



NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation
Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands

www.naccho.org.au

National Housing and Homelessness Plan

Submission to
Department of Social Services

December 2023

About NACCHO

NACCHO is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia. We represent 145 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and assist several other community-controlled organisations to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our sector has more than fifty years' collective service. In 1971, Aboriginal people established the first Aboriginal medical service in Redfern, NSW. Mainstream health services were not working and there was an urgent need to provide decent, accessible health services for the medically uninsured Aboriginal population (pre-dating Medicare (1975)). Similar Aboriginal medical services quickly sprung up around the country. In 1974, a national representative body was formed to represent these Aboriginal medical services. That body has grown into what NACCHO is today.

NACCHO liaises with its membership (ACCHOs) and eight state/territory affiliates, governments, and other organisations, to develop policy, provide advice and advocate for better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Together we address health issues including service delivery, information and education, research, public health, financing, and programs.

ACCHOs range from large multi-functional services employing several medical practitioners and providing a wide range of services, to small services which rely on Aboriginal health practitioners and/or nurses to provide the bulk of primary health care services. Our 145 members provide services from about 550 clinics. Our sector provides over 3.1 million episodes of care per year for over 410,000 people across Australia; about one million of these episodes of care are delivered in very remote regions.

ACCHOs contribute to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing by providing comprehensive primary health care, and by integrating and coordinating care and services. They provide home and site visits; medical, public health and health promotion services; allied health; nursing services; assistance with making appointments and transport; help accessing childcare or dealing with the justice system; drug and alcohol services; and help with income support.

ACCHOs build ongoing relationships to provide continuity of care. This helps chronic conditions to be better managed and provides more opportunities for preventative health care. Through local engagement and a proven service delivery model, our clients 'stick'. Cultural safety in our services is a key factor of our success.

ACCHOs are also closing the employment gap. Collectively, we employ about 7,000 staff – 54 per cent of whom are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. This makes us the third largest employer of Aboriginal or Torres Strait people in the country.

Enquiries about this submission should be directed to:

NACCHO

Level 5, 2 Constitution Avenue

Canberra City ACT 2601

Telephone: 02 6246 9300

Email: policy@naccho.org.au

Website: naccho.org.au

Acknowledgements

NACCHO welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Department of Social Services. We would be pleased to elaborate further to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, health and wellbeing.

We support the submissions made by NACCHO Members and Affiliates.

Summary of Recommendations

NACCHO recommends:

1. that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan aligns with the National Agreement and its four Priority Reform Areas.
2. a 'health in all policies' approach to the Housing and Homelessness Plan, recognising that health outcomes are influenced by a wide range of social, commercial, political, environmental and cultural determinants.
3. housing and homelessness solutions are place-based and achieved through shared decision-making with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
4. prioritising housing projects that support accredited construction and maintenance training, and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
5. that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan incorporates flexible strategies to support transient populations.
6. that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan is developed in consultation with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Authority and the corresponding jurisdictional peak bodies.
7. the National Housing and Homelessness Plan aligns with the Coalition of Peaks Housing Sector Strengthening Plan and Housing Policy Partnership to progress towards achieving Outcome 9 of the National Agreement.
8. using the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort*, as a model to guide development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
9. the National Housing and Homelessness Plan supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access housing assistance and functional housing, and to progress towards increased housing independence.
10. NACCHO recommends the Australian Bureau of Statistics is resourced to undertake regular Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Surveys to support policy decisions and targeting of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

At the meeting of National Cabinet in early February 2023, First Ministers agreed to renew their commitment to Closing the Gap by re-signing the National Agreement, first signed in July 2020. The reforms and targets outlined in the National Agreement seek to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

This Government's first Closing the Gap Implementation Plan commits to achieving Closing the Gap targets *through implementation of the Priority Reforms*. This represents a shift away from focussing on the Targets, towards the structural changes that the Priority Reforms require, and which are more likely to achieve meaningful outcomes for our people in the long term.

