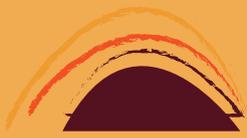


HousingWORKS

The Journal of the Australasian Housing Institute – linking housing workers in Australia and New Zealand

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Special note: AHI is grateful for the editorial services provided for this edition of *HousingWORKS* by Bakewood – www.bakewood.com.au

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Welcome to the December edition of *HousingWORKS*



Just a short introduction to *HousingWORKS* from me this edition, as Shane Hamilton from the Aboriginal Housing Office has done the job for me in excellent fashion across the following page.

Firstly, it is very exciting and encouraging to see the Indigenous housing focus of this edition. The year 2015 will witness a number of AHI events focussing on Indigenous housing issues.

I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce Ken Craig from the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office as our newest AHI Director filling the Indigenous Director position.

By the time you read this, you will be thinking about the New Year. I can't recall a time where there has been such a momentum across many states and territories and in New Zealand for social housing reform. I call on all social housing professionals to take these opportunities to respond to discussion papers, innovation initiatives or whatever may be happening in your patch.

Make your professional expertise in housing count towards government policy that adequately supports and grows social and affordable housing in all of your communities.

Happy 2015!

Donald Proctor
AHI President

Merry Christmas



Welcome to the December edition of *HousingWORKS*



Shane Hamilton, Chief Executive, Aboriginal Housing Office

As the incoming Chief Executive of the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) in NSW – and coming from a background in the Western Australian community housing sector – I am pleased to introduce this issue of *HousingWORKS*, which is a collaboration between the Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) and the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO).

Aboriginal housing – and indeed the whole social housing sector – is undergoing a period of rapid change, big challenges and a refocussing on the needs of tenants.

At the AHO, we work to ensure that both good quality housing and high standards of service for our tenants are achieved. By working through – and with – Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs), we aim to set clear targets, develop quantifiable measures, ensure those measures are the right ones, and focus on accountability in meeting our mission.

We know that accountability for achieving good outcomes for Aboriginal people in social housing is the responsibility of both the AHO and the sector. And, the keys to success are working together and understanding the challenges that all participants face in the sector.

We understand the AHO needs to be strong, accountable, communicative and goal-oriented in order to better support ACHPs and the sector in achieving their own organisational visions. Our aim is to proactively support the sector and its participants to meet their own aspirations and, ultimately, ensure we are using housing to break the cycle of disadvantage, rather than to entrench it.

In the immediate future, we will be working with the sector to decide what the AHO needs to do to create pathways for the Aboriginal housing sector to be on par with mainstream social housing – to close the gap – and to put in place measures so we can be sure we are delivering a high standard of service.

Our vision at the AHO is clear: that all Aboriginal people living in NSW will have access to appropriate, affordable, quality housing. And, we aim to break the cycle of disadvantage for Aboriginal social housing tenants by delivering fit-for-purpose, client-focussed services in the right place at the right time.

We will maintain this clear-eyed vision as we continue to work with the housing sector to ensure we meet the needs of all participants.

Shane Hamilton
AHO Chief Executive

a word from

The Hon. **MATT CONLAN** MLA



> *Following is a transcript of the speech made at the AHL's breakfast in Darwin on 28th October 2014 by the Hon. Matt Conlan MLA, Minister for Housing, on some of the housing initiatives made in the Northern Territory and their vision for the future.*

I am pleased to be here with you today to speak a little about some of the Territory Government's housing initiatives.

Access to stable and secure housing can help improve the lives of Territorians. It can give someone the necessary foundation they need to build a better future for themselves or their family.

Housing affordability is an issue that affects everyone, either directly or indirectly. The Territory is no exception to this. Population growth and a rapidly expanding Northern Territory economy have brought some significant benefits. However, they have also brought challenges, as pressure on housing supply and affordability has made it difficult for many people to access housing, particularly Territorians on low to moderate incomes.

Today, I would like to share with you progress the Northern Territory Government has made under various strategic housing initiatives in the last two years, and also the vision for housing into the future. Firstly, I would like to talk about the progress we are making in Indigenous housing in many of the Northern Territory's remote communities.

Remote Indigenous Housing

Improving Indigenous housing in remote communities is a key priority of the Country Liberals' Giles Government.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is the largest Indigenous housing program ever undertaken by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments. It has a program value of \$1.7 billion in Australian Government funding and \$240 million in Northern Territory Government funding over 10 years to 30th June 2018.

The objectives of the National Partnership Agreement are to:

- address severe overcrowding;
- increase the supply and improve the condition of houses in remote Indigenous communities; and
- ensure that rental houses are well-maintained and managed.

The partnership will deliver 1,456 new houses and 2,915 rebuilds and refurbishments by mid-2018. To date, some \$1.3 billion has been spent on capital and some \$200 million on property and tenancy management to see the Territory Government exceed its targets and deliver 1,080 new houses and 2,929 rebuilds and refurbishments.

A related program to the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – or Stronger Futures Northern Territory – which commenced on 1st July 2012.

The overarching objective of Stronger Futures Northern Territory is to support Indigenous people in the Northern

Territory – particularly in remote communities – to live strong, independent lives where communities, families and children are safe and healthy. One of the intended outcomes of this agreement is improved public housing in remote communities through upgrading houses to improve durability and functionality.

Stronger Futures Northern Territory provides \$230 million from 1st July 2012 to 20th June 2018 for a total of 2,454 upgrades to remote public housing. The combined value of these agreements represents a significant investment in remote housing that will improve the lives of many Indigenous Territorians residing in remote communities.

“ The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is the largest Indigenous housing program ever undertaken by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments. It has a program value of \$1.7 billion in Australian Government funding and \$240 million in Northern Territory Government funding over 10 years to 30th June 2018. ”

In recent months, the Northern Territory Government and the Australian Government have been negotiating the next stage of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to achieve outcomes to meet the objectives of improving the lives of Indigenous Territorians. Stronger Futures Northern Territory will also be modified to improve the delivery of outcomes under the agreement going forward.

The next phase will see a significant shift of emphasis for the remainder of the capital program under both National Partnership Agreements towards providing more sustainable local employment opportunities in the delivery of capital works, as well as ongoing property and tenancy management by Indigenous community members. To enable this, the Northern Territory Government is refocussing the way in which housing works are delivered by engaging with local Indigenous business enterprises to deliver capital aspects, and ongoing property and tenancy management services in clusters of remote communities.

We have already put in place a new service delivery model that was developed from an extensive consultation process. The model comprises contractual arrangements for the delivery of three categories of services – housing maintenance and coordination services, tenancy management services and trade-qualified services. These new arrangements are giving communities a greater ability to address maintenance issues as they arise allowing for quicker response times.

The Housing Maintenance and Coordination Services contract is delivered by non trade-qualified people from the local area, and focuses on maintenance that can be performed without the need for a trade-qualified contractor – for example, unblocking drains and fixing leaky taps. Under these arrangements, small housing maintenance problems can be addressed before they become bigger, more expensive issues. This, in turn, reduces the need to fly in trade-qualified contractors to deliver basic maintenance works on houses, which can deliver cost savings.

This service delivery model also provides further opportunities for local Indigenous people to have sustainable, ongoing employment in the management of properties and tenancies.

The new service delivery model commenced in the Barkly Region in December 2013 and has been rolled out progressively across all regions. It is already demonstrating positive results. Let me give you an example of how it has already started showing promising signs of increased local employment opportunities and more timely delivery of preventative maintenance works:

Unblocking a kitchen sink under previous arrangements cost up to \$900, with travel and the cost of a trade-qualified contractor. This now costs as little as \$65 under the new service delivery model. Not only that, the locally-employed handyman who fixes the sink might also fix a leaky tap or a couple of loose doorknobs at the same time, and identify an electrical problem that needs referring to a tradesman. That early referral means it can be fixed before it turns into a bigger problem requiring expensive remedial work.

Overall, the service delivery model has achieved a reduction in repairs and maintenance spending and a reduction in the average cost per job. This is a huge achievement in terms of getting more bang for our buck when it comes to looking after our remote housing assets.

Indigenous Home Ownership

The Giles Government believes that people living in public housing in remote areas should be able to enjoy the choice to purchase their house as people in urban localities do.

Buying a home is an aspiration that many people strive to achieve. That is why we have launched Remote Home Ownership Program to facilitate and support Indigenous home ownership in remote communities.

Under the program, remote public housing in communities with long-term, tradeable tenure – those with whom there are long-term township leases – could be made available for purchase by tenants who have met the program's eligibility criteria, and demonstrated a capacity and desire to own their home.

Stage One of the program was launched on the 1st July this year on the Tiwi Islands. Applicants will, of course, need to meet certain lending criteria set by the lender – Indigenous Business Australia – but I am very pleased to say that, so far, we've had strong interest and around 20 applicants have either lodged expressions of interest or are in the process of doing so. This is a really positive step, not only for individuals in terms of personal empowerment, but also in terms of helping to strengthen local economies.

Another key focus of the Northern Territory Government will be supporting employment mobility of Indigenous people residing in remote areas so they are enabled to take up job opportunities in regional or urban areas. The Territory



Minister Conlan and Donald Proctor

Government wants to ensure people receive the right services and support to gain and sustain employment, and this includes helping them in housing – be it public or affordable rental housing, or home ownership.

Framing the Future

As the portfolio Minister for Housing in the Territory, I am committed to increasing and improving access to diverse and affordable housing options for Territorians.

The Framing the Future Strategic Plan was released earlier this year, and provides the Government's vision and strategic direction for the Territory over the next three years. In relation to housing, our mandate is clear:

- We will support Territorians with diversity of housing choice;
- We will continue to support Territorians in social housing; and
- We will support Territorians in remote housing.

The Northern Territory Government plays a pivotal role in assisting Territorians in need of housing assistance and support to help improve their long-term capacity to contribute to social and economic life.

We are already involved in a range of initiatives that support Territorians in need of housing support, assist low to middle income households to gain access to affordable housing and help ease cost of living pressures. For example, under our Real

Housing for Growth initiative, we are creating greater choice in housing through increasing the supply of affordable dwellings for Territorians in the private rental and owner-occupied housing market.

Real Housing for Growth

The Territory Government understands the affordability challenges facing people in the Territory. Our economic growth and development is hinged on our ability to attract and retain workers to take up employment opportunities in the Northern Territory.

The Real Housing for Growth initiative is providing a greater number of affordable housing options for Territorians in the private housing market. It aims to deliver 2,000 new, affordable homes across the Northern Territory by 2016-17.

Real Housing for Growth supports the attraction and retention of key service industry workers in the Northern Territory, and includes affordable home ownership and affordable rental initiatives for low to moderate incomes earners who tend to find it challenging to secure housing at an affordable rate.

“ Our economic growth and development is hinged on our ability to attract and retain workers to take up employment opportunities in the Northern Territory. ”

We're pleased to say that, as at September this year, a total of 325 affordable dwellings have been delivered since commencement of the initiative in late 2012. There are also an additional 500 dwellings currently under construction under Real Housing for Growth. We are well underway in meeting our overall targets. In fact, for 2014-15, we are expected to exceed the 400 dwelling commitment under Real Housing for Growth.

The Real Housing for Growth Home Buyer Initiative also provides eligible Territorians on low to moderate incomes with an exclusive 'first come, first served' opportunity to purchase a pre-constructed home or house and land package through Government land releases.

HomeBuild Access

The HomeBuild Access loan products commenced on 1 January 2013, and are targeted at the purchase or construction of new dwellings, and aimed at increasing housing supply. HomeBuild Access offers three different loan product options for both first homebuyers and non-first homebuyers through low deposit and subsidised interest loans.

The Territory Government is also supporting key service industry workers to access housing at an affordable rate through the Head leasing initiative. This initiative consists of Government-backed head leases over private rental dwellings that are then rented to eligible workers for 30 percent less than the market rate.

The availability of housing under this initiative means we will be better able to retain people in the Territory who play a critical role in supporting our service industries and the broader Territory economy.

Homelessness

The Territory Government has a focus on transitioning people through the housing continuum – my vision is to help people to

transition from homelessness to home ownership.

Homelessness affects diverse groups of Territorians. The 2011 Census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that the Northern Territory had a rate of homelessness that equates to seven percent of the Territory population.

Through the Department of Housing, the Territory Government administers grant funding for a range of housing support programs and services. In 2014-15, \$21.3 million has been allocated to support over 50 programs operated by non-government organisations across the Territory. These organisations provide crisis, transitional and managed and supported accommodation and outreach, case management and support services such as the Tenancy Support Program, for many of our most vulnerable Territorians. The objective of all these services is to address and prevent homelessness, which presents a significant challenge.

The Northern Territory Government has been working with service providers to both increase the effectiveness and efficiency of social housing programs, including those that address and help to prevent homelessness.

In early 2014, the Australian Government announced a review of housing and homelessness to inform future arrangements between the States and Territories and the Australian Government with respect to program funding and delivery. At the recent Council of Australian Governments meeting, a White Paper on the Reform of the Federation was announced. The focus of this White Paper will include a review of housing and homelessness, among other key areas of government policy.

