

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

## Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (Housing - SSP)

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# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

## 1. Date Approved by Joint Council

The Joint Council approved the Housing - SSP on 26 August 2022

## 2. Executive Summary

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states that Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions in several areas including housing (UN, 2007). Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Agreement) all signatories have agreed to Target 9, that 88 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will live in appropriate housing that is not overcrowded by 2031.

All parties under Clause 43 of the Agreement acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations are better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are often preferred over mainstream services. Building the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled housing sector (the Sector) under Priority Reform Two is a key pillar to achieving this target.

All signatories to the Agreement recognise the many dedicated and passionate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have created and driven the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations (ATSICCHOs) in regional, urban and remote communities for generations. This three-year Housing - SSP provides a pathway forward to build on these efforts by broadening and elevating the capacity of the Sector. This will provide a platform for governments and ATSICCHOs to continue to implement measures and to increase the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

The Housing – SSP was developed in consultation with the Sector, who advised on the challenges and highlighted areas of opportunity. Establishing and building upon these relationships with the Sector is vital for building trust and establishing a foundation for achieving positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in partnership with the Sector and Governments.

This Housing – SSP outlines 14 priority actions to focus on over the next three years to transform and grow the sector. These actions are the result of targeted consultation with ATSICCHOs across Australia. The peak body, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA), will be instrumental in supporting this transition and working closely with the Sector, relevant state and territory peaks and governments. There are many inspiring stories we have heard through the consultations with the Sector which forms our view that a number of ATSICCHOs are resilient and well governed organisations.

The purpose of the Housing – SSP is to ensure all ATSICCHOs are in a position of strength and able to provide a viable, culturally appropriate community housing sector that meets the housing needs of tenants, families and communities while providing assurance for government and stakeholders. To provide ongoing sustainability and capitalise on these governance gains, the Housing – SSP is offered as a resource to be used over the next three years to prioritise, partner and negotiate beneficial sector-strengthening strategies. This includes sustainably growing the size of the sector, creating fair and equitable access to integrated services contracts and associated funding, and considering the Sector holistically within the housing continuum. Together these programs and services can strengthen the Sector and provide economies of scale.

The Housing – SSP contributes to addressing needs regarding homelessness. Homelessness is a major concern for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians account for 3.6 percent of the overall population, they account for over 20 percent of homeless people according to the 2016 Census (ABS, 2016). The Sector can play a significant role in reducing homelessness by providing a secure home and culturally appropriate support services that will enable positive outcomes. A number of ATSICCHOs want to broaden their service offering to include homelessness services. Supporting these organisations to broaden their service offering could provide them with an additional funding stream to support the Sector's sustainability.

To better support the existing workforce and build capability, the Sector requires a national workforce development plan that identifies the short to long-term priorities. This includes improving the capacity and skill of ATSICCHO board members, senior staff and housing workers. The Housing – SSP also identifies the importance of strong governance across the sector by increasing and supporting ATSICCHO registration under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) or State based registration systems.

Investing in safe, secure and healthy homes can have a positive return on investment in other areas such as health, disability, mental health, education and employment, and crisis support services. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the negative health impacts of overcrowded homes, particularly in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Good environmental health can influence life expectancy, child mortality, disability, chronic disease, and family and community violence. It provides a secure and stable foundation from which individuals can access services and build their lives upon. The Sector consultations also highlighted that reliable, sustained funding is a key factor to ensure the Sector can build its capacity to deliver services to people who need it.

The Sector continues to experience challenges in managing properties and supporting tenants and families. This is particularly relevant where properties were provided under historical government Welfare Board policies and the eventual responsibility of ATSICCHOs to provide property and tenancy management (i.e., rent policy and collection and repairs, maintenance, upgrade and capital replacements). Key actions around capital infrastructure and a consistent funding model are designed to encourage new and creative solutions to address issues such as longer-term tenure and home ownership opportunities.

As part of a broader housing continuum that includes social and affordable housing, home ownership offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across many income levels the opportunity to create independence. It creates incentives and builds motivation to secure housing outcomes that has implications for intergenerational stability, health and financial independence. Affordability is becoming more challenging and schemes like shared equity

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and home ownership on lands held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations (community land trusts) will be explored over the longer term to increase home ownership options. The transition to home ownership for families in ATSI CCHO managed properties would also enable increased stock numbers through new acquisitions derived from the sale of some properties.

The Housing – SSP sets out an ambitious agenda to build on the good work already happening within the jurisdictions and individual organisations, in order to grow and develop the Sector as a whole. This represents the starting point of a new partnership and will be an ongoing process that continues to evolve through ongoing consultation.

## 3. National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Agreement was endorsed in July 2020 and developed in partnership between the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory Governments, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks) and the Australian Local Government Association.

At the centre of the Agreement are four Priority Reforms that focus on changing the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They are:

1. Shared decision-making: building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap.
2. Building the community-controlled sector: building formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to deliver services to support Closing the Gap.
3. Improving mainstream institutions: systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data: shared access to location specific data and information to support shared decision-making

Under Priority Reform Two the Parties agreed to identify sectors for joint national strengthening effort every three years through Sector Strengthening Plans, which will identify actions against the strong sector elements outlined in the National Agreement. The initial sectors are: early childhood care and development; housing; health; and disability (Clauses 48-50). These sectors were chosen due to their potential to impact on a range of Closing the Gap targets and enable positive structural change in the most immediate and relevant policy areas. The Parties may consider pursuing joined up effort in other sectors (Clause 54).

Clause 45 of the National Agreement states that elements of a strong sector are where:

1. there is sustained capacity building and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations which deliver certain services and address issues through a set of clearly defined standards or requirements, such as an agreed model of care;
2. there is a dedicated and identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce (that complements a range of other professions and expertise) and where people working in community-controlled sectors have wage parity based on workforce modelling commensurate with need;
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations which deliver common services are supported by a Peak Body, governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board, which has strong governance and policy development and influencing capacity;
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations which deliver common services have a dedicated, reliable and consistent funding model designed to suit the types of services required by communities, responsive to the needs of those receiving the services, and is developed in consultation with the relevant Peak body.

This Housing – SSP outlines high level priorities and actions at a national level, which all stakeholders, through Joint Council, agree to in-principle. All Parties, through shared decision-making processes, will implement the Plans and include their specific actions, including funding commitments, in their annual updates to their Closing the Gap Implementation Plans.

All Parties, in collaboration with stakeholders, may prioritise different actions at different times, depending on the requirements of the Sector in their jurisdiction. There may be jurisdictional differences in actions, depending on individual commitments and related progress against the Plans.

Cabinet and budget processes are part of the approval processes for the Closing the Gap Implementation Plans/annual reports and they are the point where all Parties will seek authority for their specific actions.

## 4. Governance of the Housing - SSP

### Partnerships and Shared Decision Making

In line with the Agreement, a partnership approach between the Sector and governments is critical to the delivery of the Housing – SSP for the Sector. A Housing Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group was established to oversee development of this Plan for agreement by Joint Council. The Housing SSPWG was co-chaired by NATSIHA and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services and included representatives from the Coalition of Peaks and all governments.

Joint Council is responsible for monitoring implementation of the National Agreement, including progress by the Parties. Jurisdictional annual Closing the Gap reporting, and their review by Joint Council, are the key accountability mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Sector Strengthening Plan.

All Parties to the National Agreement will include in their Jurisdictional Closing the Gap Implementation Plans and Annual Reports information on action taken to strengthen the community-controlled sector (Clause 47). All Parties' Closing the Gap Implementation Plans and annual reports will set out and report on specific jurisdictional actions, including funding commitments.

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In their annual reports, jurisdictions, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, may prioritise implementation of different Sector Strengthening Plan actions at different times, depending on the requirements of the sector in a particular jurisdiction.

In line with the principles of shared decision-making under clause 32 of the Agreement, the ongoing governance and monitoring of the Housing – SSP will support governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to make decisions together, by consensus. Governments are committed to sharing data and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, and ensuring all parties have adequate time to understand the implications of decisions.

Under Priority Reform One of the Agreement, a joined-up approach between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives will be established across five policy priority areas, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing. The purpose of the policy partnerships is for all Parties to work together to identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, reduce gaps and duplication and improve outcomes across all the commitments in the Agreement relating to the Sector. The Policy Partnership will need to be engaged on any policy reforms proposed as part of this Sector Strengthening Plan.

## 5. Review of the Housing – SSP

The Housing – SSP is for three years initially. Progress on implementation of this Housing – SSP will be reviewed annually through PWG and Joint Council consideration of progress reporting. PWG and Joint Council will consider at that time whether any updates are required to the Plan and highlight key areas where the Parties can work together to achieve shared outcomes.

## 6. Reporting on the Housing – SSP

All Governments and the community-controlled sector will report on progress against actions in the Plan in their Closing the Gap implementation plans and associated annual reporting. The template for Closing the Gap Implementation Plan annual reports includes reporting on progress of each Plan.

In line with the National Agreement, a partnership approach between the community-controlled sector and governments is critical to delivery of the Housing – SSP.

It is expected that jurisdictions will engage early with Peaks and community-controlled organisations as part of their annual report preparation and budget processes and that the views of community-controlled organisations are reflected in these reports. The Coalition of Peaks also prepares an annual report, which may include more in-depth analysis of any community-controlled sector views on Sector Strengthening Plan implementation.

