The paradox of homelessness in rural and regional Queensland mining communities

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Abstract

Homelessness in Australian rural and regional mining communities is both a product of the decade long mining boom from 2002 to 2012 and a result of the mining downturn. The mining cycle is a structural driver of homelessness in these communities, compounding the social and economic dynamics that influence homelessness across any community or region. Despite some extraordinary mining cycle factors that placed more people in those communities at risk of homelessness, homelessness has not been recognised as a major social issue in rural and regional mining communities. This raises the question of how does the nation prepare for the inevitable future periods of mining boom and downturns?

This qualitative research project involved in-depth interviews and focus groups with 43 participants, including 12 participants from the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart who were either experiencing homelessness at the time of the study or had experienced homelessness within the last eight years. The research also included participants from specialist homelessness services, generic community and government services and other community representatives from the three communities of interest to this study. Mining companies declined the offer to participate in this study.

The key findings from this research include identifying contextual factors that influenced homelessness in these mining communities in the mining boom and downturn periods. Eight specific contextual themes were identified regarding the impact of the phases of the mining cycle on homelessness in these three mining communities. The research further identifies three pathways to homelessness in mining communities throughout the mining cycle. The three pathways are: (1) relationship and family breakdown and domestic and family violence, (2) unemployment and housing affordability, and (3) high vulnerability and lack of access to housing and support services. These pathways build on previous literature about pathways to homelessness and in some instances indicate how people can end their experiences of homelessness in mining communities. The research explores how mining communities could prevent and reduce homelessness irrespective of the stage of the mining cycle through mandating the ‘Social License to Operate’, longer term social planning and policy processes, and improving access to appropriate and affordable housing. Finally, the research concludes with a list of planning, policy and practice recommendations aimed at preventing and
reducing homelessness in rural and regional mining communities. These recommendations emphasis prevention and early approaches to homelessness throughout the mining cycle and more crisis accommodation options during the mining boom.
Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

_____________________________

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Acknowledgments

This thesis represents a major personal milestone and achievement in my life. The origins of this thesis occurred on New Year’s Eve 2011 when I made a personal list of goals of which undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in social work was one. This marked a return to academic study after twelve years. The last six years of this PhD journey have certainly been full of challenges and I am very proud of work that I have done to complete this thesis.

I’m very grateful for the comradery, support and inspiration I have received from a variety of colleagues, family and friends during the course of this research. Without this support, and despite my own determination to see things through, there is no way I could have completed this study. The study marks a personal journey involving my own pathway into social work, living and working in rural and regional communities and, over the last eight years working in the field of housing and homelessness. A driving motivation for me undertaking this research was to give back to these communities that have shaped so much of my perspective on Australian life and society. I hope this thesis tells the story of the participants and their communities in a way that does justice to their shared history.

There are many people I would like to acknowledge. I begin by acknowledging my supervisors Professor Donna McAuliffe and Dr Donna McDonald. Thank you for keeping me focused and on track, even during some challenging times. I feel I have learnt so much from both of you. I always came away from our supervision meetings feeling uplifted, confident in myself and in the importance of the research. I’m very grateful for your extensive time, wisdom and support in helping me to achieve this goal.

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Acronyms

AASW  Australian Association of Social Workers
ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI  Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW  Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
BMA  Broken Hill Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance
CFMEU  Construction, Forestry, Metal and Electrical Union
COAG  Council of Australian Governments
CSR  Corporate Social Responsibility
DCCSDS  Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (Queensland)
DHPW  Department of Housing and Public Works (Queensland)
DIDO  Drive in Drive Out workforce
DNRM  Department of Natural Resources and Mines (Queensland)
DSS  Department of Social Services (Commonwealth Government)
FaHCSIA  Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Commonwealth Government)
FIFO  Fly In Fly Out workforce
LGA  Local Government Area
MCA  Minerals Council of Australia
NAHA  National Affordable Housing Agreement
NGO  Non-government organisation
NPAH  National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
QCOSS  Queensland Council of Social Services
RRA  Rapid Rural Appraisal
SAAP  Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SHS  Specialist homelessness service
SHSC  Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SLA  Statistical Local Area
SLO  Social License to Operate
S2H  Street to Home initiative
Glossary

**Affordable housing:** Housing that is affordable for low to moderate income households, when housing costs are low enough to enable the household to meet other basic, long-term living costs. Housing affordability is associated with housing costs that are 30% or less of a household income, for people in the bottom 40% of household incomes.

**At risk of homelessness:** People with individual characteristics, or who have residency in a particular geographic area, which places them at significant risk of homelessness.

**Boom Bust Mining Cycle** - A boom and bust cycle is a process of economic expansion and contraction that occurs during the mining cycle. During the mining boom the economy grows, jobs are plentiful, and the market brings high returns to investors. In the subsequent mining downturn or bust the economy shrinks, people lose their jobs and investors lose money. Boom-bust mining cycles last for varying lengths of time; they also vary in severity.

**Corporate Social Responsibility:** The responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decision and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour that contributes to sustainable development, including health and welfare of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour and is integrated throughout the organisation, its practice and relationships.

**Couch-surfing:** A form of homelessness where the person does not have accommodation of their own and is sleeping on the couch of a friend or relative.

**Crisis accommodation:** Short term accommodation for people who are experiencing homelessness including refuges, shelters or motels. This is also referred to interchangeably as Temporary Supported Accommodation.

**Early intervention:** Strategies to reduce risk factors through timely identification and tailored advice and support for those at risk of homelessness.
**Homelessness:** People who do not have access to safe and secure accommodation. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness as a person or family who:

- are living in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- have no tenure or have initial tenure that is too short and not extendable; and/or
- do not have control of and access to space for social relation.

Meeting one or more of these criteria does not automatically mean people will be considered homeless. The ABS considers the level of choice and financial means that are available to the person or family.

**Prevention:** Programs and opportunities that enable and encourage individuals to address possible risk factors before they are vulnerable to homelessness.

**Sleeping rough:** This is a form of homelessness whereby an individual or family are sleeping on the street, in a car or some form of improvised dwelling.

**Social Housing:** Rental housing that is provided and/or managed by government or non-government organisations. This housing is mainly targeted at people on low incomes who are in greatest need. This includes those who are homeless, living in inappropriate housing, or who have very high rental costs. In social housing, the majority of tenants pay less than market rent (usually 25% of their weekly income). In community housing, rental payments range from 25% to more than 30% of their income.

**Social License to Operate:** An informal social contract between mining companies and communities that the mining industry will operate in a manner that benefits the local community.

**Specialist homelessness services:** Non-government organisations in receipt of funding from government to deliver homelessness services and support to people at risk of homelessness, or who are experiencing homelessness.

**Sustainable housing:** Housing that is affordable, offers secure tenure, and is appropriate for the client given their needs and history, such as support to sustain the housing.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The contribution of the coal mining industry has long dominated Australia’s national economic policy discourse. Australia’s overall wellbeing as a nation has very much been linked to the success of the mining and resource sector and was identified as a major factor that helped Australia to weather the effects of the Global Financial Crisis that impacted many countries from 2007/08. The mining and resource sector have been the focus of national debates over the last two decades because of the unprecedented economic impact of the mining boom from 2002 to 2012. Australia holds a vast natural supply of valuable mineral commodities in resource rich mining regions, particularly in Queensland and Western Australia, and exploitation of these natural riches generated a historic mining boom. An abundant supply of coal and iron ore, extracted to feed the world’s insatiable appetite for power producing coal, saw an extended mining boom from 2002 to the end of 2012.

At the epicentre of mining and economic activity was the Bowen Basin Region in Queensland, the nation’s leading coal producing and exporting region. The region is highlighted in Appendix A. The region hosts many mining communities, as well as a mixture of older mining sites and new mining projects. Mining companies, including large corporate global companies such as Anglo American (AA), BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) and Rio Tinto (RT), have significant footholds in the region. Numerous other large, medium size and smaller mining companies operate mining sites in this region. This thesis argues that the dominant discourse surrounding the mining boom was exclusively one of economic benefit and prosperity for the mining regions and that very little awareness existed as to the social issues generated by that mining boom at a national level. National awareness of the social and economic disadvantage associated with the mining boom, especially for rural and regional areas, came very late during the mining boom.

Since 2012 the mining and resources sector has been in downturn, both in Australia and across the world, with predictions varied about whether the sector will ever again experience the dizzying heights of the previous commodity boom. While few would argue the benefits associated with a prosperous Australian mining and resource sector, debate has increased
about the negative impacts of mining booms, and more broadly the mining industry, on the social, economic and environmental fabric of Australian society.

An example of the potency of this debate has been the national attention given to the new Adani Carmichael coal mine in the Galilee Basin neighbouring the Bowen Basin. During the course of this research, State and Commonwealth Governments in Australia have vigorously debated the merits of granting new large-scale mining leases that will generate extensive mining activity in regions of Australia many years into the future. The Adani project was given policy and legal approval to continue in late 2016, and as reported by the media, included a commitment by the Australian Government to provide $1 billion in public funding to assist the Indian based company, Adani (Longbottom, 2016). This investment is to build a new rail line and other infrastructure from the new mine site to a new port near Bowen on the North Queensland Coast. Large coal-ferrying container ships would then regularly traverse the Great Barrier Reef to ship Australian coal to international destinations (Robertson, 2016). At the time of finalising this research, debate continues about the ongoing finance requirements of the Adani project and the roles of government, the mining industry and private sector in supporting this project. This research argues that the discussion surrounding the future of the Adani project is timely given the learnings that need to be understood from the recent decade long mining boom.

At first glance, pairing homelessness and the mining industry seems perplexing on a number of levels. Mining is an industry undertaken in rural and regional communities; whereas homelessness, I would contend, despite the best efforts of a number of Australian scholars and researchers, is widely perceived as a largely urban and metropolitan issue. There has been some solid research into some specific areas such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) homelessness in rural and remote regions of Australia (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008; Memmott, Birdsall-Jones, & Greenop, 2012; Memmott, Long, Chamber, & Spring, 2003), rural youth homelessness (Beer et. al., 2005) and integrated service delivery in regional communities (Neale, Buultjens, & Evans, 2012). However, there has not been a great deal of focus on homelessness in rural and regional areas of Australia affected by local industries such as mining. This is surprising given the research on rates of homelessness throughout Australia identifying regional, rural and remote communities as having amongst the highest rates of homelessness in Australia (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; Wood, Battenham, Cigdem, & Mallet, 2016). The dominant social and economic discourse that mining brings
untold wealth and prosperity to Australia also renders the pairing of homelessness and the mining industry counter-intuitive. Few would conceive it possible that mining could actually produce adverse social conditions when the rhetoric from politicians and mining industry representatives is focused on economic growth. This apparent paradox is at the heart of this research which focuses sharply on the experiences of community members of mining communities who have experienced homelessness in their community, and how their experience of homelessness has been influenced by the mining industry cycle.

1.2 Significance of the research problem

This research emerged from my passion for rural and regional communities in Queensland and in particular, these regions in Queensland which support the mining industry. The research focussed on the Bowen Basin region within which sit the communities central to this research – Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. The Bowen Basin is highlighted in Appendix A within the map of Australia, and Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart, within the Mackay and Isaac regions are represented in Figure 1.1. These communities directly experienced the impacts of the decade-long mining boom from 2002 and are now feeling the effects of a severe mining downturn. The mining industry has had differential impacts for Australians on a national scale. Many argue that the benefits of the mining industry generated “two speed economy” were to the benefit and advantage of people directly employed by the mining sector, many of whom reside in Australia’s larger cities, as opposed to such benefits being realised by residents of mining communities (Cleary, 2011; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). This issue will be critically explored in this thesis from the perspective of resident community members of mining communities and their views on how the mining cycle has impacted their community. The Bowen Basin region is highlighted in Appendix A within the map of Australia. Homelessness in mining communities represents a powerful indication and narrative about the extent to which the mining industry and other social and economic factors create conditions that have led to members of mining communities experiencing social disadvantage and social exclusion.

The primary research question underpinning this study was, “In what ways has the mining industry influenced homelessness in regional and rural Queensland mining communities?” The subsidiary research questions were:
• Who are the community members in regional and rural mining communities who are specifically impacted by homelessness?

• What are the main pathways to homelessness in regional and rural mining communities?

• What are the impacts of homelessness on the broader community in these regional and rural boomtowns and cities?

• How do the dynamics of homelessness in regional mining communities challenge existing knowledge of homelessness?

• What are the respective roles of government and industry in relation to addressing homelessness in regional and rural mining communities in the immediate and long-term future?

These questions were designed to guide the development of an understanding of not only the causes of homelessness in regional and rural mining communities, but also understand the human experience of homelessness in these communities. The research was also interested in any evidence of measures or strategies which helped to prevent, reduce and end homelessness for people in regional and rural mining communities.
The profile of the Mackay and Isaac Local Government Areas within the Bowen Basin region will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three of this thesis. This region was at the centre of national and international focus during the decade long mining boom and for many, represented the opportunity and wealth available to people wishing to work in the mining industry. The region was promoted as having an almost idyllic lifestyle with access to beaches, the Great Barrier Reef and all of the usual services and benefits only available in larger cities. The proximity to the beaches and lifestyle was a hook which attracted many people to Mackay. Many Australians were enticed by these economic and lifestyle benefits.
opportunities thus portrayed, and mining regions throughout Australia saw rapid population growth in the first decade of the millennium.

Australians were also attracted to the changes in working arrangements that enabled mining workers to continue living in desirable coastal communities and large capital cities while commuting to mining communities for block shift rosters in what is referred to as Fly in Fly Out (FIFO) or Drive In Drive Out (DIDO) arrangements (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). The growth of FIFO and DIDO workers, contracted to mining companies and often accommodated in work camps or villages owned by mining companies, has been a major sociological trend in its own right that social researchers have investigated in recent years. This industrial trend of FIFO and DIDO, referred to as the temporary workforce of the mining industry, will be critically explored in this thesis in the context of how it has contributed to changes in mining communities and the resulting impact on homelessness in these communities.

This thesis argues that the paradox of the mining boom is that it generated a distinctive rise in inequality within mining communities, throughout mining regions and across the nation. The juxtaposition of the immense wealth and prosperity generated through the long mining boom with the stories of homelessness in mining communities, challenges the prevailing narrative about the value of the mining industry to Australian society. At the height of the mining boom, homelessness was given a high profile by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, along with the Housing and Homelessness Minister the Honourable Tanya Plibersek, who wrote in the forward to the “White Paper The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness” that “reducing homelessness is everyone’s responsibility. Australia’s efforts to reduce homelessness have to be urgent, as well as sustained” (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008, p. iii). Homelessness has been relegated as a policy priority for successive Australian Governments since the Rudd and Gillard Governments (2007 to 2013), with homelessness government policy discourses being increasingly influenced by a neo-liberalist agenda. Moreover, this research found that there is growing concern across the nation that some of the hard-fought policy gains made in the areas of affordable housing and homelessness have been diminished by the neo-liberalist economic and political agenda and that this will have ramifications for vulnerable Australians.
This research is positioned within a strong values and ideological foundation about the future of rural and regional mining communities in Australia. On the one hand, there is the perspective of many resident and long-term community members who advocate that government and the mining industry should promote a future for these communities as inclusive, residential communities suitable for individuals and families to establish a life and to call home (Browne, Stehlik, & Buckley, 2011; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). The competing view of the future of mining communities, generally adopted by the large mining companies, sees the community as entirely beholden to the mining industry and that if not for the success of the mining industry, there is no future for the community (Kemp & Bond, 2009) so that the future of the community is entirely based on the economic success of mining to the local area. Based on this view, given mining’s repeated cycle of boom and downturn, it follows that there can be no long-term certainty about the future of these communities. Periods of inevitable mining downturn can have devastating social and economic impacts on these communities (Browne et al., 2011; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013).

This tension about perspective on rural and regional mining communities will be a recurring theme throughout this thesis and given critical treatment of how such competing ideological perspectives either exacerbate or help to end homelessness in mining communities. There is no dispute in this thesis that the mining industry brings economic benefits to rural and regional mining communities. However, these economic benefits are very much linked to the boom phase of the mining cycle and have differential impacts for community members. Housing crises and homelessness issues are examples of the by-products of the mining boom and downturn cycle which place immense stress and pressure on rural and regional mining communities. The way in which the mining boom serves to increase the inequality across rural and regional mining communities highlights the fact that the economic benefits that are generated by the mining industry are not available to all community members.

This research argues that not only is homelessness a product of the mining cycle on rural and regional mining communities, but that the impact of homelessness on these communities was largely kept hidden from the Australian public during the decade long mining boom period. ‘Let’s pretend it doesn’t exist’ was a response provided by a participant of this research when asked for their view about the mining industry, government and sections of local mining community awareness of homelessness in the mining community and how homelessness had
been influenced by the mining cycle. This research provides a critical lens to the cyclical fortunes associated with the mining industry in Australia and will explore the relationship between the mining cycle and homelessness in mining communities.

1.3 International literature on the influence of boom/bust economies on housing markets and homelessness

The economic and social policy challenges associated with the mining industry generated boom/bust economic cycle is not contained to Australia. The influence of boom/bust economic cycles on housing markets has been a theme explored in a range of academic and international literature. United Kingdom, South America, Norway, Finland, Canada, South Africa and many countries through the Asian region have also been impacted by these cycles. A selection of this literature will now be reviewed so that this research focusing on the mining communities within the Bowen Basin region of Australia is located within an international context of mining industry generated cycles of boom and bust affecting local housing markets.

Aberdeen in Northern Scotland is a regional city that hosts the workforce and infrastructure to support the oil mining industry in the North Sea. This industry has experienced several booms and busts since the 1970s which have had some dramatic impacts on the local housing market in Aberdeen. Similar to mining communities throughout Australia, Aberdeen is also referred to as a ‘boom town’. Citizens of Aberdeen have experienced the highs and lows associated with the costs of housing and economic activity over the last fifty years. There have been significant capital gains for some private home owners during periods of boom, and capital losses during the periods of downturn. Lloyd and Newlands (1990, p.38) found that the oil mining industry in the 1970s and much of the 1980s had served to increase income inequality in Aberdeen and surrounding areas, noting “The labour market has not spread the gains from the oil developments at all widely. Aberdeen maybe a boom town for some but many have received little or no benefit”. This sentiment shows the widening in social and economic inequalities brought about by the oil mining boom in the North Seas. In more recent economic studies of the interaction of housing and labour markets in Aberdeen, Owusu-Ansah (2014) argues that it is important to limit housing market analysis of boom towns such as Aberdeen to local factors such as changes in house prices, time on the market,
planning regulations and lagged stock, as opposed to national housing and labour market trends. This finding is relevant as it confirms housing dynamics in boom towns often defy and sometimes conflict with national trends and averages.

In further research on the housing dynamics in Aberdeen, Liu and Roberts (2013) assert the influence of counter-urbanisation through rural and regional areas in the United Kingdom including Aberdeen, has meant there is a greater need to ensure adequate planning and coordination of land use and housing supply to mitigate the effects of counter-urbanisation and the influence of boom periods on housing prices in order to prevent local people being priced out of the local housing market. Since 2013 Aberdeen has experienced a significant downturn in the oil mining industry cycle which has served to focus media and politicians on the need for more effective and enduring housing policy responses.

Mining continues to be a major industry within the economy of the USA. The boom/bust cycle of the mining industry has created issues for housing markets in mining regions of the USA. Jacobsen and Parker (2016) undertook a detailed analysis of the economic downturn of the mining industry in the 1970s and 1980s on American resource towns and found that:

…the mining boom induced positive short term effects through relative increases in employment, wages, dividends, and non-farm proprietor income and negative short term effects through reduced non-farm proprietor income. In the longer run, relative per capita incomes in boom counties became depressed after the bust and showed no clear signs of recovery … the boom was a curse for western USA communities located near oil and gas reserves. After the bust, per capita incomes were lower in boom counties than we would predict if the boom had not occurred at all (p.1124).

This American research demonstrates the controversy surrounding mining booms and specifically the question about who benefits from mining booms. The loss of employment, debts and reduction in incomes post mining boom, were found to be at such a significant level that it questions the overall economic benefits associated from their oil generated mining boom for western USA communities supporting the oil and gas industry.
Canada is a country of particular interest to this study because of a number of common socio-economic and demographic factors including its similar population to Australia, rural, regional and urban geography, the resource driven economy and systems of government reflecting the tenets of western liberal democracy. Similar to Australia, the mining of oil and gas has been crucial to the Canadian economy. This industry generated a prolonged resources boom for Canada which concluded in 2013. The aftermath of the boom and effects of the down turn were severe for Canadian resource communities and regions. Debate has ensued in Canada about whether expanding approvals for oil pipelines through the country should continue in readiness for a future boom. However, such a decision needs to be weighed against the volatility of the oil commodity price and detrimental effects that oil mining has on the environment (Dobson, Lemphers & Guilbeault, 2013). The Canadian resources industry has had considerable influences on local housing markets. The influence of the oil mining cycle has been a factor to be understood in resolving and ending homelessness in Canadian resource communities. Gaetz (2010) contends that the lessons from Canada’s housing and homelessness policy experience is that such policy needs to focus on transitioning people from homelessness to being housed and that this is achieved through increasing the supply of affordable housing. The similarities between the Canadian and Australian economies, government and policy approaches to housing and homelessness issues make for an interesting point of reference.

South Africa is also heavily reliant upon its mineral industry which has experienced the boom and bust cycle. Gold is a particular mineral of interest. Ntema, Marais, Cloete and Lenka (2017) examined the social impacts and social disruption of mine closure in the Free State goldfields of South Africa. Their research identified significant social disruption in local mining communities when mines closed which was compounded as a result of government policy encouraging private ownership of houses in mining communities. They found that the policy of encouraging people to purchase homes in mining communities tended to lock households into locations which greatly inhibited their mobility during periods of mining downturn. This research is relevant to analyse in light of the challenges facing governments in relation to housing policy in regional and rural mining communities.

Finland, Norway and Sweden have long been heralded for their macro-economic policy settings and high levels of taxation that combine to provide a comprehensive social welfare system. These countries have also charted a distinct and highly successful policy approach
designed to manage the economic issues associated with oil mining generated booms and busts (Cleary, 2011). The Norwegian Government implemented the Pension Fund Global in 1990. This fund intended to maximise the profits derived from the oil mining industry in the North Sea on the knowledge that one day the mining boom would end, but if managed carefully the returns on the fund would last for several generations. Oliver Milman (2014) points out that the fund has been so successful that it, “... is set to topple $1 trillion within this decade … The fund’s average annual return has been 5.7% and in 2013 the fund swelled by 15%. Norway’s oil piggy bank is worth more than the GDP of Switzerland, more even the US’ gargantuan annual military budget” np. Sweden and Finland have also adopted similar economic approaches to managing the boom/bust cycle of mining. The history of the Swedish economy is also one dominated by mining industry related boom/ busts. Sweden is the largest mining nation in the European Union and while the mining industry is fundamental to the Swedish economy, there is growing critique of the long-term benefits of land mining and offshore mining in Sweden on the grounds of environmental, social and ethno-cultural considerations (Haikola & Anshelm, 2016). Debate continues to grow about the role of the state in future mining activities in Sweden and Finland, and for this to be dealt with more thoroughly and explicitly in government policy (Johnson & Ericsson, 2015). Finland, Norway and Sweden have benefited from policy settings geared towards management of their economies to mitigate the effects of booms and busts by way of investing in future funds that will provide benefits to all citizens long after the booms have ended.

Australia and more specifically the Bowen Basin region, are clearly not unique when it comes to the impact of boom/bust economic issues on housing markets generated by the mining industry. However, the ways in which different countries have responded to the social and economic challenges has differed based on their geography, government and approach to housing policy. Although the focus of this research is on homelessness in the Central Queensland mining communities of Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay, with particular sensitivity to the contextual issues of this region, the influence of international trends associated with boom/bust economies associated with various forms of the mining industry will be considered.
1.4 Positioning the researcher perspective

My passion for understanding homelessness in rural and regional mining communities, stems from my own personal and professional background as person who has lived in rural and regional Queensland communities and practiced social work within these communities. I graduated from social work at the end of 1996 and commenced as a social work practitioner in the Division of Intellectual Disability Services, Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in Rockhampton at the beginning of 1997, where I continued until 2001. Importantly, this period of practice provided me with an opportunity to be part of a regular rural outreach visiting service to families in western Queensland locations such as Biloela, Blackwater, Emerald, Clermont, and the mining communities of Tieri, Dysart and Middlemount. This was my first opportunity to engage with mining communities and I developed an appreciation for the challenges that members of these communities face, particularly in relation to access to human services.

I recall a meeting of community services and welfare agencies and local politicians in Dysart in early 1999 which raised a key agenda item that was the high vacancy level of social housing stock in Dysart. At that time these properties could not be filled with local people from the housing register because there was no local need. As a result, the Department of Housing and Public Works was referring people from places such as Brisbane to take up the opportunity of the vacant social housing in Dysart.

Community workers in Dysart expressed strong concerns about this practice, as it meant that people came to a community such as Dysart without any knowledge of local community and its characteristics. Life in a metropolitan area with relative ease of access to a range of services is very different within a rural mining community and requires considerable adjustment. Further, there was very little in the way of employment opportunities and informal and family supports. This practice of sending people from Brisbane and other places to vacant social housing stock in mining communities was placing untold stress and pressure on the very few welfare agencies in these communities.

After spending two years working in front-line child protection in the United Kingdom, I returned to Rockhampton to work briefly at the end of 2003, and noted much media and publicity were being given to the mining industry and the huge profits being realised by
mining companies. At a local level, a focus of discussion was about the need for a larger workforce to supply the labour to mining projects within the Bowen Basin region, inland of Rockhampton. There also appeared to be a noticeable increase in money coming into the region and being spent in the communities within the region.

Obtaining lucrative employment in the mining industry was viewed as the ultimate aspiration. For young people it meant accumulating wealth to afford the trappings of an affluent lifestyle, such as expensive motor vehicles, regular trips overseas, and earlier access to home ownership. For middle-aged and older people, it meant an opportunity to accumulate wealth by way of additional investment properties, to set themselves up for early and well financed retirement, and to enjoy other hallmarks of an affluent lifestyle. The economic benefits to individuals dominated the discussion about how the mining industry had ushered in an age of prosperity for this area of Queensland.

I relocated to a position in Brisbane at the beginning of 2004 and immediately became aware that the mining boom was an important issue for the state’s capital. The success of the mining boom was a dominant feature of media and political commentary from this time onwards. Politicians could not position themselves more quickly to be seen to be promoting the mining industry and marketing the growth it provided to the Australian economy. At a personal level, I recall often meeting people in Brisbane who worked in central Queensland mining communities on three-week block shift rosters, returning to Brisbane for their week off. They were often paying rent on properties in the city they used one week a month.

The narrative that mining could offer many Australians a passport to a better life, dominated Australian society for much of the mining boom period. A perverse reality emerged towards the end of the mining boom, that while mining offered some citizens the opportunity to rapidly acquire considerable individual wealth, for many community members of mining communities, any form of housing simply became unaffordable. The first evidence of this ‘flipside’ of the mining boom emerged in reports of increased rates of family breakdown, alcohol and drug use, some forms of criminality in national media and academic research (Carrington, Hogg & McIntosh, 2011; Nancarrow, Lockie, & Sharma, 2009).

The emerging evidence of the social issues affecting mining communities was used by some sectors to dissuade people from viewing the communities as a suitable residential option for
individuals and families. This is a perspective I wish to critique in this research. While living in a rural or regional community is not a lifestyle for all, it is a lifestyle that many Queenslanders value. Rural and regional mining communities, like much of Queensland, are communities where people feel connected and appreciate the lifestyle the location offers. This thesis argues that there have been numerous factors associated with the mining industry that have eroded the value and perception of rural and regional mining communities as residential communities, and that this is an important contextual factor in understanding homelessness in these communities.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis has been structured and designed to reflect the multi-layered nature of this research project which encompasses sociological discourses about homelessness, the mining industry and rural and regional communities. Following this introduction (Chapter One), Chapter Two is the first literature review chapter, covering literature on international and national homelessness research. This chapter takes a particular focus on the history of homelessness policy and research in Australia, making comparisons with international homelessness research trends. The chapter concludes with an in-depth discussion about pathways to and from homelessness and rural homelessness. Chapter Two has been organised to highlight what is already known about homelessness in these communities, as well as identifying where the gaps in literature and evidence appear to exist.

Chapter Three is the second literature review chapter which explores social and economic research about the mining industry, including a profile of the communities and region of interest to this study. The chapter highlights specific social research and demographic information pertaining to the mining communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart.

Chapter Four covers the research methodology, outlining the research questions underpinning a qualitative inquiry. Chapter Four also covers in detail ethical considerations, data collection methods and data analysis processes and techniques employed. The research stakeholder categories and participants are introduced at the conclusion of this Chapter.
I have elected to have three findings chapters due to the multi-layered nature of the research and the need to integrate evidence across primary and secondary data sources.

Chapter Five considers the contextual factors influencing homelessness in mining communities and explores the structural causes of homelessness in mining communities. It identifies and discusses the impact of the mining industry and the mining cycle on these communities and discusses the impact of these changes on homelessness in these communities.

Chapter Six focuses on pathways to and out of homelessness in mining communities and centres on the personal narratives of the twelve participants of this study who have experienced homelessness in mining communities. This Chapter organises these narratives into three overarching pathways: family breakdown and domestic and family violence; unemployment and housing affordability; and highly vulnerable individuals and families in mining communities unable to access housing and/or support services. The thesis argues that the characteristics of these pathways in mining communities are unique, as they are characterised by a combination of structural factors pertaining specifically to mining communities. These pathways challenge existing theory about homelessness and extend thinking about how homelessness manifests in mining communities.

Chapter Seven considers how to prevent and reduce homelessness in mining communities. This chapter explores from the perspectives of participants strategies for prevention and reduction in the future. Initiatives and strategies which have achieved a degree of success in reducing and preventing homelessness will be highlighted.

Finally, Chapter Eight outlines the policy, planning and service delivery findings drawn from this research project. A summative response to each of the research questions is provided and a set of conclusions is outlined. This research aims to better position mining communities in the future to address homelessness in the future throughout different phases of the mining cycle.
Chapter 2: Literature Review (1) Australian and International Homelessness Policy Discourses and Research

2.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter will traverse the extensive research and literature relating to homelessness in Australia and overseas, highlighting milestone homelessness policy achievements and service delivery trends. The chapter will take a specific focus on research about the causes of homelessness, and the pathways approach to understanding processes that may place people at risk of homelessness, and some of falling into homelessness. The chapter will also review evidence about the effects of homelessness on individuals and families, and what has assisted people to end their experience of homelessness. Finally, literature and research regarding regional and rural homelessness will be considered, with particular emphasis on how homelessness in these communities is thought to differ from homelessness in urban areas.

2.2 The history of homelessness in Australian social policy

Homelessness has been a feature of Australian society since the arrival of Europeans in the late 1770s; however, there is little historical awareness of homelessness as being an issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prior European colonisation. Australia’s early social history features narratives of social and economic disadvantage and records how these narratives gave rise to the social welfare responses provided by nongovernment charitable organisations throughout the 19th Century. These narratives included homeless children who were wards of the state, and poor, socially disadvantaged adult women and men.

Early government responses to homelessness in Australia can be identified in Commonwealth laws following Federation in 1901, dealing with social welfare. Income support for vulnerable groups of citizens, including the elderly and invalid (sic), and the provision of healthcare, public housing and police became the focus of government policy (Jamrozik, 2009; Marston, McDonald, & Bryson, 2014). These responses were intended to deal with some of the social issues associated with vagrancy across the nation’s cities. Although these laws did not explicitly address homelessness as a specific policy issue, they did impact
people who were experiencing homelessness, particularly among Australia’s growing urban population.

Australia’s emerging welfare system provided a basis for the refinement, reform and/or expansion of social policy and social welfare during the 20th Century. The early Commonwealth laws dealing largely with income support were widened with a strong emphasis on Australia’s federalist system and the responsibility of states and territories in delivering important public services.

The first half of the 20th century saw government and charitable organisations focus on visible public homelessness, characterised by ‘… older, alcoholic men living on skid row. The causes were generally identified as alcoholism and estrangement or disaffiliation from mainstream society’ (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2003, cited in Jamrozik, 2009, p. 269). Within this demographic were many ex-servicemen from the first and second world wars, many of whom faced complex health, disability and social issues (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014). Attitudes to people who were homeless began to encompass notions of “deserving” and “undeserving”. Homeless veterans who were also rough sleepers were seen as “deserving” and this particular cohort became the focus of responses from large charitable organisations. Seen as less deserving, other homeless people were subject to the view of their homelessness as somehow being the result of poor life decisions and individual afflictions. In the latter half of the 20th century homelessness began to be understood as an outcome of societal factors where there was inadequate housing (Jamrozik, 2009). Prior to the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972, homelessness policy and programs were primarily delivered through a combination of philanthropic and state funded programs.

Homelessness became a national policy priority during Whitlam administration (1972 – 1975) which introduced Australia’s first homelessness legislation, the Homeless Persons Assistance Act 1974. This legislation provided Commonwealth assistance in the forms of emergency accommodation, food and social welfare services. This trailblazing legislation was the first legislative framework in Australia to identify homelessness as a national social issue requiring a coordinated government strategy and action. Government funding to states and territories was underpinned by this legislation. State and territory governments would direct this funding to non-government organisations for the specific purpose of assisting
people who were homeless (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014). The policy nexus between housing availability and affordability and homelessness became stronger and more explicitly dealt with in government policy.

During the 1970s, with the Whitlam Government’s universal approach to social welfare and social policy and identification of poverty and inequality as major social issues affecting Australians, homelessness began to be understood at a national policy level (Howe, 2013; Jamrozik, 2009). Evidence was gathered, and theory began to be developed regarding homelessness. The widely accepted stereotype of homelessness as an issue affecting typically older white men who were sleeping in parks with alcohol problems was being challenged. New evidence about the multiple causal factors of homelessness and other specific population groups in Australian society affected by homelessness was being recognised and understood. Women and children who became homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, and young people who were homeless, emerged as two specific client groups of homelessness services that warranted their own discourse. Service delivery models for homeless people were designed and implemented to specifically focus on the needs of these different client groups.

In 1984 the Hawke Labor Government introduced the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). SAAP provided the national policy framework for addressing homelessness throughout Australia and was jointly funded by Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, managed by the states and territories, and delivered primarily through non-government organisations. In the late 1980s the Australian Government commissioned Brian Burdekin to report on homeless children and young people across Australia. Our Homelessness Children: Report on the National Inquiry into Homeless Children (Burdekin, 1989), lifted the profile of youth homelessness on a national level. This inquiry brought to national attention the extent to which youth homelessness had become a significant national issue.

In 1994 the Keating Labor Government introduced the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 (Australia) which consolidated resources and strategy to address homelessness at a national level. Importantly this legislation emphasised the importance of assisting homeless people to access ‘secure and affordable housing’ as a way of ending their experience of homelessness. The legislation also introduced the concept of ‘early intervention’ approach.
through services for people at risk of homelessness and argued that government funding to prevent people from becoming homeless was a worthwhile policy direction (Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994, Sec 7. Aiii; Sec 8C). The 1990s and 2000s also saw the Australian States and Territories introduce legislation to provide the policy framework for distribution of government resources to address homelessness within their different state and territory jurisdictions.

The 1990s were an important time for understanding homelessness in academic and research contexts. The cultural definition of homelessness was formulated by prominent Australian researchers Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992). In 1996 homelessness also began to be counted as part of the five-year process of Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of the Australian population. This provided Government and policy makers with critical evidence to inform decisions about investment in services to address homelessness.

From the 2000s, the census data enabled the compilation of evidence of varying state/territory trends in homelessness. The rate of homelessness over time across Australia and in Queensland is identified in Table 2.1. Although the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census has provided a powerful source of evidence to understand homelessness throughout Australia, it must be recognised that the census is an estimation rather than an exact quantification of homeless people on Census night. Nevertheless the Census data does show a national trend of homelessness decreasing in Australia from 2001 – 2006, but a sharp increase in homelessness from 2006 – 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012b; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012c). Rates of homelessness in Queensland appear to have remained fairly consistent over this ten-year period. It is within these trends at national and state levels that this thesis focuses on homelessness in a defined geographical catchment in Central Queensland impacted by the mining cycle. Data will be introduced later in this thesis about rates of homelessness in mining communities.
Table 2.1. Rates of homelessness in Australia and Queensland from 2001 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census year</th>
<th>Number of homeless people in Australia</th>
<th>Rate per 10,000 of population</th>
<th>Number of homeless people in Queensland</th>
<th>Rate per 10,000 of the Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>95,314</td>
<td>48.7 / 10,000</td>
<td>17,161</td>
<td>48.7 / 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>89,728</td>
<td>43.6 / 10,000</td>
<td>18,856</td>
<td>48.3 / 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>105,237</td>
<td>49 / 10,000</td>
<td>19,878</td>
<td>45.8 / 10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012b; 2012c; 2012d)

The decade from 2000 to 2010 saw policy innovations occur across Australia and in Queensland to address the challenges of homelessness. At the national level, the Reconnect initiative was implemented which promoted an early intervention approach with young people at risk of homelessness (Mackenzie, 2016). The Queensland Government implemented the “Responding to Homelessness” policy agenda in 2005, which saw investment of $235.5 million over four years in new service delivery models including a focus on early intervention responses for all people at risk of homelessness in Queensland (Rudland et al., 2009). The major policy breakthrough of the decade came with the election of the Rudd Labor Government in 2007 which immediately identified homelessness as a signature policy with the “White Paper: The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness” released in 2008 (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008). Homelessness had become a major social policy issue and for the first time was afforded prominent political status.

New funding for contemporary approaches to addressing homelessness were focal points of subsequent “National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) 2008 to 2013” (Department of Communities, 2009). The NPAH was the mechanism for states and territories
to receive funding from the Australian Government having agreed to the ambitious White Paper goals of ‘halving overall homelessness in Australia by 2020, and offering accommodation to all homeless people who required it’ (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008, p. 17). These policy goals were underpinned by three overarching homelessness policy strategies – “turning off the tap”, “improving and expanding existing services” and “breaking the cycle” (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008). These ambitious strategic goals transformed the approaches to ending homelessness for many Australians.

The loss of the Labor Government in 2012 to the Liberal National Party Government in Queensland and the loss of the Gillard/Rudd Labor Government in 2013 to the Liberal Coalition Government in 2013 saw a political shift towards the conservative right and neo-liberalism. This had immediate impacts on broad social policy including services to homeless people and for people in regional and rural communities. Maidment and Bay (2012) contend that the effects of neo-liberalism on rural communities has meant they have:

had to position themselves as economic entrepreneurs in competition with all other places for economic investment and the disinvestment of troublesome populations…Regional and rural settings are to promote themselves as offering particular amenities in the global marketplace, and seek to attract investment of all kinds to boost economic productivity and their settlement’s economic viability (pp. 226-227).

This is a difficult proposition when governments take the approach of exercising fiscal constraint which often results in reduced investment in human services. In Queensland numerous community services including homelessness services had funding reduced and in some instances, ceased. Examples of programs where funding completely ceased, and which had a direct impact on homeless people in Queensland, included the Drug Court Program and the Tenancy Advice and Advisory Service Queensland (TASSQ). These cuts to welfare services and programs for homeless people were accompanied by a strategy to consolidate existing housing and homelessness service providers and outsource 90% of all social housing stock to the non-government sector in Queensland (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013a, 2013b). These policies represented a strong residualist approach to social welfare where welfare services are highly targeted to the most vulnerable people (Marston et al., 2014).
The Liberal National Party conservative government was defeated in Queensland in January 2015, with Queensland electing the Palaszczuk minority Labor Government which has seen a renewed policy focus on housing and homelessness issues (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2016). The situation at the national level has reflected an extended period of policy malaise in the area of homelessness, and ongoing uncertainty about policy settings, funding and reform.

2.3 The influence of Neo-liberalism on Australian and International Homelessness Policy

The current neo-liberal political paradigm has a powerful overarching influence in national debates about the causes of homelessness and the perceived limits of what can be done by Government to reduce homelessness (Warren, McDonald, & McAuliffe, 2015). There is ongoing policy tension as to how government should be investing its limited resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for vulnerable people who are experiencing homelessness, or those who are at risk of homelessness. Despite the best intentions of the 2008 White Paper, the forces of neo-liberalism across all levels of Australian Governments, accelerated by the effects of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-08, have curtailed the successes of the White Paper’s policy approach across housing and homelessness policy. From a different perspective, the rise of neo-liberalism and apparent declining public resources for services to homeless people, has broadened the policy focus to include the role of corporate social responsibility and the place of private companies contributing to services that deliver community outcomes. This approach will be explored in detail in the context of the mining industry in Chapter Three and will be a recurring theme throughout this thesis.

Neo-liberalism has also influenced the debate in Australia about housing affordability, framing the solution to access to private home ownership in Australia’s large metropolitan cities by simply improving planning regulations to allow increased construction of new dwellings. Beer, Kearins and Pieters (2007) argue that the neo-liberal policy paradigm and resulting housing policy approaches have limited capacity to improve housing affordability, as they contend:

… planning solutions are seen to be the low cost ‘technical fix’ to the challenge of providing affordable housing in high cost metropolitan housing markets where
the capacity to significantly increase the supply of land on the fringe is limited and where governments are reluctant to release large volumes of land for urban development because of the detrimental impact on Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) (p. 20).

The research posits that the nexus between housing affordability and homelessness is fundamental and, therefore, framing housing affordability policy without addressing issues facing the most vulnerable in our society is further evidence of the neo-liberal influence on housing and homelessness policy.

Australia’s embrace of the neo-liberal policy paradigm that promulgates a minimal role for government in social policy including homelessness, has meant that because of the void of government taking a leadership role in responses to homelessness, there is an increasing role for non-profit organisations, philanthropists and other organisations to provide leadership. This trend is not unique to Queensland or Australia. International research has linked the influence of diminished government role in homelessness policy in the USA in the 1980s and 1990s, and the effects of increased competition amongst homeless people and people on low incomes for reduced affordable housing and deinstitutionalisation with increasing spatial and demographic diversification of homelessness (Takahashi, 1996; Crane & Takahashi, 1998). This empirical work has helped to characterise homelessness as a heterogeneous phenomenon and shift the policy approach to homelessness as a major planning and public service consumer issue. A reduced role for government in responding to homelessness therefore, presents opportunities and challenges to non-government organisations and other entities providing responses to homeless people.

It is important to highlight that whilst the prevailing political and economic conditions have been challenging, there have been many valid and even innovative responses to homelessness. De Verteuil, May and Von Mahs (2009) identified the diminished role of the USA Government in addressing national homelessness had generated an increase in punitive responses to homeless people, best exemplified by severe measures to reclaim public spaces in major cities for private business interests. The authors also noted that there had been some creative measures employed by homeless people and some organisations to address the challenges of homelessness on a day to day basis such as accessing food, personal hygiene
and shelter. The authors argued that government homelessness policy intent during this time represented both “care and control” approaches towards homeless people often with some confusion about where the policy emphasis actually lay. A common theme across international literature is recognition that despite the oppressive nature of neo-liberalism in Western liberal democracies, including Australia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, there has been some positive and contemporary policy and community responses to homelessness.

People experiencing homelessness have devised a range of strategies for surviving on a day to day basis. As Takahashi (1996) noted in her research on homelessness in the USA, government’s shrinking provision of affordable housing and other economic restructuring has meant homeless people have developed:

… coping strategies including employment, involvement in informal or illegal economies (such as day labour, selling blood, petty theft and prostitution), support from family and friends and the use of public and non-profit shelter and human service agencies (p.295).

Homeless people have had to deploy a range of adaptive and maladaptive strategies in order to survive. This notion of homeless people having to resort to their own devices in order to survive will be a theme examined in this research where access to human service agencies is limited.

The final area of international literature relevant to discussion about the effects on neo-liberalism on the operations and functions of homelessness agencies relates to social spaces and the rise of voluntarism. Conradson (2003a, 2003b) identified that as a result of declining state involvement in homelessness policy, and an outsourcing of these responsibilities in the United Kingdom, many social spaces in cities had significant meaning to homeless people and were associated with the provision of care. Drop in centres providing social support and welfare assistance were one example of a service that were significant for homeless people as a place of care (Conradson, 2003b). These spaces had taken on additional significance in communities that had experienced a winding back of government policy addressing housing and homelessness issues. Ruddick (2004) argues that the challenge for urban planners is to ‘embrace difference’ in the multiple and competing demands on use of public spaces in cities.
Constructing homelessness as homogenous group for public policy purposes is both illogical and counter-productive.

This use of social space by homeless people has an interesting parallel in Queensland, Australia with the increase in services that provide mobile laundry and mobile shower services for people sleeping rough. Although these approaches have been lauded as ‘innovative’ by some governments, they are also not without critique as being the result of weak policy responses to the challenges of extreme poverty and access to affordable housing for Australia’s most vulnerable populations (Parsell, 2017). Policy responses to homelessness in the era of unfettered neoliberalism may produce some local innovation and adaptive bottom up responses to homelessness, even driven by homeless people themselves, but also responses that are more about weakening the focus on the structural link between poverty, affordable housing and homelessness requiring strong political leadership.

2.3 Defining, measuring and researching homelessness

Throughout the 20th Century, there were numerous scholarly works undertaken to understand and enumerate the number of people affected by homelessness in Australian society. Scholars, Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) made a significant contribution to this work with the development of the cultural definition of homelessness in the 1990s. This definition argued that homelessness is a “cultural” phenomenon linked to minimum community standards for housing within a culture” (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 1992, pp. 274-297). In the 1990s when this definition was formulated, in Australian society, the community standard for housing involved a small rental flat with one bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and an element of secure tenure as this reflected what most people could achieve through social and private rental housing systems. Twenty-five years since this definition was developed, it continues to provide a very useful way of understanding and measuring homelessness. Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992, pp. 274-297) assert that homelessness can therefore be distinguished at three main levels:

- Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation (living on streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks etc.);
- Secondary homelessness: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including friends and relatives, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses; and
- Tertiary homelessness: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure.

This analysis broadened understanding of homelessness as being a phenomenon applying to people in a variety of situations within society who did not have the minimum cultural standard of housing. The definition includes a range of situations beyond the traditional understanding of homelessness as being limited to rough sleepers in public spaces of major capital cities. While not considered a form of homelessness, Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2009) also identified another category, referring to people who are “marginally housed”, that is, people who are housed but their housing is very close to the minimum standard. This cultural definition of homelessness informed the work of the Australian Bureau of Statistics approach to subsequent counts of homeless people as part of the national Census in 1996, 2001 and 2006 (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2009).

From 2011, the ABS introduced the “Statistical Definition of Homelessness” in 2012 replacing the cultural definition of homelessness as the underpinning definition informing the methodology to count homeless people on Census night. This new definition of homelessness underpinned a different methodology for estimating the number of homeless people in Australia on Census night (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012f). The ABS now defines homelessness as being when a person or family are:
- living in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- have no tenure or if the initial tenure is too short and not extendable; and/or
- does not allow them to have control of and access to space for social relations

Any one or more of these characteristics could apply, along with the assumption that the person or family does not have access to suitable alternative accommodation (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012e, p. 7). However, fulfilling one or more of these definitional requirements does not automatically mean homelessness. The ABS holds the view that:

   homelessness is not a choice, some people may choose to live in situations that might parallel the living situations of people who are homeless. For example:

   living in a shed while building a home on their own property, or on a holiday and
staying with friends. These people have choice because they have the capacity to access other accommodation that are safe, adequate and provide for social relations. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012e, p. 7).

The definition of homelessness and the approaches to enumeration of homelessness in Australia are critical to understanding not only the numbers of homeless people, but the causes of homelessness, its distribution and concentration throughout Australia and the types of homelessness experienced by Australians. It is also useful to developing and assessing services and interventions intended to reduce, and in some instances end homelessness.

The research recognises limitations declared by the ABS in the methodological approach for counting homeless people in the census. This includes possible over, or underestimation, because the level of information captured during census cannot always be definitive about whether a person is actually homeless. Under-enumeration may also occur by virtue of the census data not being able to physically capture data on every homeless person in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012f, p. 14). The ABS also acknowledges particular issues in counting homeless people in three specific demographic groups: young people, people who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ABS (2012f, p. 16) assert that data on homeless young people can be hidden because of difficulties in distinguishing “couch-surfing”, a secondary form of homelessness according to the cultural definition of homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 1992). Similarly, the ABS (2012f, p. 17) argue that data relating to women who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, might under-represent the number of people in this category because of difficulties accessing these people if they are in accommodation other than specialist homelessness services and fears that women may have about their living situation becoming known to perpetrators of violence. Finally, the ABS (2012f, pp. 17-18) contend that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also under-enumerated and under-estimated because of a range of factors including the quality of information that is recorded about the “person’s usual place of residence”.

Census data also has some limitations for homelessness policy and research in enumerating people who are not homeless or at risk of homelessness. As previously mentioned, since the 1990s the concept of people being “at risk of homelessness” has gained prominence in
legislation, policy and research activities regarding homelessness. The term “at risk of homelessness” is juxtaposed with the term “people experiencing homelessness” within policy and homelessness service delivery discourses. Homelessness policy and research must consider the issues for both groups of people. While the ABS Census counts provide useful evidence about people who are actually homeless on Census night, the data does not include people who may be at risk of homelessness. D’Souza, Tanton, Abello, Mohanty and Thurecht (2014) argue that determining whether people are at risk of homelessness is dependent on people residing in high risk areas, risk factors and pathways, and they developed a “Risk of Homelessness Index” to identify individuals and groups at high risk. This index can be applied to identify “areas where programs can be concentrated to prevent homelessness … allowing a targeting of particular programs to particular communities” (D’Souza et al., 2014, p. 53). Risk of homelessness is an important concept in ascertaining the factors influencing homelessness within a community and will be a concept applied in this research on homelessness in regional and rural mining communities.

Some caution needs to be applied in the processes of defining homelessness and how this is used in social research. Empirical approaches to understanding homelessness and its association with social exclusion policy discourse have received critical analysis with scholars arguing that the constructions of “homelessness” can serve to lessen the voice and power of homeless people through objectification processes (Coleman, 2000; Horsell, 2006). This critical perspective will be adopted in this research.

2.4 Australian and international homelessness research

There is a rich source of Australian homelessness research and literature available from academic institutions, non-government organisations and government agencies including policy and strategy, and government-commissioned inquiries and evaluations of homelessness and related services. This literature review considers the full range of Australian and international homelessness research relevant to this study which focuses on the mining communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah in Central Queensland.

Homelessness research and literature may be classified into three broad categories. The first category of research builds upon the work of O’Flaherty (2004) in understanding
homelessness as a result of the interaction between the social, economic and individual factors that cause homelessness in Australian society (Johnson, Scutella, Tseng, & Wood, 2015; Wood, Battenham, Cigdem, & Mallet, 2015). This literature investigates the extent to which structural factors such as affordable housing, the labour market, and the provision of welfare services can either generate homelessness or mitigate the risk of homelessness in particular communities and regions, or otherwise serve to prevent and reduce homelessness. In addition to structural factors the literature also considers personal life factors and circumstances that lead to homelessness. These personal factors and experiences include domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol use and mental health concerns. This thesis is based on a view of homelessness that for many Australians, homelessness is the result of a combination of structural and individual risk factors impacting an individual or family.

The second category of literature is about the “pathways” that have lead people to experience homelessness as well as the pathways which have assisted people to end their experience of homelessness (O’Flaherty, 2004; Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson, Gronda, & Coutts, 2008). This pathways literature outlines the social processes people have experienced that led to homelessness, and the processes occurring during the person’s experience of homelessness. The pathways concept also includes the discussion about processes, events and interventions which have ended a person’s experience of homelessness. The literature on homelessness pathways is also useful in understanding how services and interventions can be better targeted to achieve improved housing outcomes for different groups of homeless people.

The third category of literature focuses on the efficacy and value of services and interventions targeting people who are at risk, or people who are experiencing homelessness (Culhane & Byrne, 2010; Johnson, Parkinson, & Parsell, 2012; Zaretzky, Flatau, & Brady, 2008). This literature and research has become particularly important over the last decade since Australia has introduced more contemporary service delivery models and innovations to address homelessness. It is also highly relevant because of the challenging fiscal situation in which Australia and much of the world finds itself post Global Financial Crisis (2007-08) and the need for governments to be able to argue value for tax payer money for investment in social services. This literature will now be considered in the context of this study.
2.4.1 Causes of homelessness in Australia – The interplay of structural factors and personal life events

International literature on the causes of homelessness has identified tensions between the approaches taken to conceptualising the causes of homelessness. This tension is manifested by research focused on rates of homelessness across a population versus homelessness being understood at the individual level with particular reference to life events and circumstances (O’Flaherty, 2004; 2012). This debate fundamentally questions the influence of the prevailing housing market conditions as a major factor influencing a person or family’s future risk of homelessness. O’Flaherty (2004) points out that these different research approaches are in fact complementary and not contradictory when understanding the causes of homelessness within a population, but also in the design of appropriate policy solutions.

O’Flaherty’s thesis about the conjunction of structural factors and individual life events has been applied in further research such as that of Curtis, Corman, Noonan and Reichman (2013) who found that:

A health shock (such as a child being born with a significant health issue or disability) increases the likelihood that the family may experience homelessness, particularly in cities with high housing costs (p.2246).

This approach of conceptualising homelessness as being a phenomenon that can be hard to predict in communities and one that is a product of structural factors and individual life events is an important underpinning principle for this research, focusing on homelessness in mining communities during periods of mining boom and downturn.

Homelessness impacts a diverse range of Australians in different ways. Analysis of homelessness statistics from the ABS Census counts provide a detailed snapshot of the distribution and concentration of homelessness across Australia. Australian researchers Wood, Battenham, Cigdem and Mallet provided two major AHURI reports dealing with the spatial distribution of homelessness in Australia from 2001 to 2011 (2014), and the structural drivers of homelessness in Australia for the same period (2015). The first report examined the spatial distribution of homelessness across Australia and found that homelessness tends to be highly concentrated in a number of remote, rural and regional areas of Australia and pockets of some of capital cities. The second report provided an analysis of the structural drivers of
homelessness throughout Australia. Some key findings relevant to this research includes the following:

- There was no evidence to support the argument that a shortage of affordable housing throughout Australian regions was correlated with high rates of homelessness.
- In terms of suitability, there was an acute shortage of affordable one-bedroom private dwellings relative to demand, while larger dwellings seemed to be adequately supplied. However, the research also found that the shortage of affordable one-bedroom dwellings was more severe in areas with lower rates of homelessness.
- Regions with higher rates of homelessness tended to have warmer climates and less variable climate.
- Regions with higher rates of homelessness had the following demographic characteristics:
  - a greater proportion of young people and never married single people;
  - disproportionately high share of rental housing; and
  - poor rates of employment, high rates of unemployment, more unequal distribution of income and larger number of workers in labourer occupations.
- High rates of homelessness were evident in regions with weak labour markets, concentration of poverty, income inequality.
- Regions with rising rates of homelessness were characterised by having a high percentage of dwellings owned by mortgage, more people who have never been married, lower winter temperatures and greater variability between seasons and shortage of affordable rental housing.
- Indigenous males and sole parent families were particular demographic groups at higher risk of homelessness (Wood et al., 2015, pp. 2-3).

These research findings indicate that rates of homelessness differ substantially across Australia but there are some common characteristics of regions with high rates of homelessness. Factors such as high unemployment, concentration of poverty and the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in homelessness populations are indicators in some specific regions of high rates of homelessness. The findings are also somewhat puzzling for policy makers and researchers as the highest rates of homelessness are identified in Australia in non-urban areas (with the exception of some pockets of some capital cities) and these regional areas are not necessarily correlated with low levels of affordable housing (Wood et al., 2014; 2015). Low levels of housing
affordability are generally perceived to be equated with higher rates of homelessness however their research has shown that this is not always the case.

This thesis will make some connections to international research which has established the structural causes of homelessness in a range of countries including Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United States. International homelessness research has found that where there are relatively low levels of investment in social welfare programs, low levels of housing affordability and weak labour markets, there tended to be higher rates of homelessness (Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2007; O’Flaherty, 2010). The influence of structural factors driving homelessness will be a key consideration of this research into homelessness in rural and regional mining communities.

Australia’s system of liberal democracy provides basic social and economic protections for citizens however these protections provided by Australia’s welfare system are dependent on employment and wage-earning capacity. Government provided income support such as Newstart and Youth Allowance, for people not in employment are intentionally set beneath the poverty line (Jamrozik, 2009). The national and international research highlighting the structural conditions which cause homelessness has also prompted governments in other countries to consider policies such as housing allowances for the most vulnerable members of society and other employment related activities as a means of improving housing outcomes for vulnerable people and people at risk of homelessness (Milman, 2014; Stephens, Fitzpatrick, Elsinga, van Steen, & Chzhen, 2010). Generalisations about homelessness and applying them broadly to Australian society can be fraught with risk. Homelessness manifests and impacts different Australians in different ways and this thesis will focus on the different experiences of people who have experienced homelessness in regional and rural Queensland mining communities.

Highly relevant to this thesis is research by Johnson et al. (2015) that brought together the influence of structural factors such as patterns in the general economy, costs of housing and strength of the labour market with personal issues, which may place an individual or family at greater risk of homelessness, or compound their experience of homelessness. Their research was based on three distinct models involving different assumptions and data sources and included a static model of homelessness, an entry model to homelessness and an exit model
from homelessness. The findings from this research suggest some interesting questions about the interaction between individual factors such as risky behaviours and structural factors that are viewed to cause homelessness. A full summary of the findings of this research are outlined in Appendix A: Models for Assessing Homelessness. Johnson et al. (2015) shows that homelessness, and pathways to and out of homelessness, are not homogenous in any community and that the data must be critiqued and understood with regard to the nuances associated with the interplay of structural factors and individual risk factors.

2.4.2 Pathways approaches to homelessness

The concept of “pathways” to homelessness, and “pathways” out of homelessness has been embedded in national and international homelessness literature over the past decade (Pinkney & Ewing, 2006). Some authors have preferred the term ‘career’ over pathway, on the basis that career better captures the full range of experiences which come with being homeless. For them the term offers a more useful theoretical perspective on homelessness more aligned to housing literature (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008; Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006). I have elected to use the term ‘pathway’ in three dimensions of homelessness as I find it is the best available descriptor to the events that happen in a person’s life: first those events that lead to their experience of homelessness; second those that happen while the person is homeless; and third, the events which help to end the experience of homelessness. The pathways approach to understanding a person’s experience of homelessness is not without critique. Scholars have argued that homelessness research has in the past concentrated too heavily on identifying either structural causes of homelessness such as inadequate supply of affordable housing, or individual choices that have resulted in homelessness in a binary fashion (O’Flaherty, 2004; 2010; Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008b). The pathway concept as critiqued in this thesis conveys a sense of the social processes that affect individuals and families as they progress from being at risk of homelessness, to experiencing homelessness, taking into account the effects of major life events. It also conveys the social processes which may divert people from homelessness or, for people experiencing homelessness, those that assist the person to access housing and support services and thereby ending the person’s experience of homelessness.

Johnson, Gronda and Coutts (2008) suggest that a pathway is about:
a close examination of people’s biographies, the duration of their homelessness and how they adapt, and increases the understanding of the social processes that result in some people getting stuck in the homeless population, while others in similar social and economic circumstances do not (p. 5).

The concept of the pathway to and out of homelessness has a strong influence on this study of homelessness in mining communities, and is applied in combination with consideration of the structural drivers of homelessness for that individual or family, along with factors that have helped end homelessness by providing a pathway out.