The four Priority Reforms offer a roadmap to meaningfully impact structural drivers of chronic disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

[Priority Reform Area 1 – Formal partnerships and shared decision-making](#)

This Priority Reform commits to building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap.

[Priority Reform Area 2 – Building the community-controlled sector](#)

This Priority Reform commits to building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support Closing the Gap. It recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services are better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and are often preferred over mainstream services.

[Priority Reform Area 3 – Transformation of mainstream institutions](#)

This Priority Reform commits to systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve to identify and eliminate racism, embed and practice cultural safety, deliver services in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, support truth telling about agencies' history with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and engage fully and transparently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when programs are being changed.

[Priority Reform 4 – Sharing data and information to support decision making](#)

This Priority Reform commits to shared access to location-specific data and information (data sovereignty) to inform local-decision making and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to support the achievement of the first three Priority Reforms.

[NACCHO recommends that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan aligns with the National Agreement and its four Priority Reform Areas.](#)

Review of Closing the Gap

‘Too many government agencies are implementing versions of shared decision-making that involve consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on a pre-determined solution, rather than collaborating on the problem and co-designing a solution.’¹

In its recent review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Productivity Commission described government progress implementing the Agreement’s Priority Reforms as mostly weak. It found no evidence of systemic change and that Government policy did not reflect the value of the community-controlled sector. The Commission noted that few tangible steps had been taken to increase the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs and that there was a need to improve funding to ACCOs to provide more flexible and longer-term contracts that cover full costs of services and reduce reporting burdens.²

Health in all policies

A broad range of structural and social factors (social determinants) influence health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Entrenched cycles of poverty, exacerbated by poor education and employment outcomes and increased interaction with the justice system contribute significantly to poorer health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) notes that the links between socioeconomic disadvantages such as poverty, social dysfunction and exclusion, stress, racism and poor health are well established.³ This is true across urban, regional and remote areas. The consequent disparity in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians remains significant – 34 per cent of the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians is attributable to social determinant factors.⁴

Consideration is therefore needed of the impact of *all* policy decisions on health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This allows scope to identify and address those issues around social disadvantage which contribute to higher rates of chronic health conditions such as diabetes, as well as preventable disease.

A Health in All Policies approach would require consideration of the impact on health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all policy decisions. Such an approach aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It also aligns with the ACCHO holistic model of care which considers factors that contribute to health and wellbeing as well as those that compound the likelihood and/or incidence of health conditions.

NACCHO recommends a ‘health in all policies’ approach to the Housing and Homelessness Plan, recognising that health outcomes are influenced by a wide range of social, commercial, political, environmental and cultural determinants.

¹ Ibid.

² Productivity Commission 2023, Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Draft Report, Canberra, July.

³ IHW, 2.09 Index of disadvantage <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-09-index-disadvantage>

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Determinants of health for Indigenous Australians 2022 [Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/social-determinants-and-indigenous-health>].

Housing for health and wellbeing

Stronger housing and homelessness policies can have far-reaching benefits and better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Research demonstrates strong links between housing and health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.¹ The intersection between housing and health demands that an effective National Housing and Homelessness Plan will consider the priorities and strategies necessary for good health.

In the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, there are two priority concerns: Addressing overcrowding and ensuring access to safe and affordable housing is key to reducing the burdens of disease and poverty, and adequate, safe and environmentally fit for purpose housing is fundamental to preventing poor health.⁵

Overcrowding

Household overcrowding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people varies widely across states and territories, ranging from 88% in *Major cities* to 45% in *Very remote* areas.⁶ In 2018–19, Indigenous Australians were 3.7 times as likely to be living in overcrowded conditions as non-Indigenous Australians.⁷

Overcrowding compounds psychosocial stress and ill health. Contributing factors include sharing limited resources, exposure to tensions and conflict, lack of privacy and personal space and prevalence of infectious and chronic diseases due to household infrastructure that can't manage demand or support healthy living practices.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic made evident the importance of housing for maintaining health and slowing and preventing the spread of disease – overcrowding in many communities made it extremely difficult to isolate or quarantine during outbreaks.^{8,9}

