

**Western Australian
Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council**

Strategic Plan
2003/04 – 2006/07

Revised August 2004

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STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER



The State Government's role in addressing the endemic and entrenched social, economic, housing and health problems of Aboriginal communities and people has to be a balance between trying to ensure the best use of scarce resources whilst respecting the aspirations of Aboriginal people and stakeholders to determine the most appropriate use of resources.

The State Government has already committed to positive engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders in its *Statement of Commitment To A New And Just Relationship*. In the spirit of that commitment I commend the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council on the development of this first comprehensive Strategic Plan under the *Agreement for the Provision of Housing and Infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres*

Strait Islander People in Western Australia July 2002 – June 2007. The Plan is a bold document, building on the strategic gains of the last decade and looking ahead to the fundamental reforms necessary to take us through the next decade and beyond.

Some of the ideas and strategies contained in the Plan will challenge all levels of government, and there will undoubtedly be some robust debate and lobbying during the term of the Agreement around key reforms identified in the Plan. The 2002 Housing Agreement has shown that significant changes can occur if all parties work cooperatively. The focus at all times however must be on outcomes. This will be the filter through which the State Government will engage with AHIC, ATSIC, ATSSIS, the Commonwealth Government and other stakeholders. We should not shy away however from consideration of fundamental changes to the way that services and assets are planned, delivered and managed.

HON NICK GRIFFITHS LLB MLC
MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND WORKS.
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

October 2003

CHAIRPERSON'S FORWARD: ONE YEAR ON ...

The development of the first AHIC Strategic Plan last year was a key milestone which established the direction and priorities of the Council. I noted at the time that the 2002 Indigenous Housing Agreement established "formal roles and responsibilities which fundamentally changes previous relationships" and that "a cooperative and willing spirit will be essential to meet the challenges ahead." Those words were both a plea and a caution, and indeed hard work is always required in new relationships if they are to be sustainable.



In April 2004 the Prime Minister announced his intention to abolish ATSIC. A lot has happened in a short time and we find ourselves operating in a new and further challenging context. ATSI has gone, with the housing programs and staff absorbed into the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. The Commonwealth Government has insisted that it will not replace ATSIC with another elected body, and the Western Australian Government is currently planning a consultation process with the Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, in an attempt to consider the issue of representation.

The Commonwealth has offered the State Government an interim "Indigenous Housing Agreement" to ensure continuity of pooled funding arrangements and programs for 2004/05. Notably, the ATSIC Chair, a signatory to the 2002 Agreement, is absent from this Agreement.

Where does this historic change leave the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council? What does it mean for the status of the Strategic Plan?

The WA Minister for Housing has given reassurances that the Council membership structure will remain intact throughout 2004/05 and that he supports the continuation of an Aboriginal advisory body under any future Agreement arrangements. We are assured that Aboriginal housing priorities will continue to be identified through regional consultation and the strategic planning activities of the Council. The priorities of this Plan therefore remain intact.

The changed circumstances have reinforced to me one of the core messages contained in the Plan. Aboriginal affairs can withstand major upheavals if its foundation institutions and representative networks are strong, viable, innovative and flexible. It is my belief that Aboriginal housing in WA is trapped within an outdated and rigid institutional framework. I stated in my forward to the Plan last year that "we cannot afford to continue business as usual" and that "AHIC needs to look forward and have the courage to question the existing paradigms." The questions I raised less than a year ago have even greater urgency now than then.

For this reason the AHIC has brought forward the timeframe for its agenda with respect to Institutional Reform, with two major research projects currently underway. AHIC members have also resolved to take a more forthright leadership, advocacy and representation role across housing issues, including mainstream housing issues. Furthermore AHIC has signalled its intention to extend its strategic policy responsibilities to include essential services. To that end it will seek an amalgamation of the Indigenous Housing Agreement and the Essential Services Agreement.

To date AHIC is engaged through existing state government processes in pursuing critical reform agendas (eg. legislative changes, the role of local councils, normalisation of power and water services etc). Although this will continue, AHIC will in some areas step up and engage at a more senior level.

I also said last year “the magnitude of the problems in our communities cannot be understated.” We cannot use the current upheaval in Indigenous affairs as an excuse for inaction. Change creates opportunities and it is important that AHIC provides the leadership to shape the priorities under future Agreements and that the core initiatives for change identified in the Strategic Plan continue to be implemented.

The current update provides an important “Progress Report” which is being used to track our successes and challenges (Appendix D). Importantly it helps us to change tack when particular strategies are not progressing as well as we’d hoped.

I’m pleased to report that the AHIC has contributed to some important wins during 2003/04, particularly in its engagement with the Department of Housing and Works. AHIC members toured a number of rural and regional locations to see first hand the housing conditions of many Aboriginal public housing tenants. These conditions varied significantly across different localities. As a result of representations by local Aboriginal groups and AHIC the DHW has developed a comprehensive refurbishment and stock replacement program, targeting a thousand dwellings over four years. Aboriginal employment and training requirements are being built into program contracts. In addition AHIC is seeking that a progressive Aboriginal home ownership strategy be part of the package of reforms for these towns.

Similar demands are being made with respect to the DHW’s New Living program, with the ED of the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Directorate now on the Steering Committee for the Queens Park and Southwell redevelopment projects in Perth.

Progress is also being made on the home ownership front with the development of a separate Home Ownership Plan (see Appendix C). New initiatives will be developed and implemented throughout 2004.

The most difficult of tasks is to tackle the governance and management issues in Aboriginal communities and organisations. A series of reviews has commenced by AHIC. Negotiations on alternative models will be undertaken in a number of regions throughout 2004/05, with the first major consultations commencing in the Tjurabalan “COAG Trail Site” communities in August 2004. Research into management support and maintenance subsidy models has also commenced in order to find a more coherent basis for assisting communities.

The roll out of the In Home Practical Support Program in urban and remote communities throughout the year will be monitored with interest by AHIC. This initiative, modelled on the old “homemaker” program, has been identified as a high priority by a number of communities and has been promised for several years. AHIC have approved significant funding for 2004/05 and is requiring that services are established and delivered.

A complete review of current tenancy support programs has been undertaken in 2003/04 and a steering committee is currently developing proposals for AHIC’s consideration in November 2004. AHIC members have expressed deep concerns about current arrangements and are looking for fundamental change.

AHIC is particularly concerned to see a more focused and concentrated effort on expediting issues to do with our responsibilities for Town Reserves. In my view this has

been in the “too hard basket” for too long. Our inability to deal in a more strategic manner has been an obstacle to seeing the opportunities that might exist to deal with a number of core Aboriginal Housing issues including mainstream housing matters.

Finally, I wish to return to where I started in this forward, last year and this, and reiterate the importance of a “cooperative and willing spirit” if we are to make a real difference in these changing times.

PETER YU
CHAIRPERSON
ABORIGINAL HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL

August 2004

PART ONE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
- **HISTORICAL POLICY CONTEXT**
- **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION AND HOUSING PROFILE**

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Western Australian Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council Strategic Plan 2003/04-2006/07 was developed in accordance with the requirements of section 11.1 of the *Agreement for the provision of Housing and Infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Western Australia July 2002-June 2007* (the "Agreement").

Under the Agreement the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council (AHIC) has the responsibility of establishing the strategic directions for the provision of Aboriginal housing and infrastructure services for the next four years. These directions are in accord with the major strategies and principles contained in:

- The Housing Ministers' *Building a Better Future: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing to 2010*; and
- The Agreement.

This year's updated Plan has also taken into account the key findings in relation to housing contained in the COAG commissioned report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators Report, 2003*

The AHIC's responsibility to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians spans across all housing tenures, not just Aboriginal communities.

The strategic directions contained here consolidate much of the framework developed and adopted over the last few years, but also offer a vision for institutional reform which AHIC believes will help define a paradigm shift in the relationships and structures necessary to achieve optimal housing and infrastructure outcomes.

Strategies in the Plan are clustered under five core objectives:

1. Investigate the institutional reforms necessary to optimise the delivery of housing and infrastructure services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia.
2. Provide sustainable housing and infrastructure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia.
3. Develop the capacity and skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and people in housing and infrastructure.
4. Improve and increase access to safe and healthy housing and living environments across all housing tenures.
5. Strengthen the planning and coordination of housing and infrastructure services.

The core objectives of the Plan remain intact despite the radically changed context of Aboriginal affairs from July 2004. If anything, the first core objective has become more urgent, and research is currently underway examining alternative institutional arrangements. In addition, given the severe limitations placed on ATSIC Regional Councils, the AHIC is concerned that a leadership and

policy vacuum could emerge, to the detriment of Aboriginal people. AHIC has therefore determined to take on a more forthright advocacy and lobbying role across all areas of housing and also with respect to the provision of essential services. Some existing strategies contained in the Plan have therefore been revised, and others are currently being reviewed.

It should be noted that the difficult circumstances faced by Regional Councils in recent months has limited the level of input by Councils to this revised Plan. Their attention and priority has obviously been elsewhere, and therefore AHID and AHIC have taken carriage and responsibility for this current revision. AHIC reminds all stakeholders however that the Plan is a work in progress, and Regional Councils, through their AHIC representatives, are invited at all times to raise issues, or put forward ideas and strategies to help shape a better future for Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

1.2 INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

The Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Agreement represents a significant change in the management, administration and planning of housing and infrastructure services in Western Australia. The Agreement model however was developed around existing institutional frameworks and structures. The AHIC believes that the current arrangements limit the scope for innovation, especially in relation to leveraging of additional financial resources into the funding pool. Current arrangements essentially reflect a grant dependent welfare paradigm, with stakeholders having to make the best of the inadequate level of funds available.

The AHIC is committed, as a priority, to investigating alternative models which might succeed the current arrangements. The benefits of establishing an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statutory Authority will be investigated, along with the idea of Regional Authorities. Capitalising funding and asset ownership through a Housing Trust or Not For Profit Company will be examined, along with Regional Companies. AHIC has brought forward the timeframe for the research into these issues in the light of recent events, with initial investigations to be completed by December 2004.

Strategies around legislative reforms, funding and resourcing issues, local government roles and land tenure arrangements have been revised due to limited progress throughout the last 12 months. Local Government reform remains a key to improving environmental health and municipal services and outcomes in Aboriginal communities and town reserves.

1.3 ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

1.3.1 Aboriginal Communities & Town Reserves

The environmental health and housing conditions in communities varies significantly from extremely poor to adequate. The AHIC commits to an ongoing investment in communities to improve conditions and will actively seek additional funds to clear the backlog of unmet housing and infrastructure needs. Although capital works expenditure is largely targeted to new housing stock, housing upgrades and essential service infrastructure works, there is also some provision for environmental health initiatives such as contributions towards sealing of internal roads, greening and landscaping projects, and recreational facilities.

The normalisation / regularisation of essential services (power, water, waste water) and municipal services remain core strategies. The Town Reserves Regularisation Program initiatives will continue to be funded. The vitally important Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP) will continue as an intermediate strategy for delivering power, water and waste water services in discrete communities. In addition the AHIC will be proactive in supporting longer term initiatives to normalise the provision of essential services in communities. This includes supporting the State Governments power procurement pilot project in the Kimberley; engaging in the debate over appropriate subsidy / CSO regimes for provision of normalised power, water and waste water services; and strategies to greatly increase the role of Local Government in service provision. These “bigger picture” initiatives reflect the next strategic frontier to be addressed if regional sustainability agendas are to be addressed in relation to communities. ATSIC has been the front line agency advocating for fundamental change in this area but with the current uncertainty AHIC will take on a more active leadership role in respect of this strategic agenda from 2004/05.

The other major sustainability imperative is to effect significant improvements in housing management and community governance outcomes, as the sustainability of communities is persistently undermined by poor performance in this area. A raft of strategies have been developed with a greater emphasis on regional, external and mainstream management options, and a complete review of housing maintenance and rental collection arrangements. At the community level formal performance targets and funding conditions will be put in place with the aim of reducing capital works upgrade and replacement expenditures in the longer term. The ongoing issue of repairs and maintenance is also addressed in the Plan with the implementation of a pilot subsidised regional electrical and plumbing (licensed trades) service, and a commitment to examine a rental management / property maintenance financial subsidy program.

In the original Strategic Plan, the plight of many Town Reserve communities was recognised and the development of a comprehensive long-term futures vision and strategy was proposed. During 2003/04, meetings were held with the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Aboriginal Lands Trust (who own the majority of town reserve land) in respect to this strategy. One metropolitan community was closed down during the year by the State Government. The Department of Housing and Works and the Department of Indigenous Affairs are currently identifying town reserve communities in need of urgent and immediate attention. This “action” initiative has overtaken the broader process planned by AHIC. The Council will monitor this ‘piecemeal’ approach throughout 2004-2005 but believes a comprehensive strategy still needs to be developed. In the meantime, the town reserve regularisation program will be reviewed with the view to upgrading and expediting development where possible, however the initiatives in the East and West Kimberley will continue to be implemented.

The importance of the sustainability initiatives is recognised in the Plan through the restructuring of priorities and a commitment to a greater proportion of resources being allocated for housing management and community governance initiatives. Without significant improvement, pressures on capital budgets will grow at an unacceptable rate.

1.3.2 Urban Housing

The AHIC is aware of the growing pressures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban living environments in Western Australia. Many regional centres and towns are experiencing significant increases in their Aboriginal populations. Under the Plan a range of strategies and options will be pursued, including:

- working with other Government agencies to develop appropriate supported housing arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with special needs (eg. people with disabilities, mental health problems and people exiting prisons);
- homelessness strategies and
- examining alternative housing options (eg. transitional housing options, crisis housing, etc).

The AHIC is keen to ensure that strategies to improve access to all housing tenures are the cornerstone of policy and program development in relation to urban housing issues. Aboriginal specific programs have tended to focus attention on discrete communities, with little input into “mainstream” program planning processes. The AHIC will ensure that Aboriginal people and representatives become integral to these planning processes to ensure that the aspirations and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are embraced. There is strong emphasis in the Plan in improving access to community managed housing, home ownership and private rental housing in urban communities.

During 2003/04, AHIC has taken a pro-active approach to urban housing issues, particularly in respect to public housing programs. Visits to a number of country towns and rural communities have highlighted the poor housing conditions experienced by many Aboriginal public housing tenants. AHIC’s representations to the State Housing Commission have resulted in the development of a significant mainstream stock replacement and refurbishment program (1,000 houses over four years). Aboriginal employment and training requirements are being built into program contracts. In addition AHIC is trying to ensure that a proactive Aboriginal home ownership strategy is part of the package of reforms for these towns.

Improving Home Ownership outcomes for Aboriginal people in Western Australia remains a high priority for AHIC. Home Ownership rates are one of the Headline Indicators identified in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators Report, 2003. A separate Home Ownership Strategy has been developed in recognition of the importance of this issue (Attachment).

1.4 CAPACITY BUILDING

The linkage of training and employment opportunities with capital works contracts and AHID programs continues, but there is also a more developmental role envisaged to broaden the opportunities available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are commitments to extend the opportunities for Aboriginal businesses and not-for-profit organisations in the delivery and management of housing, infrastructure and training services, through the introduction and extension of preferential tender policies and other initiatives. It is important to expand opportunities in urban environments given the drift of young people from communities. A specialist position in the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Directorate within the Department of Housing and Works has been created to broker new opportunities across government, with training providers and with the private sector.

1.5 IMPROVED PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The key processes for ensuring the implementation of the planning and administrative arrangements under the Agreement occupied a considerable amount of AHIC's time throughout 2003/04, with consultations between AHID and Regional Councils over key issues often tense and difficult¹. In spite of these difficulties, key milestones were ultimately achieved ensuring that programs can proceed during 2004/05.

AHIC, at a Strategic Workshop held in July 2004, has reasserted its commitment to fundamental elements of current Agreement arrangements, in particular:

- the pooling of State, Commonwealth and ATSIC housing funds;
- program management responsibilities vested with the State;
- the need for an Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council with specific responsibility for strategic planning and policy;
- a commitment to needs based planning;
- engagement with Regional Councils over strategic level priorities.

Given current circumstances and the move to interim Agreement arrangements for 2004/05 AHIC has recognised that Regional Councils will have limited capacity to undertake comprehensive program level planning. AHIC is therefore supportive of the State (through AHID) formally taking on this role. Regional Councils and FaCS Indigenous Coordination Centres will be consulted and intimately involved during the process to ensure that regional strategic priorities are captured.

In line with the requirements of the Agreement strategies have been put in place to improve the level of involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the planning and policy processes. In particular, on the insistence of AHIC, Regional Councils were consulted for the first time by the DHW with respect the development of the Aboriginal public housing program for 2004/05. The consultation process will be extended to the full public housing program in the coming months to inform the 2005/06 program.

¹ For example the MOU between AHID and Regional Councils, the multi measure funding formula, Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans, program priorities and some policy initiatives

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

In December 1992, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed a *“National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders”* in recognition of the continued high levels of disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in remote communities.

In 1994 the Commonwealth Government and ATSIC agreed to the strategic pooling of their housing resources as part of a *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy*. Much of the intention of the strategy was to improve coordination and administration of funding programs.

In November 1996 the Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Ministers, through the Housing Ministers’ Council (HMC), established the Commonwealth State Working Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing (CSWGIH) to develop practical strategies to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in need of housing assistance. The COAG commitment and the *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy* became the foundations for CSWGIH’s program.

In 1997 the HMC, based on advice from the CSWGIH, articulated four core objectives around which key strategies should focus in order to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes ie.

- Identify and address unmet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs;
- Improve the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations;
- Ensure safe, healthy and sustainable housing; and
- Improve the co-ordination of program administration.

These became the basis for new Bilateral Agreements developed under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and have remained bedrock objectives that have informed all State / Territory Strategic Plans since that time.

The first Agreement in Western Australia was signed in 1997. This was between ATSIC, the Commonwealth and the State Government. The nexus between housing, capacity building and environmental health was a significant characteristic of the 1997 Agreement. In practical terms this led to the State Housing Commission (SHC):

- taking on responsibility for the servicing and maintenance of essential services infrastructure in Aboriginal communities (through the Remote Area Essential Services Program);
- committing to improving housing management in communities (through the Management Support and Management Incentive Programs);

- undertaking a number of capacity building initiatives in targeted larger communities (through the Aboriginal Communities Strategic Investment Program), including community governance, skills development, provision of community infrastructure and sport and recreational facilities;
- undertaking a number of initiatives to normalise and standardise essential services (power, water, sewerage) and municipal services (eg. rubbish collection) in town reserves and larger communities (through the Town Reserves Regularisation Program and ACSIP).

During this period closer working relationships were established between the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Unit within the State Housing Commission and ATSIC to improve coordination and integration of planning, program administration and service delivery. However, formal integration of planning and program management was not achieved until a new Agreement was signed in July 2002 (see below).

As well as providing the strategic framework for the development of the first Bilateral Agreements the CSWGIH was also instrumental in:

- establishing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Information Implementation Committee (NIHIIC) which is responsible for developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing information management strategy, a multi-measure approach to housing needs, and formulating national data standards. The commitment to this work is documented in the *Agreement on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Information* involving the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Commonwealth, ATSIC and State / Territory Governments;
- developing the *National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing* to ensure that dwellings conform to accepted quality standards and are appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians;
- developing the *National Skills Development Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Management* that aims to develop the skills of staff of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations and promote other best management practices necessary for them to ensure the viability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dwellings. It has also identified the need for recurrent funding programs for the sector if houses are to be sustainable.

2.2 BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING TO 2010

In late 2000 the CSWGIH provided a report to Housing Ministers which included future directions essential for the continued improvement in housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In May 2001 Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Ministers adopted the document, *Building a Better Future: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing to 2010 (BBF)* which is based on the CSWGIH report.

BBF is effectively a nationally agreed “strategic plan” (Appendix A) aimed at significantly improving housing and environmental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. The document retains the four core objectives adopted in 1997. It provides a vision for better Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and identifies desired outcomes, guiding principles, core objectives and specific strategies to be implemented across jurisdictions.

Some of the key themes running through the BBF include:

- a greater emphasis on capacity building and sustainability within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector, including more viable housing management arrangements;
- development of multi measure needs based planning approaches to inform resource allocations;
- improved accountability, including development of an Agreement on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Information to support national performance indicators, a national minimum data set and effective reporting systems, including the National Reporting Framework;
- the need for whole of government approaches to policy development and service delivery, and the streamlining of funding administration arrangements;
- the need to address the backlog of housing needs and respond to emerging population pressures;
- greater involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the planning, decision making and service delivery of housing and infrastructure services;
- recognition of the diverse housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and support for programs and services that maximise access to all tenure options, including home ownership, private rental, urban community housing and public rental housing.

BBF has become a pivotal policy document, identifying major areas of work being undertaken at national, State and Territory levels and shaping the policy and planning framework of all jurisdictions. For Western Australia the BBF has provided the framework for the development of the:

- the Bilateral Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing and Infrastructure Agreement between the ATSIC and the State and Commonwealth Governments signed in July 2002;
- National Reporting Framework to measure progress against the key desired outcomes and objectives identified in the BBF;
- this AHIC Strategic Plan, July 2002 – June 2005.

2.3 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE AGREEMENT 2002-2007

The 1997 Bilateral Agreement was formerly reviewed in 2001 by Arto Consulting (WA) Pty Ltd. Key recommendations identified the need for the three signatories to the Agreement to:

- negotiate better administration and program management arrangements, including examining the concept of funds pooling and centralised program management;
- develop more holistic and inclusive planning and funds allocations processes, with a clearly identified role for ATSIC in the development of Regional Housing Plans;
- establish improved monitoring, reporting and accountability measures and processes.

