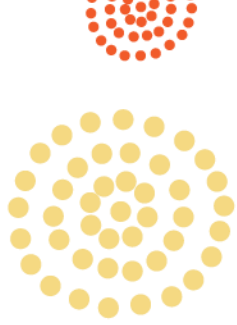


CONCURRENT SESSION

C2 Indigenous homelessness – state and territory approaches



Birdya Mia

Aboriginal Homelessness Research Project



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Early investigation

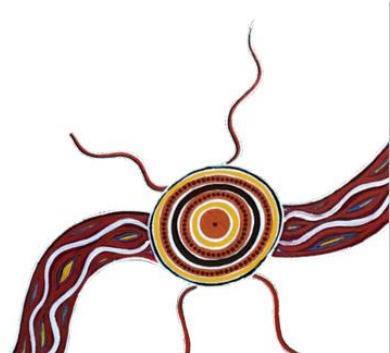
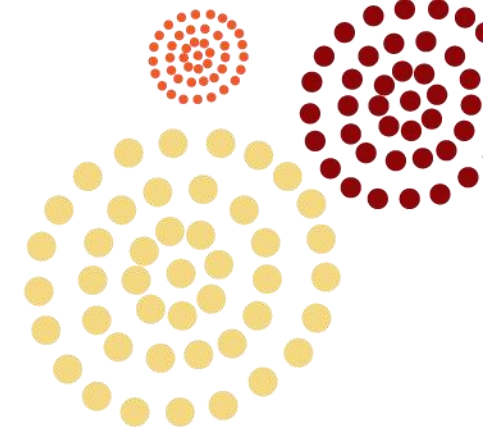


(ABC News: Joanna Menagh)

“Ask me how you can help me,”

- research participant

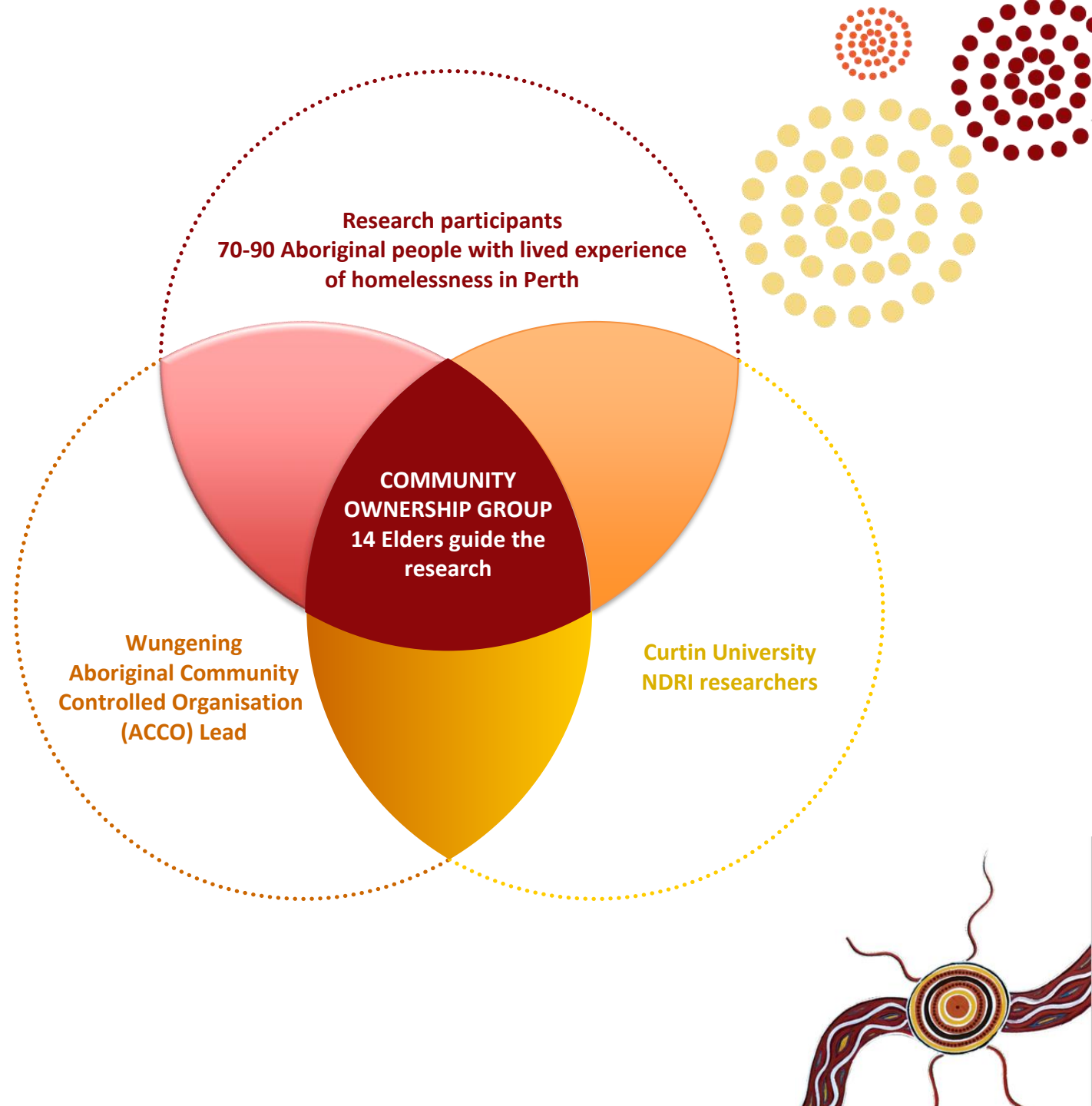
In the rush for a timely response to homelessness at the COVID-19 outbreak, there was an absence of the voices of community Elders, people with lived experience of homelessness and the staff who support them on the frontline.



