

More Needed to Close the Gap on Indigenous Home Ownership

The Commonwealth Government's announcement of a \$150m investment in an Indigenous Home Ownership Program will be welcome news for the more than 60,000 First Australians living in Victoria, 17% of whom will present to homeless agencies in urgent need of support this year. Government investment to assist more Indigenous Victorians to purchase their own home was a core ambition of *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort*, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, which was released in February this year.

While it is encouraging to see Governments recognising the huge chasm in home ownership rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, this initiative is far too small to begin to close that gap. The initiative is expected to deliver an additional 120 First Nations home owners per year for three years. If Victorian Aboriginal people receive their quota per capita of these 120 places, we may expect an additional nine families each year to obtain a mortgage and begin the home ownership journey.

While this is a welcome first step, far greater investment is required to assist the poorest Australians build wealth through home ownership on a wider scale resembling that of other Australians and to take pressure off a creaking social housing system and a private rental market filled with low income families in housing stress. The largest spending budget we can remember in Australia for decades, missed a golden opportunity to stimulate the economy and put a floor under the construction industry by investing in more social and affordable housing for Australia's First Nations people.

AHV modelling indicates we need to be building an additional 300 social housing units each year if rates of homelessness are not to deteriorate further in Victoria. From an affordable housing perspective, this year's big spending infrastructure budget was a missed opportunity.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) is an Aboriginal community organisation responsible for managing over 1,500 rental properties for Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. AHV's vision is to ensure that Aboriginal Victorians secure appropriate, affordable housing as a pathway to better lives and stronger communities.

In addition to being the largest Aboriginal landlord in Victoria, AHV is the lead agency for Victoria's Aboriginal housing and homelessness policy, *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort*. As the housing policy lead in the Aboriginal community, AHV has dual roles to hold the Government to account in securing the resources and reforms to implement the policy, while we support sector development to empower Victoria's Aboriginal community to determine its chosen housing future.

Quotes attributable to Tim Chatfield, Chair, Aboriginal Housing Victoria

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