Homelessness scholars and practitioners have identified a range of different pathways that impact different populations (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008a; 2008b; Johnson et al., 2008; 2015). These varied pathways show that homelessness impacts differently on different population groups, such as young people, families, adult women and men, women who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, older people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The literature on homelessness pathways varies in the organising principle of approach. Some research identifies name pathways linked to specific client populations or common social traits (e.g., youth homelessness, women and children escaping domestic and family violence, people experiencing substance misuse concerns or mental health difficulties), while for others the link is more general between the population and its traits, and homelessness. However, both approaches provide an understanding of the relationship between people’s experience of homelessness and other life events. Some clear pathways have been identified for different homeless population groups, setting out the particular phases people in that group have experienced of homelessness.

Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2006) identified distinct pathways for three groups: young people, family breakdown (including domestic and family violence) and housing stress. These pathways articulate the events that happen in people’s lives and social processes people experience as they become homeless. The research proposes that different interventions are required for different client groups and at various stages of the pathway. Johnson et al. (2008) extended this approach by identifying five pathways – domestic and family violence, mental health, housing crisis, substance abuse and young people. Their approach emphasised how services and interventions can target people in each of these
pathways to prevent homelessness or reduce the duration of homelessness. This approach takes into account the structural factors that impact a person’s pathway to homelessness and described interventions to facilitate a pathway out of homelessness for them. The focus on the differential impacts of homelessness on particular population groups is a major strength of the pathways approach. This research has adopted the pathways approach and, while not an exhaustive list of all pathways grounded in homelessness literature, six pathways have been selected as most relevant for the thesis focus:

- Young people
- Family breakdown and domestic and family violence
- People experiencing severe housing stress including discussion about unemployment
- People with mental health issues
- People with substance misuse
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Each of these pathways will be described and considered in the context of existing literature and research.

2.4.2.1 Young people

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2016a) reported that 9,241 young people aged between 15 and 24 years were supported in 2014-15 by a specialist homelessness service in Queensland. This represents almost 21% of all people assisted by specialist homelessness services in Queensland that year. Consistent with other Australian states and territories, the Department of Housing and Public Works, Queensland Government (2015) defines youth homelessness as young people who are homeless, or who are at imminent risk of homelessness, who are over school leaving age and aged 16 and 25 years. However as young people under the age of 16 years do become at risk of homelessness or indeed go on to experience homelessness, specialist homelessness services are required to work sensitively across-government with Child Safety Services to ensure the needs of the young person are met. The age of the young person is significant as is the fact that they present to human services as an unaccompanied individual without family support.

The youth homelessness pathway has been described by Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2006) as involving five phases and four biographical life transitions. The Chamberlain and Mackenzie model suggests young people progress to homelessness initially through three
phases: (1) being at risk of homelessness while living at home, (2) dropping out of school, and finally, (3) initial experiences of homelessness. The final two phases exacerbate the risk of the young person becoming unemployed and progressing to a trajectory of chronic homelessness. The authors cautiously use the term “at risk” to describe the situation of young people when home life becomes strained and the young person is not attending formal education. Lack of participation in education and negative experience of school life is a major factor influencing the pathway to homelessness. The four biographical transitions noted in this model include when the young person makes a tentative break from their family, when the young person makes a permanent break from the family, when the young person drops out of school and finally when they transition to chronic homelessness.

Johnson et al. (2008) theorised that the youth homelessness pathway is affected by young people’s access to affordable housing options in their community and that young people, those reliant upon government income support, are vulnerable to homelessness because of their low income. This pathway promotes the concept of an acculturation process that happens for people experiencing homelessness, and that the longer people experience homelessness the more they adapt their behaviour to cope with this experience. This theory confirms the importance of assisting young people back into education and employment as crucial elements of effective service delivery to young people experiencing homelessness. The collective work by Johnson et al. (2008) and Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2006) on youth homelessness confirmed the importance of early intervention responses to young people who are at risk, given the potential for chronic homelessness.

In further work on the youth homelessness pathway, Johnson and Chamberlain (2008a) argue that the longer the duration of a young person’s experience of homelessness, the harder it can be to end this experience because of the level of adaptation that the young person has made to their situation and environment. Importantly this research notes that young people accommodated in boarding houses are a cohort of particular concern. Boarding houses are a form of tertiary homelessness where young people can learn practices which are counterproductive to efforts to assist them obtain and maintain permanent housing.

Youth homelessness research has also highlighted the risk of homelessness facing young people exiting the statutory child protection system (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016b; Crane, Kaur, & Burton, 2013). Young people exiting statutory out of home
care require more consistent long-term planning that needs to continue after the young person has left statutory care at 18 years of age. Crane et al. (2013) argues that “young people should be proactively and voluntarily involved in periodic monitoring of their lived experience postcare and linkage of this monitoring to the activation of timely support” (p. 7). Responsive and flexible services are viewed as critical for young people at risk of homelessness. Research also identifies that young people at risk of homelessness, or who are experiencing homelessness, and who are also having concurrent interactions with the child protection system or youth justice system, are identified as having multiple levels of disadvantage. Many young people have also experienced domestic and family violence, drug and or alcohol misuse and mental health concerns which impact their ability to obtain and maintain housing (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016b). Vulnerable young people clearly face many challenges in accessing safe and secure housing.

Some of the contemporary youth homelessness responses implemented throughout Australia reflect a prevention and early intervention service delivery focus. These include the Reconnect program which provides early intervention responses to young people at risk of homelessness between 12 and 18 and youth foyers which are an international model that links young people at risk of homelessness with housing and education or employment (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2005; Mackenzie, 2016). Youth foyers have been suggested as a policy response for youth in rural communities in Australia because of this focus on employment and particular challenges for young people in rural areas in accessing housing and employment (Beer et al., 2005). These contemporary service delivery approaches are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

2.4.2.2 Family breakdown and domestic and family violence

This pathway explores family breakdown and domestic and family violence as both critical life events that generate social processes that can result in homelessness. Family breakdown and domestic and family violence are a major cause of homelessness in Australian society, particularly for women and children. The Australian Institute of Health and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2016a) identified that in 2014-15:

- 1,929 people presented to a specialist homelessness services in Queensland (or 4.4% of the total number of people who presented to a specialist homelessness service) with the main reason being their relationship or family breakdown; and
• 6,910 people presented to a specialist homelessness service because of domestic and family violence (or 15.7% of the total number of people who presented to a specialist homelessness service).

The only reasons for presentation to specialist homelessness services which rated more highly were people experiencing housing crisis, people experiencing financial difficulty and people experiencing housing affordability stress (further details can be found at Appendix D).

Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2006) identified four phases and three biographical transitions in their conceptualisation of the family breakdown and domestic violence pathway. The four phases are risk of homelessness because of increasing conflict at home; an in and out pattern as people attempt reconciliation in their relationship; long-term homelessness and chronic homelessness. The three corresponding biographical transitions are a tentative break in the relationship, a permanent break in the relationship and transition to chronic homelessness. Interventions need to be designed on the basis of understanding each of these phases and delivered in a way that suits the needs of the client, wherever they may be situated on this pathway.

The literature also recommends an early intervention approach in the context of working with people affected by family breakdown and domestic and family violence, with much of the early intervention effort geared towards building the capacity of service providers to better identify family break down and domestic and family violence and provide appropriate service delivery responses (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006). Effective intervention that can help prevent a person in this pathway progressing to chronic homelessness would involve access to affordable housing that is appropriately located and suited to the needs of the individual or family (Burnett, 2016). Location of services is critical for people affected by domestic and family violence as the person needs to be able to access employment and parents with school age children need to ensure school routines are normalised (Johnson et al., 2008).

The inter-relationship of homelessness and domestic and family violence has been reflected in a range of research and literature (Spinney, 2014; Johnson et al., 2008). Women who have become homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, often require services and interventions from a range of systems including housing, income support, health and legal arenas. Humphreys and Thiara (2003) critique the dominant medical model approach taken by health professionals when working with women who have experienced domestic and family
violence and who have developed mental health concerns, including depression and self-harm. The mental health system response should include recognition of the nature of trauma experienced by these women, focusing on the accountability of the perpetrator and promoting recovery for the woman. Related research has critiqued the child protection and legal systems’ response for women who have experienced domestic and family violence. Humphreys and Absler (2011) assert that women with children who have experienced domestic violence have been disadvantaged when they have interacted with the child protection system and courts regarding child protection and family legal proceedings. It is clear that women who experience homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence are likely to experience a range of systemic challenges in accessing appropriate services and interventions.

There is an increasing focus in literature on the rights of women experiencing domestic and family violence to have housing identified as a fundamental need, and to be provided with prevention of homelessness responses (Burnet, 2016; Spinney, 2014). The concept of homelessness prevention and recognising the property and tenancy rights of women experiencing domestic and family violence, will be recurring themes in this literature review and throughout this research.

There is also recognition of the particular issues facing women who experience domestic and family violence. Campo and Tayton (2015, p. 1) from the Australian Institute of Family Studies argue the following points about domestic and family violence in rural Australian communities:

- Women in regional, rural and remote areas are more likely than women in urban areas to experience domestic and family violence.
- Women living in regional, rural and remote areas who experience domestic and family violence face specific issues related to their geographical location and the cultural and social characteristics of small communities.
- There is a common view in rural communities that “family problems” such as domestic and family violence are not talked about, which serves to silences women’s experience of domestic and family violence and deter them from disclosing violence and abuse.
- Fear of stigma, shame, community gossip, and a lack of perpetrator accountability deter women from seeking help.
• A lack of privacy due to the high likelihood that police, health professionals and domestic and family violence workers know both the victim and the perpetrator can inhibit women’s willingness to use local services.

• Women who do seek help find difficulty in accessing services due to geographical isolation, lack of transportation options and not having access to their own income. Women experiencing domestic and family violence in rural areas face a range of unique challenges regarding access to both mainstream and specialist services to assist people who have experienced this form of violence. These issues will be examined closely in this research focusing on homelessness in regional and rural mining communities.

2.4.2.3 People experiencing severe housing stress

Poverty is a major structural cause of homelessness. Households spending 30% or more of their income on housing cost are referred to as experiencing housing stress and households spending 50% or more of their income on housing are said to be experiencing severe housing stress (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016c; Rowley & Ong, 2012). Poverty and accumulating debt are conditions that lead people to experience homelessness.

Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2006) identify three phases and three biographical transitions within the severe housing stress pathway. These phases are: (1) becoming at risk of homelessness; (2) experiencing a long-term problem such as loss of housing or accommodation; and (3) experiencing chronic homelessness. The three life transitions associated with the severe housing stress pathway include: accumulating debts, loss of accommodation and transition to chronic homelessness. The transitions in this pathway are more pronounced than in other pathways as the loss of housing/ accommodation can be sudden. The authors note that single income households are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness via this pathway because of the reliance on one income to cover essential living expenses.

Johnson et al. (2008) argue that, like the family breakdown and domestic violence pathway, access to affordable and suitably located housing is a critical feature of the pathway out of homelessness for people experiencing homelessness as a result of housing crisis. People experiencing severe housing stress and vulnerable to homelessness require access to community services and infrastructure including schools, hospital, parks and public transport.
systems. The availability of these services and infrastructure, or lack of, can make a huge difference to the person or family’s pathway to homelessness, the duration of their homelessness and the exit out of homelessness.

2.4.2.4 Housing stress and unemployment

There is extensive literature connecting housing stress and employment status with risk of homelessness (Johnson et al., 2015; Steen, Mackenzie & McCormack, 2012). Some has been reviewed earlier, in the discussion on the interplay between structural factors influencing homelessness, which indicated that countries or geographical areas with weak labour markets, do tend to provide higher risk levels of homelessness (Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2007; Johnson et al., 2015; Stephens et al., 2010). It could be argued that the issue of employment is relevant to any pathway to and out of homelessness. For the purpose of this discussion, I explore it in the context of the severe housing stress pathway, focusing on the relationship between employment, housing stress and homelessness, particularly in relation to income levels and concept of housing affordability.

Steen, Mackenzie and McCormack (2012) identified many similarities in the profiles of service users of specialist homelessness services and job seeker agencies, but identified the main differences to be that homelessness service users experienced more physical and mental health issues, greater social isolation and were more likely to have substance misuse concerns. Their research findings are valuable as they inform the ways services can work in more integrative ways to better achieve successful client outcomes, and outcome measurement based on housing placement and the capacity to maintain the housing and employment. Their research focuses on the importance of case management practices as a model of service delivery to homeless people who are also experiencing unemployment.

Policy writers and bureaucrats have long espoused the rhetoric about integration, collaboration and joined-up service delivery approaches as achieving more successful client outcomes in human service settings including homelessness services, and the literature in the main supports the rhetoric. In Grace and Gill’s (2014) study of “joined-up” case management to young homeless job seekers, while there was inadequate evidence to confirm that the joined up approach delivered improved outcomes for young people, there was evidence to indicate that the joined up approach assisted young people to improve their income levels over the course of the study. A further study by Grace and Gill (2016) concluded that quality
case management services to homeless people, reflected in 20 or more sessions between the person and the case manager, led to significantly better accommodation and employment outcomes than those services with fewer contacts. The quality of case management is a crucial component to pathways out of homelessness, particularly for homeless people experiencing unemployment.

In addition to quality case management services, the provision of financial counselling and literacy services and education has been shown as valuable in assisting homeless people to exit homelessness (Steen & Mackenzie, 2012). Financial counselling and literacy as intervention, is an effective strategy to prevent people at risk of homelessness progressing to homelessness. These services and interventions are crucial to assisting vulnerable people to sustain housing and effectively manage their tenancy obligations.

2.4.2.5 People with mental health concerns

A range of literature identifies people with mental illness as being at greater risk of homelessness than other groups in society (Costello, Thomson, & Jones, 2013; Johnson & Chamberlain, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008). Some rationale for this risk relates to the deinstitutionalisation programs of the 1980s and 1990s in Australia and the challenges associated with community inclusion. There is also a body of scholarly work exploring the relationship between life experiences of mental illness and a pathway to homelessness (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2011; Kim, Ford, Howard, & Bradford, 2010). In 2014-15, 404 people who presented to a specialist homelessness service in Queensland (or 0.9% of the total number of people presenting) cited mental health issues being amongst the main reason why they were seeking support from the service (refer to Appendix D). While this statistic appears low, it is possible that mental health issues are under-reported by people presenting to homelessness services, if the person does not self-identify as having a mental illness or the service provider is not able to identify that the person presents with a mental illness.

In a study of homeless men in the United States of America, Kim et al. (2010) found that a history of trauma was associated with homeless people experiencing mental health concerns, but substance misuse was not correlated with homelessness amongst this population. This study also pointed to the importance of trauma-informed care approaches to achieve housing outcomes with this client group. Other researchers have emphasised the need for homelessness services to take a trauma-informed approach to care in order to improve the
overall wellbeing of the homeless person (Thomas, Gray, & McGinty, 2012). Trauma-informed approaches have become an accepted principle of good practice underpinning many specialist homelessness services.

In a large Australian quantitative study of mental illness and homelessness, Johnson and Chamberlain (2011) concluded that the relationship between people experiencing mental health concerns and homelessness was overstated in public policy. Their study of over 4,000 case files of clients of specialist homelessness services found that 15% of clients had a mental health issue prior to becoming homeless and 16% developed a mental health issue after becoming homeless. More recent research explored the differentiation of homelessness between people with, and without, a formal mental health diagnosis. Wood et al. (2015) considered the interaction of structural factors and individual risk factors and found that people with a diagnosed mental illness were at less risk of homelessness than those without a diagnosed mental illness. A person with a formal diagnosis is more likely to access specialist health and community services that may prevent them from experiencing homelessness. Wood et al. (2015) also made estimates of the probability of entering homelessness and proposed that people with a diagnosed bi-polar or schizophrenic condition were less likely than people without a formal diagnosis to slip out of secure housing into homelessness.

For some homelessness pathways and population groups, access to affordable housing, while necessary, is not sufficient to assist people on their pathway out of homelessness; also critical is access to intensive and ongoing clinical and community support services (Johnson et al., 2008). Where people have a diagnosed mental illness and have a background as a client of mental health services, the literature supports the importance of planned transitions from acute mental health setting during periods of un-wellness, to the provision of proactive support to assist a person to better manage a tenancy during times of wellness.

2.4.2.6 People with substance misuse

The literature addressing the relationship between substance misuse and homelessness does not indicate that substance abuse is causal factor leading to homelessness, but rather that substance misuse is more likely to become an issue after a person becomes homeless (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008b). In 2014-15, 412 people (or 0.9% of all people who presented to a specialist homelessness service in Queensland) identified problematic alcohol and or drug use as being the main reason they presented to the service for assistance.
(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016a). Assessing the significance of this relatively low occurrence of substance misuse as the main reason is difficult, as the available literature on the connection between substance abuse and homelessness does not contain the same emphasis on biographical transitions as evident in other pathways (Johnson et al, 2015; Wood et al., 2015).

In their static model of homelessness, Johnson et al. (2015) found that for people with risk behaviours such as substance misuse, accessing the housing market was more important in preventing homelessness than the employment market. Their research noted that substance misuse does raise the chances of entering homelessness and reduce the likelihood of exiting homelessness. Research by Johnson et al. (2008) confirmed that the availability of ongoing and specialist services is critical to assist people with substance misuse problems to exit homelessness, and not return back to homelessness.

2.4.2.7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness

The data and evidence on homeless need in Australia has shown for a long time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples are overrepresented in homelessness statistics and continue to be at greater risk of homelessness than non-Indigenous Australians (Memmott et al., 2003; Wood et al., 2014). On Census night in 2011, the ABS found that there were 4,761 Indigenous homeless people in Queensland, constituting 24% of the total homeless population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012d). Research has pointed out the complex social, economic, human rights and cultural issues underpinning ATSI homelessness and the inadequacy of conventional understandings of homelessness are largely inadequate when applied to homeless ATSI people in Australia. This is particularly so in the context of overcrowding in ATSI households (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008; Memmott et al., 2012) and rough sleepers in different regions of Australia (Parsell, 2011; 2012). Homelessness research involving ATSI people has helped influence theory and knowledge about homelessness in rural and remote settings of Australia, as well as urban and metropolitan contexts. Birdsall-Jones and Shaw (2008) identified five broad types of ATSI homelessness including:

- Spiritual homelessness resulting from ATSI people being separated from land and country
- Overcrowding – more than appropriate number of people residing in an individual dwelling
• Transient homelessness – ATSI people who are transitioning between family and communities, for different reasons
• Escaping from harm and violence – ATSI people who are escaping from domestic and family violence and other situations of harm and violence
• Lack of access to shelter - simply no housing or accommodation options available to ATSI people.

These characteristics of ATSI homelessness differ across regions of Australia and ATSI people may experience more than one type of homelessness at the same time. It is important to recognise the underlying social, economic and cultural reasons for ATSI people having, in relative terms, a higher risk of homelessness, and a higher rate of homelessness compared to non-ATSI Australians. This thesis recognises the social, cultural and economic factors in ATSI homelessness at community and regional levels but sees the ATSI homelessness pathway as interconnected with other pathways to homelessness influenced by cultural, social and economic factors and not a separate pathway.

2.4.2.8 Other relevant research on populations vulnerable to homelessness

In addition to the six homelessness pathways selected for examination in this thesis, the literature explores the experience of a range of other population groups at greater risk of homelessness and experiencing higher rates of homelessness than the general population. Homelessness is increasingly being understood in terms of its relationship with other social issues. This includes people who have been incarcerated in prisons (Gokovic, Mills, & Meek, 2012), intergenerational homelessness resulting from poverty and disadvantage (Flatau et al., 2013) and, more recently, the relationship between gambling and risk of, or experience of homelessness (Holdsworth & Ticye, 2012).

The experiences of rough sleepers have also been a strong focus for scholars. For example, Coleman’s (2000) research with rough sleepers in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane found that rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness have very few or no private spaces in which to conduct day to day living activities. As such Coleman (2000) argues:

> Public spaces have become places of significance to some people experiencing homelessness and their connection with public space is threatened in inner city
People sleeping rough in public spaces, continues to be a contentious issue for many local government authorities, some of which have implemented drastic curtailment measures such as restricting (access to) facilities and enforcing “move on” laws.

Rough sleepers were given a strong focus in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2008) White Paper “The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness”. There was new investment in service delivery models aimed at reducing rough sleeping throughout Australia, including Street to Home services and Common Ground supportive housing, both based on the principles of Housing First. Evaluations and reviews of these models found that contextual factors such as the supply of affordable housing were critically important for assisting rough sleepers to obtain and sustain housing tenancies (Button & Baulderstone, 2012; Parsell & Jones, 2014). Parsell (2011) noted that the “assertive outreach” component of contemporary service models such as Street to Home was particularly effective in engaging with rough sleepers to access housing and end their experience of homelessness. There is little research specific to rough sleepers in mining communities, and information is largely limited to feedback from service providers delivering services to homeless people in these communities. This thesis will focus on the applicability of the existing literature on rough sleepers, mainly described from large urban settings, to the experiences of rough sleepers in mining communities.

Family homelessness is an area of particular interest for this study on homelessness in rural and regional mining communities. Research has examined the impact of family homelessness on family health and wellbeing and child development. Children in homeless families experience detrimental impacts on their health and development with children’s experiences of homelessness being:

characterised by high levels of family separation and exposure to violence, poor health outcomes, feelings of stress and anxiety, loss and grief, social isolation, difficulties attending and achieving at school, difficulties making and keeping friends (Gibson, 2010, p. 37).
Gibson (2010) noted that family homelessness often involves the family in interactions with both child protection and homelessness service systems, with support responses complicated as a result. Gibson argues that interventions with families at risk of homelessness, or who are experiencing homelessness, need to be multifaceted, identifying housing related goals as well as non-housing related goals such as education, employment, parenting and health issues which also impact the family’s situation and ability to access and maintain housing. Healy (2011) identified an outreach planning model for working with families that provides a focus on both housing and non-housing related goals. This research also shows that policies that promote incentives for people to take up employment and training and increase utilisation of child care and participation in education services serve to shift the focus from crisis responses to more planned family support (Healy, 2011). Research has also been undertaken showing the patterns and costs associated with families using crisis care and emergency shelters versus planned housing first responses. Families’ use of crisis-care services such as statutory child protection services, decreases while the family is using crisis accommodation services, but once they exit the emergency shelter their use of these acute services tends to increase (Culhane, Park, & Metraux, 2011). This evidence suggests a need for services and systems to become more proactive in their support of vulnerable families and that the best possible outcomes for family, both housing and non-housing, can be obtained through early intervention and Housing First responses.

Zufferey’s (2008) research on social work responses to homeless people in Australian cities found that homelessness needed to be seen in the context of gender, arguing that women’s experience of homelessness was not well understood outside of domestic and family violence discourses. In this same research Zufferey argued that homelessness must be located within socio-political paradigms and in particular the dominance of neo-liberalist ideology. Zufferey saw neo-liberal ideology as influencing government policy responses to homelessness in Australia in its attribution of blame to individuals for becoming homeless, rather than recognising the failures of social, economic and political structures. In a major Australian report on women’s homelessness and domestic and family violence, it was noted that women’s homelessness is often invisible in society with women’s experiences not well aligned to traditional definitions of homelessness because of the marginalisation of women in society and the private nature of their lives (Tually, Faulkner, Cutler, & Slatter, 2008). Women’s homelessness therefore requires a range of solutions and as Tually et al. (2008), contend there is “no one solution to domestic and family violence related homelessness and
there is no easy to roll out solution” (p. v). There is also a growing awareness of first time
homelessness amongst older Australian women experiencing poverty and issues associated
with low retirement income, minimal superannuation, housing affordability and family
breakdown (Petersen, Parsell, Phillips & White, 2014; Petersen & Parsell, 2014). The gender
and age analysis of homelessness are important considerations in examining causes of
homelessness and homelessness pathways.

Zufferey (2014) undertook content analysis of media and press representations of
homelessness and found that many representations of homeless people focused on individual
deficits and negative labels and stereotypes of homeless people. Roche (2014) took up the
issue of the impact of neo-liberalism and negative stereotypes on homeless people in his
study of the identities of homeless men. The study found that one of main challenges in
working with homeless men was negotiating a basis by which to restore their sense of self
and positive self-concept (Roche, 2014). The damaging impact of homelessness on the social
and psychological functioning and wellbeing of people cannot be underestimated. These
effects at the individual level are further exacerbated by political ideology and prevailing
economic processes which tend to make homeless adults an easy target for neo-liberal
attitudes. The values and attitudes underpinning neo-liberalism compound the binary of
“deserving” versus “undeserving” approaches to welfare in the public consciousness
(Jamrozik, 2009). The neo-liberal paradigm and some commentators’ conceptualisation of the
experiences of homeless people, causes immense damage to the individual self-esteem of
many people experiencing homelessness, and results in considerable difficulties for them in
accessing services.

As highlighted earlier, homelessness amongst older Australians is becoming a major focus of
media and policy writers. Identifying an age at which one is deemed old or elderly is not an
easy task. There are numerous policies, funding program, practitioner, cultural and social
research perspectives. For the purpose of this thesis, the approach adopted is that taken by the
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), that the age of 55 and over is
appropriate to describe the experiences of elderly homeless people (Petersen, et al., 2014).
The age of 55 takes into account the effects of people who have lived for periods of their life
in extreme disadvantage including repeated or enduring experiences of homelessness. The
AHURI research found that there were three main pathways to homelessness for older
Australian, including:
• People with a history of conventional housing.
• People who live with ongoing housing disruption.
• People with a transient housing history.

The AHURI research focused mainly on the first pathway which tended to encompass many people who had experienced homelessness for the first time as an older Australian. The causes of homelessness for this group of people, most of whom who had successfully privately rented housing throughout their lives included:

• Being served notice to vacate.
• Being unable to continue living with family.
• Lack of affordable housing options.
• Inaccessible housing design making it unsafe to continue residency.
• Breakdown in a relationship (Petersen et al., 2014, p. 3).

This research also called for more affordable and appropriate housing for older Australians, more commonly to be sourced through the social housing system and more integration of policy discourses across the ageing, housing and homelessness sectors.

The need to increase supply of affordable and appropriate housing for all vulnerable populations of homeless people is a recurring theme across the literature, and a major challenge for housing and homelessness policy responses. The issue of housing affordability in rural and regional mining communities will be critically examined in this thesis, particularly in those communities which experienced significant levels of housing unaffordability during the period of the mining boom from 2002 to 2012, followed by sharp increases in housing affordability during the mining downturn.

2.4.3 Service delivery trends

Homelessness research and literature reviewed for this thesis considers contemporary service delivery principles and homelessness service models and their social and economic outcomes. The following is a brief discussion on the research and literature surrounding contemporary service delivery principles underpinning responses to homelessness including the “Housing First principle”, prevention and early intervention approaches to homelessness, the critical interface of health care and homelessness and the “Safe at Home” initiatives as a preferred
response to prevent women and children escaping domestic and family violence becoming homelessness.

2.4.3.1 The Housing First principle

The ‘Housing First’ principle is an approach to working with chronically homeless people which prioritises the rapid provision of permanent housing complemented by flexible support services (Johnson, Parkinson, & Parsell, 2012). The provision of housing is not contingent on acceptance by the person of support services. The Housing First approach was pioneered by Sam Tsemberis who as a worker in the field of community psychiatry in New York, became frustrated about the numerous re-admissions of the same clients who presented largely as a result of homelessness and related issues (Tsemberis, 2004). Housing First is based on the principle that housing is a universal human right and should not be subject to compliance with medical treatment or behavioural change as a condition of access.

This Housing First approach is in contrast to traditional approaches to responding to chronically homeless people which have centred on the provision of crisis accommodation in emergency shelters, with the underlying premise that a person will eventually access permanent housing (Johnson et al., 2012). Flexible support services, in particular, the provision of case management services, are an integral part of the Housing First approach. This support is aimed at building skills and confidence within their own home so that the tenant does not face risk of eviction and therefore again experience homelessness.

The Housing First principle has been applied in a range of countries and jurisdictions and achieved a great deal of success in relation to ending homelessness for chronically homeless people. There is also growing evidence to show that Housing First approaches are not only successful in addressing chronic homelessness, but also extremely cost effective for the funding authority (Parsell et al., 2015).

In Queensland, over the past decade there are growing examples of service delivery which attempt to reflect the Housing First principle including “Street to Home” services, “Brisbane Common Ground” and youth foyers. These services provide housing to homeless people, or people at risk of homelessness, with access to support services. They differ from the traditional homelessness service models which provide temporary supported accommodation.
2.4.3.2 Homelessness prevention and early intervention

Approaches to prevention and early intervention are a more recent phenomenon in homelessness service delivery approaches. These approaches are predicated on a view that intervening in a way which prevents people at risk of homelessness from going on to experience episodes of homelessness or intervening early to safeguard a vulnerable person from further experiences of homelessness, are a worthwhile endeavour. Understandings of homelessness and service delivery responses have traditionally focused on people who are in crisis and requiring a range of emergency or crisis related supports. In the sphere of homelessness service provision this is often represented by the homeless shelter or crisis refuge. Although some of these service delivery models have a place within contemporary service systems, Government policy has moved to identifying strategies which provide early intervention, or otherwise help to prevent or safeguard at risk populations from experiencing homelessness (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs, 2008; D’Souza et al., 2014).

In Australia, the “Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994” introduced the notion of “people at risk of homelessness” as being a legitimate area to focus funding and resources. The concept of early intervention is linked to the notion of “risk of homelessness” in that it recommends resources directed at people at risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless (D’souza et al., 2014). The Act supported funding of early intervention responses to homelessness which were funded across Australian states and territories that focused on the timely provision of support to vulnerable people who, without such support, faced eviction from their housing and the very real prospect of homelessness (Supported Accommodation Assistance Act, 1994, pp. 8-9). These interventions tended to be short to medium term and focused on social and financial issues placing the person at risk of homelessness such as loss of employment, or issues relating to a significant health concern. This approach underpins the Queensland NPAH Homestay Supportive Initiative (Department of Communities, 2009).

Prevention in a homelessness context is a slightly different concept to early intervention as it takes a stronger focus on high risk populations including people who have mental health issues, people who have exited statutory institutions such as prisons, and out of home care settings, as well as people who have experienced repeated episodes of homelessness over a long time-frame. As discussed earlier in this chapter, prevention as a concept gained profile with the “Turning off the Tap” strategy developed in the Australian Government White Paper
“The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness in Australia” (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008). Specifically, the White Paper noted that prevention strategies should be focused on “key transition points and life events” (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008, p. 24) including young people leaving child protection and youth justice systems, people leaving hospital and other health facilities, particularly mental health facilities and drug and alcohol services and people leaving prison after serving sentences for 12 months or more.

The White Paper called for far greater “integrated service provision to prevent women and children becoming homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence” (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008, p. 32). Apicello (2010) found that homelessness prevention strategies are most effective when the approach of targeting high risk populations at individual client level is coupled with strategies including increasing the supply of low cost, affordable housing and improving income at the societal level. Prevention strategies are not intended to concentrate solely at the individual client level but also recognise the need to address broader economic issues such as supply of affordable housing within a community or region.

Early intervention has gained traction in service delivery for young people and women and children escaping domestic and family violence (Johnson et al., 2008). The Reconnect Program was implemented in the late 1990s in many locations across Australia focusing on young people aged 12 to 18 years who were at risk of homelessness and promoted an early intervention response to young people at risk of homelessness. After several years of operation, Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2005) argued that not only should Reconnect be expanded across Australia, but that there needed to be greater coordination in local communities to ensure available resources and support are directed to young people at risk of homelessness, to prevent the young person going on to experience homelessness. Mackenzie (2016) also argued that instead of doing more of the same, Government should continue to develop youth homelessness early intervention responses:

   Early intervention for young people should have a major focus on working with schools but not as a school-based program. Rather, what is needed is a
community-based approach in which schools and agencies work together in a new cross-sectoral collaboration (p. 10).

This approach places emphasis on improving the level of collaboration between schools and non-government organisations providing support services to young people at risk of homelessness. Early intervention is a theme also underpinning “Safe at Home” service delivery responses to women and children who are at risk of homelessness as a result of escaping domestic and family violence. This area will be further explored later in this chapter.

Finally, the concept of prevention and early intervention has also been associated with the concept of tenancy sustainment. Jones, McAuliffe, Reddel, Marston and Thompson (2003) define sustaining tenancies as a form of “eviction prevention” in that housing services commit to providing:

All possible and reasonable actions by a housing authority to support tenants in order to prevent their eviction from public housing. More broadly, supportive tenancy management can be viewed as actions of the housing authority designed to maintain a tenancy and to maximise the likelihood of positive housing and other non-shelter outcomes (p.1).

Tenancy sustainment has been adopted as an approach to supporting vulnerable people to maintain their tenancies. This approach has also been found to be effective in preventing homelessness.

2.4.3.3 The interface between healthcare and homelessness

Hospitals have long been recognised as places where homeless people present for assistance and support. Health care staff in accident and emergency departments of hospitals are accustomed to working with homeless people, in particular rough sleepers who present to the hospital for assistance (Moore, Gerdzt, Hepworth, & Manias, 2011; Sadowski, Kee, VanderWeele, & Buchanan, 2009). This situation has brought tension to the health care system with conflicting views of the reasons for homeless people presenting to hospitals, and this conjecture influencing the service response that is provided to these people. On the one hand, there is a view that homeless people present to hospitals with social issues relating to
their homelessness, with no significant health concerns. It follows from this view that homeless people are then using significant health care resources for non-health issues. On the other hand, there is considerable evidence that many homeless people do present with valid issues including drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues and physical injuries requiring health care assistance, and that homeless people do not receive the health care service they require because of their personal status and stigma (Coleman, 2000; Parsell, 2011).

The provision of case management services to homeless people who present to accident and emergency departments is seen as critical to be able to work effectively with people experiencing chronic homelessness (Sadowski et al., 2009). Case management services that focus on achieving safe and secure housing for homeless people is also known to reduce the rate of representation of homeless people to accident and emergency departments (Moore et al., 2011).

There is a complex interaction between social and health issues that influence the interventions with homeless people presenting to accident and emergency departments. The importance of integrated service delivery and collaboration across housing, homelessness and health care services has been established in a range of research and literature (Culhane & Byrne, 2010; Flatau, Conroy, & Burns, 2010). This area of practice is challenging from the point of view of practice ethics to ensure that homeless people who are amongst the most powerless people in society, have their rights respected and their needs met within the healthcare setting through ethical decision making (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015; McAuliffe, 2014). The other tension that arises for homeless people in hospital settings is in the process of discharge planning and policy about whether hospital inpatients should be discharged to situations of homelessness. Costello et al. (2013) found that good quality discharge planning for people with a mental health issue from a hospital is a strong homelessness prevention strategy. Their research emphasised the value of the perspective of health care workers in relation to working with homeless people, in particular, people experiencing chronic homelessness and strategies which have assisted to end the person’s experience of homelessness.

Given the media attention that homeless people with mental health issues have received in relation to being discharged to ongoing homelessness, there seems to be a widening gap
between the policy rhetoric around not exiting people to homelessness from hospitals and the realities of practice. The discussion about how to best respond to homeless people presenting to accident and emergency departments with complex issues cannot be separated from the discussion about ending chronic homelessness and the Housing First principle. Homelessness scholars such as Tsemberis (2004) identified the poor client outcomes and inefficiencies of systems, such as hospitals responding to the same people experiencing repeated episodes homelessness, including people experiencing chronic homelessness.

2.4.4 Domestic and family violence and homelessness

The relationship between domestic and family violence and homelessness has long been contested in academic literature and in government policy and funding programs (Bryce, 2015; Burnet, 2016). Domestic and family violence refuges were established in Australia in the 1970s to respond to a need for women and children who were experiencing homelessness as a result of escaping the male perpetrator of violence. The purpose of these services is to assist women and children escaping domestic and family violence as a temporary safe supported accommodation response. Specialist homelessness services including domestic and family violence refuges, are part of the existing housing and homelessness service system in the communities of interest of this study.

In Queensland, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 recognises that domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Queensland, and defines domestic and family violence in the following way:

Section 8 Meaning of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence means a behaviour by a person (the first person) towards another person (second person) with whom the first person is in a relationship that:

- is physically or sexually abusive; or
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- is economically abusive; or
is threatening; or
is coercive; or
in any other way controls or dominates the second person and causes the second person to fear for the second person’s safety and wellbeing or that of someone else. (Derived from the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act*, 2012, p. 17)

The Act goes on to further define types of abuse and situations and contexts in which domestic violence may occur.

During the course of this study, the Queensland Government commissioned former Governor-General Dame Quentin Bryce to undertake a specific inquiry into the level of domestic and family violence in Queensland and examine service system responses. The Queensland Government released the “Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland Report” in 2015 as a vehicle for implementing major policy and service system change aimed at reducing domestic and family violence in Queensland (Bryce, 2015). This report focused on a range of strategies and mechanisms to reduce incidents of domestic and family violence in Queensland and improve service delivery responses from all part of the service delivery continuum.

The report recommended strengthening existing support services such as domestic violence refuges, in particular, their funding arrangements and practice requirements and protocols (Bryce, 2015). Significant to this thesis, the report also discussed strengthening the powers of the Queensland Police Service and provision of safety upgrades to victims of violence where it is appropriate for victims to remain in their own homes and not then have to experience homelessness. These strategies constitute a homelessness prevention response.

International approaches of Home Safe as a preventative response to supporting victims of domestic and family violence (Netto, Pawson, & Sharp, 2009; Spinney, 2012; 2014) have demonstrated that prevention can be very effective. In a comprehensive study of women and families escaping domestic and family violence and repeated use of crisis services, Spinney (2014) found that integrated Safe at Home schemes are very effective noting:
Women living in metropolitan areas, rural isolated areas, in owner occupied, privately rented, public, jointly owned and jointly tenanted housing, with injunctions and police orders or without, have all been assisted to remain living safely in their homes, with no evidence that they are at more at risk if they had left (p. 62).

This notion of preventing homelessness for women and families escaping domestic and family violence will be given further consideration in this research focusing on homelessness in rural and regional mining communities.

2.5 Rural homelessness research and literature

National and international homelessness research has tended to concentrate on urban settings, major metropolitan cities and state capitals. This has had the effect of reinforcing the notion that homelessness is an urban problem. It has also strengthened the perception of homelessness being largely about inner city rough sleepers. Other than Australian Bureau of Statistics Census counts and the work of a few researchers, homelessness research in non-urban contexts has not been the focus of much recent research (Beer et al., 2005; Cloke, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2002; Milbourne & Cloke, 2006). Defining rural and regional communities, rural poverty and migration trends in rural communities, are all themes within rural homelessness research which will be considered in this section.

It is important to establish a definition of remote, rural, regional and metropolitan communities so that homelessness research can be located within the appropriate community context. There are different and competing definitions that are applied to community studies to distinguish remote, rural, regional and metropolitan communities. For the purpose of this study and consistent with other secondary evidence used here, the Australian Statistical Geography Standard used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, is adopted. This approach identifies and analyses data from “Mesh Blocks” which are smallest geographical areas, leading to “SLAs, State and Territory and Nationwide” data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Two regions of relevance to this study are the Mackay Region and Isaac Region which are defined as ABS SA3 level and made up of a number of SLAs. For the purpose of this study, and taking into account population of community and remoteness, Dysart and Moranbah will be referred to as rural mining communities and Mackay will be referred to as a regional mining community.
Although the research and literature on rural homelessness has been sparse, there has been some notable work which has challenged the perception of homelessness being an exclusively urban phenomenon. In particular, the work of researchers from the United Kingdom Cloke and Milbourne identified rural homelessness as a “hidden homelessness” because people experiencing homelessness in these communities tend not to be visible rough sleepers as in large cities and these communities tend to have fewer human services and resources available to support homeless people (Milbourne & Cloke, 2006; Cloke, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2002). Indeed, the common perception of rural communities as being “idyllic” places for families, even inclusive communities where everyone knows each other and offers support to one another, has detracted from understandings of homelessness in these communities (Milbourne & Cloke, 2006). These common perceptions of rural communities are often applied to mining communities throughout Australia.

Rural poverty research in Wales has found that people who would otherwise be defined as living in poverty in rural communities, do not necessarily see themselves as experiencing material poverty and deprivation, and that community belonging, attachment, peace and tranquillity were more highly valued than material hardship and social exclusion (Milbourne, 2014). Similar to the notion of “hidden homeless” in rural communities, this research identified the “physical invisibility” of many poor people in rural communities because poverty tended to impact a wider range of demographic groups in rural communities. Older people living in poverty are a demographic group who are physically invisible to the broader community. There are significant challenges for policy makers developing strategies to deal with poverty in rural communities because of the physical invisibility of the poor in rural communities.

Research on rural communities in the United Kingdom has also focussed on the issues of in and out migration. Rural communities have tended to be characterised by “fixity” and “mobility”, where the former refers to community members who are long-term community members and the latter refers to people moving to rural communities, and moving from rural communities (Milbourne, 2007). Fixity and mobility can be both an advantage and a disadvantage for rural communities. Rural communities rely upon people to move to the community to replace the numbers of people who naturally leave, especially younger people who move to larger cities for education, employment and lifestyle opportunities. There are
particular issues about ensuring the population of people moving to rural communities are people who bring with them the necessary skills and resources to succeed and also to replenish the community with skills that have been lost by the migration out of the community.

The research on migration to and from, rural communities in the United Kingdom has also included discussion about migrants from overseas countries. Milbourne (2007) contends that:

… migration to rural communities by migrants is less about lifestyle-based relocations and rural idylls and more about economic migration, low wage economies and poverty, although their socio-cultural impacts in particular rural places should not be underestimated (p.384).

This view of migration to rural communities by migrants recognises that poorly planned migration involving vulnerable groups can have some detrimental impacts for this group of people trying to establish new lives in rural communities. Appropriate planning is required to ensure this type of migration into rural communities sets vulnerable migrant groups up to succeed in their new environment. If managed well, this type of migration can bring socio-cultural benefits to the community.

In the Australian context, social researchers have highlighted the issue of rural disadvantage and in some instances rural decline. Cheers (1998) noted that the Australian welfare system had largely failed rural Australia and that there were challenges for human service organisations operating in rural communities because of policy settings which favoured urban areas. Importantly this research noted the practical challenges facing human service organisations in rural communities such as attracting and recruiting an appropriate workforce and navigating often fragmented service systems. This research noted that there were negative consequences associated with housing policy settings which favoured private home ownership in rural communities at the expense of social housing. The place and function of social housing within rural and regional mining communities will be a crucial area of inquiry for this research. This type of research on migration in and out rural communities in Australia is a gap in the research and literature.
Chenoweth and McAuliffe (2015) identified specific challenges for social workers practicing in rural communities, in particular, that social workers and human service workers need to have a generalist skills and knowledge base as workers are required to respond to the needs of the clients in their community with a diverse range of needs encompassing fields such as housing and homelessness, child protection, mental health, domestic and family violence and working with young people. Housing and homelessness issues are but one set of challenges facing social workers in rural Australian communities.

There has also been an increasing range of research regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness across Australia, particularly in remote regions of Far North Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008; Memmott et al., 2003; 2012). This research has contributed significantly to challenging traditional understanding of homelessness and brought a particular focus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness as a result of severe overcrowding.

More recent research has identified the need for greater service integration in rural communities to achieve better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness (Neale et al., 2012). Practical examples of service integration in a regional and rural community include the following:

- the creation of multipurpose hubs offering integrated case management;
- the creation of service provider networks; and
- merging of government agencies and school linked care programs.

These elements of good practice are more readily established in some rural and regional communities because there is a shared understanding that agencies need to cooperate and work well together to achieve the best outcomes for clients. Rural communities are also assisted by virtue of having less bureaucratic interference from government agencies responsible for policy and funding programs based out of state capitals.

Jervis-Tracey, Chenoweth, McAuliffe, O’Connor and Stehlik (2012) highlighted the tensions facing statutory social workers and human service workers in rural and remote communities in Australia, as workers practise in accordance with their professional training and ethical
base as well as being resident community members. Jervis-Tracey et al. (2012) research provides a basis for understanding the complex social, legal and medical issues facing workers in rural communities as they discharge their professional duties. This is highly relevant to social workers and human service workers practicing in rural and regional mining communities who are faced with managing complex interactions with community members and in some instances dual relationships. This topic will be explored further in Chapter Four.

Chapter Conclusion

This first literature review chapter has provided a thorough overview of the history of homelessness policy and research in Australia. The chapter then considered approaches to the definition and measurement of homelessness and considered a variety of national and international homelessness research. The chapter also explored the nexus between structural causes of homelessness and individual life events and circumstances. This discussion informed the pathways approach to understanding the processes and events that people experience that lead to homelessness, their experience of being homeless and the activities which help to end the person’s experience of homelessness. Critical review of this literature has been important to position this research in a way that challenges existing theory and knowledge about homelessness as it explores homelessness in non-metropolitan non-urban contexts.

The chapter considered the extensive literature relating to some specific pathways based on demographic groups at particular risk of homelessness, or other social processes. These included pathways regarding young people, family breakdown and domestic and family violence, people experiencing severe housing stress, unemployment, people with mental health concerns, people with substance misuse issues and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness pathways. Scholarly literature on contemporary homelessness research and service delivery trends including the Housing First principle, homelessness prevention and early intervention, the interface of healthcare and homelessness, domestic and family violence and cost effectiveness of homelessness services was considered. The chapter concluded with an in-depth discussion about key themes arising from national and international rural homelessness research. Chapter Two has provided a theoretical foundation for this research on homelessness in Queensland regional and rural mining communities.
Chapter Three will examine the socio-economic impacts of the mining industry on rural and regional mining communities in detail.
Chapter 3: Literature Review (2): The mining industry, homelessness and rural and regional Australian mining communities

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Not only has mining been a major industry throughout Australia’s history, mining continues to be fundamental to Australia’s economy. It has employed many Australians based in cities and rural and regional areas and is Australia’s major export industry. Mining has also had a significant foothold in different regions with the history of the region inextricably linked to the history of the mining industry. The Bowen Basin region in Central Queensland which encompasses the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart is one such region. As documented in Chapter One, this region experienced transformative effects during the decade long mining boom from 2002 to 2012 but then has experienced considerable uncertainty during the subsequent economic downturn since 2012. The downturn has also generated an increase in debate about the future of mining, in particular coal mining, and whether the economic benefits of the industry actually outweigh the environmental and social costs of mining. Chapter Two has considered the national and international homelessness research relevant to this study. This chapter will focus specifically on the contribution of mining to Australia and to the Bowen Basin region with particular reference to the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. Community level information and demographic data will be presented and analysed. Homelessness data and research pertaining to mining communities will also be examined. This analysis of literature specific to mining communities will contextualise this research, identifying what is known regarding the impacts of the mining cycle on housing and homelessness issues in these communities, as well as clarifying where the gaps in knowledge exist.

3.2 The contribution of the mining industry to Australia’s economy and society

Mining is a dominant industry for many Australian rural and regional communities. It is also a dominant industry for the Australian economy. Indeed, Australia’s ability to withstand the
economic challenges associated with the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 was largely put down to the booming mining industry. While this view is generally accepted in this research, it will not go without critique particularly in the context of the social disadvantage generated by the mining boom and the socio-economic implications of the “two speed economy”. This literature review chapter examines the contribution of mining to the Australian economy and society and critically explores the evidence supporting linkages between the mining industry and the impacts on homelessness in regional and rural mining communities.

3.2.1 The economic arguments supporting the mining industry

Mining has easily become Australia’s most important export industry and is fundamentally connected to discussions about the success of the national economy and the wealth of the nation. Many have argued that the world’s appetite for Australia’s minerals, in particular China and India, and their demand for Australia’s coal and iron ore, was the major mitigating factor preventing Australia experiencing the economic recession post the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. The Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) noted in their 2011 Annual Report that there had been a sustained surge in mining investment despite the global downturn and that mineral exports from Australia in 2011 realised $154 billion for the Australian economy representing 52% of all of Australia’s exports. This report coincided with the height of the mining boom period in Australia. Despite the mining downturn having impacted the industry from 2012, the MCA 2015 Annual Report highlighted how the mining industry now represented 54% of all of Australia’s exports and that the mining boom had left a dividend to Australians which included:

- Economic contribution – mining shares of the Gross Domestic Product had increased from 6.9% before the boom to 9% post boom.
- Job creation – Direct employment in 2015 was more than double the pre-mining boom workforce, and that 61% of all jobs created were based in regional Australia.
- Taxation and Royalties - $165 billion paid to the federal, state and territory governments in the decade to 2014-15.

Nationally there is general acceptance that the mining boom period did engender economic prosperity for many Australians. These benefits flowed to people in metropolitan
communities and in some instances, to people living in smaller rural and regional mining communities. The benefits were not available to all, and for the benefits that were generated for some, there was a commensurate chasm of social and economic disadvantage for other Australians. Nevertheless, even in the current mining downturn period, many Australians have accepted the ongoing value and worth of the mining industry to future economic prosperity (Cleary, 2011; Edwards, 2014; Local Government Association of Queensland, 2010). The economic benefits of the mining industry are widely viewed as fundamental to Australia’s future prosperity.

The Queensland Government has also long emphasised the value of the mining industry to the state economy. Midway through the recent mining boom, the Queensland Government identified the significance of mining to the state economy noting that the mining industry was directly responsible for the following range of economic and social benefits to Queenslanders:

- Mineral wealth had led to the lowering of prices of goods and services such as electricity which increases the competitiveness of business and helps supports more jobs.
- Mineral wealth circulates money through the economy and back into local communities.
- Mining activity provides jobs and services and supports industries.
- Mining contributes to government income that funds social services, royalties, company and income taxes paid by mining companies providing services such as hospitals, police, roads and welfare support.;
- Mining wealth contributes directly to social and environmental programs.
- Mining wealth returns profits to shareholders (Derived from the Department of Mines and Energy, 2007, p. 1).

At the time these claims escaped critical commentary in both media and academic discourses. The potency of the mining industry was nonetheless very apparent. Political and electoral success was linked, and continues to be linked, to the perceived success and benefits of the coal mining industry to Queensland and many of these claims of advancing the benefits of mining to Queensland have been, and continue to be disputed by economists, environmentalists and some of citizenry of mining communities who do not believe mining companies contributed adequately to local infrastructure during peak periods during the mining boom. Notwithstanding recent movement in some policy areas towards renewables
energies, the future prosperity of Queensland and Australia is still seen to centre on the capacity of the state to produce coal.

There has been conjecture in social policy, economic and political discourses about what Australia actually gained from the decade long mining boom and did Australia in fact, waste a lot of the economic and social opportunities associated with this period? Edwards’ (2014) thesis argued that while the mining boom did elevate living standards in Australia, most Australians tended to save the income generated from the mining boom, not splurge it and that Australians were generally more frugal during this period. Edwards’ thesis opposed the widely held view expressed by writers such as prominent Australian journalist Paul Cleary (2011) that the Australian Government wasted the benefits of the mining boom on tax cuts for the wealthy and infrastructure projects designed to appeal to the voting public. It is important to note that Edwards’ argument was made at a national level without inclusion of evidence from local and regional areas. The decade long mining boom clearly created economic advantages for Australians in capital cities and urban areas as well as some rural and regional locations giving rise to the term “two speed economy” highlighting how the mining industry powered the Australian economy producing greater economic benefits for those directly employed in the mining sector. Edwards (2014) further argued that:

Because of the decades of prosperity, Australians find themselves well prepared for the next phase of expansion. ... Australians have handled the investment boom in mining and the increase in export income reasonably well. Much of the household income gained was saved, the capital stock has been augmented and the quality of human capital has improved and the size of the workforce rapidly expanded. Household consumption growth has remained moderate. Far from being complacent, Australians were reasonably cautious and frugal in the early stages of the resource upswing, and more so after the global financial crisis in 2008 (p.132).

This view of the mining boom is widely contested by public affairs commentators (Cleary, 2011; Hetherington, 2015) and mining companies who typically blame government for inadequate fiscal and taxation policy settings to better enable further industry growth. This counterview of the mining industry should be critiqued given the size of economic growth which occurred during the mining boom.
3.2.2 Applying the concept of a Social License to Operate (SLO) to mining operations in rural and regional areas

The Social License to Operate (SLO) refers to the implied social contract between mining companies and local communities supporting the mining industry, that the industry will bring shared benefits to the community, and that it is on this basis of shared understanding and agreement on the benefits that the community provides their approval and support for the mining enterprise to occur (Owen & Kemp, 2012). The difficulties in obtaining commitment by mining companies to the Social License to Operate has been the focus of much discussion over recent decades, and this concept has been diluted in public discourses concerning the mining boom. Lacey (2013) argues that formalised contractual arrangements between the mining communities and companies should be promoted. Legislating this social contract appears to be common sense but as this article points out, it may also bring a level of bureaucracy to the relationship between mining communities and mining companies which may not be altogether constructive to either party.

Mining industry bodies championing the SLO as a way forward to ensure viability of the mining sector is extensive. However, SLOs have been difficult to develop and to maintain (Owen & Kemp, 2012). In the review of literature undertaken for this thesis it was difficult to locate examples in Australia where SLOs have been meaningful and achieved their purpose. Most research identifies the relational issues as being at the core of the efficacy of SLOs, for example, Owen and Kemp (2012) argue that a good way forward for the mining industry in Australia is to reconcile their fundamental risk-orientation with external expectations which would bring about a less defensive and more constructive approach to stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The concept of a SLO will be interrogated in this research in the context of homelessness in rural and regional mining communities.

The past decade has also seen a growth in research focusing on the role of business and the private sector providing support and solutions to the social, economic and sustainability challenges facing communities. This thesis has adopted the International Organisation for Standardisation's (2010) definition of corporate social responsibility as “the responsibility of organisations for the impacts of its decision and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour that:

- Contributes to sustainable development including the health and welfare of society.
• Takes into account the expectations of stakeholders.
• Is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviours.
• Is integrated throughout the organisation and practiced in its relationships. (derived from www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/iso2600)

This definition is useful in considering the potential role of private mining companies in their social obligations and their “contract” with mining communities particularly during times of prolonged mining boom.

Critical analysis has highlighted the point that mining companies and their rhetorical use of corporate social responsibility could be viewed as a vehicle to promote acceptance of the negative impact of mining on communities. Although concern for social, environmental, ethical and community sustainability outcomes are a focus for corporate organisations, in their research of mining companies throughout Australia involved in coal and iron ore operations, Warburton, Shapiro, Buckley and van Gellecum (2004) found that the social, environmental and community outcomes were secondary to profit outcomes as the overriding motivation for mining companies. As a way of elevating the importance of corporate social responsibility across the private sector, Schwarz (2007) argues for a more extensive normative approach across industry in adopting corporate social responsibility as a central ethos in their respective business plans.

Formalised protocols and arrangements between the mining industry and rural and regional communities based on identifying and agreeing on priorities and processes for resolving grievances, have been identified as necessary policy architecture if mining companies are to be taken seriously on their claims of corporate social responsibility to rural and regional communities in the future (Kemp & Bond, 2009). Research undertaken by the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland has emphasised the inadequacy of devolved responsibilities in mining companies and government and informal grievance processes for dealing with local and community concerns about mining activity and the impact of mining on their local community (Kemp & Bond, 2009). The engagement and relationship of mining companies with local mining communities will be the subject of considerable exploration in this study.
Corporate social responsibility will be a central theme for consideration of evidence and data available to this research. How well mining companies have discharged their corporate social responsibility in the communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah is crucial to answering the research question of what impact the mining industry has had on homelessness in these communities.

3.3 Homelessness in Australian mining communities

With the preceding overview of research into the hitherto generally unconnected topics of homelessness and the mining industry as background, this study now proceeds to examine the links between them, based on evidence drawn from a specific region. This study will consider in detail the Bowen Basin, with specific attention to the Isaac and Mackay local government areas, as the region of interest for examining the role and impacts of the mining industry, particularly during the 2002-2012 mining boom and subsequent downturn.

This section of the literature review will focus on the specific social, economic and demographic profiles of the three communities of interest to this study, and the issues of homelessness in these communities. The media attention devoted to the mining cycle and the impact of the mining cycle on mining communities will also be reviewed as this informs the national outlook and psyche about the future of the nation, in particular mining regions impacted by mining downturn. Relevant housing studies will be considered, as will social impact assessment processes governing new approvals for mining activity. Finally, all other relevant social research exploring the impacts of mining on rural and regional mining communities will be reviewed to establish the framework for the research undertaken drawing some relevant connections to discussions about homelessness in mining communities.

3.3.1 Social, economic and demographic profiles of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah

3.3.1.1 Mackay region
Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart are situated within the Bowen Basin Region of Queensland. These communities have been at the centre of the mining industry boom from 2002 to 2012 and subsequent mining downturn. The social, economic and demographic data regarding
these three communities has been greatly influenced by the nature of the mining boom and downturn cycle. In 2014, the Queensland Government Statisticians Office (2014) identified 41 operational mines situated within the Bowen Basin Region. This region encompasses communities including Clermont, Collinsville, Glenden, Bowen, Whitsunday, Mirani and Sarina which are not part of this research. A Map of the Bowen Basin Region is included in Appendix A. These mines make the Bowen Basin Queensland’s largest provider of coal. The Mackay Local Government Area is generally referred to as its own ‘mini’ region within the Bowen Basin and the communities of Moranbah and Dysart are located within the neighbouring Isaac Local Government region. Most data and evidence available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics is organised according to this classification hence this research will refer to the Mackay and Isaac regions (defined by their respective local government area boundaries) but noting these two regions constitute a major portion of the Bowen Basin region.

Mackay has experienced dramatic change which is reflected in the social, economic and demographic data specifically population, housing and employment data as a basis for understanding the structural causes of homelessness. Table 3.1 describes social, economic and demographic trends in Mackay (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2016a). This data is derived from several sources spanning the 2011 to 2016 period.

Despite the current downturn, the mining industry continues to be the largest employer within the Mackay region. The data about Mackay shows the effect that the mining downturn has had on the community with the status of house prices are lower and employment considerably higher compared to the Queensland average after the period of the mining boom. Income remains slightly higher in Mackay compared to the Queensland average.
Table 3.1. Mackay regional profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mackay</th>
<th>State of Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population as of June 30, 2015</td>
<td>123,724</td>
<td>4,778,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous population of Mackay</td>
<td>4,912 (4.4%)</td>
<td>155,824 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population situated in the most disadvantaged socio-economic quintile #</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent for a three bedroom house as at 30 June 2016</td>
<td>$290</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median personal income as at 2011 Census</td>
<td>$36,660</td>
<td>$30,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate at June 30, 2016</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment by industry</td>
<td>11.1% in mining industry (highest occupation) followed by 10.3% in construction industry</td>
<td>11.9% of employed persons worked in health care and social assistance industry followed by 10.7% of employed persons worked in retail trade industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median house sale price at of 31 March 2016</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
<td>$430,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Explanation of most disadvantaged SEIFA quintile
Derived from Queensland Government Statistician’s Office (2016a)

3.3.1.2 Isaac region

Social, economic and demographic trends impacting the Isaac region show a similar post mining boom result. It must be noted that in addition to the larger rural mining communities of Moranbah and Dysart, the Isaac region includes a number of other small communities, including rural and coastal communities of Carmilla, Clairview, St. Lawrence and smaller
mining communities including Glenden, Coppabella and Nebo. Table 3.2 notes the social economic and demographic information pertaining to the Isaac region (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2016b).

