



WEBINAR

Addressing First Nations housing disadvantage: a blueprint for action

Findings of the AHURI-funded inquiry into developing a long-term governance and resource framework for sustainable and effective Indigenous housing



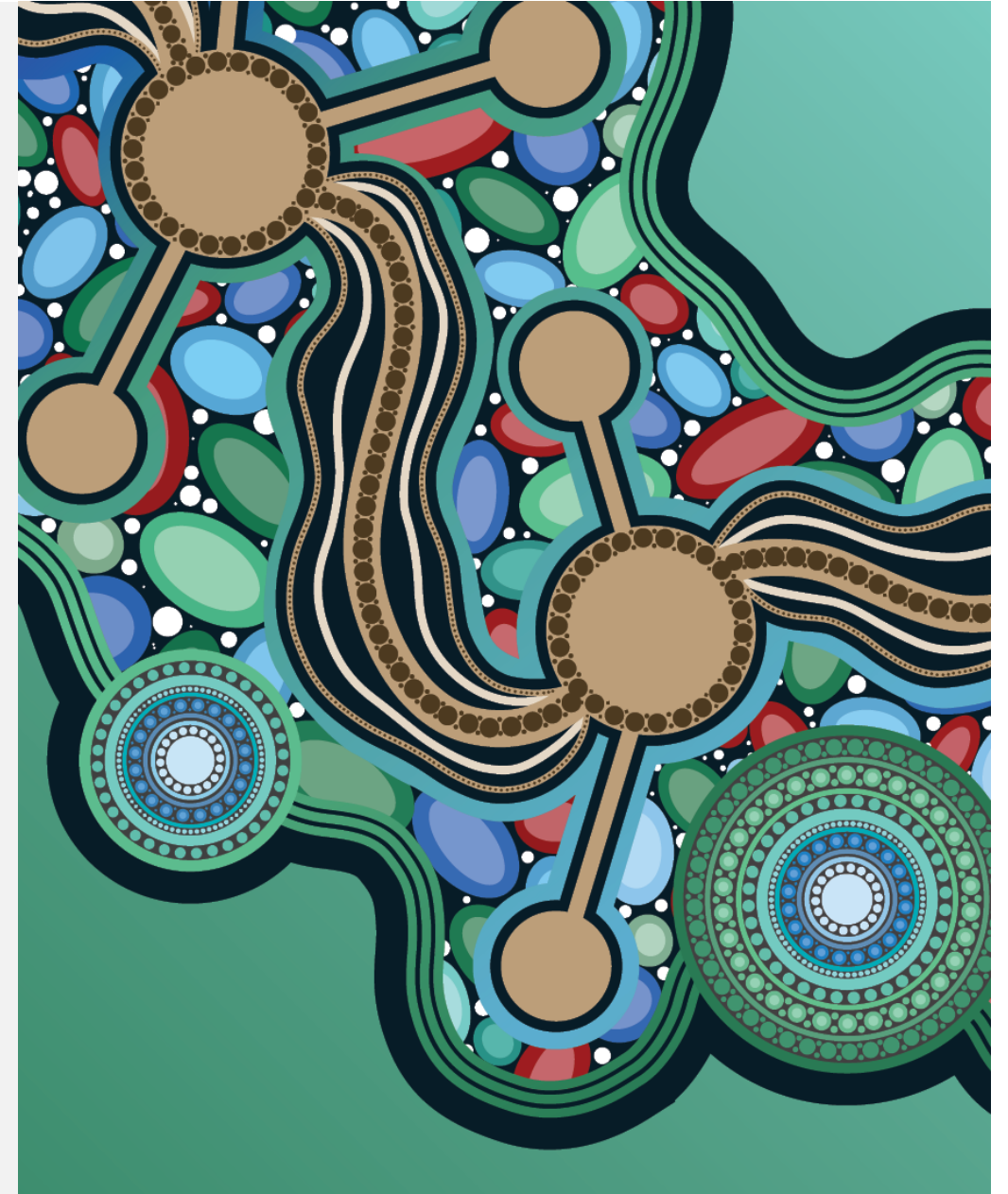
A/Professor
Megan Moskos
Adelaide University



Hon Professor
Vivienne Milligan PSM
University of New South Wales



Shaun Middlebrook
AHURI



Acknowledgement of Country

AHURI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout our nation, and we pay our respect to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' connections to land, sea and community, and respect their cultural, spiritual and educational practices.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)

AHURI is a national independent research network dedicated exclusively to housing, homelessness, cities and related urban research.

Our research supports policy development at all levels of government, assists industry and informs the broader community.