It has been consistently stated in the consultations with the Sector that they are ‘overburdened’ with monitoring and compliance regimes, therefore reporting regarding the Housing – SSP should not place any additional requirements or responsibilities onto the Sector.

## 7. Sector Snapshot: key challenges; relevant data; timeframes

A secure and stable home provides individuals and their families with the stable foundation to build their lives upon (AIHW 2021). Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are over-represented among people who are homeless and those seeking assistance with housing (AIHW 2021). While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians account for 3.6 percent of the overall population, they account for over 20 percent of homeless people according to the 2016 Census (ABS 2016). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are also more likely to be living in social housing, with 34% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in social housing in 2018-19 compared to 3% of all Australian households (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018-19). These statistics highlight the structural disadvantage facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and emphasises the importance of the Sector in delivering culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Access to secure housing leads to better outcomes for individuals while also reducing the burden on government services. Housing has positive flow-on effects to all areas of social services, including health, homelessness, education and employment inequality. For example, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) analysis on the return on investment for social housing in the Australian Capital Territory found that the median costs of health, justice, and welfare for tenants in community housing is around \$28,700 per annum, while similar costs for those who were homeless is around \$44,000 (AHURI 2021). This means that costs of service use for those in stable housing were around \$15,300 per person per year lower than for those who were homeless.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs vary across urban, rural and remote localities. In general terms, remote and regional housing need is characterised by a need for substantial expansion of available housing stock, reflecting the limited options for communities to pursue other forms of housing tenure, and to respond to the chronic levels of overcrowding and inadequate standards of housing. In remote regions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be living in social housing than those in non-remote areas (71% compared with 25%) and are less likely to own their own home (11% compared with 36%) (AIHW 2021). Across Australia, around 31% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently own their own home with or without a mortgage (AIHW 2021) in comparison to 66% of mainstream Australians who own their own home with or without a mortgage.

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**Table 1: Tenure type of Indigenous Australians**

| Tenure                   | Indigenous Australians <sup>1</sup> | All Australians <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Own home outright        | 10.2%                               | 29.5%                        |
| Own home with a mortgage | 20.9%                               | 36.7%                        |
| Private renters          | 32.7%                               | 27.1%                        |
| Social housing*          | 33.6%                               | 3.1%                         |

Notes: \* 'Social Housing' includes Public housing, Community Housing, State owned and Managed Indigenous Housing and Indigenous community housing

1. Data taken from AIHW and ABS analysis of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018-19

2. Data taken from ABS Survey of Income and Housing 2017-18

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in urban locations the needs are more strongly characterised by difficulties with the affordability of a range of housing choices. At the 2016 Census, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that rented in urban areas were almost twice as likely as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households renting in non-urban areas to be paying more than 30% of household income on rent. This is driven by high levels of rental stress in urban areas in all States and Territories (ABS 2016).

**Table 2: Rental stress (a) by section of state (b), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, Australia, 2016**

|               | NSW | Vic | QLD | SA | WA | Tas | NT | ACT |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|----|-----|
| Urban (%)     | 24  | 22  | 25  | 24 | 22 | 20  | 15 | 14  |
| Non-urban (%) | 13  | 11  | 14  | 10 | 12 | 9   | 5  | 0   |

a. Rental Stress is defined as households that, based on their Census responses paid more than thirty per cent of household income on rent payments. Excludes households where proportion of income spent on rental payments couldn't be determined.

b. Areas are deemed to be urban if they have a population of more than 1,000 people. Areas are deemed to be non-urban if they are a bounded locality of between 200 and 1,000 people or are in a rural area. Non-urban areas do not include migratory, offshore or shipping.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

The Sector is currently characterised by small organisations and driven by individuals who are highly knowledgeable and passionate about serving their community, and who employ a broad skillset and an in-depth community understanding to achieve outcomes. There is a small number of organisations who also provide wrap-around or integrated services to their housing clients and operate as multi-services organisations as well as owners and managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing. Success across the Sector to date can largely be attributed to the knowledge and passion of individuals who drive their organisations to achieve outcomes when systemic barriers would otherwise inhibit this. Currently, there are over 40 National Regulatory Scheme Community Housing (NRSCH) registered ATSI CCHOs across Australia but the majority of ATSI CCHOs are not registered.

It is important to note that there is significant diversity across the Sector in size, age, maturity, service provision and experience. While the Sector snapshot aims to reflect the diversity of the Sector, it is not possible to accurately capture the exact reality for every ATSI CCHO. Jurisdictions across Australia have distinct Sectors that are at different scales, and community needs vary. However, this represents the start of a new partnership and Sector maturation process that will continue to evolve through ongoing consultation and work with the Sector.

**Figure 1: Location of ATSI CCHOs across Australia, 2022**



**NB:** NATSIHA conducted a Sector Mapping exercise to identify jurisdictional ATSI CCHOs however further mapping is required to identify and clearly define and confirm the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations in operation. This will also involve defining what qualifies as a housing organisation and the services it provides in relation to housing. Several jurisdictions via their housing strategies have identified the need to build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing sector.

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## Jurisdictional Snapshot

NATSIHA undertook the responsibility of mapping the Sector and developing a national housing directory. The directory shows that there are differences across the states and territories. In some states the Sector is strong, but in other jurisdictions there is a majority of State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). These are administered by state and territory governments and are specifically targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. Currently SOMIH operates in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The Sector is spread out across Australia's geographic areas including urban, regional and remote and is at different levels of capacity and performance. There are also non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing providers who are managing properties on behalf of ATSIKCHOs.

The states and territories are primarily responsible for the delivery of social housing and homelessness services. Housing and homelessness responsibilities are shared across states and the Commonwealth through funding provided by the Commonwealth under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) combined with a significant contribution of states' own funding.

The section below provides a brief overview of the Sector in each jurisdiction and the respective government strategies and policies to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes.

## Commonwealth

In 2022-23, the Australian Government expects to provide around \$1.6 billion in payments to the states and territories under the NHHA to contribute to improving access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing, and an expected \$5 billion in Commonwealth Rent Assistance to help eligible Australians on income support payments pay their rent.

In addition to this spending, the Australian Government has committed to establishing a \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund, which will build 30,000 new social and affordable housing properties in its first 5 years using investment returns, including around 20,000 social housing properties and 10,000 affordable homes for frontline workers. A portion of the investment returns will also fund acute housing needs on an ongoing basis. This includes \$200 million for the repair, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities in the first five years.

The Australian Government has committed \$100 million for housing and essential infrastructure on Northern Territory homelands.

The Australian Government has committed to developing a National Housing and Homelessness Plan with the support of key stakeholders, including governments, organisations, and housing experts. The plan will set out the key short, medium and longer term reforms needed to make it easier for people to buy a home, easier to rent, and house the homeless population.

The Australian Government commits to working with the sector, including NATSIHA, in developing and implementing its commitments and considerations for future resourcing and funding, recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and homelessness services in remote, regional and urban areas.

The National Partnership for Remote Housing in the Northern Territory (NPRHNT) is a joint \$1.1 billion investment between the Australian Government and the NT Government from 2018-23. The Australian Government is investing \$550 million, matched by the NT Government, to help reduce overcrowding through increasing the supply and standard of public housing in 73 remote communities and the 17 Alice Springs town camps. Under this National Partnership, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Land Councils have an oversight role over the investment and, through the Northern Territory's Local Decision-Making policy, provide for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice at all levels of housing delivery, from tenants to decisions of strategy and policy. The Australian Government has committed to a new remote housing agreement with the Northern Territory as the NPRHNT expires on 30 June 2023.

The Australian Government supports the development of new housing supply, particularly social and affordable housing, through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC). NHFIC administers the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator (AHBA), which provides cheaper, long tenure finance for community housing providers registered under a national, state or territory scheme. The benefits of accessing finance on better terms helps CHPs to reinvest their funding into expanding the supply of affordable housing for those most in need. ATSIKCHOs have not borrowed finance from the AHBA to date. However, the AHBA has provided loans to community housing providers to deliver projects, which improve housing outcomes for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

NHFIC also administers the National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF), a \$1 billion facility that provides finance for eligible housing-enabling infrastructure projects that will unlock new housing supply, particularly affordable housing. This could include transportation routes, water, utilities and telecommunications infrastructure.

The Australian Government also invests in programs targeted at housing affordability and home ownership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes the Indigenous Home Ownership Program (IHOP), delivered through Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to provide low-deposit, low-interest home loans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who face barriers to accessing mainstream finance. In October 2020, the Commonwealth announced \$150 million in additional funding to IBA to deliver 360 new housing construction loans in regional Australia. As at 31 December 2021, 82 construction loans had been approved. As part of Budget 2022-23, the Australian Government extended the IBA Regional Construction measure for a further two years to 2024-25. This provides time for construction sector capacity constraints to ease, amid the record pipeline of construction work and shortages in materials and labour.

## New South Wales (NSW)

In NSW there are over 200 ATSIKCHOs (including Local Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal Corporations) ranging in size from small providers with a portfolio of under 10 properties to large Aboriginal community housing providers managing almost 1,000 properties. Recently the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) commenced its transfer program whereby its properties are managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing Growth Providers who have been identified by the AHO. There are 33 NRSCH registered ATSIKCHOs, most at Tier 3 but a small number at Tier 2 with some on the cusp of applying for Tier 1 status. As at 1 November 2021, NATSIHA estimates there are 4,895 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community owned dwellings.