Table 3.2. Isaac regional profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Isaac</th>
<th>State of Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population as at June 30, 2015</td>
<td>24,267</td>
<td>4,778,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous population of Isaac as at 2011 Census</td>
<td>604 (2.7%)</td>
<td>155,824 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population situated in the most disadvantaged socio-economic quintile #</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent for a three bedroom house as at 30 June 2016</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median personal income as at 2011 Census</td>
<td>$54,704</td>
<td>$30,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate as at June 30, 2016</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment by industry</td>
<td>39.5% in Mining Industry (highest occupation) followed by 8.5% in agriculture, fisheries and forestry industry</td>
<td>11.9% of employed person worked in health care and social assistance industry followed by 10.7% of employed persons worked in retail trade industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median house sale price as at 31 March 2016</td>
<td>$167,000</td>
<td>$430,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Explanation of most disadvantaged SEIFA quintile
Derived from Queensland Government Statistician’s Office (2016b)
The data suggesting relatively low housing costs must be placed within a historical context given the same report identified median house rents exceeding $1,200 per week during 2011-2012 at the tail end of the mining boom. Otherwise other data on personal income, employment levels and costs of housing would indicate that the Isaac region is in a very different situation now to respond to the challenges of homelessness than at any point during the long mining boom period.

Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah comprise a cluster of mining communities with strong formal and informal connections between communities. Mackay is the larger coast regional centre and home to a broader range of economic, financial and business activity. Much of this activity supports the mining industry. The inland rural mining communities of Dysart and Moranbah are largely based around supporting the mines within their region. These communities were originally established as mining communities but because of their size and location experience greater social challenges associated with isolation. The community of Dysart has a natural relationship with the community of Moranbah which is approximately 90 kilometres from Moranbah on the Moranbah and Dysart Road. The relationship between the two communities is strong because of the common mining industry which supports both communities. Community members may live in Moranbah but are involved in work sites near Dysart and vice versa. Driving from Moranbah to Dysart gives an opportunity to view a number of mining sites. Dysart and Moranbah are both situated within the Isaac Regional Council area. Moranbah, a slightly larger community with a broader range of services and infrastructure, is the logical next community that residents of Dysart travel to for services including a greater range of health care, speciality shopping and industry related goods and services. Moranbah is also serviced by a public transport including a modern airport, coach and rail services which are not available to residents in Dysart.

3.4 Media attention to the mining boom and downturn cycle

The decade 2002 to 2012 saw sensational headlines in the media about the coal driven mining boom in Queensland and the iron ore boom in Western Australia. On 23 March 2008, the Sunday Mail reported that “High-level income boom in mining towns” (Connolly, 2008: p.4). The article identified the mining communities of Tieri, Moranbah and Blackwater all within the Bowen Basin, as being in the Queensland’s top post codes for annual taxable income. The
tone of this article characterises the majority of media devoted to the mining boom for most of its duration.

During the course of this research there was considerable television and press media in local state and national newspapers. During the initial stages of this research media attention centred on the advent of the mining downturn as reflected in a focus piece on the Bowen Basin Region by the ABC current affairs program Four Corners (Fowler, 2012) and if it had, what impact this would have on employment and the national economy. A major headline in the Queensland online newspaper Brisbane Times on 17 October 2012 was “Mining Companies Prepare for Cut Throat Future” (Jabour, 2012), and the state newspaper The Courier Mail on 21 January 2013 was “Mining Jobs look Shaky” (McCarthy, 2013). The Sydney Morning Herald published an article on 28 January 2014 declaring “Mining boom peak spells danger for the economy but it is not all bad news” (Hutchens, 2014), noting that while there was a slowing of mining and economic activity, the downturn was not entirely bad news, with record low interest rates and a falling Australian dollar likely to strengthen parts of the economy, manufacturing, retail, tourism and utilities industries, that have been relatively weak and are forecast to pick up pace.

Mackay’s local newspaper, The Daily Mercury, ran headlines on 8 May 2014 alerting the local community that “FIFO Makes it Hard for Locals” (Russell, 2014a) and that Mackay was missing out on mining royalties to other regions and states was discussed in the article “Great Royalties Debate: State Hits Back at Council” (Russell, 2014b). These headlines highlighted the tensions in the Mackay area with perceptions that mining wealth was not benefiting the local community and that FIFO workers were making it even harder for local Mackay residents to obtain employment in mining.

More serious aspects of the mining downturn impact on Mackay were noted in in The Courier Mail article on 4 April 2015 stating “Mackay is struggling as mining boom ends” (Madigan, 2015). This article discussed Mackay City managing the fallout from the depressed coal price since late 2012 which had caused a spike in unemployment, mortgage failures, and thousands of residents searching for jobs elsewhere. This issue was again discussed in the context of the impact of the mining downturn in the Isaac region with The Courier Mail article of 4 April 2015 “Would You Pay $540,000 For This?” asserting the mining bust had wreaked havoc on the housing market, with some homes selling for less than
their value, median house prices in the Isaac region tumbling by 37\% over the past two years (Foster, 2015, p.23).

In September 2015, the national journal Australian Mining argued that the first sign of a mining recovery in Australia was evident in an article “Has the Mining Downturn Hit Rock Bottom?” (Latimer, 2015). The article inferred that while the worst aspects of the mining downturn may be over, Australians should not anticipate another mining boom any time soon. Although some signs of mining recovery were observed, the article makes clear that there is unlikely to be any mining boom again for a very long time. This article triggered some local press about the situation facing homeless people in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. The ABC ran the online article on 14 May 2014 “Social Worker: Mining towns hard for women” (Hegarty, 2014) highlighting the challenges of social disadvantage, poverty and homelessness facing women in mining communities. This publicity was the first of a number of journalists who expressed interest in this study, and this article was particularly focused on the emerging evidence of women’s homelessness in mining communities. More will be discussed on this topic in Chapter Six.

Media attention in 2016 centred on the controversial Adani coal mine project in the Galilee Basin. Late in 2016, the Honourable Anthony Lynham, Minister for State Development, Natural Resources and Mines was critical of mining companies for not fulfilling obligations associated with the “social contract” they have with rural and regional communities. This was reflected in Atfield’s article “Mines minister says state programs "abrogate" mining companies of responsibility” published in the Brisbane Times on 22 October 2016.

3.5 Social research focusing on homelessness in mining communities in the Bowen Basin and throughout Australia

Research addressing social issues within mining communities and specifically the Bowen Basin region is limited despite the long duration of the mining boom and the opportunity to explore social issues in more depth during this period. Research that is available could be characterised into four broad areas:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics Census and related work to identify rates of homelessness in these communities;
2. housing studies;
3. social impact assessment processes regarding mine approvals; and
4. other relevant social research in associated fields including criminology and domestic and family violence.

The following review of this research about homelessness in mining communities will involve each of these categories.

3.5.1 ABS census counts of homelessness in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census counts which occur every five years continue to be the main method of estimating homelessness throughout Australia. The most recent Census was conducted in August 2016 with results anticipated in 2017. Since 1996, Census data has been useful in estimating and quantifying the numbers of homeless people throughout Australia. This data is used by government agencies and scholars to identify homeless need in specific communities and regions and to also understand rates of change in the homeless population. This thesis considers Census data in the context of homeless need in the communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah in a timeframe that corresponds with the focus of this study. Table 3.3 shows the increase in homeless people in the major communities of Mackay, Belyando and Broadsound within the Bowen Basin from ABS Census counts in 2001, 2006 and 2011.
Table 3.3. Number of homeless people in Mackay and Bowen Basin, including Broadsound and Belyando in 2001, 2006 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community/geographic catchment</th>
<th>Number of homeless people 2001 Census</th>
<th>Number of homeless people 2006 Census</th>
<th>Number of homeless people 2011 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belyando</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadsound</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen Basin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub areas within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen Basin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moranbah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub areas within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen Basin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadsound – Nebo (including Dysart)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data for the Bowen Basin was only made available for the 2011 Census. Prior to this, a different geographical classification system had been used which included a large portion of the Bowen Basin counted in the previous Belyando and Broadsound statistical areas. Because of the different classification systems, it is not possible to indicate homelessness in the Bowen Basin over a timeline series for the decade 2001 to 2011. The Bowen Basin includes a number of communities including Bowen, Moranbah, Broadsound-Nebo, Clermont and Collinsville. Belyando was the former local government area encapsulating Moranbah, and Broadsound was the former Local Government Area encapsulating Dysart (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012b; 2012c; 2012d).

The ABS Census data shows an overall increase in the numbers of homeless people in Mackay from 2001 to 2011. Rates of homelessness and numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Mackay increased between 2001 and 2006. The numbers of homeless people in Mackay increased between 2006 and 2011, however the actual rate of homelessness per 10,000 people slightly decreased from 0.57% (or 57 people per 10,000) to 0.52% (or 52 people per 10,000). The rate of homelessness in Mackay was still above the national and Queensland averages for homelessness (Wood et al., 2016).
Moranbah and Dysart were part of the Bowen Basin region in the 2011 Census count, but as stated previously were part of two different geographic areas, Belyando and Broadsound, in the 2006 Census and earlier censuses. Assessing the homeless population data in the Bowen Basin Region is somewhat more complicated because of these changes in geographical classification systems used to record Census data for this area. The regional trends in homelessness in the Isaac Region are most interesting, without getting too restricted to the geographic boundaries of this data. There is an increase in the actual numbers of homeless people between 2001 and 2006 in the former Belyando area which includes the mining communities of Moranbah and Clermont. There is a slightly reduced level of homelessness between 2001 and 2006 in the Broadsound statistical area which includes the communities of Dysart and Nebo. Homelessness in Broadsound-Nebo area appears to have remained somewhat consistent from 2006 to 2011. The 2006 and 2011 Census data was captured at a time when the mining boom was at its height in this region making this a curious trend, and not necessarily as one would expect. The actual rate of homelessness decreased in the Bowen Basin region from 1.1% (or 110 people per 10,000 of population) in 2006 to 0.42% (or 42 people per 10,000 of population) in 2011 (Wood et al., 2016). This finding warrants further exploration in the course of this study in the context of the experiences and views of participants in the communities of Dysart and Moranbah.

Although mining communities in this region experienced overall population growth from 2001 to 2011, in some instances rapid population growth within a two-year period, however this on its own, cannot be used to justify the large increases in numbers of homeless people who were identified in Mackay and the Bowen Basin during the 2011 Census. For a variety of reasons, this data is more than likely to have been a conservative estimate of homeless people on Census night. There are inherent difficulties locating homeless people during census counting periods and potential undercounting of people in rural and remote areas and specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2009).

The Census data is useful in estimating the number of homeless people throughout Australia on Census night every five years. However, the Census data cannot be used to assess demand on specialist homelessness services or establish the types of issues and needs that homeless people have when they present to service providers. Data pertaining to demand on specialist homelessness services is derived from the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) which is administered through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
Aggregated data regarding the number of people who were assisted by the six specialist homelessness services in Mackay LGA from 2011-12 to 201516 is contained in Appendix E. This data shows in this five-year period, the numbers of homeless people assisted by specialist homelessness services slightly decreased from 2011-12 until 2013-14 before increasing in 2015-16. This period coincides with the tail-end of the mining boom and downturn period. Overall, the data is fairly consistent however the data does suggest that the mining downturn period initially generated a slight decrease in homelessness in Mackay-based on presentations to specialist homelessness services, but that homelessness has then increased the longer the mining downturn continues. Some caution is needed in making such conclusions as there can be a variety of factors which impact demand on specialist homelessness services. The same data for the Isaac LGA is not available due to confidentiality provisions associated with reporting data for areas with less than three specialist homelessness services.

3.5.2 Housing studies of resource boomtowns
The role of the local housing market and system is critical to better understand homelessness in mining communities. Homelessness in mining communities is linked to the availability of appropriate and affordable housing. Although rates of homelessness could be expected to be higher at times of rapid population growth - shortage of housing options and limited affordable housing, all associated with mining boom periods - there are many varied pressures on the housing market in mining communities. These pressures included the housing market dynamics associated with mining companies as providers of housing to mining company workers in mining communities, and also, subsidisers of housing for mining workers who obtained private housing options.

Scheltens and Morris (2006) explicitly dealt with the issue of homelessness and housing issues in mining communities at the Fourth National Homelessness Conference in Sydney in 2006, highlighting the issues of sustainability and housing affordability as major issues in Queensland mining communities experiencing significant growth. The proceeding also noted that as the authors were social workers they had personally observed many community members of mining communities on low incomes or government pensions, paid close to 100% of their income towards housing costs. This had made these communities impossible to live in when reliant on government income support or on low income (Scheltens & Morris, 2006).
The Australian Housing Urban Research Institute (AHURI) has published a series of highly relevant research reports regarding housing in resource boomtowns and regional communities. Haslam-Mackenzie, Brereton, Birdsall-Jones, Phillips and Rowley (2008) prepared a positioning paper for AHURI on the housing market dynamics in resource boomtowns in Australia. This study included the Queensland mining communities of Emerald and Moranbah. They identified that public and private sector employers in resource communities, by virtue of their rural and remote locations, struggled to attract and retain staff across all industry sectors, in particular the service sector. This finding was linked to the trend of resource communities sourcing their labour from a long-distance commuting workforce referred to as Drive in Drive Out (DIDO) or Fly In Fly Out (FIFO). This trend was a source of conflict in some mining communities where competing tensions between the economic needs and social needs in some mining communities manifested between resident community members of mining communities and the temporary workforce. The same authors produced a further report confirming that housing is an essential component of the physical infrastructure underpinning mining communities. They concluded that business and economic development in mining communities are diminished by the fact mining communities were experiencing a decrease in resident community population to provide a workforce and that this was an outcome of the lack of affordable housing in mining communities (Haslam-Mackenzie, Phillips, Rowley, Brereton, & Birdsall-Jones, 2009). Their research identified a need for strong coordination and planning between different levels of government and the mining industry, an adequate supply of land for building new dwellings, and increase in affordable housing. Saliently, the report concluded that the overall liveability of mining communities would be enhanced if there was a focus on building a more permanent community and effort placed into diversifying the local economy wherever possible.

AHURI released a further report in 2011 dealing with the drivers of supply and demand for housing in rural and regional centres (Beer et al., 2011). This report also considered the issues facing mining communities as being one group of communities within Australia’s rural and regional areas. This report identified seven key housing market drivers affecting housing supply and demand in rural and regional communities. These were:

- The adequacy of land and housing supply.
- Central government policy.
• The nature and structure of the labour market.
• Demographic change.
• The scale and localism of the housing market.
• The presence of an Indigenous population.
• The nature and economy of the region (Beer et al., 2011, p. 33).

Each of these factors influenced the state of the housing market in rural and regional communities. The report also highlighted that there is a great deal of diversity within rural communities across Australia, and one measure of this diversity was the differing housing profiles and mixture of private rental housing, private home ownership and social housing. Although these housing factors do not necessarily cause homelessness, they are relevant in understanding the dynamics of homelessness in rural and regional communities, and the difficulties obtaining housing. These factors also provide a context to understand why there was a lack of affordable housing in mining communities during the period of the mining boom.

3.5.3 Social impact assessments and mining approvals

Under Queensland law, proponents of resource projects are required to undergo an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA). As part of the EIA, a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) may also be required. Such Social Impact Assessments are based on five data dimensions: community and stakeholder engagement; workforce management; housing and accommodation; local business and industry content and community health and wellbeing. The purpose of a SIA is to determine future social impacts and that where social impacts are identified for communities, that the proponent consult with communities and government to develop Social Impact Management Strategies (Department of State Development, 2016).

There has been a growth in research which has examined the efficacy and usefulness of Social Impact Assessments for mining projects in the Bowen Basin.

Rolfe and O’Dea (2007) undertook a retrospective social impact assessment of the Bowen Basin four years into the mining boom in 2007 (which was not connected to new mining approval processes) and some of the main findings from this research of relevance to this study include:
• The mining boom had a substantial impact on the cost of housing in Moranbah. Between 2001 and 2006 average house sale prices increased by seven times and the median rent levels increased approximately four times. In 2006, the cost of housing services in Moranbah was rated as 95.5% higher than the cost of Brisbane. These price levels create pressures on households with lower incomes and non-mining sector businesses seeking labour supplies.

• The mining boom had not translated into building activity. In 2006, the levels of building approvals, new housing building value and new commercial building value in Moranbah per capita remained well below state averages. In contrast, the level of activity in Mackay was well above state averages. This indicates that the positive impacts of the mining boom were largely bypassing Moranbah in favour of larger regional and urban centres situated on the coast.

These findings highlight the cost of housing and pressures on housing in Moranbah midway into the mining boom; and that mining communities like Moranbah were missing out on some of the economic benefits of the boom in favour of larger regional centres such as Mackay.

The literature dealing with social impact assessment processes and approvals is also critical about the lack of rigour undertaken in these processes. Ivanova, Rolfe, Lockie and Timmer (2007, p. 211) reported that the existing processes governing environment and social impact assessments were inadequate for the following reasons:

• Economic and social impacts of mining are rarely assessed after the approvals stage.
• The impact of changes in the scale of mining operations, such as those influenced by the commodity cycle, are rarely assessed.
• The impacts of multiple operations on communities are rarely assessed.

The authors of this research argue that economic and social impacts should be monitored throughout the life cycle of mining operations which can, in some instances, continue for decades. This conclusion would be more congruent with ensuring flexible policy responses were able to be implemented to deal with challenges surrounding housing and homelessness in mining communities throughout different stages of the mining resource cycle.
A further study of the social impacts of mining across six communities in the Bowen Basin including Moranbah, emphasised assessing social impact as part of the life cycle of resource projects but also take preventative steps at community level to guard against erosion of social capital within the community and build resilience for any future downturn in mining (Petkova, Lockie, Rolfe, & Ivanova, 2009, p. 330). These authors undertook a social impact assessment of the Coppabella mine and community within the Bowen Basin and found:

- Critical shortage of skilled labour in non-mining industries.
- Reduced accommodation access and housing affordability.
- Increase in traffic fatigue and related road accidents.
- Increased pressure on emergency services (particularly those provided by voluntary workers).
- Increase in criminal and other anti-social behaviour.

These findings show the different social impacts of rapid population and economic growth in small rural mining communities and that complex multifaceted policy responses are required to respond to the challenges of these social impacts during times of mining boom.

3.5.4 Social research exploring impacts on mining communities of the mining industry

The dynamics of mining communities during periods of mining boom have been the interest of social researchers exploring a variety of issues and policy questions. Browne, Stehlík and Buckley’s (2011) study of West Australian mining communities of Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe within the Ravenshorpe Shire, highlights the consequences of mining companies who “breach their social license” with mining communities. They promoted themselves to the local community as corporate partners that could bring long-term benefits to the community during times of mining boom but “washed their hands” of the community during times of mining downturn. The notion of a “social license” is an integral concept to discourse about the future of mining communities and the role of mining companies within this future. A license or contract conveys a sense of mutual responsibilities and obligations that each party must recognise as a basis for improving relationships and outcomes for business and for communities. This research will explore evidence of a Social License to Operate (SLO) as it relates to the communities of Dysart, Moranbah and Mackay.
This research of the effects of the mining industry on homelessness in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart will take a critical perspective of the roles of the mining industry and government in fulfilling obligations of respective stakeholders regarding the Social License to Operate. Browne and colleagues’ (2011) research on the effects of BHP Billiton nickel operation on the communities of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun in Western Australia. This study of the impacts of mining in the Ravensthorpe Shire has particular relevance to this study of homelessness in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart because of the similar industry and geography of the region. Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun are regional and rural mining communities on the south coast of Western Australia, with Hopetoun located on the coast and Ravensthorpe located inland. After a long period of negotiation between BHP Billiton and the West Australian Government, approval was granted to BHP Billiton to mine nickel at Ravensthorpe in March 2004 and the mine officially opened in early 2008. The local communities had been promised by BHP Billiton that the mining operation would bring untold wealth to the community, new investments in infrastructure and an increased population, both through a growth in resident population and FIFO, which would guarantee the long-term future of these communities with BHP committing to the mine and the communities for up to 25 years.

The collapse of the world price of nickel and onset of the Global Financial Crisis had a detrimental impact on the mining operation in the Ravensthorpe shire. The mine saw significant job losses later in 2008 and the decision to suspend activities at the mine ‘was publicly announced in January 2009 through the Australian Stock Exchange. It was the first mine in Australia to announce a suspension of operations following the global financial crisis of 2008’ (Browne et al., 2011, p. 711). The many undertakings and benefits the communities were offered were never to be realised. This represented a major breach of the Social License to Operate that the community residents believed they had established with BHP Billiton. Browne et al. (2011) contended that:

The mothballing of the Ravensthorpe Nickel Operation (by BHP Billiton) in Western Australia shows how companies communicate project uncertainty to gain traction for a Social License to Operate in a community, and that the impacts of breaking that license are significantly felt by, and under compensated for, those with whom that individual or group contract is established … From a position of trust and belief in the reciprocity of the social contract, a mistrust often develops
between corporations and communities in projects where there are multiple types of contractual and non-contractual stakeholders, particularly when contract terms are not fulfilled (p.720).

This study highlights the importance of a level of openness and transparency in dealing between mining companies and local communities about their shared future. It also emphasised the need for exit planning to occur during boom times so that communities are prepared for inevitable downturn, which can be sudden and severe.

Mining communities during the tail end of the recent mining boom became the focus of research due to the level of criminality occurring within these communities (Carrington, Hogg & McIntosh, 2011; Carrington & Scott, 2008). Rural mining communities are generally characterised by a disproportionate male to female population and this is the case in the communities of the Bowen Basin, in particular Moranbah and Dysart. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017a) reported that in 2015, Isaac local government area had a total population of 24,267 people, with 13,884 males (57.2%) and 10,383 females (42.7%). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017b) also reported that in 2015, the Mackay local government area had a total population of 123,724, with 64,216 males (51.9%) and 59,508 females (48.1%). This gender imbalance was compounded during the mining boom period by the large number of FIFO and DIDO workers, many of whom are accommodated in work camps within or near mining communities. The work regimes of mining workers contribute to the stressors on these workers who perform 12-hour block shifts a day for between two to four-week cycles (Carrington et al., 2011). The industrial requirements of mining workers are fundamentally at odds with the health and mental health of mining workers and their families.

The transformation of mining communities is often discussed in the context of the rise of the temporary workforces commonly referred to as DIDO and FIFO, with the latter usually residents of capital cities (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). During the recent mining boom these workforces expanded considerably and were identified by large work camps established either within the community and adjacent to the mining community. The work camps are defined by large numbers of relatively modern looking but small container style units designed to accommodate single people. In some instances, this accommodation was designed to suit couples. The work
camps were established by respective mining companies and are private property. Workers would be accommodated in this style of accommodation for the duration of the rostered shift (i.e., two to three weeks and then when the worker returns to their community of origin, these units would be cleaned and quickly turned over to the newly arrived worker for accommodation). These work camps are now very visible features of the communities of Moranbah and Dysart.

Carrington and Scott (2008) note that rural men are at risk of inflicting harm upon themselves or others because of processes that shape the formation of rural communities and that masculinity has particular manifestations in rural communities conducive to violence and criminality. In a detailed criminological study of mining communities in Australia, Carrington et al. (2011) linked the industrial work arrangements and engagement of non-resident workers with violence and criminality in mining communities and that post-industrial mining regimes of the past two decades supported by mining companies and government service to mask and privatise these harms and risks, shifting them onto workers, families and communities. This finding is relevant to this study in better understanding the culture of mining communities. Social issues such as alcohol misuse, mental health, family breakdown and domestic and family violence have particular context in mining communities and contribute towards people not only being at higher risk of homelessness, but experiencing homelessness. There are widely held perceptions of mining communities as being centres with much higher rates of domestic and family violence. In 2009 a study of domestic and family violence in the Bowen Basin found that the rates of domestic and family violence in this region were comparable to the national average, but that women who have experienced domestic and family violence in these communities presented with higher rates of depression and other severe psychological symptoms (Nancarrow, Lockie, & Sharma, 2009). This finding is somewhat odds with research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies which has identified women in regional, rural and remote areas as more likely than women in urban areas to experience domestic and family violence (Campo & Tayton, 2015). The causes of homelessness are often a complex interaction of individual life events and circumstances and structural factors.
3.6 Chapter conclusion

This literature review chapter situated this research within an expanding field of rural homelessness research with a specific focus on the influence of the mining industry on rural and regional mining communities. The chapter included detailed data and evidence about the social, economic and demographic profiles of the three communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah and provided statistical and descriptive analysis about the changes that have occurred in these communities over the course of the mining boom and subsequent downturn. This analysis helps to describe the communities in a way which will contextualise participants’ accounts of homelessness in this research. As part of this approach, this research is curious to find out whether the inequalities and exclusionary community practices associated with the mining industry have impacted different community populations including ATSI people.

The complex interaction of causal issues, structural factors and individual life characteristics will be analysed as part of the dynamics of regional and rural mining communities. These communities experienced a large increase in the structural conditions which placed many in these communities at risk of homelessness, particularly in the mining boom. This study will gather data from respondents which will speak directly to their experiences of the structural conditions that increase homelessness in their community and the risk in individual risk factors within the community. This evidence will build pathways which are particular to the experiences of people experiencing homelessness in these communities. These pathways will also be used as a basis for identifying the services and support that have assisted local people to find their pathway out of homelessness in these communities, or in other words, what helped to end their experience of homelessness in mining communities.

The literature examined the role of the mining industry initially at the national level and the significance of the mining boom to the economy. The mining industry footprint in the Bowen Basin region was also examined as well as the various media attention focussed on the region. Finally, the literature review explored the specific research that has addressed homelessness and related social issues in mining communities. This thesis provides a foundation of existing knowledge that was useful to test during data collection and analysis phases of this research.
The chapter to follow will set out the research questions, design and methodology for the study based on identified gaps in the literature. The chapter will detail the data collection and field work processes that were undertaken in this research. The participants in this study will also be introduced.
Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Chapter introduction

The mining boom and downturn phase has had a range of impacts on people experiencing homelessness, and people at risk of homelessness in the Bowen Basin region. This chapter will outline the qualitative methodology which has guided this research project in understanding these impacts for people in these communities. Specifically, this chapter will include discussion on the research questions, the social and economic context of the research, ethical issues and considerations, the conceptual framework of the research, sampling and stakeholder recruitment, field work, data collection and analysis and research commencement approvals. The chapter will conclude with a discussion about participant pseudonyms and codes.

The research methodology is based on a critical social theory perspective and a valuing of the real-life stories of people who have experienced homelessness in regional Queensland mining communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. Ensuring the voices and perspectives of people who have experienced homelessness are heard was seen as central to this research project and the methodology was developed with this as a paramount consideration. In addition to the stories of people who have experienced homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah, this research also included participants from a diverse range of backgrounds who were identified through their involvement in these communities and their interest in the relationship between the mining industry and homelessness. The participants in this research at times voiced opposing views in relation to the issues surrounding the effects of mining industry about homelessness in these communities. This research proceeded with an awareness that there would be sources of conflict relating to the views and values held by different participants and that these would need to be managed sensitively. A sensitive approach to the defining the research questions and attention to the ethical considerations was needed to ensure these potential conflicts could be managed in a constructive way throughout the research.
4.2 Research questions

The primary question underpinning this research project has been to explore in what ways the mining cycle has influenced homelessness in the regional and rural mining communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. This question will be analysed through the mining boom and bust cycles which has characterised the time period of this research from 2012 to 2016. This research project commenced in the second half of 2012 at a time when debate first emerged across Australia as to how the decade long mining boom had ended (Cleary, 2011; Fowler, 2012). Homelessness in mining communities had been identified as a consequence of the decade long boom which saw a range of social and economic pressures in these communities.

The subsidiary research questions which are linked to the primary research question include the following:

- Who are the community members in regional mining communities who are specifically impacted by homelessness?
- What are the main pathways to homelessness and out of homelessness in regional and rural mining communities?
- What are the impacts of homelessness on the broader community in regional boomtowns?
- How do the dynamics of homelessness in regional mining communities challenge existing knowledge and understanding of homelessness?
- What are the respective roles of Government and Industry in relation to addressing homelessness in regional mining communities in the immediate and long-term future?

These research questions are aimed at exploring in-depth the experience of homelessness in regional and rural mining communities. As highlighted in the previous review of literature a central premise of this research is that homelessness is a not well understood phenomenon in regional and rural mining communities, particularly rural and regional mining communities which have been affected by the mining industry.
4.3 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework located within critical social theory was appropriate for this study due to the exploratory nature of the project and the need to have explicit focus on power structures and inequalities that serve to produce and sustain homelessness in mining communities. A conceptual framework is a paradigm through which the relationship between theory and methodology are informed and understood. According to Crotty (1998), a researcher should address four fundamental questions when developing a research proposal and conceptual framework. These are:

- What methods do you propose to use?
- What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
- What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
- What epistemology informs the theoretical perspective?

These questions have informed the conceptual framework of this social research project and are represented in Figure 4:1

![Figure 4:1. Crotty's (1998) four elements for research proposal](image-url)
My personal and professional background sparked my interest in the experiences of people living in mining communities. This perspective and motivation naturally led me to an epistemology that considered the experiences of human beings through their own stories. Instead of adopting an outsider and external view of homelessness in mining communities, I very much wanted to explore the personal accounts of people experiencing homelessness in these communities in their own words. This approach is consistent with a social constructionist view of epistemology. That is, that meaning is constructed by human beings through social institutions, personal experience and interpretation of the world in which we live (Babbie, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Rubin & Babbie, 2011). In addition to the stories and lived experiences of people who have experienced homelessness in mining communities, this research also focuses on the perspective of a range of people in mining communities representing other experiences and sectors to incorporate their views on homelessness in their communities. More detail about participant background will be provided later in this chapter.

The second level of Crotty’s conceptual framework is for the research to clearly address the issue of theoretical perspective. I have adopted critical social theory as my theoretical perspective. The exploratory nature of this research combined with my passion for understanding people’s experience of social disadvantage and social exclusion, particularly in the form of homelessness, lies within the tradition of critical social work theory and practice. Critical social theory is fundamentally concerned with power structures and sources of oppression and is closely aligned to critical social work (Allen, Briskman, & Pease, 2009; Ife, 2012; Morely, Mcfarlane, & Abbett, 2014; Mullaly, 2002; Pease, Goldingay, Hosken, & Nipperess, 2016). Critical social theory enables an understanding of the intersections between the competing discourses of homelessness and social exclusion and the discourse of economic growth tied to the mining boom. These discourses highlight the dynamics of power and oppression within society including mining communities, and the use of power to control structural, cultural and inter-personal beliefs and values. Any preconceived notions of homelessness in mining communities or negative attitudes about the role of the mining industry and the effects of the industry on the communities need to be considered. The causes and patterns of homelessness will be explored through in-depth interviews with participants aimed at their particular experiences of homelessness in mining communities.

This amalgam of structural social work and contemporary critical social theory has not been without its challenges. Allen (2009) argues that there has been some tension with structural...
social work’s alignment with modernist approaches that centre on addressing wider class and institutional oppression, where critical postmodern thinking challenges the notion that power is constructed in a manner that is possessed and replicated throughout society in a top/down process. It is my view that the dynamics of homelessness and social exclusion in mining communities are very much grounded in a market economy context, where wealth is distributed even more unevenly across local communities and broader society. What makes these dynamics more noticeable in mining communities is that these communities tend to be located in rural and regional settings and have smaller populations compared with metropolitan cities. According to Allen (2009, pp. 41-42) the core principles of critical social work are:

- A commitment to work towards greater social justice and equality for those who are oppressed and marginalised within society.
- A commitment to working alongside oppressed and marginalised populations.
- An analysis of power relations which serve to marginalise and oppress particular populations in society.
- A commitment to question taken for granted and dominant assumptions and beliefs.
- An orientation towards emancipatory personal and social change.

These principles align with my own social work practice framework and are embedded in my personal practice in this research. I find the critical social theoretical approach also to be useful in helping to build good relationships with diverse stakeholders and community work practice.

A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this research as I was interested in exploring human experience and community life of people experiencing homelessness in mining communities. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two and Chapter Three), little research, theory or public awareness exists in relation to homelessness outside of major capital cities, as well as specific research that has examined the impacts of the mining boom and downturn on homelessness in mining communities. It is my starting point in this research to understand homelessness as a phenomenon which impacts different people in different ways. This may be understood as traditional sociological analysis of class, gender, age, Indigenous status, but this analysis can be extended to consider a range of other factors such as access to affordable housing, access to support services, income support and employment.
The experience of an 18-year-old rough sleeper in Mackay will have very different narrative compared with a 35 year old woman with a 4 year old child who is homelessness as a result of escaping domestic and family violence in Moranbah. Each narrative of homelessness will be analysed from the standpoint of an analysis of power (Morley et al., 2014; Pease et al., 2016) and the uniqueness of that person’s story and experience. Qualitative inquiry will serve to clarify the themes from participant’s stories which are linked due to a shared experience of being a community member of a defined mining community.

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) has also influenced the methodology of this research. RRA is generally regarded as a broad level assessment of communities pioneered by the Institute of Development Studies, United Kingdom. According to the Institute of Development Studies (2016):

RRA emerged in the late 1970s in response to some of the problems with large scale, structured questionnaire surveys. It provided an alternative technique for outsiders – often scientists carrying out research into agriculture – to learn quickly from local people about realities and challenges. RRA practitioners worked in multidisciplinary teams and pioneered the use of a suite of visual methods and semi-structured interviews to learn from respondents. (Derived from www.participatormethods.org/glossary/rapid-rural-appraisal-rra).

Since its application to agriculture and other forms of community work, RRA has been applied in other areas of social research. RRA has increasingly been used in research involving third world communities and more recently, Australian regional and rural communities (Browne et al., 2011; Ison & Ampt, 1992).

A key element of RRA is its focus on the identification and recruitment of key informants who are most knowledgeable about a rural community and issues subject of the inquiry. I have applied this principle to this research in identifying and recruiting participants who will provide the most information about the experiences of homeless people in mining communities. RRA employs qualitative methodology involving a variety of social science tools and methods including secondary data analysis, observations, interviews and case studies. I was interested in applying elements of RRA to this research in light of my experience as a social worker in practice in these communities between 1997 and 2004 which provided critical knowledge about community values, leadership and formal and informal
governance. The other motivation for using RRA is the time and resource constraints that impact on the actual amount of time I could spend in mining communities as the primary investigator. This issue will be described in more detail during the data collection, fieldwork and data analysis sections of this chapter.

Some challenges were anticipated in applying RRA to this research as a single researcher. RRA literature does place emphasis on undertaking research in communities as part of a research team (Browne et al., 2011; Ison & Ampt, 1992). The benefits of undertaking RRA as part of a team include being able to gather data from a diverse range and often high number of sources during a relatively short period of time. Benefits also included the ability to develop strong relationships with diverse stakeholders and sometimes including community members who have a history of conflict. As a single researcher, these challenges were noted, and advice sought from my university supervisors regarding preferred management strategies. Consequently, while it is not correct to assert that this research constitutes an RRA research project, it has been influenced by RRA principles and these will be further alluded to throughout this chapter.

The final component of Crotty’s (1998) conceptual framework is devoted to the selection of research methods. This research involves the specific qualitative research methods of in-depth interviewing, including interviewing with a life story focus those participants who have experienced homelessness, focus groups, analytic induction and thematic analysis. These methods were adopted and used on the basis that they are consistent with other dimensions of Crotty’s Conceptual framework. That is, the epistemology of social constructionism, the theoretical orientation of critical social work and the selection of a qualitative methodology.

4.4 Ethical issues, considerations and approvals

This research involved ethical issues and ethical challenges at individual participant level and at systemic levels. Homeless people represent some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society and hence there were key issues to address in the design of this research to ensure adequate safeguards and supports for participants and to ensure this research maintained the highest possible ethical standards. These issues and challenges will be
discussed at the individual participant level and at the systemic or professional level in conjunction with proposed mitigation strategies.

This thesis argues that homeless people do not represent a homogenous group, and may include adult men, adult women, families, young people, people who are sleeping rough, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, refugees and women with children who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence. Due to the diversity of homeless people that were recruited to participate in this research a range of ethical issues were identified at individual participant level. These issues included the following:

- Obtaining informed consent.
- Recruiting people who may have an impaired capacity as a result of a head injury, mental illness or drug or other substance misuse.
- Cultural issues associated with recruiting a person from an Aboriginal or Torres Islander background.
- People experiencing continuing crisis in their life.
- People who may experience distress when interviewed about factors in their personal life that contributed to the experience of homelessness as well as events that may have happened to the person while they were homeless.
- My role as the primary researcher and also managing a dual role as a Queensland Government public servant working in the field of homelessness.
- Seeking permission from employing organisations for staff to participate in this study and addressing privacy, confidentiality and identifiability of participants from their communities.

Within each of these issues there were also sub-issues which required consideration and planning to achieve ethical standards set out in the Australian Association of Social Workers (2010) Code of Ethics. I will now discuss each of these ethical challenges in more detail.

Obtaining informed consent is one of the important ethical challenges with participant groups which include vulnerable people. An information sheet and consent form was developed for homeless people and slightly different information sheets and consent forms for other participants groups (refer to Appendix F Participant Information Form and Appendix G Consent Form). The assistance of support workers of specialist homelessness services was
also arranged when engaging with people who have experienced homelessness to discuss what participation in the research would mean for them. This research did not target people under the age of 18 hence there were no added issues to address with regard to parental consent or guardianship. Written informed consent was obtained from every participant.

Although homeless people do have a diverse background, there is evidence which indicates that they are at higher risk of issues such as head injuries as a result of assault or drug or other substance misuse, disabilities and or mental illness which may impair a person’s capacity to provide consent. As I engaged with different homeless people I was mindful of carefully going through information about the research and to check regularly that potential participants understood the information I was providing about the research project and what participation in the project would mean for them. Where appropriate, participants were also encouraged to have a support person which may have been a partner or a friend who also attend the interview. Where I was in doubt about a person’s capacity to provide consent, I was conscious of the potential need to activate protocols regarding guardianship and assisted decision making. This did not prove necessary as all participants were able to provide informed consent without needing to activate such protocols.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also at higher risk in relation to experiencing homelessness than non-Indigenous Australians. As discussed in Chapter Three, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented in the Mackay community above the state average. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also community members of the Isaac region just under the state average. As such, I made considerable efforts to link with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders in the Mackay Region who provided advice and feedback on a draft version of my interview questions. This feedback was actioned prior to commencement of the interviews and ensured culturally competent research.

I was conscious that this research may also involve interviewing people who were continuing to experience crisis in their personal life, some of which was pertaining to homelessness and housing issues. I remained sensitive in ensuring the interviews were conducted in a way that was supportive to the participants. I made sure each participant was aware of any local services or support to assist with issues that were discussed during the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, during the debriefing phase, I also made sure the participant had
accurate information about local services and support systems and how to engage these services and supports if needed after the interview.

As part of my commitment to valuing the participation and the expertise that homeless people offered this research, I recognised the participant’s time and contribution through the provision of a $30 Coles/Myer Gift Card. The provision of this gift card at the conclusion of the interview, was deemed by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee to meet specified ethical standards required for the provision of such incentives.

A major ethical challenge that I was mindful of throughout the research was managing my dual role as a Higher Degree Research student with Griffith University and a Queensland Government public servant who has worked in the field of homelessness. This issue was managed by informing all potential participants in the Participant Information Sheet, which also contained contact details for my University supervisors and departmental line managers should any participant wish to discuss these matters further. I was focused on managing the dual role by being clear the two roles were very separate. This research was undertaken completely outside of my work role. All activities involved with this research including field work visits occurred on my own personal time including annual leave and long service leave. I also sought guidance from my departmental line manager in my agency as to how I should organise my work to minimise any potential conflicts. In my paid professional role as a Queensland Government public servant I abstained from involving myself in funding or service delivery issues for homelessness services in the Mackay region.

Although every effort was made to ensure ethical issues regarding the dual role of the researcher were identified and managed in an appropriate manner, my personal experience as a person who has lived and worked in mining communities, and significant professional social work experience in the fields of homelessness, disability services and child protection, as a front-line practitioner, manager and senior policy bureaucrat, have undoubtedly influenced my conceptualisation of this research. On a personal level, I understand the struggles people in rural and regional communities face with regard to access to different services. As a young person growing up in the 1980s and 1990s I remember terms such as ‘rural decline’ in public discourse which referred to the loss of agricultural industries and general economic downturn in many rural areas of Australia, and how this shaped the consciousness of people in rural communities, especially young people who almost always
aspired to leave these communities to find a life and a future in larger centres (Cheers, 1998). I also appreciate the issue of distance and travel that becomes central to the lives of people seeking services. Three to four hour car trips to larger regional cities to access health services, commercial services or general shopping is a common part of life for people in these rural communities. On a professional level, my commitment to the profession of Social Work and the social justice and human rights values base which underpins social work practice, has been an enduring feature of my working life. I have also come to develop knowledge of these communities and housing and homelessness policy and funding to non-government organisations as part of my professional experience. This knowledge and experience positions me in a unique place to engage with the communities of interest to this study and to gather and analyse data. Regular doctoral supervision helped to guard against this research becoming sanitised. The application of critical social theory requires close attention to structural inequalities and providing voice and thick description to the lives of people central to the research, in this case people who have experienced homelessness in mining communities.

This research project involved a range of people representing different organisations. Some participants represented specialist homelessness services operating in the Mackay and Isaac regions, some were people representing government departments and some were community members with an interest in homelessness. In addition to having each representative complete a consent form, participants who were representing an organisation were required to also complete a Participant Approval Form. This form provided the authority for the participant to represent their employing organisation within this research. Although participants were represented by an employing organisation in this research, effort was made to ensure all participants’ contributions were de-identified in the writing of this thesis. Organisations which supported this research through authorising staff to participate are acknowledged through this thesis.

It has been my goal to ensure this research maintained a high ethical standard particularly in the context of undertaking research in regional and rural communities. I was aware that if ethical issues are not managed in the interests of vulnerable citizens, it may have a detrimental impact on their capacity to access important human and health care services (Allen, Bell, & Alston, 2008). The Australian Association of Social Workers (2010) Code of Ethics provides a comprehensive framework for guiding ethical practice for social work
researchers. Of specific interest to this study, are the following ethical issues relating to managing conflicts of interest and privacy of participants in the context of research in small rural communities:

5.1.7 Conflicts of Interest

g) social workers who practice in rural or small communities, or with specific cultural groups, will be aware of increased potential for conflicts of interest and will declare such interests to an appropriate person, and where possible, negotiate a solution. (Derived from Australian Association of Social Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010, p. 24).

As previously discussed, the only potential conflict of interest that I identified as part of this study was my role as a public servant the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works for which there were ethically approved strategies to use as a response should any conflicts arise during this course of this project. Critical reflection was used as a process in supervision to consider implications of the dual role on the conduct of this research.

Another ethical issue was to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. In the context of social work research, the Australian Association of Social Workers (2010) provides the following guidance for addressing privacy, anonymity and confidentiality considerations.

5.5.2 Research

e) social workers will ascertain that due care has been taken to protect the privacy and dignity of research participants.

h) social workers will seek to ensure the anonymity and or confidentiality of research participants and data and discuss them only in limited circumstances for professional purposes. Any identifying information obtained from or about participants during the research process will be treated as confidential. (Derived from Australian Association of Social Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010, p. 36)
Satisfying these ethical standards can be challenging when working with participants from small rural and regional communities. This ethical issue has been well described in social work research literature (Daley & Hickman, 2011; McAuliffe, 2014). The focus of this research on homelessness in mining communities also further reduces the potential range of participants from the community, increasing the likelihood that participants may be recognised from this research. The ways in which I have chosen to deal with this issue is to make sure this was discussed in my ethics application to the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Queensland Health Townsville Hospital and Health Human Research Ethics Committee. While making every attempt to safeguard participants’ privacy and confidentiality by securely storing transcripts and de-identifying information in all published works including this thesis, anonymity cannot be guaranteed as it is still possible for a reader to associate a remark with a person they may know in their community. This risk was outlined in the information sheets that participants received as part of the process of providing their informed consent to participate in this study. Finally, I sought regular feedback from my supervisors during the fieldwork phase of this research to ensure my practice was reflecting the necessary ethical standards.

I successfully completed a confirmation seminar coordinated through the School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith Health, Griffith University, on 26 March 2013. This seminar outlined my approach towards undertaking this research project, including research questions, a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the fields of homelessness and the Australian mining boom and mining communities and a proposed research methodology. Post confirmation, it had become clear that this research would require approvals from two different duly constituted Human Research Ethics Committees.

The primary ethics approval for this research was completed through Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HSV/22/13/HREC) in August 2013. This approval was based on the completion of a long form National Ethics Approval Form (NEAF) and all associated appendices and research documents. This submission was first reviewed by the committee in early July 2013 with the committee seeking some minor amendments to the NEAF to address issues including additional supports and safeguards for research participants who have a background as a homeless person. This particular ethics approval was deemed adequate to cover stakeholder participants in all categories and for the research to commence.
As part of participant Stakeholder Category C – Generic human services, Government Departments and Local Businesses, it was proposed to interview a group of Mackay-based Queensland Health social workers to understand their perspective on homelessness in the region. I was made aware that the approval from Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee would not include Queensland Health staff. Hence, I worked towards achieving a secondary approval from the Townsville Hospital and Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee commencing September 2013 which covered the Mackay Hospital and Health Service District. This committee provided an approval (HREC/14/QTHS/35) in October 2014. Once ethics approval was obtained I then obtained a Site Specific Assessment (SSA) Approval from Queensland Health in early March 2015. The focus group with Queensland Health social workers occurred on the 30 April 2015. Fortunately, the length of time to secure this ethics approval did not unduly impact on the collection of the data.

### 4.5 Sampling and stakeholder recruitment

Homelessness in mining communities is a complex and contested issue. There are different explanations and causal theories that can be put forward to explain the phenomenon of homelessness in mining communities. However, these explanations or causal theories have not been well tested. As this research involves a diverse and broad cross-section of community members, a stakeholder participant framework was developed. This framework is represented in Participants of each stakeholder category were recruited through a purposive snowball sampling process. Paton (2002) argues that purposive sampling:

> leads to the selection of rich cases for in-depth study…and that careful selection of a fewer number of these informants as distinct from standardised information from large, statistically significant sample (p.42).

This approach is in line with the qualitative methodology in identifying key research participants who have a community profile around homelessness issues and being referred by these key people to other participants within the community. Participants were also identified and recruited by virtue of their knowledge of the local community and involvement in the mining industry.
Participants of each stakeholder category were recruited through a purposive snowball sampling process. Paton (2002) argues that purposive sampling:

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This approach is in line with the qualitative methodology in identifying key research participants who have a community profile around homelessness issues and being referred by these key people to other participants within the community. Participants were also identified and recruited by virtue of their knowledge of the local community and involvement in the mining industry.

Table 4.1. Stakeholder participant framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Participant Category</th>
<th>Stakeholder Participant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category A – Individuals and Families who have experienced homelessness in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah</td>
<td>This participant group is characterised by having experienced homelessness in at least one of the three communities within the last 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category B – Specialist homelessness services in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah</td>
<td>Specialist homelessness services are services which are allocated funds from either the National Affordable Housing Agreement or National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness to reduce homelessness. There are 7 non-government service providers delivering 8 Specialist homelessness services in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category C – Generic human services, local businesses &amp; government departments</td>
<td>This participant group includes human service workers, social workers within the local Hospital and Health Service District, Department of Human Services staff, local government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant Category D – Industry and Workforce Representatives

Representatives from mining industries and related industries, workforce representatives including trade unions.

Participant Category E – Community representatives and community members

Community members with an interest in homelessness issues including representatives of the Indigenous community and local church groups and charitable organisations.

The identification, engagement and recruitment of participants was a major exercise and one which required concerted efforts from June 2013 until March 2015. Much effort and persistence were required over this 21 month period to engage potential participants and to confirm participation in line with planned visits to Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. One of the drawbacks about being a researcher based in Brisbane undertaking research in regional and rural locations, is that it takes persistence to ensure stakeholders are receiving information about the research and can see the value in the research project. Ultimately this meant being really organised regarding communications to stakeholders via email and telephone.

Once original approval was provided to commence the research from Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee, I immediately began contacting key agencies and networks to provide advice about my research. One of the first engagement and recruitment activities I carried out was to email the Mackay Region Social Work Network to provide advice about my research and to seek interest from people associated within this network. I emailed this network using my Griffith University student email address and received responses from interested network members, and also suggestions about other potential participants within the community. I researched the group of seven non-government specialist homelessness service providers in the region and also identified key contact people from relevant government departments. I was also conscious to keep an open mind that this homelessness research would benefit from community members who are involved in responding to the needs of homeless people or who are concerned about homeless issues in their communities who may not be connected to the formal homelessness service system. I wanted to ensure ordinary community members and people involved in informal responses to homeless people, also had an opportunity to participate in this research. This approach informed the development of the Stakeholder Participant Framework as well as some of the
specific recruitment strategies I used during this research. A major focus of recruitment was directed at engaging with Mining Industry and Workforce representatives. More will be discussed on the particular engagement and recruitment issues for this participant group later in this chapter.

The total number of participants who were recruited to this research was 43. Table 4.2 shows the distribution of participants across the five stakeholder categories.

Table 4.2. Distribution of participants across five stakeholder categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Participant Category</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category A – Individuals and families who have experienced homelessness in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category B – Specialist homelessness services in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah</td>
<td>10 (representing 7 non-government service providers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category C – Generic human services, local businesses and government departments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category D – Industry and workforce representatives</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Category E – Community representatives and community members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruitment strategies were carefully devised for each of the five participant stakeholder categories. Recruitment of people who had experienced homelessness in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah, was prioritised as it was felt that the personal narratives which charted their individual pathways into homelessness as well as pathways out of homelessness were crucial to answering the research questions. Special attention was paid to the recruitment of participants to Participant Category A - people who have experienced homelessness in either Mackay, Moranbah or Dysart over the last 10 years. This timeframe was nominated as it coincided with the recent mining boom which significantly impacted this particular region. Participants of this group were at least 18 years as it was felt the ethical challenges of interviewing unaccompanied young people under the age of 18 were too great. The adult representatives of this stakeholder category included young people, single adults, parents and
women who have escaped domestic and family violence. The participant sample of 43 included 12 participants who were homeless or formerly homeless people. Table 4.3 identified the demographic details of the 12 participants who formed part of this stakeholder category.

Table 4.3. Profile of participants of Stakeholder Participant Category A - People who have experienced homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Participant information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male = 5 Female = 7 Total = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18 – 25 = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 – 40 = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 – 64 = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65 and over = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Age = 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Dysart = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moranbah = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mackay = 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship/family status</td>
<td>Single adult male = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single adult male with adult children = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single adult female with adult children = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual couple = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female sole parent family = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background</td>
<td>N = 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows that Stakeholder Participant Category A participants reflected a diverse range of people who are experiencing, or have experienced homelessness in mining communities. The group included individuals who were single and also individuals who were part of a family unit.
Participants in this group were accommodated or housed in different situations as represented in figure 4.2. A total of eight participants had ended their experience of homelessness by being housed. This included six participants who had obtained social housing, one participant was in private rental housing and one participant was in share accommodation. Although technically no longer homeless, one participant was marginally housed in a caravan park. Three participants were homeless at the time of interview including two participants who were accommodated in a crisis men’s hostel and one participant was accommodated in crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Figure 4.2: Housing Status of Stakeholder Participant Category A participants at time of interview
Stakeholder Participant Category A participants also reflected a range of income and employment. Figure 4.3 shows the range of income support and employment situations for the twelve participants of Stakeholder Participant Category A.

There were three participants employed at time of interview and nine participants were not employed and in receipt of different forms of incomes support. One participant was employed and continued to access support from a specialist homelessness service, specifically a crisis accommodation service for women and children escaping domestic and family violence, service at the time of interviews. The figure shows the importance of income support policy in addressing some of the risk factors which influence homelessness, especially income support which enables access to housing in mining communities.

In addition to the demographic trends described in the above table, participants in this stakeholder category disclosed significant health issues. These included diagnoses of Huntingdon’s disease, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, epilepsy, heart condition and depression. Four participants also disclosed personal struggles with alcohol and drug misuse.
Given the personal background and experiences of homelessness described by participants, including experiences rough sleeping in these communities, it is not surprising that participants expressed these health concerns. This will be described in more detail as each of these participants is introduced.

In line with the purposive snowball sampling approach, Participants of Category A were recruited by identifying key agencies that provides services and support to homeless people in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. This largely involved targeting the seven non-government service providers in these communities that deliver specialist homelessness services. This group of service providers were the basis of the second stakeholder category. Details of specialist homelessness service providers are able to be obtained by making enquiries to local community services directories as well as contact with state-wide agencies such as Homeless Person Information Queensland (HPIQ), which is a telephone information and advice service for homeless people. Although most of the participants in Stakeholder Category A were recruited via networks I established with the six non-government service providers in Mackay, some participants were recruited through networks established with other community resources and networks including local churches and local forums for homeless people. Strategies such as the use of flyers in hard copy at reception tables of specialist homelessness services and having the flyer attached to some social media connected to specialist homelessness services also formed part of the recruitment of participants.

As stated earlier, recruitment of participants to Stakeholder Category B involved direct phone and email contact with the six non-government service providers which deliver specialist homelessness services across Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. Participants from these service providers were keen to participate in this research as there was a consciousness of how rarely homelessness research occurs in non-metropolitan context. As part of the consent process, in addition to providing individual consent to participate in this research, participants were also requested to sign a Participant Approval Form to authorise and verify that the participant’s employing organisations supported the participant’s involvement in this research. Participants in this stakeholder categories were either involved in an individual interview or participation in one of four focus groups depending on availability. Five of the six non-government service providers were involved and due to availability, two of the six non-government service providers participated in a focus group.
Table 4.4. Specialist homelessness service Provider representatives from Stakeholder Participant Category B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provider</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Individual Interview</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ozcare Mens Hostel <em>Crisis Accommodation for adult men</em></td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Samaritan House <em>Crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence</em></td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowanna House <em>Crisis accommodation for single women and women and children escaping domestic and family violence</em></td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Accommodation and Support Association <em>Crisis accommodation for families and the Homestay Support Early Intervention Service</em></td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyan Youth Shelter <em>Crisis Accommodation for young people</em></td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Moranbah <em>Crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence, young people and adults</em></td>
<td>Moranbah</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysart Community Support Group <em>Crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence</em></td>
<td>Dysart</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A more diverse mix of participants from sectors within the community were recruited to Stakeholder Participant Category C – generic human services, government departments and local businesses. These participants were also recruited using a purposive snowball sampling process. This stakeholder category included participants from very different backgrounds, professions and roles within the community. My identification and recruitment of participants to this group largely involved talking with staff in specialist homelessness services about key local people who would be useful to engage in this research. Broadly, suggestions were volunteered of potential participants from local government, state government and federal government departments. These participants were identified as generic non-government human service providers. All of these government agencies have a role to play in relation to addressing homelessness. Local government tends to have a focus on rough sleepers in parks and practical assistance for homeless people. The Queensland Government administers funds for specialist homelessness services and has responsibility for leading policy responses to homelessness. The federal government provides considerable funding to Queensland to address homelessness issues via the National Partnership Agreement and the National Affordable Housing Agreement. Each level of government is crucial in relation to addressing homelessness issues.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative was engaged in this research as a participant within Stakeholder Category C as this person’s role was with the Mackay Regional Council. This participant brought a perspective of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and also South Sea Island people and their culture, history and heritage in the Mackay region. As previously canvassed, this person also provided advice on the cultural appropriateness of the questions to be asked and people to approach in the community to participate in the research. Another local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative was interested to participate in this research however was unable to participate due to an extended period of ill-health.

Other levels of state and federal government also play a crucial role addressing homelessness. For instance, the State Departments of Education and Health are important stakeholders that provide service delivery responses to different populations of homelessness people or people at risk of homelessness. At a federal level the Department of Human Services is vital in providing income support and assistance to homeless people throughout Australia. Other state and federal government agencies such as the Police, Corrective Services, Disability Services,
Child Safety Services and the court system all have considerable roles when it comes to responding to the issues facing homeless people through Australia.

There were also suggestions of housing providers and some private real estate agents who had demonstrated a concern for people on low incomes and homeless people accessing housing in the region. However, not all of these people expressed interest in participating in this study. These people were specifically targeted for participation in one of four focus groups. The participant background of Stakeholder Participant Category C is identified in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Stakeholder Participant Category C - Generic community service providers, government agencies and local businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provider/ Agency</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland Health</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Local Government</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay Regional Council</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrelink</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay Domestic Violence Resource Service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A representative from the Department of Education was invited to participate in a focus group in Moranbah. This representative agreed to participate however on the day of the focus group, was unable to attend due to illness. A representative from the Department of Human Services similarly was unable to attend a focus group meeting in Mackay for the same reason. Identification and recruitment of respondents to Stakeholder Participant Category D – Mining Industry and workforce representatives proved a much greater challenge. Essentially this stakeholder category was to include representatives from the mining industry operating in the region and representative from appropriate trade unions. This stakeholder category was seen as vital to this research right from the outset as it was recognised that mining companies had provided and assisted with a lot of community infrastructure including housing. It was also understood that there was likely to be some sensitivities and fundamental difference in views...
about the role of mining in terms of homelessness issues in mining communities. Thus, every effort was made to offer potential participants from this stakeholder category the opportunity to attend either a focus group or individual interview.

Recruitment efforts commenced with this stakeholder category in August 2013 and continued until May 2014. Recruitment involved ascertaining who the key mining companies were that were operating across the Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart region and companies that had considerable profile. Five major mining companies were approached, and three smaller regional mining groups/networks were also approached about participating in this research. Engagement strategies included direct phone contact with mining companies in local communities as Head Offices in Brisbane or other Australian cities, messages about my research sent to enquiries section of webpages of mining companies and emails sent to contact people listed on websites. These efforts were repeated over a nine-month period. Most of the emails, messages or phone calls were simply not returned. On rare occasions where the phone call was returned I received a message that either the company would have no view to offer on homelessness in the local community or that it would not be appropriate to participate in this study.

It is difficult to ascertain the reasoning behind the mining company reactions to my attempts to engage with them as part of this study. There is evidence that mining companies have participated in other social research studies and have often supported corporate social responsibility activities. Participation in social research projects such as this one would demonstrate good faith to communities reflecting genuineness from leading mining companies that are interested in understanding the needs of local mining communities and their priorities (Kemp & Bond, 2009). I’m mindful of not surmising what the motivation for not participating in this study might be but will explore this further in my findings chapters.

I also made contact with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) who were interested to participate in this research and had arranged to participate in a focus group which had been organised in Moranbah. Unfortunately, on the day of the focus group, the CMFEU representative was called to a meeting in Brisbane and was unable to attend the focus group meeting and unavailable at other times.
Finally, recruitment of participants to Stakeholder Participant Category E – Community Representatives included engagement of people connected to churches and charitable organisations across Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah not in receipt of government funding. These organisations also provide significant services and support to local people, many of who present to their organisation in crisis. Table 4.6 represents the background of participants in Stakeholder Category E.

Table 4.6. Stakeholder Participant Category E - Community Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Background</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church Mackay</td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican Church</td>
<td>Moranbah</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Church</td>
<td>Moranbah</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Moranbah Community Member interested in housing and homelessness</td>
<td>Moranbah</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Field work and data collection

Field work, data collection and data analysis were undertaken according to the qualitative methodology discussed earlier. As data was collected it was transcribed as soon as possible and coding and theming commenced as this process continued. The data collection and field work which contributed to this research was undertaken through three separate field work visits to Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah Communities during 2013 and 2014.

