

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland

Queensland Government 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission

June 2022



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Housing Queensland



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland Australian Government 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland Limited (ATSIHQ) is a registered public company and has prepared this submission. Our submission highlights the focus areas that we believe need to be addressed by the Queensland Government in the 2022-23 State Budget to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. This Pre-Budget Submission was produced by the ATSIHQ Policy and Research Division in June 2022. The responsibility for this submission rests with ATSIHQ.

ATSIHQ Details

Chairperson: Mary Doctor
Deputy Chairperson: Angelina Akee
Chief Executive Officer: Neil Willmet
ATSIHQ ABN: 599 512 220
Website: www.housingqueensland.com.au

ATSIHQ acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and future.





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Executive Summary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland (ATSIHQ) is the leadership peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing in Queensland. We are committed to ensuring all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have equitable access to quality, affordable and culturally safe housing that supports improved health, safety, wellbeing, education and economic outcomes and self-determination.

It is well established and accepted that Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) form part of a national system of community housing providers that specialise in providing local housing solutions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Together, ICHOs, our Board of Directors and our professional leadership team are content experts who understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and what is needed to achieve better housing outcomes.

Based on feedback from our Members and academic research, there are several priority areas that could be better addressed by the Queensland Government in the 2022-23 State Budget. The priorities can contribute immediate and longer-term improvements across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, including: policy development, dedicated funding, leadership, workforce support, regulator review, home ownership and Indigenous self-determination.

In this pre-budget submission, ATSIHQ proposes five priority areas with rationales and recommendations to garner stronger support from the Queensland Government, housing industry and community of advocates. The proposed recommendations include:

Proposed recommendation 1

The Queensland Government grows the number of ICHO properties by:

- prioritising funding for capable ICHOs to address the current backlog of housing
- assisting the securing of land in targeted areas for projects to construct multi-dwelling housing stock for single and two bedrooms households
- prioritising funding for housing for Indigenous households 55 years of age and over
- enable ATSIHQ through increased resources to capture a more accurate picture of the Queensland ICHO sector (property numbers and conditions) to inform better modelling of housing need
- strongly considering the effects predicted as a result of the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games and support the LGAQ proposal for a housing summit to plan and mitigate impacts





Proposed recommendation 2

The Queensland Government prioritises a fairer housing system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by:

- suspending the eligibility criteria for ICHOs to be registered under NRSCH in order to access current and future housing funding opportunities, such as QHIGI
- additional resources for ATSIHQ to work closely with ICHOs to complete the investigations as recommended in the 2020 FaCS Review of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) – Potential Future Reform Options Report
- additional resources for ATSIHQ to undertake up-to-date data collection, analysis and provide accurate reporting of the current state of the Queensland ICHO network (on par or better than the previous National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey and/or the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey, last completed in 2015 and 2008 respectively); and
- reconsider the Queensland Government’s new definition of a CHP (as outlined in QHIGI) and revert back to the more inclusive definition that accounts for NRSCH un-registered CHPs.

Proposed recommendation 3

The Queensland Government assists repairing the Queensland ICHO properties by:

- ensuring that all Queensland ICHO properties are maintained to the relevant state standards at a minimum with a target of 100% by 2032
- investing in suitable design and construction, overcrowding reduction programs and repairs and maintenance programs that are underpinned by social conscious competition policy
- expanding partnerships and opportunities between the ICHO sector and housing industry that drives policy to increase quality assurance, value for money and sustainability
- ensuring health and safety obligations to tenants positively contributes to Closing the Gap
- ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Queensland remain the self-determining drivers of policy to mandate the resolution of socioeconomic issues, such as higher quality standards of housing

Proposed recommendation 4

The following is a list of the Sector development and Sector strengthening activities that are being led ATSIHQ and we recommend that the Queensland Government supports ATSIHQ to deliver on the following sector development and strengthening activities, as follows:

- Queensland ICHO Sector Regional Engagement Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Quality Improvement Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Business Readiness Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Promotion Plan
- Queensland ICHO Sector Business Partners Panel
- Queensland ICHO Sector Education Partners Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Workforce Strategy
- Queensland ICHO Sector Executive Development Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector CEO Health Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Procurement Guide