The White Paper will focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities and minimising duplication of effort, and I want to express my commitment to working productively with the Australian Government and the sector in this process to achieve an outcome that is in the best interests of Territorians.

Public Housing

Through the Department of Housing, the Northern Territory Government provides public housing to over 10,000 households across the Northern Territory – in both urban and remote settings. This is a big job, and the demand for social housing support is ever-increasing.

“ We want people to view public housing as a means to an end, rather than the end itself... Our motto is 'The right person, for the right place, for the right amount of time.' ”

We need to find ways to build on the good work already being done because the need continues to grow. The Department of Housing is working to modernise our public housing system to meet the needs of clients into the future. People access public housing for a range of reasons and, while we know that some tenants need more intensive and ongoing housing support, many others have the capacity to change from being reliant on social housing to living independently in the private rental market or owning a home.

We want people to view public housing as a means to an end, rather than the end itself. We want to ensure that public housing is available to those who need it most by transitioning people – with the right supports – through the housing

continuum to a stage that suits their personal circumstances and aspirations. Our motto is 'The right person, for the right place, for the right amount of time'.

We want to help people in public and social housing to improve their lives and then support them to the next stage of the housing continuum so that others are given an opportunity to do the same.

Community Housing

We know that, alone, our Government can't effectively support everybody who needs it and this is why the work of the non-government housing sector is so important. This includes community housing providers that support diverse groups of clients – from people with specific and complex needs, to people on low to moderate incomes who may be ineligible for public housing but struggle to access the private rental market without assistance.

Facilitating the growth of the community housing sector is, without a doubt, a key element of creating a more sustainable housing system. The Northern Territory Government is working to build stronger partnerships with the private sector, governments and non-government agencies and communities to increase the supply and sustainability of housing across the Territory that meets housing demand in this segment of the housing market.

“ We know that, alone, Government can't effectively support everybody who needs it and this is why the work of the non-government housing sector is so important. ”

The Northern Territory has a small but developing community housing sector. It is my vision that we will support this sector to grow in a way that opens up opportunities for Territorians to have greater access to more social and affordable housing.

The Northern Territory Government established the Venture Housing Company in 2012. Venture Housing is a not-for-profit housing provider that provides housing for people in the Northern Territory on low to moderate incomes. Venture is based in Darwin and offers affordable rental properties to people who are experiencing rental affordability issues but may not qualify for public housing.

Supported by the Territory Government, the Venture Housing portfolio continues to grow to provide more affordable rental options to Territorians. The Northern Territory Government has committed \$49 million over the 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years to expand the Venture Housing portfolio.

In April, Government transferred nine new two-bedroom units to Venture Housing. With Government backing, the company is also working towards the construction of 20 new dwellings for rental in Palmerston. In addition, throughout 2014-15, a further 96 dwellings will be purchased from the private sector for Venture Housing Company's ownership and management.

It is clear that growing the community housing sector is essential if we want to create a housing system that effectively supports Territorians in social and affordable housing. I know that a number of non-government organisations across the Territory have been exploring opportunities to work together in this space.

“ Facilitating the growth of the community housing sector is, without a doubt, a key element of creating a more sustainable housing system. ”

A great example of this is the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company, comprising four member organisations. Based in Alice Springs, it has established itself as a key provider of community housing for Indigenous people in Central Australia.

The Territory Government wants to work on creating the conditions for a strong and viable community housing sector through the development of a strategy for community housing and implementing the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. We want to continue providing increased, diverse and responsive private rental and home ownership opportunities, and I am excited to be associated with the provision of these products and services.

The establishment and delivery of programs and services that respond to Territorians residing in remote areas will continue to pose a challenge for the Territory Government, particularly in terms of supporting economic viability and sustainability. However, I am pleased with the in-roads we are making in the housing portfolio, and look forward to overseeing the delivery of many more successes.

I am excited about the Territory's housing future and look forward to building stronger partnerships – particularly with the non-government and commercial housing sectors – to increase the supply, affordability and sustainability of housing across the Territory for all Territorians.

- **For more information on the Northern Territory housing initiatives detailed by Minister Conlan, visit www.housing.nt.gov.au**



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PROGRESSING POLICY REFORMS TO Remote Indigenous Housing



> *Daphne Habibis and Rhonda Phillips look at the progress of the Government's investment into reforming housing for remote Indigenous communities: the NPARIH.*

To meet the need for better quality housing services in remote Indigenous communities, a 10-year shared commitment has been made by the Federal, State and Northern Territory governments. Known as The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), this major investment aims to improve housing conditions and expand housing options.

In addition to a capital works program, State and Territory governments have been tasked with providing 'public-housing like' management in remote Indigenous communities (see Table 1).

This article will explore some of the initial findings from a two-stage investigation by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), focussing on tenancy management reforms (Habibis et al 2014). Stage two is underway and aims to provide robust and objective evidence on achievements to date, including possibilities for improving service delivery efficiencies.

Meeting Service Delivery Challenges

The NPARIH represents a radical change in the way remote Indigenous housing is managed. It involves many service delivery challenges, including distances from service centres, limited infrastructure, poor access to skilled workforces and inadequate information technology infrastructure. Maintaining a well-run repairs and maintenance system is hindered by a low rent base, extreme weather events, costly contractor services and difficulties in the regulation of suppliers.

The well-established differences between Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal tenancies (Memmott et al 2003; Habibis 2013; Milligan et al 2011) are more pronounced in remote settings. These differences include larger households, overcrowding, low skills and education, high levels of disability, and language and cultural differences. Kinship obligations also make conforming to tenancy provisions on matters such as occupancy levels difficult (Birdsall-Jones et al 2010).

Prior to the NPARIH, Indigenous Community Organisations (ICOs) managed housing on most communities. They were often small, local and kin-based with flexible housing management practices based on customary principles. This is markedly different from the centralised, bureaucratic and hierarchical arrangements of State-managed housing.

Looking at the AHURI Findings

The 2013 AHURI study consisted of an investigative panel of Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts and practitioners from the remote Indigenous housing research, policy and service delivery communities. It also included site visits to the communities of Katherine and Ngukurr in the Northern Territory, Cooktown and Wujal Wujal in Queensland, the APY Lands in South Australia and Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia.

The research uncovered considerable variation in the extent of direct State housing department involvement in the landlord role, with land tenure arrangements and the size and capacity of alternative providers shaping arrangements. Queensland and South Australia directly manage social housing assets while, in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, arrangements included both direct and third party arrangements. This included ICOs or, in the case of the Northern Territory, also shire councils. In Western Australia, one provider was a mainstream community organisation.

Table 1: NPARIH 2008–2018 budget: Targets and Completions

| | Budget 2008-2018 | New Houses | | | Rebuilds and Refurbishments | | |
|------|------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| | \$ million | 2018 Target | Completed: | As at (end): | 2014 Target | Completed: | |
| NT | 1,700 | 1,456 | 996 | Oct 2013 | 2,915 | 2,929 | Oct 2013 |
| WA | 1,200 | 1,012 | 497 | June 2014 | 1,288 | 1,288 | June 2014 |
| QLD | 1,200 | 1,141 | 462 | April 2014 | 1,216 | 1,330 | April 2014 |
| SA | 292 | 241 | 119 | March 2013 | 206 | 177 | March 2013 |
| NSW | 396.8 | 310 | 143 | March 2013 | 101 | 401 | March 2013 |
| VIC | 30.4 | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| TAS | 28 | 18 | 8 | March 2013 | 51 | 51 | March 2013 |
| AUST | 5,500 | 4,200 | 2,025 | June 2013 | 4,876 | 5,887 | June 2013 |

Source: Habibis, D., Phillips, R., Phibbs, P. and Verdouw, J. 2014. *Progressing Tenancy Management Reform on Remote Indigenous Communities*, AHURI Final Report no 223, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, p.12.

The change from ICOs to State housing departments has contributed to the decline of the ICO housing sector. This is especially true in the Northern Territory where only a handful remain (see *Table 2*).

The reasons for the predominance of direct State provision include the policy background of mainstreaming, reported failings in past housing management practices within the ICO housing sector, and an assumption that being under NPARIH management means direct management. The pressure to deliver a substantial program within tight timeframes has been a further pressure towards direct service delivery.

“ The change from ICOs (Indigenous Community Organisations) to state housing departments has contributed to the decline of the ICO housing sector. ”

Achievements to Date

The findings suggest the reforms have achieved some success in areas – including establishing formal tenancies agreements, applying needs-based allocation decisions, improving rent collection and implementing maintenance systems. But there remains much to be done to achieve quality housing services that are sustainable and appropriate for the range of remote Indigenous contexts.

Policies and models are still developing across many critical areas of service delivery – including tenant education, rent setting and collection, and recruitment and retention of a workforce with the appropriate skills and experience. Improvements are also needed in establishing facilities and operations that will ensure assets are protected over the medium to long-term.

With tenant support in the early stages of development, there is considerable scope to leverage housing service delivery to improve levels of local employment.

Policy Lessons

A number of strategic issues fundamental to achieving the intended NPARIH goals require further research and policy consideration.

In some areas, capital works outcomes have not lived up to expectations, creating difficulties in managing tenancies. There is still a need for improvements to stakeholder communication, improved attention to the longer-term impacts of capital works decisions, and closer involvement of housing managers and communities at all stages – from planning and design through to construction.

Incremental development and action learning are also essential. Mainstreaming has resulted in a loss of specialist expertise, with those implementing the reforms often having limited experience or understanding of the distinctive service delivery context of Indigenous communities. Pressure to deliver against tight NPARIH targets has meant policy settings and service delivery arrangements were not always well-developed before the reforms commenced, therefore, ongoing review and assessment is essential.

Positive relationships with local communities are also required for establishing efficiencies, and maintaining trust and legitimacy. Ongoing investment in these community relationships will be a critical success factor. Governance within both government and non-government sectors is a crucial area for improvement. Capacity building and engagement of all stakeholders remain critical to success.

“ The findings suggest the reforms have achieved some success in areas... But there remains much to be done to achieve quality housing services that are sustainable and appropriate for the range of remote Indigenous contexts. ”

Table 2: Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) by State/Territory: 2001, 2006 and 2011

| State or Territory | All ICHOs | | All ICHOs | Funded ICHOs |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | 2001 | 2006 | 2011 | |
| NSW and ACT | 205 | 169 | 207 | 98 |
| VIC | 25 | 22 | 19 | 19 |
| QLD | 116 | 91 | 28 | 28 |
| SA | 31 | 37 | 41 | 32 |
| WA | 125 | 92 | – | 5 |
| TAS | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| NT | 111 | 82 | 30 | 30 |
| TOTAL AUSTRALIA | 616 | 496 | 328 | 214 |

Source: Habibis, D., Phillips, R., Phibbs, P. and Verdouw, J. 2014. *Progressing Tenancy Management Reform on Remote Indigenous Communities*, AHURI Final Report no 223, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, p.17.

Sustainability and Future Planning

Understanding the costs of managing housing in remote communities is essential to inform cost-effective service delivery and sustainable funding models in the second half of the NPARIH and beyond.

As capital works budgets are expended and maintenance budgets are put under pressure, the reality of unmet housing need and the ongoing challenge of repairs and maintenance demand becomes more obvious. The post-NPARIH funding source for tenancy management costs is a matter of concern – rent revenue cannot be expected to fully cover tenancy management or any maintenance and replacement costs.

“ Understanding the costs of managing housing in remote communities is essential to inform cost-effective service delivery and sustainable funding models in the second half of the NPARIH and beyond. ”

Government policy and the aspirations of some communities continue to focus on diversifying tenure and increasing homeownership. The absence of a housing market – together with community land tenure and the low income of most residents of remote Indigenous communities – means that in many locations home ownership and alternative rental models may be unviable. However, for residents in communities with reasonable proximity and access to employment markets, these options may be possible.

A critical future planning issue is whether State housing departments or third parties are the primary service providers. Further consideration of possible future roles for Indigenous and mainstream community housing providers needs to occur.

“ It is imperative that Federal, State and Territory governments maintain a long-term policy focus and commitment to remote Aboriginal communities, regardless of who is delivering services on the ground. ”

What happens to smaller communities, and those that have not signed tenancy agreements or agreed to lease their land to the State, is an area of increasing concern. All jurisdictions have identified some locations where communities are too small or lack infrastructure and employment opportunities to be considered viable for investment. Yet, attachments remain strong, with people seeking to remain in places they experience as healthier and more peaceful than some larger communities.

If policies are imposed, there is a real risk of unintended policy outcomes that will widen rather than reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health and welfare outcomes. A minimum requirement is for close, careful and genuine consultation with Aboriginal people, and proper adjustment to the on-the-ground realities of their relationships to people, place and culture.

More generally – to avoid the mistakes of the past and ensure the substantial investment of human and financial resources through NPARIH is maintained – it is imperative that Federal, State and Territory governments maintain a long-term policy focus and commitment to remote Aboriginal communities, regardless of who is delivering services on the ground.