A group of four people (three women and one man) are standing in front of a backdrop. The backdrop features several logos, including 'Lotterywest', 'Alliance Programs', 'National Drug Research Institute', and 'ndri.curtin.edu.au'. The people are smiling and appear to be at a formal event.

Other members of the project team

Louise Southalan, Jackie Oakley, Dorothy Bagshaw, Julia Butt, Patrick Egan, Emma Vieira, Chelliss Sceghi, Alice Brown, Laura Dent, Lucy Spanswick, Duc Dau



Early insights – Community Ownership Group



Community Ownership Group Members

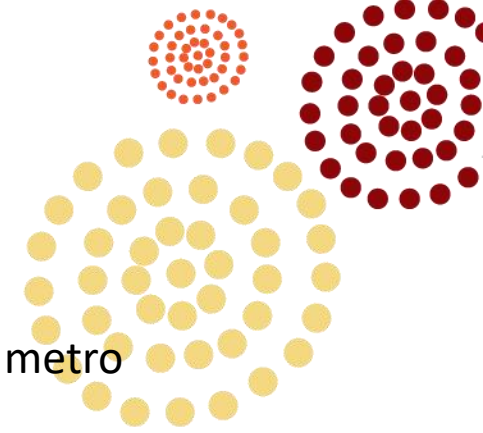
Fred Penny, Greg Ugle, Raylene Indich, Roslyn Indich, Beryl Weston, Marie Pryor, Lynette Cox, Vivienne Weir, Jonathon Blurton. Not pictured: Shirley Harris, Barbara McGillivray, Lenny Yarran, Bev Port Louis.

Roles

- Elected by Elders groups across 8 metro areas in Perth
- Support participant recruitment
- Approve research goals and methods
- Offer feedback on findings and analysis
- Are remunerated for their time - \$200 per 3hr meeting every 6 weeks

Early lessons

- The desire for immediate action and outreach alongside the long-term goals of research
- This comes with its own challenges and takes additional time and money



Methods



SOCIAL ISSUES, JUSTICE AND STATUS

Photovoice

Participation and Empowerment in Research



Eva M. Moya, Ph.D.
Silvia M. Chavez-Baray, Ph.D.
Editors

NOVA

YOUR HOMELESSNESS EXPERIENCE

What do tough times look like for people going through homelessness?

What are the normal or everyday things that happen?

What are some good things that happen?

Do you have friends or family that can offer temporary accommodation?

How long have you been homeless and how many times?

Do you have a favourite song that inspires you?

THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND WORDS

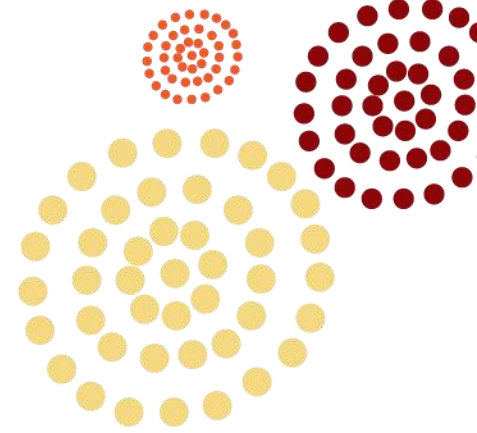
Below are some scenes of the homelessness experience. Tell us what you imagine the people might be thinking, feeling or saying. You can add any speech bubbles or write anywhere you need to.

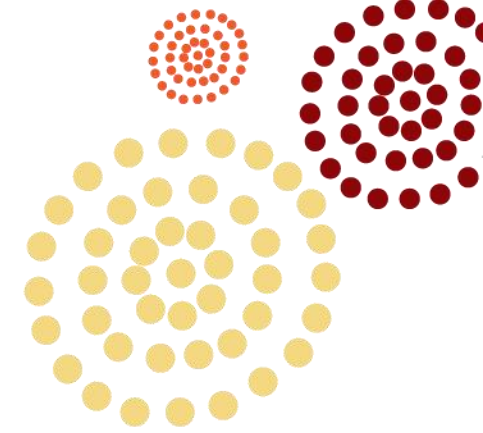
An illustration depicting various scenes of homelessness. It includes silhouettes of people in different situations: a person sitting on the ground, a person walking with a backpack, a person sitting on a bench, a person standing next to a suitcase, a person sitting on the ground with a backpack, a person walking with a backpack, a person standing next to a suitcase, a person sitting on the ground with a backpack, a person walking with a backpack, a person standing next to a suitcase. Each scene is accompanied by a thought bubble or a speech bubble, intended for users to write their responses.

There is an emotional toll on not having one's own space...

- *"...I can't stay there with [my daughter]. Its too hectic on me. I'm getting called all nasty names with her. You know, the mood swings... I love sewing and all that stuff. And I just do things like that. Out in my garden. Simple things. I just want simple things. [crying] I'm sick of moving around, walking on eggshells..."* – Participant 19, Female, 50 yrs.
- *"...all you want is your own room so you can put yourself up and you can have your own toiletries and build up your own clothing, and all that sort of stuff. When you're buying stuff and you've got your own property it puts a spring back in your step..."* – Steven, Participant 4, 42 yrs.

...which compounds the difficulty in taking steps toward housing.

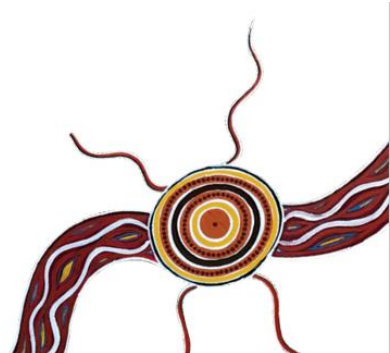




Housing first, with wrap around support.

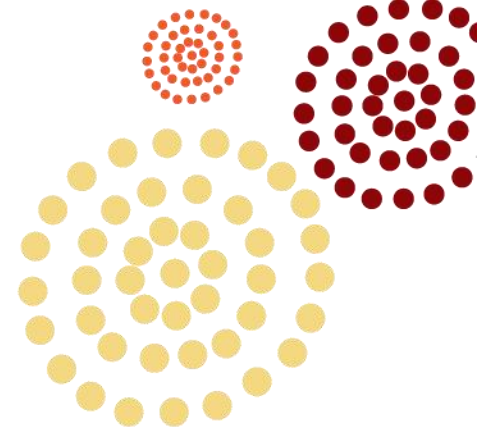
Aboriginal-led support for maintaining housing, including parenting, maintenance and managing family obligations.

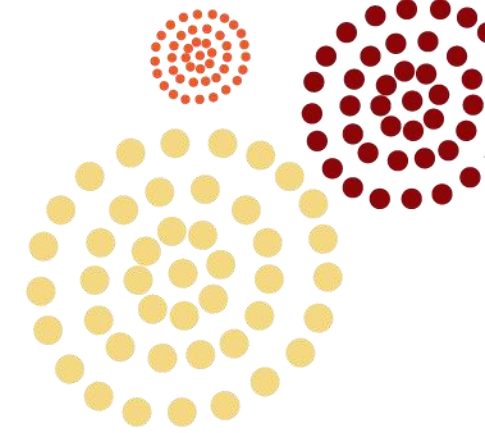
Housing should not be taken away as punishment, with supports in place to prevent loss or damage to housing.



