

Summer 2019



# BCEC

Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

## Newsletter

The latest news on BCEC's  
research activities, publications,  
events and people

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## From the Director

Welcome to our first tri-annual newsletter for 2019!

This year is set to be another strong year for BCEC and we look forward to reporting these highlights to you in the months to come.

In this edition, we look back through BCEC's achievements in the final months of 2018, including the welcome news that Bankwest and Curtin University renewed their support for the Centre, providing funding for the next four years.

This commitment is exciting for the Centre, and will allow us to continue building our reputation and extend our research impact.

BCEC released a number of impactful research reports, including research into Western Australia's health sector, Australia's private rental sector, energy policy, and tourism in South West WA.

Our report into the private rental sector in WA uncovered lease uncertainty and housing affordability to be key issues in the private rental sector, evidence which was supported by WA Housing Minister Hon. Peter Tinley AM MLA in a media statement following the launch. Minister Tinley called on industry and the community sector to partner to tackle the issue of affordable housing.

We also welcomed a visit from eleven year old Cottesloe Primary School student, Christopher Henderson. Christopher and I discussed my research into child poverty in Australia, for a presentation he was delivering in the WA Legislative Council. Research impact and collaboration comes in many forms, and I relished the opportunity to meet with Christopher for his project.

2018 was also a year of personal success for a number of our staff, including Astghik Mavisakalyan. My congratulations to Astghik for her recent promotion to Associate Professor and Principal Research Fellow – a very deserving recognition.

Thank you for your support of the Centre, and best wishes for a happy and successful 2019.

Professor Alan Duncan  
Director,  
Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

## AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

# Alan Duncan wins top media commentator prize at 2018 Curtin University Research Impact and Engagement Awards

Professor Alan Duncan, BCEC's Director, has been awarded the prestigious 2018 award for the Most Prolific Media Commentator across Curtin University's Faculty of Business and Law. The award recognises Alan's outstanding contribution to media engagement for the Centre, the Faculty of Business and Law, and Curtin University.

Alan has appeared regularly on TV, radio and in print media over the course of the year, providing expert commentary and analysis across a host of topics relating to public policy, educational outcomes, labour markets and energy policy.

Curtin Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Terry AO, said she was proud Alan's achievements have been recognised through the award.

"Alan has led by example in raising public awareness of the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre's research, through exceptional media coverage and public commentary," Professor Terry said.

"His expertise in communicating complex research topics in clear and accessible ways ensures the Centre's research findings have the broadest audience reach, and maximum influence and impact on public policy discourse."

Curtin University's annual Media Awards is designed to recognise academic staff who have made an outstanding contribution to raising Curtin University's share of positive media coverage over the past 12 months.



*Professor Alan Duncan receives his award from Curtin University Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Terry AO*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

## Bankwest and Curtin extend partnership for economic research centre



Professor Alan Duncan with Bankwest Managing Director Rowan Munchenberg

Bankwest and Curtin University have renewed the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre partnership for a further four years.

The partnership, which was extended in November, will enable the BCEC to continue to build its growing international reputation as a leading, Western Australian-based social and economic research centre.

Curtin University Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Terry AO said the BCEC was unique in its approach to delivering trusted, independent research combined with a strong commitment to communication, outreach and engagement.

"The BCEC continues to affirm its standing as the premier economic

and social research institute in Western Australia and I am delighted our partnership with Bankwest is continuing," Professor Terry said.

"Under the leadership of Professor Alan Duncan, the BCEC produces high quality and independent research on key economic and social issues that contribute to the wellbeing of families, businesses and communities."

Bankwest Managing Director Rowan Munchenberg said Bankwest was proud to support the independent and impactful research being carried out by the BCEC.

"Through the work of the BCEC, community leaders in WA and at a national level have access to expertise and insights that can help us all adapt

to, and prosper in, our rapidly changing world," Mr Munchenberg said.

BCEC Advisory Board Chair Timothy Marney said the BCEC had become an important source of knowledge and policy analysis for decision makers locally, nationally and increasingly internationally.

"The Centre is providing businesses and policy makers with economic and social thought leadership on some of the greatest challenges society is facing, offering them a range of potential evidence-based solutions," Mr Marney said.

The BCEC was established in 2012 through the generous support of Bankwest, a division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

## AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

## BCEC congratulates Astghik's promotion to Associate Professor and recent funding success



Astghik Mavisakalyan

BCEC's Astghik Mavisakalyan was promoted to the position of Associate Professor and Principal Research Fellow during the latest round of Curtin University academic promotions.

Astghik joined the Centre in 2013 and has research interests in the economics of education, labour economics and political economy.

Astghik leads the Centre's *Focus on Industry* and *Working Papers* series and sits on the Economics Society of Australia's WA Branch Council.

She was also recently successful in securing a grant funded by the Australia-

Germany Joint Research Co-operation Scheme, which supports international academic cooperation between the two countries.

Astghik will investigate the health consequences of bribing in a joint research project with collaborators Dr Olga Popova and Dr Vladimir Otrachshenko from the Leibnitz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS), based in Regensburg, Germany.

BCEC looks forward to welcoming Astghik's visiting collaborators in early 2019.

## BCEC LAUNCHES WA'S HEALTH INDUSTRY REPORT



*Dr Marcus Tan, Founder, CEO & Medical Director, HealthEngine; Associate Professor Leanne Durrington, Chief Executive Officer, WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA); Ms Stephanie Buckland, Chief Executive Officer, Amana Living; Professor Alan Duncan, Director, BCEC; Associate Professor Astghik Mavisakalyan, Principal Research Fellow, BCEC; Ms Tracy Vo, Journalist and Presenter, 9News Perth; Dr Kim Isaacs, Deputy Medical Director, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services; Mr Pieter Vorster, Executive General Manager, Customer Insights and Solutions at Bankwest.*

BCEC's latest *Focus on Industry* report, [To Health and Happiness: WA's Health Industry Future](#), was launched at a breakfast event on Friday 7 December 2018 and provides an in-depth investigation of the health industry, a sector of critical importance to WA's economy and people.

The report found that lower paid and lower skilled personal care workers are likely to be substituting the work of enrolled nurses in Australia's residential aged care homes.

The launch commenced with a Welcome to Country performed by Noongar elder, Betty Garlett and the Moorditj Mob at Wesley College, followed by Professor Deborah Terry AO, Curtin University Vice-Chancellor, delivering opening remarks for the event.

Professor Terry talked about the need for universities to deliver industry-ready graduates to ensure the sector's workforce can keep up with growing demand.

"As a result of the sector's fast growth there are key areas of strain. We need to ensure our health graduates are equipped with the skills they need to deliver strong health outcomes to WA's population," Professor Terry said.

In launching the report, Centre Director and report co-author, Professor Alan Duncan highlighted the growing role the

health care industry is playing in the WA economy.

"The Health Care and Social Assistance sector is the third biggest contributor to WA's economy, totalling \$14.4 billion in Gross Value Added in 2018, and now accounts for nearly 171,000 of all jobs in WA," Professor Duncan said.

"However, the Federal Government contribution to WA's total health spending is the lowest per capita across all states and territories, and \$212 less per person than the national average."

"Surprisingly, spending on public health and prevention totals only 1.7% of all spending in the WA health sector. This strikes us as a pretty modest budget given the long-term benefits that prevention deliver, not just in terms of positive health outcomes, but from an economic standpoint."