In 2020, NSW established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak, the Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA) NSW. The AHO has funded ACHIA NSW to deliver an Aboriginal Community Housing Incubator-Accelerator Model, which will support broad sector capability uplift and workforce development across 18 domains.

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The NSW government's 10-year Aboriginal Housing Strategy, Strong Families, Strong Communities (2018-2028), sets out its plan to improve the well-being of NSW's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities through housing. The strategy is underpinned by four pillars; to deliver housing solutions based on demand for social and affordable housing; to achieve better outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants and clients through partnerships; strengthen and grow the Sector; and improve data collection, evaluation and analysis.

The NSW government established the AHO as a statutory body under the *Aboriginal Housing Act 1998 (NSW)* to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to affordable, quality housing. As part of this role, the AHO has supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations for the purposes of carrying out operational and management services, including acquisition and construction of properties. This includes:

- Contracting organisations to provide housing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (including both ATSI CCHOs and mainstream community housing providers).
- Administering the Property Management Transfer program whereby 1,500 SOMIH properties are transferred to management by ATSI CCHOs who have successfully passed through an evaluation process run by the AHO to be designated as a Growth Provider.
- Scoping and developing a \$25 million project to deliver 45 new homes for large Aboriginal families, to support kinship living and reduce overcrowding.
- Administering the Services Our Way (SOW) program using a family-centred approach to provide culturally appropriate service coordination, support and capacity building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families experiencing vulnerability, empowering them to improve their well-being and achieve their goals.
- Investing annually in new Aboriginal housing supply through the NSW government's Capital Program, which received additional funds in 2020-21 and 2021-22 due to COVID-19 stimulus funding.
- Administering the Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund (ACHIF), which received an additional \$50 million in stimulus funding in 2021, to deliver community sector projects including both new supply and upgrades to community owned homes. The ACHIF aims to deliver improved living conditions and reduce homelessness and overcrowding.

## **Victoria**

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) is a not-for-profit, registered community housing agency and is the largest Aboriginal housing organisation in Victoria. AHV provides a significant role in supporting the growth and capacity building of the Aboriginal Housing sector in Victoria and is the lead of the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum. AHV also provides secretarial support for many initiatives that involve the Aboriginal housing sector.

Victoria has one ATSI CCHO registered as a Registered Housing Association under the *Housing Act (1983)* (Victoria does not recognise NRSCH registration). There are more than 15 other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations with housing stock across Victoria who are not registered. As at 1 November 2021, NATSIHA estimates there are 1,973 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community owned dwellings in Victoria.

In February 2020, the Victorian government helped launch Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort: Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home - the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework (VAHFF). The VAHFF outlines the Aboriginal community's vision, 10 overarching housing principles and 5 key objectives for the housing system in Victoria. One of the strategic goals of VAHFF is to build a capable system that delivers Aboriginal housing needs. This includes establishing a peak body to advocate; a growing capacity to build and manage housing stock; a program to build specialist housing and development workforce capacity; strong governance and commercial acumen; and clear and consistent policy to guide tenancy management and future strategy.

Victoria is committed to increasing the capacity of the Aboriginal sector to become registered housing providers. They also intend to conduct a Homelessness System Service Review and providing recommendations to implement an Aboriginal focused homelessness service system. The goal is to improve the homelessness service system gaps for Aboriginal communities and increase the cultural capacity of the homelessness service system.

The Victorian government has announced Victoria's Big Housing Build (BHB), a \$5.3 billion investment in social housing over the next four years. Under the BHB, Victoria has committed to delivering 10% of all net new social housing dwellings to deliver social housing for Aboriginal Victorians. This will focus on proposals that support the delivery of housing through Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including those applying on their own or through partnerships with mainstream Community Housing Providers (CHPs) to impart skills and knowledge, engage in two-way learning and commit to returning assets to Aboriginal ownership and control. The partnerships with CHPs allow non-registered organisations to access funding.

## **Queensland (QLD)**

In May 2021, QLD established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak housing body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing QLD (ATSIHQ), as a key action under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan. The peak body is working with ATSI CCHOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils focusing on all matters regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and homelessness in QLD.

QLD has 18 NRSCH registered ATSI CCHOs. As at 1 November 2021, NATSIHA estimates there are 5,400 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community owned dwellings in QLD.

The Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2021-2025 and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 sets out how the QLD government, communities and the housing sector can work together to create stronger housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in QLD. Through these Action Plans, the QLD Government is working with the First Nations of QLD through a reframed relationship that reflects a commitment to listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their housing concerns and aspirations for a better future. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan outlines specific tasks that seek to empower communities to participate in shared leadership and decision-making, to provide culturally responsive housing assistance, and to build a stronger housing sector for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

## **Western Australia (WA)**

While WA does not have an Aboriginal housing peak body, the WA government is funding the development of an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Peak Body that will include the housing sector. This work is currently underway.

WA does not currently have any registered ATSI CCHOs, however, one ATSI CCHO is expected to be registered in the near future (WA ATSI CCHOs will be registered under their own Community Housing Regulatory Framework as WA does not recognise NRSCH). As at 1 November 2021, based on NATSIHA's

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sector mapping exercise, NATSIHA estimates there are 2,711 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community owned dwellings in WA. There are an estimated 4 housing specific ATSI CCHOs in WA however further mapping is required.

The WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030 is a call to action for all sectors to work together to improve housing choices and access to suitable and affordable homes. The strategy includes an action to “build capacity in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector to strengthen its ability to respond to Aboriginal people’s housing needs”, as well as a key target to ensure Aboriginal people have secure homes that enable their wellbeing. WA intend to release an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Strategy in 2022, which will address the needs of the Aboriginal Community-Controlled sector.

The WA government is also guided by the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029, which sets out how the WA government will direct its efforts towards a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation. The WA Government is also guided by the Resilient Families, Strong Communities: A roadmap for regional and remote Aboriginal communities, which puts forward 10 priority actions to strengthen families, improve living conditions, increase job prospects and accelerate student progress at schools including recommendations for housing.

## **South Australia (SA)**

While SA does not currently have a housing sector peak body, the South Australian Aboriginal Community-Controlled Network (SAACCON) will be established as the sector peak body. This is currently being formalised between SAACCON and the SA government. The SA government initially provided funding to establish SAACCON as a peak body for Aboriginal community-controlled service delivery organisations at the commencement of the CtG refresh. The South Australia Aboriginal Housing Strategy (2021-2031) (AHS) includes an action to “support the establishment of a First Nations peak advocacy body to represent housing”.

There is currently only one NRSCH registered ATSI CCHO in SA. As at 1 November 2021, NATSIHA estimates there are 898 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community owned dwellings.

The AHS provides the strategic framework for how SA will deliver sector wide reform to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people. The AHS is underpinned by six strategic pillars; housing sector reform, service reform, economic participation, homelessness and crisis services, housing supply and home ownership.

Prioritising the growth of the Aboriginal Community-Controlled housing sector is a key sector reform area under the AHS. The SA government commits to building partnerships and delivering pilots between the mainstream housing sector and the Aboriginal community-controlled sector to inform and deliver localised and customised service models to build ATSI CCHOs.

## **Tasmania**

Tasmania has a very small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector; with the Tasmania Government’s Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 providing an overarching framework for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector. However, the Tasmanian government supports ATSI CCHOs through land transfers and development agreements in regional areas, and the purchase of government owned properties. The Tasmania government also provides funding to ATSI CCHOs for property upgrades to meet silver and gold Liveable Design Guidelines.

Tasmania does not have an Aboriginal housing peak body and there are no NRSCH registered ATSI CCHOs. As at 1 November 2021, NATSIHA estimated there are no Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community owned dwellings.

The Tasmanian government’s Aboriginal Housing Policy outlines the policy direction for the delivery of Aboriginal housing by social housing providers in Tasmania. Through Aboriginal Housing Services Tasmania, the state government provides access to secure, appropriate and affordable rental housing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal Housing Services is jointly managed by three Regional Aboriginal Tenancy Advisory Panels and social housing providers including Housing Tasmania and non-government community housing organisations.

## **Australian Capital Territory (ACT)**

The ACT does not have an Aboriginal housing peak, however, the ACT engages with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on housing matters through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. The Elected Body is a democratically elected representative body that provides direct advice to the ACT government. The ACT works with the Elected Body to co-design, implement, expand and deliver culturally appropriate accommodation and support options. A key commitment is to enhance capacity within the Community Housing Sector and develop more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community owned and managed community-housing options.

In the ACT, culturally appropriate housing is a focus area under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 and is articulated in the ACT Housing Strategy. The ACT Housing Strategy Implementation Plan contains specific actions to improve outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the domains of housing and homelessness.

Under the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly, the ACT government committed to supporting the establishment of a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community housing provider through four-years of funding. There is currently one ATSI CCHO registered in the ACT under NRSCH, which provides support services for participants in justice-led programs operated from two government-owned properties, however they do not directly manage housing stock.

## **Northern Territory (NT)**

The NT’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak body, Aboriginal Housing NT (AHNT), was launched in August 2019 under the Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT. The AHNT works to create a new Aboriginal housing system that is diverse and flexible, allows for local control over services, generates local employment and suits the needs of the community.

The NT has three NRSCH registered ATSI CCHOs who are managing a total of 705 social and affordable housing dwellings.

Across the NT, there are approximately 5,230 assets across 73 prescribed remote Aboriginal communities, 17 Alice Springs town camps and seven community living areas in Tennant Creek. Currently, the NT Government is the landlord and is responsible for the provision of safe and secure housing. Essential municipal and/or maintenance services to remote communities are provided through management contracts to 27 Aboriginal Business Enterprises and regional councils.