The review also recommended that future Strategic Plans should be negotiated between all three signatories rather than being solely a State responsibility. This would ensure that all stakeholders were in agreement about key strategic directions.

The review informed the development of the second Agreement. This *Agreement for the provision of Housing and Infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Western Australia July 2002-June 2007* was signed in July 2002 and is between the Commonwealth Government, the Government of Western Australia and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

The new Agreement represents a significant change in the planning, administration and delivery of housing and infrastructure services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including:

- The pooling of Commonwealth, State and ATSIC funds;
- ATSIC Regional Councils (RC's) having a formal role in identifying funding priorities for the pooled funds;
- The development of needs based funding formula to inform regional resource allocations;
- Planning processes and strategies to be expanded to include all housing tenures;
- Centralised management and administration of the pooled funds by the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Directorate (AHID) within the Department of Housing and Works (DHW);
- Establishment of the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council (AHIC), comprising ATSIC and State representatives, which is responsible for strategic policy and planning to ensure that funds are utilised to meet the core objectives of the Plan.

The Agreement and the formation of the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council provided a major challenge for all stakeholders, but also a significant opportunity to make a real difference in housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians. The new planning, funding and administration arrangements were put in place to reduce duplication, improve administrative efficiencies and encourage a more cohesive and coherent strategic approach to policy development, programs and service delivery.

2.4 A NEW AGREEMENT

Given the abolition of ATSiS, and the impending demise of ATSiC Regional Councils from July 2005, the Commonwealth is currently negotiating Indigenous Affairs agreements with each State. These are umbrella agreements, beneath which specific purpose agreements will sit. Negotiations are scheduled for conclusion by 30 September 2004.

When the Indigenous Affairs agreement is in place, Western Australia will begin formal negotiations leading to a new housing and infrastructure agreement. It is intended that the new agreement will also encompass essential services.

Many of the features of the current Agreement should be retained in the new Agreement; however, this is also an opportunity to streamline existing processes and arrangements. It is envisaged that the main features of the new Agreement would be:

- Continued commitment to the pooled funding arrangements;
- Department of Housing and Works to remain the primary program manager and administrators of the funds;
- Reporting and accountability to be provided through existing National Reporting Framework and Council of Australian Government reporting processes;
- A representative Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council, or like advisory body, be retained with responsibility for formulation of strategic policy;
- Responsibility for future regional program planning to be vested with the State Department of Housing and Works as endorsed by AHIC in August 2004;
- Program planning to remain based on priority needs;
- Investigation of the possible amalgamation of housing and essential services Bilateral Agreements;
- Appropriate consultation with Aboriginal communities and leaders into key policy issues and regional planning, including macro policy directions provided by ATSiC Regional Councils via their Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans.

In the meantime, the Commonwealth (through FaCS) and Western Australia (through AHID) are currently finalising an interim agreement for 2004-2005. One of the outcomes of the interim agreement is the negotiation of the new Bilateral Agreement to come into effect from 1 July 2005.

2.5 OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE – KEY INDICATORS 2003

In November 2003, the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth and State Service Provision (SCRCSSP) produced the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report 2003 (OIDKI). It was commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

The report identifies indicators that are of relevance to all governments and indigenous stakeholders and that can demonstrate the impact of program and policy interventions. It documents outcomes for Indigenous people within a framework that has both a vision of what life should be for Indigenous people and a strategic focus on key areas that need to be targeted if that longer term vision is to be realised.

The OIDKI report provides policy makers with a broad view of the current state of Indigenous disadvantage and where things need to change if the vision is to be realised.

FRAMEWORK

Priority Outcomes

Three priority outcomes sit at the apex of the report's framework depicting a vision for how life should be for Indigenous people that is shared by governments and Indigenous people alike.

- Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity.
- Positive child development and prevention of violence, crime and self harm.
- Improved wealth creation and economic sustainability for individuals, families and communities

Headline Indicators

The first tier (or 'headline indicators') provides an overview of the state of Indigenous disadvantage. These indicators are measures of the major social and economic factors that need to improve if the vision is to be achieved. But because these measures (for example, life expectancy) are at such a high level, they do not provide a sufficient focus for policy makers to act on.

The headline indicators also reflect the extent to which this vision is becoming a reality. However, improvements in those indicators are only likely to be apparent over the medium to long-term, and then only if there have been effective strategies in place in the 'strategic areas' identified in the framework.

The major headline indicator to be addressed by the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council is Home Ownership.

Strategic Areas for Action

The seven strategic areas for action have been chosen for their potential to have a significant and lasting impact on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. Their aim is to assist policy makers to focus on the causes of social and economic disadvantage, so that over time, improvements in the headline indicators will be achieved.

Strategic Change Indicators

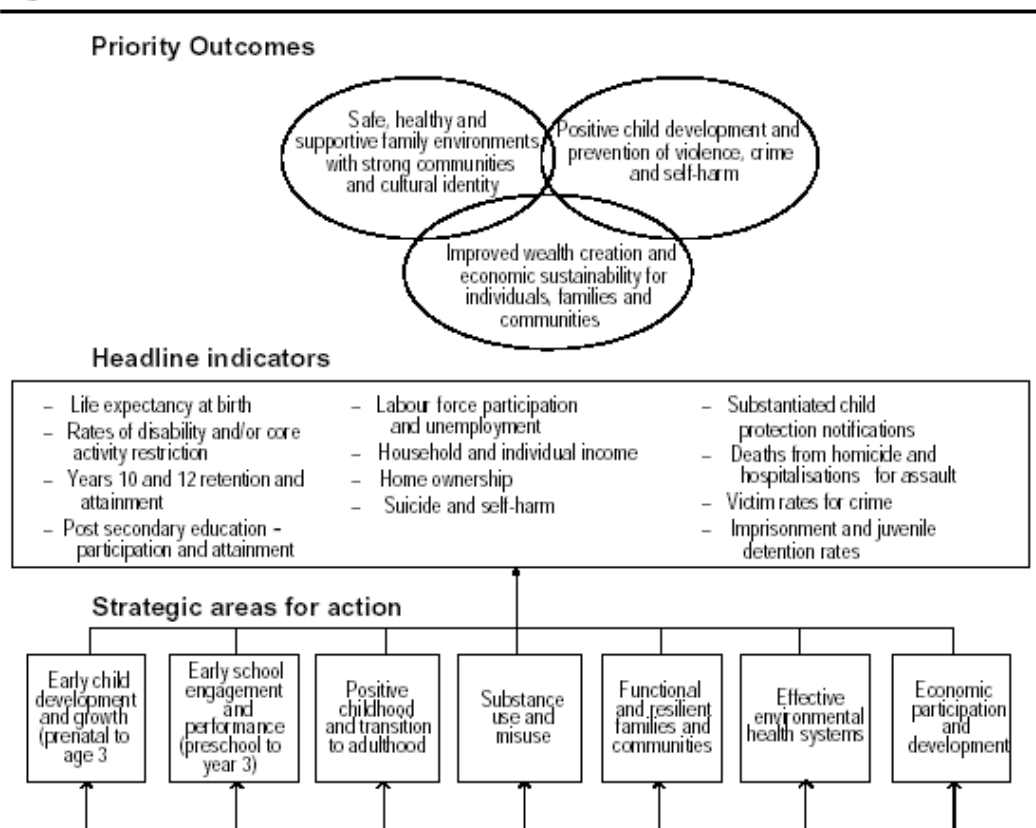
For each of the strategic areas for action, a few key indicators have been developed with their potential to be affected by government policies and programs in mind. However, the indicators are linked to actual outcomes for Indigenous people, not the operations of specific policy programs.

The strategic change indicators most directly influenced by the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Directorate's activities are:

- Access to clean water and functional sewerage;
- Overcrowding in housing; and
- Accredited training in leadership, finance or management.

The report's indicator framework is depicted in figure 1. It reflects a vision for how life should be for Indigenous people that is shared by governments and Indigenous people alike. The outcomes are linked and should not be viewed in isolation from each other.

Figure 1 The framework



3.0 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION & HOUSING PROFILE IN WA

3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

3.1.1 Population Distribution

Australia wide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.4% of the total population. 14.4% of these live in WA (figure 1). The 2001 ABS Census enumerated the WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at 58,496.² This represents 3.2% of the state total. The population increased by 22% from 1991-1996, and by a further 15% between 1996 and 2001. In contrast the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WA population growth during the same periods was 7.6% and 5.6% respectively.

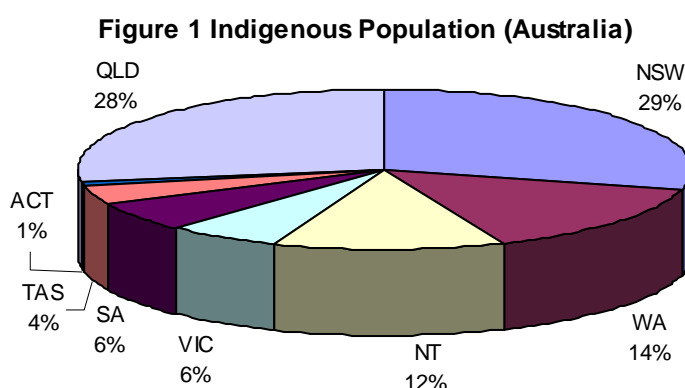
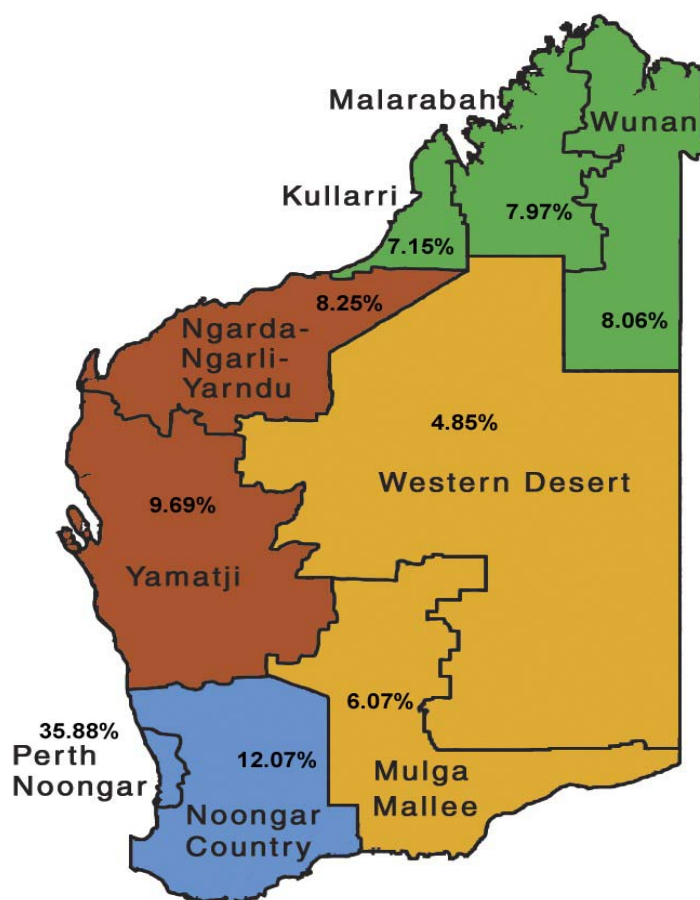


Table 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Distribution x WA ATSI Regions

ATSI Region	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Census 2001	Proportion of Regional Population which is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Region % of State Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population
Perth Noongar	20980	1.5%	35.9%
Country Noongar	7060	2.9%	12.1%
Mulga Mallee	3555	6.8%	6.1%
Western Desert	2840	32.1%	4.9%
Yamatji	5670	9.0%	9.7%
Ngarda Ngarli Yarndu	4830	12.8%	8.3%
Kullari	4180	23.5%	7.1%
Malarabah	4665	47.4%	8.0%
Wunan	4716	36.3%	8.1%
TOTAL	60497	3.2%	100%

² 58,496 was the Census enumerated population. The estimated total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for WA was 66,069. For an explanation of this estimate see ABS, Census 2001 (4705.0), Population Distribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2002, Appendix 2, pp77.

Figure 2: Distribution of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population



South West WA

Thirty six percent of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in Perth (over 21,000 people), with a further 12% (7,000) residing in the south west and the wheatbelt in the ATSIC Country Noongar Region. Although almost half of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population reside in these two localities they represent just 1.7% of the total population of these regions (Table 1). Most reside in mainstream urban housing options, with less than 400 people living in discrete Aboriginal communities. These two regions experienced a net growth of 15.8% in their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations from 1996 to 2001.

Important housing issues which impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in these two southern ATSIC regions include:

- Discrimination in and access to the private rental market;
- Public housing wait lists, including priority housing;
- Poor quality housing, particularly some of the public housing stock in the Wheatbelt and south west towns;
- Population pressures and housing demand in some rural towns;
- Affordability;
- Moderate home loan take-up rates;
- Primary and secondary homelessness, related to visitors, transient population flows, rental evictions, property standards, family disputes, domestic violence, overcrowding and other issues.

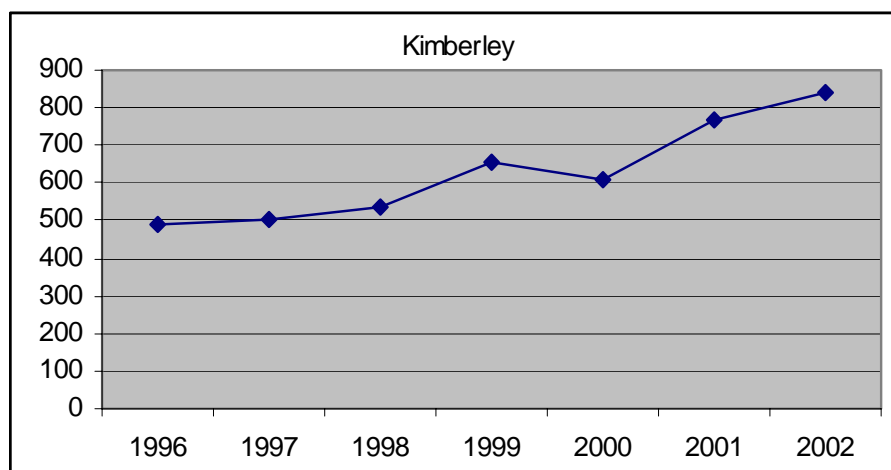
The Kimberleys

More than 23% of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reside in the Kimberleys, in the ATSI Regions of Kullari (Broome), Malarabah (Derby) and Wunan (Kununurra). In contrast to the southern regions the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population represents over one third of the total Kimberley population. The other key difference is that almost three quarters of Kimberley Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reside in discrete Aboriginal communities.

The net increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of 18.2% is the highest in the State. Most of this growth is recorded in the main regional centres and towns, with part it fuelled by migration from discrete communities. This is putting significant pressures on housing services in these localities.

The key housing issue facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the urban settings in the Kimberleys is affordability, especially in Broome and Kununurra, which have excessive rental costs and house prices, and land and housing shortages. Demands on public housing are high. Even though public rental stock represents almost 20% of the total Kimberley housing stock (compared to less than 5% state-wide), the wait list has almost doubled in size since 1996 to almost 900 applicants (Figure 3). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up an estimated 70% of applicants.

Figure 3: Public Housing Waiting List – No. of Applicants Kimberley Region



It is likely that demand will continue to grow from young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families. Given the absence of affordable private rental options in the major centres young families may be forced to return to communities where long term employment prospects are limited if adequate public housing cannot be provided or alternative forms of housing assistance is unavailable.

The Rest Of The State

Whilst 71% of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is found in the lower south and the upper north of the state, the remainder (estimated at around 17,000 people) is dispersed widely across the Mid-west / Gascoynes, the Pilbara, the Goldfields and the Central desert areas.

Of these around 6,000 reside in 73 discrete communities, with more than half of these located in the remote western desert. The other 11,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in major regional centres and rural townships including Hedland, Newman and Onslow in the Pilbara; Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie,

Esperance and Laverton in the Goldfields, and Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekathara in the Mid-west / Gascoynes.

As with the Kimberleys there is evidence to suggest increasing pressures on regional centres and towns. Table 2 provides a sample of townships which have experienced considerable growth in their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in the last few years. Some of that growth is associated with people moving from the communities. Some are looking for work opportunities, others are transient who frequently have high housing and health needs. Of interest, the public housing stock levels and wait lists in most of these towns is very small, except for Carnarvon. The Wait List however might not be a good indicator of demand because the low public housing stock levels generally deters people from making an application. Other strategies may be required to determine real levels of demand.

3.1.2 Urban Population Pressures

Whilst the ABS 2001 Census highlights the continuing strong growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population the available evidence suggests that much of that growth has been in urban centres and rural towns. A comparison of preliminary census data from 1996 to 2001 shows that 40% of the increase has been in the Perth metropolitan region. Other hot spots are key regional centres and rural towns, including Broome (40% increase between 1996 and 2001), Kununurra (32%), Wyndham (15%), Halls Creek (136%), Karratha (43%), Tom Price (75%), Onslow (160%), Leonora (32%), Coolgardie (17%), Mount Magnet (86%), Cue (49%), Geraldton (15%), Dalwallinu (28%), Kelleberrin (22%) and Albany (13%).

Table 2: Sample of Townships With Large Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Township	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Total	% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Wiluna	396	524	920	43.0%
Menzies	185	168	353	52.4%
Meekatharra	580	865	1445	40.1%
Laverton	490	756	1246	39.3%
Cue	116	278	394	29.4%
Mount Magnet	231	629	860	26.9%
Carnarvon	1379	5301	6680	20.6%
Leonora	326	1660	1986	16.4%
Murchison	70	94	164	42.7%
Port Hedland	2298	10379	12677	18.1%
Roebourne	1891	13247	15138	12.5%

Source: ABS Census 2001

In contrast Table 3 (ABS CHINS data) highlights that there has been a net population decline in discrete Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, despite growth in some regions. Although the CHINS data should be treated with some caution, data from the 2001 Census supports the CHINS data to some extent, with declines recorded from 1996 to 2001 in 8 of the 16 largest Kimberley rural districts populated mainly by Aboriginal communities. At the same time there

has been significant growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in all Kimberley urban regional centres and towns.

Table 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population – Discrete Aboriginal Communities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population – Discrete Communities (CHINS 1999–2001)				
ATSIC Region	1999	2001	Net change	% change
Perth Noongar	280	325	45	16.1%
Country Noongar	40	50	10	25.0%
Wongatha	634	645	11	1.7%
Western Desert	2909	3147	238	8.2%
Yamatji	756	876	120	15.9%
Ngarda Ngarli Yarndu	1405	1472	67	4.8%
Kullari	2999	2361	-638	-21.3%
Malarabah	4142	3737	-405	-9.8%
Wunan	3996	3945	-51	-1.3%
TOTAL	17161	16558	-603	-3.5%

Although comprehensive reliable data is unavailable, the overall picture is one of relatively low growth or stagnation in communities and significant population increases in urban areas and towns. How much of the recent urban growth reflects people moving into townships and regional centres from Aboriginal communities however is unknown. A better picture should emerge over the next 3 to 5 years as the State Government implements annual Environmental Health Needs Surveys (EHNS) covering all discrete communities and reserves. If the stagnation / decline trend continues housing policies and programs may need to re-focus.

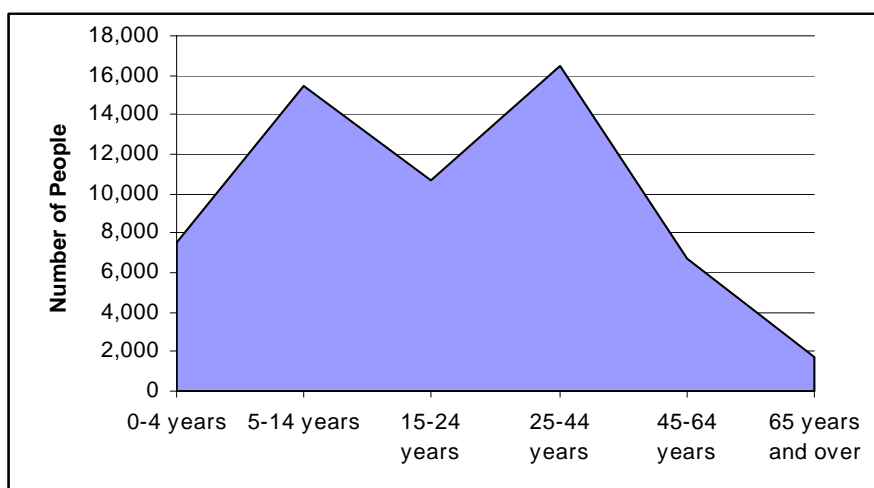
3.1.3 Age Distribution

The most compelling aspect of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in WA is its age distribution, with a median age of just 20 years. Almost 40% of the population is under the age of 15 (Table 4, Figure 4). This has major policy implications over the next 5 to 20 years.

Table 4: Age Distribution of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population

Age	Males	Females	Persons	%
0– 4 yrs	3,815	3,673	7,488	12.8
5–14 yrs	8,026	7,420	15,446	26.4
15-24 yrs	5,265	5,410	10,675	18.2
25-44 yrs	7,918	8,534	16,452	28.1
45-64 yrs	3,193	3,531	6,724	11.5
65 yrs & over	753	958	1,711	2.9
TOTAL	28,970	29,526	58,496	100.0

Figure 4: Age Distribution of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population



Housing policies will need to be closely blended with education and employment policies to provide young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with opportunities for themselves and their families. The high rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population growth will continue into the foreseeable future, compounding social problems if policy settings prove to be ineffective in reducing unemployment rates and welfare dependency. This Strategic Plan plays close attention to the issues of training, apprenticeships, skills development, employment and enterprise development strategies. Appropriate housing options for young families and singles, including transitional housing, are all areas that the AHIC has identified as needing further investigation.