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Daphne Habibis is Associate Professor and Director, Housing and Community Research Unit at the University of Tasmania. She has published widely on housing and urban policy issues, especially in relation to tenancy sustainment and Aboriginal housing.



Rhonda Phillips is Research Fellow, Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland. Her Indigenous and community housing expertise is grounded in nearly 30 years' experience in social housing and homelessness service delivery, policy, program management and research.

As the AHO's collaborators in this edition of *HousingWORKS*, the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) has worked at the frontline of Australian Indigenous housing issues since the body's establishment in 1998.

Across the following pages, the AHO reports on some newsworthy initiatives that have played an important role in the organisation over the past year. Would you believe this includes a literacy program from Cuba? Read all about it...

'Yes, I Can' literacy program true to its name

A Cuban-developed literacy program is proving to be successful in remote NSW. The 'Yes I Can' program – originating from Cuba in 2000 – has been implemented in 29 countries across the globe, with Australia being the first developed nation to adopt the program.

With the backing of the Cuban Government, the first pilot was led by the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council in collaboration with Wilcannia Central School, the University of New England (UNE) and the Australian Government.

Largely community-driven, this pilot was led by Jack Beetson, the then acting CEO of the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council and a member of the National Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign Steering Committee. His long-time associates, Bob Boughton, Associate Professor of Adult Education at UNE, and Deborah Durnan, an adult education and development consultant, were part of the team, along with Jose Chala Leblanch, a literacy adviser provided by the Cuban government.

The Australian pilot was hailed a success with notable improvements in literacy levels. People who were previously classified as 'critical illiterate' were able to gain employment in office positions after just 11 weeks in the program.

"There's much more to it than just teaching people to read," said Mr Beetson. "The kinds of things we've seen as a result of the program include less damage to property, less violence and reduced alcohol consumption. School attendance went up from 35 percent to 85 percent – it's made a real difference to people's lives."

'Yes I Can' graduation ceremony, Bourke



The program aims to address poor literacy levels in Aboriginal communities where up to 65 percent of people are functionally illiterate in English. Literacy is a cornerstone to education, employment and dealing with the demands of day-to-day life.

In remote areas – where driving is a necessary part of life – the pathway from illiteracy to prison becomes clear. Without the ability to read, Aboriginal people are less likely to pass online driving tests. While many may drive very safely, when they do so without a licence they risk incurring heavy fines, and can end up in prison for fine default and persistent offending.

“ The program aims to address poor literacy levels in Aboriginal communities where up to 65 percent of people are functionally illiterate in English. ”

A disproportionate percentage of adult prisoners are Aboriginal – just 2.5 percent of the adult population in Australia is Aboriginal, yet Aboriginal people represent 26 percent of all adults incarcerated in prison. The imbalance is due, in no small part, to poor literacy.

The 'Yes I Can' literacy program is unique in that it is largely community-driven. By educating and training community members to deliver the program, it also provides opportunities for people to practice their improved literacy skills.

Through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) provided funding to UNE to project manage the pilot campaigns, which were extended to Enngonia and Bourke in 2013-14. Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation was engaged to handle the logistics of employing local people as facilitators. By the end of the second pilot, 81 people had graduated.

“ There's much more to it than just teaching people to read. The kinds of things we've seen as a result of the program include less damage to property, less violence and reduced alcohol consumption. ”

The classes utilise an audio-visual method, with students and facilitators watching and learning from DVDs. The DVDs show a class of students, just like themselves, learning how to read and write. Once classes finish, campaign staff members organise another eight to 12 weeks of post-literacy activities to help

people consolidate what they have learnt. This builds pathways into employment, further education and increased community participation.

“Increasing literacy is a community responsibility,” added Mr Beetson. “The ‘Yes I Can’ literacy campaign is more than an education program – it seeks to mobilise a community by educating and training community members to deliver the program and provide opportunities for people to practice their improved literacy skills.”

“Tenants are better equipped to read correspondence from their housing provider, obtain their driver’s licence, understand bills and are more likely to go on to further education or to find and maintain employment. This knowledge supports participants as tenants in community housing.”

Partners involved in the implementation of this campaign have recently established the Literacy for Life Foundation Ltd. The main role of the Foundation is to coordinate the national roll-out of the campaign.

The Foundation is headed by Jack Beetson and supported by board members Ms Donna Ah Chee, CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Chairperson), and three directors: Ms Pat Anderson, Chairperson Lowitja institute; Mr John Flecker, CEO Australasia, Brookfields Multiplex; and Mr Don Aroney, Executive Director Operations, Brookfields Multiplex.

“ Tenants are better equipped to read correspondence from their housing provider, obtain their driver’s licence, understand bills and are more likely to go on to further education or to find and maintain employment. This knowledge supports participants as tenants in community housing. ”

The UNE will remain involved and will be responsible for evaluating future campaigns. The Penrith Panthers Rugby League Football Club also supports the Foundation and the jerseys worn by players display the Literacy for Life logo.

His Excellency, Ambassador Pedro Monzon, from the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba attended a graduation ceremony in Bourke for participants from Bourke, Enngonia and Wilcannia.

“Without literacy skills, people are unable to fully participate in life and, with increased literacy, comes the ability to control the decisions they make and the future they plan – it’s a great thing for the AHO to be a part of,” said AHO Chief Executive Shane Hamilton.

According to Bob Boughton, over 100 communities have expressed an interest in joining the campaign.

■ **For further information, visit the Literacy for Life Foundation at www.lflf.org.au or phone Jack Beetson on 0417 967 960.**

To give Enngonia residents the chance to practice what they had learned, they were sent a list of questions about their experience and encouraged to provide written answers. The responses were plentiful and, from the unedited comments below, it’s clear the program has made a marked difference to the participants’ lives.

- *“I wanted to see my people get a better education and to understand what sort of forms they were reading as filling out most couldn’t understand what they were doing. I saw a lot of positive messages come out of it and a lot of the students come out of their shells. It was inspiring for me to see the positive changes in them.”*
– Rick Elwood
- *“I didn’t get to finish my schooling then hearing about the literacy class I thought it could help me in what I didn’t complete, also to refresh what I did learn but forgot.”*
– Chelsea Dennis
- *“I wasn’t much good at school and through the literacy programme after doing it, I have come a long way, now I am starting to teach some of the new students.”*
– Craig Mckellar
- *“Now I buy the papers and have better understanding of things like filling in forms.”*
– Gordon Sullivan
- *“The ‘Yes I Can’ program has changed my life around because it had our own people running it,... and its lots of fun, you get to read and write better and make you feel good about yourself, more confident in things; they supply you with food which is also great.”*
– Taryn Kelly
- *“I think everyone who dropped out of school should do it.”*
– Samuel Shillingsworth
- *“Nothing is hard if you put your mind to it.”*
– Melissa West
- *“I didn’t think I could do it because I couldn’t read and write properly but when I went to the ‘Yes I Can’ program and seen my mates there it helped me and there was no one making fun of how people read or write... and it was great.”*
– Raymond Barker

AHO supports Aboriginal students through HOUSING

For Aboriginal people looking to take up work, study or training in a regional centre, AHO's Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) program offers secure and affordable study for the duration of education and training, or while becoming established in a new job.

Similarly, IPROWD is a specialist training program to assist Aboriginal people to gain entry to the NSW Police Academy at Goulburn, which is the first step to becoming an officer in the NSW Police Force. Many of these IPROWD participants are also part of the ERA program.

The best way to explain how these two programs work is by asking the people who use them. Following are three recent case studies...



ERA CASE STUDY

Tamika Clarke
Nowra TAFE

Eighteen-year-old Tamika Clarke found her independence thanks to the AHO's Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) program.

Tamika completed the Indigenous Police Recruiting Our Way (IPROWD) program at Nowra TAFE, which prepares students for entrance into the NSW Police Academy.

"I've always wanted to be police officer, but I didn't finish Year 12 at school, so the IPROWD course offered an alternative way that I could get into the Force," said Tamika.

In order to allow Tamika to live closer to the TAFE, she was offered ERA accommodation in Bomaderry. Living close to the TAFE campus helped save two hours per day in travel. This gave her more time for her studies, which she complemented with a part-time job at the Shellharbour Myer.

"I've always wanted to be police officer, but I didn't finish Year 12 at school, so the IPROWD course offered an alternative way that I could get into the Force."

"The ERA accommodation really helped me to concentrate on my studies. I avoided travel time, as the house was nice and close to TAFE, and it made it easier to study without the distractions of living in my family home. The house was definitely big enough, and it was really nice and I enjoyed having a housemate for support," she said.

"I really enjoyed the whole course. I found it easy to jump back into education and learning. I did find being away from home, and in a new environment, a challenge at first. But my family was very supportive and they've known I have wanted to be a police officer for a long time."

Asked if she had any advice for people thinking about following in her footsteps, Tamika offered this: "If it is what you are really interested in doing, go for it, definitely. You can still visit home and there are other people in the home that offer support. It has really helped me to become more independent."

Tamika recently graduated from the IPROWD course and has applied for the January 2015 intake at the NSW Police Academy, while continuing to work at Myer in the meantime.

"It has really made a difference to my life. ERA has made it a lot easier for me and I'm really grateful to be given the opportunity to have the AHO support me."

The Australian Government, TAFE NSW, NSW Police Force and Charles Sturt University are working in partnership to offer IPROWD training programs at a range of locations in NSW including Broken Hill, Casino, Campbelltown, Dubbo, Maitland, Mount Druitt, Nowra, Redfern and Tamworth.



ERA CASE STUDY

Nyoka Boney and Jessica Clark
Dubbo

Nineteen-year-old Nyoka Boney and eighteen-year-old Jessica Clark also found their independence through AHO's Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) program.

The girls shared a three-bedroom ERA property in Dubbo that was offered to them so they could complete the Indigenous Police Recruitment Our Way Delivery (IPROWD) Training Program at Dubbo TAFE.

After completing Year 12, Jessica moved from Warren to Dubbo to complete the IPROWD course on the advice of her Aboriginal Advisor at Warren Central High School.

"I'm the eldest of four kids and when I told my family what I planned to do, they were shocked," said Jessica. "They didn't think I'd do anything with my life but now they've seen what I've achieved, and are supportive and proud of me."

Nyoka, who has also completed Year 12, previously lived with her mum and 12 other family members, and had a very different reaction from her family.

“My mum was all for it, and she was hoping I’d get a placement even further away to make it harder for me and really teach me to stand on my own two feet,” she said. “It was a great opportunity and made a real difference to my life. I’ve learnt to manage money, buy my own food and cook for myself. It’s made me more independent.”

“ [My family] didn’t think I’d do anything with my life but now they’ve seen what I’ve achieved, and are supportive and proud of me. ”

“The course was tough but it got us ready for the Police Force,” continued Nyoka. “It’s a very good course and Peter Gibbs (IPROWD mentor) puts his heart into the course and gives it 100 percent. He made us want to become police officers even more!”

“I found moving from home an enjoyable thing because I found independence, so it was wonderful,” added Jessica. “It made me more mature and grow up a bit so I could look after myself. I’ve learnt how to use money and save my money more, and I learnt to cook!”

Asked what advice they would pass on to others thinking of leaving home to complete the IPROWD training program, Nyoka said, “It’s a great opportunity even if you don’t want to become a police officer. It’s a great course that lets you do other things, like become a security guard.”

“It can be a bit scary at times, going from a house full of people all the time to just one other,” she concluded. “When I lived with mum, I wouldn’t have wanted to move away to the Police Academy but, since living on my own, I’m up for it.”

As Jessica added, “The course was wonderful, I really did love it. The best part was the theory leading up to getting into the Police Academy. TAFE became part of my everyday routine and I couldn’t go without it. My advice would be to learn to use a washing machine – I had no clue how to wash clothes!”



ERA CASE STUDY

Korey Studman
Nowra TAFE

Twenty-year-old Korey Studman has made the most of the AHO’s ERA program.

Korey completed a Retail Certificate III at Nowra TAFE but found it difficult to find employment in the retail industry, despite his new qualifications. On the advice of his TAFE teacher, he investigated the Indigenous Police Recruiting Our Way (IPROWD) TAFE course, which prepares students for entrance into the NSW Police Academy.

Having decided he wanted to do the IPROWD program, Korey made the move to an ERA home in Bomaderry with the assistance of his TAFE course coordinator.

“Living close to the TAFE made it more convenient and I wasn’t distracted by friends and family, especially peer pressure, which meant I could focus on my course work – and it made me more independent,” he said.

The most challenging thing Korey faced was the first three weeks away from home when he missed being around family but he quickly adapted and found a comfortable routine. He also found that the course offered a lot more than just an education, and he has come to value the process of learning and the friendships that he has made.

“ Living close to the TAFE made it more convenient and I wasn’t distracted by friends and family, especially peer pressure, which meant I could focus on my course work – and it made me more independent. ”

“The house was really close to TAFE – only five minutes away – and it was nice, quiet and homey. It felt like a normal home, which is what I liked most about it. I already cooked and cleaned at my family home so I managed quite well on my own.”

