>$61,142.01</td>
<td>$78,405.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td>$4,542,075.70</td>
<td>$10,035,072.04</td>
<td>$2,459,728.75</td>
<td>$1,897,263.15</td>
<td>$2,099,173.66</td>
<td>$2,471,895.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin Costs</td>
<td>$135,055.19</td>
<td>$92,166.37</td>
<td>$337,085.38</td>
<td>$227,412.49</td>
<td>$221,654.39</td>
<td>$357,734.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Costs</td>
<td>$447,882.55</td>
<td>$463,770.84</td>
<td>$537,377.39</td>
<td>$510,363.25</td>
<td>$577,307.31</td>
<td>$642,023.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Management Costs</td>
<td>$602,000.38</td>
<td>$482,608.51</td>
<td>$539,488.03</td>
<td>$467,818.73</td>
<td>$614,082.20</td>
<td>$512,757.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Fee Costs</td>
<td>$364,184.04</td>
<td>$313,296.34</td>
<td>$327,132.82</td>
<td>$364,845.15</td>
<td>$370,101.53</td>
<td>$403,948.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$1,561,139.16</td>
<td>$1,363,165.22</td>
<td>$1,741,083.62</td>
<td>$1,570,439.62</td>
<td>$1,783,145.43</td>
<td>$1,916,463.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Profit</strong></td>
<td>$2,980,936.54</td>
<td>$8,671,906.82</td>
<td>$718,645.13</td>
<td>$326,823.53</td>
<td>$316,028.23</td>
<td>$555,432.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of Rooms</strong></td>
<td>216</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost per Unit</strong></td>
<td>$7,227.50</td>
<td>$6,310.95</td>
<td>$6,801.11</td>
<td>$6,231.90</td>
<td>$6,678.45</td>
<td>$6,771.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Finance in Depth

### Table 5: SouthPort Finances In Depth, 2010 - 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accomodation Type</th>
<th>Rent Received</th>
<th>Other Income</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
<th>Admin Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010 - 2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouthPort Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Sit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPF Program</td>
<td>$1,510,538.02</td>
<td>$392,584.59</td>
<td>$1,903,122.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,510,538.02</td>
<td>$3,031,537.68</td>
<td>$4,542,075.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011 - 2012</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouthPort Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Sit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPF Program</td>
<td>$1,579,161.75</td>
<td>$94,863.38</td>
<td>$1,674,025.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,579,161.75</td>
<td>$8,455,910.29</td>
<td>$10,035,072.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012 - 2013</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouthPort Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom Flats</td>
<td>$257,380.13</td>
<td>$630,382.54</td>
<td>$887,762.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Sit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPF Program</td>
<td>$1,465,777.85</td>
<td>$106,188.23</td>
<td>$1,571,966.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,723,157.98</td>
<td>$736,570.77</td>
<td>$2,459,728.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013 - 2014</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouthPort Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom Flats</td>
<td>$387,847.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>$387,847.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Sit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPF Program</td>
<td>$1,379,632.23</td>
<td>$129,783.62</td>
<td>$1,509,415.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,767,479.53</td>
<td>$129,783.62</td>
<td>$1,897,263.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014 - 2015</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouthPort Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom Flats</td>
<td>$390,478.47</td>
<td></td>
<td>$390,478.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Sit</td>
<td>$118,563.39</td>
<td>$32,782.18</td>
<td>$151,345.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPF Program</td>
<td>$1,528,989.79</td>
<td>$28,359.83</td>
<td>$1,557,349.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,038,031.65</td>
<td>$61,142.01</td>
<td>$2,099,173.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2015 - 2016</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SouthPort Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom Flats</td>
<td>$404,766.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>$404,766.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Sit</td>
<td>$208,000.09</td>
<td>$40,000.00</td>
<td>$248,000.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Owned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPF Program</td>
<td>$1,780,723.84</td>
<td>$38,405.01</td>
<td>$1,819,128.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,393,490.43</td>
<td>$78,405.01</td>
<td>$2,471,895.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Costs</td>
<td>Property Management Costs</td>
<td>Service Fee Costs</td>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>Net Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$447,882.55</td>
<td>$602,000.38</td>
<td>$364,184.04</td>
<td>$1,530,680.78</td>
<td>372,441.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$463,770.84</td>
<td>$482,608.51</td>
<td>$313,296.34</td>
<td>$1,363,165.22</td>
<td>8,361,046.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,679.26</td>
<td>$48,784.19</td>
<td>$71,797.84</td>
<td>$264,266.56</td>
<td>469,496.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$496,698.13</td>
<td>$490,703.84</td>
<td>$255,334.98</td>
<td>$1,322,817.06</td>
<td>249,149.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$537,377.39</td>
<td>$539,488.03</td>
<td>$327,132.82</td>
<td>$1,741,083.62</td>
<td>718,645.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,786.12</td>
<td>$70,941.48</td>
<td>$75,994.20</td>
<td>$264,140.20</td>
<td>123,707.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$504,577.13</td>
<td>$396,877.25</td>
<td>$288,850.95</td>
<td>$1,306,299.42</td>
<td>203,116.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$510,363.25</td>
<td>$467,818.73</td>
<td>$364,845.15</td>
<td>$1,570,439.62</td>
<td>326,823.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,067.90</td>
<td>$73,210.37</td>
<td>$60,647.35</td>
<td>$259,252.41</td>
<td>131,226.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$569,239.41</td>
<td>$525,942.92</td>
<td>$280,104.66</td>
<td>$1,479,614.59</td>
<td>77,735.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$577,307.31</td>
<td>$614,082.20</td>
<td>$370,101.53</td>
<td>$1,783,145.43</td>
<td>316,028.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,994.85</td>
<td>$64,528.47</td>
<td>$59,606.38</td>
<td>$248,155.57</td>
<td>156,610.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,994.85</td>
<td>$36,304.54</td>
<td>$27,426.94</td>
<td>$153,946.92</td>
<td>94,053.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$628,034.04</td>
<td>$411,924.33</td>
<td>$316,914.68</td>
<td>$1,514,360.95</td>
<td>304,767.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$642,023.74</td>
<td>$512,757.34</td>
<td>$403,948.00</td>
<td>$1,916,463.44</td>
<td>555,432.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
SouthPort Tenancy Management Model