The needs of elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also require further study. In particular it is important to understand the extent of premature ageing within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population given life expectancy rates. The age distribution graph (figure 4) shows a peak of adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that will flow through into “middle age” (45 years plus) over the next few years, potentially increasing the demand for seniors services.

3.1.4 Family Composition

One third (33%) of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are sole parent families compared to 12.9% for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (ABS Census, 2001). 87% of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sole parent families had dependent children under the age of 15 years, compared to 59% for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sole parent families.

Despite the relative youth of the WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population only 14.6% live in lone person households. In contrast 25.5% of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population live in lone person households.

Couples without children represent 17.4% of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family types. The proportion of couples without children in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families is more than double this at 36.7%.

Almost 8% of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families live in multi family households (eg. extended families), compared to just 0.9% for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

The above indicators show significantly different family structures between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Western Australia. This has implications for dwelling size and design which is reflected in the public housing and discrete communities building programs, with a bias towards larger homes.

3.1.5 Education And Employment

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is generally characterised by relatively low levels of educational achievement and employment when compared to the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

In relation to education, according to the 2001 ABS Census:

- only a quarter of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or older have completed high school to year 11 or 12 standard. More than double that proportion (51%) have completed year 11 or 12 in the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
- 2.9% of the states Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population have never attended school, compared to 0.5% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- 11.2% of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or older have attained post year 12 tertiary qualifications of some kind, compared to 37% of non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Some signs are encouraging, with 7.8% of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 or older attending TAFE, University or another further education or tertiary institution. This is similar to the proportion in the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (8.8%). However, of these over 60% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are in the TAFE or further education system, with 40% undertaking university or tertiary education. Those proportions are reversed for the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (38% in the TAFE / FE system, 62% at university etc).³

The unemployment rate for WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 18.9% compared to 7.3% for the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. More than a quarter (25.4%) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour force is employed through the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) on minimum wages. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people characterised as not in the labour force is also very high, reflecting almost half of the potential total labour force (47.8%), compared to 34.6% in the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

³ The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the 15 to 44 years age cohorts (46.3%), which will account for the majority of people undertaking TAFE, further education, university and other tertiary studies, is similar to the proportion of 15 to 44 year olds in the non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (44.4%).

3.1.6 Income

Less than 12% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 15 in Western Australia earn \$600 or more per week. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and households are typically on low incomes. Figure 5 shows the differences in income distribution between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. 48% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households have a weekly income of less than \$600, compared to 38% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. Family income statistics tell a similar tale, with 51% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families earning less than \$600 per week compared to 32% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Figure 5: WA Weekly Household Income

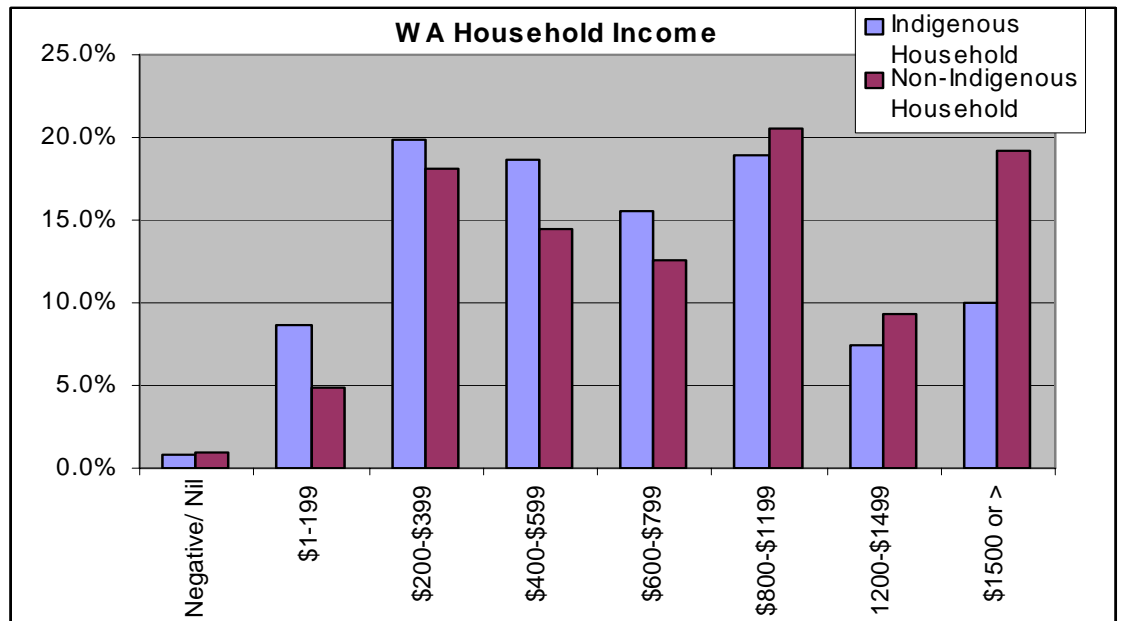


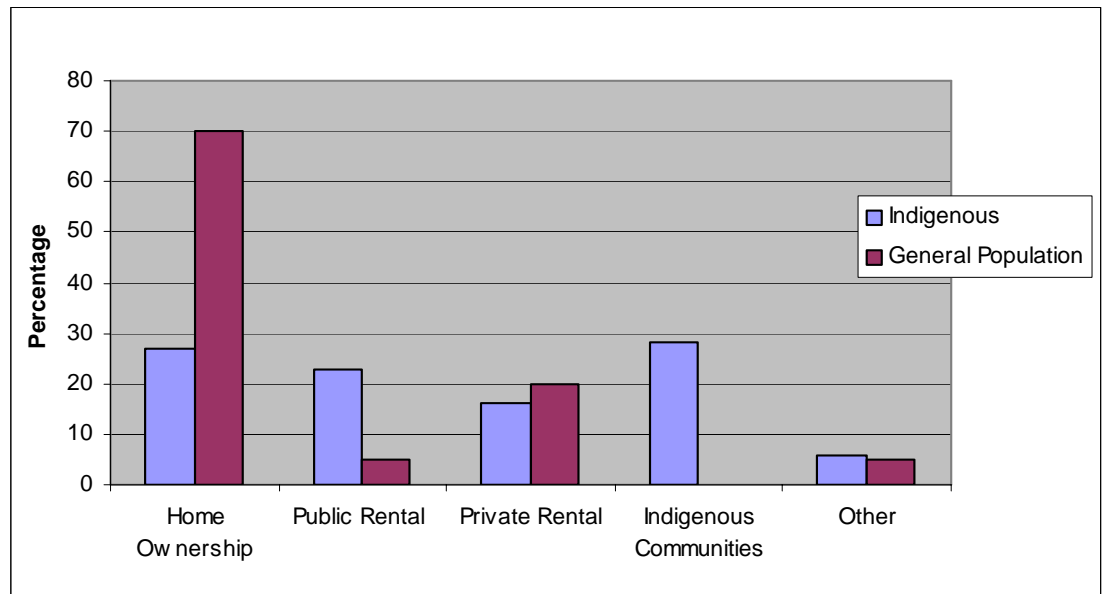
Table 5: Median Income Levels (WA)

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Median weekly individual income	\$200 - \$299	\$300 - \$399
Median weekly family income	\$500 - \$599	\$800 - \$999
Median weekly household income	\$800 - \$999	\$1,000 - \$1,199

The education, employment and income statistics reflect high levels of disadvantage, with entrenched unemployment, low average wage levels and a significant dependency on the CDEP (the base pay rate of which is below the poverty line). These factors all underline the level of dependency on government housing programs and the difficulties that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face in accessing alternative housing tenures.

3.2 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSEHOLD TENURE

Figure 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Tenure in WA



Over half of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households live in government subsidised housing, either in public rental housing (22%), Aboriginal communities or town reserves housing (28%) or urban community managed housing (4%). Home ownership rates are low at around 27%. An estimated 16% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households live in private rental housing.

3.2.1 Home Ownership

The *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators 2003* report states that “home ownership is an important economic indicator of wealth and saving, and is likely to be positively related to employment and income indicators. Home ownership also provides a secure asset base that can contribute to financial stability”.

It further states that “A factor influencing the different rates of home ownership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is the significant number of Indigenous people living on communally owned or controlled land, particularly in remote and very remote areas”.

Only 7.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australian households own their own home - a further 19.1% have a mortgage. The overall rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home ownership (27%) is significantly lower than the rate for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households (71%). The ABS 2001 Census indicates that the median monthly home loan repayments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households is in the range of \$600 to \$799. This is lower than median repayment rates for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians which is in the range of \$800 to \$999 per month, a reflection of the higher median income levels of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Table 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Households – Home Ownership Rates

State	2001	1996
NSW	36%	34%
Vic	42%	44%
Qld	28%	27%
SA	29%	28%
WA	27%	25%
Tas	57%	55%
NT	14%	14%
ACT	41%	36%
Australia	32%	31%

Source: ATSIIC analysis of ABS Census Data

Western Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home ownership rate is the lowest in the country, apart from the Northern Territory, and is well below the overall Australian average of 32% (Table 6). However, there has been some moderate improvement since the 1996 census.

There is considerable regional variation within WA, with the rate reaching 37.7% in the Perth Noongar ATSIIC Region and 32% in the Noongar Country region, compared to just 2.9% in the Western Desert Region (Table 7). The high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote communities and Town Reserves, where land tenure arrangements prohibit individual home ownership, obviously mitigates against WA's overall poor showing. Nonetheless, the low rates present a major challenge for the AHIC to pursue innovative strategies to increase home ownership levels.

Table 7: WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Household Home Ownership Rates x ATSIIC Region

ATSIIC Region	Fully Owned	Being Purchased	Ownership Rate
Perth Noongar	462	1751	37.7%
Kullarri	75	68	15.8%
Wunan	22	21	5.0%
Western Desert	3	13	2.9%
Noongar Country	238	383	32.0%
NNY	55	125	15.3%
Malarabah	30	38	7.6%
Mulga Mallee	67	161	26.6%
Yamatji	121	213	23.1%
WA	1073	2773	26.6%

3.2.2 Aboriginal Communities and Town Reserves

Twenty eight percent (28%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australian households live in rental housing in Aboriginal communities or town reserves. The land tenure arrangements in the majority of communities rules out home ownership as an option. Land tenure issues in communities are of increasing interest and processes are in place to progress the transfer of Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) land holdings to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This will open up options and challenges.

There are an estimated 280⁴ discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Australia currently (including town reserves), containing 3,000 permanent dwellings and a further 500 permanently occupied temporary dwellings (ABS, CHINS 2001). These communities accommodate approximately 16,600 people at any given time. Of these:

- 40% live in just 23 communities with usual permanent populations 200 people or more;
- a further 40% reside in 58 communities with a usual permanent populations of between 50 and 199;
- the remaining 20% (~ 3,400) live in the 200 or so smaller settlements, homeland communities or outstations.

Seventy one percent (71%) of the communities (202) are located in the Kimberleys, housing 61% of the total communities population. The high proportion of total communities reflects the prevalence of the Homelands movement in the Kimberley regions.

Nineteen percent (19%) of community residents live in 30 communities in the Western Desert, in some of the most remote areas of Western Australia. Less than 2.3% of the communities population live in the southern part of the State in the Perth Noongar and Country Noongar regions.

Significantly, around 50 of the discrete communities are Town Reserves, housing an estimated 30% of the communities population, with between 4,500 and 5,000 permanent residents.

Table 8: Discrete Communities and Town Reserves – Summary Information

ATSIC Region	Population	Dwellings	PDM	No. of Communities	Ave Dwellings
Perth Noongar	325	56	5.8	3 (1.0%)	18.7
Country Noongar	50	9	5.6	2 (0.7%)	4.5
Mulga Mallee	645	169	3.8	9 (3.2%)	18.8
Western Desert	3147	693	4.5	30 (10.6%)	23.1
Yamatji	876	206	4.3	13 (4.6%)	15.8
NNY	1472	252	5.8	24 (8.5%)	10.5
Kullari	2361	528	4.5	62 (21.9%)	8.5
Malarabah	3737	803	4.7	67 (23.7%)	12.0
Wunan	3945	770	5.1	73 (25.8%)	10.5
	16558	3486	4.7	283	12.3

Source: ABS CHINS, 2001

Population = "usual permanent population" as reported by communities.

Dwellings = Total Permanent Dwellings + Occupied Temporary Dwellings

PDM = crude population density measure ie. Population divided by Dwellings

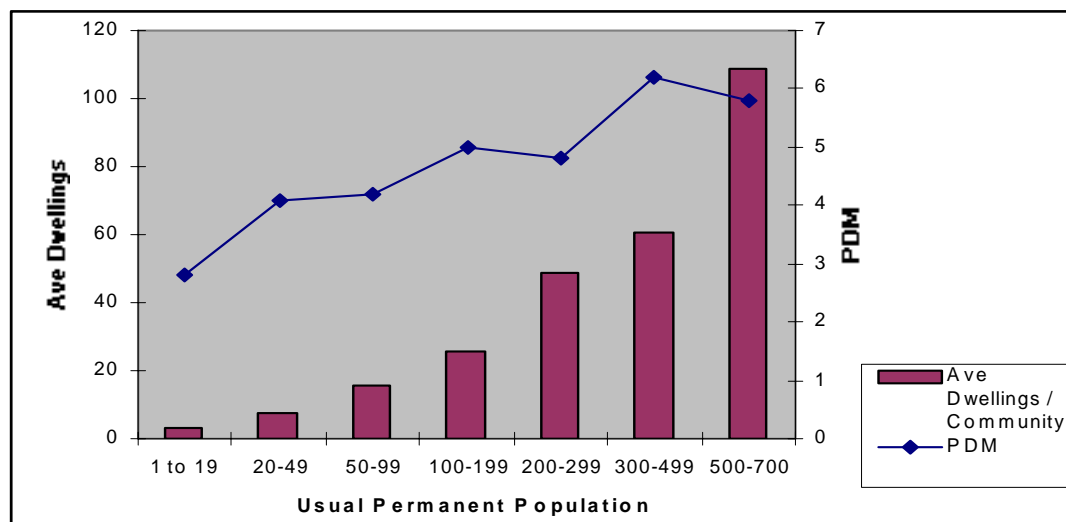
Ave Dwellings = average dwellings per community.

The environmental health conditions (housing, power, water, sewerage, waste disposal, dust control) in discrete communities range from third world living to adequate. There is considerable research linking sub-standard living conditions to poor primary health, family violence, low educational achievement and other health and social problems. It is vital therefore to ensure a continuing and substantial investment in housing and infrastructure.

⁴ Note – according to the CHINS data 19 of the 283 recorded communities had a "zero" usual permanent population, of which only three contained any permanent dwellings. A further 77 communities had populations of less than 10 people.

In addition, the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators 2003* report indicates that, nationally, Indigenous people in very remote areas were 18.8 times more likely to live in overcrowded households than non-Indigenous people. This provides further indication of the scope of the problems facing remote communities.

Figure 7: Population Density x Size of Community



There are limitations to the resources available to governments to provide services to discrete communities in WA. This is exacerbated by issues such as remoteness, the tiny size of most communities, a history of under resourcing, poor management and the lack of regularisation / normalisation of services. Communities with more established services (eg. education, health, community services), ironically, have some of the highest housing needs. For example, levels of overcrowding in WA communities, as indicated by population density, are highest in the larger communities (see Figure 7). Levels of unmet housing needs in terms of major repairs and stock replacement are also significant in a number of medium sized communities.⁵

This Plan therefore adopts a strategic approach to servicing the needs of discrete communities, with the priority being to:

- address high needs in more substantial communities;
- implement regional and external models of housing management and infrastructure service delivery where this is more efficient and cost effective;
- continue to promote and extend “normalisation” initiatives and strategies in relation to provision of essential services (power, water, waste water), municipal services (roads, rubbish collection) and housing management (particularly in town reserve communities);
- extend the involvement of local government in direct service provision.

⁵ An analysis of ABS CHINS 2001 data indicates that five communities with a population of 200 or more account for around half of the communities total stock that is identified in need of replacement. A further 11 medium sized agencies (populations between 50 and 199) account for around one third of identified stock replacement needs. Six larger communities account for almost 30% of stock in need of major repairs. 25 medium sized communities (population between 50 and 199) account of a further 50% of major repair needs.

Sustainability of Communities

All discrete communities are dependent on government programs in order to maintain their existence. Although some communities generate their own revenues through tourism ventures and other enterprises, no communities are financially or socially self sustaining. This legacy of dependency obscures and complicates goals of self determination. Communities lack the size to sustain continuous local employment or business opportunities for young people. Unemployment and under-employment is endemic and has become the cultural norm in the majority of communities. With the population in communities stabilising and in some instances declining, it is difficult to envisage WA's discrete communities ever growing to a point where they become viable in their own right. Aggressive industry and enterprise development strategies may be able to improve the situation of a handful of larger or mid-sized communities located on prime tourist routes. However, the future prospects for the vast majority of communities do not look bright from a sustainability perspective. This suggests a difficult future ahead, with struggling communities needing to be continuously assisted through Government programs.

Despite the above scenario, there are good prospects for improving the operational viability of housing management in WA communities through the adoption of innovative strategies. Many of the mid-sized and larger communities in WA are town reserves⁶, providing access to mainstream municipal and utility services, as well as access to employment and educational opportunities. A strategic framework to determine the future of town reserves will be developed, including the most effective management arrangements. Options to be explored will include mainstream DHW management, external community management, private management and self-management. Similarly, alternative external and regional management models for discrete Aboriginal communities is a major focus of the Plan.

It is important to improve the scale and efficiency of housing management arrangements. Major impediments that will need to be addressed include:

- Backlog of unmet maintenance, repairs and upgrades;
- Lack of formal maintenance subsidies / programs;
- High costs of licensed trades;
- Limited rental revenue collections / low rental charges;
- Limited reach of current Management Support programs;
- Limited access by tenants to Commonwealth Rental Assistance.

3.2.3 Public Rental Housing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households occupy an estimated 18% of WA's public housing dwellings, (approximately 6,400 tenancies). This means more than 20% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in Western Australia (perhaps as many as 25%), live in public housing.⁷ Of these around 40% live in housing stock designated specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants (Fund 6). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants have the option of being considered for Fund 6 as well as mainstream public housing

⁶ These house an estimated 30% (4,500 to 5,000 permanent residents) of the total communities population.

⁷ The DHW is unable to determine the exact number of Aboriginal families occupying its properties because an applicant's identified Aboriginality is optional only on the Rental Application form and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants choose not to identify. The figure could be as high as 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.

(Fund 1). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants choose not to identify their cultural background and therefore are usually only considered for Fund 1 allocations. Both Fund 1 and Fund 6 housing are standard public housing stock, managed by DHW Regional Services. All tenancies across both fund categories are subject to the same Rental Services policies and management arrangements.

As at 31st December 2002 there were 13,236 household applications for DHW rental housing on the wait list, of which 13.3% were identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applications (1,768 applications). Of these 1,380 (78%) were listed for Fund 6 housing and 58 were listed for priority housing assistance.⁸ The actual level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander demand is understated due to people's decisions not to identify their cultural background on their application form. The real listed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander demand could be anything between 2,000 and 3,000 households.

The issue of non-identification and undercounting (of applicants and people housed) is problematic, but it is important to respect the right to privacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. AHIC may need to consider other strategies (eg. sample or quota surveys) to test the veracity of current estimates.

Regardless of the actual current demand, the AHIC anticipates that it will continue to grow in the foreseeable future as the wave of young people identified in figure 4 become eligible as adults for public housing assistance. This will inevitably increase pressures for the introduction of other forms of housing assistance in order to improve access to private rental housing, home ownership and urban community housing options. It also emphasises the importance of ATSIC Regional Councils taking a much greater interest in the planning of annual public housing programs and other mainstream housing options.

The AHIC recognises the invaluable contribution that public rental housing makes to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia. It provides access to affordable, secure, well located and well managed housing. Some common problems do persist however. Under this Strategic Plan the AHIC will examine a number of issues faced by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to public rental housing, including:

- difficulties in accessing the DHW "Priority Wait List."
- lack of stock in some areas, particularly in rural localities;
- population pressures and trends in some rural towns and regional centres;
- poor quality of some of the older housing stock, particularly Fund 6 stock⁹;
- overcrowding and secondary homelessness;
- debt management;
- tenant liabilities;
- property conditions and standards;
- anti-social behaviors and;
- family / neighborhood disputes.

⁸ The total number of priority household applicants at 31st December 2003 was 273 (21.2% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants).

⁹ 48% of the F6 stock in the DHW SE Metro Region is more than 24 years old (older stock). The Pilbara (43%), Central region (39%) and North Metropolitan region (38%) also have high proportions of older stock. The DHW Regions with the highest proportions of newer F6 stock (less than 15 years) are SE Metro (43%), South Metro (40%), Southern region (37%) and the South West region (33%).

Table 9: Public Rental Housing Stock x DHW Region

DHW REGION	FUND 1	FUND 6	TOTAL	% of F6 stock	% of Region Total
CENTRAL	1495	341	1836	12.7%	18.6%
KIMBERLEY	1121	424	1545	15.8%	27.4%
METRO SOUTH	6534	151	6685	5.6%	2.3%
METRO NORTH	10652	337	10989	12.5%	3.1%
METRO SOUTH EAST	6732	273	7005	10.2%	3.9%
MID-WEST/ GASCOYNE	1415	411	1826	15.3%	22.5%
PILBARA	1266	250	1516	9.3%	16.5%
SOUTHERN	1178	192	1370	7.1%	14.0%
SOUTH WEST	2172	308	2480	11.5%	12.4%
	32566	2693	35252	100.0%	

3.2.4 Community & Private Rental Housing

An estimated 16% of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households reside in private rental housing, with a further 4% living in community rental housing (urban based).