Korey’s family provided the support he needed. “My family helped me out a lot with their support,” he admitted. “They told me from the beginning that, if I start this course, I have to finish it. They’re very happy that I found something I wanted to do and enjoy.”

Asked if he had any advice for people considering studying or moving away from home, Korey echoed his family’s words: “If you’re going to do it, fully commit to it and don’t just drop out half-way. You get to meet new people and have a great experience. It’s a personal challenge and, while you work as a team, it’s a personal challenge to improve yourself.”

Korey admits that his biggest challenge was with spelling and grammar but, in a demonstration of his sheer determination, he committed himself to completing all the necessary extra work that was required in order to improve.

“ It’s a personal challenge and, while you work as a team, it’s a personal challenge to improve yourself. ”

“I’m passionate about becoming a police officer because I enjoy helping people,” he concluded. The course has reassured me that I can be independent and it has helped me to be more determined to reach my goal.”

- To find out more about AHO’s ERA program, visit www.aho.nsw.gov.au/era and, for further details on IPROWD, visit www.iprowd.tafensw.edu.au/

AHO supports tenants through social comics...

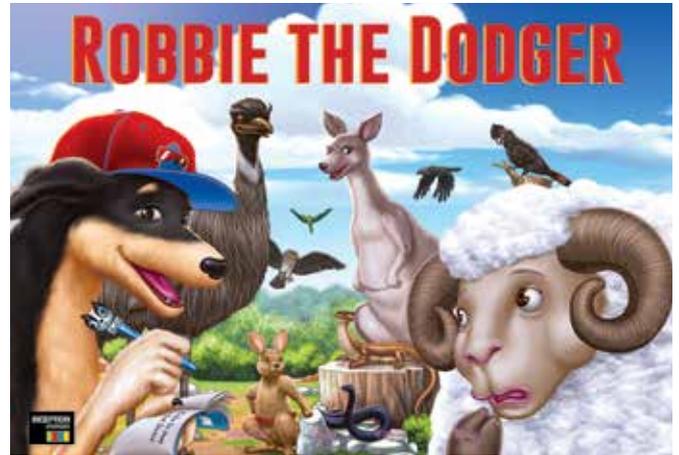
Through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) is funding social comic and children's storybook development workshops as part of its Tenant Support and Education Program (TSEP) throughout remote NSW.

Social comics assist with literacy, education, health, employment and training. Evidence shows that comics encourage reluctant readers back to reading, and have been a significant resource for communities in remote locations with poor literacy rates.

“ Participation in the workshops – and development of the social comics – builds the self-esteem of community members by addressing problems and finding solutions through storytelling. ”

The social comic workshops were facilitated by Inception Strategies. They allowed tenants in remote areas to build a picture of life in their community and to weave key housing issues into a story – one that is written by community for community. Workshops have so far been held in Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Bourke, Enngonia and Collarenebri.

Participation in the workshops – and development of the social comics – builds the self-esteem of community members by addressing problems and finding solutions through storytelling. The results of the workshops are turned into storybooks to further enforce the messages.



Artwork from the AHO storybook Robbie the Dodger

The resources from each set of workshops will be used across the sector to inform tenants about key issues that impact their tenancies. The Lightning Ridge and Walgett workshops focussed on the importance of paying rent; the Bourke and Enngonia workshops focussed on repairs and maintenance; and the Collarenebri workshops focussed on issues arising from overcrowding.

The Collarenebri workshops took place in early April 2014 with a two-day workshop for tenants and a one-day workshop for students at Collarenebri Central School.

Inception Strategies worked closely with Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation and Gunida Gunyah Aboriginal



Collarenebri Central School students with Inceptions Strategies facilitators and AHO's Bart Sykes

Corporation, which are the approved Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) in Collarenebri. They were able to provide valuable information about current issues in their community. The ACHPs organised the tenants to participate in the workshops, which were held at both the Local Aboriginal Lands Council Office and the Collarenebri Central School.

“ A primary school student from Collarenebri Central School declared, “It was the best day of my entire life,” when asked to comment on the workshop. ”

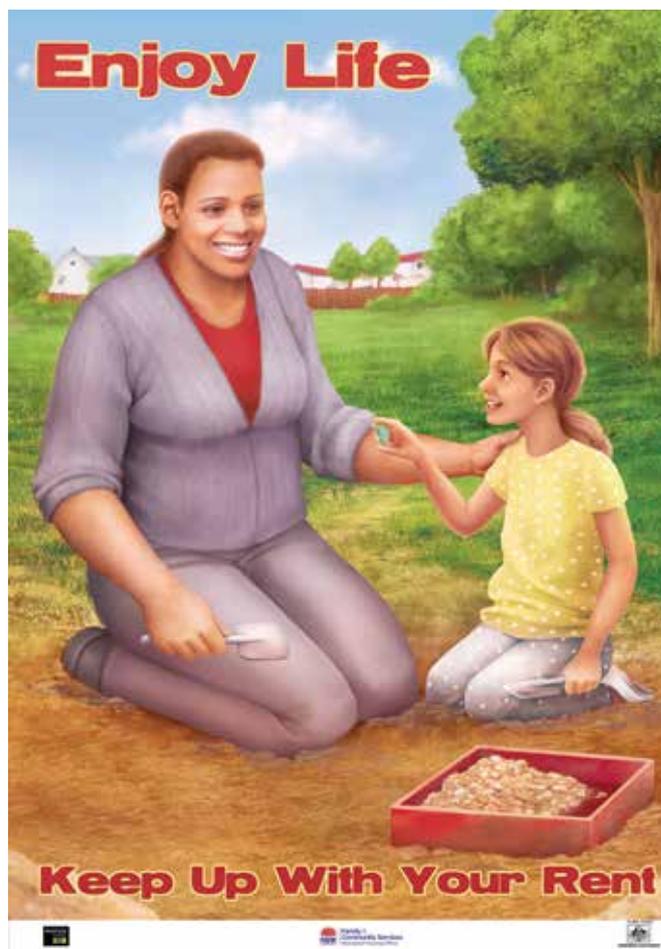
Participants at the workshops drafted a script, which was then submitted to the AHO for approval prior to the team at Inception Strategies starting on the artwork. It is a 12-month process from workshop participation to the release of a comic. The AHO will go back to each community to launch the comics once they are complete.

Chris Barden, a primary school student from Collarenebri Central School declared, “It was the best day of my entire life,” when asked to comment on the workshop.

The first comics and storybook from the Walgett and Lightning Ridge workshops were published in September.

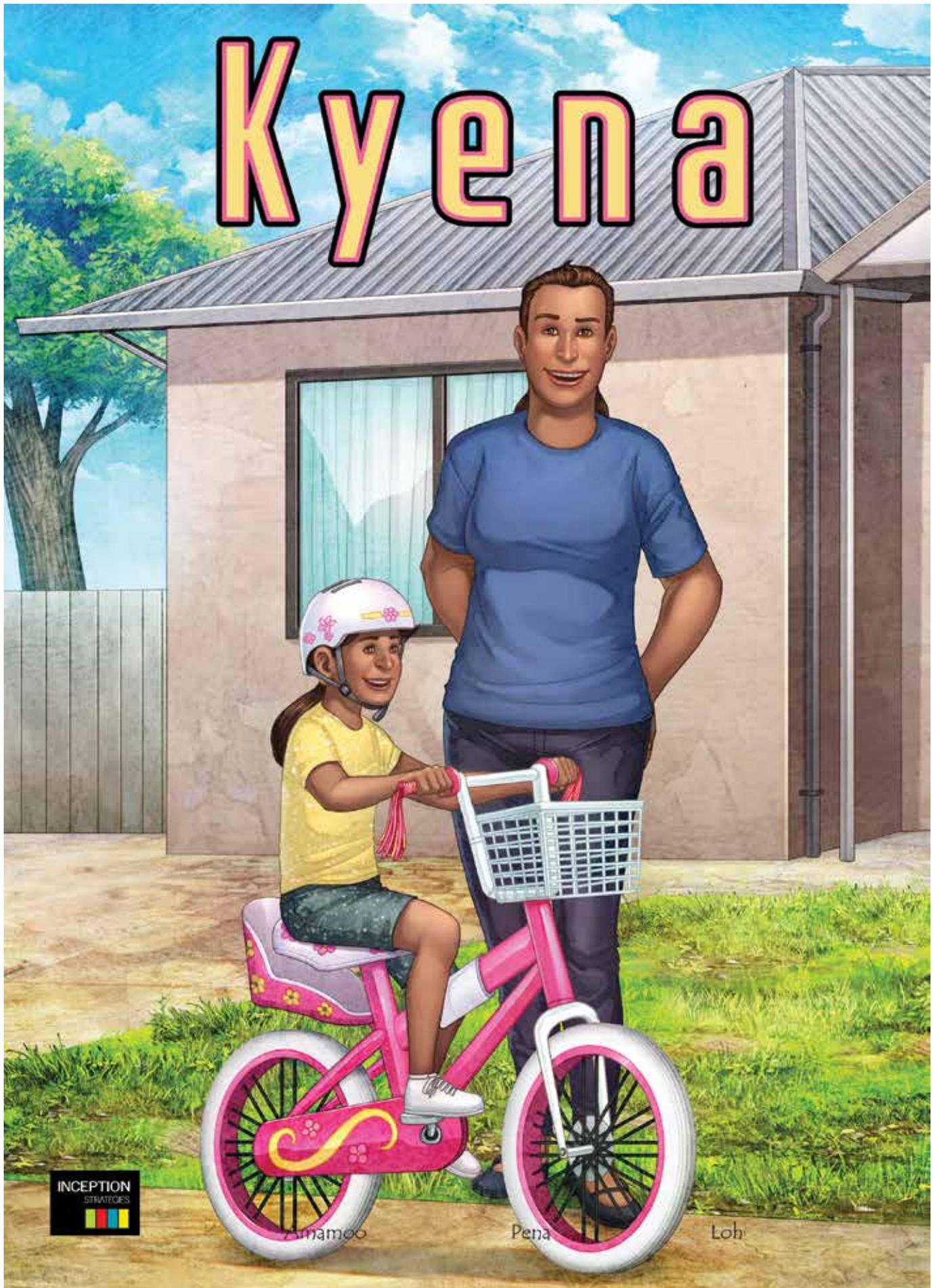
- To view the results of the social comics workshops, visit <http://www.inceptionstrategies.com/kyena.htm>

For more information on the program, contact the AHO on (02) 8836 9444 or Inception Strategies on 0412 039 636.



A collection of artwork from the AHO comic *Kyena* and storybook *Robbie the Dodger* (imagery supplied courtesy of Inception Strategies)

Kyena



INCEPTION
STRATEGIES



Anamoo

Pena

Loh

GUNDI PROGRAM

creates homes and rebuilds lives

Gundi – meaning ‘shelter’ – is the name of a program run by Corrective Services Industries (CSI) that is also supported by the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO).

Gundi sees Indigenous inmates at the St Heliers Correctional Centre in Muswellbrook build up to five modular homes per year. The homes are then delivered to Aboriginal communities in remote areas across New South Wales.

The program aims to provide inmates with practical building skills and formal TAFE qualifications in carpentry, plumbing and electrics. This assists to break the cycle of reoffending by giving inmates trade skills for improved employment prospects once they are released. At the same time, the program addresses housing shortages in remote areas where there is a lack of qualified tradespeople to build new homes.

Inmates receive training in general carpentry, painting, tiling, cabinet making, plumbing, welding, electrical work, insulation, gyprocking and roof installation. They also have the opportunity to gain tickets in forklift or crane operation, elevated work platform and dogman.

“ The project has been successful on two counts. It provides well-appointed homes for Aboriginal families in need and, for Aboriginal inmates, it provides education and skills that they can apply when they leave prison. ”

The steel and timber framed homes are constructed within the prison complex in Muswellbrook, then road freighted to remote areas in NSW. The houses are craned in and dropped into place on prepared concrete footings. Services are then connected, with fencing and landscaping works carried out by inmates to complete the homes.

Each home is funded by the AHO under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).



A home is craned into place in Coonamble



Joy from Coonamble LALC hands over the keys to one of the new residences

“The project has been successful on two counts. It provides well-appointed homes for Aboriginal families in need and, for Aboriginal inmates, it provides education and skills that they can apply when they leave prison,” said AHO Chief Executive Shane Hamilton.

Paul Lancaster, Manager of Industries at the St Heliers Correctional Complex, believes the program can be a life-changing experience.

“The Gundi project has the potential to impact upon and influence a great many lives, not only within the correctional system, but within the broader Indigenous community,” he said. “The increased levels of self-esteem, of feeling valued and of having made a contribution that these men talk about is real, and of incalculable value.”

“ The Gundi project has the potential to impact upon and influence a great many lives, not only within the correctional system, but within the broader Indigenous community. ”

In February this year, Coonamble Local Aboriginal Land Council was handed the keys to three new properties in Coonamble. Brewarrina Local Land Council also took delivery of two houses during September.

