

AHURI INDIGENOUS MULTI-YEAR RESEARCH PROJECT FEASIBILITY STUDY GUIDELINES

Indigenous housing and housing outcomes: aligning government programs with community and kinship practices

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1 PURPOSE

Through the AHURI National Housing Research Program, participating universities are invited to conduct a feasibility study into the scope and design of an AHURI Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project. It is intended that the deliberations of the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project will inform policy and program interventions to improve Indigenous housing outcomes in urban, regional and remote settings.

The research will focus on improving Indigenous housing outcomes through the alignment of kinship and reciprocity with the conditionality of government housing policy and programs. This will entail an examination of the proposition that where the conditionality of forms of housing assistance accords with Indigenous kinship and community obligations, housing program outcomes will be more readily achieved. It is anticipated that the research will explore the strength of kinship obligations and practices, how such practices have adapted over time, the difference (if any) between remote, regional and urban settings, and a comparison of these kinship obligations and practices with the broader community.

To contribute to the costs of completing a high-quality feasibility study, funding of \$8000 is available to each participating university. Collaboration between universities participating in the AHURI National Housing Research Program and other universities and key stakeholders is strongly encouraged.

The feasibility study will include (but not be restricted to) the nature of the policy research issue, the scope and type of research activity warranted for an Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project, and the nature of active policy engagement and dissemination. The feasibility study will contain a full plan to undertake the proposed research with a particular focus on the issues outlined in these feasibility study guidelines.

Following an assessment of the feasibility studies, a preferred tenderer will be identified to undertake the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project and a contract negotiated. Funding of up to \$1.15 million is available for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project, which includes provision to co-fund two post-graduate scholarships for Indigenous scholars. AHURI Limited reserves the right not to proceed with the full Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project, based on the outcomes of the assessment of feasibility studies.

2 POLICY BACKGROUND

2.1 Indigenous housing policy

The Closing the Gap national policy agenda is informed by the extent of Indigenous disadvantage, including poor housing outcomes. Equality of access for Indigenous Australians to housing services and opportunities cuts across each area of policy activity under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and associated National Partnership Agreements. Ambitious targets have been set by the Australian Government for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians living in urban, rural and remote areas. This includes closing the gap in the areas of housing, health, education and employment outcomes. Healthy homes are identified as a strategic platform in achieving these targets and there is scope for future research to analyse the impacts of housing interventions upon these targets.

A continued focus on the specific issues of improving the quality and supply of Indigenous housing and infrastructure in remote communities remains a policy priority. COAG has committed \$5.5 billion over ten years to improve housing in remote areas through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). The NPARIH aims to facilitate dramatic improvement of the housing stock and significant reform of property and tenancy managements, addressing issues of overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities.

There is also a policy focus on improving the housing circumstance of Indigenous households in regional and urban settings. This includes a recognition of the high levels of private renting for Indigenous households and the risk of discrimination, the need for mainstream public and social housing provision to be more culturally responsive and the imperative, across all geographic settings, to increase the level of Indigenous home-ownership.

There are two-related issues that underpin efforts to improve Indigenous housing outcomes, which inform the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project:

1. The conditionality of some forms of government housing assistance.
2. Indigenous cultural and social norms including kinship obligations and reciprocity.

2.2 Conditionality in housing provision

Increasingly, government provision of housing (and other forms of) assistance are delivered conditionally to foster certain social norms and associated behaviours. For Indigenous households, issues of conditionality and the use of government contractualism is especially pertinent in remote settings. This is because housing in these locations is typically provided by government because of the lack of a *real* market to underpin the development of Indigenous home ownership and renting. Chronic problems of over-crowding and poor housing supply for larger centres and out-stations on homelands, also heighten the emphasis on government provision of housing in remote locations.

Measures currently in place involve using long term leases to underpin the Australian Government's investment in remote social housing in the Northern Territory and to help residents of remote Indigenous communities to access concessional loans from the Australian Government's Home Ownership on Indigenous Land program. Legislation has also been enacted to enable long term leasing for home ownership on community-title land in Queensland. Likewise, the current reforms in Cape York are encouraging the use of conditional income management and the provision of a home ownership subsidy which is

conditional on households meeting certain obligations (Cape York Institute 2007). This complements other government interventions such as the new Income Management arrangements that see a new form of government conditionality and mutual obligation informing social policy interventions.

This issue of conditionality, or contractualism, mirrors the general use of reciprocity arrangements or obligations upon all social housing providers and tenants. Social housing providers are expected to provide a dwelling of a reasonable standard, that is, affordable, and available to the tenant on an on-going basis. In return tenants are expected to pay rent and amongst other things, to exhibit reasonable standards of behaviour.