The DHW's Bond Assistance program is the main mechanism to assist people on low incomes to access private rental housing. The extent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access is unknown as cultural identity is not included on the application form. The scheme assists more than 18,000 households annually with up to four weeks initial rent and letting fees. These loans amount to around \$6 million annually. Repayments are re-circulated into further loans, making the scheme largely self funding.

The two major problems typically experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in accessing private rental housing are affordability and discrimination. Real estate perceptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families can be extremely negative, making it difficult for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households to obtain private rental housing.

The Strategic Plan commits to developing new initiatives directly with real estate agencies to facilitate better access to private rental housing and to overcome negative stereotyping. Once successful initiatives are piloted the intention is to expand these into mainstream program arrangements.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenancies renting properties funded through the DHW's "community housing" programs, estimated at less than 10%, is well below the proportion assisted through the public rental housing. This has been acknowledged and the Community Housing Unit is developing strategies to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access. As part of its Strategic Plan the AHIC will work closely with the Community Housing Unit to monitor and trial new strategies. This will include examining joint funding arrangements, resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Regional Housing Associations and examining options for community leasing of private rental stock to be targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

These strategies are discussed further in the following sections which outline the vision, principles and core objectives of the Strategic Plan, and provide details of the specific strategies to be implemented to pursue these objectives.

PART TWO

- VISION
- PRINCIPLES
- CORE OBJECTIVES
- STRATEGIES

4. VISION, PRINCIPLES AND CORE OBJECTIVES

4.1 VISION

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Western Australians will have equitable access to quality housing and services.

Underpinning this vision is that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will have access to affordable and appropriate housing and infrastructure which is safe, well designed and contributes to their health and well being;
- housing and infrastructure services will be well managed and maintained;
- there will be a vigorous and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing and business enterprise sector operating in partnership with all levels of Government and other stakeholders involved in the delivery and management of housing and infrastructure services;
- there will be sufficient growth in new housing to address the backlog of housing need and the emerging needs of a rapidly increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population;
- economic, employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be an integral part of housing and infrastructure programs and initiatives;
- the planning and delivery of housing and infrastructure services will contribute to positive social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

4.2 PRINCIPLES

The principles for achieving the Vision are:

- respect for Aboriginal people as the first peoples and owners of the lands of Western Australia;
- maximise opportunities and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decision making processes at all levels of planning, development and delivery of housing and infrastructure services;
- recognition of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to determine alternative culturally appropriate housing and services which may differ significantly from standard mainstream options;
- all stakeholders to work cooperatively and with mutual respect to achieve real differences in housing, environmental health and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- transparency in all decision making and accountability and responsiveness between all stakeholders;
- a commitment to needs-based program planning and resource allocation, within an over-arching strategic framework;

- a commitment to leading practice in the delivery and ongoing management of housing and infrastructure;
- adequate resources to support the vision.

4.3 CORE OBJECTIVES

The Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council has adapted the major objectives contained in *Building A Better Future: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing to 2010* in structuring this State Strategic Plan.

The Plans core objectives are:

- 1. Investigate the institutional reforms necessary to optimise the delivery of housing and infrastructure services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia.**
- 2. Provide sustainable housing and infrastructure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia.**
- 3. Develop the capacity and skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and people in housing and infrastructure.**
- 4. Improve and increase access to safe and healthy housing and living environments across all housing tenures.**
- 5. Strengthen the planning and coordination of housing and infrastructure services.**

The key strategies contained in this Plan:

- have drawn on previously agreed “National Implementation Strategies” contained in the BBF;
- have been developed in consultation with ATSIC;
- reflect agreed emphases contained in the Indigenous Housing Agreement;
- build on the previous strategic framework developed for housing and infrastructure in Western Australia; and
- reflect the housing priorities identified in the COAG commissioned Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators Report.

5. INVESTIGATE THE INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS NECESSARY TO OPTIMISE THE DELIVERY OF HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES.

5.1 INVESTIGATE ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR THE MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION & PLANNING OF HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES.

All funds expended on housing and infrastructure under the Indigenous Housing Agreement originate from the Commonwealth and State Governments. No revenue is raised from any alternative sources. The funding pool is inadequate to meet the extensive backlog of needs in communities, let alone responding to the plethora of housing issues in urban communities.

The Agreement assumes efficiency gains through the pooled funding arrangements and is a significant change in the management, administration and planning of housing and infrastructure services. The Agreement model however was developed around existing institutional frameworks. The AHIC believes that these current arrangements limit the scope for innovation, especially in relation to leveraging of additional financial resources into the funding pool. The existing arrangements essentially reflect a grant dependent welfare paradigm, with stakeholders having to make the best of the inadequate level of funds available.

The AHIC is committed to investigating alternative models which potentially might succeed the current arrangements. The AHIC believes that the following criteria should shape the examination of alternative models. They will need to:

- optimise housing and infrastructure outcomes;
- enable the leveraging of additional financial resources;
- be sufficiently autonomous and independent from existing institutional arrangements;
- be secured by legislation; and
- have sufficient control vested with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

The investigation will look at a range of models, including:

- an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statutory Housing Authority;
- an Aboriginal Housing Trust or Not For Profit Company;
- Regional Housing Authorities or companies, either as sub-entities of the options above, or as alternatives to the above; and
- models implemented in other countries populated by first nations peoples (eg. Canada).

The study, to be undertaken in 2004/5, will examine the implications and potential under the various models:

- of ownership and management responsibility of quality public housing stock for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- of managing the various Aboriginal Home Loan products and schemes available in Western Australia;
- to raise alternative finance, attract donations, attract ethical investment etc.

The study will also need to assess:

- taxation implications;
- potential risks;

- the relationship to the State Government, Commonwealth Government and ATSIC (eg. the corporate structure, board representation, shareholding mix etc);
- the implications with respect to the renegotiation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Agreement in 2006/07;
- the implications of any changes in ATSIC / ATSSIS as a result of the Commonwealth review of ATSIC;
- possible impediments or problems;
- other issues or potential benefits or opportunities.

AHIC has brought forward the timeframe for the research into these issues with initial investigations to be completed by December 2004.

Regional Management and Service Delivery Models. Complimentary to the above research a consultancy is being funded which will examine options and models regional program and project management of housing and infrastructure services. This is being funded jointly from the funding pool and additional monies provided by ATSSIS.

5.2 LOBBY FOR THE LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENT POLICY REFORMS NEEDED TO IMPROVE HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE OUTCOMES

The AHIC has identified a number of legislative and government policy reforms necessary to improve housing and infrastructure outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people in Western Australia. Specifically:

- The Crown is not expressly bound by all provisions of the *Health Act 1911*, which limits the powers of local authorities to enforce health provisions in communities occupying Aboriginal Lands Trust (Crown) land.
- The Crown is not expressly bound under existing Building Regulations which means that Aboriginal communities occupying ALT land lie outside normal building controls and approval processes.
- Under section 373 of the *Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1960*, portions of the Shires of Derby-West Kimberley and Halls Creek have been specifically excluded from the Building Regulations, thereby excluding large numbers of Aboriginal communities from the protection of building regulations regardless of the status of the land.
- Land held by the ALT is not rateable under the *Local Government Act 1995*. This together with the legislative impediments outlined above, as well as the untied and deficient funding received by local governments through the Local Government Grants Commission, has resulted in severe inequities in provision of local government services to Aboriginal communities and town reserves.
- Although the Crown is bound by the provisions of the *Town Planning and Development Act 1928*, there is no statutory basis for ensuring compliance with community layout plans unless specifically included in town planning schemes or planning policies by individual local governments.

- The State Government accepts limited responsibility for essential services to remote Indigenous communities, which are reliant on capital and operational funds from ATSIC (with the proposed exception of the pilot communities subject to the Remote Power Supply Project).
- Key infrastructure such as roads, aerodromes and communal facilities are deemed to be community responsibilities and attract little funding or support from government. Communities are therefore treated completely differently to urban environments. The State Government needs to end this discriminatory practice and accept responsibility.
- Aboriginal pension beneficiaries residing in Town Reserve communities do not receive standard concessions for power, gas and water because these services are not currently metered and charged separately. The Town Reserves Regularisation Program will ultimately resolve this problem, but in the meantime elderly or disabled Aboriginal tenants will continue to be disadvantaged.

The core strategy for bringing these critical issues onto the policy agenda of the State Government was AHIC support for the development of an inter-agency Cabinet submission on environmental health and housing conditions, identifying legislative and funding reforms needed to address urgent needs in Aboriginal communities and town reserves.

Despite significant work in drafting the submission during 2003, the matter was referred to a high-level 'Director Generals' committee for further refinement and linkage to other Indigenous social policy areas. AHIC has expressed concern that the process has now stalled, impacting on other attempts to influence state budget allocations. Given these problems, AHIC has decided to take on a more forthright advocacy and lobbying role during 2004-2005 to draw attention to the critical areas of reform identified in the draft Cabinet submission. This approach recognizes that AHIC will increasingly need to step into the 'leadership and lobbying' vacuum created by the impending demise of ATSIC.

In relation to the provision of essential services, AHIC is concerned at the slow progress of normalisation initiatives and the continuing necessity for a specialist 'program' approach to service provision (eg. the Remote Area Essential Services Program). AHIC has recognised the need to extend its core roles to include developing and promoting the strategic policy and program framework around the provision of essential services to remote communities and town reserves. The Council will seek a commitment from both the State and Commonwealth Governments to amalgamate the Indigenous Housing and the Essential Services Bilaterals, and to identify strategic policy development across both related areas as a core function of the AHIC.

5.3 SEEK CHANGES TO CURRENT FUNDING LEVELS AND ARRANGEMENTS.

As discussed above (5.1) the level of funds available to address housing and infrastructure needs is grossly inadequate. Some gains (better value for money) will be made through the efficiency improvements associated with centralised coordination and program management, however the reality is that the cost to provide housing in remote communities continues to increase and will likely outstrip any efficiency gains. Real increases in resources are necessary if better outcomes are to be achieved.

Some preliminary work on outstanding needs in communities and town reserves has been undertaken. This assessment covered housing construction and upgrades; major repairs and maintenance; housing management, training and governance initiatives; essential services infrastructure (capital requirements and ongoing servicing and maintenance); and community facilities and infrastructure. It also made provision for developmental funding to establish a viable urban Indigenous community housing sector. The work covered the five years from 2004/05 to 2008/09. The ABS CHINS 2001 community level data was used as the basis of assessing the need.

Table 10 provides summary details. An additional \$31.6 million per year is required to expand existing programs to meet current needs, clear the backlog of unmet needs and extend services to cover service inadequacies or gaps. The estimates are considered to be conservative. Further analysis will be undertaken once the data from the Environmental Health Needs Survey 2003 has been collated.

Table 10: Housing & Infrastructure Costs – Aboriginal Communities & Town Reserves.

Program Area	Need \$M	%
Housing Management, Community Governance & Training / Capacity Building	45.84	8.2
Housing Construction & Upgrades	228.60	40.9
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	26.10	4.7
Essential Services Maintenance	47.45	8.5
Essential Services Capital	61.03	10.9
Town Reserves Regularisation Program	22.27	4.0
Other community infrastructure, normalisation & environmental health initiatives	67.25	12.0
Urban Indigenous community housing development	60.00	10.7
TOTAL	558.54	
TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDS	380.52	
SHORTFALL	158.02	31.6m / year

The strategies in this Plan centre around increasing the profile and understanding of the problems at government level, encouraging increased resourcing from all levels of government and engaging with both the Commonwealth and State Government about essential reforms to current funding arrangements, including arrangements for mainstream and normalised serviced provision.

Seek Additional Resources from the State Government.

Environmental health and housing in communities has been identified as one of three strategic priority areas under the Gordon Inquiry.¹⁰ As mentioned above the AHIC supported the development of an inter-agency Cabinet submission during 2003-2004 identifying legislative and funding reforms needed to address urgent needs in Aboriginal communities and town reserves. AHIC will continue to support this process during the coming year. Business Cases to State Treasury were submitted in November 2003 seeking increased State Government commitments to the RAESP and the Town Reserves Regularisation Program, in recognition that current state allocations are inadequate to fully fund these programs. These submissions were unsuccessful. AHIC will need to determine whether to revisit this process during 2004 and / or whether to engage more energetically at a political level in order to raise awareness of the current inadequacies and needs.

Review of the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program. During late 2003 the AHID participated in the Commonwealth FaCS review of the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP). The review focused on the distribution of the funds between States and Territories. A decision on changes to the allocations formula was to be made prior to the commencement of the 2004/05 financial year. That decision has been put on hold given the transfer of ATSSIS housing and infrastructure programs to FaCS. As a one-off for 2004/05, the Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services has recognized the high level of unmet need in Western Australia and allocated an additional \$3 million in ARHP funding.

5.4 DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP MODELS

Ownership of Land and Assets conveys rights and responsibilities at both community and individual level. Ownership does not solely refer to land tenure (title, crown land management orders). It can also be conferred through rights of access, succession rights, the right to determine land use etc.

The AHIC believes that fundamentally assets will be better managed and maintained where individuals and communities have a strong sense of ownership. What "tenancy" models and "community models" optimise this sense of ownership? The AHIC will work with key stakeholders to explore alternative models. As part of this the AHID is has joined an inter agency government working party being chaired by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure examining more flexible land tenure options for Aboriginal communities and the legislative requirements to underpin any proposed options. The working party was established by the Cabinet Standing Committee on Native Title and submitted an initial report in February 2004. Further consultations have occurred and work is continuing.

The AHID commenced discussions with the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) in 2003/04 to discuss land and the potential for joint projects with the Department of Housing and Works. It is hoped that formal agreements and strategies can be entered into during 2004/05 which will enhance the aims of both the AHIC and the ILC.

¹⁰ Gordon, Sue. *Inquiry Into Response By Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, July 2002

The AHIC will also liaise closely with the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) and the Department Of Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) to seek a common approach to the issuing of new land leases.

Recently, the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) and the ALT developed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding ownership of assets on ALT land. The purpose of the MOU was two-fold – to ensure that assets are secured for the benefit of communities, and to confer rights to DHW to relocate or dispose of assets where communities have been abandoned so that other communities may benefit.

5.5 INCREASE THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.

The role and potential of Local Government in the delivery of municipal services to Aboriginal communities remains a highly contentious issue. The reluctance of LGA's to extend services to communities has long been recognised as a serious detriment to the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia. Several reasons for this reluctance have been identified - the narrow economic base of LGA's, inadequate resources to properly service communities, inadequate funding allocations from the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the reluctance of communities to contribute to rates revenues, remoteness factors, legislative factors and a history of limited past involvement.

When additional or supplementary funding is available LGA's have shown a willingness to become involved in direct service provision. The best example of this is the provision of funding through the Department of Health's Aboriginal Environmental Health Program for the employment of Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) and Aboriginal Field Support Officers (FSO's). The program has produced a substantial change of attitude amongst participating LGA's and improved relationships and cooperation between LGA's and communities. The Town Reserves Regularisation Program has also been important in brokering good will and facilitating the uptake of municipal responsibilities by LGA's.

The lead agency in progressing strategies in this area is the Department of Local Government and Regional Development (DLGRD). A new position to coordinate strategies was created at the beginning of 2003 and was jointly funded by DLGRD, the AHIC and ATSIC. The AHIC contribution for 2003/04 was \$50,000. The position has now been integrated into the DLGRD structure and is being fully funded through this mainstream department from July 2004.

Endorsement of Department of Local Government & Regional Development (DLGRD) Strategic Directions Framework. The AHIC supports the Strategic Directions developed by DLGRD to bring Local Government into the centre of the Aboriginal policy framework (along with the State, Commonwealth and ATSIC) and to greatly improve their track record in providing services to communities. Core strategies submitted to the State Government include:

- legislative reforms to extend local governments legal responsibility over health and building regulation matters to communities located on crown land (see 5.2);
- high level discussions between Commonwealth, State and Local Government and ATSIC over funding / subsidy issues and allocations, including ensuring the funds granted to LGA's through the

Commonwealth Grants Commission based on “Indigenous population” weightings are tied and therefore actually expended in communities (5.3);

- continue to facilitate the development of Service Agreements between communities and LGA’s re standards of service delivery and commitments to payment of rates contributions;
- promotional strategies to encourage participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in local government elections as candidates and voters;
- support for the Gazettal of larger Aboriginal communities as Townsites;
- support in principle for the establishment of new Local Government Authorities in areas predominately populated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as has been achieved in the Western Desert with the formation of the Ngaanyatjarra Shire.

There are a number of areas where the AHIC can support the DLGRD strategies, particularly where there is a direct link with housing and infrastructure programs and responsibilities. The AHIC has established close ties with DLGRD and the Department of Indigenous Affairs to examine ways in which AHIC can best support the Strategic Directions Framework and to ensure that AHIC and DLGRD strategies are complimentary.

6. IMPROVE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY OF ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AND TOWN RESERVES

AHIC's strategic priority for communities and town reserves is to:

- effect significant improvements in housing management and maintenance outcomes;
- ensure effective programs in place to provide and maintain essential services infrastructure;
- encourage ongoing normalisation of service provision in town reserve communities.

6.1.1 Investigate Alternative Arrangements for the Provision of Housing Management Services

The sustainability of communities is persistently undermined by poor housing management outcomes. The AHIC commits to the implementation of the *National Skills Development Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Management*. A raft of strategies has been developed under the umbrella of the national framework. There is a major emphasis on regional, external and mainstream management options, and a complete review of housing maintenance and rental collection arrangements. At the community level formal performance targets and funding conditions will be put in place with the aim of reducing capital works upgrade and replacement expenditures in the longer term. To this end there is a commitment to a greater proportion of resources being allocated for housing management and community governance initiatives to ensure an effective balance between capital works and sustainability initiatives as required under the BBF. Without significant improvement, pressures on capital budgets will continue at an unacceptable rate.

Undertake A Review Of Current Housing Management Arrangements across all larger communities and Town Reserves, including those not currently serviced by AHID management support programs. A "state of play" report is needed. What are the current housing management, governance and administrative arrangements in communities? What is working well and why? What communities are struggling and why? What are the management support requirements and training needs?

The Sustainability Team within AHID has started implementing this strategy in recent months. Current Housing Management Plans, funding levels, rental charges, R&M expenditure, housing policies etc are being reviewed progressively. Comprehensive reviews are also scheduled for urban based ICHO's, commencing in August 2004. Where current arrangements are unsatisfactory the Sustainability Team will explore necessary changes with the community or organisation, including where relevant, alternative management arrangements. The reviews will also provide good information to assist with the identification of ongoing recurrent resourcing requirements from 2005/06.

Facilitate The Development Of A Range Of “Regional” Or “External” Management Models. Where the above reviews expose persistent or endemic problems the AHID will work closely with FaCS ICC staff and communities to examine alternative management contractual arrangements, including use of resourcing agencies, regional service providers, Aboriginal community housing associations, neighboring communities etc.

The AHIC is concerned that most solutions to ongoing management problems have been limited to the provision of Housing Officer funds or training within the community. Alternative “external” solutions may be more cost effective and reliable in the long term.

The AHIC supports “regional” or “external” solutions as a preference to help build the capacity and viability of professional landlord / property / tenancy management services, provided by Aboriginal businesses, resource agencies or housing associations. This does not undermine the “self determination” agendas of communities, as any arrangements would be on a contractual basis, with the Community Council holding the contract. The benefits of “contracting out” this service is that an external agent has more independence to enforce compliance of tenancy agreements. It would also provide a mechanism for gaining a better understanding of real tenancy and property management and maintenance costs.

In 2004, consultations will be undertaken with the Tjurabalan communities within the COAG trial site to establish a Regional Housing Authority. The first round of meetings is scheduled for August 2004.

Examine Rent Subsidy Models. Currently “housing management” subsidy arrangements for communities are fairly ad hoc. Funding is provided to some communities for the employment of Housing Officers (or to top up their salaries), as well as administrative support, CEO top ups, training, development of procedure manuals etc. A “formula” based on size of community (population and number of dwellings) is used to help determine the level of funds that might be allocated, however this acts only as a guide and there is considerable flexibility in current arrangements. This sort of funding support only reaches a relatively small number of communities, although importantly these are larger communities servicing the highest concentrations of population.

There is an urgent need to review the current “formula” in the context of a broader review of possible alternative financial subsidy arrangements. This needs to be undertaken in conjunction with the proposed examination of a financial subsidy R & M model linked to maintenance expenditure and rental collection targets ie. financial subsidies need to be linked to effective tenancy and property management practices. The Northern Territory financial subsidy model will be examined, as well as the formula used in NSW to assist the development of regional housing associations. Under both models the level of subsidy is reduced over time as rents increase, R & M expenditures stabilise and new housing stock is added. This work has been identified as a high priority for the first half of 2004-2005.

Evaluate The Management Support Program and Management Incentive Program Outcomes. Funds have been set aside for an independent evaluation of the outcomes of these programs to be undertaken in 2003/04. The terms of reference for the consultancy had to be scaled back after tender prices came in considerably above budget. A revised tender was let in January 2004 and the final report is pending.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants do not access the Commonwealth Governments Rent Assistance scheme. Sometimes this is due to lack of knowledge / awareness, but in the majority of cases, particularly in communities, it is because rent charges are below the threshold necessary to trigger eligibility. Many communities charge a “per head” rent, rather than a “property” rent which limits the applicability of the CRA model.