Living in overcrowded housing with poor sanitary conditions increases the likelihood of several chronic health conditions such as acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease; the burden for which can last a lifetime. Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) almost exclusively affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. ARF and RHD are diseases of poverty – impacted by household overcrowding and limited access to healthcare. According to the latest AIHW report, 92% of diagnoses between 2016 and 2020 were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In crowded households, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more susceptible to acute or chronic ear infections such as otitis media. This can lead to hearing loss and impede learning. Skin infections such as scabies can quickly spread, particularly when washing facilities are limited or non-existent. Scabies may be complicated by bacterial infection leading to skin sores, septicaemia, and

⁵ NACCHO, Core Services and Outcomes Framework <https://csof.naccho.org.au/>

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2023. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework: summary report July 2023. Canberra: AIHW. <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/getattachment/4a44660b-5db7-48d0-bcec-1e0a49b587fc/2023-july-ihpf-summary-report.pdf> Viewed [9/11/2023]

⁷ AIHW, 2.01 Housing <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-01-housing#implications>

⁸ SBS, Wilcannia families struggling to isolate, 24 Aug 2021 <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/the-point/article/wilcannia-families-struggling-to-isolate-in-overcrowded-housing/cjhm066sd>

⁹ ABC, Rising COVID-19 cases and overcrowded housing, 27 March 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-27/remote-communities-wa-covid-19-cases-rise-overcrowding-isolation/100942312>

heart, liver or chronic kidney disease. Eye, ear and skin infections can affect a child's long-term behaviour, development, education, and ultimately, their employment and income prospects.

Australia is the only developed country in the world where trachoma still exists in endemic proportions, mainly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. Safe and functional bathrooms are key to stopping the spread.¹⁰

CASE STUDY – Crowding in a remote Northern Territory community

A 2019, University of Queensland (UQ) study of Community Living Areas (town camps) in Tennant Creek and two neighbouring remote communities in the Barkly region in the Northern Territory sought to confirm ongoing impacts on health of crowding in remote communities.

The study found high rates of preventable infections including skin infections; respiratory infections; ear, nose and throat infections; and other diseases including trachoma, conjunctivitis, gastroenteritis, rheumatic fever and tooth decay; some of which can lead to chronic diseases including rheumatic heart disease and chronic kidney disease. It identified links between crowding and associated poorer hygiene, with poor health outcomes.

The study noted that the implications of crowding were not confined to individual households, but to the wider community due to sharing of working facilities such as washing machines, showers or toilets between houses when essential facilities were not functioning.¹¹

Environmentally fit for purpose housing

Aboriginal housing and public housing used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is often poorly constructed. Several causes contribute to substandard housing, including the lack of investment from Australian, State and Territory Governments and a lack of coordinated planning, expenditure and monitoring between them. Other issues include inadequate inspections and supervision of contractors during construction, and little to no enforcement of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) around structural adequacy, fire resistance, access and egress, energy efficiency and sustainability and occupant health and safety.¹²

It is essential to ensure housing is climate appropriate and safe. Adequate, safe and environmentally fit for purpose housing must be treated as a key primordial prevention measure for Aboriginal and

¹⁰ Melbourne, L. P. H. T. A., Emma Stanford and Mitchell D. Anjou, University of. (2021, May 12). To improve Indigenous health, we must improve Indigenous housing. Pursuit. <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/to-improve-indigenous-health-we-must-improve-indigenous-housing> (Accessed 13/11/2023)

¹¹ Hall, N. L., Memmott, P., Barnes, S., Redmond, A., Go-Sam, C., Nash, D., Frank, T. N., & Simpson, P. (2020, February 1). Pilyii Papulu Purrukaj-ji (Good housing to prevent sickness). Apo.org.au. <https://apo.org.au/node/303033> (Accessed 16 October 2023)

¹² <https://www.naccho.org.au/naccho-policy-position-paper-aboriginal-housing-for-aboriginal-health/> (Accessed 21/11/2023)

Torres Strait Islander communities.¹³ Improved hygiene facilities, water infrastructure and living conditions support prevention of communicable diseases including rheumatic heart disease, scabies, trachoma and otitis media.