The application of conditionality in housing policy and related policy domains has been variously supported and critiqued. For example, critics (Hammer 2003) argue that contractualism represents a distortion of the contractual ideal of modern citizenship as it is a relationship between unequals (i.e. the State and individuals), and because citizens, as welfare recipients, do not freely choose to contract with government. This point, for example, is strongly made by Behrendt et al. (2009) in regards to Indigenous communities and school attendance. Supporters maintain that any changes in behaviour by welfare and recipients of income support, needs to be equally matched by government measures to overcome broader structural factors that contribute to disadvantage (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2010).

2.3 Culturally appropriate approaches to housing policy and programs

Currently much of the policy debate about Indigenous housing is couched in terms of the relative merits of Indigenous specific and mainstream approaches to housing provision. For example, AHURI research (Milligan et al. 2011) points to the need for more responsive mainstream housing policy settings in urban contexts to better meet the needs and preferences of Indigenous clients. It is observed that there is scope for much more adaptation of policies and local flexibility to allow for cultural values, preferences and lifestyles to improve client outcomes. This can be achieved through more effective integration between mainstream and culturally specific housing services.

In particular, Milligan et al. (2011) argues that intercultural analysis provides another way to consider the nature of delivering programs in a culturally appropriate way, whereby intercultural service delivery could comprise a mix of bi-cultural, mainstream and culturally specific services working collaboratively, and thus providing a diversified and integrated response that promotes culturally respectful and proficient services and enables choice for Indigenous clients.

At the centre of these policy debates—and of this Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project — is the effect of kinship obligations (as part of Indigenous sociality and cultural norms) on housing outcomes. The early hypothesis is that where the nature of conditionality or contractualism accords with the nature of Indigenous kinship and community obligations, housing program outcomes will be more readily achieved.

As noted in the literature the extended kin network is an asset when the reciprocal sharing of income and goods provides a safety net for those without home or income (Saggers & Sims 2004). Calma (2009) observes that there are certain obligations and powerful expectations for behaviour according to ones relationship in the kinship structure. Pearson (2007) also notes that traditions remain important to social interaction in Indigenous communities:

Obligation towards kin is perhaps the most resilient social value of our culture and it has survived in one form or another throughout Aboriginal Australia when

dispossession and disruption have taken their toll on the structures and principles of traditional societies.

This is highlighted, for example, in the organisation of Indigenous households in remote communities which rely on reciprocity arrangements for child-rearing (FaHCSIA 2008; Altman 2011; Schwab 1995). Distributed parenting and shared child care are crucial for managing income difficulties in households with a heavy burden of childhood dependency.

Reciprocity arrangements are usually positive in their effect in that they provide positive benefit or value to the recipient and giver. However, not all social norms and reciprocity arrangements are positive. As noted by Pearson (Cape York Institute 2007), Sutton (2010) and others, negative social norms in Indigenous communities have ceased to be just symptoms or consequences of poverty. Instead, negative social norms have become socially acceptable behaviours. This is underpinned by cultural disruption such as the breakdown of reciprocity and kinship obligations, the loss of individual self-esteem and self-discipline, and the disintegration of traditional mechanisms for setting disputes and renewing social order (Barsh n.d).

3 RESEARCH SCOPE

The Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project will examine Indigenous housing outcomes in the context of conditionality in government housing assistance and related areas (such as income support and welfare services), and how these interrelate with Indigenous notions of reciprocity and obligations to kin. In exploring the interaction of government interventions and Indigenous cultural norms, it is expected that the research will offer an understanding of how and when to align Indigenous notions of reciprocity with the conditionality of service provision, so as to simultaneously achieve the social objective of improved housing outcomes and the reinforcement of positive social norms in Indigenous social relationships.

3.1 Design of Indigenous housing policies and programs

The central research task is to develop models of conditionality and reciprocity to improve Indigenous housing outcomes and consider what institutional policies and practices (see (Yeatman 2001) are required to complement government contractualism and Indigenous reciprocity. Accordingly, consideration needs to be given to specific recommendations to inform the design and implementation of Indigenous housing policies and programs. An integral part of the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project is active engagement with the housing policy community in the design and implementation of the research, including the identification of specific recommendations to guide housing policy and programs.

3.2 Conditionality and Indigenous housing outcomes

It is expected that the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project will determine the nature of conditionality or contractualism in housing policy and its particular application to Indigenous housing. The research task is to assess the extent to which contractualism in the delivery of housing assistance achieves these expected changes in behaviour and consequent improvements in Indigenous housing outcomes.