Proposed recommendation 5

We recommend the Queensland Government supports ATSIHQ's commitment to ending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness in Queensland through review and redesign of homelessness response initiatives that:

- improves understanding with target reductions for eliminating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness in Queensland
- improves the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Collection to provide more detailed and up-to-date information regarding the reasons for homelessness which will include:
 - statistical and anecdotal evidence regarding the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless
 - the various reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately homeless
 - housing options and solutions houses in their community/location/area
- supports NATSIHA and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jurisdictional peaks to analyse the data and provide practical, efficient and cost-effective solutions and options
- improves data regarding single person accommodation needs and solutions or options
- supports negotiating portfolio realignments for under-utilised resources, for example a single person living in a three-bedroom house

We encourage the Queensland Government to review our recommendations and to incorporate these solutions in the next State budget. We also welcome the opportunity to provide further input if needed.

Mary Doctor

Chairperson

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Housing Queensland

Neil Willmetts

Chief Executive Officer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Housing Queensland





Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland

In 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland (ATSIHQ) was established as the professional leadership body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing in Queensland. Our Members consist of:

- Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs)
- Indigenous Councils (Deed of Grant in Trust); and
- Indigenous organisations who provide housing related support services.

The ICHO Sector in Queensland has approximately 60 independent community housing providers who have a comprehensive system of partnerships with, and accountability to, the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. These ICHO's have a collective goal of delivering quality and culturally safe housing for our people, by our people.

Cultural safety is central to ICHO housing services that are offered to the community. Cultural safety is about respecting the cultural rights, values, beliefs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples while they receive housing services that meet their needs.

ICHO rental properties complement the Queensland Government and mainstream community social housing stock. Combined, Queensland's ICHOs manage a \$500 million housing portfolio of more than 2,000 rental properties. The property portfolio provides homes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are on low and moderate household incomes and who find it hard to access affordable or appropriate housing in the private market.

ATSIHQ's purpose is to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes in Queensland by eliminating the disparities in housing experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. We achieve this through supporting ICHO's, partnerships, advice, advocacy and capacity building activities. Our work is also aligned with the following national housing priorities under the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement* and the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*:

National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

- encouraging growth and supporting the viability of the community housing sector
- affordable housing
- social housing
- tenancy reform
- planning and zoning reform initiatives
- home ownership

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- Priority Reform 1 – Formal partnerships and shared decision making
- Priority Reform 2 – Building the Community Controlled Sector
- Priority Reform 3 – Transforming government organisations
- Priority Reform 4 – Shared access to data and information at a regional level

An increasing portion of our work includes providing advice and guidance to government on policy, budget matters and community-developed solutions that contribute to the quality of life and improved housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





1. Focus Area: Growing the number of Queensland ICHO Properties

Proposed recommendation 1

The Queensland Government grows the number of ICHO properties by:

- prioritising funding for capable ICHOs to address the current backlog of housing
- assisting the securing of land in targeted areas for projects to construct multi-dwelling housing stock for single and two bedrooms households
- prioritising funding for housing for Indigenous households 55 years of age and over
- enable ATSIHQ through increased resources to capture a more accurate picture of the Queensland ICHO sector (property numbers and conditions) to inform better modelling of housing need
- strongly considering the effects predicted as a result of the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games and support the LGAQ proposal for a housing summit to plan and mitigate impacts

Background

On 17 March 2022, in a [joint letter to governments](#), the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) outlined key issues of the worsening housing crisis in Queensland. Signed by 10 peak bodies, the letter identifies First Nations communities as the most vulnerable with respect to overcrowding resulting from a shortage of housing. The LGAQ and 10 peak bodies believes that this human rights issue has escalated since the global COVID-19 pandemic commenced in 2020 [1].

As at 30 June 2021, the [Queensland Social Housing Register](#) (the waitlist) reported 27,933 total applications, which includes 50,301 persons requiring 48,374 bedrooms [2]. Using a quantitative methodology and statistical analysis, based on the Queensland government's pre-determined coding within the dataset, ATSIHQ notes that:

- 9403 applications or 33% of the total (27,933) are registered as Indigenous applicants
 - 6060 or 65% (of the 9403) indicated a preference for housing that is managed by an Indigenous housing provider [2].

