

# Power and social housing service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants: Healthcare, social service and housing provider perspectives

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# Acknowledgement of Country

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We acknowledge the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation upon which we present from today.

We acknowledge the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation where many of you are today.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

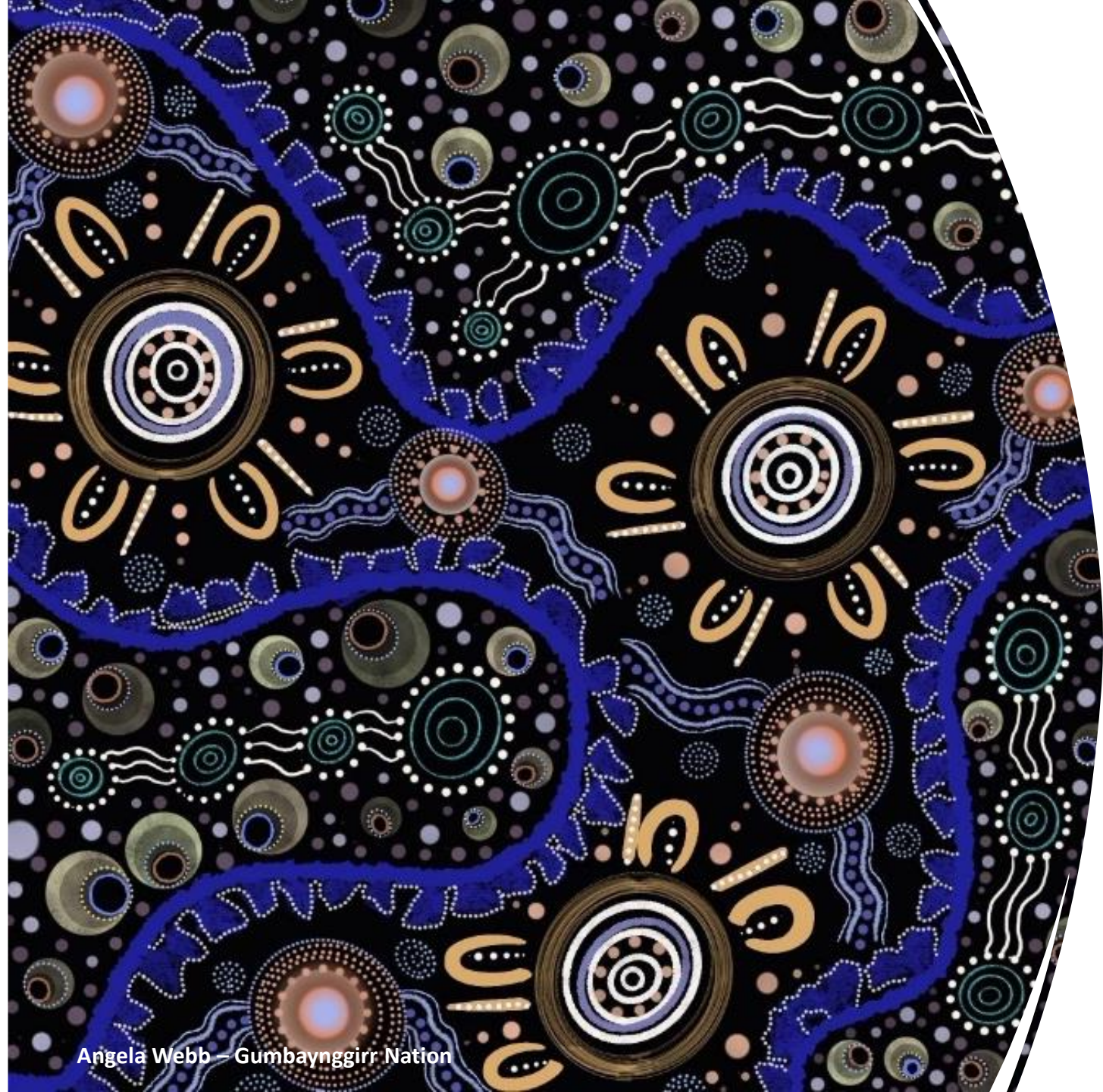
This land is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.