As already noted, the provision of housing assistance (at least for social housing) has required specific obligations from recipients and it is likely that forms of conditionality and obligations will increasingly form part of the provision of housing and support services. Contractualism sees government assistance conditionally provided with the expectation that recipients will modify their behaviour in a manner consistent with broader social norms. Such changes in behaviour, such as sending children to school, spending income support payments on basic essentials or using saving accounts to save a house deposit, are then meant to flow into positive and demonstrable changes in living circumstance. As with other social policy area where contractualism applies, the question of obligation in housing policy cannot be separated from the equally valid question of structural disadvantage and poverty.

3.3 The fit between housing conditionality and kinship and community obligations

Related to this analysis of the conditionality of housing assistance is an examination of the underlying social norms for Indigenous communities and the context of Indigenous cultural norms about kinship obligation and reciprocity for housing policy and programs. Rowse (2010) points to the continuance of community obligations for Indigenous households but with some variability across regions. A review of NATSIS 2008 shows that cultural affiliations still play a part for city based Indigenous households though not necessarily to the same extent as remote communities. It does confirm, however, that the nature and extent of Indigenous cultural norms, and their interaction with the social norms pursued by government, are central to the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project.

The research task, therefore, is to examine the degree of fit between government policy interventions (based on mutual obligation and conditionality), and how these complement (or not) notions of reciprocity for Indigenous households and communities.

3.4 A number of related factors will need to be considered

First, it would be beneficial to confirm the importance of kinship and community obligations on Indigenous housing outcomes. Based on the existing research literature, the nature of reciprocity is readily evident in the use of housing by Indigenous households. For example, Birdsall-Jones and Corunna (2008) demonstrates that kin based attachments to place are a major factor in residential choice and household formation, and that the movement from domicile to domicile among Indigenous people must take into account the mutually reinforcing interwoven influence of 'kin and country' on Indigenous residential patterns and choices. Likewise, there are examples of over-crowding for some Indigenous households and the effect on tenancies. Culturally sanctioned visiting may result in short-term over-crowding but has a positive benefit for the community (Birdsall-Jones et al. 2010).

Second, there are differences in how kinship obligations and other forms of reciprocity play out in different geographical settings. While certain cultural styles or values may be shared by Indigenous people, there is not a homogenised notion of Indigenous kinship and reciprocity. Cultures are never static and inflexible and communities are adept at synthesising existing cultural practices with other influences. Accordingly, due consideration will need to be given to; the variability in Indigenous cultural norms, how kinship obligations and practices have adapted over time, how such practices occur in different settings and are not unique to remote areas (noting that the majority of Indigenous people live in regional and urban centres).

For example, urban-dwelling people throughout Australia continue traditional relationships with their extended kin networks, resulting in household sizes much larger than for other Australians (Saggers & Sims 2004). As confirmed by Behrendt (2005), tightly knitted kinship and family networks are just as strong in urban areas, such as Sydney, as they are in more discrete rural and remote areas. Kinship and family ties are an aspect of contemporary Indigenous culture that bind communities in a way that reinforces obligations.

It is therefore expected that the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project will focus on the particular housing circumstances of diverse Indigenous communities across Australia, with attention to variations in kinship obligations and the implications for Indigenous housing outcomes. It is envisaged that this could lend itself to a series of specific case studies of remote, regional and urban settings.

It is also envisaged that the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project lends itself to a comparison with kinship or familial obligations and practices within other communities in Australia. As noted by Behrendt (2005) values of community, kinship, social responsibility (reciprocity), social interaction and the importance of place, whilst inherent in Indigenous culture, are not unique to them.

Finally, it is noted in AHURI research (Habibis et al. 2011; Birdsall-Jones et al. 2010) and elsewhere (e.g. Saggers & Sims 2004), that Indigenous Australians (adults and children) are highly mobile and this significantly impacts their housing arrangements and need. Indigenous mobility, or visiting your relations, is a critical part of Indigenous culture and earlier AHURI research (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna 2008) has shown that it creates bonds which provide resilience in times of need, including during loss of housing. However, this has implications for the fit between housing policy and practice and Indigenous obligations.

4 FEASIBILITY STUDY GUIDELINES

The following outlines the research tasks and key elements of the project plan to be addressed in the feasibility study for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project. This list is not exhaustive and applicants may wish to identify and comment on other areas to be included.

4.1 Research tasks

Research task 1

Assess the extent to which conditionality or contractualism in the delivery of housing assistance achieves the expected improvements in Indigenous housing outcomes.

