

An overview of the Indigenous housing system in Australia

From the AHURI Inquiry into developing a long-term governance and resource framework for sustainable and effective Indigenous housing.



What this research is about

This research looked at how Indigenous housing is managed, funded and regulated in Australia. It looked at ways to support Indigenous Australians in making their own decisions about their housing.

The research uses the term 'Indigenous' to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

Why this research is important

The research provides a comprehensive overview of the current Indigenous housing system in Australia.

Understanding Indigenous housing requirements is vital for developing future policies.

Based on

Final Report No. 434: *Indigenous housing support in Australia: the lay of the land.*

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At a glance

Indigenous households have unmet housing needs at twice the rate of all Australian households

1 in 8 Indigenous households have unmet housing needs

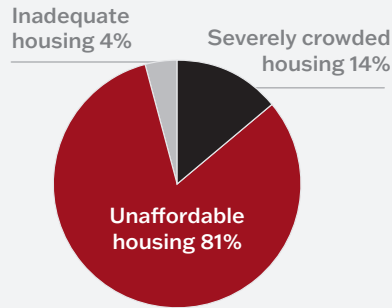


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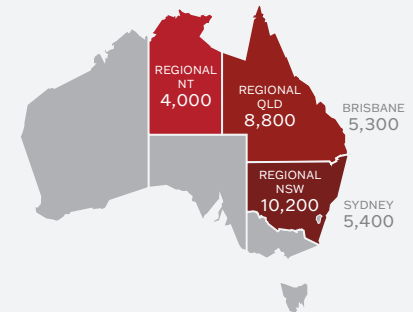
1 in 16 all Australian households



How are Indigenous housing needs unmet?



Where are Indigenous households most experiencing unmet housing needs?



To meet the growing needs of Indigenous households for the next 20 years, **Australia needs to build 3,600 dedicated social homes each year**

Indigenous housing policies need to support people in all housing situations, from homelessness to home ownership.



Practical solutions:

- develop a strategy for Indigenous housing
- grow links across the housing system
- work with local communities
- gather accurate local data

Key findings

There is no national Indigenous housing strategy and only some states and territories have dedicated strategies. The Indigenous community-controlled housing sector has receded in most states, except New South Wales and Victoria.

Closing the Gap gives governments a target

'Closing the Gap' gives governments clear directions for shared decision-making and increased Indigenous control. However, its current targets for tackling housing disadvantage are narrow in scope and lack ambition.

The Indigenous housing sector struggles to fund new housing due to its limited size, low rental income and few assets for securing loans.

Increase in the number of Indigenous households in the private housing market

In 2001 half of Indigenous households lived in the private sector. In 2021, over two-thirds of Indigenous households lived in the private sector as:

- owners (14%)
- owners with a mortgage (28%)
- renting from a private landlord (28%).

Relying on private rental creates rental stress

The private rental sector is too expensive for Indigenous households earning very low incomes. Nearly 80% of Indigenous very low income renters experience rental stress.

Social housing is still a key component of Indigenous housing

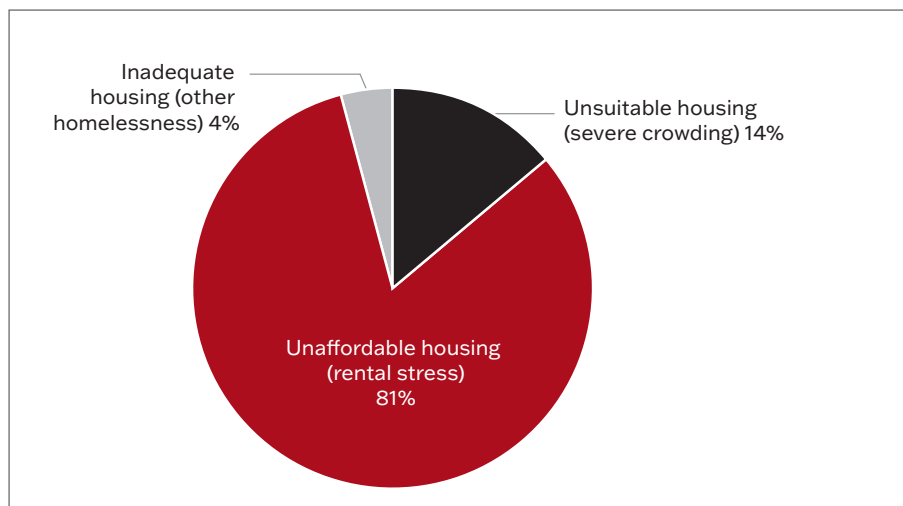
Appropriate and adequate social housing remains crucial despite decreasing from housing 32% of Indigenous households in 2001 to 18% in 2021. Currently, Indigenous members make up over 30% of new government-managed housing tenancies across Australia.