The first field work visit occurred over a two-day visit to Mackay on the 2nd and 3rd October 2013. The main purpose of this visit was to engage with a range of critical stakeholder about the research, to seek feedback from participants including advice from a representative from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community about interview questions and to obtain my first series of data through an interview with one specialist homelessness and one focus group. There was to be a second interview with a specialist homelessness service, but
this participant fell ill on Thursday and chose to participate in the focus group which was held on Friday. This visit involved a flight from Brisbane to Mackay return. The second field work visit was from Sunday 3rd November 2013 to Friday 15th November 2013. This trip involved a car journey from Brisbane to Mackay, and also from Mackay to Moranbah and Dysart return to Mackay. The third and final field trip was from Monday 5th May 2014 to Thursday 15th May 2014. This field work trip also involved a car journey from Brisbane to Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay. The final data collection activity was a two-hour video conference with Queensland Health social work staff for a focus group on Thursday 26th March 2015.

In total, 26 days were spent in field work related activities to gather data for this research and an additional two hours video link occurred. Table 4.7 shows a breakdown of the amount of time spent in each community.

Table 4.7. Field work days spent in each community and number of interviews and focus groups conducted in each community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Day spent in community including travel to community</th>
<th>Number of individual interviews conducted in the community</th>
<th>Number of focus groups conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11 #</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moranbah</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysart</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Conference with Queensland Health Social Work</th>
<th>2 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# One interview was undertaken with a couple who had experienced homelessness. This was counted as one interview.

In addition to the formal interviews that were undertaken as part of this research, a lot of time was also spent attending meetings of agency staff, community meetings, and telephone calls to stakeholders to maintain communication about the research. Time was also used to prepare for interviews and recording information subsequent to the interview.

Data was collected from Stakeholder Category A through semi-structured in-depth interviews (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In-depth interviews were selected by enabling the participant to share their personal story and experience of homelessness in a way that was meaningful and personal. An interview guide was developed (refer to Appendix H) which included four categories of open ended questions. These categories included:

- Personal background and perspective of change within mining communities.
- Pathways to and out of homelessness.
- Views on the mining industry.
- Corporate social responsibility.

These broad categories were chosen to reflect the natural groupings and themes of the questions designed to yield answers to the research questions. The interview structure was followed during interviews, but participants were not restricted or constrained in the way that they responded to the open-ended questions. The in-depth interviews with participants from Stakeholder Category A were also influenced by the life story or narrative approach to interviews. The life story or narrative approach to interviews had relevance to this approach during the section of the interview which enquired about participant’s pathway into homelessness. This was considered a highly sensitive topic area and one that required a range of social work research and interview techniques. Participants spoke of personal tragedies and life circumstances which will be discussed further in later chapters. This work carries with it considerable ethical and professional responsibilities. Particular care was taken to arrange the interview in a venue and time that was suitable to the participant. This included spending time in homelessness services talking to people to introduce myself and seeking permission to undertake interviews in a confidential interview room operated by the service provider. Interviews varied in length from 40 minutes to an hour.
The life story approach that influenced my interviews with people who have experienced homelessness is best exemplified by the work of Leadbetter (2003) who wrote about the clients of various social services departments of local authorities across the United Kingdom and how their lives were transformed by respectful and innovative approaches to the provision of services and individualised supports. This approach enables a range of social work interview skills and techniques including descriptive questioning and probing to clarify and further explore the information provided by participants. Mostly participants were encouraged to describe their life experience that led to homelessness and what helped to obtain housing or accommodation and support and thereby end their homelessness. At the conclusion of the interview, a debriefing process was undertaken with participants and information was provided on support strategies if needed at any time.

In-depth interviews were also undertaken with Stakeholder Category B participants who were representatives of specialist homelessness services. A total of ten in-depth interviews were undertaken with Stakeholder Participant Category B participants. The same four categories of questions were used however there were some obvious differences in the types of open-ended questions that were asked under each category. As Stakeholder Participant Category B participants were largely professional people representing non-government organisations, many in managerial or coordinator positions, the questions were more aimed at the experiences supporting homelessness people through their agency context, community involvement and professional framework. This is a different lens on homelessness compared to Stakeholder Participant Category A and this will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters. A debriefing process was also undertaken with participants at the conclusion of the interview. This involved asked participants for their feedback on the experience of the interview and whether it had met the expectations.

The focus groups including the video conference with Queensland Health staff, also involved a semi-structured approach with an interview guide containing a series of themed categories with open ended questions. These categories included:

- Professional background.
- Prevalence of homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah.
- Pathways to and out of homelessness.
• Views on the mining industry.
• Corporate social responsibility.

As with individual interviews, the focus groups concluded with a debriefing process to ensure that participants were comfortable with the discussions and to seek feedback on the efficacy of questions asked during the interview. I was also keen to find out whether the questions matched participants’ expectations of what they anticipated the focus group would involve.

During the field work and research process I kept a daily journal of thoughts and ideas that came to me during the course of the research. This helped shape some of my views and attitudes to the analysis of data. The context of the interview, the non-verbal communication and environmental and community factors also formed part of the analysis and assessment of the data. This information was gathered through regular journal entries which were written either during parts of the day where I had some free time or otherwise in the evening. Each interview was tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. I chose to personally transcribe 21 out of the 25 interviews as a deliberate strategy to remain close to the data and the personal stories of participants. I commissioned a professional company to transcribe four interviews. Data was maintained in confidential and secure hardy copy files and electronic files. The reason to seek assistance with transcribing the last four interview transcripts was based on time. Although I did not transcribe these transcripts, I still able to get close to the data through careful review and coding practices.

The final data collection activity involved a video conference with eight social workers from Queensland Health who were based in the Mackay Hospital and Health District Health Service. This video conference occurred on 26th March 2015. Right from the outset of this research I felt that it was important to include the views of health care social workers who are often at the front-line of service system responses to homeless people. This may include a rough sleeper who presents to a hospital’s Accident and Emergency department for assistance, or a social worker in an adult mental health setting who is working with a client who is homeless and without adequate accommodation, or even a victim of domestic violence who has been assaulted and is requiring secondary healthcare to recover from injuries sustained as a result of the domestic violence. Health care social workers interact with homeless people from a diverse and wide variety of backgrounds and their views in this
research were seen as vital. The video conference included eight social workers operating in different parts of Mackay Hospital and the adult mental health services. This activity was conducted in accordance with the process and questions of earlier focus groups.

4.7 Data coding

This study included 43 participants who either participated in an individual interview or a focus group. Three participants were involved in both individual interviews and a focus group because of the value they would provide to focus group discussions. As previously discussed, participants were organised in four main stakeholder categories. The research was not successful in engaging participants from a fifth stakeholder category. The research was interested in the life story and narrative approach to understand experiences of homelessness in these communities which underpinned the approach to interviewing the group of twelve homeless and formerly homeless participants.

The twelve participants in this study from Stakeholder Participant Category A – People who have experienced homelessness was crucial to understanding the dynamics of homelessness in these mining communities. Each of these participants was given a pseudonym to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participant. The personal narratives of these twelve participants underpin this research and show a diversity of people who have experienced homelessness in mining communities. Codes were applied to the 31 participants from other stakeholder categories to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

4.8 Data analysis

Data analysis was undertaken simultaneously with the process of data collection. As interviews were transcribed I developed a list of emerging themes and sub-themes which would inform future coding processes. NVIVO 9.2 was used as the qualitative software program to assist with the coding and theming of data through this research. The use of NVIVO commenced in March 2015 and concluded in January 2016. All 25 interview transcripts were imported to the NVIVO database and a coding system was developed and applied to each of the transcripts.

Coding practices were the subject of regular discussions with my supervisors who monitored the development of the coding system and also the application of codes to the transcripts. As
a way of ensuring reliability, I asked a colleague to review two de-identified transcripts and apply codes from the coding system. This process helped to ensure that the coding system was robust and consistent.

Initially a coding system was developed with 227 codes which included parent and child nodes. I did further work to consolidate these codes and arrived at a final coding system which included 123 codes (including both parent and child nodes). Refer to Appendix I – Coding Summary Report for further information about the fully list of the 123 codes that were used in this research.

4.9 Stakeholder Participant Category A – People who have experienced homelessness

The twelve participants in this stakeholder category were diverse in age and life experience. As set out in Table 6, five participants were male and seven participants were female. Seven participants were interviewed in Mackay, three participants were from Dysart and two participants were from Moranbah. The age range of participants varied from the youngest being 21 years of age and the oldest being 65. The mean age of participants was 41. Three participants were homeless at the time of interview and nine participants who were formerly homeless people were now housed and no longer homeless. Of the nine participants who were housed, five participants were in need of support.

4.9.1 Aaron

Aaron was a single, 28 year old Caucasian male who relocated to Dysart from Brisbane just over four months ago, to escape Brisbane and to try and obtain employment in the mining industry. I met with Aaron in an interview room of non-government organisation in Moranbah. Life had not been working out well for Aaron in Brisbane and he was keen for a new start. Aaron drove from Brisbane to Dysart and moved in with his uncle. This relationship soured after six weeks and Aaron found himself with no money, no job and nowhere to live as his uncle had kicked him out because of an argument about shared living space and household activities. Aaron had resorted to living in his car in parks around Dysart and was also admitted as a social admission into the Dysart Hospital. Aaron had been suffering fairly major depression and anxiety and whilst sleeping in his car had no money for
food or medication. Aaron was told that there was no emergency accommodation in Dysart for men. When he received a Department of Human Services payment he had money to put fuel in his car and travel to Moranbah to seek services. Initially in Moranbah he slept on the veranda of a local church as he knew that this would be a safe place for him to sleep. The church assisted Aaron to access some basic services and resources and put him in touch with the local homelessness service.

Since moving to Moranbah Aaron had found some share accommodation and a part-time job which helped to cover his costs of living. Aaron was still hopeful of securing a job with a mining company but was realistic in knowing that just getting offered a position can be tough. Aaron was trying to save money to afford a bond on a private rental property but admitted on his low income being able to afford a private rental housing property would be difficult. Aaron had also lodged application for social housing but did not believe he would be considered a priority for limited social housing.

4.9.2 Jackson
Jackson was a 21 year old, Caucasian male who had experienced repeated episodes of homelessness since he was 16. Jackson met the definition ‘chronic homelessness’ having experienced homelessness for a period greater than 12 months either in one episode or as a result of numerous episodes of homelessness. Jackson left school and started work at 14. The first time Jackson became homeless was when he turned 16. Jackson left home because of disputes with his mother and step father who eventually decided to return to New South Wales without Jackson. Jackson couch-surfed at his older brother and partner’s place in Mackay but this was only temporary. Jackson was on his own in Mackay and ended up staying at the youth shelter and saving enough money for a bond for a house. Jackson stayed at the house for a couple of months before being offered a better place. Jackson then lost his employment. Jackson ended up losing his tenancy and was sleeping on the streets of Mackay.

Jackson soon ran out of money. his clothes were dirty and he was unable to afford to have them cleaned. No one wanted to hire Jackson even though he walked the streets for weeks handing out his resume. Jackson claimed “You can’t work and live on the streets. You get too tired and dirty. Boss looks at you and notices that you wear the same clothes for days and days because you have no washing machine”. Even though Jackson was living on the street, he wasn’t old enough to access the homeless men’s hostel. During this time Jackson would
try to couch-surf at friends’ places. Eventually Jackson was sleeping in a sleeping bag underneath the fish market on the banks of the Pioneer River. Jackson had continued this experience of homelessness for four years and was residing at the men’s hostel. Jackson had his name down for social housing but did not believe he would be prioritised for housing. The cost of housing in Mackay continued to exclude Jackson from being able to afford a bond and maintain rent in the private market. Jackson received Youth Allowance of $121 per week. He suffered from a bad heart condition, mental illness and physical injuries to his body. He had connected with the homeless men’s hostel and the Youth Housing Reintegration Assistance Service (YHARS) and also advised that he had his name down at the Department of Housing and Public Works for social housing for a number of years. Jackson remained hopeful of securing work in the mining industry as a means of getting out of homelessness but was not confident.

4.9.3 John

John was a 65 year old, Caucasian male who worked as a volunteer with a local homeless service for men in Mackay. Twelve months ago, John was himself a client of the homeless service. John had separated from his wife a number of years ago when they lived in North Queensland, and after this relationship ended, John moved to Mackay on his own to continue working in the mining industry. For a number of years, John was renting a room in Mackay but driving to and from Blackwater staying in ‘donga’ style accommodation for work connected to the mining industry. Dongas are a form of small temporary accommodation for mining workers.

When the downturn began in 2012, John was laid off and was unable to afford accommodation. John also became sick with a heart condition at the same time and was eventually connected to the local homeless service for men by a health social worker. For much of his life, John recalled that he never knew about homelessness services and even used to bring his car to get serviced across the road from the homeless service that ended up assisting him. John remained in the homelessness service which offered supported accommodation for a three-month period. During this time, he was supported to make an application for social housing and eventually was offered a one-bedroom property in Mackay.
4.9.4 Nathan

Nathan was a 48 year old, single male who had separated some years earlier from his partner with three adult children. Nathan has Maori cultural background and heritage. For most of Nathan’s adult life he had worked in the mining industry as a contractor undertaking open cut operations, training and assessment functions. Originally from Dysart, Nathan had remained in the Central Highland communities for many years. Even though he was a contractor, at the end of the contract he was always offered another contract. Nathan and his family had been accommodated by mining company housing. As Nathan explained, “once you lose your job you lose company housing and you have nowhere to go”. During 2012 and the beginning of the mining downturn, Nathan was made redundant. At the same time, his adult daughter in Sydney was having problems with her relationship and committed suicide. Nathan was left in a situation of having to sell possessions including his car, in order to fund funeral expenses. This left Nathan with few possessions and no money.

Nathan first experienced homelessness in Mackay in March 2013 and remained homeless moving through situations of couch-surfing with friends in Mackay and also sleeping rough in public places in Mackay. Nathan said he preferred to sleep rough in open places as opposed to the bush because he believed it was safe. In September 2013 Nathan was referred to the local homeless men’s hostel by his bulk-billing doctor who was attending to some of Nathan’s injuries he had obtained as a result of being a victim of physical assaults while he was sleeping rough in Mackay.

4.9.5 Christine

Christine was a 27 year old, Caucasian single mother of two, a six year old girl named Monique and 2 year old boy named Alex. Christine had been living in Mackay for almost four years having travelled to Mackay from Tasmania with her former partner and father of Alex. Christine and her partner had been renting privately in Mackay and paying quite high rents during the height of the mining boom. The relationship ended and Christine was left managing the lease and rent on her own. Her main source of income was Centrelink payment for sole parents. Christine was barely managing to survive and became unable to afford basic necessities of life, including food and being able to send Monique to school. Christine is also a severe diabetic and there were periods where she was unable to afford her insulin medications. For a period of time Christine moved into a share accommodation near Calen outside Mackay, with one bedroom to share for her and two children. Christine accessed the
local church-based service that assisted her with a food hamper and also referred her to a homeless service for families in Mackay. Christine was supported to access crisis accommodation and then managed to access a two-bedroom social housing unit in Mackay. The homelessness service continued to support Christine with access to tenancy advice and financial counselling and support.

4.9.6 Susan
Susan was a 35 year old, single mother of three children; her eldest was a 17 year old male, a daughter who was 8 and a ten month old baby. Susan had been living in the Mackay area for about 6 years, having relocated to Mackay from another state to be closer to her family after becoming a single parent. Susan had been staying in a caravan on her parent’s property. Susan formed a new relationship and had a third child in Mackay however the father of the child ended the relationship soon after the baby was born. Susan had a falling out with her birth family who decided they were unable to help Susan anymore and asked her to vacate the property leaving her and her two children homeless. Susan made contact with some crisis services and housing services in Mackay who arranged for Susan and her family to be placed in motel accommodation funded by a local non-government organisation for four days. During this time Susan was linked to the local family homelessness service and St Vincent de Paul who assisted her to access community housing and practical supports. Susan lived in social housing in Mirani outside of Mackay and attended Mackay regularly for health and school related activities.

4.9.7 Tracey
Tracey was a 52 year old, Aboriginal woman in a relationship with Frank. Tracey was raised in Mackay and had lived in Mackay throughout her life. Tracey is a person who had survived extreme domestic violence, abuse, and also experienced repeated episodes of homelessness including rough sleeping throughout much of her life. The injuries and health effects of years of abuse and homelessness had taken a big personal toll on Tracey’s health and wellbeing. The extreme physical abuse and assault that Tracey had experienced was perpetrated against her by several male partners. The injuries she experienced were severe and included having a broken jaw and being stabbed. Tracey has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and presented with a range of health issues including slurred speech. Tracey’s former partner was a drug dealer and was involved in prostituting Tracey to make money. Tracey has three adult children all with health issues and her adult son is in Port Phillip Prison in Melbourne. Tracey
formed a relationship with Frank who is also a former drug dealer who has experienced time in jail. Frank and Tracey had a two-bedroom social housing property in Mackay. Tracey and Frank receive some ongoing support from a homelessness service to help manage their tenancy and rely on charitable organisations for practical assistance.

4.9.8 Frank
Frank was 47 year old, Caucasian male in a relationship with Tracey. Frank was raised in Mackay and became involved in drug dealing in the Mackay community. Frank was unemployed and had periods of time in and out of employment over the last 30 years. Frank spent some time in prison as a result of drug dealing. He has been clean and not involved in the drug scene for over two years. Frank met Tracey when they were both experiencing homelessness which included some periods of rough sleeping in Mackay and also couch-surfing. Frank and Tracey were connected to the local homeless service for families and were able to access a two-bedroom social housing unit in Mackay. Frank and Tracey relied on Department of Human Services for income support and continued to receive some case worker support from the homelessness service to ensure that they met the obligations of their tenancy and were not at risk of losing their tenancy and becoming homeless. Frank openly talked about needing to advise the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works of issues with the property as the property was often not warm enough and this exacerbated Tracey’s health conditions.

4.9.9 Veronica
Veronica’s story was one of a person with long standing connections with the community of Dysart who had spent a good deal of her life there but also left the community for a number of years during her late teens and 20s. Veronica worked as a community support worker but recalled her experience of homelessness in 2006. This was exactly one year after Veronica and her husband returned to Dysart with their four children believing it would be a positive country environment to raise their family. Her partner had a job with a mining company and Veronica worked part-time. At the end of 2005 her partner lost his job with the mining company and consequently the family lost access to their mining company provided three-bedroom property. Due to the family’s income they were not able to afford to rent a property on the private market or be prioritised for limited social housing. This led Veronica and her family to have to move in with an elderly male relative in a three-bedroom property in 2006 in Dysart.
On first assessment, it was possible to form a view that Veronica was not indeed homeless. However, Veronica’s family of six had no control over their housing environment. The male owner set the scene for how the household would run and there was no freedom for Veronica’s family to live in a place that felt their own. Indeed, Veronica’s children were often accommodated in tents in the back yard when the male relative had friends and family visit his house. There is also a question about the adequacy of the dwelling to accommodate three adults and four children. For these reasons Veronica’s situation met the criteria for homelessness as established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics – the statistical definition of homelessness (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012d). The criteria which relate to adequacy of dwelling and access to social space would classify Veronica has meeting the definition of homelessness. Veronica recalled how throughout 2006 there were numerous arguments between her family and the male home owner about a range of issues including how she should parent her children.

Veronica and her partner were forced into the situation of homelessness, having to live with an elderly relative because there were no other accommodation options available to them. The cost of private rental housing in Dysart community at the time was outside what they were able to afford. As neither parent was working for the mining companies, there was no option to access mining company provided housing. As previous discussed, their situation was also not considered a priority for limited social housing. The duration of Veronica’s homeless was almost twelve months as she endured this accommodation with her elderly relative. At the beginning of 2007, the family had sufficient funds and employment to be able to move into their own private rental housing in Dysart which had a secure tenancy agreement in place.

4.9.10 Kaylene

Kaylene was a 45 year old, single mother with five sons aged 22, 20, 17, 12 and 8. Kaylene moved to Dysart in 2012 with her partner and family, as her partner had been engaged in a Drive in Drive Out work arrangement for a period of time from Gympie. The effects of the DIDO from Gympie to Dysart had taken its toll and the family moved to Dysart. Kaylene explained that when they arrived in Dysart there was not much to do and that this would lead to feuds with her partner. The combination of long work hours, boredom on time off and the heavy drinking culture in Dysart were factors that contributed to Kaylene leaving the
relationship due to domestic and family violence. Kaylene had been accommodated in the homeless services crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. Kaylene had been accommodated in this service for approximately 9 months and was there with her two young sons who still attended primary school. Her older three sons all work in the mining industry in the Central Highlands area and like their father lived in workers accommodation. Kaylene was working but on a low income making $1200 a fortnight. Kaylene was desperately trying to save money to be able to afford to move into a private rental property in Dysart. Kaylene was very worried about any mining related increase in housing costs as this would make accessing affordable housing impossible for her in Dysart.

4.9.11 Ruth
Ruth was a 47 year old, Caucasian female and mother of four adult children. Adelaide was Ruth’s home-town and this is where her family and children resided. Ruth had been married for over 25 years and had been a victim of domestic violence throughout this relationship. Ruth also discussed having experienced homelessness as a teenager. Two years ago, Ruth met Charlie through an online dating site. Charlie was also originally from Adelaide although he worked in Dysart for a mining company and lived in the town as a permanent resident. Ruth moved from Adelaide to Dysart to be with Charlie. Upon moving to Dysart to be with Charlie, Ruth soon discovered that Charlie had a range of excessive drinking, drug taking and sexuality issues. This relationship also became violent and when the relationship finally ended, Charlie relocated to worker-provided accommodation on mining site leaving Ruth with a $750 a week rental property which she could not afford. Ruth was evicted from this property and for a period was sleeping in her car in the local supermarket car park. Ruth was eventually connected to the homeless service in Dysart which helped Ruth access some local crisis accommodation and obtain a part-time job. Ruth moved from the crisis accommodation to a situation where she was sharing a caravan with an older male as there were no other accommodation options.

4.9.12 Michelle
Michelle was a single mother who had been working full time and raising a child on her own. After moving from her rental property which was severely damaged due to a natural disaster and subsequent loss of personal finances, Michelle relocated to Moranbah to live with her father. After a short period of time accommodated with her father, Michelle decided that she
had to move out due to family conflict and stress. Michelle initiated contact with the local homeless service which placed Michelle and her son in crisis accommodation which was shared with other clients. After a period of time accommodated in crisis accommodation, Michelle was able to access a two-bedroom social housing property in Moranbah.

### 4.10 Stakeholder Participant Category B – Specialist homelessness services

Participants in Stakeholder Participant Category B represented specialist homelessness services in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah and were given the following code to protect their confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Specialist homelessness service and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSPA</td>
<td>Lowanna House (Mackay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPB</td>
<td>Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Moranbah (Moranbah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPC</td>
<td>Mackay Men’s Hostel (Mackay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPD</td>
<td>Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Moranbah (Moranbah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPE</td>
<td>Dysart Homeless Service (Dysart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPF</td>
<td>Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Moranbah (Moranbah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPG</td>
<td>Community Accommodation Support Association (Mackay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPH</td>
<td>Community Accommodation Support Association (Mackay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPI</td>
<td>Kalyan Youth Shelter (Mackay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSPJ</td>
<td>Salvation Army Samaritan House (Mackay)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants from this stakeholder category occupied various positions within their organisations including front-line case workers, coordinators and managers. This list of stakeholders represents the full range of specialist homelessness services operating within the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart.
4.11 Stakeholder Participant Category C - Generic community service providers, government agencies and local businesses

The third stakeholder category included representatives of generic community services in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. These participants were also given a code to protect their confidentiality.

Table 4.9. Stakeholder Participant Category C - Codes applied to generic community service providers, government agencies and local businesses (GCSP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCSPA</td>
<td>Indigenous Officer – Mackay Regional Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPB</td>
<td>Youth Worker – Dysart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPC</td>
<td>Counsellor – Relationships Australia Mackay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPD</td>
<td>Manager, Mackay Housing Service Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPE</td>
<td>Planning and Policy Officer, Isaac Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPF</td>
<td>Homelessness Officer, Centrelink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPG</td>
<td>Social Worker, Mackay Women’s Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPH</td>
<td>Homelessness Officer, Mackay City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPI</td>
<td>Rent Connect Officer Mackay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPJ</td>
<td>Q Health social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPK</td>
<td>Q Health social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSPL</td>
<td>Q Health social worker</td>
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<td>GCSPQ</td>
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4.12 Stakeholder Participant Category E – Community representatives

As there were no participants from Stakeholder category D, the final Stakeholder category was Stakeholder Participant Category E - Community representatives who have an interest in responding to homelessness in their community. This was a relatively small group of participants who predominantly represented religious organisations who were involved in local community responses to homelessness. There was also one representative of the Moranbah business community who participated in this research offering valuable insight regarding how the mining boom period was managed and how this impacted people becoming at risk of homelessness in Moranbah as well as people who experienced homelessness during this time.

Table 4.10. Stakeholder Participant Category E – Codes applied to community representatives (CR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRA</td>
<td>Uniting Church – Mackay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRB</td>
<td>Pastor – Church Moranbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Businessman – Moranbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRD</td>
<td>Pastor – Anglican Church Moranbah</td>
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</table>

Community representatives added an important perspective to this research. Their interest and motivation to participate was more than their professional interest but came from a place of strong individual faith and concern for the local community.

4.13 Limitations of the research

As discussed in the sampling and stakeholder engagement section of this Chapter, a major limitation of this study was the failure to recruit representatives of the mining industry as research participants. Much effort was directed into engaging with a variety of mining companies with operations within the Bowen Basin region and companies which have considerable profile within the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. The engagement strategy included phone calls and emails to head offices of companies based in state capitals including Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, and phone calls and emails to local
mining company contacts in the three communities. These phone calls and emails were not returned despite repeated efforts. On my initial visit to Moranbah, in November 2013, I presented to two offices of companies to discuss potential recruitment into the study in face to face context. While there appeared to be interest in my study, it was communicated to me that local level staff would not be able to participate in such a study without company approval, and in one situation, a company staff member made follow up phone contact to advise that she was advised by her company that she would not be allowed to participate in the study.

There was also effort to engage the relevant union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, (CFMEU), and while there was support from the Union to participate in the study, relevant staff were unavailable during the field work visits to these communities.

The failure to engage representatives from Stakeholder Category D - Workforce and Mining Industry representatives meant that the study was informed from secondary evidence about the perspective of mining companies and workforce representatives. The study contains a variety of literature which canvasses these perspectives including annual reports from peak bodies such as the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and sociological studies of the impacts of mining on rural communities.

A further limitation of this study was the reliance upon ABS data from census nights. This data is collected once every five years, the last count having occurred in 2016, for which the results will not be published until later in 2017. This study has included data from Census counts from 2001, 2006 and 2011 to understand the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart for the period of time that coincides with the mining boom. The 2016 Census data will illuminate whether the numbers of homeless people in these communities have increased and decreased in the four years since the mining boom ended, the communities have experienced consequential economic downturn.

The study also incorporates a variety of data from the Specialist Homelessness Service Collection (SHSC) which is administered by the AIHW. This collection gathers data for all people presenting to specialist homelessness services throughout Australia, including the non-government organisations delivering specialist homelessness services in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah who participated in this study. This data has been used as anchoring point for
this study, providing service delivery and social policy context informing the qualitative analysis undertaken in this study. SHSC data is very useful in understanding patterns of service utilisation by homeless people, but it only captures data for people who have actually presented to a specialist homelessness service. It does not capture data about all homeless people within a community. This issue is critical as I contend in this study that a dynamic of homelessness in regional and rural mining communities is that people experiencing homelessness, and people at risk of homelessness, often do not know about the services in the community and how they can access these services.

4.14 Chapter conclusion

This Chapter has explored the methodology underpinning this social research of homelessness in the mining communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. The primary question that this research aims to explore is whether the mining industry, and more specifically, the mining boom and downturn cycle, has had an impact on homelessness in regional and rural Queensland mining communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. The conceptual framework involves a qualitative methodology encompassing a social constructionist ontology and critical social theory perspective. Ethical issues and considerations were outlined. Ethics approvals from two human research ethics committees were discussed. Sampling, stakeholder recruitment, field work and data collection activities and processes were discussed in specific detail to this research. The chapter also involved an in-depth discussion about the analysis of data and how the use of qualitative software technology NVIVO was used to assist in the thematic coding. The chapter concluded with a personal introduction to the twelve participants who had experienced homelessness in the communities of interest, and introduction to the coding system used to de-identify all participants in this study.

This coding and data analysis process enabled me to organise data and evidence into three findings chapters. The first findings chapter (Chapter Five) deals with the structural causes of homelessness in mining communities, taking into account the social and economic effects of the mining boom and downturn cycle. The second findings chapter (Chapter Six) deals with the twelve personal narratives of people who have experienced homelessness in these communities with a focus on their pathway into homelessness, and for those who have exited
homelessness, their pathway out of homelessness. The third findings chapter (Chapter Seven) focuses on strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness in mining communities during period of mining boom and downturn.

The next Chapter will examine the contextual factors influencing homelessness in mining communities focusing on the effects of the mining cycle during the heights of the mining boom, and the mining downturn. The changes to these communities are observed through a sociological lens to understand how the various influences of the mining industry had contributed to homelessness in these communities. The chapter will then consider community attitudes towards homelessness and emerging social and ongoing social issues within these communities.
Chapter 5: Contextual factors influencing homelessness in mining communities

5.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter will provide an analysis and discussion of the structural causes of homelessness in the mining communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. This analysis will be based on the application of the methodology discussed in the previous chapter with particular reference to critical social theory as a theoretical foundation. In Chapter Three the great economic and social forces associated with the mining boom were explored regarding their impact on these communities in the Bowen Basin Region. This thesis argues that understanding the pervasiveness of these forces is critical to answering the central research question of what impact the Mining Industry, and more specifically the mining boom and downturn, has had on homelessness in regional and rural Queensland mining communities.

For the purpose of this research the mining boom is taken to have occurred from 2002 to 2012 as evidenced in reports from various mining companies and government sources (Cleary, 2011; Department of Mines and Energy, 2007; Minerals Council of Australia, 2011) and the mining downturn taking effect from late 2012. This chapter will include a detailed analysis of the effects of the mining boom period and downturn periods on the communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah as told through narrative of respondents, service providers and community representatives. The effects of the temporary workforces known as FIFO and DIDO will be considered as major change dynamic to these communities and how they contribute to homelessness in these communities. The mining downturn coincides with the data collection timeframe for this research and detailed discussion of opportunities and disadvantages for homelessness in these communities is analysed in this chapter. The chapter also considers the specific issues regarding housing affordability during the mining boom and downturn periods and how housing affordability dynamics are a major structural cause of homelessness in these communities while impacting differentially on community members. Finally, the chapter discusses the influence and relationship of the mining boom and downturn periods with community members at risk of homelessness and people who have experienced homelessness during the mining boom and downturn cycle.
5.2 The effects of the Mining Boom on Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay 2002 - 2012

The decade-long coal-driven mining boom in Queensland had a transformative effect on the communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. The boom brought unprecedented wealth and opportunity for the region, and this economic prosperity continued for over a decade. It was not until the boom had well and truly taken a hold of the mining communities in the Bowen Basin that some of the downside of the mining boom was recognised (Foster, 2015; Fowler, 2012; Hutchens, 2014).

The communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart were at the epicentre of social economic changes associated with the mining boom (Department of Mines and Energy, 2007; Rolfe & O’Dea, 2007). As discussed in Chapter Three, the history and informal relationships between these three mining communities are important to consider. While Moranbah and Dysart are smaller rural mining communities that were formed in the early 1970s as a response to the need to have a resident population to serve the mining areas within the Bowen Basin, Mackay is a larger regional centre whose European settlement can be traced to 1862. Research participants reflected on the changes to these communities brought about by the recent mining boom and emphasised the social and economic opportunities and aspirations that the advent of the mining boom had on local people.

The response to the question of whether the mining boom and the changes it has had for Mackay have been positive or negative, were highly relative and individualised. Community members who achieved transformative wealth in short periods of time would argue the mining boom transformed their lives and Mackay for the better. However, this study has focused on those people who have experienced homelessness during this period and those services that support them. Their perspective is entirely different and demonstrates the pitfalls and “underside” of the mining boom period. A homelessness service provider pointed out the dramatic change in Mackay from the tail end of the mining boom in 2012 to when I interviewed her in October 2013 with the mining downturn having taken effect on the community, as follows:

HSPC – I think if you talk to anyone, there have been huge changes in the last 12 months… 12 months ago you couldn’t have rented a card board box in Mackay,
seriously you couldn’t, there was less than 1% availability of rental properties. Now there is more availability of rental properties. I spoke with a real estate agent this morning and she was saying that there are many vacant houses and people are negotiating the rents.

The different impacts of the mining boom and the effects for community members are reflected in this statement which shows the opportunity for wealth does involve a degree of luck and good fortune. The cost of housing during the mining boom had a major impact on homelessness in mining communities and this will be examined in this thesis as a dominant structural cause of homelessness in these communities. Despite the decreasing cost of housing in these communities during the mining downturn, many people for a variety of reasons, continue to experience, and be at risk of homelessness during the mining downturn. In line with Johnson et al. (2015) research findings it does not necessarily follow that an improvement in housing affordability in a region leads to a reduction in homelessness, at least in mining communities experiencing the highs of the mining boom and the lows of the mining downturn.

There are five overarching themes that emerged in my research which convey participants’ views and appraisal of the impact of the mining boom on Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. These themes are:

- Opportunities for wealth and prosperity.
- Reduced levels of housing affordability.
- High demand on local services and infrastructure.
- Loss of community culture and identity.
- Change in industrial arrangements driving community change.

The research identified a further three overarching themes which characterised the effects of the mining downturn on Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay. These themes included:

- Uncertainty over the future of mining in the region impacting community psyche/morale.
- Loss of employment, basic services and business.
- Improved housing affordability.

These themes will be discussed in depth to explore the research questions that frame this research.
5.2.1 Opportunities for wealth and prosperity

The overwhelming sense of prosperity and the perceptions of wealth and opportunity brought to Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart during the mining boom, characterised participants’ responses to questions about how the communities have changed over the past decade. As a young person experiencing chronic homelessness, with a strong connection to Mackay, Jackson considered that overall there had been “very small changes, not a lot. People’s attitudes change day to day. The weather changes and the land changes, that’s about it really”. This statement shows that even the opportunity and wealth brought by the mining boom did not shift the day to day reality of survival for homeless people. When asked whether the mining boom related changes had been a good thing for Mackay or not, Jackson’s response was:

**Jackson** - Most of the changes are good. The population change is good, the housing and retail market changes have been good for the community and people that live here. The entertainment centre and the pool are good for most people, it is not my thing as I can’t afford it … yes there are new government services – there has been so much, a brand new hospital. This has really affected the town. The old hospital here was constantly full and you were waiting for hours to see anybody.

**SW** – It was difficult to see a doctor?

**Jackson** – Yes, seeing a doctor would take hours and hours unless it was an emergency. The only way you would go into emergency is via an ambulance otherwise you were treated out the front. The new hospital is way bigger, and facilities are better and you aren’t waiting as long. New departments and machines, more efficient and safer and you don’t have to fly people to Townsville for serious accidents anymore.

Even as a young homeless person who has struggled to access housing, health, education and employment related services, Jackson was able to see the greater good that the mining boom had brought to Mackay. This response highlighted Jackson’s attachment to Mackay and his sense of community belonging, despite experiencing extreme poverty (Milbourne, 2014). Jackson emphasised the stresses on infrastructure and how the new hospital in Mackay has greater capacity to provide health care to local Mackay people. Jackson’s response
emphasises the importance of access to quality services such as health, to people who have experienced chronic homelessness. Access to these services is often very difficult for young people at risk of homelessness in rural areas (Beer, et al., 2005), hence it is understandable Jackson has a positive outlook at this perceived mining boom benefit to Mackay.

One of Jackson’s major frustrations of the mining boom was the difficulties accessing health services that did not provide bulk billing services. In line with the principles of critical social theory, this lack of bulk billing services in Mackay is evidence of how the mining boom generated wealth, served to further oppress some of the most vulnerable community members (Allen, 2009; Morley, 2014). Jackson came to the interview with injuries including bruises and lacerations to his body and also talked about having other health issues such as chest related problems. Jackson’s physical state and personal health reflected the research about the significant health needs of rough sleepers and how individual health and wellbeing is associated with personal safety (Parsell, 2011; Thomas et al., 2012). The issue of access to important social and health care services by homeless people in mining communities will be a recurring theme of this analysis.

The pace of change, new infrastructure, albeit somewhat late, and the notion of perceived and actual benefits for the citizens of Mackay, was connected to the wealth and prosperity that the mining boom had brought to Mackay. As a mature man, who has experienced homelessness and now works as a volunteer at a specialist homelessness service, John’s response on how mining boom had changed Mackay was as follows:

The first thing, the changes have been very slow. The amount of income that was being made in this town, you couldn’t see it reflected in the town. The locals would ask “where the money has gone?” A lot of people said it was going out of the town with all the FIFO and the people who work in the Bowen Basin, Peak Downs area every week was incredible. It did change gradually but not as much as you would have thought. Mainly changes are in housing infrastructure not so much in roads and the like, but they are catching up now, which is almost impossible to do.

There was a strong view that despite the wealth and prosperity generated by the mining boom, the new infrastructure including roads, shopping centres and the hospital, did take a long time and may not have happened if not for the impact of the mining boom on the local
economy. It could also be argued that the mining boom caused significant utilisation of these services, and that if not for population and commercial demands of the boom, Mackay may not have required such level of investment.

John’s response raises a question about whether Mackay citizens on low to average incomes were actually benefiting from the considerable economic gains that occurred during the mining boom period, or whether the major beneficiaries of the mining boom were a small number of local mining employed citizens and companies based in metropolitan regions of Australia. This questioning of who benefited from the mining boom in Mackay is similar to some of the findings from international research on mining generated boom/bust economies in other countries including Scotland, Canada and the USA review in Chapter One. In the regional community of Mackay, the increasing income inequality was causing noticeable divisions in the community. For service providers this became a critical factor.

**CRA** – There is a battle for better wages for city-based employees of the mining industry. There is a big difference in the take-home pay between the guy who works out there on the drag line bucket and the same guy who works in here (servicing them). That disparity impacts on homelessness.

**GCSPD** – There is a disparity of income. Those wages are here. But it is more the person who is cooking the kebab and the shop assistant where the disparity of wages that contributes to homelessness lies, more than the person who is fixing the tooth on the drag line bucket. There is a difference between someone working at Paget fixing a tyre and the guy who is driving the truck with the tyre on it – no doubt about that. I think we are in a very interesting time right now – all the talk was that the mining industry would pick up again after the federal election (September 2013), that was all the talk, but over the last two weeks or so two mines have sacked a lot of staff, but they appear to be hiring them back again. Collinsville closed down at the end of August but are now re-hiring people. It is hard to know what is going on in the minds of the mining industry.

The income inequalities and differential in mining communities are seen as one of the structural dynamics of mining communities that contribute towards social disadvantage (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2009). The people on low incomes outside the mining industry are a group of community members who are suddenly at greater risk of
homelessness in the mining boom period than they were prior to the boom because they are unable to keep up with the cost of living in mining communities, much less be able to keep pace with the cost of housing. In addition to wage disparity issues, the job losses which have been characteristic of the mining downturn phase in the Mackay Region will be discussed later in this chapter.

The ‘boom’ had passed by people on low incomes and working-class background in mining communities, further compounding their social and economic disadvantage. This was exemplified in former mining contractor Nathan’s comment that the mining boom had really meant so many people could no longer keep their head above water in a financial sense.

Nathan – The influx of mining money in this town has meant general living costs are out of reach of most people. Unless you are in mining, general living expenses are dragging everything down. People who are just keeping their head above water are not getting anywhere or ahead. This goes for people who are not keeping on top of their finances. It is going down, down, down. Anyone in a desperate situation makes it almost impossible to get out of – rock bottom.

Just trying to keep up with day to day cost of living expenses in these communities was proving a major challenge even for the most thrifty. Nathan experienced homelessness for the first time in his forties and his observations of Mackay are that of a former long-term mining contractor who had previously managed the costs of living. The mining boom served to inflate the costs of goods and services and while the community members who were benefiting from the mining boom were able to keep up with these changes, vulnerable community members on low incomes were not able to survive without seeking additional assistance. These adverse changes in the liveability of Mackay and cost of living pressures are consistent with literature regarding the adverse community impacts the boom generated for communities (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; Cleary, 2011). The opportunity for wealth and prosperity for some people in mining communities during the boom resulted in greater disadvantage and inequality for others.

5.2.2 Reduced levels of housing affordability
The dominant issue of lack of affordable housing and access to housing was identified as a major structural issue that impacted all three communities during the mining boom period. This finding aligns with other major studies on housing affordability in mining communities
Prior to the mining boom, participants described Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart as being largely rural and regional communities with reasonable levels and supply of affordable housing. Some participants noted that previous mining booms had similar effects of producing reduced housing affordability, but these earlier mining booms were not as long lived as the more recent one. The housing system was placed under immense pressure during this time. Social housing was fully allocated and applicants for social housing faced significant waiting periods. Access to private housing was more difficult because of the “turbo charged” market forces generated from the mining boom. The onset of the mining boom from 2002 onwards greatly reduced, if not eliminated, affordable housing in these communities for the duration of the mining boom period as the cost of housing skyrocketed and greatly exceeded the 30% of take home income often given as the threshold for determining affordable housing (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; Rowley & Ong, 2012). This had severe consequences for vulnerable community members as reflected in Christine’s reflections:

Christine – The biggest thing here is that the rental market is very expensive. Being a single mother with two kids, most of my parenting pension is taken up with rental costs. I guess also finding a rental property that real estate agents will want to rent to you because you are low income and you don’t match the criteria is really difficult. Sometimes you worry at the end of your lease are you going to find another one. The first house I was renting here in 2011 was $380 a week. I was pregnant at the time and on Newstart (pension) and my youngest child was eight. That was quite difficult, and I found myself accessing a lot of different services around town just to get by... Rent has risen quite substantially. The last property I was in before going into crisis housing with CASA I was paying $440 a week, and I was living off $16 a week with two children and it was extremely hard.

Christine’s rents represented 70-80% of her income during this period. Christine’s remark supports the finding of Scheltens and Morris (2006) whose research found that vulnerable community members in mining communities were paying close to 100% of their government income support in order to continue living in the community during the boom.

The themes of rising housing costs and reduced housing affordability were also noted by Nathan who has a long-term connection with Mackay and the Central Queensland area and
could appreciate how the housing market had so fundamentally changed to be geared towards high income mining workers. Nathan commented that “house prices have gone through the roof in the last 10 years. 15 years ago, when I was renting a home here with a wife and three kids, it was quite easy. But I couldn’t afford to do it these days”. Service providers also observed the changes in housing affordability brought about as result of the decade long mining boom.

**HSPA** – For anyone moving to the area it was a big problem… Unless you are on a huge income it was really difficult. To rent or buy is really expensive. I was able to do that but heard many stories from others in the social services area, for example, lawyers in town having to get a tent and camp in town next to clients. It was really extreme not so long ago. It has recently changed.

The limited availability of affordable housing and the fact the housing market is geared towards younger singles with high income makes obtaining affordable housing for people like Christine, a single mother on low income, and other participants, next to impossible. Even middle-class professionals struggled to access housing in this environment.

The construction and supply of new homes in mining communities during the boom was also made difficult due to a complex range of housing supply issues. Rowley and Ong’s (2012) research argues that “affordability can only be improved through significant reduction in market rents and prices, direct housing subsidies to households or, more realistically, through large scale new housing supply” (p. 14). The provision of large-scale new housing simply did not come to communities like Moranbah and Dysart in time to address the rapid population growth and income inequality generated by the boom.

The higher costs associated with building a home in mining communities, in particular Moranbah and Dysart during the mining boom period, was captured powerfully in this participants’ response to the costs associated with building a property in Moranbah “you can build a mansion down the Gold Coast cheaper than you can build a three or four bedroom home in Moranbah” (Businessman, CRC). The supply of land, obtaining necessary approvals to build on the land and obtaining adequate finance to fund the construction of new properties in mining communities impacted by the inflated costs of services, worked against the common belief that simply building new dwellings in mining communities was the answer to the housing crisis. The increased costs of living and goods and services in mining...
communities were noted as consequence of the mining boom in policy literature (Beers, et al., 2011; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013).

The trend of increasing housing prices during the mining boom period was considered by all participants in the context of classic market dynamics of supply and demand. One service provider noted that during the boom the demand for housing and other services were under great demand, and therefore were prone to rapid and exorbitant price increases.

**GCSPC** – During the boom a lot of the complaints were that there was no repairs ever carried out and rent increased each quarter and they were just told “If you’re not happy take off” because that gave them a chance then with a new tenancy to actually put the price up even more. There’s only so much they can raise the price for an existing tenant.

The mining boom period clearly favoured the landlords and home owners over prospective renters. This issue is interesting to analyse from critical social theory in that landlords became “oppressors” during the mining boom and the high housing costs for people on low and average incomes was part of the oppression (Allen, 2009; Pease, et al. 2016). This remark also stresses the quality of housing and property and tenancy management services slipping during the mining boom period because basic house repairs were not able to be carried out because of the demand and costs associated with hiring tradesman to attend to these activities.

The housing affordability issues also generated trends in the utilisation of other forms of accommodation and living arrangements in mining communities. Caravan parks had broader appeal for people looking for temporary accommodation. Caravan parks have always been a feature of rural and regional Queensland communities and are often accessed by more vulnerable members of the community who are unable to access other forms of housing. This group of people have been referred to as the “marginally housed” (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2009, p. 18). During the mining boom, even caravan parks became exclusive in terms of who they accepted and the fees they charged people. Some caravan parks even closed thereby increasing the housing pressures within the community as reflected in the comment below from a generic community service provider:
GCSPC – A lot of those caravan parks have closed and there’s not new ones opening. Something you do see when the mining industry is peaking is caravans in yards, so there are obviously people living there and that’s not ideal either. Probably the owners of the property have got family staying with them in a caravan, I’m sure it wouldn’t be what they want but they’re helping someone out, they’re doing what they can, and it wouldn’t be ideal for the people staying there either, but they couldn’t afford $350 a week to rent a caravan in a park.

General housing affordability was outside the reach of many community members during the period of the boom, and this is certainly supported by the evidence from the Queensland Government Statisticians Office regarding housing costs in the Mackay and Isaac regions for this period (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2014; 2016a; 2016b).

In the context of Mackay, pressures on housing prices started as early as 2002 but rose sharply towards the end of the decade. In the communities of Moranbah and Dysart the evidence indicated that housing prices sharply increased in the early part of this decade and that housing affordability reduced at higher rates. This was most profound from 2009 to the conclusion of the boom in 2012. One businessman in Moranbah noted how oppressive the cost of living had become in Moranbah:

CRC – They couldn't afford to stay here, yeah. I mean, the rents were $2,000 and $3,000 a week and they're getting take-home pays of $400 or $500 a week

This sense of housing being completely unaffordable and out of reach created a widely held view that governments and the mining industry needed to do more to address the housing crisis. Not only was there a lack of housing for prospective single workers and workers with partners and families but the housing prices in terms of private rental housing or home purchase were out of reach of most people including people working in non-mining related employment. In Chapter Three, the research reviewed highlights that this finding is consistent with other research which has found that the housing affordability crisis in mining communities had the effect of precluding people with skills in non-mining related professions and industries from living in these communities (Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2008; 2009)

In the Mackay community, the outskirts of the community and the neighbouring farming communities of Mirani, Walkerston and Sarina, became desirable places, almost like
dormitory suburbs in large cities, for people wishing to obtain more affordable housing or purchase homes in the Mackay Region. The service providers considered this outcome as follows:

**HSPG** – one thing that I think is different is that there are no cheap alternatives on the edge of Mackay. The Pioneer Valley is very popular with the miners because it is close to town. When you look at Sarina, the Dalrymple extension has snapped up all of the available housing. There is no cheap suburb anywhere.

**HSPH** – it used to be you would go out to Walkerston but not now, it is the same housing cost all over, Sarina might be a little cheaper but not by much. And then there is no public transport.

The issues surrounding housing in these outskirt areas and neighbouring communities is also important from the point of view of social pressures placed on individuals and families and access to critical services such as public transport. Although housing was more affordable in these outlying and neighbouring rural communities to Mackay, there were significantly more pressures on people as these communities had very little in the way of local services and no public transport into Mackay. This trend was evidence of the absence of social planning and policy responses that lead to further rural disadvantage in these communities (Cheers, 1998; Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). These practical challenges will be explored further in the next chapter (Chapter Six) from the point of view of single parent families forced to move to these areas because of housing costs.

Participants who had been in Mackay for a period of time were able to reflect on the price of housing in their time in the community and link the price of housing with changes in the mining industry. A manager from a housing service provider was able to identify changes in housing policy over this critical period whereby mining companies were not requiring public housing prior to the boom period and how this dramatically changed when the mining boom took effect and how the challenges associated with housing grew.

**GCSPD** – I came to Mackay at the end of 2001 and in 2002 one of the first jobs I was given was getting rid of 100 properties in Dysart. These had been returned to the Department (Depart of Housing) by BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA). They were selling for $17,000. We kept some for public housing and we put 50 or 60 of them on the private rental market. Some of them sat empty and some of them
were used. So that is indicative of what was happening when I arrived. But it didn’t take long that on the other hand there was this boom that was starting to happen and in the latter part of 2002 was the first time that the Regional Managers Network (from the Department of Housing) went to Moranbah to have a meeting with local people there. It was becoming evident that there was a problem and that was affecting all sorts of issues including housing. If you look at Council statistics for 2003 and 2004 about the number of purchaser approvals and building approvals there was 75% increase. Also, a 60% increase in price during that period of time. We were at 0% vacancy rate for a long period of time. In the last 3 years it has plateaued. But probably in the last 6-12 months it has actually started to go down. We were at a 5% vacancy rate at the beginning of the year and I think that is down to 3% now. Purchase prices have reduced and rental prices have started to reduce. They are still high.

This shows the dramatic and sudden changes in house prices in Mackay and the changes in availability of both social and private housing brought about by the mining boom. It also documents the sudden demand and rise in housing affordability at the beginning of the mining boom and how government agencies were caught unawares and meeting to discuss the impacts of this issue.

The impact of the dramatic increase in housing costs for people on low incomes including people on Department of Human Services income support benefits such as Newstart, an income support pension for Australian citizens who are unemployed, were even more severe, as one service provider noted;

**GCSPF** – You would say that a person on Newstart has very limited chance to pay for accommodation if they are on their own in Mackay unless they go men’s hostel or refuge. They can barely afford it if they are on an aged or disability pension. Couples can sometimes afford it. But when you are a family there is very little family accommodation.

Newstart is the main form of income support available to unemployed Australians. At the time of writing this thesis, Newstart rates were approximately $535 per fortnight for a single person with no children, $580 per for a single person with dependent child/children and $485 per fortnight for partners. Additionally, people in receipt of Newstart and other government
income support benefits may be eligible for some rent assistance if they rent a property or certain board and lodgings. People on low incomes, including such government income support, were unable to access private rental housing in communities during the boom, and there was far too limited social housing available to meet the demand at this peak period.

To summarise, the mining boom was a period of great material wealth if an individual was fortunate enough to benefit from the boom through lucrative employment, investment or exponential capital gain on sale of property, but the mining boom did heighten social and economic division within these communities. The flip side of the boom is that the most vulnerable members of the community on the lowest incomes were unable to afford the most basic of services.

5.2.3 High demand on local services and community infrastructure

The general view that the mining booms had positive effects for generating wealth and prosperity, did not necessarily flow through to perceptions about local infrastructure keeping up with the demands associated with the boom times. The work done on social impact assessments of mining communities supports this finding (Ivanova, et al., 2007; Petkova, et al., 2009). Research participants commented on how local services and infrastructure had become depleted during the mining boom period and any new investment in services or infrastructure was a case of “too little too late”. In fact, the infrastructure in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart was so depleted and not keeping up with the burgeoning population and business demand, that this became a prominent social and political issue in these communities. The Local Government Association of Queensland (2010) called for a long-term funding stream for local governments to support infrastructure projects in Queensland mining regions including the Bowen Basin. Arguments about whose role it was to fund such infrastructure projects in mining regions dominated the policy debate for much of the mining boom period (Local Government Association of Queensland, 2010; Owen & Kemp, 2012).

The impact of the boom on existing Mackay infrastructure was a theme noted by service providers as a major pressure point on the community.

**HSPA –** When I first came (to Mackay during the mining boom) everything was stretched. Accommodation is the most obvious and the most difficult. But even like roads, space on the roads, space to park. The state of the roads, and state of
the infrastructure. They were being over-used. Too many people using too few spaces. Everything was really expensive. Groceries were really expensive here … Any kind of trades were incredibly expensive because they are competing with mining wages. A small job at your place was really expensive. To get your car fixed again was very expensive and could take forever. With our clients on low income there has been a devastating impact.

The demand for services, the heavy utilisation of infrastructure and the market driven increase to cost of living, detracted from the liveability of communities like Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah during the mining boom period. This finding is supported by a social impact assessment of the mining industry on regional and rural communities that examined the social impacts on Bowen Basin communities five years into the boom (Petkova et al., 2009). The communities have a range of fairly new infrastructure including a new hospital, arterial roads and Myer Centre in Mackay, mining company owned housing and accommodation in Moranbah and Dysart, a new airport under construction in Moranbah, a large new recreation centre in Dysart and swimming pool in Moranbah. The housing in Moranbah and Dysart shows a blend of older style 1970s three-bedroom houses, many of which are original housing built when Dysart and Moranbah first opened as a community in the early 1970s, and new housing including mining company owned housing. The new investment in infrastructure in Dysart did not include improvement in the condition of the roads leading into Dysart, or the dilapidated state of the town centre and shopping centre. My own diary notes from fieldwork undertaken during this research indicate that the state of the Dysart Hospital and School show the effects of their age and heavy utilisation. The mining boom saw some investment in important infrastructure in mining communities, while other important community infrastructure was left in a state of dilapidation and needing urgent repair and restoration (Ivanova et al., 2007).

The issue of access to vital social, community and health services by local community members was identified by participants as a major problem that arose in all three communities. A Mackay service provider noted the struggle to access services and the inflated cost of goods and services in Mackay as follows:

\[\text{GCSPD} – \text{I use the example of the mechanic we take our car to. He used to employ six mechanics. Never had any trouble getting your car in, always a good service. But gradually he now has only one person working for him. He can’t}\]
keep staff because they go out to the mines. They can’t afford to live here. The price of getting your car serviced has gone up. He is paying more for the rent on his property in the CBD and garages. It is a small example that we pay more for the services of our car because he can’t keep staff that go out to the mines or he gets new staff that can’t afford to live here. He has to pay them more to get them to stay here and work for him. Therefore, all of his prices have gone up.

The cost of living pressures in mining during the boom detracted from the liveability and inclusiveness of these communities. The fatigue level of local infrastructure was matched by under-resourcing of services as one Moranbah service provider noted the chronic understaffing of the local hospital and mental health services in the community.

HSPF – we have an understaffed mental health service and an understaffed hospital. It is all part and parcel of trying to support and something about the situation … we can’t do that now so imagine the influx of 30,000 people who want to come and access services.

In line with literature reviewed in this thesis about the effects of large mobile workforces in mining communities (Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2009; Maidment & Bay, 2012), this reflection notes the added pressure on mining communities with the mobile population. Business and services also struggled to attract workers to live in mining communities during this period causing a vicious cycle of sustained pressure on depleted services, especially health and community services. Even industries like fast food outlets struggled to attract staff in mining communities during the mining boom as one participant noted:

HSPB – Yes when the boom happened, Red Rooster couldn’t get enough staff, so they had to constantly shut. A lot of services couldn’t get staff because nobody wanted to work for $16-20 per hour. They all thought they would get big money.

Mining boom periods are typically characterised by the need for large amounts of labour and employers having inadequate access to labour across almost all industry groups. This finding is strongly supported by the research on housing and labour market dynamics in mining communities particularly during the period of mining boom, for example Haslam-Mackenzie et al. (2009) and Rowley and Ong (2012). It was difficult to recruit staff to lower paying jobs during the boom as people were attracted to higher paying roles but also knew that low income jobs were not sustainable in mining communities with high rental and housing costs.
and other costs of living. This dynamic generated implications for mining communities as low-income jobs are jobs that are needed by all communities and if there is no employment for fast food outlets, council workers, human service workers, retail outlets, hairdressers, then this causes other pressures within the community.

5.2.4 Loss of community culture and identity

One theme that was widely expressed across participants was that the boom had changed the culture and identity of mining communities in fundamental ways. Mackay had a longer history as a regional centre servicing a number of industries, whereas Moranbah and Dysart were specifically established to support the mining industry in the early 1970s. The rapid increase in mining employment and people on high disposable incomes saw the demographic profile in these communities shift from previously being family-orientated to being geared more towards the lifestyle of young single males. As a young single mother in Mackay, this was noticed by Susan who was disillusioned by how the mining boom had eroded some of the core community values of inclusion and social justice which had been part of the fabric of these communities until the mining boom.

Susan – It is very mining orientated. There is no room for the little people anymore. A lot of places now aren’t even welcoming for families, it is all about the money and what you have to offer them, not what anyone has to offer back to the community … it is becoming more and more a single person’s town or for a couple without kids. The expenses of everything are going through the roof. I really don’t know how they expect a person with low income or no income to survive in this town.

Susan’s response conveys the sense that the wealth and lifestyle opportunities afforded to those who were on high incomes, and the resulting cost of living pressures which impacted the whole community, had transformed Mackay to be less of a family friendly town and more suited to single people or couples without children on relatively high incomes. This finding sits comfortably with research that identifies the sociological and criminological implications of the masculinisation of rural communities (Carrington et al. 2011; Carrington & Scott, 2008). There was a sense of loss for community members like Susan who had experienced Mackay as a larger country town that was inclusive and somewhere that people could have a good life irrespective of class and financial status.
As people who had experienced chronic homelessness in Mackay, Tracey and Frank emphasised the sense of loss of community in Mackay, and how they saw the mining boom changes as being good for Mackay but only “if you are posh with money”. Frank commented that one of the consequences of the mining boom was that illegal drugs had become a lot more prevalent in Mackay. Drug use and criminality were part of Frank’s story which had seen him incarcerated for drug dealing.

**Frank** – When I first met Tracey five years ago, I was dealing drugs at the time and met Tracey through a so-called friend who was trying to sell her drugs. I’ve met a few blokes in this town especially drug dealers, amphetamine dealers, they use their women. This is how spineless they are. I stopped doing it. I couldn’t look at myself and keep doing it. They use everyone to deal their drugs, so they are not exposed to getting arrested. I find that abhorrent … when the boom kicked in, it attracted the sharks. The mine companies also brought in drug testing regime. They don’t want people going to work smashed.

Frank’s comments about illicit drug activity and related criminality, and other forms of criminality including domestic and family violence, were echoed by other participants as themes identified by other participants reflecting the cultural changes in mining communities heralded by the boom.

The cultural change and loss of identity was also noted by a generic service provider participant with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background who noted the changes in Mackay as a young person growing up in the community.

**GCSPA** – Mackay is a very diverse community … we have three very strong communities in Mackay. The Aboriginal community, the Torres Strait Islander community and the South Sea Islander Community. I’ve grown up with that. I have mixed heritage, South Sea Islander and Torres Strait Islander, and it has been harmonious but not homogenous community. Things have changed in the last 50 years. Places grow, people grow differently. It is a different community now compared to what I remember growing up in. … there has been an identity crisis in Mackay. There has been a huge influx of folk, people were coming here long before the mining boom. I think Mackay for us, was home, it had the beaches, the bush and the hinterland. We thought it would always be that way.
This personal response conveys the strong sense of loss of culture and erosion of community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the Mackay region and community. This research argues that while some of the community changes may have commenced prior to the boom, the onset of the boom accelerated the loss of culture and erosion of community values. The perception of Mackay as a coastal country community with its natural environment and proximity to beaches making it an idyllic place to live and to raise families is at odds with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander account of the impacts of the boom on the Mackay community. There is a strong sense of the boom detracting from Mackay as a place suited to families and family life.