# Overview

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- Health and wellbeing
- Context
- The Healthy Housing study
- Findings
- The way forward



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing

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- › Holistic
- › Beyond physical health and bodily disease
- › Social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of families and community

(Gee G, Dudgeon P, Schultz C, Hart A, Kelly K. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing Canberra: Department of The Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014)



Dudgeon and Walker, 2015

# The impact of colonisation

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- › Dispossession and dehumanisation
- › Disconnection from language, culture, community, Country
- › Intergenerational trauma

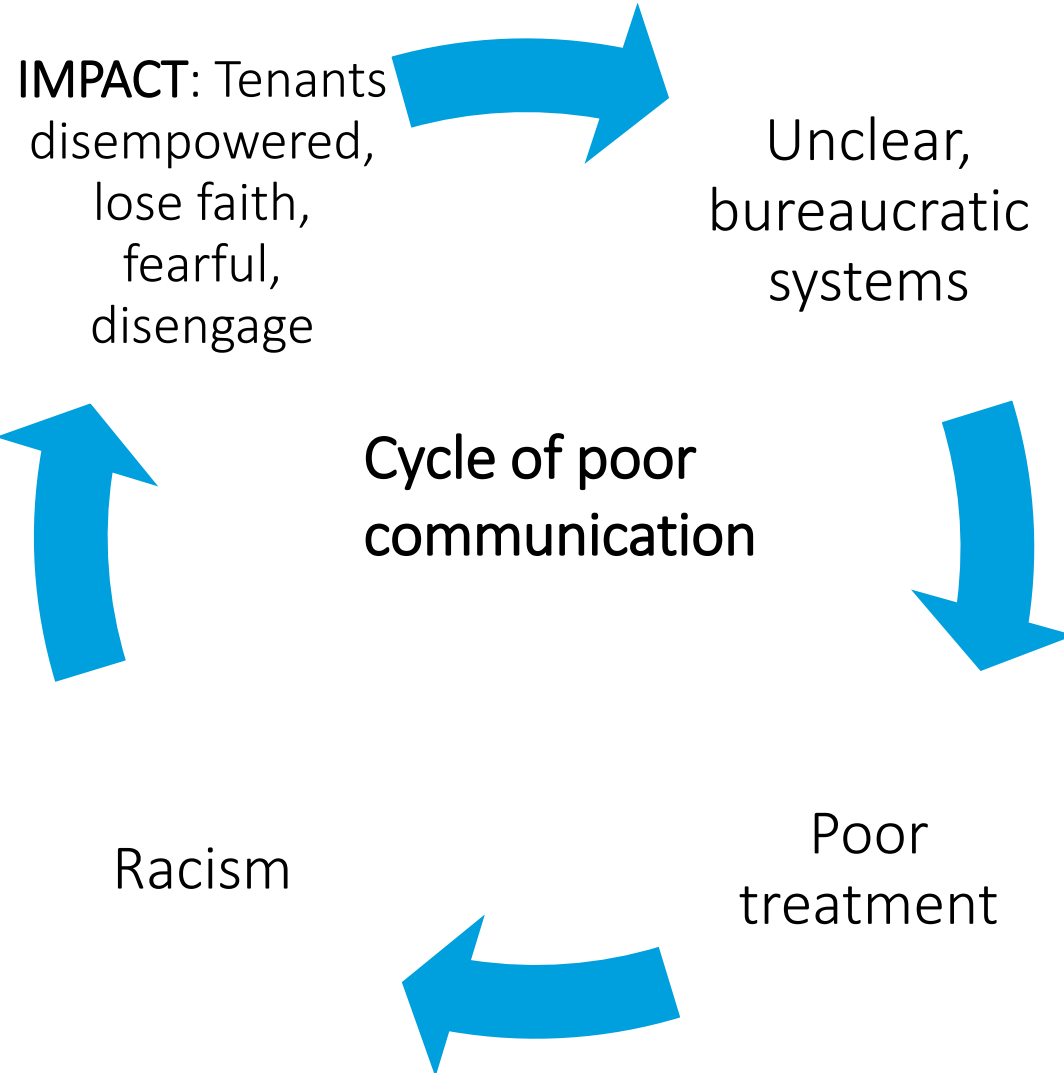
# The Healthy Housing study

What are the current formal and informal pathways for **healthcare** and **social services** to communicate with **social housing**?



# Findings

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# Unclear, bureaucratic systems

**Social service staff 1:** But I've even had stories of one client who submitted all the forms and then was told - - -

**Social service staff 2:** They were lost.

**Social service staff 1:** - - - they didn't have that. And she's got copies stamped.

**Social service staff 2:** They still insist they haven't got them. There is no equity for clients, like, if they say it's lost, if they say you didn't lodge it, and you're standing there with your stamped things, they'll go well, you couldn't have, it's not in our system. So the client is being gaslighted. Constantly gaslighted. And the same things happen for maintenance. **Gaslighting is the best way to describe what they do to the clients.**



# Unclear, bureaucratic systems

“The negative thing and the pessimistic thing to say at this point, is that the level of obfuscation is purposeful, because we have not enough housing for the need. And the only way that we can conceal that, is to make it as difficult and complex as possible.”