ATSIHQ recommends this 6060 is interpreted as a preference for housing to be delivered by an ICHO and at the macro-level are better understood as follows:

Applications:

- 4431 or 73% of all applications are for housing located in major cities and urban localities
 - 2162 or 48% of which relate to South East Queensland (SEQ)
- 1412 or 23% relate to regional locations
- 217 or 4% relate to remote locations (Deed of Grant in Trust communities)
- some applications were registered as far back as 2003 and one application in 1998
- 1102 are deferred and require further documentation for full approval

Disability applications:

- 1710 or 28% of all applications qualified for disability modifiable housing
 - 1286 or 77% relate to major urban cities and localities
 - 696 or 41% of which related to SEQ
 - 347 or 21% relate to regional locations
 - 34 or 2% relate to remote locations





Homeless applicants:

- 3803 or 63% of all applications qualified as experiencing homelessness
 - 1526 or 40% of homeless applications were recorded as having 1 or more children
 - 1034 or 27% were recorded as disabled applicants
 - 248 or 7% were recorded as a disabled applicant with 1 or more children

Peoples:

- 19,946 people are recorded against the 9403 applications for housing
- 12,635 people are recorded against the 6060 applications for Indigenous managed housing
 - 4531 are confirmed as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent
 - ATSIHQ is unable to determine the cultural identity of the remaining 7520 and flags this as a major flaw with respect to data collection protocols

Accommodation:

- 11,304 bedrooms were recorded as being required to appropriately house the people listed in the 5836 applications
 - 2773 applicants or 47% required only one bedroom
 - 1230 applicants or 42% required two bedrooms
 - 1324 applicants required three bedrooms
 - 451 applicants required four bedrooms
 - 53 applicants required 5 bedrooms; and
 - 5 applicants required 6 bedrooms [2].

ATSIHQ notes that 347 applications related to housing for persons 55 years and over, where 311 or 89% were single households and 155 recorded as homeless [2]. This is not an acceptable situation for this cohort or Indigenous peoples who may also be community Elders, members of the stolen generations and would have been (due to their age) subjected to the cruelty of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* (not repealed until 1969). In the near future, ATSIHQ will quantify the level of housing required by ICHOs to support Aboriginal women, including those who are 55 years and over. Further analysis of the impending 2022 waitlist data according to region and to measure disparity in comparison to non-Indigenous clients will also feature in future reporting.

Rationale

Coupled with the waitlist data and call for action by industry and sector bodies, the Australian housing market has seen consistent increases to weekly private rental prices and house sales to record high-levels. The Real Estate Industry Queensland (REIQ), the peak body for real estate businesses, reported that throughout 2021 and into 2022, Queensland continues to experience record low vacancy rates with most regions remaining much tighter than what the REIQ classifies as “healthy”, between 2.6% to 3.5% [3].

In December 2021, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported that Australian residential property prices rose 23.7% over the previous twelve months, with Brisbane recording a 27.8% rise [4]. Whilst these increases may be viewed as positive economics for some Australian's, there is growing concern with respect to the cumulative effects on housing disparity. This is further exacerbated in South East Queensland due to the impending Brisbane Olympic Games in 2032. The current and any cumulative increase in house prices and weekly rents will continue to place considerable strain on access to affordable housing across the State [5, 6].

Particularly, as it relates to Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander families in urban locations where their needs are more strongly characterised by difficulties with the affordability of a range of housing choices [7]. At the 2016 Census, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that rented in the private market were almost twice as likely as other households to be paying more than 30 per cent of household income on rent [8].




Without appropriate supports and assistance from the Queensland Government, Indigenous housing outcomes in Queensland may not improve and compound the already known and serious cumulative and inter-generational disadvantages.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, through the 1999, 2001 and 2006 reports on Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, summarises results from the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) of each respective year of collection. An analysis of Queensland specific ICHO data within the reports for 2001 and 2006 highlights an additional 557 properties or a 9.81% increase from 5763 to 6230 properties [9, 10].

Given this rate of increase over the 20 years to 2021, ATSIHQ calculates an estimated state-wide ICHO property portfolio of 9947 properties may exist in 2022. This would mean a 75% increase in number of properties over 20 years. However, even if the ICHO sector did sustain the 9.81% rate of increase for every four years period since 2001, the number of Indigenous housing applications increased by 165% (3545 to 9403 applications) in only the four years from 2017 to 2021, according to the respective Queensland Social Housing Registers [2, 11].