Sustained investment to maintain housing and replace aged and deteriorating housing and community infrastructure is critical. As is access to an appropriately skilled workforce with knowledge of local environment. Extreme weather events increase the speed and extent of deterioration of low-quality houses, leading to mould, rusting of pipes and damage to doors and windows, all adversely affecting resident well-being and safety. Existing structures need to be upgraded and future developments need to be designed and engineered to withstand significant weather events and changes in temperature. This should include passive or environmentally sound cooling, heating and ventilation systems. Maintenance and repairs should consider changing environmental conditions.

Strengthening families, resilience and identity

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 (Health Plan) recognises that before colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people designed housing in response to local community cultures. Housing catered not only to physical shelter needs, but to kinship, family and community living arrangements that avoid creating or compounding risk factors for ill health.

‘Community-driven solutions provide the best opportunity for culturally responsive and place-based housing... and provide long-term sustainable benefits including opportunities to stimulate local economies through meaningful and sustainable employment, and new education and training pathways for students across a range of vocations.’¹⁴

Knowing and being part of a family and community is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing. Complex kinship networks follow culturally specific social rules, obligations and practices to maintain harmony and wellbeing in families and communities. Secure and safe housing is one of the pathways for strengthening connection to family and kin, strengthening resilience and identity, and interrupting the flow of historical trauma. Overcoming inequities in housing, employment and education supports family wellbeing and healthy kinship connections.¹⁵

Poor access to safe, affordable and quality housing is for example, one of the structural drivers leading to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed in child protection¹⁶, which contributes to disconnection from family, community and Country¹⁷. The 2020-21 rate for Aboriginal

¹³ NACCHO, Core Services and Outcomes Framework <https://csof.naccho.org.au/>

¹⁴ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-plan-2021-2031>

¹⁵ Dudgeon, P., Blustein, S., Bray, A., Calma, T., Mcphee, R., & Ring, I. (2021). Connection between family, kinship and social and emotional wellbeing. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <https://www.indigenoumhspsc.gov.au/getattachment/e129c621-58a4-4966-8730-dcf6e3a533a8/dudgeon-et-al-2021-family-kinship-20210802.pdf>

¹⁶ Dudgeon, P., Blustein, S., Bray, A., Calma, T., Mcphee, R., & Ring, I. (2021). Connection between family, kinship and social and emotional wellbeing. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <https://www.indigenoumhspsc.gov.au/getattachment/e129c621-58a4-4966-8730-dcf6e3a533a8/dudgeon-et-al-2021-family-kinship-20210802.pdf>

¹⁷ [Child protection Australia 2020–21, How many children were in out-of-home care? - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2020-21-how-many-children-were-in-out-of-home-care/)

and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders was 10 times that of non-Indigenous children, with the gap widening from 53 to 64 per 1,000 population in the four years to 30 June 2021.¹⁸

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture is central to the health and wellbeing of individuals, community and Country. Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and/or experts during housing planning and development will help to protect ancestors, preserve artefacts, respect local community connections with Country and cultural beliefs, and support ongoing learning and storytelling about the past for future generations. The recent example of the unearthing of an Indigenous burial ground on South Australia's largest housing development on Kurna land¹⁹, illustrates the importance of consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Community-driven, holistic and sustainable solutions

Priority Reform One commits to building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap.

A holistic approach is required. Housing and homelessness initiatives must be developed in consultation with local communities and organisations to ensure their unique cultural and social needs and priorities are considered. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should prioritise housing projects that support local community development and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve self-reliance and health and wealth outcomes.

When housing developers engage with and partner with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities they can benefit from local knowledge of land, climate and cultural requirements. These partnerships can also support training and workforce development to build community capacity, resilience and pride in caring for living spaces, and support young people to remain in communities.