- The feasibility study will need to draw on the relevant research literature (Australian and international), to develop a strong understanding of the notion of contractualism or conditionality in housing policy and provision, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous housing outcomes, and explain how this will be operationalised in the research.
- The feasibility study will include a preliminary scoping of the relevant housing policies and programs and related policy interventions that will be examined in the research, and justify their selection for the purposes of this research task.
- The feasibility study will need to identify and outline the key research questions and detail the data sources and research methods that will be drawn upon to achieve this research task.

Research task 2

Examine the degree of fit between government housing policy and provision (based on conditionality) and how these complement (or not) notions of reciprocity and kinship obligations for Indigenous households and communities.

- The feasibility study will draw on the relevant research literature to examine the notion of reciprocity and kinship obligation in Indigenous culture. This will need to include consideration of:
 - the importance of kinship and community obligations for Indigenous housing outcomes
 - the variability in Indigenous cultural norms, how kinship obligations and practices have adapted over time, how such practices occur in different settings
 - a comparison with kinship or familial obligations and practices with other communities in Australia
 - the role of mobility for Indigenous households and its implications for the fit between housing policy and practice and Indigenous obligations
- The feasibility study will identify and outline key research questions and detail the research methods and relevant data sources that will be drawn upon to achieve this task.

Research task 3

Develop models of conditionality and reciprocity to improve Indigenous housing outcomes and consider what institutional policies and practices are required to complement government contractualism and Indigenous reciprocity.

- The feasibility study will describe the approaches that will be used in developing and testing models of conditionality and reciprocity for the delivery of Indigenous housing outcomes.
- The feasibility study will outline how the research findings will generate specific and practical policy recommendations relevant to the future design and implementation of Indigenous housing policies and programs.
- The feasibility study will describe specifically how the research team will manage the process of consulting Indigenous people and the policy community in the development of these models.

4.2 Research methods

The feasibility study will need to clearly describe the research method(s) to be used for each of the research tasks outlined above. It must be clear how the research design, the research methods and the data analysis techniques will provide answers to the identified research questions. In multi-method research designs, explain how the different types of data will be analysed and integrated.

Due consideration must be given to how the data will be obtained, and should indicate any potential access issues and strategies for how these will be overcome. Any other issues that have the potential to affect the progress of the research should also be identified.

The feasibility study lends itself to a series of specific case studies of remote, regional and urban settings and the implications for Indigenous housing outcomes. Explanation will need to be provided about the proposed use of case studies and rationale for these sites.

It is important that the feasibility study indicates how the research team will gain access to research participants, manage relationships with the Indigenous community and achieve appropriate consultation and feedback throughout the research process.

Research ethics issues must be identified, and how these will be addressed explained. Please refer to AHURI's [Ethical principles and guidelines for Indigenous research](#) document, which was developed to; assist researchers to recognise and take Indigenous rights and interests into account in the development of proposals and conduct of research, outline the main ethical issues and principles involved and to help researchers access the literature on the conduct of research with Indigenous people.

Any aspect of the feasibility study that requires primary research must be carried out in accordance with the ethical requirements of AHURI Limited and the participating universities.

4.3 Project milestones, timeframe and budget

The feasibility study needs to provide details about key project milestones, research outputs and engagement activities for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project. Timeframes must be realistic and achievable. Applicants are encouraged to consider dividing the project into a series of discrete but clearly related research stages, with appropriately spaced deliverables. This will ensure a flow of funds throughout the project, as payments are linked to deliverables and project stages, not periods of time.

Detailed project plans provided for each project stage (including budgets) could be included as deliverables, providing the opportunity to further refine the project plan throughout the research process.

A detailed schedule is required showing the key tasks involved in meeting each of the milestones. The schedule should cover what activities will be carried out, when they will occur, how they relate to other activities, how long they will take and what the key outputs associated with each activity will be. A separate list of key outputs needs to be included.

A budget for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project needs to be provided linked to the key activities and project milestones with a justification provided for the main budget items. This requires a clear presentation of an item-by-item budget showing funds sought for: personnel, data collection, data purchase, equipment (detail how the equipment is to be used, and provide details of quotes), and travel (itemising origins and destinations for travel, daily allowances etc.). A robust justification for each item of expenditure (including salary and staffing levels) is required to demonstrate value for money.

4.4 Collaborations

It is expected that the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project will involve significant collaboration with other research bodies including (but not restricted to) the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR, ANU) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

Favourable consideration will also be given to collaboration with; different schools, faculties and departments of a participating university; other universities participating in the AHURI National Housing Research Program; researchers outside of the AHURI National Housing Research Network; non-government organisations; and international research bodies, where such collaborations can be demonstrated to be integral to the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project design.