Rejection from, or long wait times for support have a crucially negative impact on Aboriginal peoples' willingness to continue seeking support

- *"You ring them up. Everyday. You're meant to ring them up. And they ask you a shit tonne of questions for no reason and they don't offer you any help and tell you to ring back tomorrow. You're meant to [call everyday]. They tell you to. To get the best outcome. I gave up. They didn't do anything." – Participant 17, Female, 41 yrs.*
- *"People that put their hand up and say they want support, they're the ones that are willing to change. And once something like that happens you have to grab it and run with it and help them, because its so easy to fall back." – Steven, Participant 4, 42 yrs.*





Support should be 24-7, flexible, and be able to take some kind of immediate action to support faith in ongoing care.

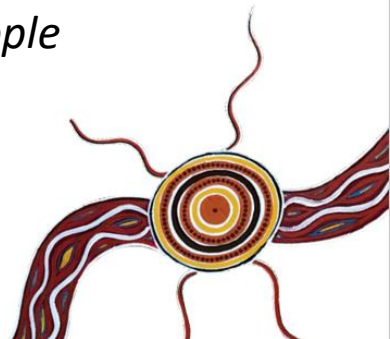
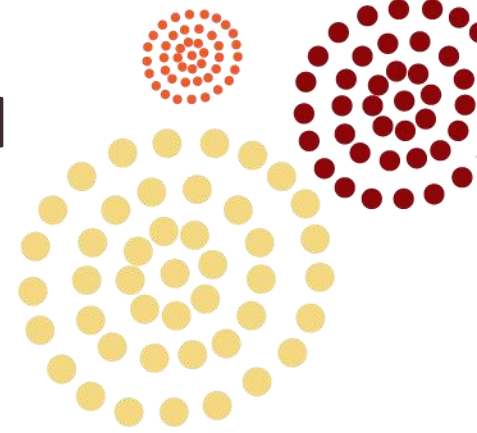


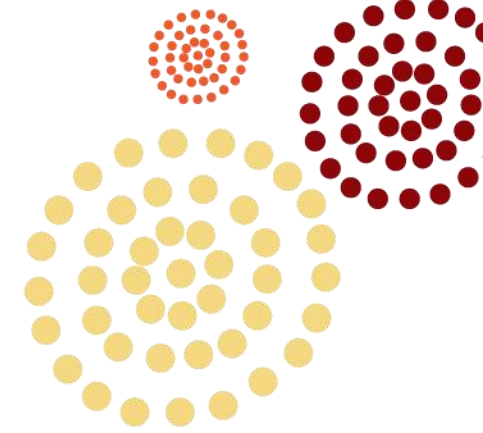
Alcohol and other drugs are used to stay alert or sleep well, avoid assault, keep warm, and avoid stressful thinking or boredom.

- *"...[I've] stayed in parks or had to walk around and be on the gear for so many days because I had nowhere to go."* – Steven, Participant 4, 42 yrs.
- *"I smoke a lot of cones. It will put us to sleep. You get a good night's sleep then."* – Participant 12, Male, 42 yrs.

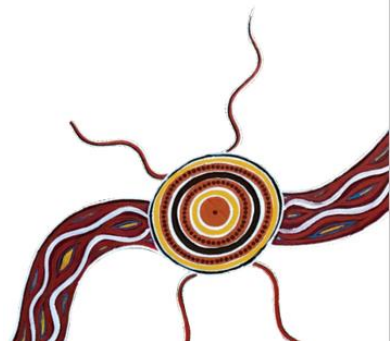
There is a gap in support for those who have recovered from substance dependence but continue to struggle with housing.

- *"I had a place in [Suburb 1 in Perth], but it was all full of drugs there so I just didn't want to live there no more you know."* – Participant 1, Male, 53 yrs.
- *"...if there was some kind of program to have people understand if you change your life and better yourself for a certain period of time, we'll give you priority housing, away from [Perth suburb] where all the drugs are, away from all the drug areas, we'll put you where you deserve to be, because you've come so far. But people just don't see it like that..."* – Participant 3, Male.