Report co-author and BCEC Principal Research Fellow, Associate Professor Astghik Mavisakalyan, said there was a concerning decrease in the number of

health care workers who report being very satisfied with their work.

"In addition, we see an increase in the share of health care workers in high or very high psychological distress," Associate Professor Mavisakalyan said.

"There is a responsibility on health sector employers to ensure the right mix of skills, positive workplace cultures and professional training opportunities for workers. It is imperative that the significance of health care and support work in our society is appropriately recognised."

Expert panellists agreed a collaborative approach is needed across the Western Australian health care sector, community, government and industry.

Dr Kim Isaacs, Deputy Medical Director, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services, spoke about the need to provide more community health services in regional communities.



Yule Brook College students and their teacher pictured with Professor Alan Duncan, Associate Professor Astghik Mavisakalyan and Dr Kim Isaacs.

*"If we want to see a change in the number of preventable hospitalisations and deaths then we need to focus on building up community health services," Dr Isaacs said.*

Dr Marcus Tan, Founder, CEO & Medical Director, HealthEngine, highlighted the role of digitalisation in creating a more efficient and effective health care sector.

"Digitalisation provides the health sector with the chance to eliminate duplication, utilise big data to analyse medication use and overuse, and to reduce costs," Dr Tan said.

Associate Professor Learne Durrington, Chief Executive Officer, WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA), discussed the need for a stronger commitment to preventative health.

"It's hard to create behaviour change but there can be no doubt that prevention is absolutely essential," Associate Professor Durrington said.

Associate Professor Durrington went on to discuss the report's findings on the satisfaction and mental health of workers in the health care industry.

"Increasing expectations and complexity of health needs could be one reason

we're seeing a decrease in the level of very satisfied health workers, but we do need to monitor this closely," Associate Professor Durrington said.

Stephanie Buckland, Chief Executive Officer, Amana Living, spoke of how aged care providers can deliver better services if they take a step back from treating only the medical issues of their residents.

"There are certainly opportunities to treat our seniors holistically, and to wrap the services around them that they personally need," Ms Buckland said.

In closing the event's proceedings, Pieter Vorster, Executive General Manager, Customer Insights and Solutions at Bankwest, thanked the BCEC for delivering a compelling report.

"When we entered into the BCEC partnership with Curtin University, we did so to change the lives of Western Australians and their communities, and this report is just one example of how we are achieving this goal," Mr Vorster said.

The report generated extensive media interest, including articles in *The West Australian*, *Business News*, *The Age*, and interviews with Professor Duncan aired on Channel 9, 6PR and ABC Radio's network.





## Steven Bond-Smith shares insights into being the primary carer for son, Leander

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**Steven Bond-Smith** is a Research Fellow with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and is interested in the economics of innovation, growth and regional economics. As the primary carer for his son, Leander, Steven says that being a parent is wonderful, but the responsibility and time commitment can also be exhausting.

### **Tell us why you chose a career path in academia.**

Following my undergraduate degree I worked for an internet service provider and used applied economics to inform the company's strategy through a regulatory reform process. As this project came to an end, I was disappointed that the applied economics component in my role would be disappearing and I was inspired to move to a consulting firm where I pursued a PhD in economics part-time.

I also had the opportunity to be a visiting researcher at the London School of Economics, Australian National University, the University of Groningen and Vrije University Amsterdam which gave me a good insight into working within academia.

Following my PhD, I returned to economic regulation, this time for an industry regulator. I found myself longing to apply economics to broader and more contentious questions involved in academic research, so

I applied for a role with BCEC.

### **What key skills do you need to do your job?**

I think one of the most important aspects of academic research is creativity. If specific theories don't already exist, we have to consider the logical mechanisms that drive the relationships between factors. I believe creativity is required, particularly when there is a counter-intuitive relationship.

For instance, intuitively, new internet technologies would make the world 'flat' because we work from anywhere, but in reality, it seems that the opposite is often true. For many industries, it has now become more important to be located in large and connected cities, as it gets easier to share information or sell products to far away markets. Rather than spreading out, cities become increasingly important to economic activity, so the world becomes less 'flat' and increasingly 'spiky'. It's advantageous for related or similar businesses to be located close together and serve the world, which is why single regions such as Silicon Valley can dominate an industry.

Economists also need to be fluent in the languages of mathematics and statistics - the key tools that economists use to explore and describe economic relationships.

### **Tell us about something interesting you are working on at the BCEC?**

I recently co-authored a report looking into the healthcare industry in WA and Australia. In particular, I explored innovation in healthcare and the rapid changes occurring

in terms of how we consume healthcare services and how they are delivered. This is particularly important in Australia and WA because of our dispersed population. We have some very isolated communities, and Australian cities are also far apart from each other. We have a great opportunity in Australia to explore new technologies that are enabling remote healthcare delivery over great distances.

This research allows us to think about what this means for the healthcare industry and for the health of people in remote communities and in our cities. We see that there are many technologies used to deliver health care yet we need to keep in mind that these technologies are not perfect substitutes for face-to-face contact with health professionals. The quality of care needs to be sustained or improved, while finding economic efficiencies in the technologies that are used for healthcare delivery.

### **Your research is centrally concerned with the economics of innovation, economic growth, and regional economics. Tell us more about this.**

Innovation is one of the primary drivers of long run economic growth. I like to think about how to model innovation to understand the implications on regions, economic growth and economic policy. For example, an innovator often only has part of an idea and it's only when they meet someone else who has the connecting part of the idea that it becomes an innovation.

While the internet means you can work from

anywhere, the greatest gains in affecting change and innovation are in very large, globally-connected cities. Similar to the case with healthcare, this is because electronic communication is not a substitute for face-to-face meetings, but complementary.

Take a look for yourself - the vast majority of your emails are likely to be from people in the same city as you and usually in the same office as you. So rather than the internet making the world flat; the world of innovation is concentrated in cities. But this theory also implies that innovation is less likely in a place like WA and Australia - because we are far away from the rest of the world and our cities are less dense and more isolated - however we know there is a thriving innovation industry here on our doorstep. So what is it about some regions that make them more innovative than others and how do innovative regions overcome barriers to innovation such as distance?

I hope my research contributes to developing strategies and policies to overcome these barriers to innovation. For example, the clustering of industries that we're good at and diversifying into related industries supports regional innovation and inclusive growth.

**Tell us about the highlight in being the primary carer for your son, Leander. What are the challenges and how do you juggle this with work?**

Being a parent is wonderful, but the responsibility and time commitment can also be exhausting. I took a significant period of parental leave and personal leave when Leander was born and I have reduced my workload since returning to work in order to spend a day at home with Leander. He changes so quickly and I'm grateful for the privilege to get to watch him grow. It is

great to see his personality coming out: he's very smiley and happy, he only tries things when he's sure of himself and is very good at letting us know exactly what he wants!

Being a parent also really highlights to me some of the drivers of the gender pay gap that my colleagues at BCEC work on. In particular, if the parenting commitment is not accounted for, then this will be reflected in subsequent career opportunities, even when those commitments reduce as children grow. I now strongly believe that if we do not have flexible and supportive workplaces and labour markets, there is human capital in parents, particularly mothers, which could be lost. This highlights to me the very real economic benefits of reducing the gender pay gap.

**What support do you have to enable the success of your research?**

My wife is an expert in econometrics and statistics. I'm really lucky that I can ask her a quick question if I need help on something I am working on. Also, when I'm working on something, I can discuss it with her and she knows what I'm talking about. Her support is crucial to me being happy and successful in my work.