Research partners:



Australian Homelessness Conference 2026

Disrupting the narrative



7–8 OCTOBER



DARWIN

aushomelessconf.org.au



Josh Burns MP



Sue-Anne Hunter



Kate Colvin



Shane Hamilton



Jackson Hills



Annie Taylor

100+ SPEAKERS ACROSS 29 SESSIONS

A framework for the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing in Australia

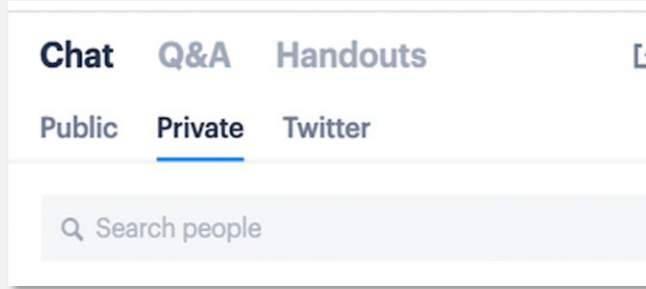
View the research in the handouts.

Authors

- Megan Moskos, Adelaide University
- Vivienne Mulligan, University of New South Wales
- Richard Benedict, University of Sydney
- Rhonda Phillips, Adelaide University
- Michael Dockery, Curtin University



Chat function



- The chat function can be found on the right-hand side of the presentation
 - Use Chat to share your thoughts with other participants
 - Use Q&A to post any questions
- Test it out by letting us know in the Chat what Lands you are joining us from today



We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands that we are presenting from today and pay respect to Elders Past and present.

We also acknowledge other First Nations of lands across Australia, their Elders, ancestors, cultures and heritage.