Favourable consideration will be given to any in-kind contributions or opportunities for leveraging further funds. These should be detailed in the application, including the form of the proposed collaboration, and how the relationship will be managed by the research team.

4.5 Policy engagement

Engagement with the policy community is integral to the activities of AHURI. The feasibility study needs to detail the nature of policy engagement during the course of the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project and how it will be managed, including (but not restricted to) consultation on project design, reporting on key milestones and dissemination.

Where relevant, consideration should also be given to active engagement with the practice communities.

AHURI has developed a number of mechanisms to foster policy and practice engagement including Investigative Panels, project User Groups and Roundtables with senior policy advisors. Alternative forms of engagement should also be explored, and innovative approaches to policy engagement will be favourably considered.

4.6 Research capacity building

It is expected that research capacity building will be incorporated in the feasibility study. The funding for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project is conditional on the inclusion of two postgraduate scholarships appropriately costed to attract promising scholars in the field of Indigenous housing research. Funding for these scholarships needs to be equally matched by the successful university.

The selection of scholars must include a demonstrated relationship between their research topic and the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project.

Applications that support capacity building in addition to these scholarships will be favourably considered.

4.7 Dissemination

The dissemination of research findings in a manner accessible to the policy and practice communities is a core feature of AHURI. The feasibility study will need to outline the range of dissemination activities and project deliverables to inform the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project. This includes consideration of the type of dissemination, timing and target audiences.

It is expected that the budget will include dissemination to the value of at least 5 per cent of the total funds requested.

4.8 Risk management

The feasibility study needs to identify the main risks and proposed remedies in undertaking the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project. This can include, but is not limited to, access to key data and information, the use of key personnel, and other critical factors that may potentially delay the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project.

4.9 Research staff

The feasibility study needs to identify the project leader and the main academic staff to be involved with the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project, a brief description of their skills relevant to their roles and expertise and evidence of research relevant to the issue of concentrations of disadvantage.

The inclusion of Indigenous researchers where possible will be favourably considered.

The ability of the research team to complete the work on time should be clearly demonstrated by detailing how the research will be accommodated into teaching or other work schedules.

Along with a brief CV for the main researchers, a list of current and proposed research (including applications for the AHURI [National Housing Research Program Funding Round 2012](#)) needs to be included.

The CV for each research team member should be no more than 500 words per team member, which includes all contact details (physical address, mailing address, email address and telephone number).

Applicants are encouraged to include early career researchers.

4.10 Project management

The feasibility study will need to outline how the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project will be project managed including contingency planning.

Costs associated with managing of the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project need to be included in the budget.

5 THE AHURI INDIGENOUS MULTI-YEAR RESEARCH PROJECT

Following an assessment of the feasibility studies a preferred tenderer will be identified for the full Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project and a contract negotiated. Consultations will also be held by AHURI with HHPWRG and HMAc, prior to a final decision. AHURI Limited reserves the right not to proceed with the full Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project, based on the outcomes of the assessment of feasibility studies.

5.1 Timeline

Research Centre Directors need to express in writing to AHURI their intention to submit a feasibility study by **15 August 2011**.

The feasibility study needs to be submitted by, **12noon AEST on 11th October 2011**.

Event	Date
Expressions of interest to Dr Andrew Hollows, AHURI Limited to undertake a feasibility study by 5pm (AEST)	15 August 2011
Submission of feasibility study by 12pm (AEST)	11 October 2011
AHURI notifies the successful applicant(s) and enters negotiation for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project	5 December 2011
AHURI notifies applicants who were not successful	Mid December 2011
AHURI and successful applicant(s) enter into contract for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project	End December 2011

5.2 Budget

Each university (who is a member of the AHURI National Housing Research Network) participating in the submission of a feasibility study is eligible for a payment of \$8000. Feasibility studies that involve a partnership between two (or more) universities are therefore eligible to receive \$16 000 (or more) for submission of a feasibility study.

Each university should invoice AHURI separately for this payment upon submission of the completed feasibility study. Payment will be contingent upon the feasibility study being deemed compliant with the requirements set out in this document.

The total budget for the AHURI Indigenous Multi Year Project, including the part funding of Indigenous scholarships, and 5 per cent in dissemination costs, is \$1.15 million over three years.

5.3 Contract

A written contract will be required prior to the disbursement of funds for the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project.

5.4 Application process

The feasibility study must address each issue detailed above in Section 4. It is recommended the document should be approximately 8000 words (excluding references, table of grants and CV's).

Any aspect of the feasibility study that requires primary research must be carried out in accordance with the ethical requirements of AHURI and the relevant universities.

All applications must be submitted to AHURI by a Research Centre Director.

For further information please contact:

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