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

A Home for all Territorians: NT Housing Strategy (2020-2025) sets out an overarching framework, guiding principles and actions that will promote increased access to social and affordable housing, private rental and home ownership across urban, regional and remote communities. The NT is also developing an NT Community Housing Growth and Reform Strategy, which will aim to build the Sector.

The NT government currently delivers two large-scale programs to improve housing in the NT:

- Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes program will improve Aboriginal housing in remote communities through a NT Government commitment of \$1.1 billion from 2017-18 to 2026-27 with the Australian Government investing an additional \$550 million over five years from 2018 to 2023 through the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT.
- Building our communities, together: Town Camps Reform Framework (2019-2024) presents a medium to long-term commitment to address key reform areas in town camps and community living areas. This program is underpinned by an initial investment of \$40.44 million.

## National challenges

The challenges outlined below are informed by consultations with the sector and governments.

### Workforce

- ATSIChOs offer sustainable employment and training opportunities to people within the community, however the ability to employ and sustain staff is reliant on the level of financial resources available from rent collected or other broader activities of the organisation. This is an ongoing concern because the ATSIChOs have invested in staff and don't want to lose them due to financial difficulties.
- The demands on the workforce are considerable and requires a high degree of cultural capability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing workers are covered under the same award wages as mainstream housing workers. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing workers experience stress and pressure that other social service organisations do not encounter, including integrating cultural values and working with the impacts of inter-generational trauma. Managing conflicts-of-interest and the cultural connectedness amongst the community is also a challenge for the workforce.
- The workforce skill set is broad in scope and difficult at times to clearly define; this is true for both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream sectors. There are limited formal training and education options and clear pathways to pursue a career in the Sector, especially when potential professional career trajectories (e.g., in finance, urban development, property law, risk) have not been clearly defined. Where available, eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers are most commonly supported through mainstream employment and education programs.
- A number of ATSIChOs report difficulty attracting, hiring and retaining staff, particularly in remote areas. This is primarily due to skills shortages, low wages, as well as a lack of understanding and awareness of working in the sector.
- Some ATSIChOs have reported outsourcing their property management to a variety of third parties including mainstream CHPs, real estate agencies and NRSCH registered ATSIChOs. This has varied results, with some ATSIChOs working closely with the mainstream CHPs to train them on culturally appropriate services, while others have been dissatisfied with this service. Where dissatisfied, some ATSIChOs do not have enough funds to bring this service in-house. ATSIChOs will often support staff to undertake a Certificate IV in housing, which reflects the role of individuals delivering housing support services and supports to tenants, applicants and the community in the social housing and homelessness sector. However, this is costly to the ATSIChO, particularly when staff turnover is high. There has been a large turnover of staff because of the intensity, complexity and intricacy of the tenancies and family connections. Many staff obtain training and qualifications and leave for better wages and conditions offered elsewhere.
- High turnover and lack of training also impacts the skills and experience of management over the long-term.
- Many staff and their governance representatives (Boards) work additional 'volunteer' hours to ensure that the appropriate support is provided to those tenants and families with urgent and/or complex needs. This often culminates in 'burn out' and the loss of staff.

### Capital Infrastructure

- The variable quality and supply constraints on the delivery of appropriate housing was a feature of consultation with the Sector.
- Increased housing supply will reduce high levels of need in communities and assist the Sector to grow and become financially viable.
  - Some state governments are pursuing different strategies to grow ATSIChO stock, including property transfers from state governments to the Sector and grants that support the construction of new supply. Note; currently these programs are limited in how many ATSIChOs they can support. Programs are not consistent across jurisdictions and funding programs are not normally long term but usually implemented as 'one-off' initiatives/opportunities.
  - ATSIChOs that are not registered have limited ability to access government programs and funds to increase and improve the standard of their stock.
- Having an integrated responsive, cyclical repairs and maintenance program, underpinned by strong forecasting (and the certainty provided by long term property management contracts and/or asset ownership), is vital to keeping stock in good condition and planning for construction and development opportunities.
- Lack of appropriate data is a key challenge that is preventing the Sector from gaining an accurate picture of the Sector's stock and where funds can be best directed.
- Investment in housing infrastructure has an economic multiplier effect, both supporting jobs and boosting the local economy. Research by AHURI, in 2020, estimated that every \$1 million injected in the residential building industry returns \$2.9 million in GDP (AHURI, 2020). Over 2020 and 2021, every state has announced funding for social housing to assist with Coronavirus pandemic recovery however the Sector, through NATSIHA, should ensure that a proportion of these funds are directed towards the Sector. Some states have allocated a proportion of these funds to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, such as Victoria's Big Housing Build (BHB) and NSW's Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund (ACHIF).
- There is a need to urgently review the process used by governments regarding the project, program and administrative management arrangements used to plan and implement capital works programs (both housing and infrastructure) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure that outcomes and benefits to the community are maximised.
- Research found that Indigenous regional and remote communities will experience the negative impacts of climate change earlier and disproportionately, compared with most urban Australian settings. Funding for housing supply, design, maintenance and enabling infrastructure must reflect this distribution of risk and higher cost (Lea et al 2021).

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

## **Service Delivery**

- Local networks and community understanding is vital to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with the term “community” having a much stronger emphasis and meaning in comparison to the mainstream sector.
- A key challenge for the Sector is an expectation from the community that it will deliver integrated support services, but ATSIICHOs are generally not funded to deliver these services. Where support services are funded by government and delivered by mainstream providers, instead of ATSIICHOs, there are limitations on the cultural appropriateness of the service. ATSIICHO housing officers usually care for tenants and families with counselling, advising, advocating and problem solving and usually look after their own people holistically and with empathy.
- Some ATSIICHOs are providing aged care accommodation, homelessness services and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) and there is potential for other ATSIICHOs to expand their service delivery to offer these services. For example, there is limited Indigenous-specific crisis and transitional housing, particularly for survivors of domestic and family violence and people leaving custody.
- Additionally, in most states and territories the size of the Sector is relatively small compared with mainstream social housing. As a consequence, a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in social housing have limited options but to engage with mainstream housing providers who do not always provide culturally appropriate services.

## **Governance**

- There are numerous ATSIICHOs across Australia who provide housing but are not registered under NRSCH or jurisdictional equivalents. However:
  - Registration provides assurance to government that the organisation has strong corporate governance in place and has the ability to effectively utilise government funding.
  - ATSIICHOs that have recently achieved registration, or are considering registration, have raised several key barriers, which provide some indication on where ATSIICHOs need support. This includes:
    - The process is difficult to navigate without support, particularly for organisations with no previous experience of the process.
    - Elements of the registration and compliance requirements are culturally difficult, which disincentivises ATSIICHOs from pursuing registration.
    - There is a financial burden on ATSIICHOs to prepare for registration in establishing new policies and processes. This is difficult for ATSIICHOs that are already struggling financially.
- Maintaining registration and meeting compliance requirements is also difficult particularly for smaller ATSIICHOs whose workforce is mainly comprised of operational staff who are focused on delivery and are less familiar with the compliance requirements.
  - Compliance burden is a significant issue for ATSIICHOs who offer a range of wrap-around services and are registered under numerous schemes or receive funding for different service types from a range of sources. An ATSIICHO that provides services in housing, aged care, disability and homelessness will be reporting their compliance separately against each service, as well as for any additional funding contracts they have under the service.
- Consistency across registration systems including identifying performance standards that are acceptable across multiple service types to reduce the need for re-assessing or re-evaluating elements such as corporate risk systems, financial forecasting, strategic planning etc. and recognition of commonalities across the registration process would benefit the Sector.

## **Consistent Funding Model**

- There is no consistent funding model across Australia for the Sector. The state and territory governments do not provide recurrent baseline funding for housing services delivered by ATSIICHOs whose costs are expected to be met primarily through rent collection.
- The majority of ATSIICHOs only provide social housing for low-income Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians whose rent is based on locally developed rental policies which at times do not cover all the costs involved especially the repairs and maintenance cycles. These policies include cost recovery rents, or rents based on household income. By its nature, social housing generally requires recurrent subsidy baseline funding meaning that, in its absence, it can be difficult for ATSIICHOs to remain financially viable.
- Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) provides a subsidy for community housing tenants. ATSIICHO tenants who receive an income support payment are eligible for CRA if they provide the relevant evidence to meet the criteria (rent certificates, etc.). As at February 2022, around 91,000 Indigenous households were receiving CRA, which was around 30.4% of all Indigenous households receiving income support payments. This data indicates individuals who have identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to Centrelink, which is optional and, therefore, may represent an undercount. The Sector is concerned that there may be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants in ATSIICHO housing who are not claiming the income support payments they may be eligible for, including CRA.
- In some limited cases, larger ATSIICHOs have diversified their stock to include affordable housing, which has increased their rental income. However, this requires that the ATSIICHOs own the asset, as homes received through asset transfers generally must remain social housing.
- ATSIICHOs have the potential to be financially viable and self-sustaining if supported to offer mixed tenancy options (social, affordable and market rents) and multi-service provision including integrated services and aged care accommodation as well as SDA.