Some initial research into CRA issues, including a cost of living survey and rent survey, was undertaken in 2003-2004. Briefing papers were also provided to the WA Minister for Housing and Works on the issue. He subsequently wrote to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for CRA payments (Senator Vanstone at that time), who indicated that the Commonwealth was not interested in discussions on an alternative CRA model relevant to Aboriginal communities. For the time being, this issue has been put on the backburner due to other pressing priorities.

6.1.2 Provide Increased Resources To Facilitate Improvements In Housing Management Outcomes.

A Sustainability and Development Team was established under the AHID restructure implemented from July 1st 2003, which included the creation of two new developmental positions (Governance / Management Development Coordinator and the Training Development Coordinator). The roles of a number of existing positions under the old structure have been revised to become specialist housing management project officers. This will be the driving force to developing and implementing the strategies to improve housing management and governance outcomes of communities.

Continue To Provide Housing Management and Governance Support Funding. Funding for the employment of Housing Officers, administrative support, housing management and governance training, and CEO top up salaries was provided largely on a historical basis during 2003/04. For 2004/05 consultations occurred between AHID and Regional Councils and revised funding requirements were identified in the Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans for 2004/05.

AHID staff will also continue to assist communities to develop Housing Management Plans and Policies containing an asset management plan, cyclical maintenance program, tenancy management policies, a charter of tenants rights and responsibilities, rent collection policies and systems, financial practices and reporting systems that link resources to outcomes.

Establish Rent Collection and Repairs & Maintenance Expenditure Targets. Related to the above “support” initiatives the AHIC has endorsed a policy for the AHID Sustainability and Governance Team to establish clear targets for rent collections and R & M expenditures as a condition of funding assistance. These targets are to be negotiated with communities and documented clearly in the letters of acceptance. There should be a clear plan to increase rent levels and R & M expenditures over an agreed period. The AHID will provide an annual report on targets and outcomes across all communities where agreements are in place. No funding assistance will be provided unless agreements are signed.

Future funding assistance, including funding for capital programs, could be jeopardized if communities unreasonably fail to meet their targets and management obligations. Further funding could be made conditional on contractual arrangements being entered into with external agencies to undertake housing management, or other terms needed to achieve substantial improvements. .

AHID staff will actively encourage communities and managing agencies to maximize rental returns by adopting direct debit arrangements and by increasing the level of take up of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by individuals. This may require an increase in base rent levels or changes to the rent charging system adopted by communities. Rent scenario models will be developed by the AHID to demonstrate the impacts and benefits on individuals and communities / organizations of changing rent settings in order to attract CRA subsidies.

The AHID will also examine options for obtaining data on rent collections and R & M expenditures in other communities where it does not necessarily provide housing management, governance, administrative or maintenance support eg. through IHMS, changes to the EHNS, undertaking an independent survey etc.

Longer term the objective is to establish more consistency across communities in terms of rental charges, property maintenance standards and tenancy and property management policies and practices.

Provide Communities With The Indigenous Housing Management System (IHMS). The IHMS is a housing management software package developed by the DHW to assist with property and tenancy management. IHMS trials were completed in 2003/04 and installed to nine organisations, along with training and technical support. Planning for 2004/05 includes rollout to 25 organisations covering up to 80 communities. The system is also being considered for urban ICHO's, although this will be linked to reviews of these organisations being conducted throughout the year.

Provide Funds To Establish The Aboriginal Communities Recruitment and Professional Assistance Service. This joint initiative between ATSC, AHID, DLGRD and DIA is to establish a centralised professional recruitment and advisory service that communities will be able to use when seeking skilled staff for key positions (eg. CEO's, administrators, housing officers, bookkeepers etc). Communities have often been disadvantaged in recruitment by an inability to check professional skills and qualifications, or to check the validity of previous work experience. The contracted service will bring independence into the recruitment process. The service will also be able to advise on alternative models for providing specific services (eg. accounting services, housing management etc) based on the experiences and best practices being used in other communities.

The AHIC has signalled that it's 2004/05 funding (\$50,000) will be the final contribution from the funding pool, following the previous 2003/04 contribution. The service will be tendered by October 2004.

Investigate Alternative Insurance Arrangements to Protect Community Housing and Infrastructure Assets. Many communities have been hit with substantial increases in their insurance premiums in recent years. DHW Risk Management section surveyed 20 communities early in 2004 to identify current costs and issues. Follow up work on alternatives to current arrangements is being progressed. Options will be put to AHIC by Nov 2004.

6.1.3 Address The Backlog Of Housing Repairs And Maintenance.

To date there has been no coherent approach to housing maintenance and repairs in Aboriginal communities. Responsibility has rested with individual communities or resource agencies where they are responsible for housing management. The ability of communities to respond to urgent repairs varies greatly and is largely dependent on the quality of their overall community management. Poor maintenance of housing, especially in vital areas such as plumbing, can have detrimental health impacts.

The Environmental Health Needs Survey (see 9.3) will help identify the extent of urgent and major repairs required to dwellings within communities. This will be important in developing appropriate responses.

Development of an AHIC Policy and Strategy for R & M. It is the intention of the AHIC to move away from the current ad hoc arrangements for R & M and put in place a coherent set of policies and initiatives that will clarify roles and responsibilities. It will also include:

- a preliminary examination of a financial subsidy R & M model linked to maintenance expenditure and rental collection targets;
- establishment of long term targets for reducing overall upgrading requirements whilst increasing community expenditures on R & M.

Research on appropriate models has commenced.

Regional House Electric Maintenance & Plumbing (licensed trades) Service.

AHIC has supported the development of a new emergency house maintenance service in 2003/04 to be piloted in 2004/05. The service will undertake plumbing and electrical work and is to be piloted in the Western Desert and the Pilbara. It will be targeted to larger communities currently under RAESP regional service contracts. Under the model the costs of work undertaken in communities will be shared between the community and the funding pool. An evaluation of the pilots, including the subsidy arrangements, will be undertaken in 2006.

Fixing Houses For Better Health (FHFBH). The Commonwealth FHFBH program will continue during 2004/05, with a budget of \$500,000. The program approach entails:

- detailed assessments / surveys of individual dwellings;
- initial fixes (immediate maintenance works) using maintenance contractors who attend with the survey team;
- development of more detailed scope of works based on the survey data and the letting of works contracts;
- follow up survey work to ascertain the level of improvement, identify ongoing issues (eg. design defects, poor housing management etc);
- development of longer term strategies to address ongoing R & M needs.

The experience of the AHID staff in implementing the FHFBH is that it is extremely labour intensive, requiring extended visits to communities by Project Officers and contractors, with little potential for local training or employment opportunities. The program has to date only been limited in reach. Its effectiveness is currently being evaluated, in comparison with an IHMS maintenance trial project. Evaluation results are expected in late 2004, after completion of phase 2 surveys.

6.1.4 Ensure Communities Have Access To Essential Services Infrastructure (power, water & waste water).

Bi-lateral agreements in Health; Housing and Infrastructure; and Essential Services provide the broad strategic framework for delivering sustainable improvements in environmental health and housing in Aboriginal communities. These Agreements target the 80 or so larger established communities and town reserves where 80% of the Aboriginal community populations reside (see 3.2.2). In relation to provision of essential services these agreements have driven the development of:

- the normalization and regularization initiatives;
- the Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP);
- Aboriginal regional service provider organizations;
- training and employment opportunities (eg. Essential Service Operators) for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- Environmental health initiatives (eg. sealing of internal roads, greening and landscaping projects and other dust abatement initiatives; improved drainage; sport and recreation initiatives).

With the changed context in Indigenous affairs since the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the abolition of ATSIC the AHIC has resolved to extend its strategic policy responsibilities to include the essential services area. It will seek Ministerial support for this position and is proposing that the current Indigenous Housing Agreement and the Essential Services Bilateral be amalgamated. This position has been supported by the Aboriginal Communities Essential Services Steering Committee (an inter-agency government committee) which currently has responsibility for strategic policy and for monitoring the implementation of the Essential Service Bilateral. If the amalgamation option is accepted the proposed evaluation of the Essential Services Bilateral, which is due to be undertaken in 2004, is unlikely to proceed.

Provision of Essential Services to Communities. The AHIC commits to a continuation of the RAESP, NAHS and other "essential service" funding as an intermediate strategy for delivering power, water and waste water infrastructure and maintenance in discrete communities. The AHIC also supports the important regular water testing role provided through the RAESP to ensure safe drinking water.

From 2004/05 however contract management arrangements have changed. These were previously split between ATSSIS and AHID. AHID has assumed sole responsibility in accordance with the provisions of the Indigenous Housing Agreement. The transfer of existing contracts has occurred, and new tenders have been advertised to amalgamate capital and servicing program management responsibilities under a single contract following an independent review of preferred models completed in December 2003. All funding for the essential services contracts have been pooled (eg. RAESP, NAHS components) to ensure a more coherent and strategic approach to the provision of services.

The successful State Program Manager will continue to oversee the RAESP regional service provider maintenance contracts, currently provided through three Aboriginal businesses. These contracts provide Indigenous traineeships and employment opportunities. The contracts were extended from 1st July 2003 for two years, at which time new tenders will be required. In re-tendering the AHIC will consider whether an additional service provider in the Kimberley region is

justified (ie. separate East and West Kimberley tenders) given the extent of the work in this region. The preparation of new tenders will need to be completed by January 2005 at the latest.

Attempts to obtain additional funds from the State Government in recognition of the costs of providing essential services were unsuccessful during 2003/04. AHIC will continue to pursue the State Government on this matter.

Normalisation of Essential Services. In larger Aboriginal communities and town reserves the normalisation / regularisation of essential services (power, water, waste water) and municipal services is fundamental to achieving substantial improvements in environmental health and safe and healthy housing and infrastructure. The AHIC is committed to upping the ante on these issues and taking on a leadership role given the current uncertainty surrounding the future of ATSIC. Long term solutions require all levels of government to address the critical issue of “community service obligation” payments to corporatised service providers (ie. Western Power and the Water Corporation). The AHIC will seek that a commitment to long term solutions be a core objective in the Indigenous Affairs Bilateral being negotiated between the Commonwealth and State Governments, with a parallel commitment to be contained in an amalgamated Indigenous Housing and essential Services Bilateral.

In the meantime AHIC supports the State Governments power procurement pilot initiatives in the Kimberley but remains concerned about ongoing time delays.

These longer term “normalisation” directions represent the next strategic frontier that needs to be confronted if sustainable improvements in environmental health conditions in communities are to be achieved.

6.1.5 Implement A Range of Environmental Health Initiatives in Communities

Program Initiatives. The AHIC will continue to support a range of environmental health initiatives to be funded from the pool where these are identified as priorities in the RHIP's including:

- sealing of internal roads;
- greening and landscaping projects and other dust abatement initiatives;
- capital works to improved drainage;
- sport and recreation initiatives and
- the swimming pools program.

In some cases (eg. sport and recreational facilities, roads sealing) the AHID has a developmental or facilitating role to ensure that other government agencies take up responsibilities where this is their core business. In recent years the AHID has used funds from the Aboriginal Communities Strategic Investment Program (ACSIP) to encourage other agencies into joint funding arrangements. One of the positive consequences of this approach is that it raises the profile and needs of communities within these agencies, leading to the development of strategies to address the most urgent needs. The AHIC believes strongly in the approach pioneered through the ACSIP and will continue to support such initiatives.

There is always some question about the extent of “responsibilities” under the Indigenous Housing Agreement in relation to “community infrastructure and purchases.” This was addressed through policy work undertaken during the year, with a policy approved by AHIC in April 2004 (see 9.2). An information brochure for communities and organisations is currently being finalised which explains the policy.

Clean And Healthy Communities Award (CAHCA). The CAHCA has been running for a number of years and is targeted mainly at school children in communities to promote a better understanding of healthy living and good environmental practices. The 2003 Awards were based on a photo competition and were sponsored by the Department of Housing and Works (AHID), ATSIC, the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Western Australian Health Department (Office of Aboriginal Health).

The departments involved in the awards discussed the benefits of the current competition format and it was agreed to stay with this for 2004/05. At the time of this update the 2004 poster competition had been finalised and the photo competition had been launched.

The AHIC Newsletter, which is produced quarterly by the AHID Policy unit, has carried several stories and “kid pages / games” promoting healthy environmental living practices.

6.2 DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE AND VIABLE ABORIGINAL URBAN COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR.

Support The Development Of Aboriginal Urban Community Housing Associations. The total available funding under the current ATSIC CHIP urban programs is relatively small (\$3.25 million in 2003/04 and approximately \$4 million for 2004/05) with a high proportion of the available funds allocated to recurrent funding (around 40%). As with discrete communities, the rental revenue streams flowing to these agencies is limited, with typically low rents and a limited number of properties. The AHIC is concerned about the operational viability of most of these organisations and the high level of dependency on government funding.

The vision of AHIC is for a more robust and financially independent Aboriginal urban community housing sector working in partnership with government, one that is capable of leveraging private capital finance and offering an innovative range of housing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It was proposed to develop a coherent set of strategies during 2003/04 setting out the steps and initiatives necessary to facilitate the development of an independent and viable Aboriginal urban community housing sector. A “policy framework” document was circulated in 2003/04 as part of this process, however there was strong opposition to some aspects of the document, in particular around the issues of property ownership / title.

An AHIC Strategic Issues Workshop was held in July 2004 which examined the contentious issues further. Some in-principle “solutions” were reached, which will need to be ratified at the August AHIC meeting. This will enable the development of a comprehensive strategy as outlined in the original Plan (see below) to proceed. In the meantime the AHID has commenced comprehensive reviews of

all funded urban Aboriginal groups to assess the current capacity of these organizations to operate on a more viable footing.

Sector rationalisation strategies have already commenced in the Mulga Mallee region, spearheaded by the Regional Council and supported by AHIC and AHID. The intention is to reduce the number of local providers and commit to the growth of a single regional housing organization. Some progress has been made with stock transfers and management contracts from a local ICHO to the designated regional provider.

ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

- the potential of current funded ngo's to develop into AUCHA's, including an assessment of current stock under management
- the implications in changing the balance of current recurrent funding allocations;
- the potential of a stock transfer program (Fund 6 public housing stock) to enable rapid growth of the sector to reach financial viability;
- the chief impediments to viable growth (eg. reluctance to charge economic rents, poor governance and management performance, lack of support from the DHW or government etc ...)
- property title issues;
- loan guarantees (to facilitate private capital finance);
- joint venturing potential;
- the potential of partnership funding or organisational partnerships with mainstream community housing providers;
- increasing access to mainstream CH programs as an additional means of increasing housing stock;
- policies re economic mix of tenants to improve rental returns;
- the level of access to Commonwealth Rent Assistance to maximize rental returns;
- compliance standards required of organizations (eg. the adoption of a Registration system to identify preferred agencies).

6.3 PROVIDE SUPPORT & TRAINING TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF PEOPLE LOSING THEIR TENANCY.

Tenancy support programs are typically classified as preventative strategies put in place to "save" tenancies and reduce eviction rates. The work undertaken in these programs however is centred around individuals - improving people's coping skills, knowledge and their capacity to manage often endemic problems.

Mainstream Support Programs. The AHIC strongly supports the DHW's Supported Housing and Assistance Program (SHAP) which is a contracted support service offered to public housing tenants who are experiencing difficulties meeting their tenancy obligations. There are sixteen SHAP services throughout the State, with a total budget for 2004/05 of \$2.2 million. This is funded from mainstream sources and does not come out of the funding pool. A high proportion of tenants assisted under the SHAP are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (more than 70%) and most SHAP services employ Aboriginal staff. Four of the contracted service providers are Aboriginal agencies, in Broome, Newman, Port Hedland and Roebourne.

Review of AHID Tenancy Programs. The Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (ATSS) and the Customer Support Officer (CSO) network employed by the DHW provide tenancy support and advocacy services for Indigenous public housing tenants and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people trying to access public housing. The ATSS has been established at six regional centres: Albany / Narrogin, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Port Hedland and Wyndham. All services are provided by Aboriginal not for profit agencies. The CSO network is based in Perth and largely services the metropolitan regions, although on occasions assistance to tenants in country regions is also provided.

Funding for these services comes from the funding pool. ATSS had a budget of \$520,000 in 2003/04 and the cost of the in-house CSO team (salaries, benefits and oncosts) is estimated at \$350,000. These are essentially “mainstream” functions and therefore AHIC sought an independent review to evaluate the effectiveness of the services and to determine whether there is any duplication or overlap with the SHAP. The review was completed in January 2004 and raised a number of concerns about contract management issues and the effectiveness of the services.

AHIC agreed to continue to support funding of the services to December 2004. AHID has been charged with developing proposals for future support service arrangements. A report is scheduled for discussion at the AHIC November 2004 meeting.

In House Practical Support Program (IHPSP). It was intended to roll out this program during 2003/04, however staff resourcing problems prevented any major development work being undertaken. Only one contract was let in Perth. This project, with the Koolbardi Aboriginal Corporation in the Queens Park area, is currently being assessed. AHIC has supported a significant budget investment in this program for both 2003/04 and 2004/05 and has signalled that it wants to see results.

Consultations are underway with a number of communities, including Newman / Parnajinya, Halls Creek communities and Bidyadanga. Warburton, Wiluna, Katanning and other communities have been identified in the Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans are also being targeted.

The service is based on the “Homemaker Program” that used to operate in the 1970’s and early 1980’s. It is being demanded by communities, Aboriginal organisations and advocates partly in response to the large growth in the Aboriginal youth population and the relatively young age of family formation. The program will provide skills development in all aspects of home and family management, including budgeting, home skills and understanding tenancy obligations.

The Department For Community Development (DCD) has also commenced a similar program. The AHID will work closely with the DCD to ensure appropriate targeting of the program.

Support Programs For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Private Rental Tenants. Private tenants are perhaps the forgotten people when it comes to government programs and services. They are more vulnerable than public or community housing tenants, with a higher probability of affordability stress and insecure tenure. Despite this, there are no tenancy support programs like SHAP or ATSS to assist them. Government programs usually come into play only after private rental tenants have been evicted or have left their tenancy.

Initiatives to improve Aboriginal access to private rental housing must be accompanied by either an extension of current support programs (eg. ATSS or SHAP) or by the establishment of new programs to assist Aboriginal private rental tenants.

To date neither of these options has been explored. A discussion paper will be developed during 2004 examining potential models, how tenants would access (or even know about the service), the resourcing / financial implications, potential funding sources, the potential of referral links with the proposed community management "lease subsidy program" and other issues.

7. IMPROVE THE CAPACITY AND SKILLS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES, ORGANISATIONS AND PEOPLE.

The linkage of training and employment opportunities with capital works contracts and AHID programs continues, but there is also a more developmental role envisaged to broaden the opportunities available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are commitments to extend the opportunities for Aboriginal businesses and not-for-profit organisations in the delivery and management of housing, infrastructure and training services, through the introduction and extension of preferential tender policies and other initiatives. It is important to expand opportunities in urban environments given the drift of young people from communities. A specialist position in the AHID has been created to broker new opportunities across government, with training providers and with the private sector.

7.1 IMPROVE COMMUNITY CAPACITY & INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

7.1.1 Facilitate Education, Training and Resourcing Support In Administration, Governance And Management.

AHID Position. As part of the AHID restructure a new position has been created (Training Development Coordinator) which is located in the Sustainability and Development Team. Previously there was no position responsible for developing new initiatives. The position will be responsible for monitoring, developing and coordinating current and new initiatives, and will work closely with the principle training agencies in WA (ie. WA Department of Training and Employment, Education Department of WA and local TAFE colleges).

The position will also look to extend training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in or moving to regional centres and Perth. A strategy will be developed to encourage greater employment activity by Local Government, private contractors and other government agencies that the AHID has regular dealings with in the delivery of its programs and services. The priority will be to develop longer term employment options for people provided with traineeship or apprenticeship places under AHID managed programs.

Other organizations will be encouraged to establish minimum targets for Aboriginal employment and to introduce traineeship programs.

Continue To Provide Housing Management and Governance Support Funding. Funding for the employment of Housing Officers, administrative support, housing management and governance training, and CEO top up salaries is continues to be provided with funds targeted to priorities identified in the RHIP's.

Funding will also be provided towards the employment of swimming pool managers as part of the swimming pools programs funded through the ACSIP.

Training Initiatives. An accredited community governance and housing management training module has been developed by the WA Department of Employment and Training (WADET) in consultation with the AHID. There have been some frustrating delays in piloting the program. Significant funds have been

set aside for 2004/05 to implement the training modules. AHIC will monitor this closely.

AHID officers assisted communities with information and advice on community governance and housing management issues, including assistance with the review of community constitutions and review or development of housing management policies and procedures. AHID also assisted communities by providing governance training and housing management workshops.

Scholarships Scheme. AHIC will give consideration to funding a limited number of tertiary scholarships for Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Honours Degree and Masters courses in Housing Management and Policy Studies ran externally through Swinbourne University in Victoria. The DHW already has a scholarship scheme in place for department employees for the Graduate Certificate stream. The AHIC would look to fund a scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in communities or in the social housing or social welfare field.

Establish The Aboriginal Communities Recruitment and Professional Assistance Service. This is joint initiative between the AHID, the DLGRD and DIA to establish a centralised professional recruitment and advisory service that communities will be able to use when seeking skilled staff for key positions (eg. CEO's, administrators, housing officers, bookkeepers etc). The contracted service will bring independence into the recruitment process and provide advice and assistance to communities on employment contract issues and alternative models for providing specific services (eg. accounting services, housing management etc) based on the experiences and best practices used in other communities. The contribution from the funding pool towards the establishment of the service was \$100,000 in 2003/04. A further \$50,000 has been allocated for 2004/05. The tender for the service will be let early in 2004/05.