Recent research²⁰ into housing design considerations for remote communities described remote area housing as an unsolved challenge. It recommended many practical considerations for planning and implementing building projects in these areas, including:

- community consultation in early design stage, engaging elders, using local materials
- engaging community in construction, engineering, vocational training
- culturally acceptable designs with appropriate skills or affordability for repairs and
- training and wage sharing between families for construction work to encourage young people to remain in communities
- supporting the environment by using reusable modular components
- incorporating sustainable design that supports social needs – e.g., Elders near carers, away from noise; independent access for independent persons, and shared access for family units

¹⁸ 2.12 Child protection. (n.d.). AIHW Indigenous HPF. <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-12-child-protection>

¹⁹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/this-adelaide-housing-development-is-being-built-on-one-of-the-states-largest-mass-burial-sites/8oxjnncyj> (Accessed 16 October 2023)

²⁰ Rajabipour, A., Kutay, C., Guenther, J., & Bazli, M. (2023). Factors to be considered in the design of indigenous communities' houses, with a focus on Australian first nation housing in the Northern Territory. *Development Engineering*, 8, 100109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.deveng.2023.100109>

- resilience against climate change considerations through orientation of windows, northside verandas, considering higher flood levels and associated elevation needs and fire-rated materials.

Key to the above, is local community engagement in planning and implementation, drawing on local knowledge of land and climate and cultural requirements.

Studio Kinship, an Australian Aboriginal-owned housing developer, has designed a modular, prefabricated housing model which can expand and contract to meet kinship protocols and the changing needs of Aboriginal families. The model incorporates maintenance via a work-to-own program and is intended to address cultural, social and economic impacts of poorly designed housing in remote areas. The pilot program will provide units for rental, community housing and home ownership in Fitzroy Crossing.²¹ The model not only supports flexibility in housing, but supports community development through associated training and employment, and opportunities to build wealth through home ownership.

NACCHO recommends, in line with Priority Reform One, that housing and homelessness solutions are place-based and achieved through shared decision-making with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

NACCHO recommends prioritising housing projects that support accredited construction and maintenance training, and sustainable employment opportunities for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Transient populations

Despite a decline in homelessness in recent years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently experience homelessness at 8.8 times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians, and access specialist homelessness services 11 times more often than non-Indigenous Australians.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in rural and remote communities are highly transient, driven primarily by kinship. There is a need to provide temporary housing that supports high frequency visits to regional centres; most commonly, visits are for a few days.

‘If Aboriginal mobility is understood in a housing, services and cultural context, then a housing pathway is not always the answer to the ‘problem’ of Aboriginal mobility/homelessness²²

Housing considerations to support Aboriginal mobility in remote and regional communities might include screened verandah spaces to accommodate temporary visitors, external environments to support outdoor sleeping and incorporating the need for semi-permanent migration of relatives into

²¹ Hardey, R. (2023, September 26). ACHO Sector Strengthening Project - Shelter WA. Shelter WA. <https://www.shelterwa.org.au/acho-sector-strengthening-project-studio-kinship/> (Accessed 9 October 2023)

²² Mr, D., Pearson, S., Tually, D., Faulkner, I., & Goodwin-Smith. (2021). Aboriginal mobility data project Final report. <https://aaeh.org.au/assets/docs/Aboriginal-Mobility-Data-Project-Report-FINAL.pdf> (Accessed 5/10/2023)

new house and renovation designs.²³ Impacts of crossing jurisdictional borders on accessing housing should also be examined.

CASE STUDY – Health and safety in Adelaide Park Lands

A South Australian study²⁴ sought to better understand and address severe health and safety consequences for Aboriginal people who, for a variety of reasons, gather in the Park Lands of the City of Adelaide. It considered services that ranged from supporting individual visitors visiting families to large groups from remote communities visiting to attend arts and cultural events.