## **Peak Body**

- NATSIHA is the recently established National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing peak, which was constituted under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) in December 2020. In comparison with other sectors, such as health, the housing peak is relatively new and still building its capacity.
- The establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak, or the capacity building of a proxy peak body or organisations, is a central theme of the states and territories implementation plans, with four states (in addition to the three who have established a peak) committing to these kinds of initiatives.
  - Three of eight states (NSW, NT and QLD) have established formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peaks, with some being more mature than others.
- A dedicated independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing peak body may not be a priority for jurisdictions with very small sectors, and current representative bodies could include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing as part of their portfolio. These Peak bodies will (amongst other things) provide support, advice, information and training and development for their respective sectors. They will also provide

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

an important 'conduit' for government, community and other relevant stakeholders to engage with on important issues which impact on the health and general well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

## 8. Objectives of the Housing – SSP and Measures of Success

Key objectives of the Sector Housing – SSP are:

- Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to move through the housing continuum and into home ownership.
- Increased service delivery, capacity, quality and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.
- Development of dedicated, reliable and consistent outcomes-based funding models for the Sector.
- Increased relevant qualifications and skills of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait workforce from a range of professional disciplines, alongside professional recognition of cultural knowledge, skills and relationships that are essential to effective service delivery.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, have the capacity to attract, support and retain adequate workforce capability to match their current and future workforce needs.

In consultations that informed this plan, representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors and governments provided guidance on what the potential success of the Housing – SSP would look like.

Input on the potential measures of success and performance indicators that would demonstrate progress are reflected in the table below. This area requires further development in future iterations and reviews of the Housing – SSP, as stakeholders must consider what baseline data exists, realistic monitoring mechanisms, alignment with CtG data activities and resourcing implications.

| Measures of Success   | Key performance indicators  |
|---|---|
| Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In line with Target 9, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88% by 2031.</li> <li>• Ensuring the mainstream housing and homelessness system is more culturally appropriate.</li> </ul>  |
| Increase in the number of ATSI CCHOs who demonstrate strong governance arrangements and are able to achieve community housing registration.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of ATSI CCHOs registered under NRSCH or jurisdictional registration systems.</li> <li>• Increased support for ATSI CCHOs from NATSIHA to achieve registration through additional multi-service support within their operations.</li> </ul>  |
| Increased capacity of qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing workforce.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed by ATSI CCHOs and other housing organisations.</li> <li>• Increased level of qualification and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and access to culturally appropriate training courses.</li> <li>• Develop specific courses that highlights the intricacies of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing sector to enable the workforce to gain increased skills and qualifications (certificate, diploma, degree).</li> </ul>  |
| Achieve targeted outcomes from all housing program funding and strategies including employment and training outcomes – especially housing construction delivered by ATSI CCHOs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of staff up-skilled in preparation for sector growth and the delivery of additional specialist services.</li> <li>• Increased wages parity with the mainstream sector.</li> <li>• Increased number of ATSI CCHOs, delivering infrastructure, construction, development and related training programs, i.e., University and TAFE/RTO cadetships and apprenticeships etc.</li> </ul>  |
| The title and management of properties owned by states and territories, acquired originally through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funding programs, be transferred to ATSI CCHOs, to build scale, asset base and cash flow.   | <p>Proportionate to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within jurisdictions, and where ATSI CCHOs, have the capacity and capability to deliver, this would see an increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of mainstream services transitioned to the Sector.</li> <li>• Proportion of mainstream funding transitioned to the Sector.</li> <li>• Number of titles of properties transferred to the Sector by state/territory governments.</li> <li>• Number of properties where management has been transferred to the Sector.</li> <li>• Average contract length of stock subject to property management transfers improves year on year to equal the contract lengths in place in the mainstream housing sector.</li> <li>• Number of funded integrated services transitioned from mainstream to the Sector.</li> </ul> |
| Increased number of registered ATSI CCHOs involved in the management, planning, designing and delivery regarding new and existing programs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of ATSI CCHOs services co-designing, managing and delivering programs, funding and resources. Increased number of ATSI CCHOs actively developing land, construction and training and employment programs.</li> <li>• Increased number of ATSI CCHOs accessing jurisdictional and NHFIC financing.</li> </ul>  |
| Increased data on the Sector to determine workforce needs and strategic program planning and development. Where available, this information is also made available to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and the Sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scoping of data requirements and areas of need.</li> </ul>   |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| Measures of Success  | Key performance indicators  |
|--|---|
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ATSIKCHOs successes are captured, including testimonials as told by the community-controlled sector and available to inform program and service development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular information provided via electronic newsletters and social media to Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations for replication and inspiration. Develop case studies that demonstrate good outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants across a variety of contexts.</li> </ul> |

### 9. Key Areas for Action

The Housing – SSP seeks to build on existing work already underway across both the Sector and government. Key areas for action were informed by consultation with the Sector and a detailed breakdown of actions to strengthen the sector can be found at Table 1 at Attachment A. While not designed to commit any specific party to resources or actions not already announced, this Housing - SSP is offered as a resource to be used over the next three years to prioritise, partner and negotiate beneficial sector-strengthening strategies.

#### Workforce

The Sector has dedicated and skilled workers, which to date have been the key in driving success. However, this is often ad-hoc and relies on passionate individuals. To better support the existing workforce and build the Sector’s capability, the Sector requires a national workforce development plan that identifies the short to long-term priorities. This includes developing sector-specific training and workforce development initiatives, a public relations campaign to advertise jobs in the housing sector to increase interest, and innovative programs that support jobs and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the housing sector.

#### Capital infrastructure

Capital infrastructure encompasses a wide range of infrastructure required to support ATSIKCHOs to deliver housing services to those who need them. This includes new housing supply, existing housing stock, transitional and crisis housing, as well as enabling-infrastructure such as roads, access to public transport and services, water and sewerage, utility connection, and internet connectivity. There is also consideration for management of current housing stock including ongoing tenancy management, efficient allocation, responsive repairs and maintenance services, and long-term asset management plans. However, due to a lack of data, it is difficult to identify what capital infrastructure communities currently require.

A key action under the Housing - SSP is for NATSIHA to develop a comprehensive national data collection activity, which will create an accurate picture of the Sector. This will help to determine the extent of support required to address housing related needs across Australia, and to identify where governments and the Sector can best direct funding and investment to have the largest impact.

#### Service delivery

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have little trust in mainstream service providers and government-run organisations, who are often unable to provide culturally appropriate services. While ATSIKCHOs commonly deliver wrap-around services to their tenants, in addition to housing services, they are often not compensated for these services. New grant prioritisation policies and processes are required to increase the proportion of services being delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, in line with Clause 55 of the National Agreement.

#### Governance

Strong organisational governance is vital to growing the Sector, providing assurance to governments and attracting investment. NRSCH, or equivalent jurisdictional registration systems, provide assurance to government that an organisation has strong governance in place, which is commonly a requirement for accessing funding. The Housing – SSP seeks to build strong governance across the Sector by increasing ATSIKCHO registration, as well as improving the capacity and skill of ATSIKCHO board members and senior staff.

#### Consistent Funding Model

Investing in safe, secure and healthy homes can have a positive return on investment in other areas such as health, disability and crisis support services as good environmental health can influence life expectancy, young child mortality, disability, chronic disease, and family and community violence. A reliable and sustainable funding model ensures that the Sector can build its capacity to meet housing and service delivery need. Future procurement processes should be consistent with all Parties respective Indigenous procurement policies.

#### Peak Body

As outlined in the Agreement, a strong sector is one where “ATSIKCHOs which deliver common services are supported by a peak body, governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board which has strong governance and policy development and influencing capacity”. Peak bodies offer a strong voice and important integrative functions by undertaking key peak roles, including; research and policy development on Sector issues; advocacy and representation to government; information dissemination within the Sector and community; consultation and coordination within the Sector; and encourage and support capacity building to enable better service delivery. A key action is to support NATSIHA and the existing state peak bodies to build their capacity and capability to better support and advocate for the needs of the Sector. In jurisdictions where an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak body does not yet exist, jurisdictions are to support the Sector to develop one

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

### Priority Actions – 2022 to 2025

#### A. Workforce

**Goal:** A dedicated and identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, with specialist skills and training relevant to the Sector, with wage parity.