**What's the toughest challenge/ biggest battle?**

I think a common challenge in many fields of research is trying to communicate your research so the general public understands how the research has value and impact. Recently, it feels like people have stopped listening to experts and have turned towards people who seem to 'tell it like it is'. As academics, we spend our lives dedicated to understanding particular issues and it's hard going if the public don't recognise this expertise.

At BCEC, stakeholder engagement with both

academia and industry is important for our research development, and also gives us an opportunity to share research with people who might not usually see it. But we have to be able to communicate our research in ways that connect with real world lives. This is not an easy task for many academics, but having industry experience helps me focus my research to ask how it makes a difference and how can I communicate this most effectively.

**What's the biggest myth about your work?**

The biggest myth is that economics is all about money. Everyone assumes an economist knows what to invest in. But in reality most economists don't work for banks, and instead focus on interesting questions about how the world works. For example, if I'm thinking about the economics of innovation, I'm looking at the relationships between skills, measures of innovation and the location of both people and innovations: none of those are measured in money.

**What advice or words of wisdom would you share with others interested in working within academia?**

Research is a most exciting endeavour due to the endless possibilities that lie ahead. But I would say that persistence is absolutely crucial. To thrive in academia, it is important to frequently publish articles in top journals and this can be challenging. There will be setbacks. The academic job market is highly competitive. Research doesn't always go to plan. It is easy to feel disenchanted by these aspects, but if it's your dream to work in academic research, it's important to look past this and persist with following that dream.



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BCEC IN THE MEDIA

*The Sydney Morning Herald*

# Australia's low-paid workforce a threat to wages growth

By [Rebecca Cassells](#), Principal Research Fellow, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre



Australia is building one of the biggest low-paid workforces in its history, with serious consequences for the economy and wages.

Carers – aged care, childcare and disability care workers - have been the No.1 growth occupation in the past 10 years, with an additional 170,000 workers added between the 2006 and 2016 censuses. The majority are women.

This workforce now numbers around half-a-million workers, and has bolstered the booming healthcare sector, which has grown at double the pace of the entire labour market in the past four years alone – 20 per cent compared with 10 per cent. Yet the hourly wage rate these workers attract is

often only just above the minimum wage and well below what could be considered a "living wage". An average childcare worker can expect to earn \$21 an hour and aged and disability care workers around \$24 an hour. Care workers are taking home about \$33,000 each year.

Caring roles – caring for children, the sick, the disabled and the elderly – have for the most part fallen to women and historically have largely been unpaid.

They have also been one of the biggest barriers to women's economic security and access to jobs within the "formal" labour market. The National Disability Insurance Scheme, aged care and childcare public

funding models have now shifted many of these roles into the "formal" labour market, with demand for these services unwavering. The Department of Jobs and Small Business has predicted that in the next five years, aged and disability care workers will grow by 40 per cent and the childcare workforce by 18 per cent.

Formalisation and expansion of these historically unpaid roles can be considered to be a relatively good thing - especially for women. The care workforce has opened up employment opportunities for many workers, particularly older women. It's also removed barriers to employment, freeing women up to pursue other paid work

opportunities. And it also means that finally some of the work that women have always done can now actually be counted. But there are plenty of problems with building such a large low-paid workforce, not least for the workers themselves.

The labour market has looked extremely healthy lately. Unemployment has fallen to a six-year low of 5.1 per cent and participation is the highest it's ever been. But despite the tighter labour market, we have not seen the anticipated wage growth that should follow.

Lots of reasons have been offered, but we can't ignore the likely effect that the addition of thousands of low-paid care workers is likely to have on wage growth both now and in the future. Adding tens of thousands of workers to the bottom of the earnings distribution also means that wage inequality is likely to increase over the coming years and these workers will be hard pressed to contribute to substantive consumption growth or the tax revenue base that the government is looking to secure.

Low-paid jobs can play an important role in the economy, generally offering lower-cost goods and services, but is care work really a low-value service? And should it be paid as low as it is, especially when we can see a number of companies making huge profits?

The aged care sector is a good example. Six big for-profit players are operating in the sector and three of these – Regis, Estia and Japara – are listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. The sector is forecast to earn about \$1.7 billion in profits in the 2018-19 financial year, with revenue reaching \$20.2 billion. It also attracts more than \$18.6 billion in government funding, yet it pays only \$13.2 billion in wages.

What's more, we've seen an increasing mismatch between the needs of those in aged care and the skill level (and pay) of the workers who care for them.

Recent analysis by the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre has shown that the number of people with complex health care needs in residential aged care has quadrupled in the past 10 years – from 13 per cent to 52 per cent, yet the number of staff qualified to deliver this care has failed to keep pace. In fact it's likely that lower-paid and lower-skilled personal care workers are substituting for the work of enrolled nurses in Australia's residential aged care homes, with personal care workers 31 per cent above the estimated workforce requirements.

This evidence suggests the aged care sector and its workforce is well and truly ready for an overhaul. The Aged Care Workforce

Taskforce that will start in 2019 and the royal commission that is under way will hopefully address some of the skills issues we are seeing in this sector.

Meanwhile, childcare workers continue to advocate a pay rise but earlier this year lost a five-year wage case as unions were unable to prove comparable worth to male-dominated industries.

Labor has recently promised that if elected it will abolish this requirement and install a new Pay Equity Panel to preside over pay equity cases presented to the Fair Work Commission. This move is likely to shape some big changes.

Notwithstanding these initiatives and the increasing likelihood of a Labor government, it may well be time again for this huge workforce to collectively do what it has the numbers to do, and what Reserve Bank governor Philip Lowe has been encouraging workers do for some time now – demand a pay rise.

For policymakers, academics and everyone else, it's a good time for us to take a leaf out of Mariana Mazzucato's book and ask the question – who really does create value in an economy and how much is it really worth?





Professor Alan Duncan, Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre; Professor Helen Hodgson, Curtin Law School, Curtin University; WA Minister for Housing Hon. Peter Tinley AM MLA; Dr Amity James, Lecturer, School of Economics, Finance and Property, Curtin University; Associate Professor Steven Rowley, School of Economics, Finance and Property, Curtin University; Alan Langford, Chief Economist, Bankwest; Grahame Searle, Director General, Department of Communities and Jennette Ward, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Council on the Ageing WA.

## BCEC FEATURE SERIES

# Australia's Private Rental Market: Quality, Security and Affordability

BCEC released two new research reports at a housing workshop in October 2018, drawing on data from the latest BCEC Housing Affordability Survey to examine the state of the private rental sector in Australia.

Both reports address issues of affordability, quality and security particularly for low income households, single parents and older people in the rental market.

The workshop was launched by WA Minister for Housing Hon. Peter Tinley AM MLA who addressed the importance of housing affordability as an issue that affects many of us and requires all our efforts to resolve.

"Housing affordability is an issue that affects many of us and it requires all our efforts to resolve. A strong ongoing partnership with industry and the community sector are crucial if we are to deliver affordable housing," Mr Tinley said.

BCEC launched two reports at the workshop: [The Private Rental Sector in Australia: Public perceptions of quality and affordability](#) and [Older Renters in the Western Australian Private Rental Sector](#).

### [Strategies to enhance housing security for WA's older renters.](#)

The *Private Rental Sector in Australia* report contains analysis of 2016 census data and a survey of more than 3,000 Australian private renters through the BCEC Housing Affordability Survey, in order to evaluate the experiences and challenges of those tenants renting through the private rental sector.