Waiting List Entry

The waiting list is opened when there are considerable vacancies at SouthPort and only a few people left remaining on the waiting list. In order to get clients placed onto the waiting list, case workers must call up on a weekly basis to see if there is room for their clients. Once the list is opened, prospective tenants are invited to attend an intake interview in order to gain a position on the waiting list.

The length of the waiting list, and the types of properties available, determines which prospective tenants get picked. During the field work period, the waiting list opened only once for females and three times for men.

This process is likely to change when the Victorian State Government implements a new state-wide waiting list for both public and community housing. This new waiting list will streamline the process for individuals, with the individuals being placed on one waiting list that will be used by housing organisations across the state.

Intake Interview

The intake interview has a dual purpose. It allows the housing worker to assess suitability and eligibility of potential tenants. Furthermore, it enables the worker to explain the accommodation provided by SouthPort. This explanation allows the potential tenant to gain an understanding of the type of accommodation provided and whether they believe they are suited to this type of accommodation.

The interview records basic personal information, such as: name, date of birth, language spoken, income source, support workers and health issues. It also attempts to capture an understanding of the individual’s housing history, such as, referring agency, current housing (how long the individual can stay there), previous housing history and whether the individual has ties to the local community. This information allows the housing worker to gain an understanding of the potential tenant and whether they are appropriate for the housing provided.

The interview is used to determine whether the individual is capable of independent living, whether they require support and case management, whether they can live in close proximity to neighbours (and, if a male, whether they are suited to a rooming house). This information is collected to allow the housing worker to make an informed decision regarding placement of the individual into an appropriate property. SouthPort provides a non-discriminatory service, ensuring that all individuals that would like accommodation are provided with housing.

Once interviews are conducted, individuals are put onto the computer system, Chinatro. They are asked to contact the office on a regular basis (once a week) to keep the communication lines open and express their continued interest in being housed.

Dwelling Offer

When a property becomes available, people on the waiting list are contacted to come in a look at the place. After an inspection, the potential tenant is given a few days to decide whether they want to take the property. Women are placed directly into a bedsit unit, while men are placed into the rooming house (unless there is a clear reason for placement into a bed-sit unit, such as age or health concerns).

If the individual refuses a property, they stay on the waiting list but they are moved to the bottom.
Entry into Dwelling

Upon accepting an offer for a dwelling, the tenant is asked to attend the office on the day they wish to move in.

They are asked to sign a Residency Agreement developed by SouthPort. This agreement outlines rent per week, an explanation is given to how rent is calculated, duties of the resident and house rules. The staff go through the agreement with each tenant to ensure that they understand the requirements. Individuals entering property 16 are asked to sign a standard Residential Tenancy Agreement, due to gazetting.