- Healthcare worker

# Treatment of tenants by housing providers

“I think the whole culture, just adding onto that, that’s in [social] housing is very much, you know, **the clients have no agency**, the consumers. Oh, it’s power over. There’s absolutely no other way. It’s not even an imbalance, because there’s no-one at the other end of the see-saw. **They’re not allowed on the see-saw.**”

- Social service staff

# Racism

“I see it, like, all the time, the discrepancies in the way that they treat white people and Aboriginal workers and clients.”

- **Social service staff**

“Communication, because they’ve had so many bad experiences when they go to housing, they get sick of being looked down upon, the level of racism that they’ve experienced.”

- **Social service staff**

## Impact – fear & disempowerment

“But it’s why a lot of clients are really afraid to fill those forms and that’s why a lot of clients go with years and years of having to put an application for a transfer or going further because they don’t know how to do it and they’re too afraid to come to [service name] for help. So most of the time when they come here it just starts from the bottom.”

- Social service staff

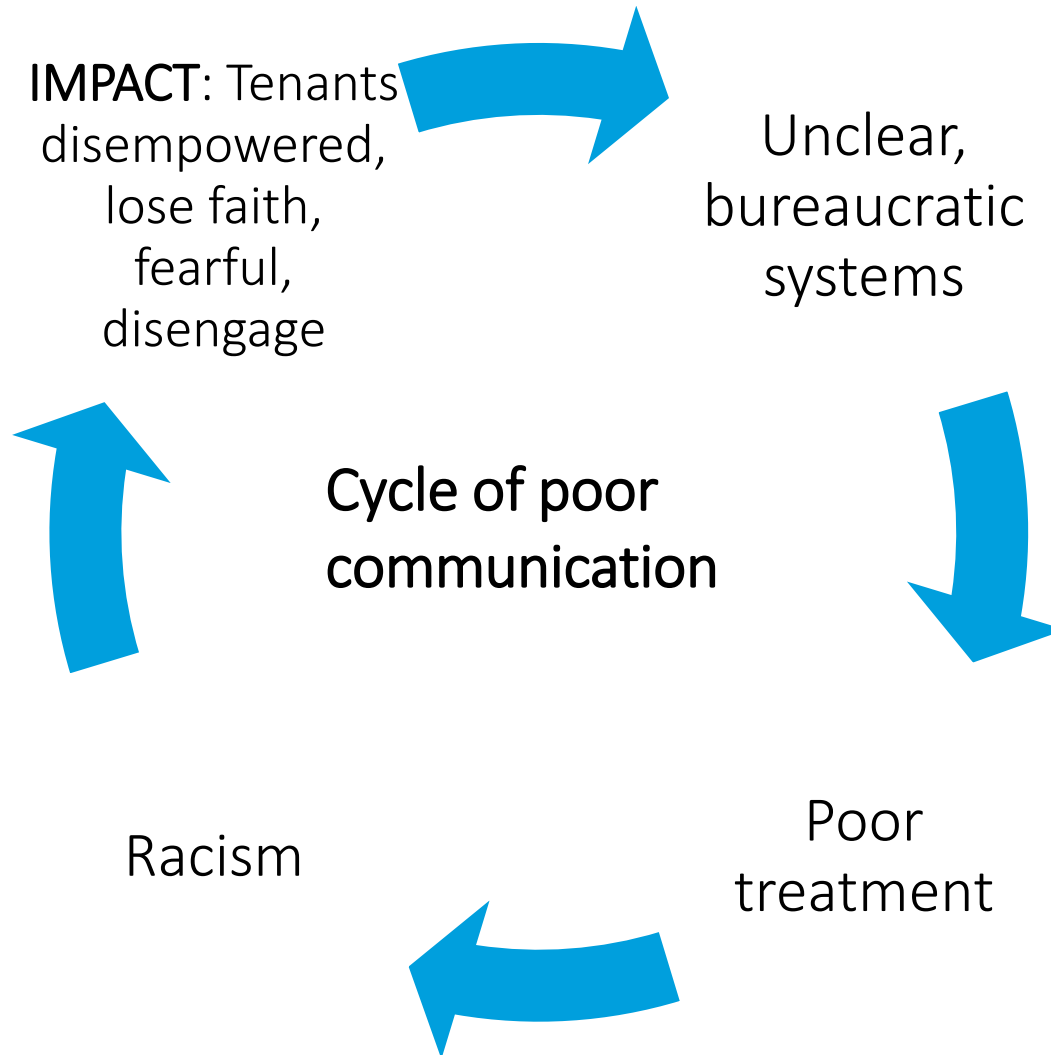
## Impact - disengagement

“Whereas a lot of the time with some of those [social housing] workers they’ll say we’ll get you a house within this time. So they give tenants these parameters that are never going to happen, and then they lose track. So then because they’ve already **broken that trust**, then the client breaks down, **doesn’t want to engage with them, stops answering phone calls**, and that’s when they circle back and go, you know, we’re trying to call that client that you gave us six months ago, but they haven’t called us back. And then the client will answer our phone calls, and they’re, like, this happened, this happened, and she kept promising me this and then she never did it, why should I bother seeing her?”