Petkova et al. (2009) argued that the negative changes in mining communities were linked to the increase in itinerant population (FIFO/DIDO workforce) and that this issue was responsible for eroding the social fabric, and social capital, in these communities. However, this on its own is not an adequate explanation for explaining the break down in relationships within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. One Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service provider pointed out that the mining boom has been responsible for creating internal conflicts within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which were not there previously. These conflicts have been generated through values being in collision. The neo-liberal embrace of individual creation of wealth versus the family and community-oriented nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The challenge for the ATSI community is knowing how to move forward when there has been so much mistrust that has arisen between community members and with mining companies (Langton, 2015). The mining boom generated transformative effects to community culture and identity need to be understood within the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history.

This change in community profile and loss of community culture and identity was influenced by the influx of new residents, many of whom were workers and families moving to mining communities with the view of it being a short term, time limited proposition in their personal lives that would set them up with a strong financial future. There was tacit acceptance that relocation to a mining community was not meant to be a long-term arrangement for some people as one service provider noted:

**HSPB** – One of the predominant ones is that young parents come to Moranbah with a five to ten year plan and when the kids finished high school they might
leave Moranbah. The problem with this is that we have so many kids going straight to mining jobs from high school. The opportunities to engage with our community are limited because mum and dad want to leave. Sometimes this puts these kids in the situation that unless they have accommodation in town they can access straight from school, they are not considered local enough to apply for some of these positions within the mining industry and therefore are not able to access these jobs.

This remark captures the challenges in engaging with new people in mining communities and their personal and emotional investment in the community. It also makes the connection between the importance of housing and accommodation and ability to access employment to prevent and reduce homelessness (Steen et al., 2012). This statement also highlights the challenges that rural mining communities such as Moranbah and Dysart face building social capital, the creation and sustainment of social networks and relationships of trust within the community (Maidment & Bay, 2012). The evidence gathered for this study strongly points to the erosion of social capital in Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay during the mining boom period.

The mining boom has undoubtedly transformed Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart on social, cultural and economic levels. One service provider compared Moranbah with Brisbane in the late 1970s and 1980s when Brisbane was perceived as transitioning from a large country town, to become an international city. The mining boom impact on Moranbah had the effect of transforming the rural mining community into a contemporary regional community.

**HSPB –** I think the changes … well I often ask people who have lived in town for 20 or 30 years what they see as the changes, and it often comes down to that sense of community and people taking the time to get to know each other. Sometimes it feels it is Brisbane, a fast-tracked place. No-one really takes the time to get to know each other and there are so many different people. I think financially with the boom and then the downturn it has had a huge impact on the town as well. We have seen a lot of people sell their houses when the boom came … they probably purchased these houses years earlier for $13,000 and we had a friend that sold his for $920,000. It was like a small Lotto win. A lot of the key people who have left town were also the people who were like the “glue” of the town.
This remark demonstrates the effects that the mining boom had on the psyche of community members and how this has impacted community morale and community mindedness. It also captures the sense of fortune and wealth associated with the mining boom. Interestingly, the service provider notes that some of the key figures and long-term community members of Moranbah left the community at the height of the mining boom. This was seen as an opportune time to leave the community as properties were being sold at record high and tantamount to a “Lotto win”. The opportunities to leave Moranbah during the height of the boom were very enticing and this impacted the profile of the community with larger numbers of new people arriving in town to capitalise on the mining boom as well as an increasing number of single adult workers accommodated in mining work camps.

Veronica, who is a long-term resident of Dysart, can reflect on the generational change that has occurred in Dysart and how the mining boom of the last decade had resulted in more social problems and concerns for young people and their families, in particular from drug and alcohol use.

**Veronica** – Back in the mid-80s I was in my late teens then. The town was full of families then, lots of sporting activities and a big range of activities and they met quite regularly. I saw a lot of interaction between community members. There weren’t so much older members they were mainly 40 year old age group and younger families. I found it to be then, when I was a teenager, it was pleasant for young ones. There wasn’t alcohol and drugs around. It seemed very easy and pleasant whereas now there does not seem to be so much interaction with community. It is limited now because of the limited number of families that lived in the town. The town is more geared towards couples or single people. They work, sleep, eat, work, sleep, eat. That social interaction time is very limited.

**SW** – A loss of that family orientation to the community.

**Veronica** – Yes exactly, children would play and socialise, so families would get together. People go out shopping for social contact. People need people. With those things being limited there is not a pull for families to come here. I can’t speak personally, but I see the work camps built … it has reinforced this attitude (the town has now lost its family orientation). I don’t agree with it … I think you
can change that … Families do want to come here. It is seen that Dysart is no longer a family town.

Veronica and service provider participants identified the loss of Dysart as a community for families noting that the changes that have occurred in Dysart have very much focused on the needs of a largely single adult male temporary workforce. The changes to mining communities making them more suited to the mobile workforce comprised of single young male adult workers has come at the expense of community being more inclusive and responsive to the needs of young people and families confirming earlier research undertaken by Maidment and Bay (2012). Additionally, participants identified the lack of social and community activities for young people and how this sometimes led to other social issues such as illicit drug use amongst young people.

Finally, the subjectivity in appraising whether the boom has been good for the community was born out in Veronica’s response, where she discusses the benefits for her son who has obtained mining employment.

**Veronica** – It is open to one’s interpretation as being what is “good”, I do have a son who is single. For him he is in and out, he lives somewhere else but camps here. It suits him, but he is only in his early 20s. Somebody who is older and is married and is having children, no I don’t see it as having been good change. In the job I am in I have seen many family breakdowns and separations through the stress of either already being separated because they are accommodating single people, or the rents were so high. At one point, unless provision was specifically made in employment contracts, the family couldn’t come either. It took away the choice about whether they wanted to be here. When you are single you keep to yourself and you are selfish. With family, you rely on other people and you care about other people and you break away from the selfish mentality – that’s what helps it to become a good town. It makes you think that there are all these other people in the community in need. There is not just you in the world there are others. If you take away the family, you take away the care in the town.

Veronica highlights the change in community culture when communities do focus on families, as opposed to single adult populations. The attitude and mindset associated with the temporary workforce population of mining communities is at fundamental odds with a caring
and supportive community. For Veronica, such a community needs to have a focus on families in order to be naturally inclusive and fairer and less individualistic.

One participant offered a contrasting perspective on the cultural change and loss of identity for mining communities as a result of the mining boom. Michelle, a young single mother who has long-term connection to the Bowen Basin region, described the experience of the boom period as having a ‘vibe’ that came to Moranbah. While noting some decay of Moranbah as a country community where neighbours knew each other, she felt that this ‘vibe’ included a greater cultural diversity in Moranbah which has helped to address small town mindedness in favour of a more contemporary and cosmopolitan outlook on life.

Michelle – There’s been an increase in things. There is a change where people don’t know their neighbours as well as they used to because there is a transient population, so people do move midyear with their jobs and things like that, so I suppose it might not be, it doesn’t, although it’s a small town, it doesn’t always have such a small-town vibe. There are also a lot of people moving in from all over the world, so for instance, I meet people from Trinidad, so from the Caribbean to the Middle East and I love that. You meet people from all different walks of life, so it’s not a small-minded community, there are lots of different people.

Michelle’s comments were unique in this research in that she was the only participant that recognised the value regarding mining communities becoming more cosmopolitan and worldly since the boom. This view was not necessarily shared by other participants who expressed more parochial views. The boom had created the opportunity for mining communities to be exposed to a greater variety of culture and taste a more cosmopolitan world view. The issues surrounding the transient population of people coming to mining communities and exiting mining communities will be a recurring theme which will be explored in Chapter Six regarding pathways to and out of homelessness in mining communities.

5.2.5 Industrial arrangements influencing community change

Many participants identified the changes in industrial arrangements including work shifts and growth of temporary workforce labour represented in the FIFO and DIDO workers, as being at the heart of the negative community changes associated with the mining boom period. These industrial trends have contributed to the changes in the community, as they favour a
mobile temporary workforce largely comprising young single adult male workers (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). The changes that have occurred: the longer shift roster requirements; the rise of FIFO and DIDO which often sees the worker living onsite for several weeks at a time with other workers; the long-distance travel to and from communities; the stress and risks associated with mining work, have been to the detriment of community that supports family life according to the respondents. These sociological trends impacting relationships and families in mining communities and families of FIFO and DIDO workers has been confirmed in related research, for example Haslam-Mackenzie et al. (2008). This research evidence shows that the changes in industrial arrangements in the mining sector have driven community change in mining regions.

Obtaining work in the lucrative mining industry in the first place is not as easy as the media would have had people believe it to be, particularly for those from a disadvantaged social background or on low income. Frank and Tracey confirmed that while the mining boom had brought a lot of hope for jobs and wealth for local people in Mackay, its reality had been that the employment prospects were somewhat of a mirage for them. Any new employment that was created favoured the temporary workforces and the associated FIFO or DIDO culture.

**Frank** – It used to be fairly slow before the mines kicked in. About 10-15 years ago it started speeding up because of the mining. I left here for a bit. I was at the Gold Coast but then came back up. They were talking about needing 12,000 people for the mines. But they didn’t want anyone from here.

**Tracey** – It is the Fly In Fly Out.

**Frank** – Some of this started before the Fly In Fly Out. It started almost 15 years ago. They didn’t want to fully train people, so I left here and went back down to the Gold Coast. I came back up five years ago now.

Frank’s comment and perspective about the difficulties facing local people obtaining mining employment was shared by service providers and participants in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. This evidence suggests that there was an active exclusion of local people from being encouraged to apply for work in the mining industry and that mining companies were not at all interested in training or recruiting local people when they could obtain FIFO labour from
other parts of Queensland and Australia (Maidment & Bay, 2012). The policy of allowing some mining companies the ability to 100% employ FIFO staff, which was supported by successive governments in Queensland up to the election of the Palaszczuk Government in Queensland in January 2015, had meant that community members in mining communities have not been able to access all forms of mining related employment in their community. The evidence about the links between the success of local labour markets and preventing and reducing homelessness within regions (Habbis & Walter, 2009; Wood et al., 2015) and the exclusion of local community members from applying for mining employment in their local area, is a major local structural factor contributing to potential homelessness in the region. Aaron noted that what jobs were going in mining communities were not available to people who were experiencing social disadvantage and were very unlikely to be given to people experiencing homelessness compounding the situation in making pathways out of homelessness seemingly impossible.

Aaron – Everything that I see that I would like to apply for now is FIFO, so you've got to either live in Brisbane or Townsville or Cairns and all these people live locally are missing out ... when they should be the ones getting the jobs where you don’t have to fly in.

Aaron’s perception of the struggle to break into mining employment is validated in the data about the number of FIFO workers employed in the Bowen Basin Region, with one government report identifying that at least “one in eight people in the Bowen Basin region was a non-resident worker, and that more than 12,000 non-resident workers in July 2009, represented 13% of the overall population” (Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2010, p. 2). This number of non-resident workers increased with more than 25,000 non-resident workers in the Bowen Basin region in 2012, or 22% of the overall population (Department of Treasury and Trade, 2012, p. 1). These statistics support the views expressed by participants about the challenge and competition in obtaining mining employment in the region. There has been a decrease in the number of non-resident workers in the Bowen Basin region coinciding with the mining downturn since 2012. The issue of homelessness in mining communities is exacerbated by people moving to the region in the hope of securing employment only to arrive and learn that few employment opportunities exist for local community members, and what employment is available, is very keenly contested.
Ruth, previously homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence after moving to the mining community to be with her partner, and now living in a shared caravan, expressed concerns about her experiences with FIFO/DIDO work arrangements and the stressors these arrangements had on her relationships and family life. Her experience is one of relationship breakdown, she reflected:

Ruth – My first husband was a Fly In Fly Out and he would have sex with other women while away at camp. He would get drunk on the mine site. I was keen to come here because I didn’t want to experience that again. I know that minerals are a big part of our country’s future but there has to be a better way.

Ruth had left a capital city in another state to relocate to Dysart to be with her partner to avoid being in a DIDO/FIFO personal situation. Ruth’s previous relationship had dissolved because of the FIFO/DIDO stressors on the relationship so moving to Dysart to be with her partner seemed to make good sense. Ruth’s situation in Dysart will be explored in more depth in the next findings chapter (Chapter Six) on pathways to homelessness in mining communities.

The loss of skills in the community, knowledge and resources, the critical elements of social capital, was identified by one Dysart service provider as the major challenge associated with the DIDO and FIFO strategies.

HSPE – The real issue with FIFO and DIDO, it is not the new people who come. It is more the people who have been here who choose to get up and leave, which they have every right to do. Effectively you are losing (community knowledge and resources) … You don’t have volunteers, a community runs off voluntary work otherwise it is not effective. If you do not have the people contributing here, if a Dad has kids on the Gold Coast, of course on his time off he will go down there and spend time helping them out. Even if a person has a qualification to coach the junior soccer team – that service is lost. Financial services are also impacted and people don’t tend to spend as much in the community. The men in the camps may come up and spend some money but they are not doing a grocery shop or spending their money in a range of other local businesses. This trend makes it more attractive to other families to then say “we don’t want to be here anymore, let’s go”.

Aside from the loss of community knowledge and resources, the service provider also noted the challenges facing groups such as sole parent mothers in Dysart, trying to survive in an environment not conducive to family life. This research highlights that through the changed industrial and labour arrangements, the boom served to create a set of circumstances where the profile of mining communities became polarised between resident community members and the temporary workforce population. This ideological and industrial battle is at the heart of the debate about the future of rural and regional mining communities (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). Should mining communities be inclusive and family focused, or are they best served to concentrate almost exclusively on supplying the fluctuating labour needs of the mining industry? This thesis posits that a focus on making rural and regional mining communities family focussed, through a mixture of industry and government strategies, is consistent with ensuring a healthy and viable local workforce. This will be examined in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight.

The experiences of temporary workforce personnel can also be understood from the impacts on their lives, relationships and families. One Mackay-based service provider also noted the impact of social isolation amongst FIFO/DIDO employed male workers:

**HSPA** – I do think we have a lot of people that come from a long way away and a lot of people are socially isolated. This town has grown enormously. People just don’t link in or make friendship networks … (as a result) they go out drinking, you hear a lot about that. Men who are a bit lost. They are not connected into their community because they are working out of it.

People who move to mining communities as part of temporary workforce arrangements or as resident community members with the view to staying for a few years to build wealth, require access to community and family support services, and many people do not realise the constraints on these services before moving to mining communities or taking up this employment. One service provider, a counsellor, considered the impact for the FIFO/DIDO worker and the family unit adjusting to those periods when the father is away for periods of time and then returns from shifts, usually in an exhausted state:

**GCSPC** – Also for the person who works away, because you’re out of sight, and I’ve probably experienced this myself, anything you do (for the family) is kind of
discounted, the people at home think they’ve been busy and doing all the work looking after the kids and the house whereas the fact that you’re doing 12 hour shifts for four or seven days or whatever continuously and have just come back from that is all disregarded, you know, this is what’s important here, you haven’t been doing your share here. It’s all just human nature though.

The psycho-social and family effects of a gruelling work regimen associated with FIFO and DIDO work is reflected in this quote. The industrial changes to work in the mining industry have contributed to the stressors on individuals, families and mining communities. Participants linked the issues associated with negative elements of male culture and substance misuse with the mobile temporary workforce and were clear the rise in this culture was at odds with the health and wellbeing of the male worker and their family.

Mining companies are also not beyond operating in unethical ways which placate the health and wellbeing concerns of workers in temporary workforce camps as reflected in the following remark about how a mining company offered alcohol to workers as a means of defusing a highly stressful situation within the work camps:

**GCSPC** – Yeah and for most people in that industry alcohol is the panacea if something is wrong. I remember once the power went off to the camp and we all sweltered, we couldn’t sleep, we were on nightshift or something and there was grumbling at work and the boss said “Look, thanks for putting up with that guys, we’ll put a couple of cartons on tomorrow” and everyone went “Great, thanks mate” and it was like hang on, you didn't address the issue in any way at all and what they really wanted to know was is this going to happen again or how are we going to stop it from happening again, are we expected to work when we haven’t slept, how are we going to manage safety when everybody’s fatigued, that sort of stuff. It was just swept under the carpet, we’ll give you some free grog, everybody’s sweet. How convenient if you’re able to do that, I wish I could do that at home sometimes.

This statement points to the inadequacy of mining companies responding to the social and health issues affecting workers accommodated in work camps. It even reflects a more dismissive approach from mining companies about the serious health and wellbeing issues raised by their workers.
A complaint from participants about FIFO/DIDO workers was that they didn’t contribute financially to the local economy or make contributions in other ways, as reflected in the following quote:

**CRC** – So many of our original families have gone over the last five or six years, seven years, when they couldn't afford to stay here. So, you've got a very high itinerant population now with the fly in/fly out. So, they're living in the camps. They don't spend any money in town. A lot of those jobs that were here have been replaced by FIFO and - don't get me wrong, I'm not against FIFO. It should be voluntary. I mean, in all the years I've lived here, we've always had some sort of drive in/drive out, bus in/bus out, or whatever, and if people want to fly in/fly out, that should be their choice. But it shouldn't be compulsory. There are two mines, Caval Ridge and Dornier, where BMA got 100% FIFO approved. Now they've applied for the new Red Hill mine to also be 100% FIFO.

This participant quote supports findings from social impact assessments of mining communities about the perceptions and actual contribution of temporary workforce personnel to mining communities and local economy (Petkova et al., 2009). There is concern among the service providers interviewed for this research that the FIFO and DIDO trend indirectly contributed to homelessness in Moranbah and Dysart during the boom by excluding local people from employment. This was a time when there was no motel accommodation or any other forms of temporary accommodation in mining communities, and the FIFO and DIDO workers actually contributed to this pressure by demand on local motels subsequently generating homelessness in Moranbah, as noted by this local businessman.

**CRC** – During the times of construction, which is when you've got large volumes of people working in the mines, that's when a lot of the contractors were living in houses. There were people living in their cars during that time. Now, I've personally never seen that, but plenty of people have told me. I don't believe it’s fantasy. But there have been plenty of occasions of people - living in cars because they couldn't get a bed in town. Look at the size of the camps we've got here. They were all - all the motels during the boom, they were all 100% full. Now the motels are doing it so tough. I mean, one motel I know of is down to 10%
occupancy now and he's losing $40,000 a month. I know of some of the others down to as low as 20% occupancy when they were at 100%.

As this response demonstrates, the policy of employing 100% FIFO/DIDO staff at new mines was viewed as contributor to homelessness in mining communities. While motel accommodation is not a solution that will end homelessness for people, it is an important strategy for some homeless people experiencing crisis and unable to access other suitable forms of accommodation. Some specialist homelessness services are allocated brokerage funding (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2015), which can assist homeless people in crisis to access temporary accommodation as part of an overall case management plan. The evidence in this research shows that motel accommodation or other temporary accommodation was simply not an option for homeless people in crisis during the mining boom, as there was no vacant motel accommodation available. This accommodation had been booked out by workers of mining companies and other industries many months in advance. This research highlights that FIFO and DIDO work arrangements place additional pressures on local accommodation services and the housing system which also adversely influences community and social cohesion. These factors contribute towards homelessness in mining communities.

It is important to recognise the contribution of mining companies towards improving local services and infrastructure, for example the new airport at Moranbah and roads, recreation facilities and some housing, but the question remains: is the contribution adequate for the additional demand that the temporary workforce places on small mining communities? This research found that mining companies do make some tangible contributions to some human services in mining communities including contributions towards salaries of youth workers in both Dysart and Moranbah. However, as these companies did not choose to participate in this study, it became difficult to consider the rationale for providing this support and how it might connect to broader industry and labour planning. This question will be further explored in Chapter Seven when it considers companies’ Corporate Social Responsibility.

Although outside the scope of this research, the impacts of FIFO and DIDO are not just limited to the small mining communities where the workers reside for generally short periods, impacts are also felt on their families in the communities where they come from. Relevant to this research is the high number of DIDO workers based in, or around Mackay, who have
employment in the mines surrounding Moranbah and Dysart and other parts of the Bowen Basin and who commute. One respondent in Mackay reflected on the positive as well as the negatives associated with FIFO/DIDO workers:

Nathan – For some people it is a good thing, it brings money into the town and helping the economy. But unless you are part of that flow, the circle of where all that money is flowing, you are slowly getting pushed out. I know families who have been here since the early 80s, they didn’t start off well but had a comfortable life until 10 years ago, with the way they had been living previous to that, it just doesn’t cover it anymore. I actually went to school in Blackwater. One mate sold his house and bought a unit because he couldn’t afford the unit. He left the mines years later and went to work for the council. 20 years ago he bought a house. But sold his house to buy something more affordable. He just couldn’t keep up with the mortgage payments. He is still doing ok. He has had to reduce his living standards.

When asked about the connection between FIFO and DIDO workers, participants in one focus group gave mixed responses about the relationship between these individuals and their families experiences. The growth in FIFO and DIDO workforces appeared to be one of the most controversial changes that occurred.

Different participants had differing views about the value and benefits of FIFO and DIDO workforces and the impact on housing and homelessness related issues during the mining boom. In the Mackay-based focus group, which explored the connection between FIFO and DIDO families and homelessness in Mackay, this difference in perspective emerged:

GCSPF – a lot of them are on subsidised rent even if they do live in Mackay.

GCSPD – I can’t see the link to homelessness.

CRA – I can, in terms of family breakdown.

GCSPD – I can see a link to family breakdown. I can see a link with youth and behavioural issues. I can see a link to a whole lot of other social ills that will in turn lead to homelessness. Kids without a constant parental figure, kids can’t
remember when both parents were at their birthday. School will tell you about those sorts of impacts.

The impacts of FIFO/DIDO arrangements with, usually, the father being away from the family for extended periods of time, placing added pressures on the mother and primary caregiver, on a repeated basis throughout year was clearly identified as a source of family breakdown. This was seen as unique contextual factor to mining communities which placed many young people at risk of youth homelessness in these communities.

A Moranbah-based focus group concluded that FIFO and DIDO families face “higher risk of family breakdown but also FIFO/DIDO staff experiencing illness or injury and this impacting on the individual and family social and economic situation”. One participant in a focus group noted:

**CRB** – Can I just talk about homelessness here … a fellow from out of town got a job here. The usual thinking is that you get a job and then you search for accommodation and then you get your furniture packed up and brought here. He got job and a place to rent and his furniture was being shipped here. Then his company stated to him you cannot live here. You are a Fly In Fly Out only. He wanted to bring his family here and had organised accommodation and furniture on its way. He was told he is FIFO only. This is the hidden homelessness. The family were told by the corporation you have to find a place in Brisbane. He wanted to be with his family and be with his kids. What has happened is that he had to relocate his family to be away from him in a unit in Brisbane. He flies home once a fortnight or once every three weeks. They are homeless – they are not with him here in a home.

Although this reflection does not meet the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012e) definition of homelessness, as the male worker would be viewed as being housed if he has a tenancy or private home in another part of Australia. However, applying this concept of homelessness to a FIFO worker is interesting given that the male worker wanted to relocate his family to Moranbah but was effectively restricted from being able to do this. This evidence links to the issues surrounding resident community members being excluded from employment in local mines because of policy sanctioned by previous Queensland Governments allowing 100% employment of staff to be via temporary contract.
One participant noted that mining companies housing subsidies made available to mining workers during the boom were a deliberate attempt to garner support for the strategy of Governments approving a 100% FIFO strategy for new mine approvals.

**HSPF** – Having been here for eight or nine years and seeing a lot of this happen, a lot of this was created by the companies as a set. I believe, and so do a lot of other people, that it was a deliberate strategy to provide their push for 100% FIFO. It was after they put in that application that the subsidy started to go up for rents. That then backed the whole housing situation. Rents were unaffordable and that then backed the 100% FIFO. I don’t think FIFO was the result of it I think FIFO was the cause of it. It was the company’s desire to have this model which actually caused it.

**HSPD** – It comes down to control of the workers. The man is away from his family, the drinking is controlled, they are in camps, there is no domestic violence, they’re not going to not show up, they are not going to have sickies …

This response reflects a widely held community view that the provision of housing subsidies by mining companies to workers has inflated the costs of housing in these communities. The high cost of housing was used as a central argument put forward by mining companies to implement the 100% temporary workforce strategy.

The family oriented and working-class history of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart was an issue participants noted had been threatened as a result of the changes in industrial practices. The changes in industrial arrangements in mining work and rostering arrangements of mining workers has had social and community implications, particularly for families.

**HSPD** – I moved here in 1988 and went to high school here. My father was in mining but back then it was a totally different environment and different town. There were sporting activities which were flourishing and families in every street. It had a whole different feel to the town. Over the last ten years, rosters became longer, the mining (industry) is always changing, and dads in the neighbourhood became more scarce, therefore sporting activities suffered and there has been a lot of marital breakdown. Because the town is mining orientated, back then you rented your home off the mining company for a very small price, and when a
marriage ended the men always got the house, even if it was domestic violence, because it came with his job. These are the things I experienced myself having been a miner’s wife. I found that I became homeless due to domestic violence. I had to access the service I now work for.

This woman service provider recognised the changes in employment and industrial arrangements since her time as a child growing up in Moranbah as being a source of relationship and marital issues as well as contributing to family breakdown and domestic and family violence. Her response also underlines the historic and implicit sexism of mining communities whereby in these situations, men were able to remain in their accommodation as housing was provided as part of their employment (Campo & Tayton, 2015; Carrington & Scott, 2008).

Several service providers noted the changes that had occurred in the community as a result of mining company housing ownership schemes and the impact this had for the local housing market:

**HSPE** – Predominantly over the last two years there has been a very big move from it being a very family orientated town, very much a great opportunity for families to live together and work in the mining industry. Obviously you would see things on the TV about the mining industry in Western Australia and a lot of those places where you would make great money but leave your family behind. Dysart was one of those communities where it was always possible for you to bring your family along and a sense of community. A lot of people by choice have purchased houses in the community through the BMA homeowner’s scheme. The opportunity then came along for those people to sell their houses for a massive profit to contractors and a lot of people have taken that opportunity and have bought a house on the coast and do the commute, because there was a shortage of houses and the BMA houses were put into the private market and became contractors’ houses. This is why the companies have been looking at camps and camp accommodation to provide accommodation for the workers.

This is an example of how mining companies aided workers to move into home ownership over several decades and this strengthened these community members’ financial situation. It also improved their overall financial situation for future stages of the mining cycle.
Similarly, to the account from Moranbah where some long-term community residents were able to sell their properties for massive capital gain, the same story occurred in Dysart during the boom. Respondents expressed a view that this dynamic contributed to the escalation of mining companies investing in lower cost work camps rather than in community housing for workers and their families. These work camps provided a more temporary accommodation response for FIFO/DIDO mining workers only and tended to operate in a way that increased the sense of ‘otherness’ of non-resident workers and the distance they experience with resident community members (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). The workers accommodated in work camps are not seen as legitimate community members and culture has formed in mining communities reflecting this division.

The loss of permanent community members who had lived in the communities for a long time prior to the mining boom and were then able to sell their houses at extremely high prices and either retire from mining or join the cohort of temporary workforce, is also felt strongly in the community. This trend also demonstrates the loss of social capital in regional and rural mining communities generated by the boom (Maidment & Bay, 2012). Many long-term residents have been lured to sell properties and relocate to communities such as Mackay and the Whitsundays based on the coast of North Queensland and locations in Southern Queensland and do the DIDO or FIFO arrangements. Interviews and focus groups with participants from Dysart and Moranbah stressed the loss of skills within the community as a result of this trend. These losses were not replaced by the new temporary community members who tended not to invest their personal time and resources into community activities showing another dimension to the erosion of social capital in mining communities brought about by the changing industrial labour arrangements.

Another industrial change noted during the recent mining boom was the growth in overseas workers coming to Moranbah and Dysart as part of the temporary workforce on 457 visas. Contentiously, these visas were issued to skilled overseas workers by Australian or international companies to work temporarily, up to four years, in Australia (Cleary, 2011). Participants noted the increase in overseas workers coming to Moranbah and Dysart via 457 visas, and these people often experienced difficulties accessing services and support for themselves and their families. The issues facing visa holders was outlined in the following excerpt from a Moranbah focus group:
**HSPF** – A lot of people were sleeping in their cars or sleeping where they could because they couldn’t afford to go anywhere on those days off. Sometimes people in those situations were sending money home to family in other places be it in Australia or overseas like New Zealand or Philippines.

**CRB** – There are people from India as well.

**HSPF** – For us as a service we can put them into crisis housing but a lot of the time they do not fit the criteria for public housing which is a lot of the time the only option here if they can’t afford private rental.

**SW** – What part of the public housing criteria are they not meeting?

**HSPF** – Sometimes it is because of their residency status, it is just that simple.

Individuals and families who came to mining communities as part of the 457 visa arrangements who did experience difficulties and crises, were unable to access a range of government services including housing. The Australian Government announced in April 2017, that the 457 visa scheme would be abolished (Fabri, 2017) in preference for employment policies targeting Australian citizens and residents.

On the question about how the mining boom of the last decade had impacted the lives of homeless people in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. Homelessness service providers agreed that one positive was that the attention to the boom eventually lifted the profile of homelessness in mining communities as without such national profile, little attention is focused on homelessness issues outside of larger metropolitan areas.

**HSPD** – In this community the boom did a good thing in terms of bringing homelessness to the fore, so that people saw it. There has been flow on from that. Like that lady we discussed earlier. When she showed up in town it was confronting for people, but people were actively wanting to help her. She was the subject of many posts on community noticeboard and Facebook – is anyone looking after her? I have clothes or this or that I don’t know if that would have happened prior. She would have gone un-noticed.
This story of an elderly woman who was a rough sleeper in Moranbah helped shape some of the community understanding of homelessness. Respondents advised that for many community members in Moranbah, their awareness of this elderly woman was their first experience of a rough sleeper and homelessness more broadly within their community. This response also confirms that for many people in mining communities, perceptions and understanding of homelessness is based on the ‘rough sleeper’ as opposed to other forms of homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2009; Horsell, 2006). Nevertheless, the economic prosperity brought about by the boom does appear to have eventually led to a focus on community members in mining communities who were not advantaged in any way, but rather they were disadvantaged. This awareness was at the local level of mining communities and in national policy discourse. This awareness of disadvantage altered the discourse of the mining boom which had been solely characterised and dominated by stories of wealth and opportunity for everyone.

5.3 The effects of the mining downturn on Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay from 2012

The mining downturn began to take effect across the Bowen Basin and many regions throughout Australia in 2012 as expressed in the ABC 4 Corners program: “Casualties of the Boom” (Fowler, 2012). This marked the end of the decade long boom which had ushered in many changes to mining communities in the region. The mining downturn was characterised by high levels of uncertainty amongst community members regarding the future of the mining industry and also the region. Participants identified three overarching themes that described the changes they have experience in their community during the downturn.

5.3.1 Uncertainty over the future of mining in the region impacting community psyche/morale
The difficulties associated with limited access to social and recreational activities for young people in Dysart was an issue that Kaylene noted as generating stressors for families and for the community. This situation had worsened with the mining downturn making it more difficult for young people in Dysart. Research participants had had at least 12 months or longer experience of the downturn, compared with their experience of the boom period. During the course of the field work associated with this project, there was increasing
publicity about major job losses in mines across the Bowen Basin. One participant who had
been a long-term community member did not see the current downturn as a downturn but
rather as a “trough”.

**CRC** – I've lived in Moranbah for 34 years and during that time I've seen lots of
booms and busts or troughs. They're not busts, they're troughs, because, check
the profits of the mining companies at the moment, mate, they're making record
profits. For the last three years there's been record tons of coal shipped out of
Queensland. Record tons. Every year they break the record.

Another service provider echoed this sentiment by asserting “it is like roller coasters … the
mining companies are doing all of the houses up so there is no need to panic”. This statement
shows a sense of confidence based on whether mining companies are spending money on
improving their housing stock in mining communities. If mining companies are investing in
their own housing stock, there is a sense that they must be planning for a longer-term future.
This response also indicates there is an inevitably about mining opportunities improving
again at some stage in the future, something that is confirmed in broader industry and policy
literature regarding the mining cycle (Cleary, 2011; Edwards, 2014).

On a more fundamental level, participants talked about the low morale within the community
and how this had now become quite visible.

**Aaron** – I’ve noticed the community is very depressed. They’re not very happy.
The housing is empty. It’s very desolate. Everyone’s selling everything to try and
make a buck here and there wherever they can. The atmosphere isn’t that great.

One service provider noted how the change from mining boom period to downturn had
impacted people in terms of making lifestyle adjustments.

**GCSPE** – there are whole generations being bred in mining communities that
really don’t understand what to expect outside of the boom times.

The longevity of the decade long boom would have convinced many people it was going to
be around forever and therefore they had not put enough effort into planning its end.

A different aspect offered by interviews was that the downturn had impacted mining
communities in a way that engendered community solidarity as resident community members
engaged in different forms of social action to improve economic and social conditions in the community.

**HSPE** – Huge changes. Depending on when the mines are going through downturns. A lot of the strikes in the 1990s which took our community to under the 1600s – from, 3,500 people to under 1,600 and everyone panicked.

**SW** – Was that a sudden change?

**HSPE** – It was building up because of the strikes. There were pickets in front of the mines. A lot of people panicked and took voluntary redundancies but some of us chose to stay here. The mining industry improved but now we are on another downturn again. Saraji, a BHP mine close to Dysart, is losing another 250 people.

These service providers were able to connect periods of community and social action during previous downturns with the current circumstances where workers were losing jobs at some of the major local mines. Other participants in this study talked openly about the loss of mining jobs as a hallmark feature of the mining downturn and how this had a negative impact on the overall Mackay region. One service provider noted “In Collinsville they are rehiring staff on reduced rates. They are getting rid of all of the high paid positions”. Collinsville is a community within the Bowen Basin and North of Moranbah, and this practice by a mining company was viewed as a trend that was happening across the region including Moranbah and Dysart.

The economic restructuring of the mining industry was having major impacts for the community and the uncertainty was troubling for many locals.

**Kaylene** – Yes, a lot of people are saying what is happening to Norwich (a BHP mine near Dysart which closed in 2013)? Are they going to open up again and hire people or not? Is it going to be Fly In Fly Out? Will it just be more men in the camps? This doesn’t really help the community because apart from the pub they don’t tend to support local businesses.

The uncertainty about the future of the mining industry and what this means for their community was paramount for participants in this research.
5.3.2 Loss of employment, basic services and business

The mining downturn has been publicly characterised by large scale redundancies and sacking and rising unemployment and economy uncertainty. Kaylene, a single mother of three male children, two of whom are adults, reflected on the loss of mining employment and the broader effect the mining downturn was having on her community:

Kaylene – The shops are struggling. You don’t know if they are going to stay open or not because there is a lot of Fly In Fly Out. There isn’t much happening and if you want to do anything you really have to travel to other places. It is a bit isolated in that area especially when you have children, I have five boys and it is hard to keep them occupied and out of mischief. It does have its good ways but you would have to love living out here to be able to stay out here.

SW – Overall, is your sense of the changes that have happened for Dysart good changes or bad changes for the community?

Kaylene – I feel it is negative because you are losing children from the schools and this impacts on the school, and also there is not enough people left to buy things because people have left the area. The only thing that has gone down is rent because no-one can afford to pay the huge amounts they were when mining was booming.

The loss of basic services and business from mining communities is the other hallmark feature of the mining downturn period. The loss of these services, such as hairdressers, supermarkets, clothes shops, have had an impact on the psyche of small rural mining communities. The loss of services, job insecurity and economic issues all weigh heavily for those who remain living in the local mining communities.

GCSPB – When Norwich Park (a mine near Dysart) closed three years ago they lost a whole workforce but a lot of them were transferred to other mines and a lot went Saraji, Peak Down and Goonyella (all mine sites). With the downturn at Saraji this time they are not re-employing – it is either voluntary redundancy or a tap on the shoulder.
The impact of the mining downturn has also been keenly felt within the local community and recreation groups. Mining communities experienced a loss of social capital during the boom period (Maidment & Bay, 2012) but the downturn has not seen any improvement in this situation. The downturn has impacted not only the vibrancy of mining community economies, but the morale and community spirit. Long-term community residents were able to view the downturn within a longer view of life in rural mining communities, as being implicit of living in a mining community and enduring the various stages of the mining cycle. Community members do however feel a sense of uncertainty about what the future holds for them personally but also professionally.

For some participants, this uncertainty also prompted a sense of resilience as reflected in the statement from the Moranbah participant:

CRC - Yeah, well, see, the aero club's been here for 35 - 36 years. BMA haven't. The aero club used to be a very, very busy club. Now there's not many members in it, but we have a clubhouse at the airport and BMA has drawn up plans for their expansion of the airport which don't include our aero club. Their new administration building is in the same spot as our aero club is, but there's been no discussion about it. They've just - to hell with the community, mate. But we aren't going anywhere.

The loss of employment, services and business from mining communities was a major theme underpinning participant responses in this research.

5.3.3 Improved housing affordability
As noted throughout this thesis, the mining downturn has generated wide spread improvement in the affordability of housing in mining communities. A positive change of the mining boom, noted by Kaylene was that of a reduction in rents on the private rental market and increased availability of social housing stock. One participant noted in an interview in 2014 that housing prices and housing availability had generally improved in Moranbah for both single people and families.

CRC – There's plenty of accommodation available, plenty of affordable accommodation available in town now. But that wasn't the case 18 months ago. It is now, but the other - a lot of the issues are with a lot of the small businesses
around. With all those families leaving town a lot of them have had trouble even finding staff with the expertise they need, but all that expertise was forced out of town. But now, because of 100% FIFO - and those FIFO workers don't spend any money in town - a lot of businesses here are doing it really tough.

Analysis undertaken for this thesis and presented in Chapter Three showed that even during the mining downturn phase housing prices were still out of reach for many vulnerable people during 2014 (Queensland Government Statistician’s Office, 2014).

Another personal account shows the fundamental difficulty with locating affordable housing even during the mining downturn:

Aaron – The only place I could rent myself was $200 a week and it was a three-bedroom house but I had no bond or anything like that. I’ve never done it before and I had to get rent assistance to pay for the bond and all that, it was like you had to have one to have the other and you couldn’t get either. So it was kind of confusing. I’ll hopefully save up and get my own. I’m lucky that there is a depression at the moment because I wouldn’t be able to afford a room. I heard that it used to be $2000 a week.

The combination of a greater access to affordable housing during the mining downturn but also people on less income or people who have lost employment and managing large personal debts, also contributed to new dynamics of homelessness.

SW – Is homelessness more noticeable now? If you are to reflect on Moranbah over the last 5-10 years, is homelessness in Moranbah any more noticeable now than at any stage in the past?

HSPF – I think with the last (mining boom) when rents went through the roof it brought homelessness out into the open. Prior to that there were a lot of long-term residents who didn’t see it or could understand how it could happen. I must admit myself when driving out here, this is a mining town - homelessness? I had been working in Supported Accommodation Assistance Program in Victoria with the traditional homeless. It was a big eye opener (here). Anywhere else in Australia they would be people with a roof over their head but here people are sleeping in cars, on church verandas or down at the sewerage plant because they have
nowhere to go or can’t afford to put a roof over their heads. It is easier in a way because you don’t have as many needs to deal with but it is also harder because the options are limited because they earn too much for community housing but they don’t earn enough to pay $3000 a week rent. This was the situation a lot of people were finding themselves in.

The circumstances regarding improved housing affordability during the downturn has meant the pressures to access housing and afford to remain in housing are no longer occurring in mining communities.

The housing costs during the mining boom was a major source of anxiety for community members on low incomes fuelling concern that should a similar boom period be experienced again in the next phase of the mining cycle. This was a recurring theme for the women participants in this study, particularly Christine, Kaylene and Ruth who had all had lived experiences of homelessness. Kaylene was particularly worried about coping as a single mother in Dysart should the mining boom return.

Kaylene – I think before the mines were closing down, rent was so expensive and no-one could afford it. It has dwindled down. But you still have the concern – if it booms again what happens to us who are living on the little income we have? That would be my only big concern. I only bring in $1,200 a fortnight. There is no way I could afford the boom rent if that was to happen again.

Kaylene’s statement reflects the issues for people on low incomes in mining communities (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2009). Ruth, who has been a victim of severe domestic and family violence, also highlighted the added stressors that she faced trying to escape a dangerous relationship because of the housing costs and associated levels of personal debt.

Ruth – Prior to us leaving here, we were paying $750 per week rent and he got really angry with me because he thought he could live at the camp for $250 week and he walked out left me in the rental house with no phone, no money, no car, no means of supporting myself and I ended up in the crisis house.

The issue of personal debt was a significant theme for participants regarding the downturn and, like Ruth, many saw this as a contributor to homelessness.
John, who was a first time older homeless man in Mackay, also identified that during and post mining boom, housing was still hard to access for people on low income and that for $200-$250 per week you would be lucky to obtain very basic accommodation. He said:

**John** – God No. You would be lucky to have a shower and toilet down the hallway. The oldest pubs in town are charging people $125 per night to be able to stay there. They should be shut down quite honestly. Depends what time of the year too. There are people who will pay it and I suppose if you are making the big bucks who cares?

A room in a private boarding house or even the nearest pub had become out of reach for local people during the boom. The downturn has seen an improvement in access to some of these more traditional forms of short term accommodation in mining communities.

Housing affordability during the boom was a major challenge for all community members not employed by the mining industry and not receiving high incomes (Rowley & Ong, 2012). An innovative strategy that was implemented during the mining boom to assist housing non-mining staff and personnel performing critical roles in the community such as teachers, doctors and social workers was the My Place program implemented by the Queensland Government in conjunction with local communities. This program provided reduced rent for certain occupational groups.

**HSPF** – Did you ever hear about the My Place program which was developed, for people who worked as teachers, social workers and nurses to keep them in mining towns where reduced rate of rent was offered to keep those people in the towns? That was implemented in Mackay as a response to people on low incomes.

**HSPG** – The other thing was the low paid lost out (during the boom). For example, at one stage they lost their only butcher in Moranbah because on a butcher’s wage you couldn’t afford the housing costs. I remember getting a phone call from a guy who had a lawn mowing contract he couldn’t afford to stay in Mackay unless he got cheap housing.
Employer provided accommodation is important across sectors in the mining communities and is vital to the functioning of the community to building community cohesion. These employer-provided housing responses continue to be important to low paid members of the community during the downturn.

The issue of employer provided accommodation or housing is a major theme in how to attract new workers to rural and regional Queensland mining communities (Haslam-Mackenzie, et al., 2008). A Dysart service provider reflected that:

**HSPE –** Nine times out of 10 the employer has to make arrangements for accommodation of workers because it isn’t feasible for them to be here. BMA also provide subsidised accommodation if people work in a high needs area – crucial services. Obviously, Education Queensland have a good spattering of houses through the town. The majority of people living and working in the town will be part of a relationship where the partner is still working in the mines. Now that rents have come down it is a different story. Depends what incentives they are being offered to be here in Dysart. There are definitely a lot of people who wouldn’t apply for jobs here in the first place, or ended up leaving because when things got to critical stages there was just no point in them being here. I know the hospital has had quite a bit of difficulty. They have accommodation there and continue to ship nurses in and out because they don’t have the people living here and staying here.

As can be seen in this quote, the strategy of mining industry and government employers making accommodation and housing available to workers was a vital attraction tactic to obtain much needed industry labour.

The housing affordability also improved in Mackay during the transition from the boom period to the downturn. This was verified by a group of professionals in a focus group who commented that “housing affordability was exacerbated during the mining boom and ameliorated during the mining downturn”. Interestingly this group of professionals also identified the increasing levels of bankruptcy impacting on people in Mackay and thereby placing many people at greater risk of homelessness.
HSPC – I think the bottom fell out in probably December last year (2012). It took a few months for it to really come to pass. Because of the mining downturn people have left town. You can really see it, last year you would go to the shopping centre and it was always packed out but now you go there and there is hardly anybody there. You really can see there isn’t money around - where ever you drive around you see cars, caravans and jet skis beside the road for sale. Living in Mackay on the one hand is expensive but on the other, the golden goose has left and it hasn’t quite caught up as yet. There isn’t an awful lot of work out there and when businesses aren’t booming they pull back on their services and pull back on their jobs. I know when I first came here, seriously, you could go to any coffee shop any restaurant and everybody would be looking for staff, now it is just not like that.

This quote shows the transition in morale and attitudes in mining communities transitioning from boom times to downturn. The issues of private ownership of material possessions and employment are viewed as central to the narrative of the benefits of the mining industry to rural and regional Queensland.

The structural causes of homelessness in mining communities have developed from the range of housing affordability and supply issues, interconnected with other factors such as family and relationship pressures and cost of living issues. The downturn was also identified as time where many community members were left with unsustainable levels of personal debt. Although some of the structural causes of homelessness remain consistent during the mining boom and downturn phases and in line with national research on structural drivers of homelessness (Wood et al., 2015), there are unique structural causes of homelessness for mining communities in each phase of the mining cycle. The market forces that operate in relation to the supply of housing in mining communities, including high demand, with people able to pay high house prices, sometimes subsidised by mining companies, which firmly placed these settings in favour of the landlords of properties. One respondent commented:

HSPF – From 2011 to 2012-13. People started out in properties that were $250 a week rent. Within a six-month period these same properties became $1000 a week. They kept creeping up and up. That is the fear. It is a justifiable one for those looking at private rental now that there is always the opportunity for the landlord to review rent every six months with the view to increasing it and there
is no cap on it. This is something our organisation has advocated against. We tried with the previous government (Bligh Labor Government) to have a cap on how much rent could increase every time there was a rent review. It was just ridiculous. One week a rent $250 week and then two months later it was $800.

The price rises and dynamics of housing during the mining boom period resulted in a whole set of pressures, ethics and issues. Landlords could provide tenancies to properties on the basis of whoever bid the highest. In this environment it is unlikely the interests of the most vulnerable in the community including people who are at risk of homelessness or who experience homelessness are safeguarded.

The downturn also created a set of financial circumstances that have caused homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. A service provider eloquently highlights the financial traps some people fell into as the communities transitioned from boom to downturn.

**GCSPC** – I know it’s decreased (housing and homelessness issues) but a lot of people move away. Something I saw a lot when I was working in the mining industry was people came up from places like Adelaide and Melbourne to get jobs, heard there was work going and then they bought houses at the top of the market, so they might’ve paid $500,000 or more for a four-bedroom home and then when the crash came they couldn’t sell it for that same price but continued to have that mortgage to buy it and because they’d lost their job they couldn’t afford to pay it off. So a lot of those places foreclosed and so they lost pretty big. But a lot of those people moved away again, they chase work and so if there’s work going in Western Australia in the mining industry they might go over there.

These are the people who moved to the Mackay region hoping to capitalise on the mining boom however by the time they arrived and established themselves with housing, the boom had ended and for many, so did their jobs. Data from the Queensland Government Statistician’s Office, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, points to a movement of people away from mining communities in the period of the mining downturn which is a recurring theme expressed by a number of participants (Queensland Government Statisticians Office, 2016a; 2016b). Lack of access to affordable housing was a hallmark of the of the boom period. The mining downturn phase meant many people being stranded with huge financial debts and resulting loss of assets including homes and this also placed people
at risk of homelessness, or in situations of homelessness. These structural dynamics and how they contributed to people experiencing homelessness in these communities will be explored in more detail in Chapter Six on pathways to and out of homelessness in mining communities.

5.4 Exploring community attitudes towards homelessness in mining communities

The mining boom provides a unique opportunity to better understand the social issues brought to mining communities and a greater appreciation of the inequalities that it further compounds. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the social processes of the mining boom era eroded the long-standing community values of these communities. In examining the mining communities’ attitudes towards homeless people, and emerging social issues in these communities, it is essential to consider the attitudes towards homeless people in mining communities and how these attitudes have been formed or strengthened as a result of the boom and downturn cycle.

I begin this discussion with the responses from a number of the homeless participants in this study as they tell of their experiences when interacting with other community members. Jackson is a young person who has experienced chronic homelessness including rough sleeping in Mackay and has even found himself having to camp in unsafe bushes and shrubs next to the Pioneer River. His view about Mackay community’s reaction to homeless people is mixed, but that the public’s dominant stereotypes and perceptions of homeless people as represented by the older alcoholic man and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rough sleepers in public spaces (Zufferey, 2008; 2014) still influence people’s perceptions of homelessness in mining communities.

**Jackson** – It is mixed – some homeless people are older alcoholic people, they don’t care, they just want to drink so I just ignore them. There is other people – there are Indigenous people here and they don’t care, they live on the street and it is their land so they don’t mind. You have to avoid these people because they are quite violent and can be like ‘what are you doing on our turf’. The other guys, the drunks, are real protective over their alcohol.
SW – What about the attitudes of the general public?

Jackson – They don’t mind seeing the homeless person, and some pull you up to ask if you are alright and try to encourage you to go to the hostel. “You should book into Ozcare clean up and get some clothes”.

Jackson highlights the safety risks for homeless people who sleep rough. An awareness of personal safety is a recurring theme in Jackson’s responses to questions about his experience of homelessness in Mackay.

Jackson’s response reflects the more dominant stereotypes of homeless people and also aligns with John’s response who as an older, white, former homeless man in Mackay, conceptualises homeless people as being rough sleepers in parks.

John – Well if they see a man sleeping on a park bench, the first thing they think he is a drunk. A big problem is drugs with younger people. It is very prevalent. You have to give people a chance. We all make mistakes. The general public see this. I think if you can say to people that look, I have been here in my life, but now I am here and I sure as hell don’t want to stay down there. Everyone deserves another chance. Plenty of people out there who are willing to give you a hand. Their goal is to get you off the street.

John’s emphasis on drug misuse issues as part of the lifestyle of rough sleepers fits with Johnson and Chamberlain’s (2008b) research, which concludes that it is more common for drug misuse to follow homelessness than it is to precede it. In other words, people tend to become homeless first and then turn to drug use as part of their personal survival of the experience of being homeless. Jackson urges giving young people who are marginalised a chance instead of looking down on people and adding to their sense of exclusion from the community.

Christine commented that most of the Mackay community show some kindness and generosity of spirit towards homeless people.

Christine – The main population are quite generous and offer words of encouragement or help you in some way or guide you. There are some people
who don’t care and think “go out and get a job”. It is just ignorance to the money lining their pocket.

Christine’s response shows how the affluence generated from the mining boom period did influence some community attitudes - beliefs about homeless people in Mackay - in a negative way. This view was also echoed by Susan, as not all respondents were positive about the community’s attitudes towards homeless people in Mackay. Susan, also a young single mother, described the attitude in far less complimentary ways.

Susan – It is rude. Really, really rude. The people on the lower end of the scale understand and go out of their way to try and help someone who is doing it tough. People with money and people in the mining industry look down on you like you are a scumbag. They look at you like “I’m able to do it, why can’t you?” Some of us aren’t that lucky. Some of us don’t have the education or the upbringing or the guidance that you need to get to those places. Who are they to frown on others who aren’t as lucky? I think it is really quite sad the attitude towards homeless people in this town.

Homeless people experience judgement and negative stereotyping, which links to the more fundamental issue of whether they are deserving or undeserving of support and welfare assistance. This was discussed in Chapter Two in the context of how these neo-liberalist values and attitudes have underpinned, and continue to underpin, Australia’s response to homelessness. The current neo-liberalist paradigm is a major source of the values and attitudes which seek to diminish homeless people as being “undeserving” of welfare assistance (Marston et al., 2014). The experience of people experiencing homelessness, in particular, rough sleepers, must not be idealised or romanticised. The evidence provided to this study and exemplified in accounts from respondents such as Jackson, showed that sleeping rough is a daily battle for survival, and that this battle for survival was pronounced in mining communities impacted by vast social and economic inequalities associated with the boom. The mining boom generated social and economic divisions which promoted the widening inequalities throughout these communities and served to polarise the attitudes of community members towards homeless people in their community.

In contrast, service provider participants in this study were almost unanimous in their view that the major community attitudes towards homeless people ranged from ignorance, to
apathy, to fear, loathing and contempt, to some examples of genuine community concern and empathy. A selection of these views from individual interviews and from focus groups shows overall a lack of understanding and ignorance about homelessness within the community.

5.4.1 Responses that reflect ignorance and apathy

Community attitudes and responses to homelessness in mining communities were varied. There were however, views of homelessness shaped by neo-liberal perspectives that perceives homelessness as a result of individual weaknesses and poor lifestyle decisions and therefore not deserving of government policy. These responses are represented in the following range of participant quotes:

**HSPC** – Let’s just pretend it doesn’t happen. If you went out on the street and asked if there was a problem with homelessness in Mackay most people would say no. I think you have to know where to go to see it. There was an awful lot of people in Mackay that did not know that this shelter existed. Those that needed to, did. The same with drug and alcohol, youth centre, domestic violence – unless you need that support in your life you just ignore it. If you went out to the northern beaches they would tell you there is no such thing as homelessness. Maybe if you went to Bakers Creek or Sarina there would be a slightly different story.

**HSPI** – So many people in Mackay have no idea that there is a homeless shelter here in Mackay helping people under the age of 21. Unless you are working in the human services industry, in the community with the churches and youth groups, mental health services and whoever else youth engage with, the outside community have no idea about the homeless youth on the streets. They may see them. They will probably say “they should be home in bed” but would never give a second thought to thinking that these young people probably don’t have a bed to go home to. Many times, I have spoken to people about what I do and the amount of time where they say, “what is that?”, I never knew there was one.

**GCSPH** – Most people don’t know anything about it. Half of the population all live in nice houses. Got there Harlies (Harley Davidson motorcycles) and two Holdens (motor vehicles). Why would they care? They come home and watch TV
and go out and surf. They are comfortable. They wouldn’t know about homeless people.

**HSPA** – I think people who aren’t related to the human service industry, aren’t aware of it until it actually happens to them. The house gets sold. Everyone knows about us but I think a lot homelessness is hidden. Despite all the awareness raising of the community there is still a lot of the community who do not know about homelessness. I deal with it so much I am really aware of it.

Participants noted that the general awareness and understanding of homelessness in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart is limited, at least until people have some personal experience. This evidence gives rise to the view that homelessness in mining communities was an inevitable and accepted consequence of the mining boom and that homelessness was a social issue in mining communities that did not rate for Australians obsessed with the material gains of the mining boom (Warren, et al., 2015). This attitude can also be understood from the perspective of critical social theory and an examination of the power of the dominant economic class within mining communities.

The smaller community of Dysart also reflected some apathy but demonstrated that local community members were still very interested in providing assistance to homeless people:

**HSPE** – I don’t think people, … I don’t think people see Dysart as a place where that happens. But if you are talking about situations of domestic violence for women and children, I think there is an empathy because there is a sense, certain challenges we all face. We all know the majority of us here do not have extended family here. I have had a lady who was homeless and a community member saw her in the park and offered to have her stay at her house. People are generally willing to give a referral and willing to help where they can. But I don’t think people see it as a major problem. We have had a few instances on Facebook where women get on and say they have been kicked out by their boyfriend and have nowhere to stay. A lot of people were suggesting they go to the community centre for help. There has been other times where other women who have secured accommodation elsewhere will say “you can come and stay with me until you get things sorted out.”. We will apply to the Department and get things sorted out.
Unless the woman has relatives here nine times out of 10 they will leave (Dysart) if that relationship has broken down and there is no chance of reconciliation.

One advantage of responding to people in need in smaller rural communities is that there is less organisational red tape and more capacity to mobilise informal community support options for people, including this example of awareness of a homeless woman within the community, triggers a community response including use of social media. This finding is in line with literature on rural human services and welfare systems (Cheers, 1998; Chenoweth and McAuliffe, 2015; Maidment & Bay, 2012).

5.4.2 Responses that reflect fear, loathing and contempt
Participants from a range of stakeholder categories observed that there were some quite severe attitudes including fear, loathing and contempt, which were directed at homeless people in mining communities. These attitudes appeared to have been amplified during the mining boom period with the sharp division in status and inequality throughout the community. The following statements from participants reflected the range of attitudes, including this statement from a service provider in Mackay and Ruth:

**GCSPD** – I think there is a fear of homeless people.

**Ruth** – They (the community) are assholes. You can’t approach anyone. The police don’t care. The community centre don’t care. Average people care. The ones who are in a position to care don’t care because at the end of the day when they go home. My situation does not matter to them and I have received the bad end of the stick from all of them. I thought they would remain objective, but I have been subjected to things you would never wish upon anyone. I do not call the services here good or reliable or trustworthy or honest. That is the truth from me. From my personal experience I was shunned and judged even by the people who are supposed to help you.

These responses indicate the level of social isolation and exclusion that homeless people experience in these communities. Ruth’s response also shows how she feels let down by the housing and homelessness service provider system that was not able to support her at a critical time in her life. This issue of relationship between homeless people, the community
and the service provider system will be explored in more depth in Chapter Six addressing pathways to and out of homelessness.

5.4.3 Genuine community concern and empathy

Some participants expressed views that the local community was very accepting and inclusive of people experiencing homelessness and that there were significant efforts made by community members to assist homeless people. These sentiments were shared by Veronica and her direct experiences and observations in Moranbah, as demonstrated below:

Veronica – I can only indicate what I know, and I think there is a sympathetic attitude towards people who are homeless. That is why I think this town is so great, all of those qualities are there if we can just bring them back. There tends to be the social network in the resources area (mining industry) which is very sympathetic for those people who are homeless. When there are homeless people the town does pull together and support one another. From what I have experienced and see they would care for them. They would take them in. I haven’t come across anyone who has been ostracised or left out in the cold – I would be sad if that was the case.

This response reflects the traditional attitude and view of rural communities as being places of great informal networks of support and inclusion (Milbourne, 2014; Cheers, 1998).

One participant, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, provided this perspective on community attitudes towards homelessness:

GCSPA – Embarrassment. A bit of anger because they make us all look bad, and that it’s (homelessness) across all the community. I don’t think that. There is an embarrassment. There is that sentiment “what are they doing homeless, when they have homes to go to?” There is a mixture of responses but not a lot of responses about what we can do with these people. We all have lives with issues. There is no time to worry about John down the road homeless, drinking every day getting beaten up by yobbos.

The loss of community is evident in this response and a sense of shame and embarrassment for local ATSI people when a member of the community experiences homelessness. This
connects with the research undertaken about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008), in particular, spiritual homelessness and lack of access to accommodation services and support. This statement needs to be considered within the context of the dominant values of individualism, materialism and neo-liberalism which characterised the attitudes and narratives associated with the mining boom. The neo-liberalist forces driven by the mining boom affected the local ATSI community. As this participant noted, it resulted in a weakening of relationships within the ATSI community. Future boom periods need to be better managed as far as serving to strengthen community relationships within the ATSI community as opposed to weakening culture and relationships (Langton, 2015).

5.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has considered the structural dynamics, contextual factors and community attitudes in communities during periods of mining boom and downturn. Specifically, the chapter has appraised the changes that have occurred in these communities through the eyes of the participants of this study and the application of Critical Social Theory. Eight overarching themes of change were identified for the mining boom and downturn periods.

The themes reflecting the mining boom period included: opportunities for wealth and prosperity; reduced levels of housing affordability; high demand on local services and infrastructure; loss of community culture and identity and change of industrial arrangements driving community change. As these themes were characteristic of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart during the mining boom period, the structural dynamics which can serve to contribute towards increasing levels of homelessness, were analysed.