Indigenous households have large unmet housing needs

Analysis of 2021 Census data revealed 45,700 Indigenous households couldn't meet their housing needs – about one in eight households, double the national rate for all Australian households.

Most of Indigenous households' unmet need comes from being in rental stress.

Figure 1: Drivers of unmet Indigenous housing need, 2021



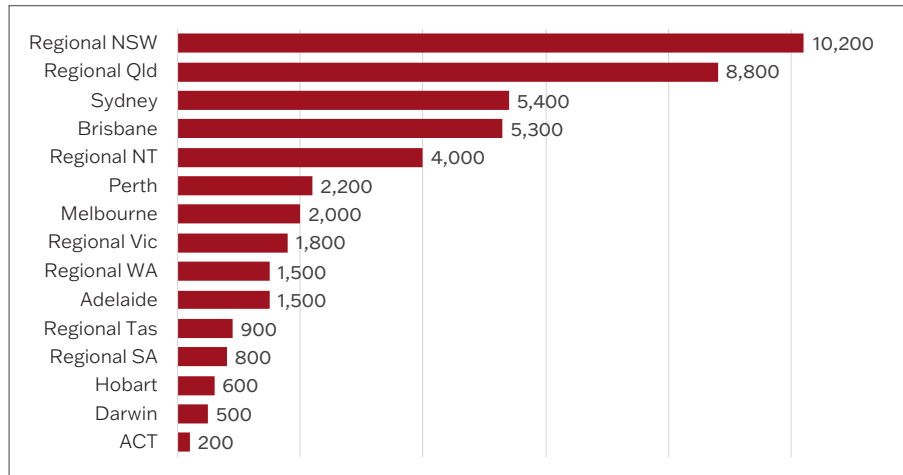
Source: Author analysis of ABS data.

Note: The percentages in this figure do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

'The private rental sector is too expensive for Indigenous households earning very low incomes.'

The areas with the greatest unmet need include New South Wales, Queensland and remote Australia.

Figure 2: Number of Indigenous households with unmet housing needs, 2021



Source: Author analysis of ABS data.

Indigenous housing needs to grow

To meet the projected need from low income Indigenous households over the next 20 years, an additional 3,600 dwellings per year will be needed.

Policy actions

Areas for future policy focus include:

- create a national framework for Indigenous housing backed by solid research on what local communities need
- build partnerships with the private housing industry, educational institutions and non-Indigenous non-government organisations
- align Indigenous housing policies with ‘Closing the Gap’ to ensure the Indigenous community-controlled housing sector can develop consistently and grow sustainably.

Indigenous housing policies need to support all housing situations, from homelessness through to home ownership. This needs flexible funding and strong connections across different parts of the housing system.

‘Indigenous housing policies need to support all housing situations, from homelessness through to home ownership’.

Policy development must consider the different needs of Indigenous populations in both urban and remote areas. The resources allocated to any area should match the level of unmet need. Practical solutions should focus on working with local communities, gathering accurate local data and helping housing providers adapt their services as needed.

Research design

This research included a detailed literature review, an assessment of the current Indigenous housing system across Australia, an analysis of housing needs and interviews with government and Indigenous housing sector stakeholders.

To cite the AHURI research, please refer to:

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