Clearly demand for housing through Queensland's ICHO network (including DOGITs) outstrips supply and the current rate of increase.





2. FOCUS AREA: A fairer housing system for Queensland ICHOs (access to funding without being NRSCH Registered)

Proposed recommendation 2

The Queensland Government prioritises a fairer housing system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by:

- suspending the eligibility criteria for ICHOs to be registered under NRSCH in order to access current and future housing funding opportunities, such as QHIGI
- additional resources for ATSIHQ to work closely with ICHOs to complete the investigations as recommended in the 2020 FaCS *Review of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) – Potential Future Reform Options Report*
- additional resources for ATSIHQ to undertake up-to-date data collection, analysis and provide accurate reporting of the current state of the Queensland ICHO network (on par or better than the previous National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey and/or the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey, last completed in 2015 and 2008 respectively); and
- reconsider the Queensland Government's new definition of a CHP (as outlined in QHIGI) and revert back to the more inclusive definition that accounts for NRSCH un-registered CHPs.

Background


In 2021, the Queensland Government, through the [Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025](#), established the [Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative](#) (QHIGI). The initiative seeks partnerships with individuals, organisations, developers and housing providers to deliver more housing for those who need it [12]. As a state-wide integrated capital investment program, QHIGI is expected to deliver 6,365 new social homes through a \$1.813 billion investment over four years. The program is to be delivered through three initiatives, namely the:

- [Housing Investment Fund \(HIF\)](#) - funding partnered projects to increase social housing and additional affordable housing supply
- [QuickStarts Qld \(QSQ\)](#) - a capital investment program to accelerate planned acquisition, new construction, and redevelopment opportunities to deliver new homes sooner; and
- [Help to Home \(H2H\)](#) - a partnership with property owners, landlords and registered community housing providers (CHPs) to deliver private rental outcomes to people who are eligible for social housing [12].

The Queensland Government's eligibility criteria to access QHIGI includes a requirement for potential participants to HIF and H2H to be registered under the [National Regulatory System for Community Housing \(NRSCH\)](#) [12]. At the minimum, potential participants for QSQ must be in the process of obtaining registration under NRSCH or alternatively, the Queensland-RSCH (QRSCH).

NRSCH was established by way of states and territories adopting of the [Community Housing Providers \(Adoption of National Law\) Act 2012](#) (the National Law). In Queensland, NRSCH is implemented through the [Regulatory Framework](#) (the Framework) and managed through the Part 4 of the [Housing Act 2003](#), The Registrar and their [Regulatory Services Office](#). The Framework consists of the [National Code](#) (the Code), which sets out [seven Performance Outcomes](#) (POs) and [three Tiers of registration](#) [13, 14]. Specifically, the Code requires registered providers to be well-governed, financially viable and to perform in compliance with standards to deliver quality housing services. The three Tiers categorise a CHP's level of assessed risk, scale and complexity of operation and scope of housing and related services [15].

Fundamentally, NRSCH was designed to ensure a graduated approach to registration and compliance in line with the complexity and size of the individual community housing providers. However, the uptake of NRSCH by ICHOs has not reached levels desired by State and Territory Governments and different solutions have



been proposed over several years [16]. In 2020, the New South Wales Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) published the [Review of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing \(NRSCH\) – Potential Future Reform Options Report](#). Specifically, potential reform 3.0 outlined the concerns of Indigenous housing professionals who advocated for:

“Expansion of the NRSCH to better cover and address the requirements of Indigenous housing and ICHOs.”

The proposed expansion covers the provision of additional scope for ICHOs to access all government funding programs. However, little to no advancement of this proposal has materialised [14].


Rationale

ATSIHQ agrees with the overarching aim of NRSCH to ensure a well governed, well managed and viable community housing sector that meets the housing needs of tenants and provides assurance for government and investors [13]. However, in early development of NRSCH, there was no mention to ICHOs that immediate and future funding would be dependent on registration under NRSCH [17]. In Queensland, ICHOs are not strongly represented as a NRSCH registered cohort of the overall CHP sector [14]. In 2022, NRSCH registration relating to Queensland ICHOs has resulted in only 17 registrations that includes 16 Tier 3 organisations and one Tier 2 organisation [18].