There were three overarching themes of change which characterised the mining downturn period since late 2012. These included: (1) uncertainty over the future of mining communities, (2) loss of employment, business and services, and (3) improved levels of housing affordability. Housing affordability issues were sharply contrasted in these communities during periods of mining boom and downturn. Although there was a high level of consistency in the view from participants that the mining industry and more specifically, the mining boom, had been a major factor in people becoming at risk of homelessness as well
experiencing homelessness in mining communities, there was some variation about the extent to which the mining industry was responsible for causing this trend. The structural factors inherent to the mining boom period (low levels of housing affordability) were made more intense by specific housing factors such as those historic arrangements that predated the mining boom and that were made between the State Government Department of Housing and Public Works for access to social housing stock for mining company workers. Mining company subsidies for workers for private rental housing began inflating the housing market and long-term residents then began selling houses at the height of the boom. As a result of the housing market collapse during the mining downturn, properties reduced dramatically in value and new owners were left with debt and increasing demand on local services and infrastructure, including a small number of specialist homelessness services.

There was some recognition that the community did often respond in a range of informal ways to assist homeless people in their community which in other metropolitan or rural mining communities may not have been possible. This leads to a consideration of the social capital within mining communities that can be harnessed towards effective local community responses which can end homelessness for community members. It also focusses attention on the extent to which the mining industry, and specifically the effects of the mining boom and downturn, has served to erode social capital in these communities.

Finally, the chapter explored community attitudes towards homeless and the emerging and ongoing social issues in mining communities to establish the context in which homelessness occurs. Community attitudes towards homelessness were categorised in three broad themes: responses reflecting ignorance and apathy towards homelessness; responses that reflected fear, loathing and contempt for people experiencing homelessness and genuine community concern and empathy. These attitudes were explored in the context of the structural dynamics occurring in these communities during the mining boom and downturn with particular emphasis on the neo-liberalist values and paradigms which typified the lifestyle of the boom era. The emerging and ongoing social issues in mining that were identified by participants relevant to understanding homelessness in these communities, included the rising income inequality; the increasing rate of people at risk of homelessness; the financial and lifestyle adjustments of community members and the increasing demand on specialist homelessness services during both mining boom and downturn periods.
This chapter concludes that the mining industry throughout both the cyclical boom and downturn phases has placed more people at risk of homelessness in mining communities but has also led to more people experiencing homelessness for the first time for a variety of reasons, including significantly reduced housing affordability during the mining boom and the level of demand on local services including homelessness services outstripping the supply of these services. There is also evidence that the mining industry was a factor in some of the gender and cultural changes within communities that had a part to play in levels of family breakdown and domestic and family violence in these communities. The mining downturn period also placed considerable pressures on people at risk of homelessness. While housing affordability improved during the boom downturn, the scale of loss of employment and services and business in these communities has had a lasting impact on vulnerable members of the community. These structural dynamics and community attitudes and emerging and ongoing social issues in mining communities will be explored in the next chapter as pathways of people who have experienced homelessness in these communities.
Chapter 6: Pathways to and out of homelessness in mining communities

6.1 Chapter introduction

This research has conceptualised homelessness as a result of complex interactions between structural dynamics and individual life circumstances and does not position people as being “to blame” for their personal life situation (Johnson et al., 2008; 2015; O’Flaherty, 2004; 2012). Chapter Two highlighted the research and literature arguing that homelessness is a result of the interaction of structural factors such as the state of the economy, employment and cost of housing along with individual life events and this research follows in this theoretical tradition (O’Flaherty, 2004; Johnson, et al. 2015). In keeping with the approach of O’Flaherty (2004) and Curtis et al. (2011) it is important to reiterate that while pathways are a useful way of conceptualising homelessness, they are not always predictable or linear. This notion that homelessness can’t always be predicted, runs counter to the idea of a ”pathway” being linear and orderly. O'Flaherty (2010) used the analogy of a high tide and low tide to describe the interaction of structural issues and individual life events in causing homelessness and that homelessness will occur when structural conditions are optimal. If there is an abundance of affordable housing and employment (the high tide) homelessness will occur just as it will continue to occur when there is an absence of affordable housing and other important structural conditions (low tide). Curtis et al. (2011) used the concept of a "life shock" as descriptor for an event such as major illness or giving birth to a child with disability as an event that can precipitate homelessness. According to these authors, the influence of structural factors and individual life events in causing homelessness are not always a 50:50 scenario. At times structural factors are the dominant influence and other times it is the individual life events. The previous chapter examined the structural dynamics of mining communities during periods of boom and downturn and the implications for homelessness in these communities.

Community attitudes in rural and regional communities were found to be subject to extreme influences associated with the mining cycle. Attitudes were also influenced by the dominant neo-liberal paradigm which values private wealth, small government and individualism over the community. This chapter will explore the specific pathways to and out of homelessness
for the twelve participants of this study who have experienced homelessness in the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart. Their unique stories will be analysed to identify the series of events which occurred in their lives that led to their experience of homelessness and what this actual experience of homelessness has meant for them. The Critical Social Theory and Life Story approaches are underscored in this chapter by a commitment to privileging the perspectives on homelessness offered by this group of participants and a detailed analysis of power issues (Allen, 2009).

This chapter discusses the three main pathways to homelessness for people living in the mining communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah that affect people living in mining communities which challenge existing theory about pathways to and out of homelessness. These pathways are:

- Family and relationship breakdown and domestic violence.
- Unemployment and housing affordability.
- High vulnerability and access to services.

The twelve stories of participants who have experienced homelessness will be discussed within one of these three pathways to homelessness in mining communities. While privileging the voice of the twelve participants who have experienced homelessness, the discussion of pathways will also include evidence from other stakeholder groups. It is the intention that a focus on these pathways and the specific contextual issues relating to mining communities will add to existing literature that has largely been developed from understanding the causes of homelessness, and what helps to end homelessness, in major cities and urban areas (O’Flaherty, 2004; Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). Particular attention is paid to the participants’ entry to homelessness, their duration of homelessness and their exit from homelessness where this has occurred. Chronic homelessness will also be examined for participants in respective pathways, especially the third pathway which focuses on people with high vulnerability to homelessness. The specific community variables and factors which impact a person’s experience and duration of homelessness in mining communities, and chronicity of homelessness, are examined. The chapter will also explore the evidence about pathways out of homelessness for people in mining communities and assess the effectiveness of interventions that were available to homeless people.
6.2 Pathway 1 – Family and relationship breakdown and domestic and family violence

Family and relationship breakdown and domestic and family violence should be viewed as events that may happen on the same continuum; the latter being a much more severe and violent outcome which is also illegal. As discussed in Chapter Two, most homelessness pathways research organises family breakdown and domestic and family violence within the same pathway into homelessness because it is fundamentally about human relationships (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). Domestic and family violence remains a leading cause of homelessness amongst women and children in Queensland and across Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016a). Therefore, this pathway specifically explores family and relationship breakdown and domestic violence as defining experiences which propel people towards homelessness in mining communities. Although this research did not find that family breakdown and domestic violence is a unique cause of homelessness to mining communities, it did confirm and build on previous research showing the connection between family breakdown and domestic and family violence and homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008).

Many Stakeholder Category A and Stakeholder Category B participants in this research confirmed that mining communities and the mining boom produced an increase in domestic and family violence and that this is part of the industry culture and community profile and of the internal structural dynamics associated with mining towns. It is nevertheless hard to prove that mining communities experience higher rates of domestic and family violence compared to non-mining communities and the evidence available would suggest rates are not higher in mining communities (Nancarrow et al., 2009). The community responses to domestic and family violence in mining communities tend to be different because of the contextual issues of masculine culture and demands on few human services. Women’s experiences of domestic and family violence in mining communities can be more severe because of these contextual issues. Chapter Five identified eight overarching themes which characterised the mining boom and downturn period and these themes are highly relevant when considering mining community responses to women who become homeless as a result of domestic and family violence. These themes will be analysed as part of this pathway.
This section will analyse the experiences of five women participants: Michelle, Susan, Christine, Kaylene and Ruth in relation to their move to reside in a mining community, the conflict leading to relationship or family breakdown, and in the cases of Kaylene and Ruth, their experience of domestic violence. In line with the discussion about the Family Breakdown and Domestic and Family Violence Pathway in Chapter Two, these two issues have been placed together within this pathway because they are a part of the same continuum that can lead to homelessness. The events associated with family breakdown and domestic and family violence, specifically the resulting housing stress and homelessness and the duration of homelessness experienced, will be discussed and analysed.

As described in detail in the previous chapter, family breakdown and domestic violence are particularly acute in mining communities because of a range of contextual issues and pressures including greater housing affordability stressors during times of mining boom, financial stressors and changes to community culture and identity. These stressors are acute in rural mining communities and are exacerbated by the isolation that many who move to these rural communities are without any informal networks of support. All five themes identified as characterising the mining boom period in Chapter Five, have an influence on the culture of mining communities which generates domestic and family violence.

The changes in mining communities during the boom, particularly the opportunities for wealth and prosperity, loss of community culture and identity and changes in industrial arrangements had negative consequences for women in these communities. Bay and Jenkins (2012) describe how the development and sheer size of male-dominated, mobile, temporary workforces has served to further masculinise these communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, this process diminished the social capital in mining communities. This was confirmed by data in the previous chapter (Chapter Five) as many participants discussed a loss of community culture and identity in their community. The loss of identity and culture and the shifts in industrial labour arrangements in mining communities, combined with the sociological evidence about the rise of the temporary workforce within mining communities, created conditions conducive for family breakdown and domestic and family violence. The limited support networks available to people when their relationship or family breaks down is also a contextual feature of this pathway.
The pathway described here highlights the need for a strong gender analysis of homelessness (Tually et al., 2008; Zufferey, 2008), specifically in the masculine environment of the mining industry. There is no denying the significance of gender within this pathway. All five participants in this pathway were women. This research does not suggest that men are not impacted by this pathway, or that this is not a pathway to homelessness that some men may experience, but the evidence strongly points to the severe impacts it has for women in mining communities. This was a dominant theme that emerged from service providers when asked who they saw as the most vulnerable client groups in mining communities. A Dysart service provider commented:

**SW** – Who do you see as the most vulnerable and most at risk of homelessness in Dysart?

**HSPE** – Definitely women, and women with children. For the reason that most husbands have accommodation provided as part of their employment … there is no public transport in Dysart and many people move here not knowing that. We have had people come and they do not have a car and they do not have transport or a way to get a bus. A lot of young women move here to be with a boyfriend and they live in a de facto relationship and if that relationship breaks down, the woman is in crisis as she has no way of getting a taxi, bus or a train.

This service provider’s quote highlights the challenges faced by women who move to mining communities to be with a partner, but the relationship breaks down. Not only are they faced with homelessness but also difficulties in accessing basic services to be able to work through the situation and live day to day. This finding supports Nancarrow et al., (2009) research that women experience more severe effects of domestic and family violence in mining communities.

A Mackay-based service provider also commented on the masculinisation of mining communities as a result of the mining boom and how this had detrimental effects for women’s health and safety in these communities.

**HSPA** – There is a huge population of men in Mackay. I have read some statistics which suggests there are 5,000 more men in Mackay than women and it really has created a culture that made it unsafe for women. There were way too many men. Way too much testosterone. We have a lot of women coming to our shelter.
because of domestic violence related homelessness. We also have situations where the male landlord, or males renting out a room, and the women is being sexually harassed. We’ve had that so many times.

This service provider quote identified that the dynamics of the mining boom favoured men, with women experiencing increased sexual harassment, discrimination and disadvantage, particularly women who had experienced relationship or family breakdown. As discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter Five) about the adverse changes in communities due to disproportionate gender ratio, these findings are supported by sociological and gender studies on rural mining communities (Carrington & Scott, 2008).

This pathway analysed the experiences of participants who experienced family breakdown and those participants who experience domestic and family violence. The family breakdown pathway includes the stories of Michelle, Susan and Christine who all experienced relationship or family breakdown which impacted their housing situation. The domestic and family violence pathway includes the accounts of Kaylene and Ruth who are survivors of domestic and family violence. This pathway also explores the issues for women and children escaping domestic and family violence finding safe refuge in mining communities and affordable housing options. There have been some innovative and contemporary policy options that enable women and children experiencing domestic and family violence to be able to remain in the family home and have the perpetrator evicted thereby not rendering the victim of domestic and family violence to be homeless (Netto et al., 2009; Spinney, 2012; 2014), which are also relevant to the women discussed here. The following section outlines a summary of key events in each of the five participants’ lives.

**Family breakdown pathway**

**Michelle – Pathway to homelessness and out of homelessness**

- Michelle and her child had been sharing private accommodation outside Mackay. She was working as a bank teller.
- Property was damaged during 2012 storms and floods.
- Landlord refused to make repairs to the property and refused to compensate Michelle for the damage to her property as a result of a leaking roof and exposed housing.
- Michelle decided to leave her job and relocate to Moranbah to reside with her father in his private accommodation.
• After six months living with her father in private accommodation in Moranbah, Michelle and child moved out of this accommodation due to a breakdown in relationship with her father and brother.
• Michelle, unable to afford private rental housing in Moranbah, immediately becomes homeless
• Michelle contacts local homelessness service and accessed crisis accommodation. Michelle spends two months in crisis accommodation.
• Michelle accessed social housing in Moranbah.

Susan – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness
• Susan and family relocate to Mirani from the Northern Territory to be closer to her family for support.
• Susan found the private rental housing too expensive and leaves tenancy to take up accommodation in a caravan with partner and two young children on family property. Susan has an older third child who is a young adult who was also living on the family property in separate accommodation.
• Susan experiences relationship breakdown with partner.
• Susan experiences family breakdown with birth parents and is asked to leave their property and becomes homeless.
• Susan accessed crisis accommodation for homeless families, initially motel accommodation organised by a specialist homelessness service before moving to a crisis accommodation service in Mackay where she remains with her two children for two months.
• Susan takes up a social housing tenancy in Mackay.

Christine – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness
• Moved to Mackay with partner and two children under the age of five.
• Rented privately in Mackay.
• Relationship breakdown left Christine with unaffordable tenancy.
• Evicted from private rental housing due to significant rent arrears.
• Christine takes up shared accommodation in small community 40 kilometres north of Mackay – Christine rented one bedroom to accommodate herself and her two children.
• Christine accessed crisis accommodation for homeless families in Mackay.
After two months in crisis accommodation, Christine accessed social housing in Mackay.

**Domestic and family violence pathway**

**Kaylene – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness (domestic violence)**
- Kaylene moved to Dysart in 2012 with her partner and four sons so that the family would be together and the father would not have to continue the strenuous DIDO arrangements.
- Kaylene experienced severe forms of domestic violence.
- Relationship ends and Kaylene sought a Domestic Violence Order which was granted by the Court.
- Kaylene accessed crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.
- Kaylene was still using crisis housing and received support from the specialist homelessness service.

**Ruth – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness (domestic violence)**
- Ruth moved to Dysart to be with partner and shared a tenancy with partner in private housing.
- Ruth experienced severe forms of domestic violence.
- Relationship ends, Ruth left with expensive private rental tenancy lease.
- Eviction from private housing.
- Sleeping in car in local supermarket car park.
- Ruth accessed crisis accommodation for three months.
- Ruth left crisis housing and then moved to marginal housing in caravan accommodation shared with male adult.

The research analysis indicates the impact of relationship and family breakdown and domestic violence on this group of women and how these experiences have placed these women in situations of homelessness. Although their experiences share commonality with other research focusing on the relationship between domestic violence and homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008), this thesis argues for the need for a closer analysis of the pathway to homelessness that these women experienced because they lived in mining communities. This analysis will focus on the intentional decision to move to or relocate to a mining community, the events surrounding the relationship breakdown and
incidents of domestic violence, the experience of housing stress and general lack of housing options in mining communities and the length or duration of homelessness. The assistance provided by specialist homelessness services will also be considered.

6.2.1 Relocation to mining community to be with partner or family
All five accounts highlight an intentional decision to relocate to Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah on the basis of an existing relationship and for access to family support. Christine and Susan moved to Mackay from interstate as they had partners at the time who had located work in Mackay and in Susan’s case, the availability of extended family was seen as a good source of informal support. Kaylene had relocated to Moranbah to be with her partner and to ease the burden that the DIDO/FIFO lifestyle had been having on her relationship and family. Ruth relocated to Dysart from Adelaide for similar reasons to Kaylene, to be with her partner because of her previous experience of the detrimental effects of long distance relationships. All five scenarios show a decision that was based on a view that relocation to the community would be a positive move.

Michelle’s situation is slightly different to the other four participants in this pathway as she had secure housing near Mackay until this housing was damaged through a natural disaster. Michelle’s housing in Mackay had become untenable as the landlord refused to make the necessary repairs to the property after significant damage from several natural disasters, and to compensate Michelle for her loss of property. There was also a threat to significantly increase her rent.

Michelle – Our landlord decided not to fix the property. We had lived in the damaged property for four months with no ceiling, with the rain coming in, and when I requested for them to fix it, more forcefully, we were asked to leave, or the rent would be increased to $850, a twofold increase.

Michelle was unable to afford alternative housing in Mackay on her own and decided to leave her job and relocate to Moranbah where she could have free accommodation with her father for a period of time.

The relocation to Moranbah was not easy for Michelle as she talked about the difficulty of transitioning from being a person in fulltime paid work to relying upon Centrelink benefits and how this affected her financial options.
Michelle – The biggest issue I have financially is that from a person who was working full time to being on unemployment benefits. I have issues with lending, ... lending has become cheaper but I cannot refinance. I still have bills from when I was living in Mackay. If I could access a service where I could refinance my debts and consolidate them, it would’ve made things easier for me.

The qualitative evidence suggests that whatever the circumstances that bring people to mining communities during periods of mining boom, or their motivations for being there, if there is a failure to access or maintain employment, and build social support networks within the community, this does place the person and their family at risk of homelessness.

6.2.2 Relationship and family breakdown and domestic violence incidents

All participants were clear in their assessment that relationship and family breakdown and domestic violence were major causes of homelessness through Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. The pressures placed on relationships and families in mining communities are intense and there are often few avenues for individuals or families to seek either informal or formal support services. It is important to clarify that for Michelle, Christine and Susan, their pathway to homelessness reflected family and relationship breakdown. Michelle, Christine and Susan did not disclose that they experienced domestic and family violence. Kaylene and Ruth however did disclose that they experienced repeated and severe forms of domestic and family violence. In the situation of Christine and Susan, it was the ending of the relationship, and in Susan’s case a falling out with her birth family, that led to experiences of homelessness.

Susan – I had been paying $380 per week renting a little place at Mirani, and this and the cost of living caused me to move back in with my parents who had a caravan in their backyard. I was staying there myself and with my daughter. I met my partner and we moved in together and had a child together. When bubbly was quite young we had a falling out. Things ended and I had nowhere to go. I came here to the homeless service and they were great and put me up in a motel. Within a couple of days, they found a house for me to live in.

For Susan, the vulnerability of relying on partners and family for housing and support meant that life became more precarious when these relationships soured and were no longer helpful. Fortunately, in Susan’s case she was connected to a very helpful homelessness service in
Mackay which organised motel accommodation and housing within a short period of time. The breakdown in relationships with partners and family, and subsequent inability to access affordable housing in their own right, led to Michelle, Susan and Christine’s first and only episodes of homelessness in their lives.

Soon after their move to Dysart, Kaylene and Ruth’s relationships became violent and this was the primary reason for their experience of homelessness. Kaylene was married to her partner and had relocated to Dysart to “keep her family together”. Ruth had recently formed a relationship with her ex-partner before also deciding to move to Dysart to pursue her relationship. In both Kaylene and Ruth’s situations, the relationships became physically and emotionally violent soon after moving to Dysart. This was a common experience according to one community representative who noted that

**CRD** – The domestic violence statistics are shocking across Australia but in mining communities even more so, the stress, the workloads, the shifts, the expectations that money. ... there are so many pressures that are magnified in this culture that has caused domestic violence to be ramped up in ways which is alarming.

In line with Burnet’s (2016) argument that women experiencing domestic and family violence are further disadvantaged by losing their housing, and struggling to find suitable alternate housing, Kaylene and Ruth could not locate appropriate housing to end their experience of homelessness. This evidence of demand for specialist support services for women experiencing domestic and family violence was supported by other service provider participants who recognised in a focus group in late 2013 in Mackay that women and children who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, and families, were priority client groups for their services.

**GCSPG** – I think we have noticed a spike in the number of women in crisis particularly in the last 2.5 months or so, and I agree although the rents have dropped a bit, the prices are still very expensive.

**HSPJ** – Yes, I’d agree with that. We have data collected suggesting we had 30 turn aways last month. So that is 30 women and children who have not been able to be accommodated due to domestic and family violence. So that is still too high. We have had one person in our shelter for almost twelve months, a single woman.
And she is really proactive in looking for accommodation. She has possibly just found a granny flat. One room accommodation in Mackay is still unaffordable and she has a part-time job.

Service providers also agreed that families including sole parent families were high amongst the profile of clients presenting to their services seeking assistance.

**HSPH** – Well I would say there are more families.

**GCSPi** – The issue is that Mackay is perceived as a rich town so people, so families come here before securing a stable job and they face the reality that the vacancy rate is extremely low, even worse than a few years ago.

**HSPH** – It was only earlier that there was a 0.5% vacancy rate. Out of the 800 requests for accommodation for families, as we’ve just finished doing our stats, we have only accommodated 7.6% of these families (around 60 families). That’s a huge amount of families that we weren’t able to support.

The service provider responses show that even the specialist homelessness services were not always able to assist clients presenting to their service for assistance because of the high level of demand. The community of Mackay tends to feel the pressures as the larger regional centre where DIDO workers are based with their families. Some of the main pressure and conflicts families in Mackay and other communities experience, stem from the range of social, personal, housing and financial issues associated with the mining boom lifestyle. The same pressures in housing people in crisis existed in Dysart and Moranbah, and as smaller communities that are significantly more isolated, potentially this makes the challenge of more integrated service delivery more difficult.

Reflecting on the issues that lead to her relationship breakdown and experiencing domestic violence, Kaylene commented that:

**Kaylene** – A lot of it comes down to there being not much to do in the town. The hours my partner used to work, he would come home tired, grumpy and this would lead to bickering at each other. Boredom happens, you go to the pub for drinks and then chaos happens. A lot of the reason for family breakups in this town comes through boredom and alcohol.
Kaylene is reflecting here on the culture of mining communities and the limited range of social and recreational opportunities as being major contributors towards family breakdown and domestic violence.

This view was echoed by Ruth who could reflect that the culture of mining communities promoted violence within relationships and who specifically mentioned the build-up phase of a domestic violence cycle linked to the industrial regime of long work shifts. This finding links to the evidence from the previous chapter on the impacts of industrial changes on the quality of life, relationship and family functioning in mining communities.

Ruth – The men get these stereotypical blinkers on attitude and think money, money and money. They lose sight of the value of their relationships. They get drunk on their days off and they party and then they are grumpy when they are back at work. Tom (pseudonym) was so grumpy with me when he was working those 12-hour shifts. He would threaten me; he was aggressive and sexually violent to me.

The abuse and violence that Ruth experienced was extreme and ongoing. Ruth literally lived in fear of her life and this fear has continued as Ruth now lives in different accommodation situations since leaving this violent relationship. Kaylene and Ruth both spent some time in the local domestic violence refuge for women. On moving out of the refuge, Ruth also accepted her former partner back for a short period, before being subject to more abuse and violence. Kaylene continues to receive support from the refuge.

6.2.3 Housing stress and lack of affordable housing options

In circumstances of relationship and family breakdown, and domestic and family violence, immediate access to safe and secure housing is crucial (Bryce, 2015; Spinney, 2012; Johnson et al., 2008). The critical moment in Christine, Michelle and Susan’s experience was the contact made with the local specialist homelessness services. Once they made contact with this service, initially crisis housing and then social housing was located which suited the needs of both families. Christine and Susan were from the Mackay area and benefited from having a larger service provider network to access. Michelle had relocated from Mackay to Moranbah, and Ruth and Kaylene, who were from the Dysart, had to contend with a much smaller rural service system.
Kaylene and Ruth’s partners were employed within the mining industry. The issue of women who have experienced domestic violence being forced from housing that has been provided or subsidised by the mining company, who generally employs the male partner, has long been contentious. The result being that women who experience domestic violence were often forced out of mining housing when such violence occurs. For some women, they then become subject to Family Court Recovery Orders requiring the woman to remain within a geographic perimeter to the community. This remained a major source of contention and frustration for numerous participants. One conversation from a Mackay-based focus group touched on this:

**HSPH** – There has been an increase in domestic violence, and in the mining towns if there is a bust up the bloke gets to stay in the home and the poor woman and kids either has to stay there and suffer or find somewhere else to live in town which is just unaffordable and impossible anyway. Domestic and family violence is still a major cause of homelessness.

**GCSPG** – One of our biggest issues is around recovery orders. It has got a bit better in a town like Mackay, but if a woman leaves a relationship and goes to live with family in Sydney, he goes and gets a recovery order and if he is successful she and the kids have to return to Mackay and there is really nowhere for her to go in terms of housing.

**HSPJ** – There is still nowhere for her to go, particularly if she comes back she is by herself without the kids, because the kids end up being with him.

Women and women with children who become homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence in mining communities have added challenges in not only finding affordable housing in the local community, but if they choose to leave the community, may end up being the subject of a Family Court Recovery Order so that the father can have visitation to the child/ren more easily. In some instances, this has meant women having escaped violence and returned to their community of origin for family support and employment, were then returning to the mining community as part of the Family Court Order.

This trend of women escaping domestic and family violence in mining communities becoming subject to such court orders adds to the research regarding the multiple levels of
disadvantage experienced by women escaping experiencing domestic and family violence (Humphreys & Absler, 2011). Some of the human service participants commented that it is no wonder some women return to an abusive relationship in these circumstances. As one service provider participant noted:

**HSPF** – (Recovery orders) have brought a lot of people back who wanted to leave. In a couple of cases we have had women leave Victoria which is where they came from and have been ordered back. That was during the boom when there was no accommodation. One young lady with two small children ended up sharing a caravan with a person she partially knew. All because of the recovery order – you either come back with the kids or we (the father) will take the kids.

These sentiments were shared by a Mackay-based service provider who commented:

**HSPJ** – We have even had to bring children back from New Zealand, Tasmania and Western Australia because of recovery orders.

The interaction of child protection, domestic and family violence and family law matters continue to create challenges at a practice level, and family law proceedings (Humphreys & Absler, 2011).

Another service provider noted the disadvantage experienced by women escaping domestic and family violence in mining communities on low income or with access to limited income:

**HSPA** – If you are not employed you have zero chance of getting a place in a share house. Our women are not in the running for the private market. Most are on Newstart and this means they have to wait for social housing as there are simply no other options except occasionally a caravan park but even they are hard to access. ... women who are homeless try to keep a pretty low profile because it is dangerous, especially if you are living in a car or couch-surfing or staying in really unsafe situations.

The risks for women experiencing homelessness in mining communities are quite significant, but finding appropriate housing remains challenging (Burnet, 2016; Campo & Tayton, 2015). Ruth and Kaylene have both made conscious decisions to remain in their communities with ex-partners and in the knowledge that there are generally fewer housing options. For Kaylene this was about established family routines including participation in school and her
employment in the town. For Ruth, this was about not feeling intimidated or bullied by some community members who had sided with her former partner at her expense and isolation in the community. For Ruth, the prospect of having to move to another community and start over again was too much.

### 6.2.4 Duration of homelessness and exit from homelessness

The duration of homelessness for Susan, Christine, Ruth and Kaylene also varied and in the case of Christine, Ruth and Kaylene involved repeated episodes of homelessness. Table 6.1 shows the duration of homelessness for each participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Duration of homelessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Two months housed in crisis housing before accessing social housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Greater than 12 months – lived in unsuitable/overcrowded accommodation for a year before accessing crisis accommodation for a two-month period and then accessed social housing. Christine had met the definition of chronic homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Three months and three weeks - three weeks sleeping rough in a motor vehicle and then three months in crisis housing before moving to share caravan accommodation while technically not homeless, Ruth remains in a situation of homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaylene</td>
<td>Greater than nine months - Kaylene has had repeated episodes of support including periods of supported accommodation and is still experiencing homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Two months in crisis housing before accessing social housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table 6.1 the duration of homelessness varied from two months for Susan and Michelle to greater than twelve months for Christine. It is important to highlight that Christine’s duration of homelessness meets the criteria of chronic homelessness. The forms of homelessness also varied amongst the five participants from Ruth’s account of sleeping rough in Dysart in her car, Christine’s lengthy experience of severe overcrowded housing and all five participants’ experiences of crisis accommodation services. The duration of
homelessness for participants in this pathway seems to have been influenced by how soon the participant was linked with a specialist homelessness service, at least in Mackay. In four of the five participant experiences, a temporary period in a crisis accommodation service was followed by the offer of social housing. Ruth was the only person who exited crisis accommodation to not go onto social housing, but rather a share caravan arrangement.

In all five situations, the women participants experienced some degree of precariousness in regard to their housing and accommodation prior to becoming homeless. For Christine and Ruth this meant having to pay a high rent when their partner left, and in Ruth’s case her partner left the joint private rental to be accommodated in mining company workers’ accommodation. Kaylene was forced to move out of housing that was mining company provided and her former partner was able to remain in this housing as he was the employee. Susan was reliant on caravan accommodation on her parent’s property however this accommodation was withdrawn when Susan had a falling out with her parents.

It is important to recognise that while Christine and Susan have exited homelessness they still access support as this helps to prevent risk of homelessness. This support is more low-key and makes sure that they are keeping on top of tenancy responsibilities and obligations, and provides information on other useful community services and activities. Both Ruth and Kaylene remained classified as being in situations of homelessness at the time interviews were conducted. The commonality across each of the five stories was a need to access crisis housing and support and from this point, further intervention and support was provided. Christine discussed the psychological impact of homelessness on her psyche and ability to function on a day to day basis. Christine’s discussion of how she felt immense stigma and shame of homelessness and how this in turn influenced the whole family’s functioning confirms other research about how families with children are not well-serviced by the existing housing and homelessness service system (Gibson, 2010).

Christine – Homelessness really does affect your mind. I’m a diabetic and I need my medication constantly. It was really hard to maintain my medication a lot of the time as I couldn’t afford to take my insulin. I needed to pay my rent. I would rather have a roof over my family’s head and have high sugars than spend $10.50 to get insulin. I couldn’t afford it.
The psychological impact for Christine was very much about basic survival and needing to be able to have shelter. This came at the expense of her personal health. Christine reported subsequently that since Christmas 2012 she managed to resolve her finances, and this had helped her overall situation and capacity. The assistance of a local specialist homelessness service has been crucial to Christine being able to get to the position that she feels more empowered and in control and able to deal with the challenges facing her family.

6.3 Pathway 2 – Unemployment and housing affordability

The second pathway into homelessness in mining communities, referred to as the Unemployment and Housing Affordability Pathway, is linked to the person who was living in a mining community, had been gainfully employed and experienced loss of employment and inability to obtain alternative employment. This pathway has relevance for mining communities because of the attraction to mining communities during the boom and loss of employment during the downturn cycle. Participants, Aaron, John, Nathan and Veronica, have personal accounts of homelessness in mining communities which are connected to loss of employment or failure to obtain employment. As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, the links between housing stress, homelessness and unemployment are critical (Steen et al., 2012). The particular issues around loss of mining related employment is explored in the lives of John and Nathan, who were men gainfully employed in the mining industry for many years before experiencing redundancy and loss of employment.

The decade long mining boom saw extraordinary opportunities for people to acquire wealth over relatively short timeframes, and such opportunities were made available for people unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labourers for various work in the mining industry. As noted in the previous chapter, many Australians perceived the mining boom as an opportunity to generate wealth and perhaps establish a better lifestyle for themselves and their families. There were also lucrative opportunities for “savvy” business people in mining communities who could see the demand for goods and services for mining industry related services and other services in the community to support the burgeoning population. The communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah experienced extensive population growth between 2001, 2006 and 2011. These figures remain largely an estimate and historically have not included those accommodated by mining companies in work camps. The 2016 Census data is expected to
distinguish between permanent and temporary community members on Census night in more accurate ways than in previous Census. The immediate implication that arises from a dramatic increase in population, is the supply and availability of affordable housing. This pathway is characterised by a series of decisions and life events, including an intentional decision to relocate to a mining community because of the opportunity for a better life.

6.3.1 Intentional decision to relocate
In light of the perceived opportunities and wealth to be exploited in mining communities during the mining boom, large numbers of Australians were motivated to move to mining communities to seek their fortunes. For many people who did not come from rural backgrounds or understood the issues living in rural mining communities, this motivation was perhaps underlined by a sense that mining communities could be almost idyllic country communities that promoted a healthy non-urban lifestyle (Cloke et al., 2002; Maidment & Bay, 2012). This was certainly the case for Aaron who was keen to start a new life in the prosperous Bowen Basin. His experience subsequent to arrival was in stark contrast to the commonly held view of immediate wealth and opportunity. For “out of towners” arriving in communities such as Moranbah and Dysart with no connections to the community and little personal resources or even employment, their experience is captured in the following remarks from community and human service provider representatives:

**CRD** – A big group of homeless people I see is single people chasing the elusive dollar. ... We often find people arriving in town and end up sleeping on the veranda of our church. There are a few people who have done this because they feel safe there … we find them there the next morning and … the homeless men I talk to say that he has basically nothing to go on but a phone number some person has given him to find a mining job.

**HSPF** – Everyone coming here searching for the elusive dollar. ... A lot of people presented into our agency after having applied for a job online and got that job and came here thinking they would get into a motel until they found housing but found they couldn’t afford or access it right from the get go. They had a job but were living out of a car. ... I cannot remember the number of companies I wrote to asking them to have something in their advertisements to ask people to check out housing and accommodation in the area before applying for jobs.
These responses show the extreme situations that some people find themselves in on arrival in a mining community, including sleeping rough on a church veranda and in motor vehicles. Almost immediately, these people are brought to the attention of local charitable organisations and human service agencies.

In the previous chapter (Chapter Five), the structural reasons for lack of affordable housing in mining communities, particularly during the period of mining boom, were outlined. The term “housing crisis” regarding pathways into homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006) almost seems an understatement considering the extreme housing costs in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah during the boom. Mining communities experienced severe shortage in affordable housing during the boom greatly curtailing housing options for people on low incomes in mining communities. This pathway takes up the experiences of Aaron, Veronica, John and Nathan.

Veronica, Aaron, Nathan and John experienced homelessness as a result of lack of affordable housing in Dysart, Moranbah and Mackay forcing them to live in situations that satisfied definitions of homelessness. Their brief biographies follow:

**Veronica – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness**
- Veronica brought up in Dysart with her family during the 1970s and early 1980s.
- Left Dysart in late 1980s to travel.
- Returned to Dysart with her partner and four children in 2005.
- Partner lost job and lost mining company provided housing in late 2005.
- In the absence of any other housing or accommodation options, Veronica and family moved in to live with an elderly male relative in a three-bedroom property in Dysart.
- Members of Veronica’s family were forced to sleep in tents in the back yard when home owner had his family visit and had no control over household arrangements or space.
- Accommodation not adequate for family and was overcrowded.
- After ten months Veronica and family were able to access private housing.
Aaron – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness
- Relocated from Brisbane to Dysart to obtain a mining job and obtained work as a council worker. Aaron is accommodated in share accommodation with his uncle who lives in a three-bedroom property in Dysart.
- Lost job with Council after four weeks and unable to locate alternative employment.
- Resided with uncle for six weeks before being asked to leave accommodation by uncle.
- Slept in car for four days with no money for food or water.
- Admitted to Dysart Hospital as a social admission.
- Hospital referred to homeless service in Moranbah and when Centrelink payment made, puts fuel in car and drives to Moranbah.
- Slept on veranda of local church as this was seen as a safe place to sleep rough.
- Connected to local specialist homelessness service.
- Found share accommodation with other young people.

John – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness
- Relationship breakdown and relocation to Mackay as a single male at 55 to work in the mining industry.
- Rented a room in Mackay while DIDO to Blackwater and there accommodated in worker accommodation.
- Loss of job/ made redundant at 64 years of age.
- Exacerbation of health issues and unable to afford to continue to room in Mackay.
- Referred and accommodated homeless men’s hostel and transitional house.
- Accessed a one-bedroom social housing property and now receives periodic support from local specialist homelessness service.

Nathan – Pathway into homelessness
- Worked in mining industry for over 25 years.
- Rented private housing in Mackay and Dysart during this time.
- Made redundant from his mining job.
- Nathan’s daughter committed suicide soon after he lost his job and all available finances were used to pay for funeral related expenses.
- Sold all possessions – cars, furniture to make money.
• Commenced couch-surfing at friends’ places as he had nowhere to go of his own.
• Commenced rough sleeping in Mackay in March 2013 and continued to sleep rough until September 2013 at which time he accessed the local homeless men’s hostel.
• Nathan was experiencing chronic homelessness in Mackay at the time of interview.

In line with the findings from Johnson et al. (2015) study about entries and exits to homelessness, John and Nathan both meet the characteristics of gender, age and loss of employment of the static model and exits models outlined placing them at high risk of homelessness. Nathan also experienced primary homelessness in Mackay. Mackay is one community in Queensland without Housing First initiatives such as Street to Home services which offer critical assertive outreach services to rough sleepers (Button & Baulderstone, 2012; Parsell, 2011). These individual characteristics and service system factors place John and Nathan at higher risk of entering homelessness but also mean they experience greater difficulty in exiting homelessness. As men who had both been employed for long periods in mining, John and Nathan found the loss of employment having a major impact on their lives.

6.3.2 Loss of mining employment
Nathan and John are middle-aged and older men with considerable employment and work history, much of which is directly connected to the mining industry in Central Queensland. Nathan had been working for over “25 years as a contractor with mines” and previously did not have to worry about ongoing employment. If one employment contract ended, Nathan was usually able to access another employment contract with the same company, or industry, without a great deal of difficulty. By virtue of Nathan having worked for the mining company, he was able to access mining company provided housing in Dysart and raised a family in this form of housing. John moved to Mackay from far North Queensland after his marriage failed when he was 55 years of age. He became a DIDO, renting private accommodation in Mackay but commuting to mining locations near Dysart and being accommodated there in workers’ accommodation paid for by the mining company. Despite some life challenges, both men were able to function quite successively while still gainfully employed in the mining industry and the sequence of events leading to homelessness in their lives had a major impact on their self-esteem (Roche, 2014).

Nathan’s pathway to homelessness is best described in his own words:
Nathan – I was working in the mining industry for the last 25 years as a contractor. It has been pretty good but in the last two years ... prior to this when you finished your contract you would just move straight into another contract. But in the last two years because of the influx of workers ... when a contract finishes, there may be 100 jobs available but 300 people have been laid off, so it has been getting harder and harder. But because I have been out there long enough, I have been one step ahead of most people. But the last time I got made redundant my daughter was having trouble with her husband and then I took some time off work to look after the grandkids and then she committed suicide ... I decided I couldn’t return to work. When my daughter died there was no information about how you can afford the associated costs. I sold everything I had because my daughter passed away in NSW and I wanted to bring her body back to Mackay because her mother is buried here. There were extra costs. It was over $20,000 so I sold my car. After the funeral was done I had nothing to go back to. In Dysart there is no accommodation for anyone who is not working. Once you lose your company accommodation out there you have to move out of town. That’s when I came back to Mackay. I spent a few months on the streets until someone mentioned this place (men’s crisis accommodation).

Nathan’s life experience is that of a competent worker who was long-term employed by the mining industry. Nathan supported a young family in Dysart for many years. The advent of the mining downturn in the Bowen Basin region in late 2012 meant that for the first time in his life, Nathan was not able to secure ongoing mining employment. The sheer number of workers competing for fewer jobs placed enormous pressures on shrinking employment opportunities. This period also coincided with a series of extremely distressing personal events for Nathan with the onset of his daughter’s illness, and then suicide, and dealing with all of the grieving and financial issues associated with death. Nathan’s story highlights the interaction of structural causes of homelessness and individual life events in his pathway to homelessness (Johnson et al., 2008; 2015; O’Flaherty, 2004). Negotiating entry back into the workforce in a highly competitive environment would have been an extremely challenging proposition for Nathan at a time of such intense personal grief and anguish.

John’s experience describing his pathway to homelessness is of someone who was gainfully employed in the mining industry for many years, before losing his job and this then
catapulted him to a situation of homelessness. John and Nathan’s pathway to homelessness confirms research that previous labour market experience and housing instability as causal factors in causing homelessness are not different between homeless clients and clients of job seeker agencies (Steen et al., 2012). In his own words, John’s pathway to homelessness started:

John – … at the age of 64 (I’m now 65) and I lost my job. You knew the downturn was coming – it didn’t just happen. This is not the first downturn either … (Prior to having relocated to Mackay some years ago my marriage had ended) I signed my house in North Queensland over to my ex-wife and daughters up there. I had been renting a room here in Mackay. I was travelling out to the mines and living in a donga or a tent when I was out there working. When I got laid off and all of a sudden, I had no income, and with the personal health things going on in my life, I became homeless. I ended up here at the hostel.

John’s loss of employment also coincided with the mining downturn. John paused throughout sharing his story, because some parts were just too painful to revisit, particularly the circumstances around his marriage breakdown and personal health issues. John and Nathan both lost their mining-related employment in 2012 and their lives progressed rapidly to becoming homeless people. The sadness and loss of personal status in both John and Nathan’s account of homelessness reflects the wounding to identity that the social processes associated with homelessness causes (Roche, 2014). Rebuilding identity must be a focus of intervention for service providers working with homeless people (Thomas et al., 2012).

Veronica and her partner’s decision to return to Dysart was based on their shared belief that Dysart would provide a good environment to raise a family and economic opportunity in relation to the mining industry. Veronica’s partner had mining employment and thus was able to access mining-provided housing when first relocating to the community as reflected in the following quote:

Veronica – Early 2006 I was working and my husband was let go and our housing through his company was also let go. The town was starting to increase in numbers and rental properties were scarce. We couldn’t find a rental property. We had arrived back in the country, working, participating, why weren’t we able to get housing? We had moved from … on my income, a good income, it took us
out of emergency housing/housing commission criteria, middle-class but not having a house to go to. It was only through another family member through marriage, who lived by himself, we were able to be accommodated with him. In a three-bedroom house there were seven of us. Six were ourselves, and then himself. That was almost nine months. He had grown children who would come back home. The only reasons we could stay with him was because his children had left home. Now when his children came back we found it difficult. Our children ended up being in tents in the back yard.

The loss of this employment within twelve months of arriving in the community meant Veronica and family were homeless as there was no other housing in the community they could access. Veronica’s response also shows the lack of influence or control they had in relation to their accommodation. Veronica and her family moved into inappropriate housing for a ten-month period and in her own words “For me homelessness is about not having a home of our own … though we had a room”. Veronica and family did not have control over this property and it was not suitable for the size of their family and for these reasons, their situation met the “definitional standard” of homelessness. Veronica’s experience of homelessness ended when they were able to enter into a tenancy agreement for a private rental property in Dysart.

The loss of employment, or failure to access employment, once relocating to the mining community characterizes Aaron, Veronica, John and Nathan’s story about their progression towards homelessness. Aaron lost his employment with the local Council within several weeks of moving to Dysart. Veronica’s partner also lost his employment with a mining company after several months and as a result of losing employment, the family also lost their mining company provided housing. Adequate income and employment are essential conditions for access to housing in mining communities, particularly during periods of boom. Veronica and John’s experience was during the boom period, whereas Nathan and Aaron’s experience of homelessness was at the end of the boom and beginning of the downturn. This thesis suggests that when considering the impacts of loss of employment and inability to obtain other employment, it is important to contextually situate experiences within the different phases of the mining cycle.
Employment and adequate income are crucial to avoiding homelessness and exiting of homelessness (Steen et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2015). This issue was expressed in all three focus groups, members strongly asserted that homelessness in mining communities is related to access to employment and income. Generally, employment, particularly within the industry, did improve chances of obtaining housing. However even employment in the mining boom period did not necessarily safeguard people from experiencing homelessness as noted in the following service provider remark:

**GCSPH** – There are people who do get jobs and end up sleeping in their cars, and because they can’t get a house or an apartment they end up sleeping rough in their car for an extended period of time. This then has a real effect on their physical and mental health.

This evidence goes to the severe shortage of all forms of housing that occurred in mining communities during the boom which is supported by research on housing during the mining boom, for example, Haslam-Mackenzie et al. (2009). One focus group noted that the influence of seasonal work and fluctuation of income and delayed income from employment in certain industries such as construction, also placed people at risk of homelessness. Financial issues including personal debts, also contributed towards a person’s risk of homelessness and also to their experience and duration of homelessness.

John and Nathan were unable to locate alternative employment after losing their jobs in 2012. Despite their longevity of experience in the mining workforce they were unable to obtain alternative employment when the downturn first impacted the Bowen Basin region in 2012. In addition to not accessing alternative employment, Nathan’s and John’s lives were both impacted by severe personal tragedies and challenges. For Nathan, this was the loss of his daughter to suicide, and for John this involved the onset of a debilitating mental health problem. Both men were unable to access worker accommodation or mining industry subsidised housing when they lost their jobs. After attending to the funeral costs associated with his daughter’s death, Nathan spent a period couch-surfing with friends while John accessed private boarding house accommodation. Nathan’s couch-surfing was not sustainable and he soon became a rough sleeper in Mackay. The homeless men’s hostel was the last opportunity available to both men.
6.3.4 Duration of homelessness and access to specialist homelessness services

As discussed in Chapter Two, homelessness is very personal and so the length, experience or duration of homelessness was also different for Aaron, John, Nathan and Veronica. Table 6.2 shows the duration of homelessness experienced by them.

Table 6.2. Pathway 2 - Duration of homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Duration of homelessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>10 days sleeping rough before finding share accommodation with other young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>10 months in inappropriate accommodation with a relative which meant significant overcrowding before having sufficient personal funds to be able to access private rental housing in Dysart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Greater than seven months – initial experience of homelessness was in a men’s boarding house for four months until being evicted because he couldn’t keep paying the charges and then three months in a Men’s Crisis accommodation service until accessing a one-bedroom social housing unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>Greater than 12 months – initially homeless via couch-surfing, Men’s Boarding house accommodation, several episodes of rough sleeping and several episodes of support at the local Men’s Crisis accommodation service. Nathan meets the definition of chronic homelessness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four participants’ experience and duration of homelessness vary from 10 days in the case of Aaron, to greater than 12 months for Nathan. It is important to highlight that Nathan’s repeated episodes and duration of homelessness meets the criteria used for chronic homelessness. Nathan’s situation in particular, is one of almost helplessness, showing a spiralling down in his life to loss of housing, entry to homelessness via couch-surfing, rough sleeping and men’s crisis accommodation services.

After being evicted from accommodation with his uncle in Dysart, Aaron had an initial period of homelessness lasting ten days including four days sleeping in his car, two days in Dysart Hospital and four days sleeping rough in Moranbah, including on a local church veranda. This period was particularly challenging for Aaron.
Aaron – It was hard. The third day I thought about hanging myself with my belt but I didn’t. I had no idea what to do when I got kicked out of hospital. I was escorted off the property at Dysart Hospital and told I couldn’t sleep in my car. I was hoping I could spend the night in the lock-up but the officer didn’t want to look after me.

Hospital accident and emergency departments are often amongst the first places that people who are homeless present to seek assistance (Moore, 2011; Sadowski, et al., 2009), as was the case with Aaron. Aaron’s response aligns with the strong view from the focus group held with health social workers, that homeless people come to the attention of staff in one of two ways: first is via people who present through admission and are homeless and do not have any stable accommodation; and second, is people who are admitted to hospital and have a length of stay on a ward. Social workers undertake discharge planning with patients and it is established that these people are also homeless and do not have any stable accommodation. Aaron’s first point of contact with the human service system was via the small Accident and Emergency Department of Dysart Hospital. While this was only a short reprieve for Aaron, it was a chance to stabilise his thoughts and attend to his health, in particular, his depression and anxiety. Aaron commented “I’m always on medication for depression and anxiety and I hadn’t had any medication for four days”.

Aaron lost his employment with the local council and this precipitated falling out with his uncle which led to his experience of homelessness. Aaron’s experience of homelessness was from being housed with his uncle in Dysart, to sleeping in his car in a park outside of Dysart. After a long weekend of sleeping in his car, Aaron tried desperately to access support via the hospital. While this process compounded the mental health issues that Aaron was struggling with, it was not the cause of his homelessness. Again, this confirms other research showing that mental health is not generally the cause of homelessness, but that it can be something which develops or becomes more severe during episodes of homelessness (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2011).

After being discharged from hospital under police escort, Aaron travelled to Moranbah where he continued his experience of homelessness before being assisted by a local specialist homelessness service who provided practical support and case management. They helped Aaron move into share accommodation with other young people. Aaron explained that after
staying with friends he was able to move into accommodation with other friends where he was a tenant, thereby ending his experience of homelessness. Aaron’s pathway into homelessness was characterised by a crisis of housing availability and limited formal and informal supports. Although his homelessness situation was resolved, Aaron discussed working closely with the local employment agencies to help him find work and how his immediate situation had been improved by obtaining a part-time job which helped to guarantee rent payments were made on time. Even though Aaron’s housing needs have been met, he remains vulnerable.

When John lost his accommodation at the private boarding house in Mackay he was referred to the homeless men’s hostel. Until John found himself homeless in Mackay, he did not know this service existed in Mackay. Nathan was also referred to the same homeless men’s hostel through networks he had formed while sleeping rough in Mackay. While John’s experience of homelessness had ended when he was successfully housed in a one-bedroom social housing property in Mackay from his period in crisis accommodation at the men’s hostel, Nathan’s experience of homelessness was ongoing. At the time of interview Nathan did not appear confident of obtaining social housing in Mackay and although workers from the local Men’s Crisis Accommodation Service confirmed they would continue to support Nathan to access housing, he did not feel confident that this would happen. Nathan’s disillusionment with the housing system stresses the point expressly made by Haslam-Mackenzie et al. (2009) that not only is housing unaffordable in resource communities, but that the supply of housing was often not suited to the needs of community members, in this case an inadequate supply of housing suited to single adults. Specialist homelessness services were crucial to Aaron, John and Nathan regarding the provision of vital accommodation and support services during their periods of homelessness and assistance to access suitable long-term housing.

Veronica was in a more isolated situation by having to persevere in a private accommodation situation. This arrangement involved overcrowding and lack of control over social spaces and this caused a great deal of stress to Veronica’s family and wellbeing. She struggled along in this arrangement for almost twelve months before being able to access alternative private rental housing. Veronica stated that she was not aware that there was a specialist homelessness service in the community that could assist her family and reflected that had she made contact with the service earlier, it would have been possible to obtain housing for her family much sooner.
6.3.3 Exits from homelessness: Access to share accommodation, social housing and private housing

Aaron, John and Veronica each had different housing outcomes which ended their experience of homelessness. Housing affordability issues in mining communities during periods of mining boom and downturn had a major influence on their experience of homelessness and ultimately on how long they remained homeless. The acute downward pressures of the supply of affordable housing during the period of boom meant that Veronica and her family remained in overcrowded housing with no other housing option until they were able to gather enough resources to access a housing option in the private housing market. Aaron was homeless and sleeping rough until he was able to be linked with some other young people where he could share accommodation.

Aaron’s pathway to housing was extreme, and is best described in his own words:

Aaron – When I was asked to leave the housing with my uncle, I lived in the car in Dysart for four days with no food. I’m also on medication for depression and anxiety so I hadn’t had any medication four days so I couldn’t think of anything. It was a long weekend, nothing’s open, making phone calls left right and centre. My phone went flat. I ended up going to the hospital. They gave me two nights there and they said to contact the homeless service in Moranbah. I also got some money from Centrelink. My Dad transferred money too, so because it was the Friday the money didn’t go into the Wednesday because it was a long weekend. ... I was going insane because I had nothing. I got to Moranbah and then they said there was no emergency housing for me. ... So, I was fretting a bit and I sold my Xbox to try and get a bit of money so I could get some food and sleep in my car or get a room. I was lucky enough that the people I met up through the Council, they let me stay at their house for the weekend. I then got paid again from Centrelink and I started looking for housing. I was lucky enough, there was three places where I could get a room for $160 a week. It was just a room, all furnished and everything which is good because I don’t have bond money. I don’t have anything. I don’t have fridges or anything like that so yeah. It is share accommodation, but I am in the process of applying for social housing.
All four of these experiences demonstrate what an inadequate supply of affordable housing does in placing community members in situations of homelessness in mining communities. The increased population and the provision of housing subsidies by mining companies to their workers served to inflate the general cost of housing in these communities further adding to the housing affordability crisis in mining communities during the boom. Landlords of private rental housing also capitalised in a market that responded to an increasing population of workers with high incomes. These dynamics had different impacts on different members of the community as noted in this service provider’s comment.

**GCSPI** – Wages went up, rents went up, rental agreements were renegotiated, and prices became too high. The trend forced people out at the bottom of the market. It started with single people then moved to families.

The increasing cost of housing in mining communities had an impact on people on low incomes placing these people at risk of homelessness. This included people in low paying non-mining related employment, people in part-time or casual employment and people on Centrelink benefits in low-cost housing or accommodation. The flow on effect also impacted on community composition and profile as mining communities simply became out of reach for people not employed in the industry during the boom. This confirms other research about the sociological implications of the mining boom on rural mining communities (Maidment & Bay, 2012; Scheltens & Morris, 2006). This critical housing affordability issue links to the structural dynamics of mining communities, in particular the loss of community culture and identity, as discussed in Chapter Five. While some participants identified that the boom had modernised their community, and in some ways helped to diversify the population in the community, the housing affordability conundrum in communities such as Dysart and Moranbah meant that these communities became even more of a “monoculture” with the mining industry pervading every aspect of community life. If people weren’t employed in the mining industry, they simply couldn’t afford to live there.

Client groups presenting to specialist homelessness services and community organisations providing human services were also an issue. Due to a lack of single unit dwellings in the private sector, the single people who were interviewed in this study tended to move to situations of share accommodation, in some cases greatly exceeding expectations for the size of the property. Single people could be seen by housing providers as being more flexible in relation to housing and accommodation. Aaron’s experience suggests this. Aaron was able to
move more easily to different accommodation. However, the impact for couples and families is more pronounced as exemplified in Veronica’s situation. In a family of six, their only option was to move into a three-bedroom property with a male relative.

6.3.5 Access to affordable housing
Access to affordable housing is critical when considering how any person comes to end their experience of homelessness. This research has highlighted the issues facing homeless people in mining communities to access affordable housing particularly in periods of economic boom. People who become unemployed are at particular risk of homelessness in mining communities during boom periods. As noted in Chapter Five, even some people who were employed and on reasonable incomes experienced homelessness in mining communities during the boom. This pathway shows that residents of mining communities who lose their employment are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

Single adult men who experience mental health issues who then become homeless, like Nathan and John, deal with a range of conflicting attitudes and societal responses which can impact their capacity to access housing and other supports. Research has highlighted the conflicting identities of homeless men and how these need to be understood in order to provide effective intervention (Roche, 2014). One Mackay-based service provider who works with many male clients reflected:

GCSPC – It’s the way our society is geared; it’s a market economy at the moment so if you are able to work and earn a living you can afford to look after yourself. A lot of the people with mental illness, what I see, they get on track for a while and they go well and they access employment and they are able to take care of themselves for a while, then once they do that these services are withdrawn from them because it is all about getting them into a state where they are able to look after themselves, so they no longer get the support and then they fall again.

The need for ongoing support after a crisis episode is apparent in this service provider’s responses as the risk of experiencing further episodes of ill health is paramount and this results in the person being at risk of homelessness or going on to experience homelessness.
This research confirmed that service providers tend to take a holistic service approach in assessing client needs that takes into account a person’s housing needs, and this then informs planning and intervention. Traditional approaches to responding to single adult men such as Nathan and John when they experience homelessness is reflected in what occurred for them. They were referred to the local men’s hostel. In Nathan’s case he had spent considerable time rough sleeping prior to accessing the men’s hostel and in between periods of accommodation at the men’s hostel. This raises the issue about whether a ‘Housing First’ approach to people experiencing homelessness such as John and Nathan would be a more viable and effective outcome. A service provider in this study was critical that the concept of housing first could be applied successfully to clients. This service provider works with homeless adult men and said:

**HSPC – Housing is not the issue. Seriously it is not the issue. People become homeless because of other things. You can always find a house to live in. But it is the capacity to maintain the house which is the issue. When you say homelessness, it is not about putting someone in a building. When I talk about rehabilitation from addiction, homelessness is the result of the problem. I personally think we have it wrong. I think we focus on homelessness services needing to be getting people off the street and into a building, and that is not where we are at all.**

This view would appear to conflict with the Housing First principle with the emphasis being on housing homeless people as soon as possible, without preconditions such as attending rehabilitation services (Tsemberis, 2004). Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart do not currently have new homelessness initiatives provided by the Queensland Government such as Street to Home services which embody the Housing First principle. This service provider comment is therefore interesting to analyse as she represents a community where there are no funded Housing First service delivery options happening for homeless people. Chapter Two described the two essential elements of the Housing First principle being the rapid housing of homeless people and the availability of “wrap around” supports aimed towards addressing issues within a person’s life that impact their ability to manage a tenancy (Tsemberis, 2004).

The complex, yet inextricable links between housing, general health, mental health and specialist alcohol and drug services, are clearly part of a contemporary and complete housing and homelessness service system response. This research has exposed just how ineffective
service systems can be in mining communities supporting large populations of typically male workers that do not have access to services that offer Housing First approaches. The supply of affordable housing is a major impediment in mining communities during the boom, however given the current period of mining downturn and improved availability of affordable housing, it does point towards the need for a Housing First response for people such as the four participants analysed in this pathway.

6.4 Pathway 3 – High vulnerability and access to services

Mining communities, like all communities, have community members who are highly vulnerable for a variety of reasons including age, ethnicity, disability, mental health status, background in statutory systems including child protection and criminal justice and people experiencing poverty. Research has stressed that these vulnerability factors place community members at heightened risk of homelessness (Johnson, et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2010). Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart are therefore places where people who are already vulnerable to homelessness face additional challenges and structural barriers. This research argues that the social and economic forces associated with the mining industry has compounded their vulnerability and for many has meant that they have gone from being at risk of homelessness, to experiencing homelessness, in many instances rough sleeping.

The third pathway to homelessness involved people who experienced significant social disadvantage and trauma from very early in life, and this pattern of trauma and disadvantage continued from the person’s transition to youth and into adulthood and resulted in the person being highly vulnerable to homelessness. The participants whose experience is reflected in this pathway have all endured chronic homelessness. In line with the approach take in this research, this pathway brings an explicit focus to the interplay of the structural drivers of homelessness in mining communities as discussed in Chapter Two, and individual biographical characteristics which combine to place this group of people at greater risk of homelessness than other community members (O’Flaherty, 2004; Johnson et al., 2008; 2015).

Jackson, Tracey and Frank have experienced this pathway. Jackson was a 21 year old from Mackay who has experienced chronic homelessness since 15. Tracey and Frank were a couple from Mackay who have experienced homelessness throughout their lives as single
people but now also as a couple. The lives of Jackson, Tracey and Frank have been characterised by considerable hardship, disadvantage and social exclusion. A snapshot of these respective pathways into homelessness follow.