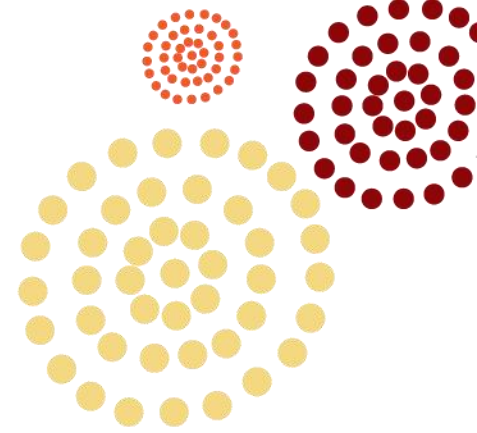




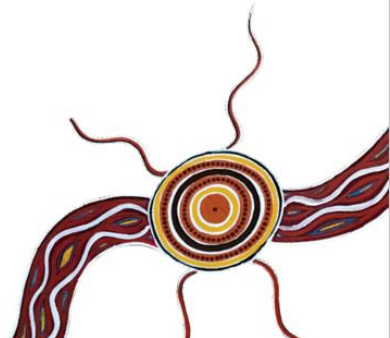
Specialised housing support for those who have recovered from drug and alcohol dependence, including support to re-enter the housing market, and securing housing outside of areas prominent for drug and alcohol use.

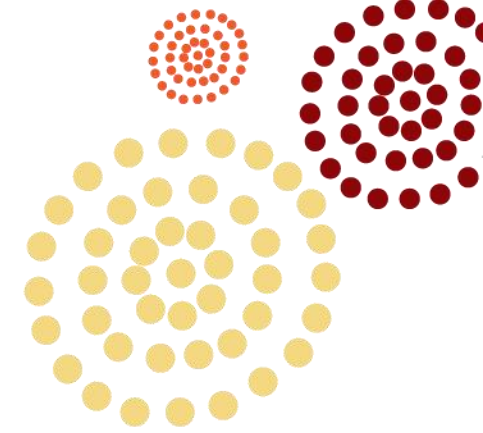


Ongoing negative perception of “Homeswest” as a government housing brand among the Aboriginal community, despite its discontinuation as an entity in WA since 1999.



- *“They’re sort of like the police. They make their own laws as they go.” – Participant 8, Female, 52 yrs.*
- *“...it always had constant sewerage problems there... I said, ‘That stench, its coming right through the house.’ [He said] ‘Well open your windows.’ Talking down you know, like that kind.” – Participant 19, Female, 50 yrs.*
- *“[My mother] she’s elderly, and she’s going through elderly abuse with her son. So she fears calling the police because it goes against her with Homeswest. Because they do. They do put it on record, and they do say, ‘okay this is too many callouts’. And it becomes an issue. So they get scared to call the police for their own protection, but scared of eviction mostly.” – Participant 25, Female.*



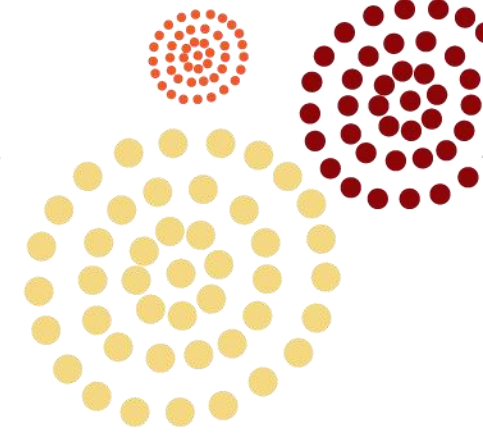


Stronger community education around *current* Housing policies and all changes.

Clear guidance around the *rights* of those being housed or seeking housing.



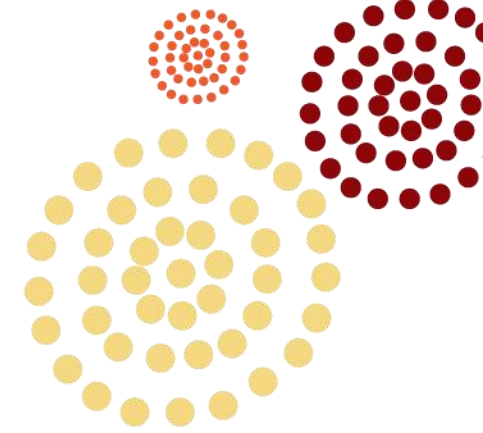
Covid-19 created immense fear in the beginning, but participants are now disinterested in discussing it.