ATSIHQ is aware of a possible further 44 ICHOs operating in Queensland that are not registered under NRSCH and therefore unfairly made in-eligible for applying for funding. This severe limitation is not consistent or supportive for addressing the disparity faced by a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, which can be characterised in Queensland through:

- over-representation on the social housing register
 - Indigenous applicants make up 33% of all applications despite only being 4% of the overall population of Queensland [2, 19]
- Overcrowding
 - 20% of Indigenous peoples experience overcrowding compared with only 4% of all other households [20]
- need to address historical maintenance and upgrade issues across the state-wide ICHO portfolio
 - 45% of properties were recorded in 2019 as having 2 or more structural problems
 - In 2018-19, about one in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households lived in housing of an unacceptable standard, a figure that has remained unchanged since 2008 [21]
- need for better housing solutions to meet the needs of the existing and future populations
 - in the five years to 2016, the census count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders increased by 30,658 (or 19.7%), faster than the increase a decade earlier (13.3%)
 - one-third (35.4%) were aged less than 15 years, compared with one-fifth (18.9%) of non-Indigenous Queenslanders [19]; and
- need to better align the Queensland ICHOs with the policy environment under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, Closing the Gap and shared principles under the Queensland Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019 – 2023 [8, 17].





3. FOCUS AREA: Repairing Queensland ICHO properties

Proposed recommendation 3

The Queensland Government assists repairing the Queensland ICHO properties by:

- ensuring that all Queensland ICHO properties are maintained to the relevant state standards at a minimum with a target of 100% by 2032
- investing in suitable design and construction, overcrowding reduction programs and repairs and maintenance programs that are underpinned by social conscious competition policy
- expanding partnerships and opportunities between the ICHO sector and housing industry that drives policy to increase quality assurance, value for money and sustainability
- ensuring health and safety obligations to tenants positively contributes to Closing the Gap
- ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Queensland remain the self-determining drivers of policy to mandate the resolution of socioeconomic issues, such as higher quality standards of housing

Background

The 2020 *'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report'*, produced by the Productivity Commission, on behalf of the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service, states that 20% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households lived in housing of an unacceptable standard. The types of housing construction and building defects that contribute to this situation includes:

- incompatible building materials for environmental conditions
- foundation and structural damage
- hasty construction methods
- plumbing faults
- poor water proofing
- electrical faults
- drainage issues
- poor roof materials
- sagging floors
- high humidity; and
- dampness.

Basic standards are defined in the report as housing that has working function for washing people, washing clothes, storing/preparing food, and sewerage, and no more than two major structural problems. The Report also states that 30% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households reside in housing with major structural problems. ATSIHQ understands that these figures have remained unchanged across the 2016, 2014 and 2011 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reports [21-28].

The above quoted figures are compounded by separate socio-economic and environmental health matters that contribute to problematic home environments and health matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, including: overcrowding, rates of disease and infection, compromised access to clean water, functional sewerage and electricity services, practices of good physical, mental, spiritual and cultural health. This situation is the continuation of a legacy model for delivering and maintaining housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families that is not sustainable.

In late 2021, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) released their report '[Sustainable Indigenous housing in regional and remote Australia](#)'. The report re-casts sustainable housing as appropriately designed for householder needs and environmental conditions. In doing so, researchers are better able to distinguish adequately maintained housing that will better facilitate householder safety and health with contemporary housing design that may better respond to anticipatable future impacts from climate change [29].





Combined, the historical neglect of successive governments to provide appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples, contemporary financial and logistical challenges and difficulties of effective asset and tenancy management have contributed to Queensland's substandard portfolio of Indigenous community housing. The situation is exacerbated through insufficient or subsidised rental revenue to meet ICHO operating expenses and sufficient asset management systems that would stimulate positive growth.

As the repairs, maintenance, replacement and new construction backlog grows along with the numbers of Indigenous housing applicants, dwellings continue to deteriorate, increasing the immediate and longer terms to appropriately maintain the ICHO portfolio. Coupled with stagnant decreases in overcrowding the disparity in appropriate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families can be characterised as a situation of institutional racism.