■ For further information on the Gundi program, contact the AHO on (02) 8836 9444.

THE GREENING OF COMMUNITIES

Earlier this year, representatives of the Royal Botanic Gardens contacted the Aboriginal Housing Office's Sydney/South Eastern Region (SSER) to talk about ways it could assist in promoting the Community Greening program to Aboriginal housing tenants and providers.

Community Greening covers a range of activities to promote communal garden projects undertaken by the Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust and Housing NSW. By promoting communal gardening in social housing communities – and at nearby locations – a significant contribution to improved social cohesion, crime reduction and public health in both urban and regional New South Wales can be made.

“ The Community Greening program aims to establish 300 projects by 2016. Currently, there are 261 projects operating. ”

SSER has been working with the Royal Botanic Gardens and other partners to develop a range of strategies to help increase the number of projects operated by Aboriginal people, as well as the participation of Aboriginal people in existing projects.

The Community Greening program aims to establish 300 projects by 2016. Currently, there are 261 projects operating, which take the expertise of the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Domain Trust 'beyond the garden walls', and seek to serve the broader community through innovative outreach programs.

“It would be wonderful if increasing the number of Aboriginal housing tenants involved in Community Greening actually helped the program to reach its target. This is a great program that provides so many potential benefits for our communities,” said AHO SSER Manager Janice Dennis.

The core purpose of the program is to support communities with establishing and maintaining their own communal gardens. Since its commencement, Community Greening has received widespread recognition and won various awards including the Silver Award in the Social Justice Category of the Premier's Public Sector Awards. The program has also been successful in attracting support from a range of public and private sector organisations.

Projects take on many different shapes and sizes. Some are designed to grow plants and flowers to help revitalise community life and improve the local environment, while others are used to grow vegetables.



Staff and community in the Airds Tharawal Community Garden

Aside from improving the environment and giving people access to fresh, healthy food, Community Greening also provides a range of social benefits. It has been seen to increase tenant involvement in community life by helping to build people's confidence and their level of social interaction. The program also enables tenants to develop a range of vocational skills in gardening, planning, teamwork, resource allocation and decision-making.

“Community Greening provides a great way for Aboriginal people to help others to understand the range of uses of various native plants. Not only that, it is a good way for us to pass our knowledge on to our young people and help to keep our cultural practices and languages alive.”

Engaging Aboriginal people and communities is a key objective of Community Greening with specialist Aboriginal staff members employed. This includes horticulturalist Brenden Moore and the Education Coordinator for Aboriginal Programs, Clarence Slockee. Brenden and Clarence work as a part of a dynamic

team headed by the Community Greening Coordinator, Philip Pettitt.

“We already have a number of successful projects operating within Aboriginal communities and we are very keen to expand on this success,” said Clarence. “We do, however, face some significant challenges with funding and keeping people engaged once projects have started. Given our experience with Community Greening, we are now in a good position to look at innovative ways to overcome the challenges and take the program to a new level.”

According to Brenden, the main benefits have been the ways in which people reconnect with their natural environment and culture.

“Community Greening provides a great way for Aboriginal people to help others to understand the range of uses of various native plants,” said Brenden. “Not only that, it is a good way for us to pass our knowledge on to our young people and help to keep our cultural practices and languages alive.”

- To find out more about this exciting program, contact the Community Greening Coordinator on 02 9231 8399 or visit the Community Greening website: www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/education/community_greening



Community Nursery volunteers from Rosemeadow eagerly receive plant donations

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1

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2

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A category winner will be selected
in each Australian jurisdiction
and in New Zealand

April – August 2015

3

**State Award
Receptions**

Awards Receptions are held in
Qld, SA, WA, ACT/NSW, Vic/Tas
and New Zealand

28 October 2015

4

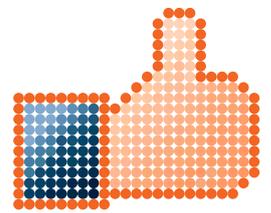
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> *Cheryle Russell from NT Department of Housing shares some heart-warming stories of new housing developments within a remote Indigenous community in Arnhem Land, proving not all news is bad news.*

A fresh take on a new house

Nalwarri Ndurruwutthun has lived in Yirrkala her entire life. Until early this year, she lived in an old house at Lot 92, Yirrkala, and is now enjoying her new home at Lot 93.

Nalwarri kept living in her old house while her new home was being built. The close proximity gave her a good opportunity to watch the construction carefully and see it come to life. As Nalwarri says, “to ensure that everything was going right.”

“I like the design of the new house, and I am very happy to be given such a nice one,” she says. “Having a new house has been good for my health, and it’s nice that I can have more of my family with me.”

Nalwarri currently lives with four nephews, one niece, one grandchild and a daughter-in-law. She’s very proud her nephews help her in the garden and reveals, “they were the ones who put in the plants for me.” Nalwarri has some lovely tomato plants growing, however, “the kids keep eating them before I can pick them.”

Forced to retire due to ill health, Nalwarri now spends the majority of her time at home with her family, admitting she “can find this a bit boring.” This is not a surprising revelation, considering she has travelled extensively and spent most of her life as an educator, school principle and cultural advisor.

The 56 year-old admits she has fond memories of the 40 years she spent working in education and “loved the various positions that I held.”

Nalwarri’s new home is a result of a recently completed package of works at Yirrkala, and was constructed under the National Partnership Agreement for Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).



Nalwarri Ndurruwutthun enjoys her tomato plants



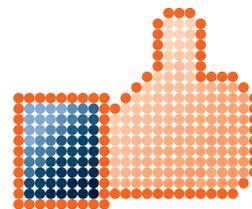
Steven (standing) and Jesiah Mununggurr



Nalwarri Ndurruwutthun, Steven (standing) and Jesiah Mununggurr



Jesiah Mununggurr and Nalwarri Ndurruwutthun



Too good to be true

On 15 August 2014, Mr Donald Marawili and Ms Judith Markia – two humble public housing tenants living in the remote community of Yirrkala – were given an early Christmas present: their newly constructed three-bedroom home.

Donald and Judith didn't believe they were getting a new house until the house was getting built. When handed the keys to their new residence, they couldn't stop smiling. "Our whole family arrived to help us move and we were all very excited," says Donald.

Making a nice yard and planting some trees are some of the things Donald and Judith are now looking forward to enjoying in their new home.

Donald and Judith's previous public housing property was old and deemed beyond economic repair. It was subsequently torn down to make way for their new house, and they lived in transitional accommodation while it was being built.

Their new home is also part of works completed at Yirrkala under the NPARIH.



The former residence of Mr Donald Marawili and Ms Judith Markia



Cheryle Russell is a Housing Officer with the Northern Territory Government Department of Housing, servicing the remote communities of Galiwinku and Yirrkala in Arnhem Land.



Mr Donald Marawili and Ms Judith Markia's new home

Making home ownership on traditional land a reality



> *The Department of Housing and Public Works provides an update on Queensland Government initiatives enabling Indigenous Queenslanders to own their homes.*

Home ownership is no longer a dream for Indigenous people living on traditional lands in Queensland.

In May of this year, Luella Bligh of Palm Island became the first private landowner on Indigenous lands in the State's history. She was able to purchase a lease over a vacant block at Long Beach, several kilometres out of the main township.

It was a historic occasion, and one made possible by the Government's decision earlier this year to scrap the complex web of rules that had previously restricted individual home ownership on Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) land.

Ms Bligh, her partner and two daughters have since been busy building their dream home. "What we have now is very different from the house I grew up in here at the mission," said Ms Bligh. "It had a dirt floor made from ant hills, a tin roof, iron louvres and no glass windows. The shower and toilet were out the back and, in the wet season, the creek ran through our kitchen."

Building her home was challenging, with the whole family helping every day after work and on weekends. "It was a big commitment but we have something tangible now," she said. "My view is that we have to progress as a people, and part of that is home ownership – making our own decisions."

Just a few months after Luella Bligh made history on Palm Island, Ailsa Lively made history of a different sort – becoming the first Indigenous Queenslander to purchase a social housing home on DOGIT land. The Yarrabah resident said the landmark event was a way of ensuring an ongoing connection to her traditional home.

“ [The house I grew up in] had a dirt floor made from ant hills, a tin roof, iron louvres and no glass windows. The shower and toilet were out the back and, in the wet season, the creek ran through our kitchen. ”

"Being able to provide security for my family's future is really important to me and owning a home on my traditional country gives me peace," the mother of three said.

Since Ailsa's purchase, the Government has received 45 applications from Indigenous Queenslanders interested in purchasing their social housing properties. So far, agreements have been struck to release eight social housing dwellings for sale in Yarrabah and 22 on Palm Island.

Eleven families have also expressed an interest in purchasing 99-year leases over land where they already have a home – 10 of these are in Yarrabah and one on Palm Island.



Queensland Housing Minister Tim Mander said that, while home ownership on Indigenous land had technically been possible since 2008, a concerted effort across a number of departments was required to make it a reality.

“To give just one example, in most cases these townships had never been properly surveyed and town planning schemes had never been developed,” said Mr Mander. “In the past, there were only baseline surveys of where the road came into the town and nothing more. There was no real concept of a ‘block’ of land because lands were always communal and boundaries were never clearly defined.”

“ While home ownership on Indigenous land had technically been possible since 2008, a concerted effort across a number of departments was required to make it a reality. ”

The survey work to allow for new social housing was conducted under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) – a joint program with the Commonwealth. These surveys also meant people who wanted to buy social housing did not need to have the land surveyed themselves.

The next step involved determining a price for the land and for the social housing dwellings. A nominal price for the land lease has been established through a methodology determined by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, which holds responsibility for leases. Deciding a sale price for social housing was another challenge, because previously there had been no real estate market on Indigenous land to provide indicative prices.

“ The Government has received 45 applications from Indigenous Queenslanders interested in purchasing their social housing properties. So far, agreements have been struck to release eight social housing dwellings for sale. ”

Agreements on an affordable sale price were negotiated between the Department of Housing and Public Works and land trustees of each community interested in home ownership.

Mr Mander said the Government had also moved to ensure Indigenous owners would have ongoing security of tenure, altering legislation to enable the person who holds the lease to have a statutory right of renewal after 99 years.

“The driving principle here is to create a situation where Indigenous people living on Indigenous land have the same opportunity for home ownership as any other Queenslanders,” he said.

■ For more information on housing assistance from the Queensland Government, visit <http://www.qld.gov.au/housing/>

FACT BOX:

Some of the significant achievements of the NPARIH program so far include:

- Delivery of 515 new dwellings (against a target of 1,141 to be completed by June 2018).
- Completion of 1,490 refurbishments (exceeding the life of program target at 30 June 2014).
- Development of 728 serviced lots for the construction of social housing dwellings in remote Indigenous communities.
- Delivery of workers' accommodation facilities in Aurukun, Doomadgee and Palm Island.
- Delivery of 11 new dwellings to Aurukun, Hope Vale, Palm Island and Woorabinda for use as transitional accommodation for families whose homes are undergoing major upgrades.
- Purchase of 34 Employment Related Accommodation Program (ERAP) dwellings, removing the barrier of housing to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take up employment, education and training opportunities in the regional centres of Cairns, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville.
- Delivery of the AFL Cape York House – a 48-bed boarding facility in Cairns to provide accommodation for young Indigenous students from remote areas of Queensland.
- In the three months to September 2014, there have been a total of 47,954 employment hours undertaken on social housing construction, and other housing and infrastructure-related work across NPARIH communities. Of this total, Indigenous employees undertook 85 percent. In the month of September, 12 apprentices and 22 trainees were employed on NPARIH projects.

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- Housing and Community Services ACT (HACS)
- NZ Housing Corporation
- QBAS for QLD Housing
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- The Housing Authority of Western Australia, maintenance of 16,000 homes (recently awarded in July 2014)

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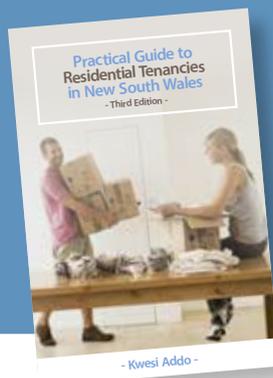
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AHI UPCOMING EVENTS

■ Indigenous Housing Professional Practice Seminar 23 March 2015, Sydney

Improving Indigenous housing service planning and delivery for better outcomes



This seminar aims to provide an opportunity for mainstream public and community housing professionals to join with experts working in the indigenous social housing field to improve understanding of the respective sectors and identify opportunities for service planning and delivery across all sectors for the benefit of the indigenous community.