#### National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Workforce Development

| No. | Action  | Description   | Responsibilities  | Resources        | Timelines                     |
|-----|---|---|---|------------------|-------------------------------|
| A1  | <p>Scope current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and support services and determine projected workforce development needs in line with sector growth under Priority Reform Two and Target 9 of the Agreement with scope to leverage existing processes through working with the Coalition of Peaks.</p> <p>This will support a long-term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development plan that identifies priorities and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development, in conjunction with the implementation of the NATSIHA Workforce Strategy (NWS).</p> | <p>NATSIHA to work with the Coalition of Peaks for a joined-up approach with Health, Disability etc. to develop an overarching workforce strategy which includes agreement for a campaign to highlight the positive aspects of working in the Sectors.</p> <p>Scoping should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mapping of current and future capacity, coverage, and funding as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population growth corridors, and</li> <li>attention is required to achieving wages equity across the housing Sector, including 'cultural loading' to recognise cultural knowledge and skills in the community-controlled workforce.</li> </ul> <p>The NWS will be developed in collaboration with jurisdictional governments, the Sector and other key stakeholders, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. This strategy aims to support the recruitment, retention, wages parity, sustainability, and quality of the Sector's workforce.</p> <p>In addition to the NWS, a targeted implementation plan to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development objectives to be developed that support a national long-term approach to workforce planning and development. This will include facilitation strategies to increase the pool of VET services and adequately qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and related services and to establish a sustainable workforce for the Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector into the future.</p> <p>Utilise existing government programs and, if required, scope potential funding options to support the training and employment initiatives (cadetships and traineeships) across the Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander housing sector in partnership with tertiary institutions, employer representative bodies and ATSICCHOs.</p> | Coalition of Peaks, NATSIHA, NIAA, all governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jurisdictional peaks and yet to be identified partners. | To be determined | Medium to long term (3 years) |
| A2  | Develop the cultural capability of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and mainstream housing sector workforces.  | Focus on developing the cultural capability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and support services who are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients by continuing to build on existing work across governments and the sector.   | NATSIHA, Australian Government in collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives                                   | To be determined | 0 – 3yrs and ongoing          |
| A3  | Increase the number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people with disability employed with ATSICCHOs.  | <p>Develop formal working relationships between NATSIHA and the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN).</p> <p>Strengthen the current disability workforce and provide opportunities that will also benefit the Sector due to the needs of our tenants who have disability. This will enable the housing to be viewed through a disability lens especially as we have a large percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing tenants with disability, who require modifications and related services.</p>   | NATSIHA, FPDN, Australian Government (new Disability Employment Support Model) in collaboration with state and territory governments              | To be determined | 0 – 3yrs and ongoing          |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

### B. Capital Infrastructure

Goal: Capital infrastructure needs identified and consistent funding stream

#### Housing capital infrastructure development – Outcome 9: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

| No. | Action   | Description   | Responsibilities   | Resources        | Timelines                                   |
|-----|--|---|--|------------------|---|
| B1  | Develop a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data collection project.  | <p>It is imperative that true and accurate data is collected in all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and homeless to determine the extent of support required to address housing related needs, issues and provide solutions. This data collection project will have a positive influence regarding workforce, capital infrastructure, service provision, governance, sustainable funding models and will greatly benefit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing jurisdictional peaks and their tenants.</p> <p>NATSIHA will scope and plan a data collection exercise to better understand the size and quality of ATSIICHO housing stock across Australia that can help identify the future needs of the Sector in order to better prioritise future funding. The scoping exercise will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop an understanding of current data and what data gaps the collection exercise will seek to understand;</li> <li>- Scope and plan the data collection exercise; e.g., what data will be collected, who will collect, how it will be collected and when the data will be collected (one-off or ongoing).</li> </ul> <p>Align this project with a number of existing government processes to improve housing data, including work being undertaken by the Data and Reporting Working Group under the Agreement.</p> | NATSIHA, jurisdictional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peaks, all governments | To be determined | Medium to long term<br>(Minimum of 3 years) |
| B2  | <p>Build the capability and sustainability of ATSIICHOs through growth and ability to provide new housing. This could potentially include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New housing supply programs consisting of new construction and purchasing of existing houses.</li> <li>• A Housing Stock Transfer Program (property management and title). In the short-term states consider property management transfers of viable stock to ATSIICHOs with appropriate stock and management capacity for long-term leases. In the medium to long-term, and where there has been demonstrated success by specific ATSIICHOs, consider title transfers.</li> </ul> | <p>Work with jurisdictional governments to develop a robust, fair and equitable housing stock transfer program. There are several key factors to take into consideration and adhere to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments to have trust and confidence in the Sector, especially registered ATSIICHOs, to help ensure any asset or management transfers and funding allocations are merit-based and align with the net public benefit principles.</li> <li>• Longer contract management periods (e.g., 20 years) in line with the mainstream housing sector</li> <li>• Set timeframes for the deeds and titles to be transferred to the Sector</li> <li>• Also has possibilities regarding employment and training outcomes</li> </ul> <p>In order to support the growth and strength of the Sector it is important there is control and autonomy over housing assets.</p> <p>This will enable ATSIICHOs the ability to leverage against their portfolio as well as to determine appropriate maintenance requirements and control over tenancies.</p>  | NATSIHA, state and territory governments, jurisdictional peaks and sector representatives    | To be determined | Ongoing                                     |
| B3  | Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations who are accessing, able to access and are aware of the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) funding programs.   | <p>NHFIC administers programs that support community housing providers to access cheaper, long tenor financing and that seek to unlock new housing supply. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator (AHBA) provides cheaper, long tenor finance for NRSCH (or equivalent) registered community housing providers.</li> <li>• The National Housing Infrastructure Facility, a \$1 billion facility that provides finance for eligible housing enabling infrastructure projects to unlock new housing</li> </ul>  | All governments, NATSIHA in partnership the Indigenous jurisdictional peaks and NHFIC        | To be determined | Ongoing                                     |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| No. | Action | Description   | Responsibilities | Resources | Timelines |
|-----|--------|---|------------------|-----------|-----------|
|     |        | <p>supply. State and territories are eligible to access NHIF, and this funding source can be used to support ATSICCHOs, to increase housing supply.</p> <p>NATSIHA to engage with NHFIC to understand the application process and develop modelling and guides that can support registered ATSICCHOs to access available funding.</p> |                  |           |           |

### C. Service Delivery

**Goal:** Clearly defined standards and requirements for service delivery

#### Quality Housing and Integrated Services Provision by Community Controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Organisations

| No. | Action   | Description  | Responsibilities   | Resources        | Timelines                            |
|-----|--|--|--|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| C1  | Increase the capability and sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations to be able to grow their housing and homelessness service delivery capability.          | The community-controlled housing sector will benefit from the development of grants prioritisation policies (in line with Clause 55a of the National Agreement on CtG) with Parties to the Agreement each progressing in their respective jurisdiction. Increasing the proportion of support services delivered by ATSICCHOs and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations will have flow on benefits and support tenants in their complex social needs and to strengthen organisations to address mental health and related illnesses stemming from intergenerational trauma etc. Linkages to Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) to be developed and strengthened. | Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments, NATSIHA, jurisdictional peaks and sector representatives | To be determined | Medium to long term (3 – 5 years)    |
| C2  | Create best practice models using ATSICCHOs who have successfully and organically grown their organisation to provide effective services to meet the social and emotional well-being of their tenants and communities. | These case studies can be tailored to guide and encourage ATSICCHOs who are interested in providing integrated services for the benefit of its tenants. The models can be tailored to suit their location and circumstances and be guided by the: Accessibility Remote Index of Australia (ARIA)   | NATSIHA, jurisdictional peaks, the Sector and relevant jurisdictional government agencies.             | To be determined | Short to medium term (0 – 1.5 years) |

### D. Governance

**Goal:** Governance of individual organisations, including compliance with sector-specific regulatory systems.

| No. | Action  | Description  | Responsibilities   | Resources        | Timelines        |
|-----|---|--|--|------------------|------------------|
| D1  | Improve the capacity and skills of existing board members.  | Training to be developed specifically for the Sector.  | NATSIHA, Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC), Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) | To be determined | To be determined |
| D2  | Build capability of ATSICCHOs through encouraging and supporting ATSICCHOs to apply for community housing registration. | <p>Continue to build on work already underway in each jurisdiction to support ATSICCHOs to achieve registration.</p> <p>Achieving NRSCH registration, or the jurisdictional equivalent, will build the capacity and capability of ATSICCHOs. This includes performance requirements such as:</p> | NATSIHA, jurisdictional peaks and state and territory governments  | To be determined | Ongoing          |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| No. | Action   | Description   | Responsibilities                | Resources        | Timelines                          |
|-----|--|---|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
|     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair, transparent and responsive housing assistance to tenants, residents and other clients</li> <li>Sound management of community housing assets in a manner that ensures suitable properties are available at present and in the future</li> <li>Increased community engagement and partnerships to promote community housing and contribute to socially inclusive communities</li> <li>Increased governance standards by ensuring coherent and robust strategic, operational, financial and risk planning</li> <li>High standards of probity</li> <li>Management of resources to achieve the intended outcomes of business in a cost-effective manner</li> <li>Financial viability through ensuring a viable capital structure, maintaining appropriate financial performance and managing financial risk exposure.</li> </ul> <p>Achieving community housing registration will affect many aspects of an ATSIICHO's functions in relation to the Housing - SSP elements in a positive light.</p> |                                 |                  |                                    |
| D3  | Consider options to expand existing community housing registration processes to better cover and address the requirements of the Sector and ATSIICHOs. | <p>Feedback from the Sector emphasised the importance of communication; an increased focus on the cultural competency of registrars and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers; clear transitional arrangements; and the need for a modular / segmentation approach that considers the unique characteristics specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing (such as the differences in asset types – both in form and quality (including housing in remote locations)).</p> <p>Relevant jurisdictions that use NRSCH should consider the recommendation in the Review of NRSCH on the “Expansion of the NRSCH to better cover and address the requirements of Indigenous housing and ICHOs” (NSW Government, 2020).</p>   | State and territory governments | To be determined | Short to medium term (0 – 3 years) |

### E. Consistent Funding Model

**Goal:** Across the Aboriginal & Torres Strait housing sector, funding for organisations is available/predictable and supports organisations to be responsive to the needs of those receiving the services.