**Jackson – Pathway into homelessness**

- Born in Western Sydney.
- Raised in Mackay, left school at 14 to start work and left home at 16 years of age. All family except his older brother relocated to Sydney.
- Jackson “couch-surfed” with friends and stayed with his older brother, but was asked to leave after three months.
- Accommodated at youth shelter and found a job as a car detailer.
- Jackson saved some money for bond on private housing unit and took up this option.
- After six months, Jackson left the tenancy for another unit.
- At 17 Jackson lost job and was unable to keep paying rent and was evicted.
- Jackson ‘couch-surfed’ with a friend who allowed him to stay for shorter periods.
- Jackson began sleeping rough in bushland. Jackson was considered “too old” to return to the youth shelter.
- Unable to afford housing in Mackay on youth allowance.
- At 20 and 21 Jackson accessed temporary accommodation at the homeless men’s hostel which allowed him to access food, health and accommodation services.
- Despite his name being on the social housing register, Jackson advised he is unlikely to obtain housing anytime soon. Jackson had not found a pathway out of homelessness.
- Jackson was experiencing chronic homelessness in Mackay at the time of interview.
Tracey – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness

- Tracey moved to Mackay as a child with her family.
- During her late teens formed a relationship and started to have a family in Mackay.
- Experienced extreme violence from former partner including being stabbed and having her jaw broken.
- Relationship ended, Tracey exploited by criminal people in Mackay including involving Tracey in drug dealing.
- Experiences of homelessness commenced with couch-surfing, temporary accommodation in emergency services and rough sleeping including in St Vincent de Paul clothes bins.
- Formed a relationship with Frank and after a further period of homelessness together were referred to local homeless service for families.
- Specialist homelessness service assisted Tracey and Frank to obtain a 2-bedroom social housing unit in Mackay.
- Although now housed, Tracey had experienced chronic homelessness in Mackay.

Frank – Pathway into homelessness and out of homelessness

- Frank raised in Mackay by family.
- Lost employment during his 20s and turned to drugs and crime and introduced to different experiences of homelessness including rough sleeping.
- Frank was incarcerated for criminal activities relating to drug dealing.
- On release from prison moved to the Gold Coast temporarily to couch-surf at a friend.
- Returned to Mackay and met Tracey through an ex-drug dealing associate. Decided that together they would support each other to stop drug use and to obtain housing.
- Experienced intermittent period of homelessness with Tracey before being referred to a specialist homelessness service.
- Specialist homelessness service assisted Tracey and Frank obtain a two-bedroom social housing unit in Mackay.
- Although now housed, Frank had chronic homelessness in Mackay.

The full impact of the trauma and disadvantage that Jackson, Tracey and Frank have experienced, will be analysed here focusing on crucial childhood and adolescence experiences; an early experience of homelessness that lead to chronic homelessness, the duration of their homelessness, and how they were able to access to affordable housing and
support services. In Tracey and Frank’s experience there are positive exits from homelessness, but at the time of interview Jackson was still residing in a men’s crisis accommodation service and therefore his experience of youth homelessness was ongoing. The interview with Jackson was filled with a sense of despair and hopelessness which will be explored carefully in this analysis.

Although Tracey and Frank were housed, their experience continues to reflect the need for ongoing support in order to maintain their housing and not be at risk of becoming homeless in the future (Button & Baulderstone, 2012). Without this ongoing support the vulnerability factors place them at greater risk of losing their housing and again experiencing homelessness. An analysis of homelessness prevention strategies will be discussed as a mitigating strategy in cases such as Tracey and Frank.

6.4.1 Trauma and disadvantage
Jackson’s story of survival in Mackay as a young homeless person reflects the elements that are so commonly associated with the pathway into youth homelessness, including family breakdown and withdrawing from education at an early age (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). In the six years since Jackson left his family home, his experiences have included share accommodation, having his own tenancy which has managed for periods of six to 12 months, couch-surfing at his brother’s place and with friends, periods in emergency accommodation in homeless services for youth and for adult men, and rough sleeping. Jackson did not elaborate on the reasons that he left home at 15 but it was evident that this was a major period of upheaval and conflict in his life. At the age of 21, he had spent approximately six years in situations of homelessness, one of the longest durations of homelessness of all participants in this study, representing approximately 25% of his life. Jackson’s experiences confirm existing research and literature that the longer young people experience homelessness, the greater social adaptation occurs and the harder it can be to end their experience of homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008a). Jackson did not talk at all about his birth parents during the course of the interview, despite being given opportunities to discuss family relationships. This is not unexpected given the trauma, disadvantage, shame and stigma that many people experiencing homelessness endure. As the interviewer I certainly did not push these boundaries during the interview.
Tracey and Frank’s background also reflect exposure to significant trauma and disadvantage. Tracey acknowledged her Aboriginal culture and heritage during the interview and that this had impacted her upbringing in Mackay, being part of a family with low income. Tracey was a victim of domestic and family violence which commenced as a child and appears to have continued well into her adulthood with different partners. Tracey’s extreme abuse and trauma is reflected in the following statement:

**Tracey** – The guy I was living with used to abuse me. I left him and was sleeping in a car for a while. I found out late that this guy had sexually abused my daughter. My ex-partner tried strangling my son when he was just seven. ... I have a broken jaw from previous physical abuse and it has had to be reconstructed. He also tried to stab me.

Tracey openly talked about the significant injuries and trauma that she experienced as a result of these assaults, and her ongoing difficulties accessing safe and secure housing in Mackay. Elements of her story reflect the struggle that women escaping domestic and family violence experience when leaving a violent relationship and access housing (Burnet, 2016; Spinney, 2014). I have elected to represent Tracey’s experience within this pathway, and not the earlier pathway that focused on family breakdown and domestic and family violence, because Tracey’s Aboriginality, gender, family background, low income, health and disability status, all contribute towards her high vulnerability to homelessness.

Frank discussed his working-class upbringing in Mackay and how he had had a fairly average childhood and upbringing. Frank identified his early involvement in drug related activity, initially as a drug user and subsequently as a drug dealer, which lead to his involvement with the criminal system and periods of time incarcerated. This episode of criminality in Frank’s life and subsequent incarceration, hindered his ability to be safely and securely housed. Frank discussed the difficulties obtaining employment and housing because of his criminal background:

**Frank** – I am on parole at the moment. They talk about all the jobs in mining and I thought there must be one for me. I ended up getting a card (authorising work on a mining site), it took me a while. It is hard getting anywhere if you are competing against 30 other blokes for a job and you don’t have a card. The BMA
The card was $800. The medical was $350. How are people on the dole expected to afford that?

Frank’s statement highlights the significant costs that are involved in people making applications for mining employment and how this can be a barrier for people on low incomes. Gokovic et al. (2012) identified that almost one third of all ex-prisoners are homeless after they leave prison. Frank’s incarceration was a major barrier in being able to obtain employment and housing on release from jail. This shapes his reflections on how he came to experience homelessness. Additionally, drug and alcohol misuse appear to have played their part in Frank’s experiences of offending and ultimately homelessness which is consistent with available research about the extent to which drug and alcohol misuse cause homelessness (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008b). His experiences as an ex-prisoner most certainly have impacted on his housing situation and ultimately on his experience of homelessness in Mackay as he described not being able to obtain various forms of housing until he was assisted by the local specialist homelessness service. This experience is consistent with research focusing on prisoners and homelessness (Gokovic et al., 2012) and the need for strong pre-release planning and case management support upon release from prison.

6.4.2 Early experiences of homelessness that lead to chronic homelessness

Jackson, Tracey and Frank each had early experiences of homelessness in life. For Jackson and Tracey this was as a child and adolescent and for Frank as a young adult. These early experiences of homelessness continued, and Jackson continued to find himself in a situation of homelessness. Jackson’s entry to homelessness reflects many of the features described in the literature regarding youth homelessness (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). Not only does Jackson’s entry to homelessness reflect the classic dynamics and estrangement from family and early departure from formal education, but his duration of homelessness is considerable. Of all twelve participants, Jackson’s duration of homelessness was the longest being in excess of five years and therefore meeting the definition of chronic homelessness. Jackson’s entry and experience of homelessness in Mackay has not been linear, as reflected in the passage below from his interview:

**Jackson** - I have been working since I was 14. I worked for about 4.5 years until I was 18. When I was 16 I had nowhere to live. That was the first time I was homeless – when I was 15 turning 16. I ended up staying at the youth shelter
down the street and got a job and saved up enough money for a bond. Then I got a house. I stayed at that house for a couple of months. Then I got a job at a better place and I was there for a week, but after a week the boss said we don’t need you anymore and I’m going to have to let you go. I was really upset about that. I was paying rent money on the house. He chose the other dude because there were two people working there – he chose the other guy because he had more qualifications and tools and a nice car. I didn’t have car or license.

SW – those things worked against you?

Jackson – After that I lost my house and I was back on the streets again. I was absolutely spewing and couldn’t find any work again. By the time I walked around weeks and weeks handing out my resume all my money had run out. I ran out of clothes and was all dirty sleeping on the streets again. No one wanted to hire.

Jackson’s experience of homelessness in Mackay was linked to the difficulties he had in obtaining and maintaining housing and employment. Some of these pressures were due to the competitive nature of the retail industry in Mackay but other pressures were brought about because of his dishevelled appearance and presentation to places of employment which was a consequence of not having a home.

Jackson also spent a great deal of time in different forms of homelessness including couch-surfing, emergency accommodation and sleeping rough in some of Mackay’s most unsafe public spaces. This is reflected in his quote below:

SW – so you were sleeping on the streets during that time when you were trying to find another job.

Jackson – I was sleeping on the streets while I was working trying to save up money to buy a house. You can’t work and live on the streets. You get too tired and dirty. Boss looks at you and notices that you are wearing the same clothes for days and days because you have no washing machine. Eventually I lost everything, my shoes and backpack. I had nothing and was living on Centrelink money. I would have to buy new clothes every week because I had nowhere to stay and I wasn’t old enough at that time to stay at the men’s hostel. I was pretty
much at Vinnies buying cheap clothes and spending as long as I could at a mate’s place as I didn’t want to sleep out in the open. Eventually it was just me and a sleeping bag underneath the fish market. It has been like that for 4 years now. This is where I come to eat (men’s hostel).

Jackson’s life story reflects a transition from youth to adult chronic homelessness. He was 21 years of age at the time of interview but his physical appearance and health issues including chest problems made him appear considerably older. As a young man in Mackay, outside the experience of the men’s hostel, Jackson had little hope of being able to be housed in Mackay. He did however maintain some hope of finding employment again.

Tracey and Frank have ended their experience of homelessness through being allocated a social housing property in Mackay but continue to receive some support from a Homestay Support service. This service is geared at providing early intervention in order to assist Frank and Tracey to maintain their tenancy and not be future at risk of homelessness. Tracey and Frank both value the support they receive from the service and acknowledge that without it they would very likely be experiencing homelessness again.

Jackson, Tracey and Frank each have had life experiences which meet the definition given for chronic homelessness. Their individual pathways into homelessness and experience of homelessness have been influenced by the nature of the mining boom on the community of Mackay as far as accessing employment and affordable housing. Most obviously, the availability and cost of housing has been prohibitive. Jackson stressed the problems he experienced trying to afford housing in Mackay particularly living on youth allowance, which is barely over $200 per week. At the height of the boom, which coincides with the late teenage years of Jackson’s life, he faced one struggle after the next to find a safe, affordable and secure housing option.

6.4.3 Duration of homelessness
The duration of homelessness for Jackson, Tracey and Frank is represented in Table 6.3 below. This group of participants have the longest duration of homelessness of all participants, with Jackson, as the youngest participant in this study, being homeless the longest.
Table 6.3. Pathway 3 - Duration of homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Duration of homelessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>In excess of five years (chronic homelessness) – initially couch-surfing at 15 years, repeated placement at youth shelters, several periods of maintaining a tenancy between 17 and 20, rough sleeping for greater than three months and at time of interview in men’s crisis accommodation (currently 21 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>In excess of two years (chronic homelessness) – early experiences of homelessness linked to her experience of domestic and family violence. Experienced couch-surfing, emergency accommodation and rough sleeping in St Vincent Clothes Bins. At time of interview supported in a one-bedroom social housing unit with her partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Greater than 12 months – Multiple episodes of homelessness which commenced from Frank was a young adult, including periods of rough sleeping and couch-surfing with friend on the Gold Coast after being released from prison; Found it hard to access housing as a single male released from prison, short episodes in boarding houses and emergency accommodation before forming a relationship with Tracey and accessing a one-bedroom social housing unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The duration of homelessness for Jackson, Tracey and Frank clearly meets the criteria of chronic homelessness, which is based on the definition of a person experiencing homelessness for greater than six months or multiple episodes of homelessness over a twelve-month period or more (Homelessness NSW, 2016). Jackson, Tracey and Frank also have some complex needs which is also a characteristic attributed to people experiencing chronic homelessness. Jackson’s situation shows a distinct lack of service level collaboration across service systems for him which is noted as an essential activity if the goal is to end chronic homelessness (Culhane & Byrne, 2010). Tracey’s and Frank’s situation shows some level of collaboration across service delivery systems, however, their situation requires ongoing support and coordination across agencies to safeguard them from re-entering homelessness.

In this pathway, all three participants’ experience and duration of homelessness has been affected by the influence of the mining industry on their communities. Jackson, Tracey and
Frank all emphasised the difficulties they experienced in accessing affordable housing in Mackay as well as accessing employment. The pressures on local services and infrastructure and changes in community culture, as discussed in the previous chapter, also impacted the participants in this pathway who were requiring access to a range of specialist health, mental health, housing and employment services. Jackson’s lengthy experience of homelessness in Mackay, altogether more than five years, and the fact he was only 21 years at time of interview, is evidence of the great difficulties that people with high vulnerability to homelessness face when trying to access services and support that will end their homelessness in mining communities during extended periods of boom. The opportunities for people with high vulnerability to homelessness to access affordable housing during period of downturn and consequential cheaper housing prices would appear to be much improved. This is contingent upon complementary access to support services, such as those Tracey and Frank accessed to help maintain their tenancy.

6.4.4 Exits from homelessness: Access to affordable housing and maintaining this housing with support

The dominant theme emerging is being able to access affordable housing and being able to maintain the housing. Jackson has experienced homelessness over a six-year period which has included different forms of homelessness. He has had share accommodation and also a single tenancy on at least one occasion which failed as a result of him losing his job and not having adequate income to maintain this tenancy. Jackson receives living away from home youth allowance which is approximately $210 per week ($10,920 per annum). With average private rental units for single bedroom or studio units in the Mackay area upwards of $250 per week ($13,000 per annum), private rental housing is out of reach. At the time of interview, Jackson confirmed that he has had his name down for social housing but because he is a single young male he is not prioritised in the social housing system. Social housing rental is generally applied at a 30% of tenant’s income hence this would equate to approximately $63 per week for Jackson which would be affordable if only he was able to access this form of housing.

Jackson is a young homeless man and a regular service user of the adult Homeless Men’s hostel in Mackay. Men’s hostels generally cater for adult men between the ages of 18 to 65. Jackson is 21 and is trying to find opportunity to access employment which is central to being able to obtain and maintain housing in Mackay during the boom and, to a lesser extent,
downturn periods. Some youth services in town have tried to help but this assistance is more practical and in the form of safe storage of personal items and collection of mail services. Jackson expressed hope that support workers connected to the few homelessness services he has come to know well, will help him access social housing one day. He realises that his only hope of accessing housing and being able to maintain this housing and build a positive future is very much connected to the relationship he has formed with workers in homelessness services and his ability to access employment. Despite his experiences, Jackson is clear that staying in Mackay will provide the best opportunities for him to be housed, access employment, and build a life.

Tracey and Frank are joint tenants of a social housing property in South Mackay. The social housing property where they are tenants is old and very basic and has a range of property maintenance problems. Tracey complains about the water dampness in the property and the general coldness and how this adversely impacts on her overall health. Tracey and Frank continue to receive some support from the local homelessness service which provides an early intervention response to people at risk of homelessness. Without this support Tracey and Frank are very much at risk of homelessness as they could be evicted from their housing for failing to meet obligations of the tenancy.

6.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored three distinct pathways for people experiencing homelessness in the mining communities of Dysart Moranbah and the larger regional centre of Mackay. The first pathway focused on those women who had experienced homelessness as a result of family breakdown and domestic violence. This pathway included the accounts of Susan, Christine who experienced family and relationship breakdown in Mackay, Michelle who experienced family breakdown in Moranbah, and Ruth and Kaylene who experienced severe domestic and family violence in Dysart. Family breakdown and domestic violence are well established in research regarding their propensity to contribute towards homelessness but the experience in mining communities during periods of mining boom were was exacerbated by a range of pressures including relationship stress and pressure associated with the mining community culture and environment, the lack of informal and formal support available to
people and the lack of affordable housing and general high cost of living in mining communities.

The second pathway focussed on unemployment and housing affordability. Veronica and her family experienced homelessness when her partner was made unemployed and they lost their company provided housing. Aaron became homeless when he lost his job with the local council and his uncle asked him to leave the share accommodation. John and Nathan were men employed in the mining industry but who lost this employment in a period coinciding with the mining downturn. Both men experienced other major personal events including major health concerns and the death of a family member at this time which led to their experience of homelessness in Mackay. This pathway shows the impact that the mining downturn can have on not only the loss of employment but also other structural factors impacting homelessness in mining communities, which then has a major bearing on people experiencing homelessness in mining communities.

The third pathway considered those who are highly vulnerable to homelessness because of personal background and individual characteristics and inability access appropriate services. This pathway was represented by the experiences of Jackson, Tracey and Frank all of whom reside in Mackay. Jackson’s pathway in homelessness in Mackay is not dissimilar to other accounts of youth homelessness: withdrawal from education at an early age, family breakdown and an inability to access affordable housing. Jackson’s story is unique as he has survived as a homeless person in Mackay including experiencing rough sleeping on the bank of the Pioneer River in Mackay during the period of the boom. Tracey and Frank’s background including Tracey’s experience of domestic violence and physical and mental health concerns, and Frank’s background in prison, place them at greater risk of homelessness. Their experience of overcoming homelessness coincides with the mining downturn period in Mackay and the considerable pressures to access affordable housing and support services.

This chapter has analysed the experiences of 12 people who have experienced homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. Nine of these people were able to access housing and support services which ended their experience of homeless. For three of the participants, Kaylene, Jackson and Nathan, their experience of homelessness continued at the time this research was undertaken. A fourth, Ruth, was marginally housed. These three pathways
represent and analyse the particular structural challenges that people experiencing homelessness and who are at risk of homeless in mining communities face during periods of mining boom and mining downturn. Understanding pathways of people to, and out of, homelessness in mining communities and how these pathways differ from existing research explanations about such pathways helps to plan and more effectively respond to people who are at risk of homelessness in the communities, and people who are actually experiencing homelessness.
Chapter 7: Looking to the future: Prevention, early intervention and reduction of homelessness in mining communities

7.1 Chapter introduction

Analysis based on indicators of homelessness discussed in previous chapters has confirmed the mining industry in both the boom and downturn phases, has substantially contributed to homelessness in the communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. The impact of homelessness on respondents has been varied, with some respondents advising that homelessness had a pervasive and long-lasting impact on their lives, and for others, their episode of homelessness was relatively short term.

The main contextual factors associated with the mining cycle review in Chapter Five forced many community members into situations of homelessness. Appendix E sets out the number of people assisted by specialist homelessness services in Mackay local government area and shows an interesting pattern of total number of people assisted by specialist homelessness services (SHS). A total of 1,993 people was assisted by SHS in 2011-12 which coincided with the tail end of the boom and the figure further reduced to 1,685 people assisted by SHS in 2013-14. This is a reduction of 15.5% in a two-year period. However, the total number of people assisted increases to 2,035 in 2015-16 which is a 20.8% increase in numbers of people assisted by SHS on the 2013-14 figure (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016a).

As previously mentioned in this thesis, the same data for the Isaac local government area was not available due to confidentiality provisions associated with this data collection. Clearly more analysis is required to understand the implications of the mining cycle on rates of homelessness in mining communities. This research has clearly identified the need for much greater effort in homelessness prevention and early intervention strategies in mining communities and the need to more directly address the provision of affordable housing in mining communities during the mining boom.

Chapter Five analysed the structural factors which contributed to people experiencing homelessness in these communities during the boom and downturn. This chapter accentuated the significant social and economic effects the boom had on these communities, in particular the implications for opportunities for wealth creation; high demand for services and
Chapter Six analysed the pathways to and out of homelessness for the 12 participants interviewed for this study, supported by evidence from other community participants. Nine of these participants had ended their experience of homelessness at the time of interview and three participants remained homeless. Three broad pathways were identified that reflected characteristics and contextual factors unique to the experiences of homeless people in mining communities. The pathways were: (1) relationship and family breakdown and domestic and family violence, (2) unemployment and housing affordability, and (3) high vulnerability and access to services. While a wealth of literature and research exists about these pathways, much of this work has been based on the experiences of homeless people in large cities and urban areas. The identification of these pathways as being significant to mining communities both challenge and add to our understanding of homelessness in the context of experiences of people moving to and living in mining communities during the mining boom and downturn period.

This chapter will focus on how homelessness could be prevented and reduced in mining communities from the perspectives of those interviewed. Prevention, early intervention and reduction are commonly used terms in homelessness research and policy discourse (Johnson, Parkinson & Parsell, 2012; Johnson et al., 2015; Netto, Pawson & Sharp, 2009), and the application of these terms will be analysed as part of the policy responses to homelessness in mining communities. This analysis provides additional evidence to position rural and regional mining communities to better address the challenges of homelessness in future phases of the mining cycle. This chapter considers homelessness trends throughout the mining cycle, quality social planning processes and the need for flexible and agile housing policy designed to address affordability, supply and demand issues. This chapter will also recognise the vital role played by non-government organisations delivering specialist homelessness services in mining communities, and the respective roles of the local community, government and mining companies in affecting such change.
7.2 Locating the mining cycle and homelessness in mining communities

This analysis argues it is fundamental to future community planning to be able to distinguish the different homelessness trends that occur in mining communities throughout the mining cycle. This study has presented the evidence regarding the increasing numbers of homeless people in the Mackay and Isaac regions during the mining boom period, noting some statistical evidence showing a reduction in the rate of homelessness in the Isaac region towards the end of the boom period in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a; Wood et al., 2016). As of 2011, Mackay continued to have a higher rate of homelessness compared with the national average, whereas the Isaac region had fallen below the national average. The research has also gathered evidence from specialist homelessness services and other generic community agencies operating in mining communities which highlights how these smaller rural-based services were at capacity, in many cases over capacity during much of the mining boom period and for periods subsequent to the boom. Although hard to verify on a statistical basis until the results of the Australian 2016 Census are published (anticipated towards the end of 2017), there is an acceptance that the housing and homelessness crisis which characterised mining communities throughout the mining boom period has now subsided. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that it remains important to discuss the effects of the change in housing affordability in mining communities throughout the mining cycle.

Chapter Five confirmed that the mining boom saw housing affordability considerably reduced across the three mining communities central to this study. For many community members there was simply no affordable housing in these communities with rents being extremely high due to the inflationary pressures of the mining boom housing market. Occupancy rates of housing were reported to be at 100% and there was significant competition and demand for housing as it became available. The mining downturn phase has seen a turnaround in this situation with private rental housing becoming more affordable and available and social housing becoming more available (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2016a; 2016b). The supply of affordable housing in mining communities has improved and this is to the advantage of people who are at risk of homelessness, or who are experiencing homelessness and needing to access safe, secure and affordable housing.

Access to affordable housing remains a key component of successful intervention with people experiencing homelessness, and the success of such interventions also depends on a range of
factors including access to employment, health and community services, social and community supports (Bay & Jenkins, 2012; Cheers, 1998; Haslam-Mackenzie, 2009). Such support services also need to target the ability of tenants to sustain their tenancies, and this needs to be considered as different client groups have different needs (Jones et al., 2003). The future of the mining industry remains uncertain as the international price of coal is reduced and the export demand lessens, making it difficult to determine whether, if at all, another boom period is approaching (Edwards, 2014; Hetherington, 2015). The current environment of the mining downturn draws attention to the possibilities to end homelessness in these communities with the improved access to affordable housing. Access to affordable housing for people on low incomes who are vulnerable is a critical element to preventing and ending homelessness for people in mining communities.

Prevention and early intervention strategies are particularly relevant in responding to homelessness in mining communities. Chapter Two analysed how prevention and early intervention are relatively new concepts in homelessness policy discourse. Initiatives such as Homestay Support Services and Rent Connect services are good examples of prevention and early intervention responses to homelessness, as they target assistance to people who are housed, but without support may lose their housing and become homeless (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008; Department of Housing and Public Works, 2016). Prevention and early intervention in homelessness responses in mining communities is a complex matter as access to housing for so many community members was next to impossible during the boom. As participants pointed out, people in private rental housing experienced considerable increases in their weekly rental payments during the boom which made maintaining their housing challenging. It becomes difficult to evaluate the potential effectiveness of existing early intervention initiatives such as Homestay Support and Rent Connect if the dominant issue in mining communities is a lack of affordable housing.

Prevention and early intervention strategies target the population of the community at risk of homelessness, and this population remains hard to identify and quantify (Wood et al., 2015). The first two pathways describe those identified as being at risk of homelessness after major life events have occurred (i.e., incidents of relationship and family breakdown, domestic and family violence, unable to obtain employment/loss of employment and lack of access to affordable housing). Participants identified with the second pathway, Veronica, John, Aaron

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and Nathan, had relatively short periods of time in their life being at risk of homelessness, before quite suddenly experiencing homelessness in mining communities. This thesis has identified the critical challenge of providing timely responses to people who are at risk of homelessness in mining communities. Prevention and early intervention strategies in mining communities need to activate housing assistance and other supports as soon as people become at risk of homelessness, be that through a family breakdown, loss of job or other major life event.

The application of prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce homelessness in mining communities is likely to be very effective for people experiencing the third pathway to homelessness. These are vulnerable people who may require access to housing but are also likely to require support to sustain this housing (Jones et al., 2003). The nature of the vulnerability can vary, and include factors such as youth, age, mental health concerns, physical health concerns and previous or chronic experiences of homelessness. Service providers work with the local schools and other agencies to engage with the person and determine whether services and support is required. This research confirmed that service providers do work in a preventative manner with client groups at risk of homelessness, however for most service providers, most resources were directed towards crisis intervention responses. Apicello (2010) suggests that homelessness prevention strategies are most successful when the approach of targeting high-risk populations at individual client level is combined with low cost, affordable housing and access to income support and or employment. This resonates for people with vulnerability to homelessness in mining communities. Prevention and early intervention strategies will require a whole of service system approach if we are to succeed in preventing and reducing homelessness in mining communities.

Other efforts to reduce homelessness in mining communities have concentrated on those people who are experiencing homelessness by way of decreasing the amount of time these people remain homeless. The research found that these efforts largely focused on the services provided by seven non-government organisations that deliver eight specialist homelessness services in the Mackay and Isaac region and other community organisations and networks. Non-government organisations funded to deliver specialist homelessness services provide access, support, and/or supported accommodation and housing services based on case management approaches designed to assist access to housing and to be able to maintain this
housing. They also work to build skills for self-reliance and independence (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2015). All of the specialist homelessness services in this study, except for the Homestay Support service in Mackay, respond to people who are homeless, whereas the Homestay Support service targets people who are housed, but without support could face eviction and homelessness. The mix of services and strategies providing prevention and early intervention and crisis responses needs to be flexible and vary according to shifting patterns of community need throughout the mining cycle.

Two examples of community driven initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness in Mackay were the local Homelessness Community Action Plan and the efforts of a group of locals to establish a Drop in Centre for homeless people. These two examples suggest a strategic approach to reducing homelessness in the region, but also a practical way in which a service can support people. Moranbah and Dysart also have community networks and events aimed at building the profile of the risk of homelessness. Their efforts have concentrated on women and children who are homeless escaping domestic and family violence and/or young people. Despite these endeavours by non-government organisations and other community partners, the research has found that successfully dealing with the challenges associated with homelessness throughout the mining cycle in these communities requires coherent planning and policy responses across all levels of government and the mining and human services industries.

To explore the future in more detail, during interviews I asked all participants at the conclusion a hypothetical question. The question was aimed at eliciting feedback about what effects the mining downturn would have on homelessness in mining communities in the longer term. This question was timed in response to widespread media publicity at the time on the effects of the mining downturn in the Mackay region in 2013 and 2014.
The question I asked participants was:

In the event that mining companies suddenly announced that they would withdraw operation from local communities, what impact would this have on local homeless people?

The responses were quite poignant and were grounded in what was the current reality of the mining downturn already having substantial effects on the region. Community service providers and homelessness service providers were reflective and apprehensive about the implications of the downturn for the communities and ultimately any loss of the mining industry to the region:

**GCSPD** – We are already there (at the downturn). An example of this is what is happening in Dysart, Moranbah and Emerald, as mines have slowed down or stopped. Some have reduced operations. We already have social housing properties in Moranbah we cannot fill. The Isaac Affordable Housing Trust has NRAS properties and the department (Housing) has given them on peppercorn rents which they cannot fill in Clermont and Moranbah. The mining companies keep talking with our property section about handing back properties because they want to get out of housing full stop. They don’t want to have subsidised housing for staff out there.

**HSPD** – With the experience of the bust that we are now going through, the culture and atmosphere change even for people in public housing moved, even though they weren’t in mining employment. The sinking ship mentality. We lost lots of old timers who had played the system. It does trickle down.

These two statements indicate the question I asked was not interpreted as being a hypothetical, but rather reflecting the current circumstances and concerns of residents of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. Their responses were pessimistic about what loss of the mining industry would mean for the communities.

Homeless and formerly homeless participants also reflected this sentiment as noted by Michelle as a Moranbah-based participant:

**Michelle** – I don’t think it is hypothetical because it is happening now. Definitely the community is driven by mining, so if the mining companies left the services
wouldn’t be as good as they are now, most families would leave, and that is difficult for everyone left behind. It would be a ghost town in comparison to what it is now.

Other participants also noted that the overall negative impact for the region and that it would reduce community prosperity and wellbeing and that for Dysart and Moranbah in particular, could leave them as ‘ghost towns’.

There were some responses from Mackay participants that noted the negative and positive impacts the loss of the mining industry to the region would have for those who were homeless and were experiencing hardship.

**Christine** – A lot of people would move out of Mackay. The FIFO workers would come home on weekends, but it would empty the place out a lot. It would probably lead to the real estate agents dropping house prices. When I went for a rental last year when it was really booming, there were over nine people who came to look at the property over two days and it was only just put on the market. In what we have just come through you had to have the best application with best references otherwise you were no chance.

A reduction in population and a commensurate reduction in housing demand could generate some positive spin offs for housing affordability.

Three of those interviewed reflected that mining companies withdrawing from the region may result in some housing opportunities for homeless people:

**Jackson** – There would be more housing, the housing commission would free up and people on the waiting list would be put through. Some people abuse the housing commission – they have plenty of money but still living in housing commission. They don’t really need housing commission and some poor bugger down the street is still living under the fish market. Some people who are married or are single parents are housed quickly. Single males have the longest waiting periods. You have to be patient. It is about four years just to get a vacancy. We are the last priority.
Nathan – A lot of people would move from Mackay onto what they would think are greener pastures. Even all this infrastructure would not be needed. There would be more opportunity for someone like me to find accommodation.

Veronica – when there is less people in the town it would make private rental more affordable. When there is less demand … it might mean that housing becomes more affordable for homeless people.

Jackson, Nathan and Veronica could foresee some potential benefits of the mining companies withdrawing from the region and the general mining downturn with more availability of housing and more affordable housing. The availability of more affordability housing would potentially offset some of the challenges brought about by the mining downturn including loss of potential employment, some loss of businesses and services within the community and other issues associated with financial stress. This discussion links to the themes identified in Chapter Five regarding the boom and downturn. While improved housing affordability is an advantage of the downturn, the combined effects of considerable loss of employment across the region and ongoing economic and community uncertainty also affect opportunities for homeless people. This finding sits comfortably with the approach taken by O’Flaherty (2004) in that homelessness is not homogenous and can be very difficult to predict.

7.3 Robust social planning and policy processes that address the full life of the mining cycle

This thesis has discussed the considerable social and economic changes that swept through Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart as the mining boom gained momentum and how under-prepared these communities were to deal with these social and economic challenges. Many participants remarked on how governments and all areas of community were slow in responding to these challenges including the supply of housing affordability but also importantly, in ensuring the provision of adequate social and community services and community infrastructure. For many, the boom phase corresponded with the construction phase of mining (Cleary, 2011). Once the construction phase had concluded, and mining operations had transitioned to a maintenance phase, the industry and broader community had to adjust to the post-construction operations phase of mining:
**CRC** – In the last six or seven years there’s been many thousands of people employed on construction of the new mines. Now the construction is all finished and the mines are producing coal, so there’s always a greater number on construction. But they were the ones living 15 to 20 to a three or four-bedroom house. They are also in the camps, so the fact construction is now finished and they are into production where they use a lot less people. But during the construction periods, that’s when the political decisions created the squeeze in accommodation and forced a lot of families out of town. Good people.

This response shows the total lack of preparation in the community for the influx of workers that occurred in during the construction phase of new mines which was part of the boom period.

Participants believed that policy responses to the mining boom period were slow, and in many instances a case of “too little too late”. There was a strong theme that emerged of how hardly any agreed learning had been taken from the recent boom about how to better manage future booms. The need to plan housing and homelessness responses in mining communities to cater for the dynamics of the mining cycle is supported by international studies of homelessness that found the need to identify the need to develop policy and planning responses to address the needs of homeless people as a constituency (Takahashi, 1996; Crane & Takakhashi, 1998). A piece meal, reactive policy response to homelessness in mining communities during periods of acute housing crisis was not viewed as a long-term solution.

Some of those interviewed were long-term community members and could remember the transition from boom to bust in the past, and had accepted that the current mining downturn phase was “part and parcel” of living in a mining community. The smaller communities of Dysart and Moranbah remain vulnerable to the mining cycle as their future is dependent on the future of the industry, and this is reflected in the demographic and industry data of these communities reviewed in Chapter Three. Mackay, as a larger coastal regional community supported by a broader range of industry and business, is also feeling the impact of the downturn, significant of social, economic and community wellbeing. It is in this context it is no wonder that community members of mining communities have sought an overhaul of their local governance and demonstrated their intent to seize any opportunity to influence their relationship with all levels of government through a “new regionalism” (Brown & Bellamy,
As discussed in Chapter Three, new regionalism places emphasis on promoting economic initiatives including the mining and resource sector and encouraging the embeddedness of global companies within regions and new relationships between regions and government (Smyth et al., 2005). The ongoing conjecture surrounding future mining approvals in the Bowen Basin region and neighbouring areas, continues to highlight the need for social planning and policy processes that can deal with the challenges of the mining cycle and their impact on mining communities in more timely ways.

A Moranbah participant exemplified this concern:

CRC – I see this morning that the Director-General and Mr Seeney have approved the go ahead of the Carmichael coal project. This project is some 140 kilometres north west of Clermont. It will be the biggest coal mine in Australia and probably the world. $16 Billion to establish it.

Clermont is a small rural mining community also within the Bowen Basin region, which will become the neighbouring community to support the proposed new Adani Carmichael coal mine. During this research the Carmichael Coal mine was subject to further political interest and further government assessment and approval processes when the Queensland Government changed after the January 2015 election. Further environmental assessments were carried out before the new Labor Government approved the Carmichael coal mine to proceed in 2016. Media interest included a headline on Monday 29 August 2016 “Greg Hunt’s approval of Adani’s Queensland mine upheld by Federal Court” (Robertson, 2016) and a subsequent ABC online article on 5 December 2016 “Adani Coal mine project: Queensland Government approves rail line and camp as protestors rally in Melbourne” (Longbottom, 2016). This major mining project highlights the controversies about the impact of mining on the environment and rural and regional communities. The Adani Carmichael coal mine continues to be the subject of fierce political debate at the time of writing this thesis, and ongoing negotiations between the Queensland Government and the Indian company Adani over the company’s financial contribution to the project and the royalties (Elks, 2017). The political stakes are high in the ongoing debate about the new coal mines. This research confirms that Queensland is polarised about the benefits of coal mining to the State.
The ongoing conjecture about the future of coal mining within the state raises the important issue of how rural and regional mining communities can be better positioned to address the challenges of the mining boom and downturn cycle in the years ahead. While there have been efforts to undertake appropriate social and environmental approvals for new mining projects, such processes do not appear to have adequately accounted for the significant demand on housing issues much less any insight or preparation to address homelessness in these communities (Ivanova et al., 2007).

Participants also noted that it is vital that long-term social, economic, housing and infrastructure plans for mining communities are developed as a matter of priority for communities in mining regions. A Moranbah-based participant made the following observation of the need for more robust planning processes:

**GCSPE** – It is like preparedness on both ends. Not only the end user but the housing market here. The housing here simply did not match the demand for the required work force. There were opportunities for companies. ... people needed to understand there is a huge change in environments moving from Brisbane to Moranbah. Not understanding how country towns operate. ... Little town, a country town under the great strains of a resource boom. There were no systems in place to soften the blow or make the blow more reasonable. The processes had been put in place to deal with this after the horses had bolted. They were slow to happen. Projects that were put in place to address housing now had created an oversupply of housing for the downturn period.

This response demonstrates the need for different sectors and government to engage more openly in dialogue that will improve the position of the community to deal with similar challenges in future phases of the mining cycle. As one Dysart service provider poignantly observed, there is no shortage of issues which require concerted planning responses:

**HSPE** – I think the first step is to look locally when allocating housing. We need a little more flexibility with conditions compared to other towns. For instance, for people who are on the edge of earning this much money per year, they are not going to meet certain housing criteria but they need to find something more permanent. I think emergency funding would also help our service and be able to respond to people more quickly. I think the big thing in Dysart is that
Homelessness does not appear to be a problem to anyone because (homeless) people get up and leave when the situation occurs as quickly as they can. That doesn’t help our community because if they are people that could be retained in our community then affordable housing and employment would keep them here.

The issues raised by this participant require focused collaboration and substantial policy work in order to achieve improved community outcomes in future phases of the mining cycle. The needs of rural and regional mining communities must be considered over the full life of the mining project, not just at the initial approval and construction phase. The findings here support other community-based studies involving mining communities which call for more robust social planning and policy responses to become a part of initial and ongoing approval processes (Browne et al., 2011).

This research has found that the mining cycle has left the Mackay and Isaac regions fractured and fragmented, thereby increasing the challenges for human service providers. This dynamic has particularly influenced the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community network. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service provider participant from Mackay pointed out that the following dynamics were present when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people sought support from various social and community services including housing and homelessness services:

**GCSPA** – We are fractured, very fractured and I am certain we need to build stronger communities and strengths in communities. At the moment, with the way the community operates we are still going to have homelessness and we are going to continue to contribute to homelessness. One of the other aspects of the ‘silos’ is old feuds between organisations. If you go to this organisation you can’t go to another organisation because there are two opposing families. If you have health and housing needs, you have to choose: is it your health or your housing? There is no integration of services.

This remark confirms the particular challenges facing organisations providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mining communities and highlights how the boom contributed to further divisions within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Mackay. Although a small sample, evidence provided by the two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants suggested that the boom did not produce any benefits.
for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The evidence available to this study shows that the increasing inequality within mining communities that defined the mining boom period was reflected also within cultural groups within these communities (Langton, 2015). The social and economic challenges associated with the boom need to inform future planning activities and processes so that ground up solutions to such challenges can be readily implemented in a way that does not cause fractured or fragmenting of relations.

Planning processes are critical to ensuring that the best possible strategies are enacted to deal with the challenges of the mining cycle, particularly as they relate to homelessness. These processes need to gather the evidence to inform policy development and implementation. The importance of community-based planning addressing the nexus of capital funding for the construction of properties in communities and funding for support services remains an ongoing challenge for housing policy in rural and regional mining communities. This policy development work needs to recognise the mobility of populations both into and out of rural and regional mining communities across the mining cycle (Milbourne, 2014; Milbourne & Kitchen, 2014) and provide flexible and enduring housing responses.

7.4 Housing policy to address affordability, supply and demand

This thesis has argued, from the evidence reviewed, that future housing policy needs to address the challenges of homelessness in mining communities. Housing policy also needs to be more focused on how housing remains critical to the future of mining communities, and that having effective housing policy works to reduce social exclusion and many associated social issues experienced in rural and regional communities (Beer et al., 2011; Cheers, 1998; Hulse, Jacobs, Arthusron, & Spinney, 2011). Those interviewed were consistent in their feedback that the provision of affordable housing in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah should be a feature of any future housing policy and be flexible enough to cater for the phases of the mining cycle. The evidence reviewed in this study shows that there was limited supply and high demand for private and social housing in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah during the boom and there were very few strategies that were implemented which successfully dealt with this challenge at the time.
The interlinked issues of housing supply and housing affordability in mining communities need to be better addressed in housing policy. The policy settings underpinning housing policy need to cater for the mining boom peaks and downturns of the mining cycle. Housing stress in mining communities is similar to other urban and metropolitan areas in Australia and overseas in that severe housing stress is concentrated amongst those people with low levels of income (Liu & Roberts, 2013; Yates, Randolph, & Holloway, 2006). The major point of difference is that there are a lot more people experiencing housing stress during the mining boom. Improving responses to homelessness in mining communities is contingent upon there being adequate affordable housing solutions for all community members. Participants overwhelmingly expressed the frustration at the lack of cooperation between private and public housing sectors, inadequate coordination across different levels of government and affordable housing not having priority policy attention. This need for improved policy that provides more flexibility in the provision of housing in mining communities is consistent with other major studies on housing supply and affordability in Australian communities (Eardley & Flaxman, 2012; Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2009). Housing policy settings need to be agile enough to shift from the need to build more dwelling and increase supply of affordable housing during the mining boom, to better utilisation of existing social housing and access to affordable private housing during periods of downturn.

Participants identified a range of community initiatives and proposals that were developed during the mining boom to address housing supply and affordability issues which required policy support but failed to receive such support from government. The construction of new dwellings in Moranbah seemed an obvious solution to the housing crises during the boom, and there were efforts by locals to build more properties to cater for the growing population. One Moranbah-based participant noted how local communities were stifled in their attempts to put forward preventative solutions to address housing challenges:

**SW** – How could housing affordability in Moranbah been better managed during the period of the mining boom?

**CRC** – Exactly what should have happened in 2005 … I only spoke up because of my role within the community. I was not involved financially (in the housing affordability project) but mate, that was going to be so fantastic for our community. These were private developers, no government money that had put
four years of work into putting this all together. It matched and met all town planning procedures.

SW – It had local government approval?

CRC – It was approved by the Belyando Shire Council … politicians at state government level interfered and just tore up the town plan. The politician stood up at the time and said there was no town planning. That’s what they said about it and that is why they put ULDA (Urban Land Development Authority) in here …

Up to another 4,000 properties were to be built in a timeframe before the boom really hit.

This reflection highlights some of the anger and mistrust local community members have towards representatives of Government who they believe have sided with powerful international mining companies ahead of the local community. There was a view that proposals put forward by the local community to deal with housing related challenges in mining communities, were discounted because the mining companies have much greater influence with government policy makers. Participants also commented on their experience of the need to have a mixture of housing solutions that cater for all community members. In addition to affordable housing solutions, it was discussed that temporary accommodation is required for some people who are experiencing homelessness and who are in crisis in mining communities, single men and women and families. This reinforces the notion that reducing homelessness in mining communities cannot be a one size fits all approach.

From the interviews and focus groups it was evident that housing policy needs to centre on the interrelationship between the housing market and the labour market. The interaction between the housing market and the labour market in mining communities remains a structural issue that influences rates of homelessness in mining communities during periods of mining boom and downturn (Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2008). Although in periods of mining downturn there is a reduction in house prices, this generally comes at the price of a person’s employment, or as a significant hit to an individual or family’s wealth and personal debt if they had purchased a home at the height of the mining boom only to see house prices drop substantially and into negative equity.
It is acknowledged that predicting future commodity prices is by no means a perfect science. All levels of government and industry need to be able to reasonably predict the cycles of mining activity and plan for impacts on local mining communities. Investing in housing in rural and regional communities can be viewed as an expensive exercise for government or private industry particularly if the mining-related profits are not realised. Housing policy needs to be able to address this risk through mitigation approaches. However, given the volatility of world economy and mineral markets, this remains a challenge but the evidence from this research shows that investment in supply of housing in mining communities is necessary and does lead to better economic and community outcomes in the longer term and multiples phases of the mining cycle.

This research has also exposed the essential need for the housing sector to respond rapidly to changes brought about by the mining cycle. More detailed forward planning by governments and the industry about housing affordability issues and responses is needed. The current mining downturn phase appears an appropriate time for such policy work to be undertaken. This would prepare mining communities for the “turbo charged” economic environment that is likely to occur when the next mining boom impacts the region given the reliance upon coal as an energy source.

### 7.5 Roles and responsibilities of specialist homelessness services, local, state and federal government and mining companies

The role of specialist homelessness services operating in mining communities in conjunction with other community services and informal networks is pivotal to understanding the ways in which homelessness can be prevented and reduced in these communities. The specialist homelessness services have an important history of operating in their communities for many years, in some cases from the 1970s when there was initial investment in homelessness services at Commonwealth and state level. These services are perceived by the community as being the “one stop shop” for assistance and advice about homelessness, and widely recognised places of social care (Conradson, 2003a). The research found that this sense of community embeddedness and deep connection to the community is an important part of the motivation and commitment demonstrated by these organisations to supporting homeless
people. This connection to community was a reason why each of these participants was so determined to see housing outcomes achieved for the clients of their respective services.

One Mackay-based service provider noted the changes in service delivery over this thirty-year period and how that service felt constrained by original funding allocations and infrastructure.

**HSPJ** – Our service is 30 years old and there has been no increase or modification in the building. This means there hasn’t been any increase in the number of clients you can accept. This is a real issue because the population has changed. Everything has changed, but this is the only domestic violence shelter in our community and we receive quite a lot of women from mining communities.

These specialist homelessness services have been at the centre of responding to homelessness in Dysart, Moranbah and Mackay throughout the mining cycle. Most of these services provide temporary supported accommodation and support services with one service based in Mackay providing the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) Homestay Support initiative which is an early intervention response to homelessness. The funding and resources allocated to these services have been, and continue to be, stretched in responding to homeless people and providing effective services and interventions.

Each service responds to a particular client group and is funded to deliver a service delivery model that provides access, support and/or supported accommodation to people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness. Most commonly people present to a service at a point of crisis which was the experience for each of the 12 people who were participants in this study. The research found that the services aim to provide a contemporary human service response to their clients as one service provider put it:

**HSPD** – Every situation and person is different. We provide a case management plan for everybody who presents to our service. It is a matter of assessing and prioritising according to need.

The specialist homelessness service in Dysart has a particular focus on women and children escaping domestic and family violence and young people. The Moranbah service works with all clients including young people, women and children escaping domestic violence, families and single adults. In Mackay the services tend to have more specialist focus on particular
client groups ranging from young people, single adults, families and women and children escaping domestic and family violence. This research concludes that more discussion and focus needs to shift towards early intervention models and affordable housing options, and how these could address the structural drivers of homelessness in mining communities given the recent experiences during the boom/bust cycle (Johnson et al., 2008; 2015; Yates et al., 2006).

The research found that there was much distrust and even some contempt for sectors of the mining industry and also some areas of government that had betrayed the faith of the community. One Moranbah participant expressed this frustration in the following manner:

**HSPF –** I do believe under the international charter of human rights we have a charter to provide housing and address the homeless situation, but I believe that no government, left or right, even come close. What concerns me at the moment is how fast governments at state and federal level are back-pedding away from any responsibility and want to hand it over to the private sector. I don’t feel it should be the private sector’s responsibility and I do believe state government needs to maintain some level of responsibility in addressing this issue of housing in mining communities and I think the responses to date have not been adequate. They are band-aid solutions to problems which are only going to get worse as time goes on.

This response shows the controversy in mining communities underpinning the mix of company-owned housing, private housing and the social housing within the community. As noted in Chapter Five, in Moranbah, the Department of Housing and Public Works had previously leased an amount of social housing stock to mining companies prior to the last boom. Since the downturn, mining companies have subsequently returned some of this stock to the department. This indicates that while the need for housing has reduced in mining communities, it flags the intent of mining companies to exit the role of being a housing provider in mining communities.

The mining companies have also been the subject of ire from some community members at their lack of open dialogue about their policy intentions and business objectives, and associated impacts on communities. This is represented in the following service provider quote:
HSPF – I actually showed up at a meeting prior to being banned from attending any other BMA meetings and myself and two other prominent people in this community, when head of one of the projects said right out that the reason for 100% FIFO was exactly that, it was about controlling the workforce and making sure they weren’t distracted to the point that they did not even want to come into the town or participate in anything in the community because they didn’t want this to impact on the worker showing up and being work ready the next day.

This remark supports the evidence of the erosion of community culture, trust and identity that has been attributed to aspects of the mining industry (Bay & Jenkins, 2012).

Increased awareness of the impact of homelessness in mining communities can be viewed as a product of the recent mining boom and transition to downturn. This is the paradox at the heart of this research that Australia’s economic prosperity was also the cause of some extreme social disadvantage and homelessness. This research found that responding to homelessness at the individual and family level in mining communities was primarily seen as the responsibility of the “local” community. The local community was broadly defined as local community members, non-government organisations delivering specialist homelessness services, and other stakeholders who have an interest in homelessness. Most participants viewed local government as also being members of the local community because of their involvement in responding to local homeless people. For example, Jackson identified homeless service providers in his local community as being the most significant force in dealing with homelessness problems:

Jackson – they point you in the right direction and they try. You have to do what they advise otherwise you are just not going to make it. They help you to get into housing, and they get the paperwork done. They can help you get your identification and they help you with your mail. They can do more, handle your money for you if you are a bad spender, or you spend money on things like drugs. They can help you pay rent and make sure your bills get paid. Make sure you got food. Check to see if you are still alive.

Jackson’s experience highlights the priority given to valuing the expertise of specialist homelessness services and other agencies that provide services to homeless people.
At the time of commencement of the study and collection of data (from late 2012 to the beginning of 2015), the Liberal National Party Queensland Government announced plans to recommission all housing and homelessness services across Queensland following a similar process that New South Wales had undertaken in 2012 (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013a). This announcement weighed heavily on service provider participants concerned about the future of their homelessness services and whether the State government would continue to fund them, as reflected in the following service provider comments:

**HSPB** – It is up in the air until we understand how the new funding submissions are going to be presented with tenders. The reality is that a lot of the services that are currently here may not be here in a couple of years.

**HSPI** – Well at the moment, they are recommissioning all youth services. Government needs to be at the forefront and find out exactly what the community need is … we are funded through the Department of Communities and we have a service agreement with them and you hear on the grapevine that the government is going to cut funding towards homelessness services ... we don’t get enough funding to begin with ... We are only scraping through to keep the doors open for young people.

The term ‘recommissioning’ was used euphemistically by the government about their approach to reforming funding for specialist homelessness services, however service providers were anxious that this was code for cuts to their funding. The election of the Palaszczuk Labor Government in 2015 provided some relief to service providers however the anxiety about future funding continues for service providers, and this anxiety is strong amongst small rural and regional service providers who participated in this study.

The slowing of the Australian economy linked to the mining downturn has had broad ranging impacts on the social welfare sector. The community response to homelessness is defined by the human service agencies that are specifically funded by government to provide services to people experiencing homelessness and people at risk of homelessness, as well as agencies that are not funded by government and rely upon charitable revenue to operate. In the neo-liberal policy environment, the anxiety of service providers is palpable (Marston et al., 2014), however the local community remains a source of innovation regarding practical strategies to reduce and prevent homelessness. Participants identified the importance of networking within
their communities and how this networking reached beyond the traditional group of human service providers but included local elected officials and agencies such as the Queensland Police Service who are often the first responders to people experiencing homelessness.

Community representatives also identified areas for the strategy development aimed at providing more effective front-line services to people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness including the need for family support services to alleviate the pressures on families living in mining communities, financial counselling services and tenancy advice and advocacy services. The research found some examples of proactive community level efforts to address homelessness at a strategic level, for example Mackay-based participants noted how as a community, they had been working together over a number of years towards achieving support and backing for a Drop in Centre for homeless people in Mackay as the community had determined that this was a priority. However, while the community is leading the front-line responses to homelessness in mining communities, there is no doubt that the State Government, in conjunction with other levels of government, continue to have a vital role in relation to establishing and implementing homelessness policy settings.

There was consensus from service providers that there is a vital role for government in working with local communities and the mining industry, to prevent and reduce homelessness through planning and policy processes that support housing and homelessness policy. Participants generally referred to the State Government as the lead level of government in relation to addressing homelessness, but the role of local government and Commonwealth Government were also recognised as having significant influence in relation to homelessness policy and service delivery. This underlies the reality that each level of government in Australia is responsible for different aspects of housing and homelessness policy. One respondent representing a local government argued that there was a need for all levels of government to “partner up” with community stakeholders (Smyth et al., 2005) to address homelessness in Mackay:

**GCSPH** – The role of government is to partner up and support. They need to see who the players or stakeholders are and coordinate work. ... there are hot spots in town, where people go, for example the libraries when it is raining or the swimming pool where people can go and have a shower, there are different
departments in council that need to be aware of this and come up with a strategy which is compassionate to homeless people. You can’t just move homeless people from one place to the next, this is not solving homelessness, but just moving people to another public space. ... Council needs to ensure that public spaces are safe but this doesn’t mean that we are allowed to treat people disrespectfully. This is why we partner up with Queensland Health and the Mental Health Unit to find out what is the best way to support homeless people.

The interconnection of housing and homelessness policy is a reality and needs to be coordinated and managed in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for people in mining communities and throughout the State. Local government is responsible for a range of policies that include regarding rough sleepers who are commonly found in parks and other public spaces, and sensitive but multifaceted policy response is the approach that should be taken. This was certainly the experience of Jackson and Aaron who while sleeping rough were approached to “move on”.

In line with the dominant neo-liberal approach to social and economic policy adopted by mainstream political parties, participants also noted the general drift of governments away from taking responsibility in relation to the provision of housing (Bay & Jenkins, 2012). This theme highlights the disillusionment amongst some local service providers about how political parties fail to accept the challenges to housing associated with the growth of the mining industry, and in particular the provision of safe and affordable housing for all community members. There was a group of service providers who felt that the government should take a much more interventionist approach in managing the effects of mining booms in rural and regional communities. This should be right from the beginning at the assessment and approval phase of the project to determine community benefits and risks, and such a process needs to have a greater focus on the social impacts for mining communities.

**HSPA –** Whatever the process is that allows mines to open, there will be social impact studies happening and whoever it is making money out of it should be putting money in and making sure the local community is not negatively impacted by money going elsewhere.

Other participants felt that Government also needs to reconsider the role it plays in the housing market, including perhaps placing limits on private rental costs during a mining
boom. Although a somewhat idealistic approach in a market-driven housing environment, Christine nevertheless reflected the view of many that the cost of housing during the mining boom was not at all fair and reasonable:

**Christine** – I think government should put a bracket around it. It would be helpful to every Australian if real estate agents were only allowed to charge a certain amount of rent based on evaluations. I think that would be helpful. They do that with your income with housing. Maybe they should do that with everyone’s incomes. Rent should be based on income.

John identified the ineffectiveness of current government housing services and products in assisting vulnerable people in mining communities, in particular how the Commonwealth Government rent assistance was inadequate to enable people to access the private rental housing market during the boom.

**John** – Subsidised housing? I know there is rent assistance but what is the point if you have nowhere to rent? The rent assistance does help but it barely scratches it.

This research has found that there is a strong case for improving the provision of housing subsidies to vulnerable people in mining communities during phases of mining boom. Although participants noted that the Queensland Government’s Rent Connect Service was helpful in assisting people locate private rental housing, the scheme had limited value in mining communities during the boom because the existing range of products and services were not enough to assist people on low income access housing.

It was recognised by Mackay-based participants that there had been a concerted attempt by the three levels of government to coordinate policy efforts and that this collaboration had been successful to a degree. The Homelessness Community Action Planning (HCAP) initiative was a project that was launched by the Bligh Labor Government in Queensland in 2009 to “engage government, business, non-government sectors and the community in a process that will embed business principles and accountability for reducing homelessness in Queensland” (Department of Communities, 2009, p. 22). The benefit of Homelessness Community Action Planning was acknowledged by government and continued in different ways under successive state governments, with strong rhetoric about the importance of local, ground-up and place-based responses to responding to homelessness (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013a; 2016).
The Homelessness Community Action Planning initiative has confirmed the urgency for human services to collaborate more with the business community around housing issues. Developing the relationship with the private sector around strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness is an area where extra effort is required to build skills and relationships for agreed policy outcomes, however the leadership associated with this initiative appears to be lacking. As discussed in Chapter Two, the “Housing 2020: Delivering a flexible efficient and responsive housing assistance system for Queensland's future Strategy” (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013b) and “Homelessness-to-Housing 2020 Strategy” (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013a) were policies of the former Newman Liberal National Party Government. “The Housing 2020 Strategy” (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013b) aimed to:

... establish a flexible, regionally based, integrated system that, by 2020, will deliver an additional 12,000 homes and see up to 90% of social housing dwellings managed by community housing providers. Over this period, we will also see the introduction of a variety of options to help people find suitable accommodation in the private market (p. 2).

This policy placed emphasis on a greater role for community housing providers in responding to the housing needs of Queenslanders and a privatisation of existing social housing stock. The separate Homelessness-to-Housing Strategy (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013a) had a two-pronged approach to reduce homelessness in Queensland by firstly building more “bricks and mortar” initiatives and reforming service delivery models. Within this policy approach, the settings and directions clearly promoted stronger engagement with the private sector regarding housing and homelessness services in Queensland and HCAP was viewed as strategy by which this engagement could be achieved. The participants commented that despite these policy directions, little effort was directed towards stronger engagement and collaboration between these sectors, and if anything, promoted distrust and scepticism. Since the election of the Labor Government in January 2015, Queensland has embarked upon an extensive community consultation process and a new Housing and Homelessness strategy is anticipated in 2017 (Department of Housing and Public Works, 2016).
7.5.1 Corporate social responsibility
The views of participants on the roles and responsibilities of the private sector, and particularly mining companies in relation to preventing and reducing homelessness in mining communities was varied. Many participants expressed anger and frustration at the obvious impacts the mining industry had caused communities in the areas of housing and homelessness. For some this equated to the most brazen exploitation of a community. However, other participants noted the contribution of mining companies to the local community, and some of these contributions included housing and homelessness related projects. One of the limitations of this study was the lack of involvement by the mining sector. Therefore, the views of the respondents to the study offer one perspective. Their responses underscore the issues associated with corporate social responsibility and what this means for mining communities and in particular their contributions which may assist people experiencing homelessness.

Some participants were able to point to examples of where mining companies had made specific contributions which have assisted in the provision of homelessness services. For example:

**HSPA** – BMA donated us a whole lot of household furniture which was nearly new, it was wonderful. We refurnished our whole shelter. . . . I know BMA has also sponsored the Vangari Dance Company and fund some scholarships (for young people to further their education).

During the course of this research, it was identified that BMA make a 50% recurrent contribution to the annual staff salary of the youth worker based in Moranbah and the youth worker based in Dysart was identified. This practitioner was interviewed:

**HSPB** – My role is half funded by BMA. Without their funding it would be a half time position for youth in town. My role is the only youth role in the town. Any way mining services can assist they will. Whether that is voluntary assistance or might be some funding towards a program. There is a focus on trying to implement strategies for the whole community and using the whole community instead of expecting that the mining companies will fund everything.