Outline

- Research design
- Research findings
- Addressing the research findings
- Q&A

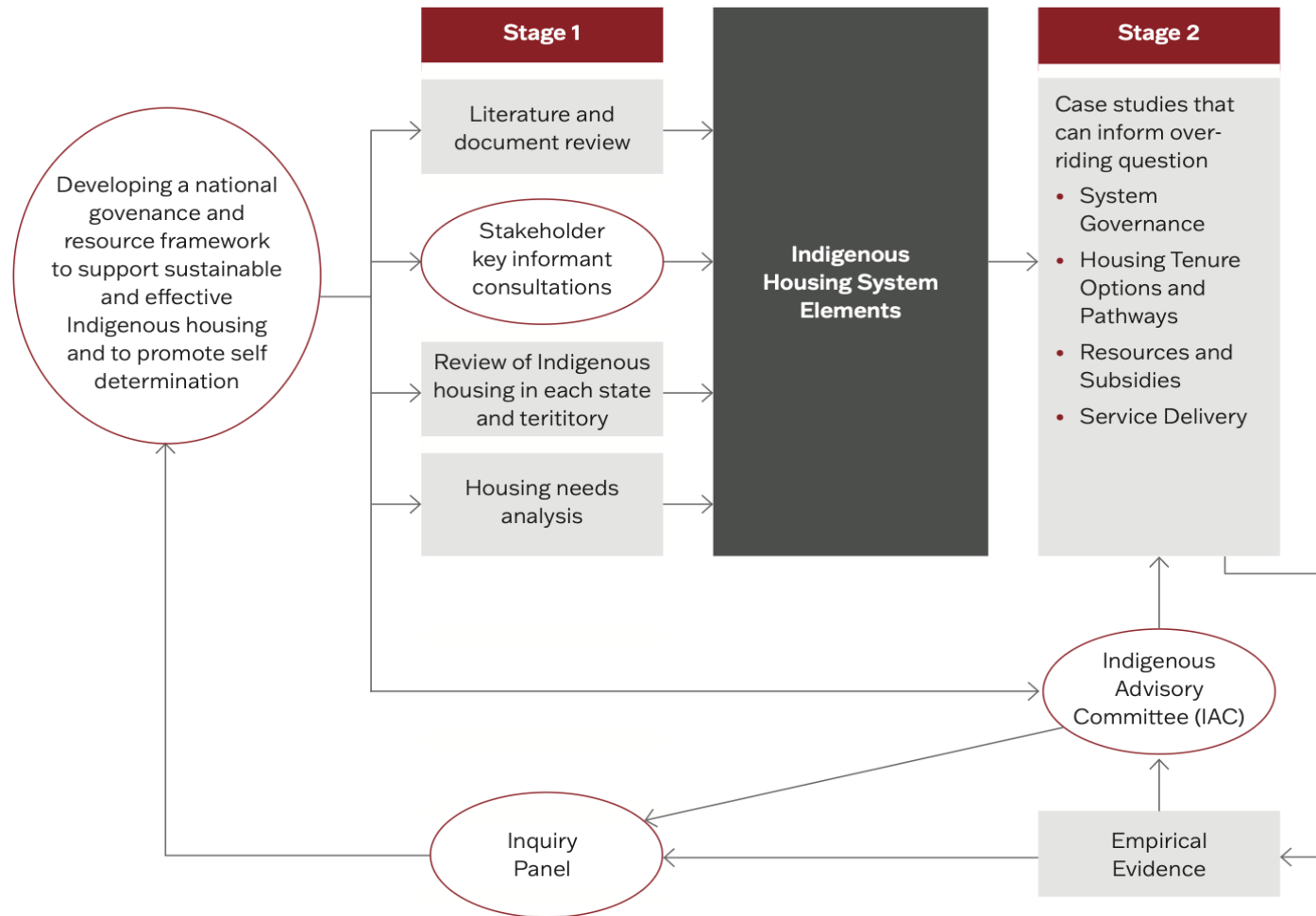


Why we undertook this research

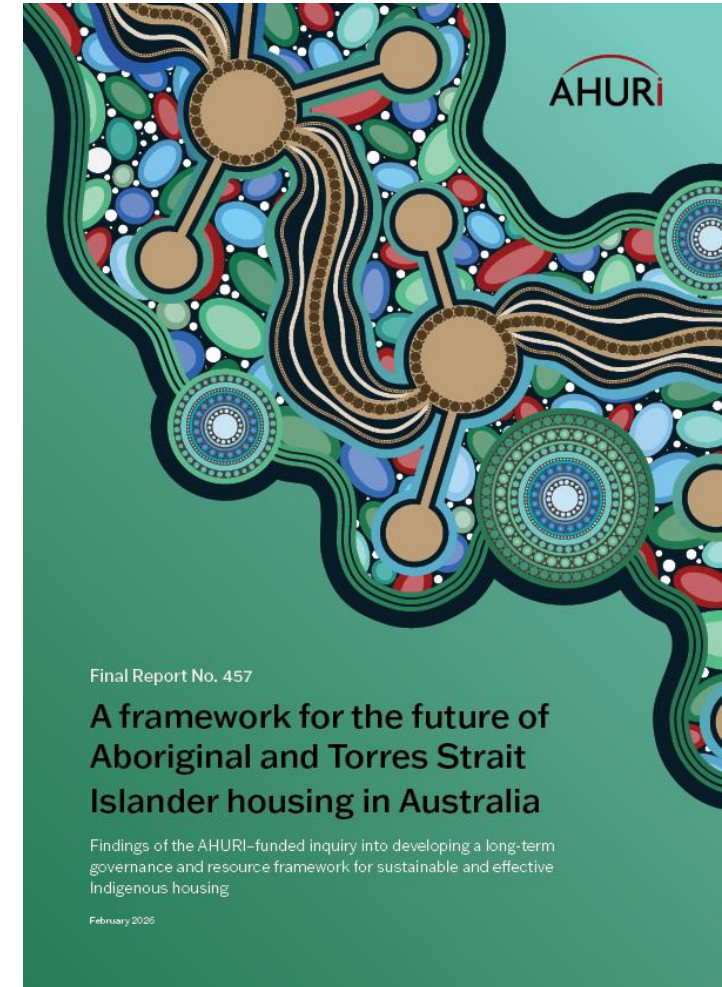
- Aimed to provide policymakers and practitioners with comprehensive evidence and recommendations for the future support of Indigenous housing in Australia.
- Undertaken from 2023 to 2025
- Inquiry focused on 4 key questions:
 - What reforms are required for existing **governance** and **regulatory arrangements** to improve housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians, and according to what principles?
 - How can self-determination be better supported in Indigenous housing policy and provision?
 - How is Indigenous housing best resourced, supplied and managed?
 - What is the long-term vision to ensure sustainability and effectiveness in Indigenous housing support?

How we undertook this research

Inquiry research program design



Publications



Indigenous Advisory Committee

- The Inquiry research overseen by an expert Indigenous Advisory Committee
- The IAC is comprised of Indigenous housing leaders and practitioners from across Australia.
- IAC met on four occasions to inform research design and conduct, interpretation of findings, and reporting.
- The IAC also informed and ratified the Framework for a future National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy



IAC members in attendance at the March 2024 meeting in Adelaide.

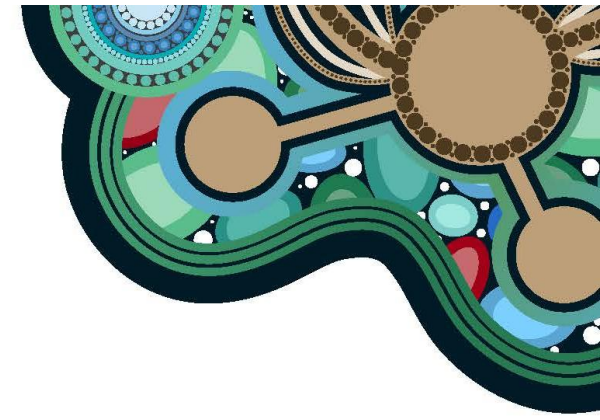


The background is a solid teal color. It features several decorative elements: wavy black lines with a green glow effect, and circular patterns resembling stylized cells or molecules. These circles have concentric rings of dots in shades of blue, green, and brown, with a white center. The circles are connected by the wavy lines, creating a network-like structure.