Tenants are provided with an Information Welcome Pack. Included in this pack is:

- Charter of Rights and Responsibilities
- SouthPort Privacy Statement
- How to report maintenance
- 24 hour crisis support and information lines
- How to make a complaint
- Information about SouthPort
- Local Free Meals
- Information resources to aid the individual to transition to the local area

Upon Entry into the program, tenants are provided with the following, to aid them in independent living:

- A single bed & mattress
- A fridge
- A table
- Kettle
- A sheet and quilt cover
- Mattress protector
- Quilt & Pillow
- Towel
- Toiletries (toothpaste, soap, toothbrush, face washer, shampoo)
- Dishwashing Liquid & Scourer
- Laundry Liquid
- Bucket
- Kitchen Cloth
- 2 * Small Plates
- 2 * Large Plates
- 2 * Bowls
- 2 * mugs
- 2 * Glasses
- Cutlery Set for 2
- Pot set (2 spots)
- Frypan
- Spatula and Big Spoon
- Multi-Purpose Spray

Once the formalities are completed, the housing worker will help the tenant move in to their new property, if required.
Living

Independent living is a core philosophy to SouthPort. The tenants are required to feed themselves, keep their properties clean and act appropriately in public areas, by not displaying acts of violence (physical, verbal or threatening). Once moved in to the property, contact with SouthPort is limited and dependent upon the tenant. Tenants have the option to ‘drop in’ to the office or call if they need to speak with staff regarding rent, maintenance, issues or community events. SouthPort will conduct a property inspection, in principle, twice a year in each dwelling. Furthermore, due to fire regulations, an external company conducts bi-yearly checks in each property to ensure fire safety standards are being met. A housing worker is present during this visit.

SouthPort have a presence at properties through their maintenance housing worker, who does various maintenance jobs throughout the properties. This provides a non-intrusive way for SouthPort to have a presence at the properties and to provide a point of contact for tenants. SouthPort will not enter an individual’s property without expressed permission by the tenant, unless there is a safety concern regarding the tenant.

Potential Upgrade to a Bedsit / One Bedroom Apartment

SouthPort employs an upgrade system within their properties. An upgrade offer is made when there is a vacancy in bed-sit or a one bedroom apartment. A tenant in a rooming house will upgrade to a bed-sit unit while a tenant in a bed-sit will upgrade to a one bedroom apartment. Factors including the tenants’ time spent in SouthPort housing, their rent history and behaviours will determine whether they are eligible for an upgrade. SouthPort have a list of all the tenants in their properties, sorted into their start date at SouthPort. SouthPort will work down the list to find the oldest tenant available for an upgrade, assess whether they are in rent arrears or have had behavioural issues. If they are not in rent arrears and have displayed no serious behavioural issues, they will be offered an upgraded place. If there is a problem with rent arrears or behavioural problems, the next person will be considered.

Occasionally, an internal transfer between bedsits within SouthPort properties is made. This is assessed on a case by case scenario, and depends on the circumstances and reasons for the desire to move.

VCAT

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal resolve disputes between tenants and landlords. SouthPort use VCAT to obtain compliance and possession orders. The main cases that SouthPort brings to VCAT involve rent arrears. Other cases relate to behavioural issues within the properties, such as violence, prostitution and drug dealing. As evidence is required to obtain compliance or possession orders, behavioural issues are often dismissed. During the fieldwork period, only three tenants were given an immediate Notice to Vacate, as they engaged in violence against other tenants or staff which had been reported to the police.

Tenants are also able to use VCAT for dispute resolution for concerns they have regarding SouthPort and their management of the property. One example of this would be maintenance problems, where a tenant believed that SouthPort had not acted according to legislation.
Rent Arrears

Rent arrears are defined as money that is overdue after missing one or more required payments of rent. SouthPort has developed an extensive and clear Rent Arrears Procedure to manage and respond to tenant rent arrears. If the tenant has more than 14 days in rent arrears, they are sent a letter to inform of the rent arrears and to instruct them to contact the office within 7 days. If there is no response, they are sent a second letter, with a Notice to Vacate. SouthPort applies for a VCAT possession order, where the tenant and housing worker attend a hearing. The hearing can have four outcomes: adjourned, thrown out, compliance order given, or possession order. Adjourned is achieved if the tenant has shown progress in repayment of arrears. Thrown out refers to the application being denied as there is insufficient evidence. A Compliance Order is an order which requires the tenant to pay the rent; if it is breached, the VCAT process is undergone again. A Possession Order allows SouthPort to purchase a Warrant of Possession, where they can evict the tenant. The tenant has the right to a Review Hearing at VCAT, where the case will be assessed again; however they are required to attend the hearing. If the tenant does not contact the housing worker to rectify the rent arrears after they receive the Warrant of Possession, SouthPort has the authority to evict the tenant. If at any point the tenant contacts the housing worker to establish a payment plan, the process to go through VCAT is stopped.