The study recommended cultural supports, better coordination and funding for non-housing needs and recognition that many of the visitors don't need support or housing but may benefit from cultural engagement. Service recommendations included:

- improving amenities with toilets, running water, bins, electricity and fire pits and making these available to anyone using the Park Lands
- decriminalising public drunkenness via a health-based approach
- reviewing tenancy laws to understand and cater for housing needs and cultural obligations when family and community visit
- funding more Aboriginal Health workers to support outreach services from inner city service providers
- improving flexibility of Aboriginal hostels to improve under-utilisation
- trialling sleeping in the Park Lands with wraparound support services.

NACCHO recommends that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan incorporates flexible strategies to support transient populations.

Sector Strengthening

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live longer, healthier lives, the National Housing and Homelessness Plan should support self-determined solutions, draw from lived experience and knowledge of the land, prioritise culturally safe solutions, and support and grow the Aboriginal community controlled sector.

'The development of a highly capable, culturally fit Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector is essential to changing the trajectory

²³

https://www.ahuri.edu.au/sites/default/files/migration/documents/AHURI_RAP_Issue_69_Mobility_of_Aboriginal_people_in_rural_and_remote_Australia.pdf (Accessed 13/11/2023)

²⁴ Ibid.

away from housing stress and homelessness
towards collective and individual ownership of land and housing.²⁵

Priority Reform Two commits to building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support Closing the Gap. It recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services are better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and are often preferred over mainstream services.

The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should aim to increase the proportion of housing services delivered by Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). This can be achieved by aligning with the Coalition of Peaks Housing Sector Strengthening Plan, and funding and seeking guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak bodies.

The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can easily access culturally safe housing assistance and culturally appropriate, sustainable and maintainable housing that considers the expected impacts of climate change.

Community-led and integrated approaches between ACCHOs, housing and environmental health organisations are crucial to arrest poor health outcomes for families and individuals. Environmental health programs and ongoing maintenance of housing stock must be community controlled.

Funding the Aboriginal Community Housing and Community Controlled sectors to determine, design and deliver culturally appropriate housing services will build capacity to improve housing and associated health, wealth and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[NACCHO recommends that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan is developed in consultation with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Authority \(NATSIHA\) and the corresponding jurisdictional peak bodies.](#)

Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Coalition of Peaks led Housing Policy Partnership has been established to support shared decision-making on issues and actions to accelerate progress towards Outcome 9 of the National Agreement: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secure appropriate, affordable housing and essential services that are aligned with their priorities and needs.*

The Productivity Commission's review of Closing the Gap noted that existing policy partnerships are functioning as forums of discussion with little authority for shared decision making on policy issues. They lack the necessary detail (resourcing, timeframes, and responsibilities) to ensure transparency and accountability for implementing actions.