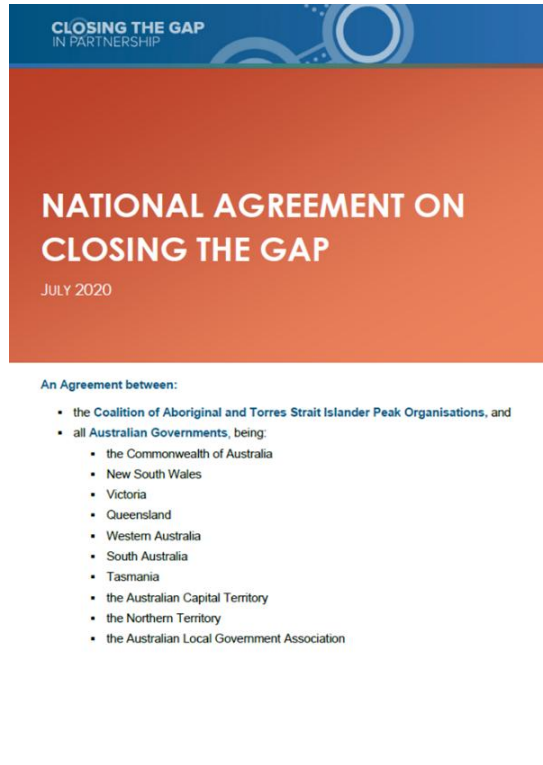
Key research findings

Historical and Policy Context

- ATSIC abolished, ending national government support for self-determination
 - Under ATSIC (1990–2005), Indigenous policy had access to a well-informed and representative voice. Its regional structure provided an avenue for regional and remote communities to be represented.
- Subsequent policies favoured mainstreaming of housing services
 - These policy approaches emphasise integrating Indigenous housing into mainstream housing systems, rather than creating separate, isolated programs.
- Reduced capacity of Indigenous community-controlled housing sector
- ‘Closing the Gap’ (CTG) strategy in 2020 proposed new direction:
 - reform to mainstream and community-controlled housing sectors, and
 - self-determination and joint decision making



Closing the Gap – a Closer look



PRIORITY REFORMS ON CLOSING THE GAP

PRIORITY REFORM 1
Formal Partnerships and
Shared Decision Making

PRIORITY REFORM 2
Building the Community
Controlled Sector

PRIORITY REFORM 3
Transforming Government
Organisations

PRIORITY REFORM 4
Shared Access to Data and
Information at a Regional Level

Outcome 9 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to appropriate, affordable housing that meets their needs and priorities. There are two Targets under Outcome 9. These are:

Target 9A

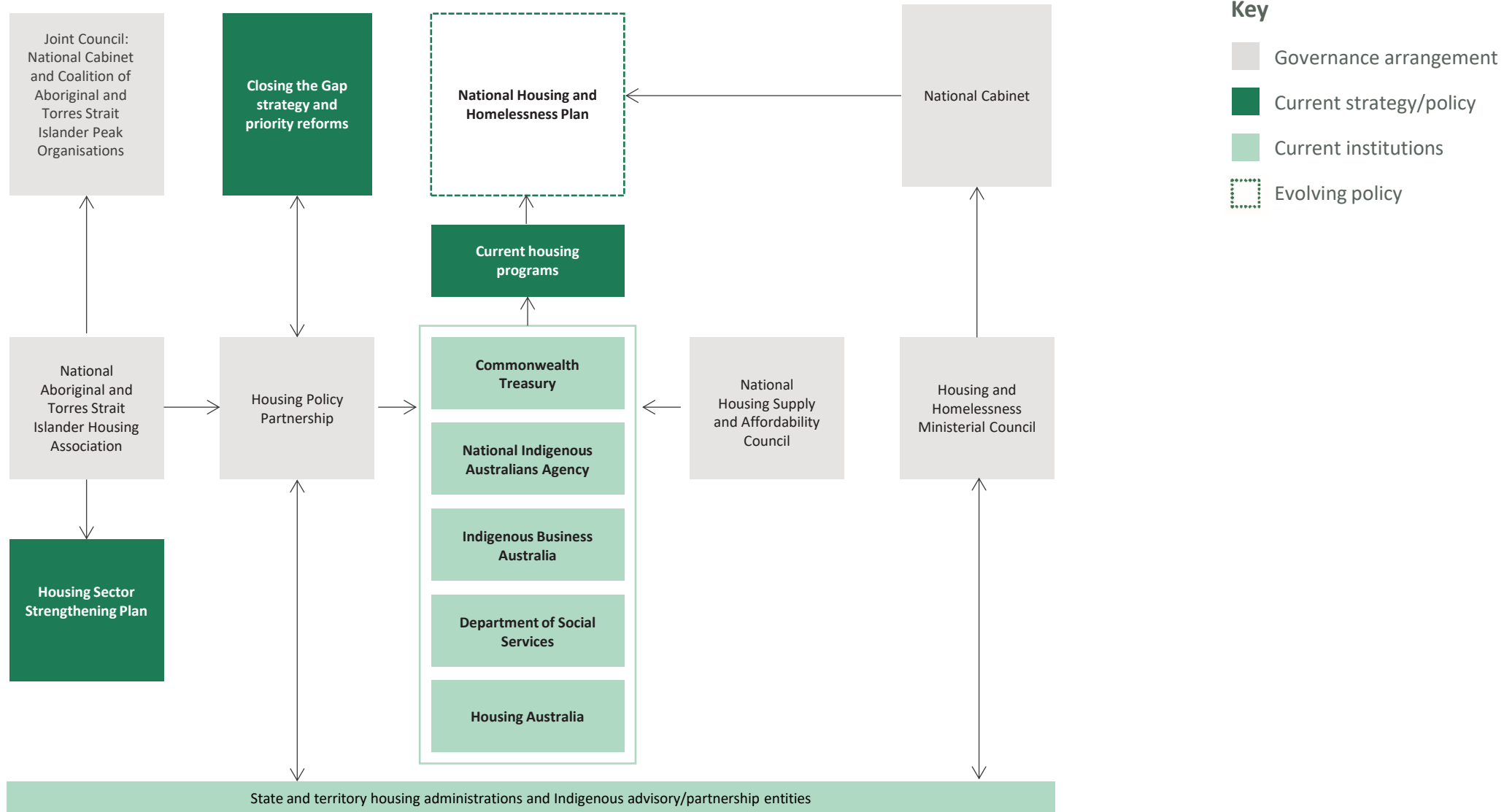
By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent.

Target 9B

By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households: within discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town based reserve”).)

- Positive aspects include:
 - non-government organisations formally participating in policy making, including the est. of formal policy partnership
 - formalised information and data sharing agreements,
 - investment in capacity building and
 - improved accountability for CTG outcomes by all parties
- At the same time, there is much work that remains to be done.
 - The Productivity Commission's review found that governments haven't fully met their commitments, and fundamental changes are needed to achieve the agreement's goals.
 - For housing, the Commission found that expansion of the ICCHO sector had not materialised.
 - There are also concerns that the CTG housing targets are deficient.

National Governance is complex



Strengthening governance and accountability is crucial

- Current governance arrangements have resulted in fragmented and disjointed approach which often results in lack of accountability.
- A comprehensive national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing strategy is required
- For a future strategy to succeed:
 - Strong support required from Indigenous leaders and from governments, along with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all parties
 - Governments must embrace a different approach to Indigenous housing support
 - Priority should be given to economic self-determination and to enabling Indigenous-led innovative and place-based responses along the housing continuum.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should always be afforded opportunity across the entirety of the housing continuum. An implication of this principle is that all issues, [such as] private market discrimination, access to mainstream services [and] tenure pathways, come under the remit of a national strategy and any governance mechanisms.”