Rationale

Research completed by the United Nations (UN) concludes that there is an urgent need to focus on policies to improve health, affordable housing, basic services, sustainable mobility and connectivity in both developed and developing nations [30].


Housing is critical drivers for 13 out of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, of which Australia is signatory to. Housing is the platform for human resilience, sustainability and for positive development and outcomes in health, education and standard of living [31]. The availability of accessible housing allows for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to prosper by encouraging the development of a sense of identity and belonging tied to home and place. This enables the emergence of cohesive societies and provides a working framework for further financial and economic development [32].

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience the highest levels of housing stress, homelessness and overcrowding in Australia. The scope and history of disadvantage inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia means there are substantial political challenges to achieve agreement on the design and implementation of housing across the continuum. [8, 16, 21, 33, 34].

Urgent investment in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing sector to enable better maintenance programs. Overall improvements to health and wellbeing from quality improvements to Indigenous housing positively contributes to productivity across education, economic and cultural health indicators. However, regardless of house design, it is increasingly clear that the benefits of improved repairs and maintenance are unlikely to be fully realised without concurrent hygiene promotion and wrap-around tenancy support programs as an integral part of a broader ecological approach to housing improvement.

A better and more ecological approach to improving the ICHO sector would deploy multi-faceted programs that concurrently target priorities in key areas of influence, including: housing construction and building materials, repairs and maintenance backlogs, tenant and household behaviours, environmental health, organisational led wrap-around service delivery, supportive societal norms and a socially conscious and sustainable competition policy environment [35].





4. FOCUS AREA: Implementing of the Queensland ICHO Sector Strengthening Activities

Proposed recommendations 4

The following is a list of the Sector development and Sector strengthening activities that are being led ATSIHQ and we recommend that the Queensland Government supports ATSIHQ to deliver on the following sector development and strengthening activities, as follows:

- Queensland ICHO Sector Regional Engagement Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Quality Improvement Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Business Readiness Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Promotion Plan
- Queensland ICHO Sector Business Partners Panel
- Queensland ICHO Sector Education Partners Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Workforce Strategy
- Queensland ICHO Sector Executive Development Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector CEO Health Program
- Queensland ICHO Sector Procurement Guide

Background

Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Agreement) all signatories have committed to ensuring that by 2031, 88 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will live in appropriate housing that is not overcrowded [36].

All parties under the Agreement, including the Queensland Government, acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations are more suitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access services, achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are often preferred over mainstream services. Building the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing sector (the Sector) is a key pillar to achieving this target through Priority Reform 2 [36].

In support of the Agreement, the Australian Government's is developing a three-year Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (HSSP) in consultation with the community housing sector and other stakeholders. The HSSP proposes an overarching plan to build upon the scaffolding of the Agreement. A central theme of the HSSP is to broaden and elevate the capacity of the Sector. This will provide a platform for all governments and ATSICCHOs, including ICHOs in Queensland, to continue and increase the proportion of services delivered [36].

At the Queensland State and local community levels, ATSIHQ and individual ICHOs will collaborate on developing and implementing sector strengthening activities. Queensland's ICHO sector is currently characterised by small organisations and driven by individuals who are highly knowledgeable and passionate about serving their community, and who employ a broad skillset and an in-depth community understanding to achieve outcomes. There is a small number of organisations who also provide wrap-around or integrated services to their housing clients and operate as multi-services organisations as well as owners and managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing.

An expansion of the provision of wrap-around services to individual ICHOs across the network is a model that can support a more sustainable sector and contribute to addressing priority reforms areas and targets under the Agreement and HSSP.





Rationale

ATSIHQ believes that success across the Queensland ICHO sector to date can largely be attributed to the knowledge and passion of individuals who drive their organisations to achieve outcomes when systemic barriers would otherwise inhibit this. In alignment and support for the Agreement and HSSP, ATSIHQ advocates for strong and ongoing Sector development as a priority.

ATSIHQ will continue to work closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing providers to identify what they need and what is relevant to their overall success. We will engage frequently with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Sector and will continue to assist the Sector by listening to their needs and by helping them to overcome organisational challenges so that the Sector is strong and sustainable.

Our commitment to Sector development and Sector strengthening will be supported through a range of engagement activities including site visits, CEO communication and Member events; through the sharing of news; and through the ongoing development of organisational resources.