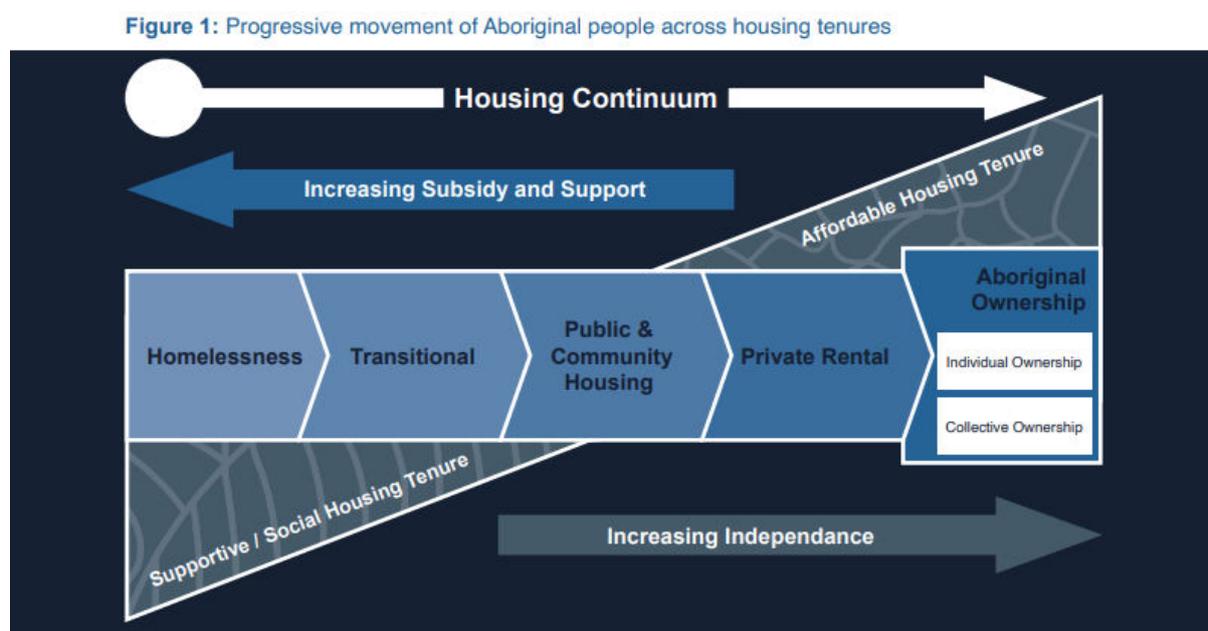
[NACCHO recommends the National Housing and Homelessness Plan aligns with the Coalition of Peaks Housing Sector Strengthening Plan and Housing Policy Partnership to progress towards achieving Outcome 9 of the National Agreement.](#)

²⁵ Dudgeon, P., Blustein, S., Bray, A., Calma, T., Mcphee, R., & Ring, I. (2021). Connection between family, kinship and social and emotional wellbeing. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <https://www.indigenoumhspsc.gov.au/getattachment/e129c621-58a4-4966-8730-dcf6e3a533a8/dudgeon-et-al-2021-family-kinship-20210802.pdf>

Every Aboriginal person has a home – a story of Aboriginal self-determination

The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort*,²⁶ sets an ambitious 20-year agenda to improve housing for Victorian Aboriginal communities within a generation. The community developed framework demonstrates the strength, capability and determination of the Victorian Aboriginal community sector to advocate and plan for improved housing. It offers a fresh perspective on addressing the unique housing and homelessness needs of Victorian Aboriginal people and provides a reference for developing the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

The framework acknowledges the need to support movement of Aboriginal people across all housing tenures, increasing independence and decreasing need for subsidy and support. This vision is aptly demonstrated in the image below.



Source: Aboriginal-Housing Victoria

NACCHO recommends using the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort*, as a model to guide development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

NACCHO recommends the National Housing and Homelessness Plan supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access housing assistance and functional housing, and to progress towards increased housing independence.

Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey

Priority Reform Four commits to shared access to location-specific data and information (data sovereignty) to inform local-decision making and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to support the achievement of the first three Priority Reforms.

²⁶ Ibid.

The National Housing and Homeless Plan should be informed and supported by reliable national statistics on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and associated community infrastructure needs.

The ABS Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS)²⁷, last conducted in 2006, provides complete enumeration of housing stock, management and financial practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations. It collects details of housing related utilities infrastructure and access to transport, communication, health and education services.

CHINS, alongside the ABS Census, contributes rich data, not otherwise available, about housing organisations and infrastructure in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in urban and remote communities in all Australian States and Territories.

If conducted regularly, CHINS data would support evidence-based policy and decisions about housing and inform implementation, evaluation of and updates to, the National Housing and Homelessness Plan. It would contribute to measuring and monitoring progress against Closing the Gap Targets 9a and 9b which increase access to appropriately sized housing and meet or exceed local standards for receiving essential services, respectively.

NACCHO recommends the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey is reinstated, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics is resourced to undertake regular CHIN surveys to support policy and investment decision-making.

²⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DSSbyCollectionid/B65AB82E947FCBD4CA256BD0002827F0>
(Accessed 29/11/2023)