Report author Associate Professor Steven Rowley, from the School of Economics, Finance and Property at Curtin University, said the Australian private rental sector appeared to be delivering quality and affordable housing for most renters, but was failing those on low incomes.

"The majority of private renters have a household income of \$78,000 or less, and more than half of respondents said they were in housing stress because they were being forced into unaffordable

accommodation due to a lack of suitable alternatives," Associate Professor Rowley said.

The report found some positives, with dwelling quality generally perceived as good, the relationship between the landlord and tenant often excellent, and tenants reporting strong feelings of being at home.

However, it also found that more than one in three single parents suffered discrimination when applying for a new rental property.

These findings are in line with the *Older renters in the Western Australian private rental sector* report, which found older Australians reported facing a lack of tenure security despite 41 per cent looking to sign long-term leases and another 23 per cent open to a lease extension if it was available.



Report author Associate Professor Helen Hodgson, from the Curtin Law School, said it was important for older Australians to have the security to be able to age in place, particularly if the alternative was premature admission into an aged care facility.

“Our research found many older renters have only been in their current home for up to three years with 41 per cent of older Australian renters forced to leave their previous rental property due to factors beyond their control,” Associate Professor Hodgson said.

BCEC Director Professor Alan Duncan chaired a panel discussion with Grahame Searle, Director General, Department of Communities; Jennette Ward, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Council on the Ageing WA; and Michelle Mackenzie, Chief Executive Officer, Shelter WA.

Grahame Searle shared the important work being done by the Department of Communities in contributing to the debate about private rental sector reform and delivering much needed affordable housing options for households on low incomes.

Jennette Ward discussed the need for long-term changes to deliver better living conditions and greater opportunities for seniors in Western Australia.

Michelle Mackenzie discussed whether the WA private rental sector is delivering quality and secure housing for all.

“Over a third of tenants are paying more than 30% of their income on rent, and for low income tenants this leads to long term, sustained housing stress. Limited access to affordable rental properties contributes to long term housing instability, poverty and homelessness,”

said Ms Mackenzie.

“A shift in thinking is needed. Rental properties are not just investment vehicles, they are people’s homes.”

Minister Tinley subsequently released a statement outlining his comments at the workshop, including his party’s commitment to addressing housing affordability, and noted the value of the work that BCEC is undertaking.

“It is important that organisations such as the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and Curtin University should be supported when undertaking research that deepens our collective understanding of rental affordability in WA,” Mr Tinley said in his statement.

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

# Applications are now open for the BCEC Economics and Social Policy Scholarship



Applications for the 2019 BCEC Economics and Social Policy Scholarship are now open.

This scholarship supports broadening access to tertiary education for those traditionally under-represented at university.

A \$5,000 per annum scholarship will be awarded to eligible applicants over the

course of the scholar’s studies at Curtin University, for a maximum of three years.

Applications are open to undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students undertaking studies in the area/s of economics and social policy. The scholarship reflects Bankwest’s commitment to community development and the Centre’s aim to

improve the lives of West Australians.

The new scholarship is supported through BCEC event registration fees.

Applications close March 15, 2019.

## Australia's South West for Asian markets: Promoting tourism product development



*Xavier Sala Busquets, Market Manager, Western Australia, Expedia; Rebecca Guilbert, Sales and Marketing Manager, Willie Creek Pearls; Associate Professor Christof Pforr, Curtin University School of Marketing; Adam Barnard, Managing Director, ADAMS Coachlines; BCEC Director Professor Alan Duncan; Dee Smith, Former Chair, Australia's South West; and Dr Michael Volgger, Curtin University School of Marketing.*

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre together with the South West Development Commission and Australia's South West hosted a workshop on attracting Asian tourists to Western Australia's southern coast, in Busselton in October 2018.

The event was well attended by tourism industry representatives and policy makers, who gathered for the launch of a BCEC Feature report, [Australia's South West for Asia: Promoting tourism product development in Australia's South West tourism region for Asian markets](#).

Report author Dr Michael Volgger, from Curtin University's School of Marketing, said the research found most Asian visitors were attracted to the South-West's blue skies and crystal clear waters, but many potential visitors required a greater understanding of the region's overall experiences.

"There is a real need to sharpen our focus on promoting the uniqueness of Australia's South West to Asian markets, in order to further increase awareness of the region's key locations," Dr Volgger said.

Co-author Associate Professor Christof Pforr, also from Curtin's School of Marketing, said China was the main driver of Asian tourists to Australia, with 1.25 million visitors in 2017.

"The primary motivation for Asian visitors wanting to visit Australia's South West was the clean environment, blue skies, beaches, food, scenery and the overall outdoor experience," Associate Professor Pforr said.

"The key attractions Asian visitors identified included the Leeuwin Lighthouse, Busselton Jetty, Margaret River Chocolate Factory, wineries, caves, beaches and towns, the Tree Top Walk in Pemberton, Greens Pool in Denmark and The Gap in Albany."

South West Development Commission Acting CEO Ms Rebecca Ball said she was excited by the opportunities identified in the report to increase visitation from our key tourism markets in Asia.

"We have already met with tourism industry leaders to discuss

where we should focus our future tourism development and marketing activities," Ms Ball said.

"We will be working further with Australia's South West and the local tourism industry to capitalise on the opportunities highlighted in this report, complementing the efforts of the wider State Government to target the high growth Asian markets. By teaming up to offer more tailored products and services, not only will the South West benefit, but visitors will also enjoy a more fulfilling experience."

BCEC Director Professor Alan Duncan chaired the panel discussion at the launch event with Rebecca Guilbert, Sales and Marketing Manager, Willie Creek Pearls; Adam Barnard, Managing Director, ADAMS Coachlines; Xavier Sala Busquets, Market Manager, Western Australia, Expedia; and Dee Smith, Former Chair, Australia's South West.

Rebecca Guilbert promoted the important role that strong brands and tailored signature experiences play when developing a tourism strategy to draw Asian visitors.

Adam Barnard said the South West's core product of a clean environment, blue skies, beaches, food, and scenery is key to attracting Asian markets to the region.

Xavier Sala Busquets said he found there were positive signals in recent accommodation booking data from Asian markets, however providers need to work together to optimise opportunities identified within the report, to both domestic and international customers.

Dee Smith discussed the importance of collaboration, and said that tailored marketing activities to Asian markets is key to ensuring the long-term tourism objectives for Western Australia's southern coast.



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

# Christopher Henderson visits the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

It's not every day BCEC Director Professor Alan Duncan is asked to discuss his research on child poverty in Western Australia with an 11-year-old. But then Christopher Henderson is not your average Year 6 student.

Young, ambitious and motivated, the Cottesloe Primary School graduate wanted to find out more about Professor Duncan's research findings and the related policy implications to help with a school assignment. The two met over Milo and muffins at the Centre in November.

During his last two years of primary school Christopher participated in the Department of Education's Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) program, offered to gifted and talented students in years 5 and 6. For four hours each week, PEAC students undertake up to six consecutive short courses, from a broad and challenging selection of topics.

It was during his research for the PEAC Parliamentarians course that Christopher discovered Professor Duncan's research on child poverty. As part of the course, each student had to prepare a five-minute speech on a subject or issue of their choice,



*Christopher Henderson with Professor Alan Duncan (left); and with Dr David Honey MLA, Shadow Minister for Water; Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader (right).*

and deliver it in the Legislative Council before an audience of politicians, teachers, students and parents.