Program will include:

- Address from Aboriginal Housing Office representative
- Presentations from Housing Providers showcasing their Aboriginal service delivery strategy
- Round table discussion: Opportunity and challenges for improved Aboriginal service planning and delivery
- Panel Discussion: What role can Aboriginal Housing Providers play in wider Aboriginal Service Delivery?
- Engaging Aboriginal communities and staff
- Culturally sensitive strategy and approach
- Building workforce capability

■ Leadership Master Class

Empowering Social Housing Leaders

Purposefully residential, the Leadership Master Class empowers delegates to take focused time and space to refresh and extend their leadership capabilities to aid success and meet demands of future social housing industry growth and change. The event provides a unique opportunity for existing and emerging leaders of social housing policy and practice to participate in a high-level development program with their industry peers.

An engaging schedule of presentations, workshops and exercises will be presented by facilitators and speakers with experience and proven track records of success in leadership development and experienced and respected senior social housing leaders with focus on building understanding and capacity in four key areas: **self-leadership, interpersonal leadership, team leadership, strategic leadership.**

Interactive workshop sessions will be interwoven with presentations from senior leaders from industry, who focus on one or more of the topic areas to contextualise learning.

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING:

- Increase self-awareness
- Find energy in your leadership approach
- Connect with industry peers
- Learn from senior leaders within the housing industry
- Discover new ways of doing things
- Enhance leadership approach
- Build leadership capability



Registrations are now open and Early Bird discounts are available!
To find out more and register for both events on-line visit
events.housinginstitute.org

Reflecting on **Aboriginal housing issues** in Victoria



> *Jenny Samms – CEO, Aboriginal Housing Victoria Australia – provides some insights into the housing shortage faced by Victoria's rapidly growing Aboriginal community.*

Victoria, like most parts of Australia, has high levels of unmet demand from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for public and social housing. And driving this demand are the population profile and characteristics of the community.

Victoria's Aboriginal¹ population reached almost 50,000² in 2014, slightly less than one percent of the State's total population. Young and rapidly growing, the population grew by 26 percent – with an average annual growth rate of 4.7 percent – between the 2006 and 2011 census. This is compared to 1.7 percent for the general community (only in the Australian Capital Territory did the Aboriginal population grow at a faster rate).

Also, consider the following: the median age is 21 years compared to 38 years for the general population; a third of the population is under 15 years of age; and only 4.3 percent is over 65 years of age.

There are three factors driving this population growth:

- A far higher than average birth rate;
- Interstate migration; and
- More people identifying as Aboriginal.

Forty-six percent of Victoria's Aboriginal people reside in Melbourne, with 54 percent in regional areas. Most parts of Victoria have very small numbers of Aboriginal people while only a few localities – Shepparton, Mildura, Geelong and Bendigo – have relatively high numbers. There are no remote areas in Victoria.

This young and fast-growing population, combined with the disproportionate disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal people, has a major affect on demand for public and social housing.

The Challenges in Meeting a Growing Demand

As young people enter into early adulthood, they need housing to become independent of family. Aboriginal mothers also tend to have babies earlier – and have more children – and often raise them alone. All these factors drive demand.

The extreme levels of disadvantage experienced in some parts of the Aboriginal community also affect demand. Income levels are lower, making it difficult for Aboriginal people to find a footing in the private rental market and even harder to enter into home ownership. Greater rates of family violence, drug and alcohol dependency, mental illness and family breakdown all create a need for more public and social housing, while disproportionately high rates of incarceration disrupt housing stability for many.

As a result, 22 percent of Victorian Aboriginal households³ are in social or public housing, compared to a population share



Staff (Kym Williams and Priscilla Williams) outside Narrandjerri House, named after one of the founding elders, Winnie Narrandjerri Quagliotti

of 0.9 percent, with Aboriginal households twice as likely to receive Commonwealth Rental Assistance.

Aboriginal leaders and communities, frustrated by the lack of services for Aboriginal Victorians, established the Aboriginal Housing Board (now Aboriginal Housing Victoria or AHV) in 1981. And, it is through their hard work that Victoria now has Aboriginal organisations that provide community legal, health, housing and childcare services. These organisations provide an integrated service delivery system while also preserving and nurturing cultural strength, and – in turn – building stronger people and stronger communities.

As well as advocating for better housing, AHV's founders aimed to manage housing independently with the ultimate goal of owning it. Today, AHV is an independent, not-for-profit company that manages tenancies in 1,552 properties, of which 1,449 are owned by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and a further 73 owned by AHV.

“ Appropriate, secure and affordable housing is fundamental to people's ability to better their lives and strengthen their communities. ”

There are over 4,000 residents in AHV houses – about eight percent of Victoria's Aboriginal population – with 401 tenants on market rent and 1,093 on subsidised rent. The average household income is \$730 compared to an average weekly income of \$962 for all Aboriginal Victorians. There are still over 1,000 people on our waiting list and it is growing all the time.

The Right to Housing

Appropriate, secure and affordable housing is fundamental to people's ability to better their lives and strengthen their communities. The right to housing is recognised in a number of international human rights statutes because it is integral to the right of an adequate standard of living.

Without stable, secure and appropriate housing, it is difficult for children to participate in education, for people to find and retain

1 In this article, Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Victoria.

2 ABS 2014

3 According to AIHW data there are 1,784 Indigenous households in public, 395 in community and 1,961 in Indigenous Community housing, a total of 4,140. Housing Assistance for Indigenous Australians AIHW 2014

work, live a healthy life and avoid negative contact with the criminal justice system. Some of our most intractable problems – such as child neglect and abuse, and family violence – are almost impossible to address in the absence of adequate housing. Family reunification, particularly where children are in out of home care, is also dependent on stable housing.

AHV's long-term objective is to achieve transfer of title on all the houses we manage, and leverage our housing assets to maximise opportunities for our communities into the future. Currently, the DHS houses we manage are under a lease agreement. AHV pays the Department an annual fee and, in return, retains the rent collected to run operations and undertake tenancy services, including responsive maintenance on the properties. We are not able to redevelop or dispose of this stock at present.

“ Some of our most intractable problems – such as child neglect and abuse, and family violence – are almost impossible to address in the absence of adequate housing. ”

Overcoming Further Obstacles

Over time, we would like to expand AHV housing stock to facilitate and support home ownership for our communities. We realise home ownership can provide a very important step towards wealth creation, and that wealth provides economic security and opportunities for current and future generations.

However, we face some immediate issues:

- **Maintenance of our housing stock** – we have inherited an ageing and generally poorly maintained housing stock, which is costly to bring up-to-scratch. The problem is exacerbated by the normal wear & tear that large families create, and the general disadvantage experienced by most of our tenants. In a small number of properties, there is very severe tenant damage, often caused by people experiencing mental illness and/or drug dependency. Ice (crystal methamphetamine) is a scourge in Aboriginal communities and there have been instances where ice-affected residents have caused up to \$100,000 worth of damage in the space of 30 minutes. This has only to occur ten or so times a year to have a major impact on our ability to meet other people's housing and maintenance needs, as well as our financial bottom-line.
- **Unmet demand is compounded by a mismatch between supply and demand** – as families change over time, housing needs also change. We cannot meet the demand for one and two-bedroom houses, which – in turn – means that lone tenants cannot move out of three or four-bedroom homes and make them available for larger families. Suitable housing for elders who still wish to live independently is a growing need. Our housing stock needs redeveloping to better accommodate tenant needs.
- **There is a lack of integrated support for struggling tenants** – Aboriginal Victorians are the most disadvantaged in our society, and those struggling most are likely to be living in public and social housing. Integrated 'wraparound services' are often fundamental to them achieving a successful tenancy, but all too often these services are unavailable, piecemeal or do not offer the cultural safety Aboriginal people need.



Priscilla Williams and the portrait of respected elder Winnie Narrandjerri Quagliotti

- **Provision of suitable transition housing** – AHV is reliant on other agencies for provision of transition and crisis housing. Supply rarely meets demand, and many Aboriginal people find what is available to be culturally unsafe.

Where tenant damage renders a house uninhabitable, we often resort to temporary motel accommodation, which is unsuitable for more than a few nights, particularly where families are involved. We have also been concerned about the impact a lack of stable housing has on people in contact with the justice system. Neither bail nor parole is usually granted in the absence of housing, and people in public and social housing generally give up their tenancies when they serve lengthy terms of imprisonment.

We are very pleased the Victorian Government has announced \$2.6 million for Transitional Housing for Aboriginal Prisoners. The proposal aims to provide stable and secure accommodation so people can successfully participate in programs and treatment. This includes culturally appropriate services to address known risk factors and the specific, complex individual needs of Aboriginal people. It also includes services and cultural support to help people re-enter the community with the skills and knowledge to participate in the workforce. The proposal will be developed in consultation with Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS).

The inter-related and complex issues that our clients go through ultimately shape their housing experiences. These issues point to the need for a life course approach to public housing policy; one that recognises wider economic, social and cultural experiences, and integrates social policy and housing interventions, particularly at key transition points in people's lives. This approach is most likely to maximise return on investment and will be one that offers the greatest chance of achieving inter-generational change.



Jenny Samms is CEO at Aboriginal Housing Victoria, and a Research Fellow at Monash University. She was a senior Victorian public servant for many years working in social policy, education and training, labour market reform and Aboriginal affairs. After leaving the Victorian Public Service in 2012, she worked as a policy adviser at the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, and as a consultant until joining AHV in late 2013.

MĀORI HOUSING NEWS FROM AOTEAROA



> *Robert Macbeth from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment Social Housing Unit shares news of where New Zealand's Māori housing is headed over the next decade.*

In July 2014, the New Zealand Government launched 'He Whare Āhuru He Oranga Tāngata – The Māori Housing Strategy.' This sets out the directions for Māori housing over the next ten years (2014-2025).

The Associate Minister of Housing, Hon. Tariana Turia, made the following statement when releasing He Whare Āhuru:

Both Australian and New Zealand readers may be interested in the range of funding programmes and initiatives for Māori housing, which include the following:

He Whare Āhuru is a forward-looking document and provides the foundation for engaged discussion between the government and tangata whenua [New Zealand's Indigenous people] as it relates to achieving positive housing outcomes until 2025. He Whare Āhuru is also an aspirational strategy in that it highlights the opportunities that exist within the whole continuum of housing as they relate to Māori experiences and realities.

“ A significant proportion of Māori do not own their own home. Whānau [families] have often said that one of the ultimate goals is to achieve home ownership. ”

He Whare Āhuru reflects our desire for tino rangatiratanga [self-governance] because it is about providing pathways from inter-generational dependence to independence, and ensuring that iwi, hapū and whānau [tribe, sub tribe and families] acquire warm, safe and dry housing where whānau [families] are able to flourish in their community wherever that might be.

A significant proportion of Māori do not own their own home. Whānau [families] have often said that one of the ultimate goals is to achieve home ownership. Returning home to their ancestral land and realising the opportunities to work collectively towards home ownership not only becomes feasible but is now an affordable option to explore together.

He Whare Āhuru is also about taking a wider perspective

to recognise the economic opportunities in housing and working together to realise what those opportunities are so our children and our children's children see a brighter future on their land and on their own terms. This may mean greater collaboration between local government, landowners and local business working closer together for the greater good of the community and their region.

“ Real change for whānau will come from a greater commitment from government to invest in their future urgent housing needs. ”

Māori housing providers have an important role in supporting whānau, hapū and iwi in social and affordable housing. The ability for Māori to house and care for their own has long been an aspiration held by many Māori. Unlocking the potential of the Social Housing Reform Programme to see how iwi can leverage off the growth of their asset base will also contribute to better housing outcomes for whānau [Māori families].

Real change for whānau will come from a greater commitment from government to invest in their future urgent housing needs. I am excited by this potential and the opportunities that will arise as a consequence of He Whare Āhuru.

Hon. Tariana Turia
Associate Minister of Housing
Funding programmes and initiatives for Māori housing



Houses under construction by Aorangi Māori Trust Board on Māori freehold land. The Social Housing Unit (MBIE) provided the Trust Board with a Kāinga Whenua Infrastructure Grant and a Pūtea Māori capital grant to support this eight-unit development near Hastings.

Both Australian and New Zealand readers may be interested in the range of funding programmes and initiatives for Māori housing, which include the following:

- **Kāinga Whenua loans** – this enable individuals and trusts to build, with loan finance, on multiple-owned Māori land.
- **Kāinga Whenua Infrastructure Grants** – these grants help Māori individuals, land trusts and other collectives develop housing on ancestral Māori land. The funding is provided for additional infrastructure costs such as establishing roading and services.
- **Māori Housing Fund** – the Fund consists of the following:
 - Capital grants (principally for social rental/kaumatua [older persons] housing in rural locations);
 - Capability building (project feasibility costs); and
 - Rural housing repair.