As part of the specifications for the service policy guidelines have been developed around appropriate salaries and conditions for different professional roles in communities.

7.1.2 Incorporate Training And Employment Opportunities Across Housing And Infrastructure Capital Works Programs And Be Proactive In The Development Of New Initiatives.

AHID Programs. The provision of traineeships, apprenticeships and local employment opportunities in discrete communities and town reserves will continue to be central to housing construction and upgrading contracts, including community based works supervisors where communities have the capacity to project manage. The Capital Works Team within the AHID will assess each project and ensure that contract terms maximize opportunities.

The AHID will continue to support in-house bids from communities to project manage construction and upgrade projects as a commitment to building community capacity.

Training and employment is also an important component of the RAESP, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being trained and employed as Essential Services Operators. The Regional Service Provider contracts were

extended for two years from July 2003 which will enable a number of apprenticeships attached to the services to be completed.

Other Contract Opportunities. The Capital Works Team within the AHID will continue to liaise closely with the “Works” division within the DHW which has responsibility for overseeing the contract tendering for the majority of state government capital works (eg. staff housing, GEHA, community facilities) in discrete communities. Discussions are underway to increase the range of contracts with Indigenous employment / training requirements and to create more options for joint AHID / Works tenders (improved cost efficiencies).

In the last few months have negotiations have been conducted with a range of stakeholders (AHID, DHW Works, OATSIH, Arup Australasia) in relation to major capital works being planned for the Derby hospital and related projects. Indigenous employment and training opportunities are being developed with the critical point being linkages across a range of project to ensure ongoing opportunities.

Employment and Training Data Base. In 2004/05 the AHID will establish a data base to track Indigenous traineeships, apprenticeships and employment created through funding and contract arrangements. The data base will be used to track the progress of current strategies and will also provide valuable information for national performance reporting purposes.

7.2 SUPPORT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The AHIC is committed to supporting Aboriginal businesses, communities and not for profit organizations through maximizing contract opportunities for works and services provided through the funding pool.

Strategies include:

- Development of a preferential tendering policy to provide Aboriginal businesses with pricing advantages on top of buy local considerations. A draft policy will go to the State Housing Commission Board in August 2004 with a recommendation for immediate implementation in relation to AHID and “housing” tenders, and a further recommendation to seek Cabinet approval to apply the policy to all Government capital works tenders.
- Continue to encourage Aboriginal businesses to tender for all AHID contract work, including construction, upgrading works, essential services contracts, training, tenancy support services, housing management services, and consultancy work.
- Continue to encourage in house bids in relation to housing upgrades, maintenance and construction work from communities that have the capacity to successfully undertake the work and provide training opportunities.
- Hold a special conference for Aboriginal Businesses, Organisations and Contractors to discuss training and employment issues, tendering / contractual policies and procedures, business development strategies

and other issues relevant to enhancing the Aboriginal business sector.
This is scheduled for mid 2006.

It should be noted that although AHIC is fully supportive of broadening business opportunities for Aboriginal organisations, these agencies must operate within a competitive service environment. AHIC does not support a regime of “special grants” for the provision of services, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The AHID is required to operate within State supply policies, which require competitive tendering in most cases.

AHIC also believes that the Aboriginal business sector, including not for profit corporations, may need to be more flexible and innovative in their operational and tendering practices, and be prepared to join forces with other organisations or businesses (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in order to win contracts.

8. IMPROVE ACCESS TO SAFE AND HEALTHY HOUSING AND HOUSING ENVIRONMENTS ACROSS ALL TENURES

8.1 PROMOTE STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ABORIGINAL ACCESS TO HOME OWNERSHIP OPTIONS.

Only 7.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians own their own home. A further 19.1% have a mortgage. The overall rate of home ownership (27%) is the lowest in Australia, apart from the Northern Territory (14%) (see 3.2.1). The DHW currently operates the Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme which lends around \$5 million annually and the ATSIC Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme allocation for Western Australia is similar. Both schemes are stifled by not operating in a fully commercial framework, thus limiting the scope for leveraging of additional loans finance which typify most mortgage schemes. It is estimated that if the schemes were amalgamated and operated through a commercial loans venture a further \$15 million (on top of the combined \$10 million allocated to the schemes) could be available for Aboriginal home loans.

Improving Home Ownership outcomes for Aboriginal people in Western Australia is a key priority for AHIC. Home Ownership rates are one of the Headline Indicators identified in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators Report, 2003. A separate Home Ownership Strategy has been developed in recognition of the importance of this issue (Attachment).

A Home Ownership Strategy Steering Committee was established late in 2003 and is considering the following ideas:

- the feasibility of utilising the combined DHW and ATSIC Home Ownership funds to leverage additional loans funds eg, through Keystart;
- improved promotion of the schemes;
- targeting of the schemes to specific localities where there are known concentrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and where property prices are affordable;
- development of a “discount” scheme for the purchase of public rental properties by long term Aboriginal tenants;
- greater use of shared equity options;
- assistance packages to enable Aboriginal people to access mainstream loans schemes (eg. assistance with stamp duty or legal costs, top ups to first home buyer scheme allowances etc);
- issues and options for Aboriginal people with disabilities (eg. capacity for loans funding to modify homes for wheelchair use).

As a result of the establishment of the Steering Committee the following outcomes have been achieved:

- increased marketing and profile of Home Ownership options in the New Living redevelopment planning sessions;
- restructuring of the DHW Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme (AHOS) to enable higher referrals on shared equity loans and greater portability for existing borrowers who wish to move home;
- introduction of low deposit access to home loan finance through the Keystart home loan scheme target to Aboriginal applicants for loans up to \$250,000;

- broaden the role of the AHOS branch to a one stop shop of all relevant home finance products for Aboriginal applicants and borrowers;
- development of a proposal for a discount scheme for Aboriginal public housing tenants to encourage them to purchase their home. This will be presented to AHIC in August.

A range of other strategies being progressed are contained in Attachment

8.2 DEVELOP RESPONSES TO ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS

The 2001 Census identified 595 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians as living in improvised dwellings (344), in homeless hostels (183) or staying as a visitor in a private dwelling and having no usual place of residence (68). This represents 1% of WA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, but is a significant undercount as it does not enumerate those who are street homeless, those staying in squats, those staying in emergency SAAP accommodation and many fringe dwellers. Of those counted the WA proportion is above the Australian average (0.9%), and lies third behind the Northern Territory (2.4%) and South Australia (1.2%).

Ironically it is those not captured in the Census data that represent the most visible face of Aboriginal homelessness ie. people living on the streets, in parks, fringe dwellers and those being evicted from public rental housing. At this level of primary homelessness problems are often complex and deep seated, crossing all areas of disadvantage (health and mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependency, economic and social disempowerment, etc).

The AHIC, in 2003, signalled to ATSIC Regional Councils that they need to address the issues of homelessness in their Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans by documenting the need for visitors accommodation, shelters, camping facilities, emergency or crisis service needs etc. The terms of references for regional RHIP consultancies include the need to identify these demands in communities, town reserves, regional centres and towns.

Some recognition of these problems have been included in the RHIP's and reflected in the 2004/05 programs, although it is clear that the task of obtaining a comprehensive picture of needs is a complex one.

A consultant was engaged in 2003/04 to examine current information sources in government agencies, community organisations and services. This was targeted at Perth and the south west, although some qualitative work was also undertaken in Port Hedland. The consultancy highlighted the gaps in data and services, but was unable to "map" core needs.

Further thought will need to be given to these issues if effective service responses are to be developed.

State Government Homelessness Taskforce / Aboriginal Hostels Demonstration Project. The State Government has put in place a comprehensive strategy in response to the State Homelessness Taskforce Report published in January 2002. Many of the issues and initiatives identified in the report are indigenous specific given that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people suffer the highest rates of homelessness in Western Australia.

It is not the role of AHIC to duplicate the initiatives and strategies being driven in response to the Taskforce findings. However, there is a clear responsibility on AHIC to keep a very close eye on progress, to identify ongoing issues and problems, and to be proactive in developing new strategies which will compliment current initiatives.

The AHIC has agreed to take responsibility in response to two Taskforce recommendations:

- Work on joint ventures involving Aboriginal Hostels Ltd, DHW, DIA and private sector hotel, motel, caravan park operators to develop short term housing options for Aboriginal people visiting towns and cities;
- Develop a demonstration project to include adequate facilities such as ablution blocks with showers, cooking facilities and shelter.

The concept currently under consideration involves:

- support for a case management outreach service;
- provision of some form(s) of emergency shelter accommodation;
- longer term (medium to long stay) hostel or cluster unit options for young singles and families;
- consideration of group home options for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

Limited progress was made during 2003/04 by the Steering Committee in addressing the taskforce recommendations.

8.3 CAPITAL PROGRAMS TO INCREASE AND IMPROVE THE HOUSING STOCK IN COMMUNITIES

The environmental living and housing conditions in communities varies significantly from extremely poor to adequate. There needs to be ongoing investment in communities if improvements in health and living circumstances that have occurred in the last decade are to continue. Strategies to increase the level of funds available are discussed in section 5.

The strategies discussed below relate to the existing funding context.

Capital Expenditures. Approximately \$45 million will be allocated to housing construction, upgrades and major repairs from the funding pool in 2004/05 to address overcrowding and urgent housing needs in communities. The AHIC will continue to commit to significant capital programs throughout the term of the Agreement. The commitment from the pool has increased in 2004/05 as full pooling of funds has been achieved with the inclusion of the ATSIC NAHS program.

Special Needs Housing. The AHIC is committed to broadening the scope of housing provision in communities to include housing for singles, seniors, visitors, transient people and people with special needs, including people with disabilities. As well as responding to urgent needs identified in the RHIP's, the AHIC will, by late 2004, develop a coherent strategy based on information from the EHNS and regional consultancies. This will include negotiations with other government agencies with respect to appropriate support programs (eg. for people with disabilities). The AHIC is determined to ensure that support programs and services available to Western Australians in mainstream residential environments are progressively introduced into larger Aboriginal communities and town

reserves. As part of this process there will be negotiations with the Department for Community Development (DCD) regarding safe houses and other supported housing initiatives in response to domestic violence issues in larger communities.

Housing for Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Given the age profile of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (see 3.1.3 Figure 4) it is critical that appropriate housing options for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are provided. Lodging house / hostel style accommodation has been identified as an option along with the need for an increase in the availability of single persons units (in communities and regional centres).¹¹ This is supported by public housing wait list data which shows that almost 70% of current demand from known Aboriginal applicants is from singles and childless couples.

The movement of young Aboriginal people from communities to regional centres and rural towns is a current theme in many discussions about housing demand. Although there is still no solid evidence of an ongoing or growing trend, there is no doubt that, on the evidence available, Aboriginal population growth in WA is concentrated in urban environments. To date there has been no “policy” or “service” interface between communities and rural and regional towns. Responses to issues are either isolated “urban” or “community” responses, with no integration of the two. This is an area that requires further investigation.

Implement the National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing. WA will continue to adhere to the national framework standards. The AHIC has endorsed a proposal to ensure that all houses in communities contain smoke detectors, RCD's, security screens and doors. The Environmental Health Needs Survey 2003, which will examine every community dwelling, will identify deficiencies. This will enable the AHID to estimate the cost of upgrading all dwellings to the proposed standard.

The AHID has recently provided landscaping within the lot boundary in a number of community and town reserve projects. This will increasingly become standard practice.

8.4 IMPROVE ACCESS TO SAFE AND HEALTHY HOUSING IN TOWN RESERVES

Town Reserve communities originated as Aboriginal reserves, created by the State Government in the 1920's to accommodate Aboriginal people displaced from their traditional lands. Most Town Reserve communities are situated on Crown Land, which has been vested with the Aboriginal Lands Trust since 1986. There are 45 town reserves of various sizes throughout WA, with an estimated total population of between 4,500 and 5,000. This represents up to 30% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians that live in Aboriginal communities.

Many town reserve communities are plagued with:

- a history of neglect and indifferent management performance;
- poorly maintained properties;
- substantial debt problems (water, power and rental arrears);

¹¹ see Eringa, Karel & Pendergast, Paul (Shelter WA), Meeting Youth Housing Needs in Broome Through Collaborative Practice, Burdekin Youth in Action, June 2003

- sub-standard and unreliable power, water and waste water services, contributing to poor environmental health conditions;
- inequities in environmental health surveillance, rubbish collection and the provision of maintenance to roads, drainage and communal facilities;
- significant population fluctuations, including being a magnet for transient and itinerant people and people with extreme socio-economic disadvantages and chronic health problems.

A number of town reserve communities are essentially running as defacto crisis or welfare housing services, without the requisite funding or expertise needed to be fully effective.

In short many Town Reserve communities have endemic problems and lack the capacity and expertise to resolve those problems. Many are considered a blight on the surrounding community, particularly where the town or suburbs are expanding and the reserve is no longer on the “outskirts” of town.

It is important to recognise that town reserves are an urban housing environment and move away from categorising them as remote communities. Although there are similarities with communities (eg. self management through Community Council structures), the AHIC believes that it is timely to draw a clear distinction between discrete communities and Town Reserves. Conceptualising town reserves as an urban housing option places them alongside urban community housing and public rental housing (Funds 1 and 6) as a social housing alternative and enables TR issues to be dealt with within the broader strategic urban housing framework.

This Plan contains three broad sets of strategies with respect to Town Reserves communities:

- Undertake a consultation with all town reserve communities and stakeholders to develop a long term vision / futures strategies for town reserve communities;
- Develop a comprehensive management and governance strategy for all town reserve communities; and
- Continue to progress the normalisation of essential services and municipal services in town reserves through the implementation of the Town Reserves Regularisation Program.

8.4.1 Develop A Long Term Vision / Futures Strategy for Town Reserve Communities.

There is no long term plan in place for Town Reserves. The AHIC has committed to funding the development of a “futures” strategy based on extensive consultations with the communities, local government, government agencies and other stakeholders. An assessment is required of:

- the function that the Town Reserve community is serving;
- the views and vision of the various stakeholders;
- the effectiveness of the communities governance and management structures;
- the effectiveness of current regularisation strategies in addressing environmental living conditions;
- issues and relationships with the surrounding community;
- the population that the community is serving;

- the status of the land tenure and ownership of the physical assets of the community (and how that the impact; and
- other issues impacting on the future viability of the community.

At the time of the development of this strategy it was stated that “all options will need to be considered, including external management arrangements, transfer of land and assets to community control, and community closures.”

In the original Strategic Plan, the plight of many Town Reserve communities was recognised and the development of a comprehensive long-term futures vision and strategy was proposed. During 2003/04, meetings were held with the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Aboriginal Lands Trust (who own the majority of town reserve land) in respect to this strategy. One metropolitan community was closed down during the year by the State Government. The Department of Housing and Works and the Department of Indigenous Affairs are currently identifying town reserve communities in need of urgent and immediate attention. This “action” initiative has overtaken the broader process planned by AHIC. The Council will monitor this ‘piecemeal’ approach throughout 2004-2005 but believes a comprehensive strategy still needs to be developed, and will give further consideration to this issue.

8.4.2 Continue To Progress The Normalisation of Essential Services and Municipal Services in Town Reserve Communities.

The standard of essential and municipal services provided to Town Reserve communities is, generally, extremely poor in comparison to the level of services available in adjacent mainstream towns or suburbs.

A number of factors have contributed to the lack of adequate services, including:

- power & water services are often provided by State utilities via ‘single point’ service connections to the community;
- lack of management capacity to collect monies from residents to pay for bulk-billed consumption leading to the accumulation of large debts, disconnection of power or restricted water pressure / flows.;
- responsibility for the maintenance of essential service infrastructure within Town Reserves does not lie with one single government instrumentality or agency resulting in rapid deterioration of assets and ad hoc responses to emergency repairs;
- a very limited level of municipal service provision by Local Government, in spite of their close proximity to towns, resulting in lack of or inadequate rubbish collection, lack of roads and drainage maintenance, lack of community and sporting facilities etc.

The AHIC endorses the continuation of the “normalisation / regularisation” aims and strategies developed for town reserves which are contained in the Essential Services Bilateral Agreement.

These include:

- ‘As constructed’ survey to locate existing services;
- creation of community layout plans (CLP) to facilitate appropriate and orderly development, including the establishment of easements over essential services;
- integration of the CLP into the town-planning scheme where appropriate;

- upgrading works necessary to bring the services and infrastructure up to a standard acceptable to the relevant authority (Western Power, Water Corporation and Local Government), including the realignment of existing services within road reserves, road and drainage works;
- implementing individual metering and developing account management arrangements;
- negotiating with Local Government Authorities with respect to provision of municipal services including rubbish collection, street lighting and ongoing maintenance and provision of roads and communal facilities;
- the removal of barriers to regularisation through negotiation and resolution of impediments such as historical debt re-payments, public access concerns, payment of local government rates and community management issues;
- development of debt management protocols between communities and utilities.

The long term objective of the program is the transfer of responsibility for provision and maintenance of essential and municipal service infrastructure to the relevant utility or local authority and to ensure that tenants of communities are able to manage their individual responsibilities in respect of payment for water and power consumption.

In the interim the AHIC is concerned that Aboriginal pension beneficiaries residing in Town Reserve communities do not receive standard concessions for power, gas and water because these services are not currently metered and charged separately. The Town Reserves Regularisation Program will ultimately resolve this problem, but in the meantime elderly or disabled Aboriginal tenants will continue to be disadvantaged.

8.5 IMPROVE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ACCESS TO URBAN HOUSING OPTIONS

Around 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians live in urban environments (see 3.2):

- 9% in town reserve communities;
- 22% in public rental housing;
- 27% own their own homes (or have a mortgage);
- 16% in private rental housing; and
- 4% in social housing managed by non-government organizations.

Much of the funding focus under the Indigenous Housing Agreement remains on discrete communities, however the AHIC is aware of the growing pressures for Aboriginal people living in urban environments in Western Australia. Many regional centers and towns are experiencing significant increases in their Aboriginal populations. Demands on mainstream social housing services (public and community housing) continue to grow and are likely to escalate as the young people highlighted in figure 4 (3.1.3) become adults requiring independent housing. There is a recognised lack of transitional and temporary housing to cater for the mobility of Aboriginal people. Indigenous specific supported housing services for people with special needs are extremely limited. The low levels of access to home ownership and the difficulties experienced in accessing private rental housing are well known. And the public housing stock designated specifically for Aboriginal tenants (F6 housing) is largely family housing, whereas 70% of current demand is from singles and childless couples. The AHIC is aware of persistent disadvantages faced by Aboriginal people as discussed in section 3.

Although the AHIC does not have primary responsibility for overseeing “mainstream” service provision, the Council has made a commitment to working strategically with mainstream service providers to influence decisions, policies, service planning and resource allocations to maximize options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are clear service deficiencies that are highlighted in this Plan (eg. supported housing services for people with disabilities) and the AHIC will work actively with relevant stakeholders to develop appropriate program and policy responses.

8.5.1 Gain A Thorough Understanding Of Urban Housing Needs And Issues.

Urban housing issues were at the forefront of AHIC’s agenda during 2003/04.

Strategies to improve our understanding of current needs included:

- involvement of Regional Councils and ATSiS regional staff in the planning of the 2004/05 public housing (Fund 6 program). Regional planning consultations (for the 2005/06) will extended to include both the Fund 1 and Fund 6 programs.
- Funding of a consultancy to identify special urban housing needs in Perth and the south west. The consultancy was unable to map “core” needs due to a lack of comprehensive data in government and non-government agencies.
- Dwelling condition surveys were undertaken covering Fund 6 public housing properties and urban ICHO properties. This was useful in highlighting maintenance and upgrade requirements, as well as dwelling suitability.
- Identification in the RHIP’s of the need for visitors accommodation, shelters, camping facilities, emergency or crisis service needs etc. The terms of references for regional RHIP consultancies included the need to identify these demands in communities, town reserves, regional centres and towns. Unfortunately, town based information was unable to be gathered and was not included.

Further thought will need to be given to these issues if effective service responses are to be developed.

Urban Housing Issues Steering Committee. AHID had proposed the establishment of an Inter-Agency Steering Committee to oversee the development of strategies in response to the core issues and needs identified through the RHIP’s, the Homelessness Taskforce and the SW needs consultancy. The lack of comprehensive data has meant that further work is needed on identifying basic needs. This will be progressed through a series of meetings with key government service agencies including the Disability Services Commission, the Health Department of WA, the Department of Justice and the Department for Community Development.

A specialist position has been created in the AHID restructure to coordinate strategies to improve responses to urban housing needs and demands. This

project officer will have responsibility for liaising with these agencies to develop strategies to identify critical needs and demands. Once that is done program responses can be negotiated and developed during 2005/06 for implementation from 2006/07.

8.5.2 Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access To Mainstream Public And Community Housing.

Visits by AHIC members to a number of country towns and rural communities have highlighted the poor housing conditions experienced by many Aboriginal public housing tenants. AHIC's representations to the State Housing Commission have resulted in the development of a significant mainstream stock replacement and refurbishment program (1,000 houses over four years). Aboriginal employment and training requirements are being built into program contracts. In addition AHIC is trying to ensure that a proactive Aboriginal home ownership strategy is part of the package of reforms for these towns. The Urban Programs area within AHID is actively participating in the implementation of the strategy and will provide AHIC with regular progress reports.

As noted earlier perhaps as many as a quarter of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians live in Homeswest housing, of which around 40% live in stock specifically designated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants (Fund 6). The level of actual listed demand is unknown (see 3.2.3) but could be as high as 3,000 households, representing almost a further 15% to 20% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in WA.