Christopher identified his topic of 'Child Poverty in Western Australia', following a comment made during an interview with Dr David Honey MLA, Member for Cottesloe. His well-researched presentation included references to Dr Honey; Mr Colin Pettit, Commissioner for Children and Young People; and Professor Duncan.

In his speech, Christopher said:

"When I met with Dr David Honey MLA, he said 'Christopher, there were children in Mosman Park who went to sleep hungry last night!'"

"I ask you, honourable guests, parents, teachers, ladies and gentlemen, to think about that for just a moment. No breakfast, lunch or dinner.

"And in a place just streets away from where I live and go to school.

"When I thought about this, and after doing some research, I kept seeing the words 'child poverty'.

"Starving children from third world countries is bad enough, but how can this possibly be in a country such as Australia?"

To top off his excellent result in his PEAC course, Christopher received a Woodside SciTech Science Award at his school graduation in 2018.

The award recognises outstanding results in science by students throughout West Australian primary schools.

Professor Duncan said he is tremendously proud of Christopher's passion and academic achievements.

"I am especially proud that Christopher is highlighting the role of education in promoting or reducing inequality and child poverty," Professor Duncan said.

"To see such motivation at such a young age is a joy. Christopher has unlimited potential to achieve the extraordinary. He really does hold the future in his hands."

As for Christopher, he said Professor Duncan was the perfect mentor to assist him with his speech.

"I am so grateful to Professor Duncan for his help as he has done so much research into child poverty and he gave me a far greater understanding of the economic and political issues, as well as the different types of poverty."

"I couldn't have done it half as well without him!"

# THE CONVERSATION

## ‘Just like home’. New survey finds most renters enjoy renting, although for many it’s expensive

By [Steven Rowley](#), Director, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Curtin Research Centre, Curtin University and [Amity James](#), Lecturer, School of Economics, Finance and Property, Curtin University



One in every four Australian households rents, and it’s not just those on low incomes.

A new nationally representative survey of 3,182 renters, funded by the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, finds that while 60% of renting households have a household incomes below A\$78,000, 30% are on incomes of more than A\$100,000.

Although many households on low incomes and those headed by single parents are undoubtedly struggling to meet rental costs, those on moderate or higher incomes are generally positive about the experience.

### Many of us rent

Despite its reputation as a nation of homeowners, Australia has the 10th largest private rental sector in the 37 nations that make up the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

### Most people are happy with what they rent

Perceptions of dwelling quality are positive with only 6% reporting that their dwelling is in a poor or terrible condition. 81% report a good or excellent relationship with their landlord.

Add a property manager into the mix and this falls to a still respectable 69%. Fewer than 5% of respondents reported a poor or terrible relationship.

Around half of respondents claim to have a good to full understanding of their rights as tenants.

Overall, when asked whether their rental property felt like home, just over 60% reported it did, with less than 20% being negative about

their experience.

The longer a tenant lives in a rental dwelling, the more it feels like home, highlighting the importance of security of tenure.

Generally, levels of satisfaction with the sector are high given the proportion of tenants who would rather be owners.

OECD Country	Private Rental Market	Total rental market including social housing
Switzerland	55.1%	58.5%
Germany	50.3%	54.7%
Denmark	46.0%	46.0%
Netherlands	42.9%	42.9%
Korea	38.4%	43.5%
Sweden	36.9%	37.4%
United States	34.9%	34.9%
Canada	30.7%	30.7%
Austria	30.4%	42.9%
Australia	25.8%	29.8%
Luxembourg	24.5%	28.7%
Belgium	23.8%	32.2%
France	21.4%	35.5%
United Kingdom	17.3%	35.6%
Finland	14.0%	32.5%

Comparison of international private rental sectors. OECD Housing tenure distribution 2014 or later. ABS Census data 2016

Property Manager	All	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Excellent	21.0	17.0	19.0	18.0	26.0	26.0	34.0
Good	48.0	42.0	51.0	52.0	43.0	45.0	44.0
Average	26.0	33.0	25.0	25.0	24.0	26.0	21.0
Poor	4.0	7.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.0	0.0
Terrible	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	0.0
Total Excellent or Good	69.0	59.0	70.0	70.0	70.0	71.0	78.0

Landlord	All	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Excellent	39.0	38.0	36.0	36.0	42.0	43.0	55.0
Good	42.0	41.0	47.0	42.0	36.0	39.0	33.0
Average	16.0	20.0	14.0	18.0	19.0	15.0	6.0
Poor	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0
Terrible	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.0
Total Excellent or Good	81.0	79.0	83.0	78.0	78.0	82.0	88.0

Relationship with property manager or landlord.  
Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre 2018 Private Rental Sector Survey.

## Security of tenure matters

Security of tenure is a major concern of private renters.

Two thirds of renters have been in their current property for less than three years. Almost 40% have rented four or more properties during their time as renters.

While two thirds of moves are by choice, around one third are forced with the primary reason being the owner selling the property.

Moves are stressful, expensive and disruptive, particularly for households with children. Around half of all renters say they would gladly choose to sign a lease longer than 12 months if given the option because it would offer greater security and a stronger sense of home.

## As does discrimination

One in five renters report some form of discrimination when applying for rental properties.

Those households most likely to suffer from discrimination are single parents with children.

In September Victoria passed landmark legislation intended to improve the rights of renters.

Some important issues addressed in the legislation are highlighted in the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report which found the vast majority of respondents are on short-term leases (12 months or less).

NSW is following suit, although, disappointingly, it does not plan to outlaw no-grounds evictions.

## And rent can be expensive

The typical proportion of gross income spent on rent is 28%, with almost half of all renters paying more than 30%, a figure that rises to 63% for renters over 55.

One in seven renters are paying more than 60% of their income in rent.

When asked the reasons for such high rental payments, almost six in ten report being forced to pay that much through a lack of available

alternatives.

Commonwealth rent assistance was regarded as important or very important by nine out of ten of those receiving it.

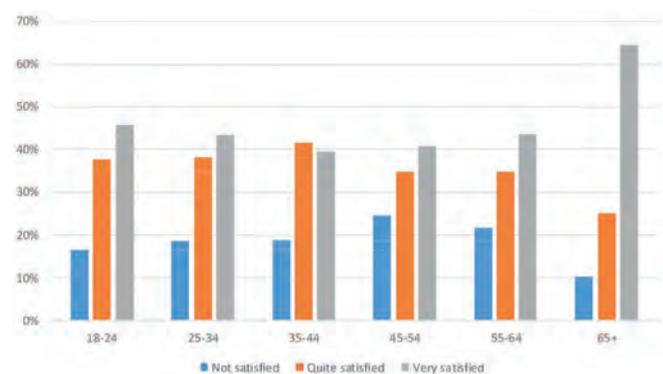
## What we could do to help

One of the best ways to make rent more affordable would be to reintroduce a subsidised rental scheme that offered a financial incentive for developers to invest in housing that would be leased to low-income households at below-market rents along the lines of the National Rental Affordability Scheme by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008.

It was wound up by his successor Tony Abbott in 2014.

Workable build to rent schemes could also help boost supply and security of tenure, and the negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions tax available to mum and dad investors could be tied to the delivery of long-term, below market rental dwellings.

Our survey finds the private rental market is performing quite well for those on moderate to high incomes. But not for those on low incomes who will never access home ownership and need secure long term tenure.



