



Morning Session B

Discussion Paper 2

Capacity - What must be done to enable the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness sectors and individual providers to build their capacity to meet current and future challenges?

CHALLENGE OUTLINE:

1. AHV projections suggest Victoria is facing significant demand for new social housing and it is imperative that the Aboriginal housing sector builds capacity to address the challenge.
2. To maintain existing levels of social housing tenure under the projected population scenarios modelled, an additional 1438 social housing units are required for Aboriginal households in Victoria by 2021 and an additional 5085 by 2036. (Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) based on Khalidi)
3. The proportion of Aboriginal households as a share of all households in public housing in Victoria has risen from 3.0% in 2014 (1890 of 62,853) to 4.3% in 2018 (2673 of 62,247).
4. The net average increase in Aboriginal households in public housing has been close to 200 (196) each year over the past five years. (Report on Government Services (ROGS), 2019)
5. The share of mainstream social housing in Victoria available to Aboriginal households has not shown the same kind of growth. In 2018 there were only 354 Aboriginal households in community social housing down from 492 in 2014. (RoGS, 2019)
6. This decline occurred in the context of growing numbers of Aboriginal clients in contact with homeless services and a 33.6% increase in Aboriginal people assessed as requiring homeless support services.
7. This suggests that the mainstream social housing sector is not always taking on Aboriginal households despite the evidence of their priority needs.
8. Aboriginal providers have the cultural understanding to develop housing services and stock that meet the needs, aspirations and intrinsic requirements of Aboriginal households.
9. This indicates that there is a vital need to invest to a greater extent in Aboriginal controlled social housing and to build the sector's capacity to deliver it.
10. Delivery of new developments would have social and economic benefits for the community, but most Aboriginal organisations do not yet have the scale to become housing developers.
11. AHV has critical mass and a strong skills base, but is still a relatively small developer in Victoria's social housing sector. Its developments are too small in scale to meet projected demand.
12. Co-ops have relatively small portfolios of between 5 and 52 units with limited development capacity and face regulatory compliance conditions designed for far larger providers. Questions remain as to the cultural appropriateness of the regulatory environment.
13. To be able to own, manage and grow stock demands that we continue to build our professional capacity and find new funding sources or build partnerships.

14. Loss of NPARIH funds has removed an important source of funds making renewal of existing stock more challenging.
15. Limited opportunities to pursue formal tertiary qualifications in housing in Victoria are also constraining capacity building.
16. A challenge exists to establish a process for future leadership and governance of the Aboriginal housing sector and to give Aboriginal tenants a voice.
17. Significant work is also required to improve the cultural sensitivity of mainstream social housing providers.



POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

Career Paths and Professional Development

1. Establish more structured professional development programs, providing upskilling and career paths for housing staff based on professionalization and recognition of skills.
2. Worker exchanges and placements between the Aboriginal sector, DHHS and other social housing providers may be useful.

Model Policies

3. There may be merit in development of model Aboriginal tenancy policies.
4. Tenant policies and allocations must be clear, consistent and publicly available.
5. Thought needs to be given to handling temporary absences in a culturally appropriate way and managing absences due to incarceration, family violence debt waivers, disability modifications, ensuring formal orders for kinship care so government payments occur.

Advocacy and Peak Organisation

6. There may be a need to develop a peak organisation to provide sector wide support, eg training, internal policy, administrative tools, advocacy, advice line, day-to-day advice.
7. A model exists in Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA)/NSW which has been funded by NSW AHO to provide Aboriginal sector peak body services.
8. There may be merit in exploring partnerships and models, including with Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA)VIC.
9. CHIA(Vic) could also lead improvement of mainstream provider cultural capacity in conjunction with Aboriginal Housing Victoria, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

A Voice for Tenants

10. How do we advocate for Aboriginal tenants and Aboriginal housing needs?

11. Consideration could be given to formation of an Aboriginal tenants union.
12. A mechanism could be established to support tenants for VCAT appearances and for VCAT to establish a Koorie list.

Housing Registration Supports

13. Government could consider a third tier of Housing Registration standards appropriate to smaller providers operating at the Housing Provider level.

Housing Provider arrangements

14. Investigate how Aboriginal housing providers can be organised to achieve the critical mass to develop and maintain housing stock in a financially viable way. Find models to do this.

Development Expertise

15. Investigate ways for more Aboriginal housing providers to achieve greater proficiency in housing development.