- *"I've been isolating way before Covid even started."* – Participant 21, Female.
- *"I went [to a hotel] for two weeks. It was good. You had a meal price every day, \$20 on the record for either morning or lunch... A bit of luxury actually. I enjoyed it while I can."* – Participant 29, Male.
- *"It was alright. I never really had any problems with [the pandemic]. It was just another way of living. A different way of living."* – Participant 10, Male, 36 yrs.

The ongoing impact is still felt by support services who have ample lessons to share.





In crises, listening and engagement should be immediate.

Consultation should take place, most importantly, with those with current experience, but also service providers and those with previous lived experience of homelessness to gain a full picture.

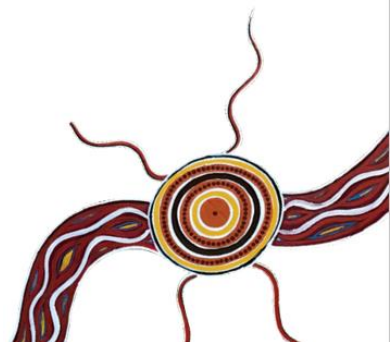
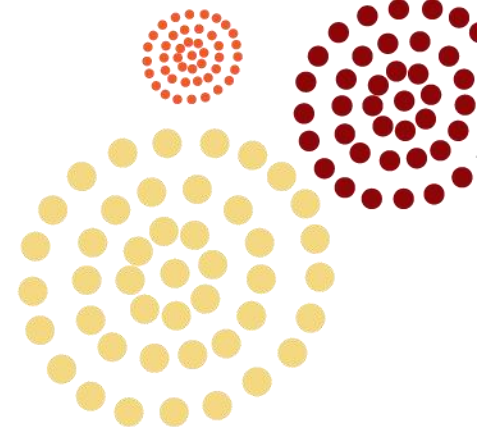


Cultural understanding of housing needs is not experienced, including kinship, visitor and family obligations

- *"[The government] really need to, they need to go in and do a big overhaul with cultural stuff and everything. Because you know they don't, they don't consider nothing... Put some real people with heart for the work. Not just there to please the white man, you know?"* – Participant 19, Female, 50 yrs.

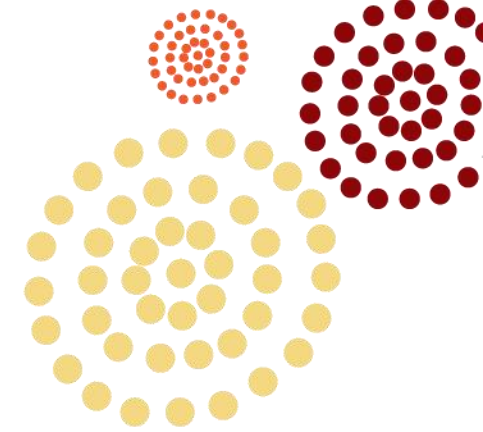
Many Aboriginal people interviewed feel sadly disconnected from their culture, often because of a history of shame.

- *"I grew up with my Aboriginal family and that, but there was no cultural teachings or that like, because all of us we live in the suburbs we haven't got that culture. And its been taken away a lot more from us, than other States. So everyone close to the suburbs has more or less lost their culture unless they get back to Country. But they don't do the proper stuff that they do, like go through lore and that sort of thing."* – Participant 4, Male, 42 yrs.



A diversity of Aboriginal people being supported to work safely and comfortably in government agencies and inform policy – this requires long-term cultural shifts, and different ways of working beyond quotas.

Paid support for Elders to mentor younger Aboriginal people around culture and pride in housing.



- *“...our Elders do have a lot of say. We have a lot of Elders that are smart and actually quite educated now. They’re magnificent. I want to learn a lot from them as well. They’ve got PhDs and stuff like that. They’re out there and, even if people have to be paid to get out there. Because they deserve to be paid, they’ve got a lot of knowledge. Because they’re our future. They tell us about our past and what’s needed for the future.” - Participant 25, Female, 25 yrs.*



Overall

Increase in ongoing funding, deep listening,
hearing what is said, and taking action.

Scan here to open our Spotify playlist, curated
by Aboriginal people experiencing
homelessness in Perth