Relationship with property manager or landlord.  
Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre 2018 Private Rental Sector Survey.

This article first appeared in *The Conversation* on October 9, 2018.



*Chris Twomey, Research and Policy Development Leader at the Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS); Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, WACOSS; Professor Alan Duncan, Director, BCEC; Geoff White, Manager Customer Service, Horizon Power; Dr Tom Houghton, Senior Lecturer, School of Economics, Finance and Property, Curtin University; Ronny Flendt, Head of Customer Billing and Assurance, Water Corporation; Dr Julian Inchauspe, Senior Lecturer, School of Economics, Finance and Property, Curtin University; and Dr Yashar Tarverdi, Lecturer, School of Economics, Finance and Property, Curtin University.*

## Energy Policy in WA: An Inclusive Future?

Two BCEC *Feature* reports examining energy policy in Western Australia were launched at a special BCEC workshop on Thursday 27 September 2018.

The workshop explored ways WA can strike the right balance between affordability, reliability and environmental impact in its energy market, while ensuring responsiveness to changing consumer needs and space for innovation. An inclusive future is one in which essential service provision is efficient and effective and no-one in our community is left behind.

The event was well attended by representatives from government, industry and the not for profit sector.

The first BCEC-funded project, [Gas and oil prospects: The insertion of Australia into international markets](#), led by Dr Julian Inchauspe, Senior Lecturer at Curtin University's School of Economics, Finance and Property, examined key trends and developments that underpin the profitability and risk of liquefied natural gas (LNG) investment; and asks if WA is positioned to take advantage of technological advances that are yet to be inserted into the Australian market.

The second report launched at the event was, [Power plans for electricity: The impact of tariff structure changes on energy vulnerable households](#), led by Dr

Tom Houghton, Senior Lecturer, at Curtin University's School of Economics, Finance and Property, and examined the experiences of vulnerable households who participated in a pricing research pilot, including larger families and those with lower incomes or receiving concessions.

The research was a collaboration between the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) and Horizon Power, using data from a pilot study collected through meter readings, questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with regional Western Australian households during the 2016/17 summer period.

Dr Houghton said power plans where customers are charged partly for their peak capacity, had the potential to smooth energy costs over the course of a year by charging in a similar way to mobile phone plans.

The workshop included a special panel discussion on the topic 'Energy in WA: How do we develop an inclusive and innovative policy in WA?'

Chris Twomey, Research and Policy Development Leader at WACOSS facilitated

the discussion with Ronny Flendt, Head of Customer Billing and Assurance, Water Corporation; Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, WACOSS; Geoff White, Manager Customer Service, Horizon Power; Professor Alan Duncan, Director, BCEC and Dr Tom Houghton, Senior Lecturer, School of Economics, Finance and Property at Curtin University.

Ronny Flendt said Water Corporation had introduced innovative ways to better reach out and support customers in hardship, including a customer engagement survey.

Geoff White said Horizon Power was uniquely positioned, given its role as an integrated generation, network and retail business and its challenges as a regional and remote provider in a harsh climate, to use its advanced metering technology to innovate and explore customer experiences in order to drive a better product.

Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, WACOSS said the research highlighted wider community issues linked to poverty and financial hardship, which needed to be addressed by industry and the government.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### The Social and Economic Sustainability of WA's Rural Volunteer Workforce

**When:** Tuesday 26 February 2019  
11:00am-1:00pm

**Where:** Conference Room, City West Lotteries House  
2 Delhi Street, West Perth

You are warmly invited to the launch of the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre funded report, *The Social and Economic Sustainability of WA's Rural Volunteer Workforce*. Curtin University researchers, Professor Kirsten Holmes and Associate Professor Amanda Davies, will present the findings from a recent study of rural volunteering in WA. They examined the challenges facing volunteer-involving organisations and individual volunteers across all sectors and offer recommendations for policy and practice.

**To express your interest to attend this event, email [K.Holmes@cbs.curtin.edu.au](mailto:K.Holmes@cbs.curtin.edu.au)**

### Gender Equity Insights 2019: Breaking through the Glass Ceiling

**When:** Friday 1 March 2019  
11:45am for a 12:00pm start to 2.00pm

**Where:** Hyatt Regency Perth, Grand Ballroom,  
99 Adelaide Terrace, Perth

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) invites you to a lunch event to launch the fourth report in the *BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity* series with special guest speaker, the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

*Gender Equity Insights 2019: Breaking through the Glass Ceiling* extends and strengthens the evidence base around gender equality throughout Australian workplaces and its changes over the last five years.

The report profiles gender pay gaps across occupations and industry sectors using five years of the extensive WGEA reporting data that covers around 4 million Australian workers each year.

A Special Investigation on Women in Leadership is included, examining the role of workplace environments and policy initiatives in progressing women in the workforce and in narrowing the gender pay gap.

**To express your interest to attend these events, email [bcec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:bcec@curtin.edu.au) or phone 08 9266 2873.**





View down a lane way in Perth, Western Australia.

BCEC Research Highlights

# The WA economy: What to watch for in 2019

By Alan Duncan, Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre  
 Daniel Kiely, Senior Research Fellow, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre  
 Silvia Salazar, Research Fellow, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

2018 was a critical year for the economy. Having laid some important foundations, 2019 is shaping up to be even more important.

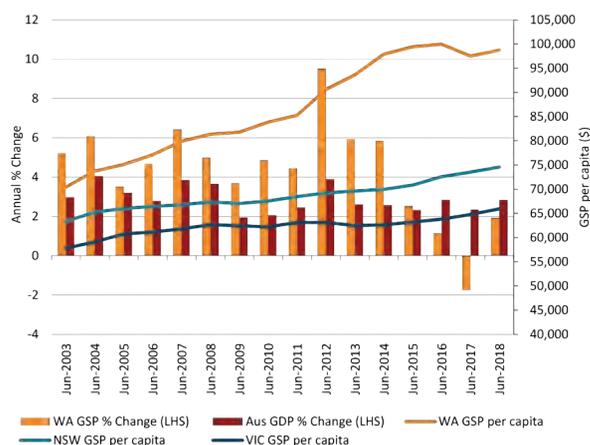
Latest economic and social indicators for Western Australia analysed in BCEC's December 2018 Quarterly Economic Commentary show that the WA economy has returned to positive growth.

Although, WA's economic growth has been slower than that reported in other states. The WA economy grew by 1.9% over the 12

months to September 2018, (Figure 1), less than the national trend (GDP grew by 2.8% to June 2018) and growth reported in other states and territories.

Despite a decline in June 2017, WA's per capita GSP sits at \$98,725, still far in excess of the equivalent measures for other states, and \$24,000 above that of NSW.

Gross State Product, selection of States, and Australian GDP, 2003-2018



Notes: Chain volume; Reference year is 2016/17. June 2018 GSP per capita is calculated using March 2018 population data due to time lags in population data releases. Previous years use June population data.

Source: BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 5220, Table 1 and ABS Cat 3101, Table 4.

