



Subject: National Housing and Homelessness Plan

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to inform the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

The purpose of the Plan is to set out a shared national vision to improve housing outcomes and address homelessness in Australia. It will also provide a clear strategy for how all levels of government can work together, and with the private and community sector to deliver the shared vision.

The National Housing and homelessness plan issues paper canvases a range of factors effecting housing and homelessness in Australia and poses several questions for which public consultation and submission are sought to inform the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

As a party to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the issue's paper is particularly seeking views to guide the development of a national approach which articulates the housing needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Indigenous housing is an enduring policy issue in Australia and there are persistent reports that the housing experience of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continues to be in crisis. Compared with other Australians, Indigenous people are 10 times more likely to be homeless and 16 times more likely to live in severely overcrowded homes (Productivity Commission 2022). Indigenous households are only half as likely to own a property and consequently a high proportion live in rental accommodation (often in social housing) (ABS 2022a; Productivity Commission 2022). Poor access to quality housing is a further issue commonly faced by Indigenous Australians (Moskos et al 2022) which can result in negative impacts on mental and physical health, family relationships, and educational and economic participation (Baker et al. 2016; Baker et al. 2018; Dockery et al. 2022). These challenges are exacerbated for Indigenous Australians living in regional and remote areas where access to decent housing is particularly problematic (Habibis et al. 2015; Moskos et al. 2022).

The University of Adelaide, has prioritise Indigenous housing as a strategic area of research interest. Currently we have completed a program of research that can be drawn upon to inform the design of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

We have examined the factors which enable Indigenous people in Australia to have sustainable housing tenancies. The evidence should be used to develop better housing policy and programs for Indigenous peoples (See Moskos et al 2022).

We have also examined key measures of overcrowding used in Australia to see whether these appropriately capture experiences of overcrowding. With a focus on Indigenous and CALD households, the research demonstrates both a conceptual and empirical disconnect between current measures of overcrowding and actual experiences of excessive density. It should be used to refine current density measures and inform future data collection to support measures that more accurately capture experiences of overcrowding in Australian households (See Dockery et al 2022).

We have also examined what is required for sustainable Indigenous housing in regional and remote Australia, in the context of fluctuating populations and climate change challenges (See Lea et al 2021 and Grealy et al 2022). This research can be used to inform the future design of housing in remote areas as well as inform the design of effect repair and maintenance programs in remote areas.

In addition to this past work, we are currently undertaking three research projects pertaining to different aspects of Indigenous housing. The finding from this research will be of critical importance to the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, we are currently undertaking research that will provide updated population changes and generate population projections for all remote Indigenous communities across Australia to 2031. It will additionally provide insights into how these trends in mobility impact on remote community's infrastructure needs, particularly housing. See for example: <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research-in-progress/Indigenous-mobility-and-its-impact-on-remote-infrastructure-needs-an-exploratory-study>

We are also currently working with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to analyse data from the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC) to provide insights into Indigenous housing and homelessness experiences and impacts on broader socio-economic outcomes.

More specifically, we have recently embarked upon a major national program of research which seeks to develop a Long Term Governance and Resource Framework for Sustainable and Effective Indigenous Housing. A one page overview of the research program, plus additional diagrams containing information about project scope, policy context and stages is provided as an attachment to this submission. We would welcome briefing the Department further about this research, and holding discussion as to how to ensure the findings of this research can be used to inform the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Despite the above body of research, there is still critical need for more.

Quality data is needed to inform future Indigenous housing policy development and measure progress against targets such as those in the Closing the Gap agreement. However, as highlighted by leading Indigenous academic [REDACTED], "the lack of reliable and consistent disaggregated data for Indigenous Australians is striking, resulting in the paucity of evidence-based Indigenous policy-making".

Currently there are major limitations in the existing housing data including an under-representation of Indigenous people, the use of culturally inappropriate methodologies, and a focus on housing infrastructure rather than experiences of housing.

We encourage the government to address this gap by investing in research to understand how a knowledge infrastructure of Indigenous housing and homes can be best developed. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department on the design and conduct of such research.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Associate Professor Megan Moskos

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