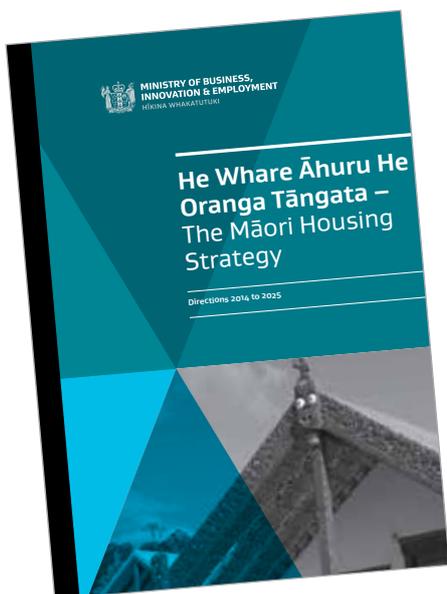
In addition to these funding programs and initiatives, there is a particular focus on rural housing repair – with a pilot programme underway in Northland – and on improving housing on the Chatham Islands, which is possibly New Zealand’s most rural and remote location.

Other recent developments in Māori housing

In September 2011, New Zealand’s Controller and Auditor-General published a report entitled ‘Government planning and support for housing on Māori land – Ngā whakatakotoranga kaupapa me te tautoko a te Kāwanatanga ki te hanga whare i runga i te whenua Māori’. It looked at how effectively the Government supported Māori seeking to build housing on multiply-owned Māori land.

In December 2014, the Office of the Auditor-General released a follow-up report. Readers may find it of interest as it outlines the range of programmes and the progress being made. This report concludes:

“Although steady progress is being made, an ongoing genuine commitment to effectively acting on our 2011 report recommendations and the Māori Housing Strategy is essential. We remain of the view that a single point of contact in each region, and a shared and co-ordinated process supported by staff with the relevant expertise and knowledge is crucial to supporting those who want to build housing on Māori land.”



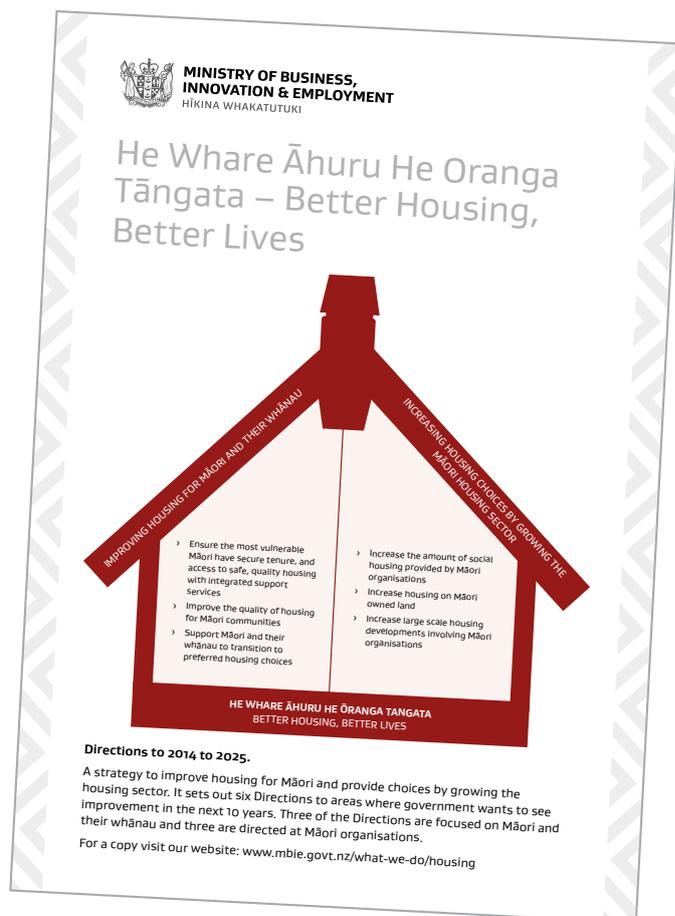
“Those putting the Māori Housing Strategy into effect should realistically identify necessary resources, devise ways to put plans into practice, and follow up those plans. Information about good practice, successes, lessons learned, and funding should be shared regularly and often. That information should be clear, accurate, accessible, and easy for everyone to understand. Finally, we consider that strong relationships between central and local government agencies, Māori organisations, and Māori are vital to the Māori Housing Strategy’s success.”

A full summary of this report can be found on the Controller and Auditor-General website, with the full report available for download: www.oag.govt.nz/2014/housing-on-maori-land

We look forward to outlining the progress that is being made towards implementing the Māori Housing Strategy and in showcasing the many examples of Māori housing projects in future issues of *HousingWORKS*.



Robert Macbeth is the Operational Policy Manager for New Zealand’s Social Housing Unit, within the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. His role currently includes overseeing a number of Māori housing funding programmes and working with Māori housing providers. Prior to returning to New Zealand three years ago, he was the Group Manager, Social Housing Sector in Victoria and retains close links with the housing sector there.



He Whare Āhuru He Oranga Tāngata – The Māori Housing Strategy can be downloaded from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment website: www.mbie.govt.nz/what-we-do/housing/pdf-document-library/strategy.pdf



Achieving outcomes for young people

With a strategic focus on achieving outcomes for young people, SGCH is pleased to announce developments in key projects to inform delivery of programs, products and services.

GENERATION NEXT REPORT

Available from October 2014, the report will present key findings from **Generation Next**, a program of research undertaken to build knowledge of the plans, attitudes and aspirations of tenants up to 30 years of age. The report will inform the products and services we can offer to support young people in achieving their future goals.

Yfutures REPORT

An independent report by Associate Professor David McKenzie, Swinburne University, evaluating **Yfutures**. Yfutures was a mentoring program operated in partnership with Yfoundations to create sustainable pathways out of disadvantage, and improve long-term outcomes for young people.

Project STAY

Funded by the Mercy Foundation, **Project STAY** is identifying and working with eight young people who are homeless, applying 'Housing First.' Housing First is an approach that centres on providing homeless people with housing quickly, then providing additional services as needed.

For the latest news and info on these projects, please visit sgch.com.au



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- Rider Levett Bucknall
- RJHA
- Studio Pacific Architecture

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Me Heke Ki Pōneke



Derby's Aboriginal short-stay accommodation is open for business

> *Gavin McGuren from the Western Australia Department of Housing reports on a new affordable housing solution servicing local Aboriginal communities.*

Derby – located on the King Sound near the mouth of the Fitzroy River, 2,366 kilometres by road from Perth – was the first town in the Kimberley, gazetted in 1883. One of six centres, it services the pastoral, mining and tourism industries, and Aboriginal communities with a population of around 4,200.

Those living in Aboriginal communities surrounding Derby now have more accommodation options following the completion of the new Derby Aboriginal short stay accommodation facility in September of this year. Located on Ashley Street, this facility can house up to 54 visitors at any one time in hostel-style accommodation. Residents may stay for up to a month and costs include two meals per day.

The building itself comprises an administration office, families and single accommodation rooms, commercial kitchen, recreation facilities, children's playground, barbecue areas and manager's accommodation. Residents are also able to access support services during their stay through two Aboriginal support workers located at the facility.

“ Research shows that up to ten percent of people living in Derby at any time are temporary residents visiting from surrounding remote communities. ”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 49 percent of the total population of the Derby-West Kimberley region. And, with over 70 Aboriginal communities spread across the vast Derby-West Kimberley Shire, the population of Derby itself waxes and wanes between the wet and dry periods that mark the seasonal changes in the far north.

Research shows that up to ten percent of people living in Derby at any time are temporary residents visiting from surrounding remote communities. With limited affordable accommodation in the town, the influx of visitors has led to overcrowding in available housing and people 'sleeping rough' outdoors, and associated anti-social behaviour.

The Western Australian Government built the State's first Aboriginal short stay accommodation facility in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, the heart of the Goldfields region. The former Boulder golf course was chosen as the site for a short stay centre for Aboriginal people visiting from remote communities in the Western Desert.

“ This facility means dignified accommodation for members of remote Aboriginal communities who need to visit Derby to attend to business or access essential social and government services. ”



Dept of Housing Director General Grahame Searle with Chris Hall from MercyCare

The Kalgoorlie-Boulder short stay was also funded under the State's Royalties for Regions program and replaced the troubled Boulder Camp site. It offers a variety of accommodation at a very affordable price and has been operating successfully under the management of Red Cross since 2012.

The Derby Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation facility was made possible through a unique and well-developed inter-agency partnership that offers visitors a suite of services. The Department of Housing was given \$11.4 million to design and construct the facility from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program administered by the Department of Regional Development.

While the Department of Housing retains ownership, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support are managing the facility through a service level agreement that was awarded to MercyCare. This was made possible through \$4 million, provided over four years, from Royalties for Regions.

The Department of Corrective Services' West Kimberley Regional Prison provides a range of services for the facility, including two meals a day and all laundry and gardening services.

The facility was delivered on time and under budget and was officially launched by then State Minister for Housing, Bill Marmion, on 4th October 2014.

“All of us can be proud of this achievement,” Mr Marmion said at the launch. “This development will significantly reduce hardship often experienced by short-term visitors to the cultural and service hub of Derby. This facility means dignified accommodation for members of remote Aboriginal communities who need to visit Derby to attend to business or access essential social and government services.”

Peter Lonsdale, Director of Aboriginal Housing at the Department of Housing, said the short stay was operating at over 90 percent capacity within just two months of opening.



A look around Derby's short stay accommodation

"Visitors have already expressed their appreciation at having somewhere safe and affordable to sleep while visiting Derby," Mr Lonsdale said. "We know up to 200 Aboriginal people are visiting Derby from surrounding communities at any time, with as much as three times that many during the Wet. I'm sure this facility will do much to reduce the hardship experienced by short-term visitors, especially families with young children."

Project Manager Louise Paterson paid tribute to everyone involved in bringing the project to fruition and said there was strong community support from the beginning.

"It's been a fabulous project to be part of, and it was great to see so many happy guests enjoying the facility at the opening," Ms Paterson said. "The Shire of Derby West Kimberley has worked closely with us at every stage, from helping us find a suitable site to partnering with us in the community consultation."



The contract for management of the facility was awarded to MercyCare – a leading not-for-profit provider of aged care, family, community, health and children's services – which has partnered with local providers, Centacare Kimberley, to manage the short stay.

"The Department of Corrective Services has also been a great support helping us with fit-out, and are providing the facility with a meal and laundry service, as well as doing the gardening, while Child Protection and Family Support are managing the facility through their contract with MercyCare and Centacare Kimberley," Ms Paterson said.

MercyCare Chief Executive Officer Chris Hall said the facility is run after the fashion of a hostel, with visitors charged a small daily fee that includes meals.

"Derby is a significant service centre for remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley, so there are many people who need to travel into Derby for business, medical and support services," Mr Hall said. "Often when people visit Derby, they have nowhere to stay, and because they've come such a distance, they can't do all their business in one day, which is where the short stay is aiming to fill that need."

MercyCare was pleased to be providing a meaningful support service for Aboriginal communities accessing a range of vital services in Derby.

"We're delighted to be partnering with Centacare Kimberley as part of this project to support the local community, even more so because this project is a first for MercyCare working in Derby," Mr Hall added. "We're confident the facility will prove enormously beneficial for Aboriginal communities across the Kimberley region."



Gavin McGuren is the Senior Media Liaison Officer at the Western Australian Department of Housing.

Meet a new AHI **CORPORATE MEMBER**

Name of Organisation: *Compass Housing Services Co. Ltd.*
Group Managing Director: *Greg Budworth*
Joined AHI: *2005*

Vision of organisation:

“The vision of Compass Housing is simple: we want to ensure all people have appropriate and affordable shelter, and they are engaged in sustainable communities.”

Summary of services provided:

“At Compass Housing, we provide tenancy and property management services. Alongside this, we also provide place-making and community development services, affordable housing, social housing, crisis housing, transitional housing and resettlement services.”

Defining features of organisation:

“Compass Housing takes a strong scientific and evidence-based approach to our mission and the incentivisation programs we offer for tenants and staff. We’re multi-jurisdictional and we have a proven record for innovation. What also makes Compass Housing different is our focus on ‘value-add’ features for tenancy management. These value-adds are designed to support principles that are important to our organisation and our tenants: social inclusion, economic participation, health and welfare, place-making and community connection.”

Achievements of organisation this year:

“Compass had 660 tenants perform voluntary work in 2013-14. We managed \$1.3 billion in assets and delivered operating surpluses of 18% of our income. We were awarded \$2.1 million in funding after successfully applying for the NSW Boarding Housing Tender, as well as 37 NRAS incentives under round 5. We received an 89% approval rating in tenant satisfaction surveys and 69 new dwellings procured under various programs. Our youth building program is now receiving philanthropic funding, which is also a great achievement.”

Current Programs:

“Our major programs are the GROW program, our Grow A Star initiative and Compass Connect.

The GROW initiative is a social inclusion and economic participation program. It aims to enhance the lives of our tenants by engaging them in personal, social, environmental and economic sustainability opportunities; talking with them about things like health and nutrition, and raising their self-esteem and their general mental and physical wellbeing. GROW supports tenants by improving ways to increase the security of their tenures through contribution to the community and sustainable living practices.

We also have Grow A Star, which involves the fundamentals of the GROW program, but with a more targeted focus on youth-related issues. It also involves cooperative relationships with external sporting, arts, education and training providers.