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing sector funding model

| No. | Action  | Description  | Responsibilities                     | Resources        | Timelines  |
|-----|---|--|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| E1  | Develop guidelines and support material to enable Housing and Homelessness organisations to become financially sustainable. | <p>NATSIHA to develop funding models for ATSIICHOs to implement for reliability, sustainability, accommodates flexibility and provides funding for comprehensive service delivery to ensure a fully operational Sector. To provide sustainability in the Sector there are funding streams that could be utilised, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable rent collection policies that are complemented by Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) where eligible</li> <li>Integrated services provision</li> <li>Improved diversification of housing portfolio</li> </ul> <p>In collaboration with the sector and governments, NATSIHA will articulate a vision of the Sector that enables ATSIICHOs to be financially sustainable.</p> | NATSIHA and all jurisdictional peaks | To be determined | Research and report finalised by Mid to late 2023. |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| No. | Action | Description | Responsibilities | Resources | Timelines |
|-----|--------|-------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
|     |        |             |                  |           |           |

### F. Peak Body

**Goal:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations which deliver common services are supported by a peak body.

#### NATSIHA and Jurisdictional Peaks

| No. | Action  | Description  | Responsibilities   | Resources        | Timelines                          |
|-----|---|--|--|------------------|------------------------------------|
| F1  | Explore and determine options for the ongoing sustainability of NATSIHA.  | NATSIHA was created at a National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander housing workshop in Adelaide in July 2017 due to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identifying a need for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak. Although unfunded to date NATSIHA has had a significant impact and assisted in supporting and establishing peaks in several jurisdictions and is working closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing Sector to establish peaks in the remaining jurisdictions. Established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) etc. offer lessons learned in building sustainability.  | NATSIHA, Commonwealth Government, State/Territory Governments and jurisdictional peaks | To be determined | Late 2021 – mid 2022               |
| F2  | Build capacity of NATSIHA to support ATSIKCHOs to achieve the relevant jurisdictional community housing registration. | Support for ATSIKCHOs to achieve community housing registration could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop templates that the Sector can use to model their policies and practices, as required for their relevant jurisdictional registration.</li> <li>• Connect ATSIKCHOs seeking registration with registered community housing providers, including registered ATSIKCHOs, who can provide guidance and mentorship through the process.</li> <li>• Modelling to be done that describes different models of ATSIKCHOs for different areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mix of social, affordable and specialist housing</li> <li>○ Scale needed to be viable</li> <li>○ Governance models e.g., democratically elected boards, merit-based process and appointed by members, mix of appointments and elected directors.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Undertake a desktop analysis to identify what areas ATSIKCHOs need to build upon.</li> </ul> | State and territory governments, peak bodies and the Sector                            | To be determined | Short to medium term (0 – 3 years) |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

### Future Actions – for further consideration

The below actions have been identified as future priorities for the sector that build upon the priority actions.

| Action   | Description  | Responsibilities   | Resources        | Timelines        |
|--|--|--|------------------|------------------|
| <b>National Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Housing Workforce Development</b>  |  |  |                  |                  |
| Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career development through secondary school and tertiary institution career engagement, preparation of the workforce, on the job staff development, mentoring, career development and progression. | <p>This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scholarships for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing workforce to undertake further study, including tertiary and graduate studies</li> <li>• enabling access to professional development programs or on-the-job training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing staff focused on realising the potential of individuals</li> <li>• building leadership skills through access to programs, which actively identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to progress into leadership positions</li> <li>• leveraging existing government schooling and tertiary support programs, scholarships and subsidies</li> <li>• increasing completion rates.</li> <li>• embedding ongoing mentoring programs for Indigenous employees to assist with staff retention and progression;</li> <li>• focus on improved cultural safety in the ATSIICHO and housing sector more broadly;</li> <li>• improved advertising of this career path (e.g., Jobs Fairs);</li> <li>• partnerships between ATSIICHOs and construction industry to create apprenticeships/traineeships; and</li> <li>• increase the number of ATSIICHOs delivering housing construction.</li> </ul> | To be determined   | To be determined | To be determined |
| Develop and review innovative programs to increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all aspects of housing construction and infrastructure programs.   | <p>Use previous and current successful Aboriginal developed construction and infrastructure programs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable building industry apprenticeships to be completed in all trades</li> <li>• Train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to complete handyman courses to carry out day-to-day general repairs and maintenance to reduce costs for ATSIICHOs and provide employment</li> <li>• Develop partnerships to provide tertiary training and education opportunities for property lawyers, urban planners, risk specialists, surveyors, land development industry skills etc.</li> <li>• Develop partnerships with health services to train occupational therapists to provide advice and develop disability modification solutions</li> <li>• A successful Aboriginal employment model, which could be replicated is the NSW Aboriginal Communities Development program which included four streams; Governance, Employment &amp; Training, Infrastructure/Capital works and increasing governance and capacity.</li> </ul>  | NATSIHA and jurisdictional peaks. All governments and sector representatives | To be determined | To be determined |
| Develop, review and implement strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled sector workforce development.  | <p>Work to align with the Agreement and complementary Workforce Strategy to deliver on Focus Area Four, which seeks to strengthen the Sector and workforce capability.</p> <p>These strategies would be implemented through the National Employment Framework, and/or through jurisdictional CtG Implementation Plans and annual reports.</p>  | All governments and sector representatives                                   | To be determined | To be determined |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| Action   | Description  | Responsibilities  | Resources        | Timelines        |
|--|--|---|------------------|------------------|
|  | Strategies should consider current and future capacity, funding, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population growth corridors. They will be guided by the results of Priority Action A1.   |   |                  |                  |
| <b>Capital Infrastructure</b>  |  |   |                  |                  |
| Develop strategies to meet housing need in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through increased and improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing stock. | <p>The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Collection Project (priority action B1) will provide the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the housing stock currently owned/managed by the Sector</li> <li>• Research and identify the properties which have been purchased/constructed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted Commonwealth government funding</li> <li>• Work with the Sector in each jurisdiction to determine the actual number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are on waiting lists or requiring housing.</li> <li>• That NRSCH registered ATSICCHOs be supported so that they have the capacity to provide Special Disability Accommodation (SDA) based on community need.</li> <li>• That NRSCH registered ATSICCHOs be supported so that they have the capacity to provide Aged Care accommodation based on community need.</li> </ul>                  | NATSIHA, Australian Government, state and territory governments, jurisdictional peaks and sector representatives                      | To be determined | To be determined |
| Understand and reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness.  | <p>The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Collection Project (priority action B1) will provide detailed and up-to-date information regarding the reasons for homelessness which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistical and anecdotal evidence regarding the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless</li> <li>• The various reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately homeless</li> <li>• Housing options and solutions in their community/location/area</li> <li>• Data regarding single person accommodation and solutions or options</li> <li>• Under-utilised resources, for example a single person living in a three-bedroom house</li> </ul> <p>NATSIHA and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jurisdictional peaks will also analyse the data and provide practical, efficient and cost-effective solutions and options.</p>    | NATSIHA, Australian Government in collaboration with state and territory governments, jurisdictional peaks and sector representatives | To be determined | To be determined |
| Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific long-term housing strategy in each state and territory.  | <p>Not all states have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing strategy. As current housing strategies expire and new ones are being developed, it is recommended that all states and territories develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific housing strategies that address the short, medium and long-term challenges and achieve the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens partnerships when developed collaboratively with government and ATSICCHOs</li> <li>• Provides the opportunity to consult with the Sector and gain a proper understanding of the sector and the strategy will address these issues accordingly</li> <li>• Provides clear direction and confidence in the future</li> <li>• Ensures that the data driven needs within the Sector are identified and solutions are provided to address these needs because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the solutions</li> </ul> | NATSIHA, State/Territory Governments, and jurisdictional peaks  | To be determined | Long-term        |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| Action  | Description   | Responsibilities   | Resources        | Timelines        |
|---|---|--|------------------|------------------|
| Consider options to fund repairs and maintenance programs.  | Ensure that ATSIKCHO properties are maintained to the relevant state standards at a minimum, as well as give assurance that funds are well spent and the work, health and safety obligations are being met.   | NATSIHA and jurisdictional peaks, state and territory governments and sector representatives | To be determined | To be determined |
| Consider disability modifications.  | <p>Work with the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) to interpret the results of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data collection project.</p> <p>NATSIHA and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Peaks will take advice from FPDN to plan programs to ensure that people with disability are able to have their houses modified to suit their needs to make life more comfortable for them and they are able to use all functions and facilities within their house.</p> <p>Collaborating with FPDN will also enable ATSIKCHOs to connect with the various professionals required to successfully plan and deliver the modifications, i.e., Occupational Therapists.</p>   | NATSIHA and jurisdictional peaks, FPDN, all governments and sector representatives           | To be determined | To be determined |
| Consider 'Special Needs and Circumstances Accommodation' (i.e., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exiting the justice system, disability and other complex needs). | <p>Research into the development of a Supported Independent Living (SIL) and/or Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) for ATSIKCHOs. Modelling could be done to provide guidelines and recommend processes and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing and Disability services/organisations to provide better housing and disability services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a holistic way. This could include ensuring all accommodation going forward is accessible and appropriate for people with disability and ensuring that communication materials and services are disability friendly.</p> <p>Provide housing stability and social inclusion for vulnerable people who are over-represented in the criminal justice system. That includes stable housing and culturally sensitive tenancy management, and other wrap-around support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women exiting the criminal justice system.</p> | To be determined   | To be determined | To be determined |
| Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home ownership.  | <p>Undertake a targeted communications project to promote the role of Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) as housing financier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to purchase a home with low-cost financing.</p> <p>NATSIHA working with IBA to develop a submission to government to support ATSIKCHOs to enable social or affordable tenants to purchase their property.</p>  | NATSIHA  | To be determined | To be determined |
| Review and evaluate housing affordability programs.   | <p>Work with government to consider and develop programs that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access affordable housing programs.</p> <p>NATSIHA to conduct a review and evaluation of existing and former affordable housing programs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have accessed government affordable housing programs, such as National Rental Affordability Scheme, Reconnect and Safe Places</li> <li>• Ascertain the experiences and exits from these programs (current and previous tenants); and</li> </ul>   | NATSIHA  | To be determined | To be determined |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| Action  | Description  | Responsibilities       | Resources        | Timelines        |
|---|--|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek advice and direction from the mainstream Community Housing Sector on 'lessons learned' and how affordable housing program can be improved and better supported by NATSIHA.</li> </ul>  |                        |                  |                  |
| <b>Quality Housing and Integrated Services Provision by Community Controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Organisations</b>  |  |                        |                  |                  |
| Develop an integrated services holistic housing training program to upskill Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ATSIKCHOs to enable them to connect tenants with the appropriate and culturally safe services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homelessness</li> <li>Disability</li> <li>Health</li> <li>NDIS</li> <li>Mental health</li> <li>Domestic and family violence</li> <li>Cultural capability</li> <li>Drug and alcohol misuse</li> </ul> | Develop a training program, which will ensure that staff are aware of these issues and provide steps and information for them to connect affected tenants to the appropriate services. This skill and knowledge will also enable them to monitor the services delivered to ensure value for money and services are being delivered appropriately.  | To be determined       | To be determined | To be determined |
| Contract IT, HR, Financial and other backend corporate services on a regional pooled level.   | Many ATSIKCHO costs relating to these services are very expensive. A solution to reduce these costs is to purchase these services on a regional or state level so there is only one large contract as opposed to smaller more expensive contracts. If ATSIKCHOs in a particular region formally partner together to enable them to bulk purchase licences and internet access this would save them money and allow access to effective services to enhance their business. These services could also ease the burden of reporting processes discussed in the action below.   | To be determined       | To be determined | To be determined |
| <b>Governance</b>   |  |                        |                  |                  |
| Streamline reporting processes.   | <p>All ATSIKCHOs who are registered as community housing providers are required to provide compliance reports to their registering body, as well as additional reports to their state/territory governments and other funding streams.</p> <p>During consultation, ATSIKCHOs identified that the compliance reporting is labour intensive, time consuming and costly to produce, which could require a full-time employee to monitor and complete.</p> <p>Consider options to streamline the compliance reporting. For example, work with NRSCH to review their compliance report and consider whether it can be applied to jurisdictional compliance processes. Also consider consolidated reporting automation or reference systems to support streamlining reporting systems.</p> | To be determined       | To be determined | To be determined |
| <b>Consistent funding model</b>   |  |                        |                  |                  |
| Ensure those eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) are accessing the payment to assist  | Community housing tenants on income support payments may be eligible for CRA to help pay their rent. This serves as a crucial government subsidy to support ATSIKCHOs managing social  | Australian government, | To be determined | To be determined |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