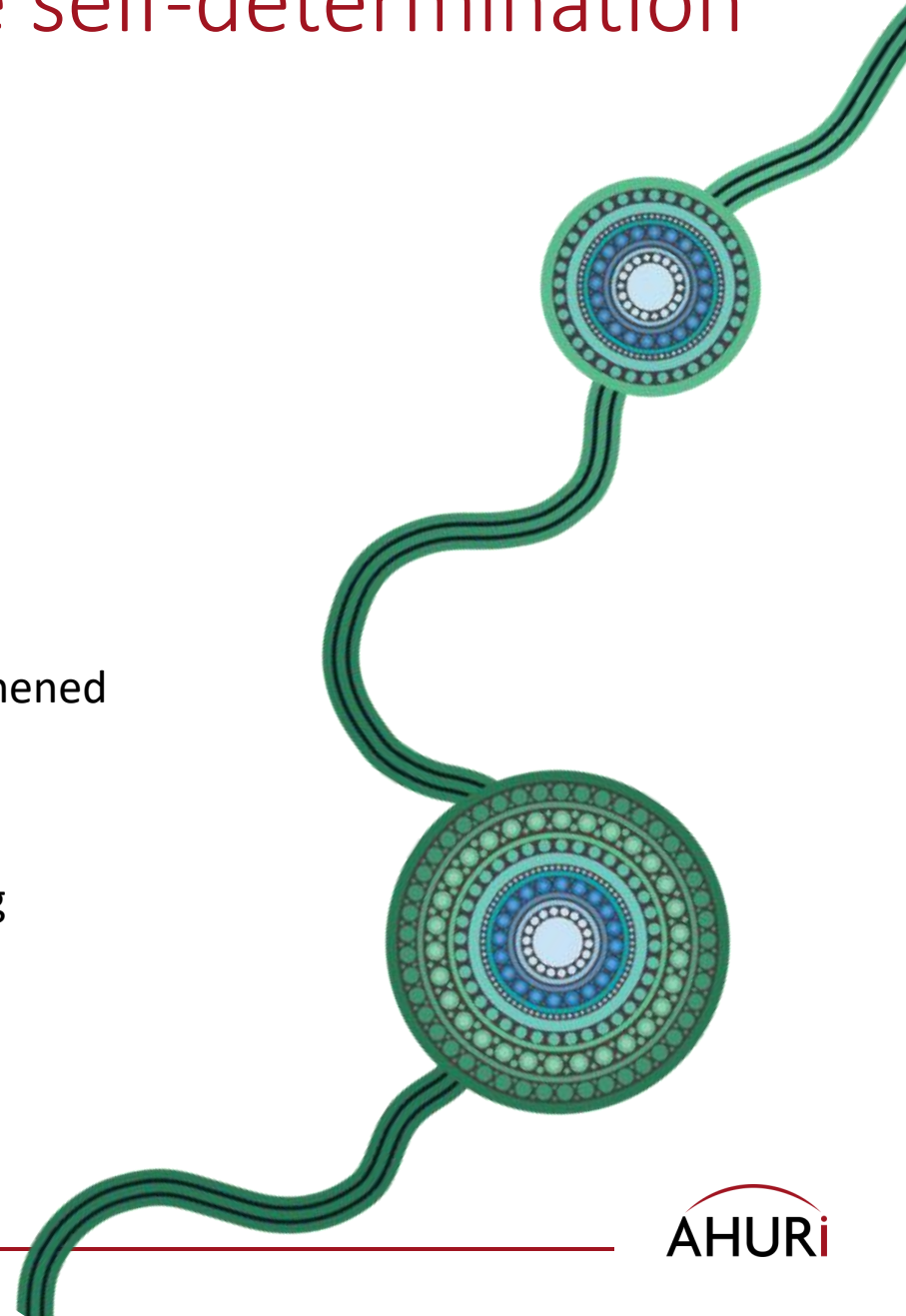
(Indigenous community member)

“ We’re pushing for [an] independent national plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, instead of being all pushed into the one; we think there should be a separate one for our people ... it should be developed with engagement with Aboriginal people. We’ve been mainstreamed too much.”

(Indigenous community member)