5. FOCUS AREA: Ending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness in Queensland

Proposed recommendations 5

We recommend the Queensland Government supports ATSIHQ’s commitment to ending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness in Queensland through review and redesign of homelessness response initiatives that:

- improves understanding with target reductions for eliminating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness in Queensland
- improves the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Collection to provide more detailed and up-to-date information regarding the reasons for homelessness which will include:
 - statistical and anecdotal evidence regarding the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless
 - the various reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately homeless
 - housing options and solutions houses in their community/location/area
- supports NATSIHA and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jurisdictional peaks to analyse the data and provide practical, efficient and cost-effective solutions and options
- improves data regarding single person accommodation needs and solutions or options
- supports negotiating portfolio realignments for under-utilised resources, for example a single person living in a three-bedroom house

Background

In 1987, during a federal election campaign speech at the Sydney Opera House, then (Labor) Prime Minister, the Honourable Bob Hawke MP [37], famously made his government’s promise that *“By 1990, no Australian child will be living in poverty”*.

This remains a powerful message, signalling that government policy should be geared towards those least fortunate and most vulnerable [38]. However, 35 years on, poverty still exists and is most clearly demonstrated through the single measure of homelessness. Nationally, in the ten years to 2021, the number of clients assisted by specialist homelessness agencies increased at an average annual rate of 1.8% from 236,400 persons to 278,300 persons [39]. The situation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is worse.

The number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Queensland on Census night in 2006, 2011 and 2016 illustrates a very concerning disparity between each cohort and a disturbing pattern for maintaining a status quo.

Year	Indigenous	% of population	Non-Indigenous	% of population
2006	4,780	3.8%	12,804	0.34%
2011	4,819	3.1%	12,961	0.31%
2016	4,450	2.4%	14,846	0.32%

Source: [19, 40]

Although the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were recorded as homeless has fallen, it is a very slow reduction over a ten years period. Remarkably, Indigenous Queensland homelessness is always consistently higher than non-Indigenous Queenslanders by 2 to 3 per cent across respective Census’.

Over time and due to ineffective policy, homelessness has become a common thread in the life experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. In terms of the cohort of younger





Indigenous peoples and families, secondary homelessness or overcrowding at a family residence, is a key feature of everyday life. This scenario is further exacerbated by continuing discrimination in the private rental market, where it remains often difficult for Indigenous peoples to gain acceptance as private tenants. There is an evident unwillingness on the part of real estate agents outside the capital city to approve Indigenous families for tenancies. This is due to institutional racism and society wide prejudice against Indigenous people as householders [41].

Rationale

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reports that people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness are among Australia's most socially and economically disadvantaged. Access to secure housing leads to better outcomes for individuals while also reducing the burden on government services. Housing has positive flow on effects to all areas of social services, including health, homelessness, education and employment inequality [7, 20, 39].

For example, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) analysis on the return on investment for social housing in the Australian Capital Territory found that the median costs of health, justice, and welfare for tenants in community housing is around \$28,700 per annum, while similar costs for those who were homeless is around \$44,000 [29].

This means that costs of service use for those in stable housing were around \$15,300 per person per year lower than for those who were homeless.





Conclusion

ATSIHQ and its Members acknowledge that greater action is required by the Queensland Government to remove barriers to achieving better housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Significant policy, strategy and investment support is sought from the Queensland Government and Queensland Housing Industry to improve the housing and health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in addition to Australian government investment.

It is clear that there remains a number of substantial barriers to improving and addressing housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland. ATSIHQ has outlined several recommendations in this submission that should be included in the next Queensland state budget. ATSIHQ's first three concerns are focused around the removal of barriers to funding, increasing the ICHO property portfolio and addressing the back log of repairs and maintenance. ATSIHQ's plan for resolving the absence of up-to-date ICHO property condition and household data will re-position the sector to better inform its own strategies to improve housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our targeted sector strengthening activities form part of the ecological approach to increasing the abilities of individual ICHOs and improving the overall sustainability of the sector. Finally, ATSIHQ and ICHOs, invites increased partnerships with the Queensland Government and all industry stakeholders to support eliminating the disparity in housing and homelessness outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by 2032.






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