The importance of public housing to Aboriginal people in WA cannot be understated. The age distribution of the Indigenous population suggests that this demand will grow significantly in the coming years (see 3.1.3). Stock numbers have been relatively stagnant over the last decade. It is important that the housing stock is expanded steadily over the next decade if a housing crisis is to be averted.

The AHIC supports the involvement of ATSIC Regional Councils in the planning of the annual public housing procurement and construction programs (Fund 1 and Fund 6) (see 9.2). It is important that the mainstream process incorporates the views, knowledge and experience of Aboriginal regional representatives.

The AHIC has also ensured that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have formal representation on a number of important Boards and committees (see 9.1) which are directly involved in public rental housing policy review processes. The AHIC is aware of the common issues faced by Aboriginal people and it is important that policy changes are positive and do not exacerbate problems.

Development of An Asset Management Strategy for Fund 6 and Other Public Housing Stock Tenanted by Aboriginal People. The DHW owns around 2,500 Fund 6 public rental houses. A further estimated 3,500 public rental houses are rented by Aboriginal tenants. Decisions about these assets, including redevelopment, sales, replacement, maintenance, upgrading and refurbishment are made by DHW Regional Managers, with some consultation with AHID staff in relation to the Fund 6 stock. The decisions are made largely within the context of the broader asset management strategies of the mainstream regions, and almost entirely within the "public housing framework." There is no over-arching asset management plan in place for the F6 stock, and indeed a lack of centralised

information about the state of the stock, its redevelopment potential, outstanding maintenance, its locational relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, its re-sale potential etc. There is also no consideration of potential alternative management arrangements (eg. where local or regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or business organisations exist which have tenancy and asset management experience).

The AHIC commits to the **development of an asset management strategy for the Fund 6 and other Aboriginal public housing stock**. This will include a comprehensive property audit, the establishment of a fund 6 data base and the identification of potential alternative local or regional management options. The audit will be carried out in 2004/05. This will inform future planning.

During 2004/05 AHIC has allocated \$9.0 million to the Fund 6 program to be expended on housing purchases, upgrades and maintenance. This is an increase of \$400,000 on the 2003/04 allocation.

Continue To Fund Aboriginal Urban Community Housing Organisations. A proportion of the ATSI Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP) funds have traditionally been allocated to Aboriginal Corporations to assist with their administration costs and housing management responsibilities. Properties have been purchased or constructed under the program and then transferred to these Corporations to house low income Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

These programs now come under the umbrella of AHIC as the funds are part of the funding pool to be program managed by the AHID. For the 2003/04 financial year it was largely "business as usual," with a commitment to undertake comprehensive organisational reviews (see 6.2) to ascertain whether current funding arrangements are reasonable and sustainable.

Funding allocated in 2003/04 amounted to \$3.25 million, split between resourcing / administrative / management support and capital purchases, construction and upgrades. In 2004/05 this has increased to around \$4 million, with 40% being allocated for recurrent funding support. AHIC have agreed that these levels of funding are unsustainable given that less than 400 houses are managed under these arrangements. Strategies for change are identified in section 6.2.

Increase Access For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People To Mainstream Community Housing Options. In 2003/04 the Community Housing unit within the DHW developed a strategic plan which has recognised the limited access of Aboriginal people to mainstream community housing options. The AHID was closely involved in the development of the Plan. A range of strategies have been included to improve the situation. Some liaison occurred between and the CH unit during 2003/04 and it is recognized that closer working relationships need to be established if substantial outcomes are to be achieved for Aboriginal people. The potential exists for joint funding arrangements, promotion of partnerships between experienced Regional Housing Associations and Aboriginal Corporations and other initiatives.

8.5.3 Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access To Private Rental Housing

The DHW's Bond Assistance Loan Scheme is the main mechanism to assist people on low incomes to access private rental housing (see 3.2.4). The Homeless Helpline, established as part of the response to the State Homelessness Taskforce, has been useful in directing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the scheme. One of the reported observations of the Helpline team is the large proportion of people, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, who have no knowledge of the existence of the Bond Assistance Scheme.

The AHID will work with the Manager of Bond Assistance on a promotional strategy targeted through Aboriginal networks to improve awareness of the Scheme.

Following discussions with the Bond Assistance team in January 2004 the Bond Assistance Application Form has been changed to include an option for the applicant to identify their Indigenous status. This will provide a data source to begin to measure the effectiveness of the scheme in assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into private rental housing.

The feasibility of a private rental loan scheme to assist Aboriginal tenants experiencing difficulties in making rental payments will be examined in 2004/05. The potential of running this as an extension to the Bond Assistance program will be investigated. The scheme could run at minimal costs, given that loans would be repayable. The main purpose of scheme would be to prevent loss of tenancies, which tend to put pressures on other Aboriginal tenants, particularly in public housing, or crisis welfare services.

A small pilot project commenced on July 1st 2004 with the East Metropolitan Community Housing Association to improve Aboriginal access to private rental housing. Under the scheme EMCHA leases and manages properties from the private market and allocates them to Aboriginal tenants. These tenancies will roll over to private management if they progress successfully. Under this proposal full rent is charged to the tenant (and passed on to the owner). Funding is provided for management / administration costs and some tenancy training costs. Some guarantees are also in place in relation to property damages although the risk is shared between the AHID and EMCHA, with an exposure limit in place per property per year.

Two further pilot projects will be established in 2004. the intention is not to prescribe the particular model, but to encourage competitive and innovative proposals from potential service providers. This will enable different models to be tested.

9. IMPROVE THE PLANNING & COORDINATION OF HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE.

Maximise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and infrastructure outcomes by improving the coordination of planning, program management, reporting and evaluation.

Identify and address the unmet housing and infrastructure needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Agreement signed in July 2002 represents a fundamental change in the planning and program management arrangements for the provision of housing and infrastructure services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia. The new arrangements aimed to improve efficiencies and establish a coherent strategic approach to policy development, program planning, compliance arrangements and service delivery. Key milestones in the implementation of the Agreement formed many of the strategies for this section of the original Plan.

Given the abolition of ATGIS, and the impending demise of ATGIS Regional Councils from July 2005, the status the current Agreement is virtually null and void. Negotiations on a new long term agreement are likely to commence after the federal election. AHIC considers that many of the features of the current Agreement should be retained in the new Agreement, including:

- Continued commitment to the pooled funding arrangements;
- Department of Housing and Works to remain the primary program manager and administrators of the funds, with regional program management models being introduced where feasible;
- Reporting and accountability to be provided through existing National Reporting Framework and Council of Australian Government reporting processes;
- A representative Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council, or like advisory body, be retained with responsibility for formulation of strategic policy;
- Program planning to remain based on priority needs;
- Appropriate consultation with Aboriginal communities and leaders into key policy issues and regional planning.

Two major changes supported by the AHIC is for the State Department of Housing and Works (AHID) to have primary responsibility for future program planning, and for the Indigenous Housing Agreement to be amalgamated with the Essential Services Bilateral in Western Australia with AHIC taking on a broader strategic policy responsibility.

9.1 IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE IN PLANNING AND POLICY PROCESSES.

The Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council (AHIC) was established in March 2003 and has primary responsibility for steering the implementation of the Agreement and ensuring improvements in housing and infrastructure outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Strategic policy and planning is a core responsibility of the AHIC.

The AHIC members are all Aboriginal West Australians and there is a commitment by the Council to ensure that Aboriginal people and organisations are consulted over policy, program and project issues and that there are increased opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be directly involved in decision making.

The AHIC is scheduled to meet six times a year, but already in its short history there has been a need for a number of out of session telephone and video conferences, as well as additional meetings.

The AHIC chair was appointed to the State Housing Commission Board in May 2003 to ensure that Aboriginal housing issues are well represented on the Board and that policy and planning processes for mainstream services more closely take into account the views and needs of Aboriginal people.

The Chair has also been appointed to the Housing Advisory Committee which provides an active policy review and advisory function (to the Minister) in relation to public rental housing policy issues.

To date the AHIC Chair has not held regular meetings with the Minister for Housing and Works. The Council will seek to change this in 2004/05 given its commitment to a more active advocacy role and its intention to take on increased strategic policy responsibilities.

Throughout the year AHIC members, including the ED of AHID, have been involved in various committees and working parties on key issues impacting on Aboriginal housing outcomes, including the New Living Planning Committee and the Affordable Housing Committee.

Communities and other stakeholders will be kept informed about AHIC initiatives, decisions, policies and proposals through the publication of a regular AHIC newsletter (four have been published since May 2003), updates contained on AHID and ATSIC web sites, policy consultations, mail outs and other activities.

Other Mechanisms for Improving Consultation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation. In February 2003 a statewide conference was held to discuss Community Sustainability Issues. The conference provided an opportunity for networking and enabled representatives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Agreement. It was important for staff from ATSIS and the AHID to listen to community concerns and ideas. Future updates of the Strategic Plan will include details of future conference agendas and timelines. The intention is to hold a conference at least once every two years.

A commitment has been given to holding a special conference for Aboriginal Businesses and Contractors involved in housing and infrastructure to discuss

training and employment issues, tendering / contractual policies and procedures, business development strategies and other issues relevant to enhancing the Indigenous business sector.

The AHID, in partnership with DHW Regions, will continue to run regional Indigenous policy forums. Forums were held in Port Hedland, Karratha, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie in 2003/04. A follow up forum in Geraldton is scheduled for August 2004 and other forums will be scheduled on a regular basis throughout the life of the Agreement.

At the program delivery level the AHID consults actively with communities and Aboriginal organisations about service delivery issues, including appropriate housing designs, community layout plans, housing management support, training and employment opportunities, works supervision and contracts etc.

9.2 IMPLEMENT THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING AGREEMENT & OTHER STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PLANNING.

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing (SCIH). Housing Ministers created this committee in May 2001 to oversee the implementation of the BBF. All jurisdictions have membership, as does the Department of Family and Community Services and ATSIC. The Executive Director of the AHID, who is also an AHIC member, is WA representative on the SCIH. Four working groups have been established through the SCIH:

- Advocacy, Policy & Research Coordination and Evaluation;
- National Indigenous Housing Information Committee;
- Sustainability;
- National Skills Development Strategy.

WA will continue to be actively involved in these forums.

Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans (RHIP's). Under the terms of the Indigenous Housing Agreement ATSIC Regional Councils had responsibility for developing four year RHIP's for 2004/05-2007/08 which identify priority housing and infrastructure needs. There were significant problems encountered with the RHIP process and activity, and only one or two year RHIP's were received. Although a RHIP framework and guidelines had been completed and agreed in December 2002, there was considerable resistance and confusion about the level detail required for the plans. Consequently some of the RHIP's were seriously delayed, which meant that the annual program for 2004/05 was not finalised until late July.

A Senior Research Officer was contracted by the AHID during 2003/04 to assist regions with the development of their RHIP's. He prepared useable data sets (using CHINS, EHNS and Dept of Planning and Dept. of Indigenous Affairs information) and travelled to each region to provide advice and instruction on the RHIP framework. He also liaised closely with ATSIS regional staff on a day to day basis to help them with their RHIP preparation.

In anticipation that AHID will become responsible for future planning the AHID Policy and Planning section has developed a proposed planning process which will be considered by the AHIC at its August meeting. Under this framework Regional Councils and FaCS ICC's will be consulted about regional strategic level priorities.

Operational Plan. The 2004/05 Operational Plan (OP) is the second to be developed in response to the needs identified in the RHIP's. The OP also reflects some of the core strategies contained in the Strategic Plan. The State Minister for Housing has approved the Plan and the copies have been forwarded to the Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services.

Multi Measure Needs Based Funding Formula. Consultants were engaged to undertake extensive consultations with all stakeholders and develop a *multi-measure needs based funding formula*, based on five nationally agreed indicators, to divide the pool of funds between each ATSI Region in Western Australia. This work was completed early in 2004 although full consensus was unable to be reached with all Regional Councils on the application of the formula. The principles of the formula were considered sound, but unreliable and inadequate data, which impacted on the distribution outcomes, undermined the validity of those outcomes. With these weaknesses in mind AHIC adopted the formula on an interim basis in order to bed down the 2004/05 program, but have asked for a revision using more up to date EHNS data later in 2004. This may lead to some minor changes in expenditure flows.

Given the current uncertainties surrounding the future of Regional Councils, the formula may ultimately become irrelevant, with future allocations being based on state wide needs analysis.

Annual Planning for the Mainstream Public Housing Programs. AHIC supports close involvement by ATSI Regional Councils in the annual mainstream public housing programs (Fund 1 and Fund 6). Consultations occurred between AHID, DHW Regions and some Regional Councils in relation to Fund 6 planning for the 2004/05 program. This will be extended to cover the total public housing program during the current year.

Development of An Asset Management Strategy for Fund 6 Public Housing Stock As previously discussed (8.4.2) there is no over-arching asset management plan in place for the F6 stock, and a lack of centralised information about the state of the stock, its redevelopment potential, outstanding maintenance, locational relevance to Aboriginal tenants or its re-sale potential. There is also no consideration of potential alternative management arrangements (eg. where local or regional Aboriginal community or business organisations exist which have tenancy and asset management experience).

The AHIC commits to the **development of an asset management strategy for the Fund 6 public housing stock**. This will include a comprehensive property audit, the establishment of a fund 6 data base and the identification of potential alternative local or regional management options. The audit will be carried out in 2004. This will inform future planning.

A Rolling Review of AHID and ATSI Program Policies commenced in March 2003 after the establishment of the AHIC in order to establish a common strategic and operational policy framework, agreed by all stakeholders. Policies developed and approved in the last 12 months include:

- Funding guidelines - "housing" and "infrastructure" programs.
- Program variations - New projects not previously identified in the RHIP's.
- Preferential tendering policy (pricing preferences on top of Buy Local considerations for Aboriginal businesses and contractors). This will go to the SHC Board for approval in August 2004.
- Contingency projects

- Urban Community Housing Policy

Work was also undertaken on the homelands/outstations policy, although no consensus was reached.

9.3 **QUANTIFY NEED, IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION, AND UNDERTAKE AND RESEARCH.**

Environmental Health Needs Survey (EHNS). The AHIC supported the implementation of the EHNS during 2003/04 which was conducted in the majority of discrete communities and town reserves in WA. The survey gathered data at the community and individual dwelling level to help quantify housing and infrastructure needs and to measure changes in housing, environmental health and health outcomes. The survey compliments CHINS as a major data source for planning and outcomes assessment in Western Australia, but as with CHINS the collection of dwelling level data was inconsistent and in a number of communities unable to be obtained. EHNS and CHINS data were both used as part of the development of the Regional Housing and Infrastructure Plans. The final reports from the EHNS are currently being produced.

The steering committee overseeing the implementation of the EHNS will review the process and future directions for the EHNS by December.

Funding for the survey is shared between the Health Department of WA, the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Housing and Works (the funding pool).

In 2004 the EHNS steering committee (of which AHID is a member) has liaised with the Institute for Child Health Research to inform data analysis from the WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey (2002). It is intended that data from the EHNS will be used to support the analysis from the WACHS. The first volume of the WACHS was released in May 2004 and the DHW has contributed funding towards future WACHS analysis.

Indigenous Housing Management System (IHMS). The IHMS is a housing management software package developed by the DHW to assist with property and tenancy management. Throughout 2003/04 continued development and trialling of the product in communities. A roll out timetable has been established for 2004/05. IHMS provides capacity for dwelling and community level data collection and reporting and potentially could become a key source of property and tenancy management data for program planning, reporting, measuring outcomes and analysis purposes. An independent evaluation of the Fixing Housing for Better Health survey fix process and the IHMS as a potential data source is being conducted in 2004/05.

Quantify and Cost Backlog Of Unmet Needs In Discrete Communities and Town Reserves. Preliminary assessment and costings were undertaken in November 2002 by the AHID. These were based on CHINS data. Costings will be refined in 2004 using EHNS data. These costings were included in the draft environmental health State Cabinet submission and were also used to inform briefings to Treasury.

Support A National Indigenous Research Program. The DHW will contribute funding for research on Aboriginal housing issues through the Australian Housing Urban Research Institute (AHURI) program. In 2003/04 Western Australia submitted a proposal for research into community population mobility / migration issues and trends to be considered as a priority. There is some preliminary evidence to suggest stagnation and even decline in community populations overall, although insufficient qualitative and quantitative data to assess the implications of this. It is an important issue for WA given that an estimated 28% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander West Australians live in discrete communities or town reserves. The proposal was identified by AHURI as a research priority and a Queensland based team has one the bid to conduct the research during 2004/05.

WA is also involved on the user group of an AHURI research project into Aboriginal public and community housing access issues.

9.4 IMPROVE COORDINATION, ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT.

Funds Pooling and Centralised Program Management. The timetable for the phasing in of the pooling of Commonwealth, State and ATSIC funds was agreed in July 2002 with partial pooling occurring in 2002/03 and 2003/04¹² (with the transfer of allocations from the ATSIC Community Housing and Infrastructure Program). Full pooling has been achieved for the 2004/05 financial year (with the transfer of the capital arm of the Remote Area Essential Services Program and the National Aboriginal Housing Strategy program).

Under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Agreement the State (through the AHID within the DHW) is responsible for program management and administration of the pooled funds. This continues into 2004/05.

The AHID continues to refine its staff structure and program arrangements, following the 2003 review, to meet its additional administration, compliance and program management responsibilities under the Agreement. With full pooling of funds from 2004/05, the staff structure will become more established with the consolidation of specialist positions created to coordinate strategies to improve:

- housing management and governance;
- capacity building and training;
- responses to urban housing needs and demands; and
- policy and planning outcomes.

Independent Reviews of the urban tenancy support programs managed by the AHID (and funded from the pool), the Management Support Program (communities) and the Remote Area Essential Services Program (communities) were undertaken during 2003/04. The recommendations of these reviews are currently being examined by AHID.

¹² See AHID Operational Plans 2002/03 and 2003/04.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the AHID (as program manager), and ATSIC Regional Councils were developed in 2003-2004. AHIC endorsed a draft version in February 2004, for distribution to all Regional Councils. This followed extensive consultations between the stakeholders to ensure a common understanding of operational, policy and planning frameworks, standards of service delivery and roles and responsibilities of all parties. To date, only the Western Desert Regional Council has signed the MOU.

Resourcing. The AHIC will ensure that the AHID, as program manager, is adequately resourced to undertake its responsibilities under the Agreement. It is important that funds are provided for consultancies and research to assist ATSIC Regional Councils with the development of their RHIP's.

9.5 IMPROVE MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION.

National Reporting Framework (NRF). The NRF is the mechanism through which outputs and outcomes under the Agreement will be reported. The framework for the NRF, including performance benchmarks and targets, was developed during 2002 by the Commonwealth, ATSIC and AHID. The first NRF document was finalised in October 2002, although a number of data gaps existed and some benchmarks still need to be developed. AHID, through representation on the National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee (NIHIC) is participating in the refinement of NRF indicators.

The AHIC supports processes at the national level to rationalise all reporting requirements (eg. for CSHA and the Agreement) and establish a nationally consistent approach (the National Reporting Framework). Senior officers from the AHID will continue to be actively involved in these initiatives through the Standing Committee On Indigenous Housing.

The AHIC commits to a transparent accountability regime and publishes all key reporting and policy documents on the DHW / AHID Internet site at www.dhw.wa.gov.au. These include the Strategic Plan, the Agreement, the NRF, Operational Plan, research findings, discussion papers and policy documents.

Compliance Initiatives. As program manager the AHID has responsibility to ensure that funds allocated or awarded through tenders to communities, community organizations, businesses, consultants and other stakeholders are used effectively and for the intended purposes. The expectations on communities by multiple Government agencies are often onerous and complex. Many communities struggle with these requirements. Many lack the resources, staff expertise, the accounting and data systems to enable them to meet their accountability requirements.

There are no easy solutions given the number of funding agencies and other stakeholders involved with communities. For its part the AHID will continue to roll out the IHMS and has also restructured and enhanced its finance section. The level of resourcing required to ensure effective compliance will be monitored by the AHID.

In addition the AHIC will continue to commit funds to:

- housing management and governance training;
- top up salaries for community CEO's, administrators and housing officers;
- salaries for housing officers;

- administrative support and
- a contracted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities Recruitment and Professional Assistance Service.

Agreement Evaluation. The requirement to independently evaluate the coordination, planning, administration and program management arrangements under the Indigenous Housing Agreement in 2006 has been overtaken by recent events. A new Agreement will be entered into from 2005/06.

SIGNED for and on behalf of the Parties by:

HON NICK GRIFFITHS LLB MLC
MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND WORKS

Date:

SIGNED for and on behalf of the Parties by:

MR LIONEL QUARTERMAINE
A/CHAIRMAN
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMISSION

Date:

SIGNED for and on behalf of the Parties by:

HON KAY PATTERSON
MINISTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Date:

CHAIRPERSON'S FORWARD – OCTOBER 2003

All stakeholders under the *Agreement for the provision of Housing and Infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Western Australia July 2002- June 2007* have important roles to play if the intentions of this Strategic Plan are to be realised. A cooperative and willing spirit will be essential to meet the challenges ahead. Although working together is not new to stakeholders, the Agreement establishes formal roles and responsibilities which fundamentally changes previous relationships.

Within this context the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council will play a vitally important leadership and brokerage role. The AHIC has the responsibility to ensure that programs and services are delivered within a coherent strategic framework. This Plan is the starting point for this to occur. It will be updated annually as new initiatives and strategies are developed and implemented to improve housing conditions, housing management, and training and skills development outcomes.