Arrears Payment Arrangement Schedule establishes the necessary payment to reduce a specific amount in arrears.

Exit Housing

The tenant or SouthPort decides when tenancy is completed. The tenant can move out at any point; when choosing to do so they must return the key to the office and they will be vacated. They are given any money they are owed, and Centrepay is cancelled. Centrepay is a service provided by Centrelink in which they automatically deduct the rent from the individuals pay and transfer for it the housing organisation.

SouthPort will only provide an immediate notice to vacate when a tenant has engaged in violence against another tenant or staff member. Other evictions by SouthPort are based on rent arrears or consistent disturbance of the peace. All evictions must be taken through VCAT, with the statutory body holding the final say regarding the eviction. During field work, 3 tenants were evicted due to extreme levels of violence. One was evicted due to rent arrears.

Maintenance Conducted

SouthPort completes all maintenance repairs when a tenant vacates the property. This can involve repairing any broken fixtures, ensuring all appliances work, painting the walls, replacing the carpet and general cleaning. Maintenance repairs are conducted to ensure that the following tenant moves into a clean and respectable dwelling.
Appendix E
Affordability Calculations

Section 1 in the table provides the calculation that SouthPort use to determine rent. This calculation does not include the service fee as part of housing costs, as guided by the Housing Registrar of Victoria. Therefore, under this model, it is deemed affordable.

Section 2 in table uses the ABS definition of affordable housing, which incorporates service fee as part of housing costs. Therefore, it provides a calculation to determine whether the rent charges minus CRA is under 30%. Utilising this model, tenants within the housing program would be deemed in housing stress. These two definitions and calculations display starkly different images. Although this research has adopted the Housing Registrar of Victoria’s definition, the contrast provides for an interesting frame of reference to understand the specific pressures low income people face.

Table 6:
Rent Calculations per property for tenants receiving Disability Support Pension, Age Pension and Carers Pension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Pension Income</th>
<th>25% Pension Fee</th>
<th>Service Fee Amount Charged</th>
<th>Rent Assistance</th>
<th>Pension Rent Per Week</th>
<th>Market Rent</th>
<th>Rent less CRA</th>
<th>30% of Income</th>
<th>Amount paid over 30%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedsit</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 28.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 192.70</td>
<td>260.00</td>
<td>127.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 8.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 30.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 194.70</td>
<td>300.00</td>
<td>129.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 10.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bedsit</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 27.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 191.70</td>
<td>324.00</td>
<td>126.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 7.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 30.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 194.70</td>
<td>355.00</td>
<td>129.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 10.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 15.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 179.70</td>
<td>198.00</td>
<td>114.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 4.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 23.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 187.70</td>
<td>198.00</td>
<td>122.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 3.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 26.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 190.70</td>
<td>188.00</td>
<td>125.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 6.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 31.85</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 196.40</td>
<td>188.00</td>
<td>131.20</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 11.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 26.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 190.70</td>
<td>278.00</td>
<td>125.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 6.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 30.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 194.70</td>
<td>278.00</td>
<td>129.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 10.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 28.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 192.70</td>
<td>260.00</td>
<td>127.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 8.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 30.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 194.70</td>
<td>260.00</td>
<td>129.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 10.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 26.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 190.70</td>
<td>194.00</td>
<td>125.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 6.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 30.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 194.70</td>
<td>206.00</td>
<td>126.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 7.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 28.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 192.70</td>
<td>178.00</td>
<td>125.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 6.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 30.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 194.70</td>
<td>240.00</td>
<td>127.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 8.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 26.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 190.70</td>
<td>148.00</td>
<td>125.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 6.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 36.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 200.70</td>
<td>265.00</td>
<td>135.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 16.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Room</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 36.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 200.70</td>
<td>312.50</td>
<td>135.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 16.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>397.40</td>
<td>99.35 + 21.15</td>
<td>+ 65.20</td>
<td>= 185.70</td>
<td>312.50</td>
<td>120.50</td>
<td>119.22</td>
<td>= 1.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7: Rent Calculations per property for tenants receiving Newstart Allowance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 1</th>
<th>Section 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Start Income</td>
<td>25% New Start Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Rooms</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Bedsits</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Flats</td>
<td>258.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>