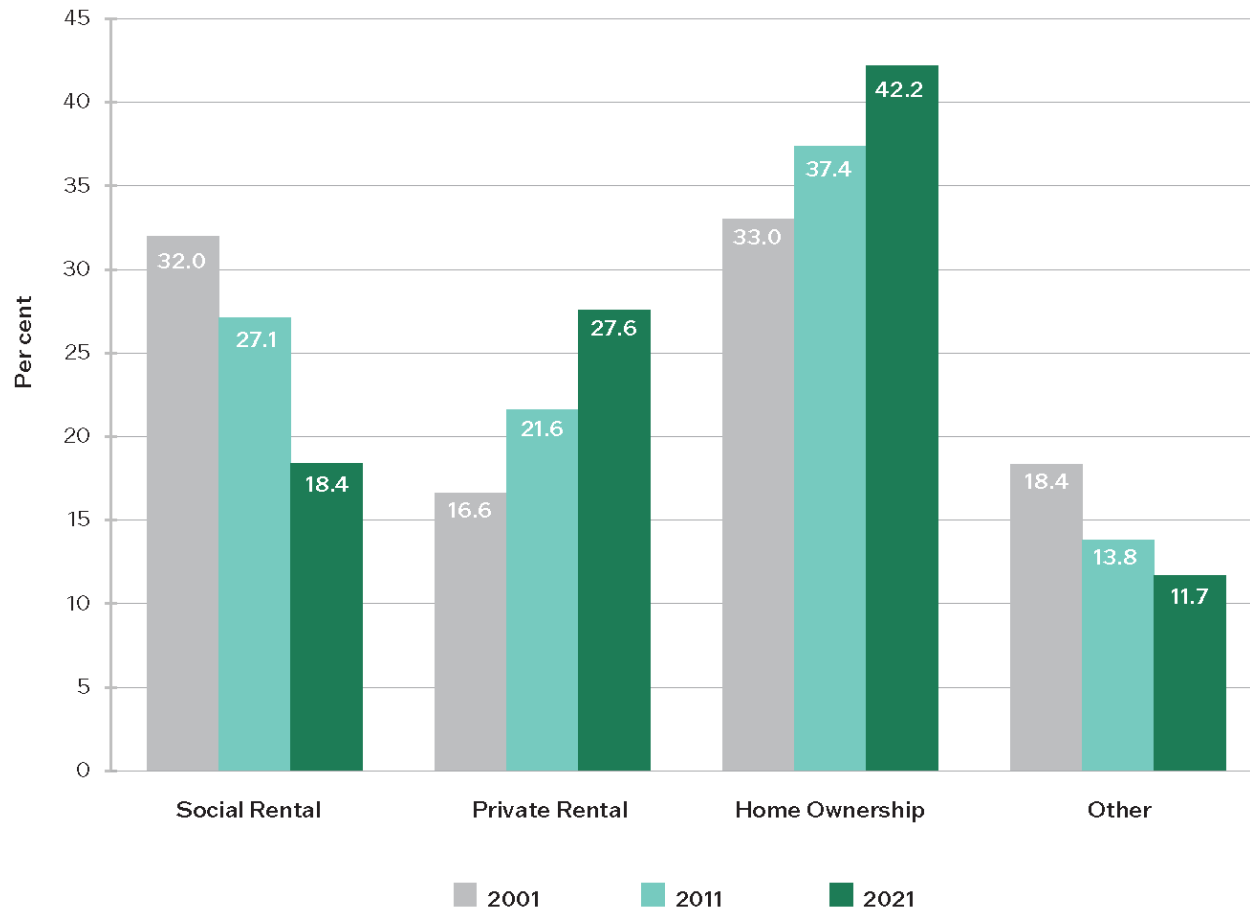
Much more needs to be done to advance self-determination

- Closing the Gap (CTG), the Housing Policy Partnership (HPP) and Jurisdictional shared decision-making structures (such as NT JSC remote housing) are positive developments in partnering and enhancing self-determination in housing policymaking.
 - Little evidence to date that significant shared decision-making is occurring and government 'business as usual' ways of working persist.
- The HPP needs support to develop further
- Existing jurisdictional shared decision-making structures need to be strengthened
- Coordination and clarity of roles are required.
- Embedding Indigenous leadership and expertise within government housing agencies will strengthen the evolving approach to governance.
- Supporting Indigenous housing peak bodies is a further critical strategy for facilitating self-determination in housing policy and provision.



Tenure choices and pathways

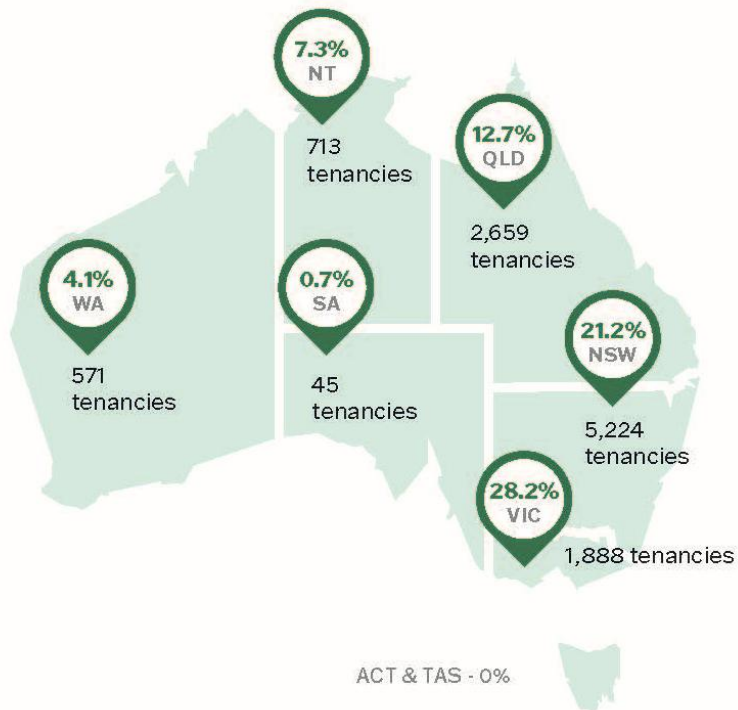
Percentage changes in the housing tenure of Indigenous households between 2001, 2011 and 2021.