The magnitude of the problems in our communities cannot be understated. There is a serious crisis in relation to governance and the ongoing management and maintenance of the housing stock. There is a continuing backlog of unaddressed housing need, a reflection of insufficient funding over many years. Employment and training opportunities remain extremely limited, consigning many Aboriginal people to a future of welfare dependency. Added to this is the growing pressures and issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban living environments.

We cannot afford to continue “business as usual.” The AHIC needs to look forward and have the courage to question the existing paradigms. Is it reasonable to expect individual communities to self manage the complexity of issues and problems that plague communities, particularly where the majority of Aboriginal communities in Western Australia are tiny settlements? Are the current institutional frameworks for program management and service delivery under the Agreement flexible enough to optimise outcomes, or are there other models that might be more effective which we should work towards? Are current strategies and commitments to increase State and Local Government responsibility for the normalisation of essential and municipal services sufficiently resourced and comprehensive enough to effect substantial change during the period of the Agreement?

It is the intention of the AHIC over the next four years to seriously investigate alternative models for the ongoing control and management of Aboriginal housing and infrastructure programs, grants funds and assets. We must find ways in which we can better combine these resources and assets, and use these to leverage additional sources of revenue independent of government grants. True partnerships between Aboriginal people and Government agencies will never exist where the relationship is fundamentally conditioned by “welfare” or “grant” dependency.

The AHIC is also committed to a much greater emphasis on strategic sustainability initiatives, including regional solutions to service delivery, especially in relation to housing management and essential services in discrete communities and Town Reserves. Although “community specific” initiatives will continue it is important that more cost effective, external and “business” oriented models are developed and supported where long term training and employment opportunities are generated for

local Aboriginal people. At the same time long term solutions to power procurement and provision of water and waste water services in discrete communities have to be found.

The strategic importance of “normalisation” initiatives in Town Reserves is acknowledged in the Plan. However, a renewed urgency is required and the concept of normalisation needs to be broadened to include management and governance arrangements. More fundamental still is the need to address the long term future of town reserves. In ten and twenty years from now, do we still envisage there being 45 to 50 urban reserves, increasingly surrounded by mainstream suburbs? Do we risk entrenching these communities as poverty ghettos? Are there better uses we can make of the reserves and their assets? What are the aspirations of the people that live in these communities? The AHIC will undertake a comprehensive consultation with all Town Reserve communities that will inform a long term blueprint for the future.

The poor track record in Western Australia in achieving Aboriginal home ownership is acknowledged. AHIC has identified this as an issue of primary importance, and as such has committed to the development of a separate Aboriginal Home Ownership Strategic Plan to be completed early in 2004.

In relation to other urban environments many regional centres and towns are experiencing significant increases in their Aboriginal populations. The AHIC has been careful to ensure that urban housing policies and programs are taken into account in the development of this Strategic Plan and it is anticipated that this will be an area of significant policy and strategy development over the next four to five years.

Finally, AHIC’s primary aim during the period of the Agreement is to realign the strategic framework for the long term. The vision is for increased control over Aboriginal housing and infrastructure programs, assets and services by Aboriginal stakeholders through an independent legal entity or authority together with increased “mainstream” delivery and responsibility for essential and municipal services. If AHIC can achieve acceptance of this paradigm shift by 2007 by all key stakeholders, then our cooperative efforts under the framework of the Agreement will not be in vain.

PETER YU
CHAIRPERSON
ABORIGINAL HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL

October 2003

APPENDIX A: BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING TO 2010

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING TO 2010

Housing Ministers' Conference 4 May 2001

The Vision

A VISION FOR BETTER ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING

- ***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia will have:***
 - ***access to affordable and appropriate housing which contributes to their health and well being;***
 - ***access to housing which is safe, well-designed and appropriately maintained.***
- ***There will be a vigorous and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing sector, operating in partnership with the Commonwealth and State, Territory and Local Governments.***
- ***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing policies and programs will be developed and administered in consultation and cooperation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and with respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.***

The Challenge

As the new century begins, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still typically endure much lower standards of housing than other Australians. Redressing this unacceptable situation will be one of the important challenges for public policy over the next decade. It will require a sustained and concerted effort by governments in close partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Ministers, together with the Commonwealth Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, affirm their commitment to a national effort to make a real difference in housing and environmental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

This document outlines the new directions for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing over the next ten years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations have played an important role in providing housing in all parts of Australia, and under the new directions their role will be further strengthened. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control and management of housing enables communities to make or influence decisions about their future. It also facilitates community ownership of housing

resources, contributing to the economic independence of communities.

Desired outcomes

The new directions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing aim to achieve the following outcomes:

better housing: housing that meets agreed standards, is appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and contributes to their health and well being;

better housing services: services that are well managed and sustainable;

more housing: growth in the number of houses to address both the backlog of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need and emerging needs of a growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population;

improved partnerships: ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are fully involved in the planning, decision making and delivery of services by governments;

greater effectiveness and efficiency: ensuring that assistance is properly directed to meeting objectives, and that resources are being used to best advantage;

improved performance linked to accountability: program performance reporting based on national data collection systems and good information management; and

coordination of services: a 'whole of government' approach that ensures greater coordination of housing and housing-related services linked to improved health and well being outcomes.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

This part sets out the principles, objectives and implementation strategies for achieving substantial and enduring improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes over the next decade.

Principles

The guiding principles for achieving the vision for better Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing are:

1. Governments and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will work collaboratively in policy development, planning, service delivery and evaluation.
2. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing sector is recognised as a vital partner in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing provision and will be involved in all aspects of service planning and delivery.
3. Best practice will be encouraged in service coordination, housing provision and asset management.
4. Adequate resources will be provided to support the vision.
5. Policy will promote an environment that builds and strengthens community capacity and involvement and is responsive to local needs and initiatives.

6. Self-management and socio-economic independence will be advanced through employment, training and enterprise development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in housing and infrastructure construction, maintenance and management.
7. Responsibility for achieving sustainable housing will be shared by those who provide housing and those who use housing.
8. All stakeholders will be accountable for outcomes and for the proper use of public funds.

Objectives and Strategies

The Governments of Australia in developing the new directions are committed to achieving the following objectives through the implementation strategies outlined.

Objectives

There are four objectives for achieving the vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing:

1. Identify and address unmet housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. Improve the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations and involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in planning and service delivery.
3. Achieve safe, healthy and sustainable housing.
4. Coordinate program administration.

Each objective has a number of implementation strategies.

Implementation strategies

1. Identify and address unmet housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- 1.1 Develop and use a multi-measure approach to quantifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need, and to assist in informing resource allocation at national, State, Territory and regional levels.
- 1.2 Develop an effective balance between new housing provision, upgrading and maintenance, and housing management.
- 1.3 Ensure policies, plans and service provision take account of the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities with regard to: the mix of housing type, tenure and location; the desire for home ownership; cultural, social and environmental factors; and people's life stages and special needs.
- 1.4 Continue to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to mainstream public and community housing programs.
- 1.5 Implement the *Agreement on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Information*, including data collection to support national performance

indicators, a national minimum data set and reporting systems that will facilitate performance appraisal at the national, State, Territory, regional and local levels.

1.6 Maintain a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing research program and clearing-house.

1.7 Encourage development of improved technologies for housing and infrastructure in remote areas, and dissemination of information on developments.

2. Improve the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations and involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in planning and service delivery.

2.1 Implement the *National Skills Development Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Management*.

2.2 Link training opportunities with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing sector's need for skilled employees in housing and project management and administration.

2.3 Maximise opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be involved in housing construction and maintenance, including: investigating a tender preference system and building incentives into the tender process; and voluntary registers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander companies and tradespeople, and companies that employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

2.4 Develop principles and standards for service delivery by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations, and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are fully consulted about, and involved in, planning and delivery of housing and related services.

2.5 Encourage streamlining of the sector and provide incentives to organisations to achieve effective and efficient management practices.

2.6 Support organisations to develop housing management plans containing: objectives for housing assistance delivery; an asset management plan, including a cyclical maintenance program; a tenancy management plan, including client consultation and feedback mechanisms, and appropriate information and training for tenants to ensure tenants' responsibilities are understood and their rights protected; rent collection policies and systems; and financial practices and reporting systems that link resources to outcomes.

2.7 Outsource tenancy management and support services, where practicable, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to foster enterprise development and employment opportunities.

2.8 Foster the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector to represent and advocate its own interests.

2.9 Investigate recurrent funding options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations that are linked to effective asset management and

recognise regional differences.

3. Achieve safe, healthy and sustainable housing

3.1 Target resources to reduce the backlog of maintenance and upgrades in order to improve health and safety.

3.2 Implement the *National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing*.

3.3 Implement the *National Strategic Asset Management Best Practice Principles*.

4. Coordinate program administration

4.1 Finalise and implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing agreements between the Commonwealth, State/Territory housing agencies, ATSIC and the Torres Strait Regional Authority (where appropriate).

4.2 Maximise outcomes by coordinating planning and delivery across governments, ATSIC, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (where appropriate) and communities with respect to: infrastructure programs; primary and environmental health programs; mainstream public and community housing; the income support system; community services programs; Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP); education, training and employment programs; and communication technology.

4.3 Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment policies in State, Territory and Commonwealth housing agencies.

Evaluation and Review

In order to monitor the progress of the implementation of the new directions and make appropriate program delivery decisions, it is agreed that:

All jurisdictions will work to improve availability of good quality data through the *Agreement on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Information*.

All jurisdictions will develop and implement reporting systems that will facilitate performance appraisal at the national, State/Territory, regional and local levels.

All jurisdictions will implement a regular program of evaluations of all aspects of the strategy that will assist in ensuring that problems are promptly addressed, assistance is properly directed and resources are used efficiently.

All jurisdictions will report annually to Housing Ministers and the Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs against the desired outcomes defined in this strategy, and make recommendations for action to address any shortfalls in performance.

Ministers will ensure that a full-scale review of the new directions is undertaken in 2005. The review process will provide for consultation with key stakeholders, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

APPENDIX B: PROGRESS REPORTING ON BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE: INDIGENOUS HOUSING TO 2010

Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010 (BBF) identifies seven BBF desired outcomes. Jurisdictions report annually to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on progress against the seven outcomes, via the National Reporting Framework. Jurisdictions respond to 38 indicators mapped to the seven outcomes as per the tables below. Where relevant, jurisdictions report on both community housing and State-owned and managed housing.

Outcome 1: Better Housing – Housing that meets agreed standards, is appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and contributes to their health and well-being

Whether new houses meet state and territory minimum standards	5
Whether upgrades meet State and Territory minimum standards	6
Proportion of improvised dwellings	2
Proportion of dwellings needing major repairs	3
Proportion of dwellings needing replacement	4
Proportion of clients satisfied with a) amenity b) location of their dwelling	35
Proportion of overcrowded households across all tenure types	23
Total and average number of additional bedrooms required across all tenure types	22
Proportion of households paying less than 25% of income in rent	24
Proportion of communities not connected to a) water b) sewerage, c) electricity	7
Proportion of dwellings not connected to – a) water, b) sewerage c) electricity	8
Proportion of dwellings meeting the nine FHBH healthy living standards	9

Outcome 2 Better Housing Services: Services that are well managed and sustainable

Proportion of dwellings needing replacement	4
Proportion of clients satisfied with quality of the service provided	36
Rent collected as a percentage of total rent charged (rent arrears)	11
Average weekly rent collected	10
Proportion of organisations that have a housing management plan	27
What jurisdictions are doing to assist ICHOs in developing and implementing housing management plans	28
Total and average amount spent on maintenance each year	12,13
Maintenance expenditure as a proportion of rent collected	14
Proportion of employees in ICHOs who have completed accredited training in housing management and related areas	29
Proportion of employees in ICHOs who are undertaking appropriate training in housing management and related areas	30
Recurrent to capital expenditure ratio	15
Number of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations	26
Proportion of organisations using rent deduction schemes	38

Outcome 3 More Housing: Growth in the number of houses to address both the backlog of Indigenous housing need emerging needs of a growing population

Proportion of overcrowded households across all tenure types	23
Total and average number of additional bedrooms required across all tenure types	22
Proportion of households paying less than 25% of income in rent	24
Proportion of Indigenous households housed by different tenure type	19
Proportion of households accessing mainstream housing services that are Indigenous	20
Total number of dwellings targeted to Indigenous people	1
Proportion of Indigenous people who are homeless	21

Outcome 4 Improved partnerships: Ensuring Indigenous people are fully involved in planning, decision making and delivery of services

Proportion of employees in ICHOs who have completed accredited training in housing management and related areas	29
Proportion of employees in ICHOs who are undertaking appropriate training in housing management and related areas	30
Recurrent to capital expenditure ratio	15
Strategies and outcomes to increase Indigenous employment in housing services	32
Mechanisms for Indigenous input to planning, decision making and delivery of services	33
Proportion of people employed in housing management who are Indigenous	31

Outcome 5 Greater effectiveness and efficiency: Ensuring that assistance is properly directed to meeting objectives and that resources are being used to best advantage

Proportion of clients satisfied with quality of the service provided	36
Proportion of Indigenous households housed by different tenure type	19
Proportion of households accessing mainstream housing services that are Indigenous	20
Total number of dwellings targeted to Indigenous people	1
Allocation of resources on the basis of need	25
Occupancy rates	17
Turnaround time	18

Outcome 6 Improved performance linked to accountability: Program performance reporting based on national data collection systems and good information management

Proportion of indicators (not Census or CHINS) that jurisdictions could report on	37
Average cost for providing assistance per dwelling	16

Outcome 7 Co-ordination of services: A whole of government approach that ensures greater co-ordination of housing and housing related services linked to improved health and well-being outcomes

Co-ordination of housing and other services that seek to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous people	34
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The National Reporting Framework is regularly reviewed and the indicators refined by the National Indigenous housing Information Implementation Committee (NIHIC). AHID provides Western Australia's representative on NIHIC.

Annual reporting over the life of *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010* will ultimately provide progress trends which are comparable across Australia. This year, national baseline data is being finalised, to provide a solid foundation for future trend analysis.

Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council

ABORIGINAL HOME OWNERSHIP

Strategic Plan

“The poor track record in Western Australia in achieving Aboriginal home ownership is acknowledged. AHIC has identified this as an issue of primary importance, and as such has committed to the development of a separate Aboriginal Home Ownership Strategic Plan to be completed early in 2004.”

Peter Yu, Chairperson AHIC

Source: AHIC Strategic Plan 2003 - 2007

February 2004

INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council (AHIC) on 8 October 2003 requested the development of an Aboriginal Home Ownership Strategic Plan with the objective of fostering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home ownership in Western Australia.

A Steering Committee has been formed consisting of representatives from ATSI and DHW to develop the Aboriginal Home Ownership Strategic Plan and progress strategies over a 12-month period. The committee will report progress and review strategies at each meeting of AHIC.

Please note that where the word “Aboriginal” is used in this document, this should be construed as including Torres Strait Islanders.

VISION

For Aboriginal Western Australians to match the home ownership rates of non-Aboriginal Western Australians.

MISSION

To foster sustainable home ownership among Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

BACKGROUND

Only 7.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Western Australians fully own their home – a further 19.1% have a mortgage. The overall rate of home ownership (27%) is the lowest in Australia, apart from the Northern Territory (14%). This compares with 69.5% of non-Aboriginal home ownership nationally.

The Department of Housing and Works currently operates the Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme (AHOS), a shared-equity home loan scheme which has traditionally lent approximately \$6m pa to 60 new households. More than 400 households have received AHOS loans since the scheme’s inception in 1995. The budget allocation for ATSI’s Home Ownership Program (HOP) in Western Australia is approximately \$8m per annum.

Home ownership is an important indicator of wealth and savings with positive relationships to income and employment outcomes. It also provides a secure asset base contributing to financial stability and overcoming disadvantage for Aboriginal people. The Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision has therefore identified home ownership as a key indicator to overcoming economic disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Factors contributing to the low rates of home ownership amongst Aboriginal people include:

- lower average income levels. This factor has been exacerbated by the recent rapid increase in property prices, particularly in the Metropolitan area;
- institutional obstacles which may constrain Aboriginal people from purchasing the property in which they currently reside;
- the significant numbers of Aboriginal Western Australians living on communally owned or controlled land, thereby removing the option of individual home ownership; and
- the uncoordinated promotion and delivery of services by Federal and State agencies and non-government organisations.

OUTCOMES

The Aboriginal Home Ownership Strategic Plan will achieve the four following outcomes:

1. A coordinated approach to the marketing of home ownership to Aboriginal people.
2. Home loan schemes developed to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.
3. Availability of public and community sector rental housing for purchase by Aboriginal tenants.
4. Aboriginal land tenure securable by credit providers.

ROGER GUINERY
KEYSTART POLICY DIRECTOR

16 February 2004

OUTCOMES

1. A coordinated approach to the marketing of home ownership to Aboriginal people.

The primary focus is to develop a coordinated approach to the marketing of home ownership to Aboriginal people, and to the delivery of home loans. Potential benefits of this coordinated approach include:

- greater efficiency and effectiveness of marketing and promotion (reduced duplication of effort);
- focus on promoting home ownership rather than an individual scheme;
- enabling potential borrowers to select the scheme which is best for them;
- cross-referral of borrowers who cannot be assisted by the scheme they first contact; and
- ensuring Aboriginal people are aware of their opportunities to purchase their current rental opportunities (Homeswest or Aboriginal Corporation).

The outcome will be achieved through the following tasks:

No.	Task	Who	Date	Status
1.1	Establish joint Aboriginal Home Ownership Steering Committee.	DHW/ ATSIC	31/12/03	Done. Meeting monthly
1.2	Identify key locations for Aboriginal home purchases by analysing recent lending activity.	Steering Committee	27/02/04	In progress
1.3	Develop joint brochure to promote home ownership schemes including AHOS, ATSIC loans and the First Home Owners Scheme to be distributed through key organisations such as Homeswest, Aboriginal Corporations and the Aboriginal Employment & Development Commission.	Steering Committee	31/03/04	In progress
1.4	Monitor inter-agency referrals for Aboriginal loan applicants to increase awareness of loan schemes available and ensure that, where one scheme is unable to help, assistance is provided by another scheme.	Steering Committee	30/01/04	Monitoring commenced
1.5	Develop joint marketing program featuring joint workshops on home ownership and the coordinated use of the media.	Steering Committee	Prelim. Sched: 31/03/04	In progress
1.6	<i>Undertake cooperative marketing with Aboriginal Corporations to encourage tenants to purchase their rental home from the Corporation.</i>	Steering Committee	31/03/04	To be commenced

1.7	Promotion of Aboriginal home ownership in DHW New Living projects through participation at New Living planning sessions.	DHW	31/12/03	Done.
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2. Home loan schemes developed to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

Product development focussed on developing home loan schemes which are relevant to the needs of Aboriginal people aspiring to home ownership.

The outcome will be achieved through the following tasks:

No.	Task	Who	Date	Status
2.1	Restructure the Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme (AHOS) to enable higher referrals on shared-equity loans, at the discretion of the Loan Counsellors, and greater loan portability for existing borrowers who wish to move home.	DHW	31/12/03	Done
2.2	Provide low-deposit loan scheme (not shared equity) run for Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people.	DHW	31/12/03	Done. Aboriginal people can now apply for low-deposit home loans of up to \$250,000 financed by Keystart
2.3	Establish AHOS Branch as a one-stop shop for Aboriginal applicants and borrowers of AHOS and Keystart loans regardless of their income levels.	DHW	31/12/03	Done
2.4	Comparison of DHW and ATSIC schemes to identify potential gaps in the combined range of products and strategies to rectify those gaps.	Steering Committee	30/06/04	In progress
2.5	Financial leveraging by DHW and 3 rd parties to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase shared-equity base, and • increase income limits for DHW equity participation. 	DHW	25/06/04	In progress. DHW is seeking potential providers of shared equity to further develop shared-equity schemes for Aboriginal homebuyers.
2.6	Return-to-Country Scheme ¹³	DHW	31/03/04	Submission to State Housing Commission in progress.

¹³ The Return-to-Country scheme aims to assist Aboriginal people return to the towns in which they were raised and/or still have family connections. The scheme would take the form of a shared-equity scheme in which Aboriginal people eligible for public rental accommodation can purchase a home.

3. Availability of public and community sector rental housing for purchase by Aboriginal tenants.

The primary focus will be on encouraging rental accommodation providers to make available properties for sale to their tenants. Key groups include Homeswest, the Aboriginal Corporations and CHC-funded organisations. Options would include 100% purchase and phased-purchase as per the DHW's GoodStart model.

The outcome will be achieved through the following tasks:

No.	Task	Who	Date	Status
3.1	Encourage property sales to tenants by Homeswest (visit regional offices).	DHW	25/06/04	To be commenced
3.2	Review discounts on sale prices of Homeswest homes.	DHW	26/06/04	To be commenced
3.3	Encourage property sales to tenants by Aboriginal Corporations (eg. SAC, WAC and MRAC).	DHW/ ATSIC	25/06/04	To be commenced
3.4	Encourage property sales to tenants by CHC-funded organisations.	DHW	25/06/04	To be commenced

4. Aboriginal land tenure securable by credit providers.

The nature of the land tenure of Aboriginal people has been identified as a constraint on home purchase. Home purchasers prefer and lenders generally insist on freehold tenure. This creates two challenges:

- to review Aboriginal land tenure so that it is utilisable as security for home loans; and
- to amend lending practices by credit providers to accept as security properties which do not include freehold land, eg. leasehold.

The outcome will be achieved through the following tasks:

No.	Task	Who	Date	Status
4.1	Review land rights and land tenure so that land can be used as security	DHW	25/06/04	To be commenced. Specialist resources required.