Donald Proctor presenting Greg Budworth with an AHI Award

Another program is Compass Connect. Compass Connect is a place-making program, where tenant-led initiatives receive funding grants. Compass Connect has provided tenants with financial support to set up Internet cafés and computer training courses, to establish community gardens, renovate common areas in some of our housing complexes, have local artists paint murals and – in some cases – just simple, but much-needed, clean-ups in some local areas.”

Comment on the current state of housing in Australia:

“The [social] housing sector appears to have very little vision, which is reflected in some of the policies, programs and performance in some areas of the sector. There’s a general abrogation of responsibility by most governments, but not always out of disinterest as much as due to lack of funding. There are some states doing as best as they can within a system desperately in need of structural reform.”

Why did you become a Corporate Member of the Institute?

“We became a member of the Australasian Housing Institute because it is the only organisation that spans the full range of housing providers as well as government and non-government stakeholders. The AHI is also the only industry body that has worked hard to include people working in our sector in New Zealand, and it’s the only industry body that genuinely aims to connect providers and grow the professionalism of staff in the industry.”

■ www.compasshousing.org

a career in housing

> **Bernie Coates** – Director of Community Renewal for the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation – reflects on a remarkable career in housing that literally began in the back o’ Bourke.

“I don’t want to think about that,” says Bernie Coates when asked to sum up the legacy of his career. He pauses, clearly put on the spot by the question but by no means irritated by it. “Yes,” he laughs. “I don’t know what to say to that. Let me have a little think about it, eh?”

It is, perhaps, a bit unfair to ask someone like Bernie to compress a 40-year career in the housing industry into couple of sentences. Such has been the impact of Twitter and other social media channels in our lives that we’ve become inured to observing life in succinct 120 character grabs. In the case of lives and careers like Bernie’s, 120 characters are nowhere near enough.

In 1971, the Bee Gees, Carole King, Rod Stewart and Janis Joplin topped the pop charts. Australian troops were beginning their withdrawal from the Vietnam War and a young man who’d just graduated from the University of New South Wales was looking to make his way in the world. Still 12 months from being elected Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam and the ALP embodied the hopes of a generation desperate to shake up the status quo after almost three decades of conservative rule, and create a more socially just Australia; a zeitgeist that spoke to Bernie.

“I’d studied Architecture at the University of New South Wales, and I went to work for an architect named Bill Lucas who was a fairly prominent Sydney architect in the ‘70s,” says Bernie. “I was doing little renovation works around Sydney, Paddington and places like that – just little renovation jobs, primarily. Bill was very much into humanitarian ventures, so someone approached him to do a particular project in Bourke and, from my point of view, that kind of ticked all the boxes.”

“It was about community, it was about community development and it was about Aboriginal issues, and I hadn’t had much to do with Aboriginal issues to that point, so it looked like a great opportunity,” continues Bernie. “Two of us who worked for Bill Lucas went off to spearhead that project by living in Bourke for the next three years, and that’s kind of how my career in housing started.”

“I didn’t really know what my career was going to be, really. I thought it would be something to do with architecture but, once I got into the community development end of it, you know that kind of took over... kind of what I’ve been doing ever since, in a way, is this connection between communities and how their housing needs get met.”

The project that Bernie refers to was the Widgeri Cooperative and, through the establishment of the Aboriginal Advancement Association of Bourke, was among some of the first attempts at empowering Indigenous communities through self-help, as established by the Gorton and McMahon federal governments.

“It was very early, obviously, in Aboriginal housing,” remembers Bernie. “I think Bourke was one of the first Aboriginal communities to get any funds for housing. If my memory serves



me right, I think we got \$32,000 from the Federal Government to build four houses.”

“It looked like a very small amount of money to build four houses but the concept was self-help, so what we were meant to be doing was to assist Aboriginal people to build their own houses by teaching them the skills to do so. Looking back on it, it was a fairly ambitious goal. It was about housing but it was also about community development.”

“ I think Bourke was one of the first Aboriginal communities to get any funds for housing. If my memory serves me right, I think we got \$32,000 from the Federal Government to build four houses. ”

They certainly were ambitious goals. Despite the penchant for talkback radio shock-jocks, populist current affairs programs and conservative newspaper columnists to dig the boots into Indigenous housing programs – often portraying the recipients as ‘undeserving’ – Bernie acknowledges solutions to the problems that exist in the sector still remain after so many years.

“If you go with this theme of communities meeting their own housing needs, community development and housing, I guess, we’ve taken a lot of strife but, you know, I still don’t think we’ve kind of yet worked out the way that communities can best be involved in meeting their housing needs. We’re still torn, we’re still conflicted about how best to do that.”

“For many, many years, we had a self-determination objective, so aboriginal communities were meant to be at the forefront of housing programs; were meant to determine what sort of housing and how it was delivered. While there have been some successes in that area, there’ve also been some failures,” he admits.

"I think the current thinking has really gone back to more of a kind of paternalistic nation that governments know best about how to provide Aboriginal housing and, you know, I think we've swung from one extreme to the other. There probably is a middle ground where communities can still have a very active role and a significant influence on how their housing is delivered. That's where I think we ought to be."

Bernie's in no doubt, though, whether it be black or white Australia, there's been a significant change in the popular representation of people who access social housing: "Social housing has become residualised and, in a sense, it's become stigmatised in the public eye. The images of public housing these days are of housing getting wrecked or people abusing their housing privileges, all those sorts of things, and that's a direct consequence of narrowing the focus of social housing over all these years."

“ There probably is a middle ground where communities can still have a very active role and a significant influence on how their housing is delivered. That's where I think we ought to be. ”

"I think it's a really major issue that we've got to come to grips with," he continues. "The more we narrow the target for social housing, then the less public acceptance it has, and, therefore, the less political acceptance it has. There doesn't seem, at this point anyway, to be much political will to address fixing the system. Our job as housing professionals is to build the case for re-investment in social housing."

"In the post-war period – and up to about the 1980s – there was a very significant government investment in social housing, there was a real belief in social housing, and that's gone now really. It's hard to see how we're gonna get past that. Maybe the transfer of stock to community housing, maybe some policy development in terms of affordable housing, those might provide a way forward."

After many years in Bourke, Bernie eventually returned to city life for a long and decorated career in Adelaide's social housing sector: "I was in Adelaide for 20 years. I was chair of what was originally the Co-operative Housing Authority of South Australia, which became the Community Housing Authority of South Australia later in life. I chaired the Local Government's Community Housing Program Committee and I was a member of the Homestart board – that was a pretty exciting time in the development of housing policy."

As he talks about his time in the City of Churches, it's clear what housing professionals were able to achieve and the legacy they created is what has Bernie remembering that time with fondness.

"The institutions that were set up in that period continue to deliver really good outcomes for people in South Australia. They're at the forefront, as it has often been, in the housing fields, so that was a pretty exciting time for good policy development, so that's pretty satisfying to me – to have been part of that era of real ground-breaking policy development in South Australia, that was good," he says warmly, and with obvious understatement.

Now based in Sydney as the Director of Community Renewal for the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation, Bernie is excited to see residents in some of greater Sydney's once notorious community housing neighbourhoods get behind renewal initiatives: "I think we've developed a really good approach to the renewal of public housing estates and found a way of respectfully engaging the communities in places like Bonnyrigg, Minto, Claymore, Redfern and Waterloo – and making sure they have an influential voice in those projects."

"I'm really proud of the Bonnyrigg project, of the Minto project and so on, because the communities in those places really got behind it and became their champions," he continues. "That's been really satisfying over the last 10 years – it's the stuff that really motivates me, being able to involve communities and tenants in these projects. That's been really satisfying. Having said that, there are great sets of challenges. I don't think social housing has been in such a position of challenge for a long, long time. We've all got to work a bit harder really to find a way through this difficult period."

When it comes to 'getting away from the office', Bernie's pretty much the same as most people, with gardening and travel featuring prominently.

"I've been going to the US a fair bit lately but, before that, I was spending a fair bit of time in Europe," he says. "Whenever I go, of course, I've got to go and look at the local public housing estates, much to the distress of my partner," he laughs. "I just can't help myself, really – I have to go and check out what the situation there is."

“ Social housing has become residualised and, in a sense, it's become stigmatised in the public eye. The images of public housing these days are of housing getting wrecked or people abusing their housing privileges. ”

Before long, we're ready to call the interview to a halt. As Bernie gets set to move on, I hesitantly take him back to the subject of his legacy. "It's a good question and I do think about leaving what I do, you know, 'what would I do next'?" He smiles.

"I think what I do, and what I do as part of a team, we can make a real difference and we can leave a real legacy in terms of quality housing – building really good quality housing – and having made a difference in terms of investment and community development where you're actually enabling and supporting tenants to take leadership roles in the community, so it's very 'give someone a fish and they'll eat for a day, but teach people to fish...'"

"It's that sense of enabling and supporting communities because our tenant community's got a whole range of amazingly capable people but, for a range of reasons, they've struggled," he concludes. "So we're providing them with an environment and support, and we've seen the benefit of that and we've seen the contribution they make back to their communities is ten-fold to what we invest, so the multiplier effect is really exciting. I guess it's being part of something that's enabled that to happen."

meet a new AHI member...

- > **Name:** Leeanne Caton
- > **Title:** Managing Director, Noongar Mia Mia
- > **Joined AHI:** June 2014
- > **Residence:** Western Australia
- > **Years in housing:** Three

Current project or activity:

"I'm an Indigenous person, and Noongar Mia Mia is an Indigenous housing company – a not-for-profit proprietary limited company. We work to provide high quality and affordable housing for our tenants in a culturally appropriate and professional manner."

What made you choose a housing career?

"I've worked in every single social indicator area, if you like – health, education, justice, economic development... I've worked with the Western Australian State Government, the Northern Territory Government and the Federal Government, and I've kind of fallen into housing."

What are you particularly proud of having accomplished?

"Achieving 'Preferred Provider' registration status after a four-year process. I came in during the last year of the process and, with my understanding of the public sector, I was able to get it finalised. It took Noongar Mia Mia four years, but we got there."

"We've also become a self-sustainable organisation. We have no more government funding, so we're very proud of that. We also won the BHP Billiton Perth NAIDOC Business of the Year this year, and we've been working with the Indigenous Land Corporation to have a building that we've renovated divested to us."

What makes you motivated or inspired in your career?

"You could say it's like the chicken and the egg with housing – what comes first? Health and education providers will always argue their disciplines are more important than the others. The thing we throw into the equation is you can't have any of that unless you've got stable accommodation. It's very hard to secure employment or get an education or have good, holistic health unless you've got stable accommodation."

"I've worked in the Indigenous affairs arena all of my career. It's about enhancing the living conditions of Indigenous people, and it's across all areas because that's what we're about – becoming economically independent and also assisting our tenants to do the same. One of our mottos is "Success doesn't start at home, it starts with a home". Success in life we're talking about, you know? That's one of the reasons why I'm keen and motivated in this area."

What attributes make a great housing worker?

"I think understanding and empathy for the realities of day-to-day living for the people that we provide a service to is really important. Primarily, we're dealing with people in social housing, so it's about having empathy for the kind of lives they're living at that socio-economic 'rung of the ladder', so to speak. I think that's the biggest thing that makes a great housing worker. You also need to be fair but firm at times too."

What are the biggest challenges facing housing professionals today?

"In the area I work in, it's difficult integrating our people into mainstream suburbia, dealing with racist neighbours, and putting some kind of education process in place for surrounding neighbours, if necessary. The last thing we want is the spotlight on our tenants."

"Because we focus on economic independence, increasing people's understanding about the processes involved in becoming a homeowner is a big challenge for us too. If you've been living in public housing for generations, you have no concept of the fact that, if you're a homeowner and your toilet breaks, your toilet will stay broken until you can afford to get a plumber. Issues obtaining credit is big for us too. You could earn \$500,000 a year in the mining industry but, if you've got blemishes on your credit rating, no one is going to give you a loan."

What do you believe are the future directions for the housing profession?

"Governments have to let go and hand over their stock to organisations that have the capacity to do the job better. While state governments are only outsourcing the management of their properties, there's not going to be any urban regeneration – any modern housing – and it'll stay the same old stuff. But, if they hand the titles over to community housing providers, then we'll put the money in to keep that stock up-to-date and also partner with organisations that provide training as well. It's the whole economic development process."

What do you hope to achieve from your AHI membership?

"Access to the most up-to-date material, and information and support. We went to the eStock Transfer Seminar in Adelaide in October, and the information we got from that seminar enabled us to meet with the Director General of the State Government Housing Department here [in WA] four days later. We were able to go to him with the most relevant and up-to-date statistics and put a case to him and negotiate a win/win decision. We got all that from that AHI seminar, so we wouldn't have been able to do that if we had not participated."





Australasian Housing Institute

Supporting housing professionals

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Membership of the Australasian Housing Institute is open to anyone working in the social housing sector, in either a paid or unpaid capacity, or who has an interest in the social housing sector.

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