| Action  | Description   | Responsibilities  | Resources        | Timelines        |
|---|---|---|------------------|------------------|
| in paying their rent, particularly those in ATSIICHO housing.   | housing. To ensure that eligible tenants are receiving the payment, it's vital that ATSIICHOs have sustainable rent collection policies.  | jurisdictional peaks and NATSIHA  |                  |                  |
| Improve diversification of ATSIICHO housing portfolios.   | <p>For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in urban locations the needs are more strongly characterised by difficulties with the affordability of a range of housing choices.</p> <p>Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes for ATSIICHOs through diversified portfolios of social and affordable community housing which are affordable, as well as enable tenants to move into home ownership.</p>  | NATSIHA, jurisdictional peaks, all governments and sector representatives | To be determined | Ongoing          |
| <b>NATSIHA and Jurisdictional Peaks</b>   |   |   |                  |                  |
| Develop a strong evidence base for best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery through peak bodies, with data to be owned by the Sector. | <p>There is a clear role for peak bodies to build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base of what works in culturally appropriate and community-led service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and support services.</p> <p>This includes supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led monitoring, evaluation and research projects with the Sector, as well as providing resources to support capacity development for monitoring, evaluation and documentation of best practice across the community-controlled sector.</p> | To be determined  | To be determined | To be determined |

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

## ADDENDUM – Engagements

The Housing – SSP has been informed by extensive consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and governments across Australia.

A SSP Working Group, co-chaired by NATSIHA and the Australian Government Department of Social Services, met monthly between June 2021 and March 2022. This also provided opportunities for sector representatives and government representatives from every jurisdiction to offer guidance on the development of the Housing – SSP.

Multiple sources have been used to map priorities for sector strengthening strategies to build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing sector. These sources include:

- Sector mapping and directory
- Workplan, communication strategy
- A template (Update on Key Actions) was provided so each Jurisdictional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak and governments could provide details of housing strategies and key housing programs in their jurisdiction
- An issues paper was provided to various ATSICCHOs that included a survey which was used as a tool during consultations and interviews.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peaks in each jurisdiction were consulted for their input into the Housing – SSP. Information was sought regarding current activities, surveys or other programs being implemented so that duplication or over-consultation with the Sector could be minimised.
- Consultations via workshops were held with ATSICCHOs. Information regarding issues and solutions provided were incorporated into the Housing-SSP
- Consultations were also held with relevant government housing agencies in each jurisdiction for information on the various strategies and programs being implemented in their jurisdiction. This information was provided via the template provided, emailed or verbally during the consultations.
- Several ATSICCHOs who are registered community housing providers were interviewed regarding their experience with the registration system and what part/s of the process could be improved or made culturally appropriate or increased awareness of the community expectations and issues faced by ATSICCHOs in the delivery of its services.
- Several progressive and innovative ATSICCHOs were interviewed and their experiences were recorded. These ATSICCHOs agreed to be used as model housing providers in the near future

# **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan**

## **ADDENDUM – Employment**

Supporting growth for the Sector would support the creation of sustainable employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across a variety of unique work areas across Australia.

Community housing providers are large employers in the community who offer secure and stable employment and training opportunities. Employment in the housing sector creates a range of opportunities across different work areas, this includes but is not limited to:

- Housing Officers and Support Workers to manage tenancies and provide ongoing wrap-around support services to tenants.
- Maintenance and repair staff to maintain homes and manage current and future assets.
- Roles for the construction industry when building new supply or redeveloping old assets.

Office staff in finance, organisational governance and compliance

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

### Reference list:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016, Table 1.1
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2019, Table 1.1
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness, 2019
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Indigenous Housing, 2021
- NSW Government, Review of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) – Potential Future Reform Options Report, 2020
- Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2021, Housing and homelessness sector overview data tables, Table GA.16 & GA.17.
- S Rowley, A Crowe, C Gilbert, M Kruger, C Leishman, J Zuo, Responding to the pandemic, can building homes rebuild Australia, AHURI, 2020
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1>

### TERMINOLOGY / ACRONYMS

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Aboriginal                      | Australian Aboriginal peoples and can often include Torres Strait Islander peoples   |
| ACHIA                           | Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association NSW  |
| ACHP                            | Aboriginal Community Housing Provider (NSW)  |
| Affordable & social housing mix | A mixture of tenancies regarding affordable and social housing which enables them to house tenants on higher incomes in a portion of their dwellings. This enables the housing organisation to collect the higher rents and subsidise the organisation’s social housing portfolio. |
| Affordable housing              | Affordable rental housing is rental dwelling available through a housing assistance program that provides for a specified level of below market rent, with eligibility typically targeting households on low to moderate incomes.  |
| AHNT                            | Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory  |
| AHO                             | Aboriginal Housing Office (NSW)  |
| AHVIC                           | Aboriginal Housing Victoria  |
| ATSICCHO                        | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisation  |

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| ATSIEB                             | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ACT)  |
| ATSIHQ                             | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland  |
| Commonwealth Government            | Also referred to as the Australian Government and Federal Government  |
| CoP                                | Coalition of Peaks  |
| CtG                                | Closing the Gap   |
| Environmental health               | The condition of housing can have a direct impact regarding people's health and improved housing and living environments can lead to improvements in health.  |
| FPDN                               | First Peoples Disability Network  |
| IBA                                | Indigenous Business Australia   |
| ICHO                               | Indigenous Community Housing Organisation   |
| Indigenous                         | Refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples  |
| Integrated or wrap-around services | Wrap-around services means an individually designed set of services and supports for people with serious or complex needs that includes treatment services, personal support services or other necessary supports.  |
| Jurisdictions                      | States and Territories of Australia   |
| NACCHO                             | National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation  |
| NATSIHA                            | National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Association – NATSIHA consists of representatives from each Jurisdiction (elected by its members) and will engage subject matter experts on the Board when and if required                           |
| NRSCH                              | National Regulatory System Community Housing  |
| RoGS                               | Reporting of Government Services  |
| SAACCON                            | South Australia Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Network   |
| Social housing                     | Social housing is secure and affordable rental housing for people on low incomes with housing needs. It includes ATSIHQ owned and managed housing, public housing (government), community housing and State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). |
| SOMIH                              | State owned and managed Indigenous housing  |
| The Agreement                      | National Agreement on Closing the Gap   |

## **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Sector Strengthening Plan**

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| The Sector             | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing sector   |
| Torres Strait Islander | Peoples who identify as Australian Torres Strait Islanders  |
| UNDRIP                 | United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  |
| UNDRIP - Article 21.1  | Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security. |