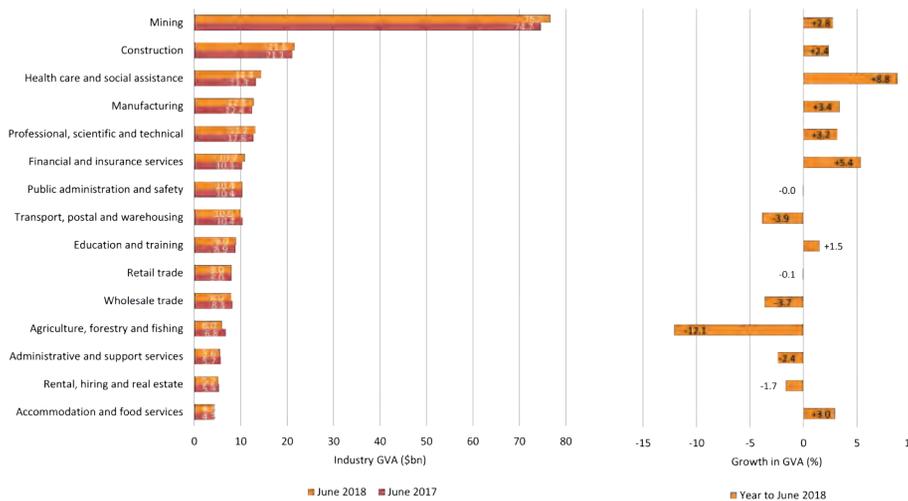


### Growth sectors and the need for diversification

A number of sectors have been strong contributors to the State's overall growth, including Mining, Manufacturing, Construction, and Finance and Insurance services.

WA's Health Care and Social Assistance sector is also rapidly expanding, adding 8.8% in economic value and 16,000 more jobs over the last year, which you can read about further in our recent [To Health and Happiness](#) report.

Industry GVA (\$bn) and GVA growth (%), selected industries: 2016-2017 and 2017-18



Notes: Economic Activity is measured through Gross Value Added (GVA). It is the value of output of goods and services minus the value of intermediate consumption. GVA is expressed in chain volume measures; Reference year is 2016/17.

Source: BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 5220, Table 6

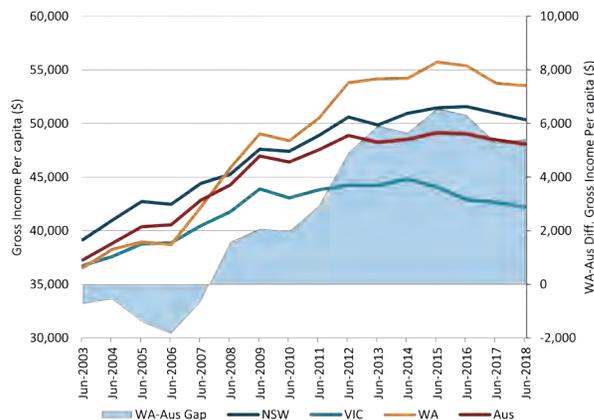
However, WA still remains dependent on the Mining sector, and there is a pressing need for the State to diversify, particularly in a time of growing international economic and political uncertainty.

### Household disposable income and household consumption

Per capita household disposable income can provide a more relatable measure of economic wellbeing from the perspective of an individual or family.

As a consequence of cooling economic and labour market conditions since the mining boom, WA's household disposable income has averaged a -1.3% drop over the last three years. Despite this decrease, household disposable income per capita in WA (at \$53,535) still remains above NSW (\$50,364), Vic (\$42,222) and the Australian average (\$48,115).

Gross household disposable income per capita, various States, 2003 to 2018



Notes: Chain volume; Reference year is 2016/17. June 2018 GSP per capita is calculated using March 2018 population data due to time lags in population data releases. Previous years use June population data.

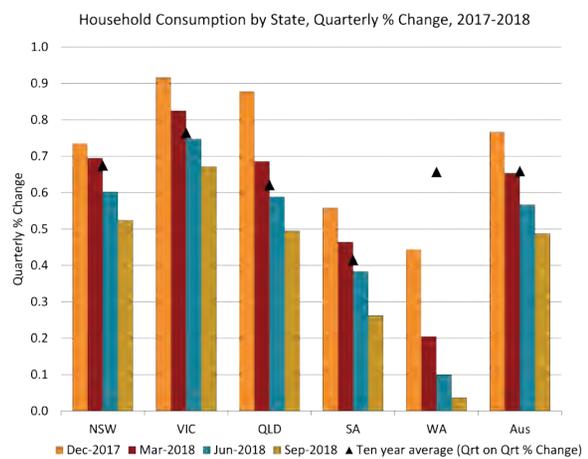
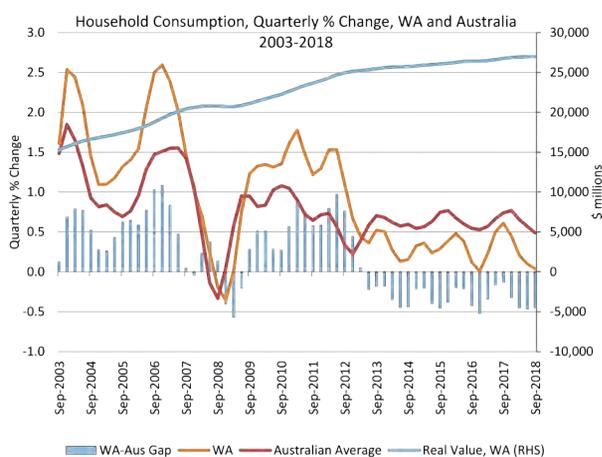
Source: BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 5220, Table 1 and ABS Cat 3101, Table 4.

Household consumption accounts for a 42% share of the State economy, so stronger growth in this indicator is critical to overall economic growth and employment creation.

The drop in household disposable income presented over the last two years is well and truly making its way into household

consumption growth in WA, with the latter being effectively zero in the quarter to September 2018. Of course, low wage and population growth are also contributing factors, with (until recently) weak growth in full-time employment also playing its part.

### Household Consumption Growth, WA and Australia, 2003 to 2018



Notes: Chain volume, Trend.

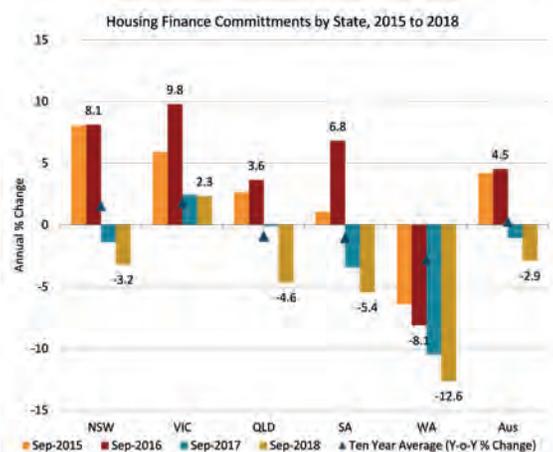
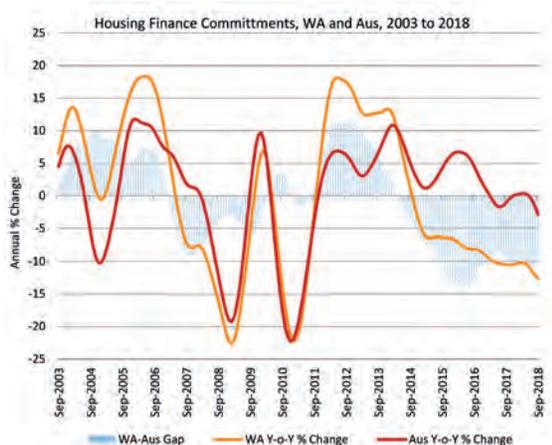
Source: BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 5206, Table 25.

