

# Housing transfer praised



MORE than 1400 State Government-owned properties will be transferred to Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) in a move that has been widely praised.

The transfer will bring to 1500 the number of houses owned by AHV, which the organisation says will provide housing for more than 4000 Indigenous Victorians.

AHV chief executive Jenny Samms said many Aboriginal people in Victoria live in public housing and find it difficult to buy a house or even find a rental property because of disadvantage and issues with racism.

"This will allow AHV to determine our own future," she told the *Koori Mail*.

"We're self-funded and we run our business on that basis. We've been doing responsive repairs on some of the properties.

"Some of the properties have reached the end of their economic life or they've been severely damaged.

"Some of them are too old so it's not economically viable to repair them any more. But this will allow us to have the opportunity to redevelop."

Ms Samms said the initial benefit to tenants is simply that AHV has become a 'one-stop shop' for all their housing repairs.

She said that in the past having repairs done could be

confusing for tenants because the Victorian Government looked after some and AHV others.

Ms Samms said tenants would also benefit in the long term, with AHV looking to start a home-ownership program.

"Some of the tenants have lived in the properties for more than 20 or 30 years," she said.

"We can't just sell the properties. We have to sell them at market value, but I've had plenty of people saying they love their house and would be happy to pay that for it so now we can start moving towards arrangements so they can own their house.

## "Self-determination"

"But this is more than that; this is the Government saying that an Aboriginal organisation can do this. We've met their standards and this is self-determination."

An initial transfer of 511 titles has already occurred, with the remainder to be transferred in coming months.

Ms Samms said AHV has long aspired to take on the properties.

"The real work has occurred over the past two or three years," she said.

"Our application to obtain ownership of these properties has required some intensive work over the past few years, but I believe we're the only Aboriginal organisation in the country that has met the standards."



All smiles: Aboriginal Housing Victoria chair Tim Chatfield and chief executive Jenny Samms.