This contribution was known to some community members including other participants of this study, but generally BMA was not well recognised across the community for this, and
some other contributions. The recurrent contribution towards the salary of youth worker positions was tangible evidence of active corporate social responsibility by BMA, in an area highly relevant to homelessness in mining communities.

In other examples, service providers were able to identify one-off contributions generally of a capital nature.

**HSPE** – I am aware that they have contributed to the affordable housing scheme and getting that up and running. They have put a lot of money into building houses and units and work camps in Dysart. This has helped to reduce demand on housing and therefore rent has come down.

In one situation a service provider in Mackay supporting women and children escaping domestic and family violence noted a mining company had offered a ‘donga’ to assist with accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence. While the offer was welcomed, the proposal did not proceed because of not having permission from the funding agency (The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services) for this service.

**GCSPG** – The mines regularly approach us. We were offered a donga to be placed out the back of our office to support women and children escaping domestic violence, but the Department of Communities said no. They were going to pay for the set-up of the accommodation for us, but this never eventuated.

There are some examples of creative and practical assistance that mining companies have provided to assist homelessness services and community responses to homeless people in mining communities. Such contributions tend to not be well known or publicised in the community. Overall, there was strong sentiment expressed across most participants that mining companies could be contributing a lot more to their communities through a specific approach to homelessness which confirms earlier research undertaken in this area (Warburton et al., 2004).

Despite this overall criticism by some homelessness service providers they did acknowledge the contribution of mining companies to the shifts they had made in more recent years in their responses to families accommodated in mining housing where women are experiencing domestic and family violence. This approach links to the contemporary “Safe at Home”
service delivery response (Spinney, 2012) to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

**HSPD** – I think the mining companies have done a great job by taking men (perpetrators of domestic violence) out of the family home and putting them into the camp. It is easier to house the men this way than force a woman with children into a situation of homelessness.

This service provider response about mining companies is an example of where the company has taken some responsibility to prevent homelessness for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. Mining companies who have employed this policy are leaders in reform to responses to women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

These findings raise an issue as to why mining companies appear somewhat reluctant to make public their corporate social responsibility contributions to homelessness more visible in the community? Could this in any way be linked to the fact this research was unable to attract and recruit participants from this stakeholder category? An implication that can be taken from the reluctance of mining companies to publicly acknowledge their corporate social responsibility and philanthropic contributions is that this may be perceived as tacit acceptance of the negative impacts that mining brings to rural and regional communities including homelessness. Some service providers also pointed out that it was not always easy for mining companies to make public declarations about assistance that had been provided due to privacy and confidentiality issues, which is particularly relevant regarding services to women and children who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence. For example:

**HSPJ** – A service like ours can’t acknowledge it really because of confidentiality of address. We can’t really promote the fact that they have given it to us. We have received some grants and one-off donations, it is quite ironic because 50% of the women in our shelter are from the mining communities.

There was also a view that some mining companies have mixed reasons for being seen to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities.

**GCSPH** – Some of the mining companies are more community minded than others. For some of them it is just a tax dodge.
Some participants also expressed their deep concern with mining companies and considered that they had a responsibility in relation to housing and in particular, people at risk of, or who are experiencing homelessness. One Moranbah-based businessman discussed this in relation to the history of mining companies in his community and where their priorities lie.

**CRC** – BMA bought Utah out in 1978 and any support of the community is only token supply by BMA. Sure there might be a few million dollars here and there but it’s still only a token support and it is usually in the form of a swimming pool or something like that. They don’t give a dam about the people. Their focus is on the dollars. I talk mainly about BMA because they are the biggest one, but Anglos and the rest of them are no different. BMA are by far the leaders in anti-community because they are quite happy to see Moranbah become a big work camp. They would be more than happy for that.

While only one view, it nevertheless reflects a commonly held view that mining companies are driven from a fiscal and monetary imperative and corporate social responsibility remains a distant second to this objective (Warburton et al., 2004).

One Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participant to this study expressed extreme frustration and disappointment with mining companies’ lack of “follow through” and commitment to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**GCSPA** – No, I am not aware of any contributions that mining companies have made. I’ve never been a more angry professional except for the time when there were opportunities to train and employ local Indigenous people into opportunities in the mines and that didn’t happen. I asked the companies what is your process for engaging Indigenous people? I was annoyed with their response. They said ‘We speak to Indigenous people’. Who sources these people? I had people coming to me and asking ‘Aunty how do we get a job in the mines?’ I said I would have to talk to people. I got into an argument with this lady who said she had contacts. I asked her who the contacts were so that I could refer people. She gave me the names of two people who were South Sea Islanders, they weren’t even Indigenous. She argued with me that they were Indigenous. I said they are not Indigenous people and that is why you are not getting Indigenous people in your mine. The project fell over. I think out of the cohort of 14 young Indigenous
men only two got a leg in the door and were there for six weeks before it fell over. It was soul destroying. ... People were coming and getting on out there but if you were Indigenous ... you were up against it, maybe if half the crew died you might get a shot. I just wish the mines would go away because instead of Closing the Gap in terms of opportunity for Indigenous people it opened some gaps even further.

This remark highlights the frustration of a local ATSI service provider regarding her experience at how mining companies overlooked local ATSI people in the recruitment processes during the mining boom. For what efforts some mining companies may have made towards corporate social responsibility it appears significant work is to be done if future mining booms are to be managed in a way which promotes the goal of greater Indigenous economic participation. Langton (2015) argues that there has been an improvement in the relationship between Indigenous people and the mining industry due to “innovative engagement”, but that further:

Policy reform is needed to ensure that government programs which deliver goods, environmental or personal services include explicit Indigenous employment goals ... and collectively efforts should be focused on the school age population ... to ensure employability and avoid a worsening of disadvantage in some areas (p. 9).

Planning and policy responses to homelessness in mining communities need to recognise ways in which the local ATSI community can also have access to the economic benefits associated with the boom period knowing that access to employment and good income is a strong way of preventing homelessness.

Other participants noted that mining companies and their commitment to corporate social responsibility very much depended on whether the particular social issue or project was valued in the community or not.

**HSPC** – It depends on the flavour of your request. Homelessness is not a flavour at all. I have tried to approach the mining companies on a number of occasions. It depends what it is, youth, sports and that sort of thing yes, homelessness definitely not.
Funding for responses to homeless people are in competition with other community interests such as rugby league and sporting teams and high-profile charities which are deemed to have more community value and are more “deserving” than homeless people. The Moranbah focus group could see the benefits and drawbacks associated with mining companies and corporate social responsibility as noted:

**GCSPE** – the mining companies subsidise services and in conjunction with the department of communities. Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Moranbah is partially funded by Mining companies. Moranbah District Support Service is also partially funded.

**HSPF** – The mining companies will do grants for different things. In terms of input into the community they have been good.

**GCSPE** – In the past they have been good. I think that is part and parcel with the mining boom. With that we saw an investment in affordable housing. From a private aspect and local government perspective, there was an initiative to reinvest to offset some of the concerns that had built up around shortage of housing.

**HSPF** – It doesn’t compare with what they spent on the new airport.

**GCSPE** – No, and let’s be clear there is an agenda to be able to transport 458,000 people through that airport every year.

The last passage of this discussion in the focus group raised some strongly worded responses from two of the more dominant members of the focus group, and the discussion shifted from seeing the positives for the community in the contributions of mining companies to viewing what the mining companies had provided as serving their self-interest. It was also evident that what amounts were spent on corporate social responsibility for community good became less impressive when compared with the hundreds of millions of dollars invested by mining companies in the new Moranbah airport designed to transport tens of thousands of workers into and out of the region each year.

There was evidence in this study that there were meaningful dialogue processes established between mining companies and some community organisations. One service provider
participant commented how much BMA listened to the struggles the service was having trying to locate housing for clients and how this led to some changes in their housing policy and approach to accommodating workers and their families. This is reflected in the quote below:

**HSPB** – I think doing what the Mining companies are doing already – identifying needs and acting on them. I sat in a BMA meeting recently and they listened to the struggles we were having and they handed back quite a few properties. They had no idea what the pressures were causing. This turned into a strategy that BMA could still somehow hold onto properties and lease them to police and teachers.

Such positive dialogue focusing on housing issues in mining communities is essential; for the future outcomes that reflect a win-win for both the mining company and the local community.

A blend of housing in mining communities remains critical to ensuring that all community members have the best opportunity to access appropriate and affordable housing. One issue emerged during interviews regarding the funding of the construction of new dwellings in mining communities, and whether this should continue to be done by mining companies. This also underlies the role of the State Government in the provision of housing, in particular housing suited for families and individuals who may not be directly involved in the mining industry. Michelle considered this as follows:

**Michelle** – I think morally it should be to ensure that people have the choice to live with their families in a safe environment and conduct their business in a way that doesn’t create a community that takes those choices away. ... I think the mining companies are making a move back towards supplying accommodation for their employees. I think that is the big issue. Once they started selling housing they had and then putting employees into private rentals they were driving the private rentals up too much. ... The other option, not so much about homelessness but for the wellness of the community, is allowing people who work in their company to choose where they live. ... I think it is unhealthy mentally and socially for men to have to live in camp accommodation if their family want to live in a town with them. And if they want to then have their family on the
Sunshine Coast and fly out every other week then they should have that choice too if the company wants to provide it. ... providing choices.

Michelle confirms the importance of providing choice for community members in relation to housing and that ideally a range of housing assistance is required to address all challenges facing community members in mining communities. A balanced mix would include non-funded responses such as tenancy and advocacy support services, but also include services currently delivered from the housing services centres, and affiliated services, such as housing bond loans and Rent Connect services. These services could then be complemented by specialist homelessness services, particularly Homestay Support services which provide early intervention responses aimed at assisting the tenant to be able to sustain their tenancy. The provision of housing options need to be identified early to enable community members opportunities ranging from mining company provided housing and accommodation, social housing, private rental housing and home ownership.

### 7.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has analysed, from the perspectives of participants, how to prevent and reduce homelessness in mining communities throughout the mining cycle. The evidence gathered from participants occurred within the downturn phase of the mining cycle and the responses were reflective in that they were able to see the impact the mining boom had on their local communities and could also see the challenges associated with the mining downturn.

The chapter discussed the need for comprehensive and long-term evidence-based social planning and policy processes to be part of initial mining approvals and to become a regular feature of the life of the mining project. If it is anticipated that the lifecycle of the mine is 30 years, it would be expected that social planning occurs on a regular basis to address community need (every two to three years). Social planning needs to take into account all of the contextual issues and structural factors that impact homelessness in mining communities.

The issues that lead to homelessness in mining communities during periods of mining boom and mining downturn as discussed here, need to be managed more effectively, and policy frameworks need to accentuate flexibility for service providers in mining communities to be able to deal with these challenges. Better housing and homelessness policy needs to be
developed in response to social planning processes and the policy settings need to be grounded in the provision of affordable housing during mining boom periods.

The chapter concluded by considering the important and interrelated roles of local specialist homelessness services and community services, government and the mining industry in addressing homelessness in mining communities. Corporate social responsibility was explored in the context of mining company’s obligations to mining communities and identified practical examples of where this obligation had been discharged. Chapters Five, Six and Seven have examined evidence gathered during the course of this research regarding effects of the mining cycle on homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. This analysis showed how contextual factors associated with the mining cycle contributed to homelessness in these communities. The evidence was analysed through three particular pathways and how these pathways challenge some existing theory and knowledge about what places people at risk of homelessness, and how people come to experience homelessness. The pathways also examined the responses that have assisted some homeless people to exit homelessness in these communities. The analysis also covered strategy that could be developed or enhanced to better respond to the challenges of homelessness in mining communities during future phases of the mining cycle. The final chapter (Chapter Eight) of this thesis will examine the conclusions to be drawn from this research and recommendations for future policy, practice and future research.
Chapter 8: Conclusion and recommendations

8.1 Chapter introduction

Rates of homelessness can be influenced by a range of structural factors and individual life events. This research aimed to explore the ways in which the mining industry has influenced homelessness in the rural and regional mining communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012a; 2012b; 2012c) and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data (2016a; 2017a) examined in this thesis suggests an increase in the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Mackay and Isaac regions throughout much of the mining boom period, from 2001 to 2011, except in Isaac region between 2006 and 2011, where the Census count of homeless people suggests a reduction in homelessness in some parts of this region (Wood et al., 2015). This data was given a critical perspective given the vast discussion about the limitations of ABS Census data in rural areas (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2009). Such statistical data does not give an “on the ground” perspective.

This research considered qualitative data from 43 participants from the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart, who participated in either individual interviews or focus groups about homelessness in their communities throughout the mining cycle. This qualitative data provided a complementary and deeper perspective on homelessness in mining communities compared to the quantitative data sets offered by the ABS and AIHW. This research integrated the primary qualitative data with the secondary quantitative data to contextualise the experiences of homelessness in mining communities.

8.2 Overview of research findings

This research found that the mining industry has had a considerable influence on homelessness in the communities of Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah and that this commenced with the boom from 2002 to 2012 and continued throughout the downturn, post 2012. Homelessness in mining communities can best be described as “hidden”, similar to the term “hidden homelessness” in rural communities developed by Milbourne and Cloke (2006). For much of the boom, homelessness in mining communities was not viewed as a major national or community issue. While this research found considerable evidence of rough sleeping and
other forms of primary homelessness in mining communities throughout the mining boom, much homelessness was not always visible or easily identifiable. In addition to people sleeping rough, this research identified couch-surfing, people living in overcrowded housing, emergency accommodation and other forms of temporary accommodation as major parts of respective pathways to homelessness. Mackay has historically had a small population of ATSI and non-Indigenous rough sleepers in public spaces. During the mining boom there became more awareness of individuals and families sleeping in cars, makeshift accommodation and even on verandas of local churches which increased the visibility of homelessness. Homelessness was associated with the lack of access to affordable housing. This issue was accentuated by the pressures associated with large numbers of temporary workers moving into mining communities and also brought focus to the considerable housing needs in mining communities during the boom.

The decade long mining boom from 2002 to 2012 brought what could be termed “a perfect storm” of structural factors that influenced homelessness in regional and rural mining communities. As discussed in Chapter Five, the rapid population growth in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart through the mining boom placed immense pressure on infrastructure and housing in these communities. All three communities became subject to the market forces that dramatically impacted the cost of housing. Housing in these communities was scarce and what housing that was available was not affordable. Community members employed by mining companies and related industries were in strong positions to be able to afford the higher cost of housing whereas people on low and average incomes struggled to be able to access and maintain their housing. The provision of housing subsidies to workers of mining companies to assist them access private rental housing had perverse housing market outcomes in these communities. There were also policy issues regarding the provision of social housing in these communities and bureaucratic and lengthy approval processes for constructing new dwellings. Housing costs in Mackay were further compounded by the desirability of Mackay as a coastal, regional community with access to more services and commercial enterprises, making Mackay the location for DIDO and FIFO based workers.

These structural factors involving the population and local housing market conditions transformed Moranbah, Dysart and Mackay from rural and regional communities which had been affordable to various socio-economic groups to being places geared towards people on high incomes. The research found that the level of housing stress and severe housing stress
among community members during the boom had the effect of increasing the numbers of community members at risk of homelessness, and who experienced homelessness.

The research found that human service agencies believed that the responses, from the mining industry and government to homelessness in mining communities were largely driven by the crises in housing and were entirely inadequate. Although there were some responses that were well intentioned and aimed at reducing housing stress and in some instances homelessness, respondents agreed that the policy responses were “too little too late”.

The Homestay Support service established in Mackay in 2009 was the only new specialist homelessness service in the region during the decade long mining boom. Existing community services and specialist homelessness services were not enhanced or expanded to cater for the additional homelessness accommodation demand during the mining boom era. This research identified that some mining companies made contributions to housing and homelessness services in Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart as part of a broader commitment to corporate social responsibility. However, these contributions remained little known within the community. In any case, respondents did not consider they were commensurate with the extent to which the mining companies caused housing and homelessness issues in these communities, or commensurate with their other infrastructure investments (such as the new airport at Moranbah) at that time.

The mining downturn period from late 2012 had severe structural factors which has influenced homelessness in these communities. The loss of employment and issues of personal debt that were generated during the mining boom era had flow on effects to people at risk of homelessness, and for people experiencing homelessness during the mining downturn. There is also the mining-boom-generated loss of community culture in mining communities discussed in Chapter Five which has had a part to play in many relationship and family breakdowns in the region and incidents of domestic and family violence. These negative aspects of the mining boom phase on mining communities have continued during the current era of downturn and future uncertainty.

On the positive side, the mining downturn period has been characterised by some improved levels of housing affordability across all three communities. This trend in increased housing affordability in mining communities should assist with improving the experiences of many homeless people in these communities to obtain housing more rapidly and be able to maintain
such housing. These increased levels of affordable housing could also prevent people at risk of homelessness, becoming homeless. This is particularly relevant when considering the evidence about what has worked to end participants’ experiences of homelessness in mining communities in this study. This was also the explicit message from those continuing to experience homelessness such as Jackson, Nathan and Kaylene or in the case of Ruth, who in sharing a caravan with another adult in Dysart, was very close to homelessness.

Nevertheless, the research concludes that homelessness in mining communities during the mining downturn period continues to be an issue in these communities. The loss of community identity and culture that has occurred in mining communities have made issues such as family breakdown, domestic and family violence, mental health concerns and alcohol and drug issues more noticeable to the broader community. These individual life factors combined with structural factors such as housing affordability and unemployment, place people at greater risk of homelessness (Ellen & O’Flaherty, 2010; Johnson et al., 2015). The evidence from participants in this study confirmed that the culture of mining communities promotes and exacerbates many of these issues. The research also reconfirmed how the environment of mining communities remains limited in the services and community infrastructure that can assist people with their difficulties. Access to specialist health services and homelessness services were vital for participants in this study to be able to end their experience of homelessness.

A number of other questions emerged during the research as outlined in Chapter Four and these will each be considered in the following discussion. This research has found that homelessness in mining communities is diverse and can impact on different people in very different ways. Findings from previous scholarly work on pathways to homelessness, and out of homelessness, are extended in this research by considering the unique contextual factors which lead to homelessness in mining communities (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). This research also posits that in the absence of concerted planning responses, and in contrast to O’Flaherty’s (2004) contention that homelessness cannot be predicted, one could reasonably predict an increase in homelessness in mining communities during periods of mining boom.
This research identified and then discussed in detail three specific pathways that describe the sequence of events that lead to homelessness for participants in this study. These pathways are:

- Family and relationship breakdown and domestic and family violence.
- Unemployment and housing affordability.
- Members of mining communities with high vulnerability to homelessness and unable to access services.

Although the pathways themselves are not unique to mining communities, the contextual factors which have influenced participants’ experience of homelessness are. The family and domestic violence pathway to homelessness in mining communities was significant because of the cultural influences of mining communities and the very few services and supports available for women in these communities. For those women who experience homelessness as a result of escaping a violent partner in mining communities, options are limited to accessing a small number of supported accommodation places within local domestic violence refuges and access to DV Connect telephone services which would endeavour to arrange for the women to be placed in local motel accommodation until a refuge or other housing response could be located or otherwise leave the community. This so-called option of leaving the community brings with it challenges if the women has child/ren and the former partner seeks action through the Family Court of Australia by way of a recovery order forcing her and her child/ren to return to a specific place as determined by the Court. Service providers reported that this often led to the women returning to a violent partner because of lack of housing and accommodation options in the communities identified by the Court Order.

Some mining companies have now altered their housing policy so in situations of domestic and family violence the woman partner can now remain in the mining company owned housing while the male was accommodated in work camps/villages. This research confirmed that this was evidence of a sensible outcome that reflected a prevention approach to homelessness and something that should be expanded wherever possible.

The second pathway involved people who have intentionally moved to mining communities to obtain employment and may have obtained employment but have lost this employment, or were unable to secure employment. This pathway accentuated the importance of employment
The paradox of homelessness in mining communities as a safeguard against homelessness. The pathway also reflected the challenges for people in mining communities going through periods of mining downturn, in particular loss, of employment and managing high levels of personal debt. Participants in this study who had successfully avoided homelessness throughout their lives had found that in middle age and older age, loss of employment became a major factor in their pathway to homelessness. The mining downturn had resulted in increasing levels of affordable housing and with the right support, homeless people could be better assisted to end their homelessness by accessing secure housing either through the private rental market or the social housing system.

The third pathway identified, involved vulnerable members of mining communities who are placed at greater risk of homelessness or have experienced homelessness in mining communities due to the structural factors and dynamics inherent in mining communities. These people have, in many instances, been long-term community members and have resided in mining communities long before the recent decade long mining boom. Some of the personal characteristics that are shared by this group include those with a mental health problem or disability, people with substance misuse issues, victims of violence, people experiencing chronic homelessness, and/ or people with very low incomes. Sometimes, the people in this group have experienced a number of these issues throughout their lives. This research found that this cohort of people were at greater risk of homelessness during the mining boom period when housing was unaffordable and there was greater demand on critical services. Such people were also impacted by the mining industry induced “neo-liberal” culture of material gain and individual responsibility which served to reinforce the view that homelessness was a result of individual issues and poor lifestyle choices.

As noted earlier in this chapter, this research identified that homelessness in mining communities takes a variety of forms including rough sleeping, couch-surfing, people accommodated in limited emergency accommodation and people in private boarding houses. Six of the twelve homeless participants had experienced rough sleeping, eleven of the twelve homeless participants had experienced support in emergency accommodation and four participants had experienced couch-surfing. One participant had been living with her family in a home that was characterised by overcrowding and had no security of tenure. The diversity of experiences of homelessness was supported by the evidence of the other 31 research participants from other stakeholder categories.
The twelve homeless, or formerly homeless participants ranged in age, gender and family composition. There was one Aboriginal participant as part of the group of homeless people in this study. There were no participants from non-English speaking backgrounds however service provider participants did remark how many people from overseas, in particular New Zealand, were often referred to their homelessness services because of visa-related issues and the cessation of employment. Workers on 457 visas on contractual labour to mining companies, are not able to access income support or social security in Australia when their work ceases and the service providers did report clients in this predicament being referred to their service. The visa arrangements complicated the provision of effective support to these people who were not eligible for housing assistance or income support or other services in Australia. These people were often supported to explore options for returning to their country of origin as at least social security issues could be provided to the person.

The question as to whether the structural and contextual factors associated with mining communities and the pathways to homelessness in such communities, impact people differently to people living in larger metropolitan communities, or even other rural and regional locations which are not served by the mining industry, was considered. Although this study was not a comparative study of homelessness in mining communities with other non-mining communities, analysis in this research confirmed the distinctive nature of homelessness in mining communities. Chapter Two identified that most homelessness knowledge and theory has been developed out of understanding homelessness within large urban communities, usually capital cities. This research has considered homelessness in non-urban and non-metropolitan context in recent years, and is one of the first Australian projects to explore homelessness in mining communities and develop a deeper appreciation of the impact of the mining industry on homelessness.

The three pathways analysed in this thesis, while not unique to homelessness in mining communities, are influenced by the contextual factors which are particular to mining communities. These contextual factors discussed in Chapter Five have served to create circumstances whereby people in mining communities are at risk of, and experience homelessness as noted within the respective homelessness pathways analysed in Chapter Six.
The limited housing and support services available to homeless people during periods of mining booms mean that people are often faced with the reality of having to relocate from their community if they are unable to access housing or support services. Participants in this study confirmed that this had been the case for many homeless people during the mining boom period. Homeless people in Moranbah and Dysart were also referred to services in the larger regional centres of Emerald to the south west, Rockhampton to the south east and Mackay to the east. In some instances, homeless people migrated further to the Queensland capital Brisbane or even interstate.

The research has confirmed the diversity of experience of homelessness in mining communities is different depending on the stage of the mining cycle. This research has established the fundamental differences in the smaller rural mining communities of Dysart and Moranbah and the larger regional community of Mackay. The economic and community wellbeing of Dysart and Moranbah is linked to the success of mining in their region. Historically, these communities were created to support the mining industry and it continues to be their main reason for existence. Participants in this study saw no future for their community should mining no longer be a viable option in the region and mining companies were to withdraw their operations.

A similarly pessimistic view was held for Mackay by some participants however other participants could see the benefit that would be generated for other industries. This opportunity for alternative, more environmentally sustainable industries was seen by some as leading to a more diversified local economy. Mackay is a coastal community and enjoys some tourism and has a long history of agriculture. Although Mackay has a history of homelessness dating back decades that is often linked to itinerant farming workers, there was more acceptance by participants that it would be able to successfully transition from its economic reliance on mining.

As further evidence of the strength of informal and formal network across the region, specialist homelessness services, community services and health services work closely across all three communities. This research identified that while the intention to work closely together is a commitment of service providers, this didn’t always happen or was evident to people experiencing homelessness in these communities. Not surprisingly, Mackay had the strongest evidence of integration and collaboration with other charitable organisations and
services in these communities who were interested in providing services and support to people experiencing homelessness.

Participants discussed the various roles and responsibilities across the mining Industry, Government and the local community in addressing homelessness. They recognised that there needed to be some flexibility in the roles and responsibilities across stakeholders, and the roles and responsibilities may change depending on the mining cycle. A long-term commitment to the community was most highly valued amongst participants. A summary of the various roles and responsibilities as determined from the research follows:

8.2.1 Local community

The research found that the local community, service providers, local officials and other stakeholders, were perceived as the leaders in responding to homelessness at the local level. The local community was viewed as the best source of intelligence and advice about homeless need in the community and should have more influence in decision making about how and where to place resources to prevent and reduce homelessness. This research finding is a reflection of the fact that all 43 participants in this study were resident community members of the three communities at the centre of this study. Participants agreed that the specialist homelessness services and other organisations providing homelessness services do a very good job of networking and collaborating with one another, in the interests of improved client outcomes but also to identify gaps within the local housing and homelessness service system and put forward policy options to government to address these gaps. The Mackay Drop In centre proposal is a very good example of this on the ground collaboration.

8.2.3 Mining industry

Participants identified mining companies as having the responsibility to do a lot more in relation to working with the local community to provide responses to people experiencing homelessness. Dysart and Moranbah participants had noted some impressive contributions by mining companies to assist homeless people including the allocation of mining company owned properties to specialist homelessness services to help provide supported accommodation responses to homeless people. In Dysart and Moranbah, BMA made recurrent funding contributions to important youth worker positions. Some specific activities that mining companies could do more of to address homelessness in the communities include adjusting company housing policy and practices to suit the needs of the community. This was
found to be particularly effective for women and children experiencing homelessness as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, but there is further company policy that can be improved to address the needs of workers and their families. Mining companies could also contribute more funding towards homelessness projects and being more explicit about their commitment to corporate social responsibility.

8.2.3 Government

Participants identified all three levels of government in Australia as having critical roles and responsibilities in relation to homelessness in mining regions. These roles and responsibilities have been summarised for each of the three levels of government: Local, State and Commonwealth Governments.

Despite Local Government being the bottom tier of government, this research confirmed that Local Government has active role in a range of housing and homelessness issues within mining communities. Local Government is responsible for providing approvals for new property construction, as well as being a provider of services that are important to homeless people including public libraries and homelessness events. Local Government also has responsibility for enforcing controversial “move on” laws which can impact rough sleepers. Interestingly, there was no evidence provided to this study that either local governments in Mackay or Isaac were local governments which had enacted these laws in a way which was disrespectful to homeless people. There was feedback that during the height of the mining boom, the local government in Mackay had employed security officers to make contact with people sleeping in cars in public parks as this was not considered safe.

State Government also has a prominent role and responsibility in relation to homelessness. The Queensland Government is responsible for providing housing services and assistance to people in housing need and also, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, provides funding to specialist homelessness services. State Government has a critical role to play in relation to setting housing and homelessness policy. State Government is responsible for the legislative and policy framework underpinning social policy and planning and human services and as this research has argued, these processes need to better prepare mining communities for the social impacts of the mining cycle.
The Commonwealth Government has responsibility for setting national housing and homelessness policy and providing funding to the states to provide services to homeless people. At a macro-economic level, this research confirmed the need for the Commonwealth Government to set policy that affects the operation of mining companies and with the state government be active participants in the regulation of the mining industry to ensure the needs of mining communities and broader Australian society are served by the industry. Most participants, though not all participants, maintained a view that the Government should do more to make mining companies responsible for funding important community infrastructure which is depleted during times of mining downturn. Housing was one area where participants believed government could do a lot more in their relationship with the mining companies.

There was a general consensus across participants about the fundamental roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, however there was little shared understanding or agreement across these roles. This was in part due to the fragmentation of the sector from recent neoliberal policy influences at State and Commonwealth levels (Beer et al., 2007; Department of Housing and Public Works, 2013a). It was acknowledged in the absence of agreed roles and responsibilities there was dispute over who was accountable for, as one service provider representative noted, “making things happen” in the community.

Establishing an agreed, shared and transparent charter of roles and responsibilities in relation to housing and homelessness issues in mining communities was viewed as a priority policy issue that government is well placed to lead. Finally, participants were adamant that there needed to be proper planning and governance arrangements between rural and regional communities, government and the mining industry. The existing processes and forums were viewed as largely inadequate and ineffective.

**8.3 Recommendations**

The recommendations flowing from this research are grounded in a range of social planning, social and economic policy and service delivery responses aimed at better preparing mining communities to address the challenges of homelessness in their community. Ultimately the recommendations are geared towards seeing the prevention of homelessness and a reduction in homelessness in mining communities irrespective of the stage of the mining cycle. This may seem ambitious particularly in the context of mining boom periods, but it is my view
that proactive planning activities and policy can mitigate some of the features of mining boom periods which drive homelessness rates up in mining communities. The recommendations have been categorised under five distinct thematic headings.

8.3.1 Mandating the Social License to Operate

The notion of a Social License to Operate (SLO), as discussed in Chapter Three, has been a term applied to the informal acceptance of mining communities to allow mining activity (Lacey, 2013). The aftermath of the decade-long mining boom has generated the reflective questioning across Australia of what has been learnt from this era to better prepare mining communities and the broader populace of Australia for future mining booms. The SLO is also contentious and topical at the time of this research given the Commonwealth and Queensland State Governments approval of the Adani coal mine in the neighbouring Galilee Basin in Central West Queensland.

The SLO infers a level of trust and goodwill that the mining companies and operations will be conducted in a way that benefits the community. This research has identified how crucial housing is to a community and the impacts of homelessness in mining communities. This finding supports other Australian research highlighting the importance of housing in mining communities (Haslam-Mackenzie et al., 2009). Housing and homelessness responses to community members need to be identified as conditions of a SLO. It is hard to see any tangible evidence of a living Social License to Operate in the Mackay and Isaac regions. While mining companies may argue they have discharged some of their corporate social responsibility obligations to mining communities, and this research has uncovered some evidence supporting the view that some mining companies have made contributions towards housing and homelessness responses in mining communities, the terms social license and corporate social responsibility need to be kept separate. These terms should not be used interchangeably. The SLO implies an upfront contract between mining companies and mining communities whereas corporate social responsibility is viewed as a nice altruistic thing to do on the part of mining companies, but this is not enforceable by any contractual agreement between the industry and the community.

Mandating a SLO that takes a focus on housing and homelessness issues for citizens would not be unique to Australia. As discussed in Chapter One, numerous countries around the world have been impacted by resource driven boom/bust economies having some devastating
repercussions for local housing markets. Australia can learn from the countries like Sweden, Finland and Norway, who have successfully implemented policies and programs across government and industry that take a long-term view of the community and place high value on social responsibilities and environmental values.

Despite some participating in community dialogue and certain low-key contributions to some homelessness services, mining companies did not take an active interest in homelessness throughout much of the mining boom and downturn. This research confirms the work of other research that company profits are the overriding motivation for the company’s existence (Warburton et al.; 2004). The Social License to Operate needs far greater influence in all negotiations affecting mining projects and the communities which support this industry. Corporate social responsibility needs to be seen as a component of the broader governance associated with a SLO. This research argues for a policy position to be formulated across government that mandates the SLO governing new mining project approvals. This thesis recommends that the SLO becomes a mandated requirement of mining companies and should be demonstrated at the stage of the initial mining approval.

This research also argues that in addition to ensuring the SLO is a prominent feature of any future mining approval process, that mining companies are required to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility during periods of mining boom in a way that relates to housing and homelessness issues in these communities. This research found that the contributions made by mining companies towards housing and homelessness responses were covert and not widely known or acknowledged. Despite much effort, this research was also unsuccessful in recruiting representatives from mining companies as participants in this research. Mining companies need to be active participants in research and related community activities aimed at improving the social conditions for local community members.

Housing and homelessness responses need to be viewed as a major strategical challenge for mining communities, ensuring plans and resources are in place to deal with the wide-ranging effects of different phases of the mining cycle. Consequently, housing and homelessness responses need to be central to the development of a SLO, as well as to the initial and ongoing government approval processes. Housing crisis and increasing rates of homelessness in mining communities is the consequence for communities failing to prepare adequate response to the challenges associated with the mining cycle.
8.3.2 Long-term social planning and policy responses

The recent decade long mining boom can be overwhelmingly characterised by a lack of social planning and policy responses. What planning and policy responses did occur could best be described as “too little too late”. Housing and homelessness planning and policy responses are largely driven by government, and to date have been entirely inadequate in relation to dealing with the cyclical challenges of housing and homelessness in mining communities. More robust social planning and policy processes need to occur, not only as part of initial approval mining processes for new mining projects but as a regular and ongoing feature of the life of the mining project. In order to reinvigorate the Social License to Operate, social planning and policy processes and activities need to take a longer-term view of mining communities. The life of a mining operation varies but on average the life of a mining operation can between 30 and 60 years. These periods of time may encompass several mining boom and downturn periods. As noted in other research, mining communities, and some mining operations end prematurely because of global factors (Browne et al., 2011).

Social planning and policy processes need to be clear about the vision for the community, and this vision needs to be clear about the inclusiveness of the community and the extent to which the community is seen as a viable place to live for people who choose to live in mining communities for reasons other than being directly employed by the mining community. The inclusiveness towards families, particularly sole-parent families, and families with young children and school age children also needs to be explicitly stated as part of the vision for the community. There also needs to be more flexible use of investment in funding of specialist homelessness services to effectively address homeless need for different client groups in mining communities during peak periods.

8.3.3 Improving access to appropriate and affordable housing

It is difficult to predict exactly when the next mining boom will occur in Australia, and when it does occur how long it will last and how significant it will be to Australia’s economy. What is clear is that as governments across Australia continue to court mining enterprises and view mining as an economic saviour to Australia. The next mining boom is likely to bring widespread issues of lack of affordable housing in mining communities and mining regions as people flock to these regions in search of personal wealth and fortune. The mobility of people into rural and regional mining communities needs to be understood and should to be the focus
of more effective planning and policy responses than what has been experienced to date (Milbourne, 2014). The mix of mining company provided housing and accommodation, including work camps, social housing and private rental housing and privately-owned housing, needs to be considered from the perspective demands placed on mining communities during periods of mining boom. Also essential for consideration, is the implications for when the mining boom ends and cost of housing becomes considerably more affordable, but many are left without employment and some are caught with significant personal debts.

This research has clearly shown the impacts on vulnerable members of mining communities to homelessness by sheer lack of access to appropriate and affordable housing. Affordable housing is housing that costs no more than 30% of a person’s fortnightly income. This had the effect of making people homeless more quickly and in many instances extending their experience and duration of homelessness. This research has also shown that many people who in any other community situations, non-mining communities or communities not impacted by acute shortage of affordable housing, may not even be deemed at risk of homelessness, actually experienced homelessness in mining communities because there were simply no housing options available to them when needed.

The mining industry and government has an obligation to co-design housing policy to best suit the needs of the changing profile of mining communities. This joint approach has to align with the longer term strategic planning with the community and the agreed and shared values of the community. This approach also needs to take into account employment and community issues that may inhibit people being able to reside in a mining community for a longer duration.

8.3.4 Greater emphasis on homelessness prevention and early intervention approaches

As discussed in Chapter Two and in Chapter Seven, prevention and early intervention concepts in the context of homelessness services and intervention are fairly new service delivery trends but have been found to achieve great effectiveness in reducing homelessness. Prevention has been applied to “known at risk of homelessness” populations, such as young people (Crane et al., 2013; Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008) leaving out of home care, or people undergoing major life transitions who require support to access housing and maintain their housing. This thesis has also discussed the application of prevention to women and
children escaping domestic violence and the behaviours safe at home initiatives and policy which prevent homelessness (Burnet, 2016; Spinney, 2014).

Early intervention applies more to targeting interventions to people at risk of homelessness due to a major life event such as loss of employment, relationship or family stressors or major health issue. These particular issues can be quite significant in communities affected by the mining cycle and there need to be strategies in place to assist people during these periods.

Prevention and early intervention need to be principles underpinning targeted homelessness services and support in mining communities. This approach can be applied to people at risk of homelessness in range of situations including severe housing stress; loss of employment; experience of a major health issue; youth and family breakdown and domestic violence (Burnet, 2016; Spinney, 2014; Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008). Early intervention and prevention has context specific applications to people at risk of homelessness in mining communities. The mobility of people into rural and regional mining communities during boom periods, and the mobility of people out of the community over the mining cycle, should to be taken into account when designing early intervention and prevention responses.

Early intervention and prevention strategies specifically addressing the main pathways to homelessness identified in this thesis would not necessarily be difficult to implement, or expensive to fund. The Family Breakdown and Domestic and Family Violence Pathway discussed in this thesis is an opportunity for service providers and government to collaborate more effectively to provide solutions to women and children escaping domestic and family violence that does not see them become homeless. Examples of mining companies providing housing to women and children who have become homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence, while the male partner is accommodated at the workers accommodation, is one example of where the mining industry has implemented a policy based on the principle of prevention. Improving preventative approaches was widely embedded in the suite of recommendations put forward by Bryce (2015), which under Recommendation 73 of “Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland” report, calls for improved investment in domestic and family violence services, including refuges and crisis accommodation, particularly services located in rural and remote communities. These arrangements which focus on the housing needs of women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence, produce more positive impacts for these people in
terms of less disruption to the lifestyle and routines such as participation in school and employment (Burnet, 2016). These practices may also help to stop, as Ruth, so blatantly pointed out, the social ostracism of women in mining communities when their relationship breaks down.

The Unemployment and Housing Affordability Pathway presents some opportunities to apply early intervention and prevention approaches for people at risk of homelessness in mining communities. The support that is required to prevent homelessness and also to intervene early when homelessness first happens, will look different depending on the phase of the mining cycle. People at risk of homelessness during the mining boom periods, may well require a range of supports to maintain their housing, or access more affordable housing. It was noted that the Homestay Support service is available in the Mackay LGA however, no Homestay Support early intervention response is available in the communities of Moranbah and Dysart. There is a strong argument for initiatives such as Homestay Support which provide a case manager who can work with the person at risk of homelessness to assess, plan and implement strategies which will strengthen the person’s housing situation and decrease the risk of the person losing their tenancy. This initiative also has available brokerage funding which can be sourced to assist implement strategies connected to the person’s case management plan.

Initiatives like Homestay Support will be very useful in mining communities to assist people at risk of homelessness maintain their tenancies. The initiative would also be useful in mining communities during periods of mining downturn where many community members have experienced loss of employment and this can also impact the person’s housing tenancy. The extent to which an early intervention approach will be effective during the boom will be dependent on accompanying housing affordability policies. If social housing stock is not available, and private rental housing or home ownership is out of reach for most people on average incomes, it is unclear how effective even early intervention on its own can be in mining communities during booms.

In addition to the vital work of specialist homelessness services in rural and regional mining communities, participants also noted the importance of other related housing services which provide critical support to help people maintain their tenancies and avoid eviction and ultimately homelessness. These include the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service, financial counselling services, youth services, drug and alcohol services, relationship counselling, parenting and family support services and are supported by a range of evidence (Johnson et
All of these services and interventions play an important role in preventing people at risk of homelessness from going onto homelessness in rural and regional mining communities.

The High Vulnerability and Access to Services Pathway also offers opportunity for early intervention and prevention approaches with people at risk of homelessness in mining communities. Jackson’s experience of homelessness in many follows the typical pathway of youth homelessness of increasing family tensions, temporary periods away from the family home and decreasing participation in formal education (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). What distinguishes Jackson’s pathway experience is the failure of the youth homelessness service system in Mackay to address Jackson’s homelessness needs, and this being linked to the extreme pressures in Mackay with regard to critical shortage of affordable housing and high demand on local human services during the boom. This failure of the service system has meant that Jackson has experienced chronic homelessness, and that the barriers that he faces to obtain housing and employment are now that more challenging.

As noted in the previous pathway, the Homestay Support service is the only early intervention response available. This research found that there is an absence of youth specific early intervention responses in mining communities.

There is no Reconnect service in Mackay, Moranbah or Dysart for young people at risk of homelessness. There is scope for improvement of early intervention responses to young people in mining communities and it would seem obvious that proven programs such as Reconnect, with its focus on working closely with at risk young people between the ages of 12 and 18, could prove very useful to young people and families in mining communities.

Similarly, there is an absence of early intervention and prevention responses for people like Tracey and Frank who are highly vulnerable to homelessness for reasons including health, mental health, previous offending and drug and alcohol issues. The Homestay Support service provides an early intervention response aimed to securing the individual or family’s housing, however for people like Tracey and Frank a longer-term prevention response is appropriate. In mining communities during times of boom and critical shortage of housing and services, there is a compelling case to dedicate housing resources to people who are highly vulnerable to homelessness, and simply cannot access the services they need to remain housed. There is an opportunity for the mining industry and government to work more
collaboratively and flexibly with housing stock to provide housing solutions to the most vulnerable people in the community with appropriate support services. Without a dedicated strategy that targets the most vulnerable people in mining communities, and focuses on preventing homelessness for these people, the levels of homelessness, marginalisation and social exclusion will increase.

8.3.5 Increased capacity to provide crisis accommodation options
This research found that there was a need to improve the range of emergency accommodation responses available to people experiencing homelessness during the mining boom. This strategy has to build on the existing crisis accommodation services but consider the particular needs of different client groups such as young people, single adults, families and women and children who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic and family violence. This research confirmed that all demographic client groups struggled to access crisis accommodation during the mining boom period and that this had flow on effects in terms of obtaining housing.

Pressures on existing crisis accommodation services were evident across all services in the three communities during the mining boom, but these pressures were most acute in the smaller communities of Moranbah and Dysart who advised that for long periods their service was at maximum capacity and was unable to provide supported accommodation responses when people were referred.

It is essential that safe accommodation options be explored in mining communities during boom periods and these may include non-traditional responses to people in crisis. This may include the provision of more funding, and more flexible use of funding, to homelessness services to be able to lease properties from the private market. This will require some planning and collaboration as sourcing properties in mining communities to lease during a boom is not easy. These strategies should be promoted wherever possible, so that the community can more effectively support people experiencing homelessness.

8.3.6 Future Research Opportunities
The research concludes from the evidence gathered that the influence of the mining industry on mining communities, especially the profound impacts of the mining cycle, need to be better understood and managed if homelessness in these communities is to be reduced. The
mining cycle is ongoing and the recent approval of the Adani coal mine near Clermont in the Galilee basin west of Moranbah in 2016, again signals the need to better prepare mining communities to guard against the worst aspects and attributes of mining boom periods, particularly lack of housing. Participants in this study reflected that the mining boom and downturn period had occurred several times through their lifetimes and they fully anticipated future periods of mining boom to follow the current downturn. The mining cycle needs to be recognised in policy responses as structural driver of homelessness in mining communities.

Further analysis and research involving the 2016 Census data relating to homelessness in the Mackay and Isaac Regions will also be an important exercise in considering homelessness policy responses. This further research will also be useful in considering the effects of migration issues into and out of mining communities, including temporary workforce personnel whose data was captured as part of the 2016 Census. This will be important in developing future social policy and planning responses for these regions.

Additionally, future research needs to engage mining companies to properly understand their contribution to issues such as homelessness in mining communities, and the role they can play in responding to homelessness in mining communities. Engaging mining companies for such social research appears a major challenge due to the inherent political sensitivities. Nevertheless, it is important that mining companies are engaged as research partners to ensure mining communities are viable, sustainable and healthy places for individuals and families to live in the future.

8.4 Chapter conclusion

This research project is the culmination of four years of work to better understand homelessness in rural and regional Queensland mining communities impacted by the mining cycle. The data collected in this study corresponded with the mining downturn period of the mining cycle. The participants in this study provided evidence based on their experiences of homelessness from the decade long mining boom, and the subsequent downturn and some participants were still in situations of homelessness at the time data was collected for this study.
The mining industry and mining cycle do have profound influences on homelessness in rural and regional mining communities. The issues and challenges associated with homelessness in these communities vary according to the stage of the mining cycle. The dominant narrative of the mining boom of economic and social prosperity to Australian society needs to be reframed. The mining cycle did produce immense wealth, fortune and opportunity for some Australians, but also was the catalyst for a deepening division in social and economic inequality in Australian society. This widening inequality was no more apparent than in the mining communities in rural and regional Australia where community members experienced homelessness. A more tempered, circumspect narrative about the mining cycle that points out that the in the absence of appropriate planning and policy responses and ethical behaviours, mining booms drive increasing inequality across Australian society, is crucial. This inequality produces long-term social disadvantage that continues in mining communities during the downturn phase of the mining cycle. This increasing inequality is reflected in social, economic and community outcomes, and is most notable and apparent in the rural and regional mining communities which support the mining industry. Homelessness is one of the more severe and exclusionary human outcomes that occur in mining communities as direct result of the vast inequalities and pressures exerted on these communities during these times. Government and the mining industry must take more responsibility for causing homelessness in mining communities as it is a product of a poorly managed national economy and poor levels of social planning and policy regarding rural and regional communities. Mining communities, and mining regions throughout Australia, need to have support to ensure the critical elements of the ‘Social License to Operate’ are implemented in a way that serve as a safeguard against homelessness in these communities.
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Appendix A: Map of Bowen Basin region within Australia

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016)
Appendix B: Concept map
## Appendix C: Summary of research findings from Johnson, Scutella, Tseng and Wood (models for assessing homelessness)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Type</th>
<th>Model Assumption and Data Sources</th>
<th>Key Findings about the Interaction of Individual and Structural Factors in the Context of Causing and Ending Homelessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Static Model (Point in time assessment of homelessness)</strong></td>
<td>Data sourced from Journeys Home (JH) dataset to assess probability that an individual will become homeless at a point in time. Micro level individual data from the Journey Home project. Area Level data – 2011 Census.</td>
<td>Older men (45 years plus), those with low educational attainment, the unemployed, people who have experienced violence and the incarcerated are at higher risk of homelessness. People with prior episodes of primary homelessness were also at higher risk of homelessness. Regular drug use, absence of parenting during childhood or involvement in the child protection system were not associated with homelessness. (Factors correlated with these behavioural and biographical characteristics could be elevated for higher rates of homelessness.) Those with diagnosed mental health issues are at less risk of homelessness than those without a similar condition. People who were married, had dependent children, or had better social support, are less likely to be associated with homelessness. For people with risk individual behaviours, housing markets do matter but the effects of the labour market is mixed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Model (Probability of entry to homelessness)</strong></td>
<td>To estimate probability of people’s entry into homelessness, identify all persons classified as housed and estimate probability of entering homelessness within 6 months.</td>
<td>Vulnerable males are less likely to sustain secure housing than females. Families with children lowers the chance of becoming homeless, regardless of relationship status. The age and country of birth are not important as far as entry into homelessness. Those with low levels of education are more likely to slip out of formal housing circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro level individual data from the Journey Home project</td>
<td>Absence of parenting does not impact the pathways into homelessness, however those who had been in state care as children are more likely to enter homelessness (This is different to the static model of homelessness which found this group no more likely to be homeless) Risky behaviour (drinking, smoking and drug use) raises the chances of entering homelessness. The effects of ill health on entries into homelessness are mixed. While a long-term health condition increases an individual’s likelihood of entering homelessness, having a diagnosed bipolar or schizophrenia condition decreases the probability of slipping out of secure housing and into homelessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Level data – 2011 Census</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Exits Model (Probability of exit to homelessness) | To estimate probability of exiting homelessness, focus on homeless people and estimate their probability of being housed Micro level individual data from the Journey Home project Area Level data – 2011 Census | Employment status improves chances to exit homelessness. People who lost their job more than six months to 2 years prior are more likely to exit homelessness. Some evidence to show people without a principal caregiver at age 14 exited homelessness People recently incarcerate were less likely to exit homelessness People with drinking, smoking and illegal drug use also less likely to exit homelessness Age does have an impact on being able to exit homelessness, more evidence showing young people are more likely to exit homelessness, but this maybe drive by services and other unobserved factors. |
### Appendix D: AIHW Queensland Supplementary Tables (Table 14: Clients, by main reasons for seeking assistance, 2014-15 adjusted for non-response)

#### Table QLD CLIENTS.14: Clients, by main reasons for seeking assistance, 2014–15, adjusted for non-response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Main reason for seeking assistance</th>
<th>Males (number)</th>
<th>Females (number)</th>
<th>Total clients (number)</th>
<th>Total clients (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,002</td>
<td>4,612</td>
<td>8,614</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,613</td>
<td>3,007</td>
<td>5,620</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing affordability stress</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,441</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>2,989</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic gambling</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing crisis</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,565</td>
<td>10,119</td>
<td>19,685</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,971</td>
<td>6,557</td>
<td>12,528</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous accommodation ended</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,164</td>
<td>6,756</td>
<td>9,920</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time out from family/other situation</td>
<td></td>
<td>358</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship/family breakdown</td>
<td></td>
<td>899</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic and family violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,833</td>
<td>5,077</td>
<td>6,910</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-family violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>732</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>1,114</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>248</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic drug or substance use</td>
<td></td>
<td>137</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic alcohol use</td>
<td></td>
<td>197</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,474</td>
<td>2,149</td>
<td>4,623</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition from custodial arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition from other care arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination including racial discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerant</td>
<td></td>
<td>424</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to return home due to environmental reasons</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement with school or other education and training</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of family and/or community support</td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>2,812</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not stated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>128</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>. .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

1. Where more than one reason for seeking assistance has been provided, the client chooses the main reason.
2. The client's main reason for seeking assistance at the start of the first support period.
3. In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. In addition to improvements in the CMS for these data items, wording providing specific examples of housing crisis was removed from the section relating to reason for seeking assistance in the CMS. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. These changes in agency reporting were evident in the data from all states and territories.
4. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated): 43,955.
5. For data quality issues, refer to the Explanatory Notes.

### Appendix E: Number of clients assisted by Specialist Homeless Services within the Mackay LGA from 2011/2012 to 2015/2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Clients#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 – 2012##</td>
<td>1,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 – 2013##</td>
<td>1,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 – 2014</td>
<td>1,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 – 2015</td>
<td>1,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 – 2016</td>
<td>2,035</td>
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</table>

Sources: AIHW SHSC CURF (2011-12 to 2014-15) and AIHW – Queensland Regional Statistical Summaries 2015-16 (2017a)

# Number of clients with at least one support period provided by a SHS located within Mackay (R) LGA

## Data for these years are to be used with caution as geographic coding was problematic in early years of the specialist homelessness services Collection
Appendix F: Information sheet

Homelessness in Regional Queensland Mining Boomtowns: Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah

INFORMATION SHEET

Who is conducting the research

Associate Professor Donna McAuliffe, Senior Investigator, Dr Donna McDonald, Senior Investigator, Shane Warren, Primary Researcher School of Human Services and Social Work / Griffith Health Contact Phone Number: 0488288150 Contact Email: shane.warren@griffithuni.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?

I'm very interested in being able to talk with you about your experiences of being homeless in the communities of Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah. This research aims to explore homelessness in regional Queensland mining communities which have been impacted by the current decade long mining boom.

What you will be asked to do

As a research participant you will be asked to participate in individual interviews with the primary researcher Shane Warren. These interviews will be focused on understanding your experiences of homelessness. The length of the interview will be approximately one to one and a half hours and will be arranged at a time and place of your convenience.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants in this research will be specifically selected on the basis of their membership to at least one of the following stakeholder categories:

- Category A - Individual and Families who have experienced homelessness
- Category B - Specialist homelessness services
- Category C - Government Agencies, Local Businesses and generic human Services
- Category D - Mining industry and workforce representatives
• Category E - Community representatives interested in homelessness issues

I am making contact with you as I understand that you are a person who has experienced homelessness in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah (Category A) and maybe interested in participating in this study.

Approximately 35 participants will be recruited to assist this research across the five participant groups.

The expected benefits of the research

This research provides an opportunity to explore homelessness in regional and rural mining communities. The findings from this research will help inform new and innovative ways to address homelessness in these communities. Homelessness research has tended to focus on homelessness in large cities in Australia and around the world, hence this research will explore people's experience of homelessness in regional mining communities.

Specifically this research will contribute to the knowledge base which informs social work and human services practice with homeless people. In particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the circumstances that lead to people becoming homeless in mining communities, and the factors which helped to end homelessness for people living in these towns.

Finally this research aims to identify ways in which communities can work together, including mining industry and community representatives, to develop and implement strategies that are helpful to people experiencing homelessness in their local communities.

A thirty dollar IGA, Woolworths or Coles/Myer gift card will be provided to you as an incentive to participate in this research at the conclusion of the interview process. This incentive is in recognition of your time and experience which has assisted this study.

Risks to you

As a person living in a regional community every effort will be made to ensure your privacy and confidentiality will be protected. This research or any publication arising from it will not attribute direct quotes to you. However, given the size of the communities of Dysart, Moranbah and Mackay it is not possible to always be able to guarantee anonymity.

This research is being led by an independent PhD student researcher with the School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith Health, Griffith University. In addition to my role as an independent student researcher, I am also an employee of the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW). This research is being undertaken outside of my role as a public servant.

If at any stage you have concerns about the nature of this research in the context of the researcher's dual roles please feel free to contact my University Supervisor Associate.
Your confidentiality

This research will collect personal information about individual and community experiences of homelessness however all published results will be de-identified. As previously discussed, given the small size of the communities of interest, anonymity cannot be guaranteed but every effort will be made to ensure participant’s privacy and confidentiality are maintained.

Interviews will be transcribed and safely secured in research files which are locked in a cabinet. Electronic files will also be subject to password protection. Participants will be asked to review transcripts to ensure the accuracy of information.

Your participation is voluntary

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your participation in this study in no way influenced the services and support provided to you by specialist homelessness services or any other community or government agency. Participants are also free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Questions / further information

If you have any further questions regarding this study please feel free to contact Associated Professor Donna McAuliffe on 07 33821070 or Dr Donna McDonald on 07 33821176 for additional information about the project.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

Research participants will be provided with regular updates on the progress of this research which will include any initial or interim findings. A written summary report will be provided to research participants at the end of the research as well as offering opportunities for participants to discuss the research findings with the primary investigator.
Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information which may appear in the publications/reports arising from this research. This is occurring with your consent. Any additional personal information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of the data maybe used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will be at all times safeguarded, except where you have consented otherwise. For further information consult the university’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone 07 3735 5585.
Appendix G: Consent form

Homelessness In Regional Queensland Mining Boomtowns: Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah

CONSENT FORM

Research Team
Shane Warren (Research Team Member), Dr Donna McDonald (Research Team Member), Associate Professor Donna McAuliffe (Senior Investigator)
School of Human Services and Social Work / Griffith Health
Contact Phone: 0488288150
Contact Email: shane.warren@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include participation in an individual interview with Mr Shane Warren to explore experiences of homelessness in the communities of interest;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be a thirty dollar Gift Card from either an IGA, Woolworths or Coles/Myer store which will be made available to me at the completion of the interview in recognition of the time that provided to assist the research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and in no way impacts upon any service provision that I might receive from specialist homelessness services or other community or government agencies;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that interviews will be tape recorded to allow Mr Warren to transcribe the interview for analysis and that all recording and transcriptions will be safely secured to protect privacy and confidentiality;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Interview questions – Stakeholder category 1

PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGE ON MINING COMMUNITIES

- Are you from Mackay? How long have you been living in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah?
- What has been your experience living in these communities? What changes have you seen in these communities over the last ten years of the mining boom?
- How would you describe these changes? Are some changes good? Or have there also been changes which have been bad for the community?

PATHWAYS INTO AND OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

- Please tell me about your experience as a person who became homeless? What were the things in your life that happened that led to you being homeless?
- How long were you homeless in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah?
- What was your impression of the communities’ attitudes towards homelessness?
- What were some of the main things that happened to you while you were homeless in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah?
- Tell me about your experience of homelessness in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah?
- When you were homeless, were you interested in accessing services and support?
- What assistance was helpful to you to getting housing and support services?
- What things do you think help to reduce homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah?

MINING INDUSTRY

- Have you ever been involved directly with the local mining industry (i.e., employed by a mining company or employed by a company that provides support to the mining industry?)
- In your view, has the mining industry made a difference on the way homeless people can get housing and support services in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah?
- Do you know of any contributions that mining companies have made towards improving local communities?
- Is homelessness in mining communities such as Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah different to homelessness in large cities? If so, how is it different?
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Who do you see as the main organisation to help you with homelessness in Mackay, Dysart, Moranbah?
- What do you think the role of Government in relation to addressing homelessness in your community?
- What do you think the mining industry should do about homelessness in Mackay, Dysart, Moranbah?
- What should the local agencies of the community do about homelessness in Mackay, Dysart and Moranbah?
- What would happen to homelessness if mining companies left Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah?
### Appendix I: Coding summary report

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<td>Access to specialist homelessness services</td>
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<td>How a homeless person came to access or link to a specialist homelessness service in Mackay, Dysart or Moranbah</td>
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<td>There are few services and resources available in mining communities to assist homeless people</td>
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<td>Attitudes towards Mackay</td>
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<td>Reflection from participants about their experiences living in the Mackay Community</td>
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<td>Attraction to working in Human Services</td>
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<td>Participants attraction to working in human services</td>
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<td>Participant observations of changes in the Dysart community during their period of residing in the community</td>
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<td>Participant observations of changes in the Mackay community during their period of residing in the community</td>
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<td>Changes in Moranbah</td>
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<td>Participant observations of changes in the Mackay community during their period of residing in the community</td>
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<td>Churches providing unfunded support and services to homeless people in Moranbah</td>
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<td>Community Attitudes and Awareness of Homelessness</td>
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<td>Participant observations and comments about the communities of Mackay, Moranbah and Dysart awareness of homelessness issues</td>
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<td>Experiences of People moving to mining communities</td>
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<td>Attitudes and experiences of people moving to mining communities as opportunities to improve wealth and circumstances</td>
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<td>Detailed information about the demographics and motivations of people coming to Moranbah</td>
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<td>If mining was to collapse in mining communities, what effect would this have on homelessness in these communities</td>
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<td>Future goals of the Homeless person</td>
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<td>Personal goals identified by homeless participants during the interview</td>
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<td>Participants experiencing homelessness discussion on their contact and relationships with family members</td>
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<td>Housing as a Human Right</td>
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<td>Feedback from homeless participants experience with the homelessness service system and opportunities for improved service delivery</td>
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<td>Difficulties for people escaping DV in mining communities such as Moranbah</td>
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<td>The implications for people escaping DV in mining communities who are then made subject of recovery orders</td>
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<td>Wrap around supports</td>
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<td>The provision of wrap around human service supports including case management as a important component of ensuring people at risk of homelessness or who are homeless, access housing and are able to maintain their housing</td>
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<td>Competition for housing</td>
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<td>Types of Homelessness</td>
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<td>Homeless people couch-surfing in mining communities</td>
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<td>Priority client groups of homeless people in Mackay including rough sleepers and women and children escaping DV and young people</td>
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