- **Healthcare worker**

# Findings

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# The way forward

- Improved transparency and efficiency in social housing service delivery
- Improved communication
  - Frontline housing workers' understanding of Aboriginal people's context (colonisation and its impacts)
  - Trauma-informed services
  - Cultural awareness training for non-Aboriginal housing staff



# The way forward

“So just that culture, changing that and just having client officers in there who are really there because they want to make a difference and they really understand and respect and value the people that they’re working with, that on its own would make a difference.”

- Social service staff





# The way forward

“A much more respectful approach when they validate the story of the clients and acknowledge the trauma and intergenerational trauma, just that will make a difference to clients’ lives.”

- **Social service staff**

# Acknowledgements

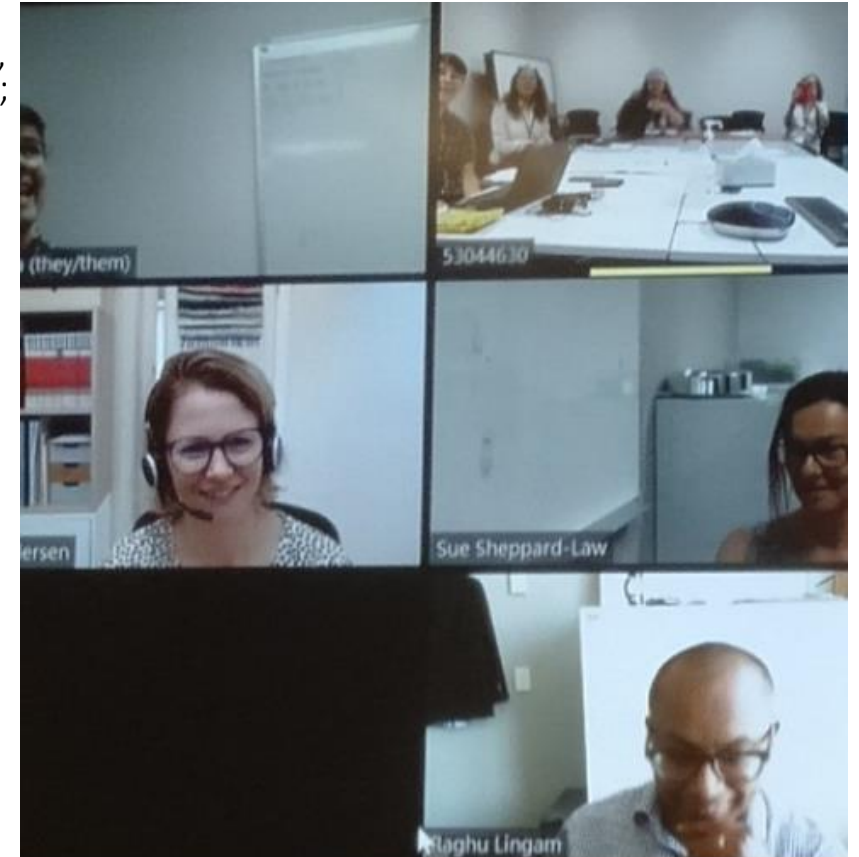
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## Healthy Housing team

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## Partners

- › The George Institute for Global Health, UNSW
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- › Ngala Nanga Mai
- › Sydney Children's Hospital Network, UNSW
- › South East Sydney LHD
- › Members of SPHERE
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# Acknowledgements

ALWAYS WAS  
ALWAYS WILL BE  
ABORIGINAL LAND

Wiradjuri artist Charlotte Allingham



Angela Webb – Gumbaynggirr Nation