### Grey skies continue for the housing sector

Australia has now accumulated twelve consecutive months of negative growth in housing finance commitments, averaging -0.8%

growth in this time. This has been primarily driven by tightened lending criteria in the mortgage sector, alongside low population growth.

### Value of Construction Work Done by state, quarterly change, 2003 to 2018



Notes: Chain volume; Trend. Preliminary data. The value of building work done includes the construction of new buildings and alterations and additions to existing buildings.

Source: BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 8755, Table 8.



**Michael Dockery**  
Principal Research Fellow  
Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

### MIKE DOCKERY RETURNS TO BCEC AFTER TEACHING SECONDMENT

Principal Research Fellow Mike Dockery returns to BCEC after a teaching secondment to Curtin University's School of Economics, Finance and Property. At the end of 2018, Mike swapped the mountains of paper work and marking for the mountains of Peru, and economic theory for the more up-to-date thinking of the Incas. Mike is delighted to be back in a research role and working again with the BCEC team.

On his return, he submitted a paper providing evidence that Indigenous parents passing on traditional culture to their children promotes better developmental outcomes – a work many years in the making. He's also resumed work on

occupational segregation and women's job satisfaction; returns to private schooling; and parental aspirations for children's higher education. Mike has a report on Housing and Children's Wellbeing to finalise for an existing Australian Housing and Urban Institute (AHURI) grant, and a new AHURI grant commencing on sustaining Indigenous tenancies.

In 2019 Mike hopes to find time to initiate a project on Indigenous incarceration while helping his younger two boys navigate their 2nd and 3rd years of high school. To relax, Mike takes time out trying to learn piano, which unfortunately is not proving so relaxing for the rest of the family.



**Anh Tram Le**  
Senior Policy Fellow  
Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

### TRAM JOINS BCEC AS SENIOR POLICY FELLOW

Tram is a Senior Policy Fellow with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, a position she holds in conjunction with being a Principal Consultant Skilled Migration at the Department of Training and Workforce Development. Tram is also a Research Fellow with IZA Institute of Labor Economics.

Tram's research area is applied labour economics including immigration, educational attainment, time use and prisoners' education and labour market outcomes. Tram has used different types of data in her research, including twins, longitudinal and cross-sectional.

Tram has published in a number of Australian and international journals such as Industrial Relations, Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Journal of Happiness Studies, Labour Economics, Economics of Education Review, Education Economics, International Migration Review, International Migration, Twin Research and Human Genetics, Economic Record, Australian Economic Review and Australian Economic Papers.



**Silvia Salazar**  
Research Fellow  
Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

### MEET BCEC'S 2018 ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL POLICY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Kim Nguyen is in her second year studying a Bachelor of Commerce at Curtin University and was awarded the first BCEC Economics and Social Policy Scholarship in 2018.

She has a growing interest and a driving passion for economics, and believes that good research into social and economic policy plays a key role in addressing many of the issues we face today, especially poverty.

Kim demonstrates a passion for making a difference, which aligns closely with BCEC's values and mission and our commitment to making a difference to the wellbeing of

West Australian families, businesses and communities.

Kim said that growing up, she used everyday challenges to empower, rather than dampen, her desire to achieve a good education, and says she chose to overcome adversity!

The biggest challenge, Kim said, is to empower ourselves in our everyday lives, take better care of ourselves, increase our sense of personal power and focus on what we can control.



LATEST RESEARCH

# Publications

## Accessing BCEC's Publications

Visit [bcec.edu.au](http://bcec.edu.au) to view the Centre's published reports, journal articles and working papers, along with presentations, newsletters and government inquiry submissions prepared by BCEC.



### [A strength-based program for adolescents with autism](#)

**Matthew Jones, Marita Falkmer, Ben Milbourn, Tele Tan, Louise Sheehy, Sven Bölte, Sonya Girdler**  
*Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre*

It is widely recognised that many individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have abilities and strengths well suited to employment in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry. Despite this, their overall employment rate remains marginal.

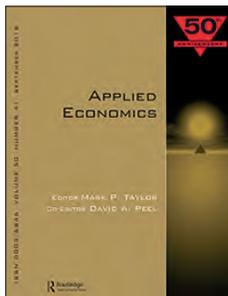
This report embeds current knowledge, as reported in literature, together with data obtained by observations and interviews from three existing strength-based ICT-groups. The aim was to develop guidelines for strength-based ICT programs for adolescents with ASD. This report also provides recommendations for service providers to consider when coordinating a programs facilitators, activities and environment.



### [Older Renters in the Western Australian Private Rental Sector: Strategies to enhance housing security for WA's older renters](#)

**Helen Hodgson, Amity James, Eileen Webb**  
*Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre*

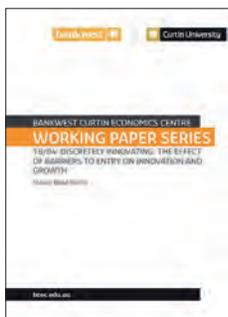
More people are reaching retirement age without owning a home, and the number of older people residing in the private rental market is increasing. Fixed incomes, short leases, a lack of affordable housing options and limited capacity to modify a rental property see many older renters experiencing tenure insecurity. This research draws on national legal, financial, planning and policy precedents, to explore interdisciplinary strategies to make housing more secure for older people in the private rental sector in metropolitan and regional WA.



### [Self-assessed versus statistical evidence of racial discrimination: The case of indigenous Australians](#)

**Alan Duncan, Astghik Mavisakalyan, Yashar Tarverdi**  
*Applied Economics*

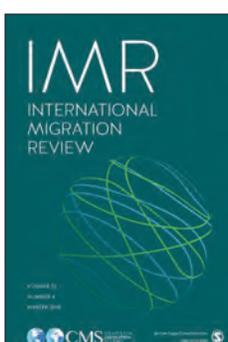
This paper provides new insights on the labour market discrimination faced by indigenous Australians – one of the most disadvantaged indigenous populations in developed countries. Combining two large, nationally-representative datasets, we decompose the employment gap between indigenous and non-indigenous populations as of 2014-2015, and show that differences in characteristics between the two groups account for only 43% of the employment gap for females, and 23% of the gap for males. Our findings underscore the importance of improving transparency in employment processes for addressing the issue of disadvantage of racial minorities.



### [Discretely innovating: The effect of barriers to entry on innovation and growth](#)

**Steven Bond-Smith**  
*Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre*

This article considers the effect of a discrete entry barrier (i.e. an integer number of firms) in an endogenous growth model to draw conclusions about the relationship between contestability, innovation and growth. Sector specific workers provide a tool for calibrating numerical examples. Sectors with lower entrepreneurial contestability have lower innovation. Wage inequality varies depending on the extent that the entry barrier is binding upon a marginal entrant. The model offers policy implications to support entrepreneurial entry, particularly in relatively small or isolated regional economies.



### [Macroeconomic Fluctuations in Home Countries and Immigrants' Well-Being: New Evidence from Down Under](#)

**Ha Nguyen, Alan Duncan**  
*International Migration Review*

This article exploits plausibly exogenous changes in macroeconomic conditions across home countries over time and panel individual data to examine the causal impact of home countries' macroeconomic conditions on immigrants' well-being in Australia. We present new and robust evidence that immigrants in Australia feel happier when their home countries' macroeconomic conditions improve, as measured by a higher gross domestic product (GDP) per capita or lower price levels. Controlling for immigrants' observable and unobservable characteristics, we also find that the positive GDP impact is statistically significant and economically large in size.





**Let's keep in touch**

**Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre**

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