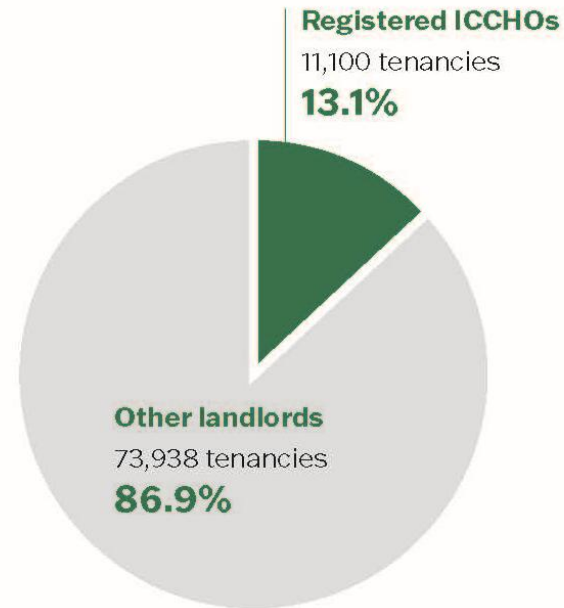
The Indigenous community-controlled housing sector is small and there is no growth plan

Social housing tenancies managed by registered Indigenous community-controlled housing organisations 2024/2025

States and territories



Australia



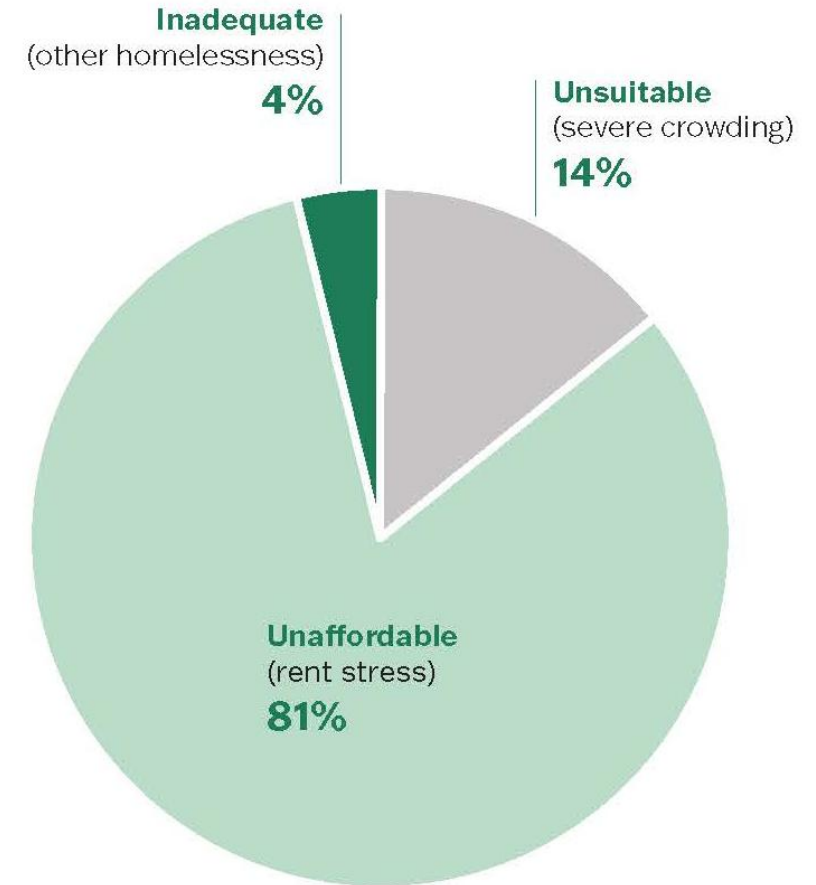
How governments can support community-controlled housing

- Under the current national commitment to support the ICCH sector, each jurisdiction should have a plan for growing and sustaining its local sector.
- Transfer programs should:
 - be of sufficient scale to support operational viability
 - provide funding for the maintenance, upgrade and replacement of housing stock
 - grant property title to support autonomy and increase capacity to leverage resources for growth.
- To build the sector, all governments should:
 - Fund Indigenous housing peak bodies to lead the development of the sector's workforce and provide training, education and support in NRSCH registration and compliance, housing governance and management capabilities
 - Investment in leadership development, workforce training pathways, staff remuneration, and strategies to retain talent
 - Address workforce challenges, beginning with collection of robust evidence to support workforce planning

High and growing unmet Indigenous housing need

- 45,700 low-income Indigenous households had unmet housing needs in 2021
- One in eight (13%) of all Indigenous households
- Double the rate of all Australian households (6.6%)
- Drivers are unaffordable rents, overcrowding and inadequate housing
- Rental stress predominates in urban areas. Overcrowding mainly found in remote areas
- Projected to grow by another 26,400 households over 20 years
- Many of these households will need social housing

Drivers of unmet Indigenous housing need, 2021



Current funding support is neither sufficient nor fit-for purpose

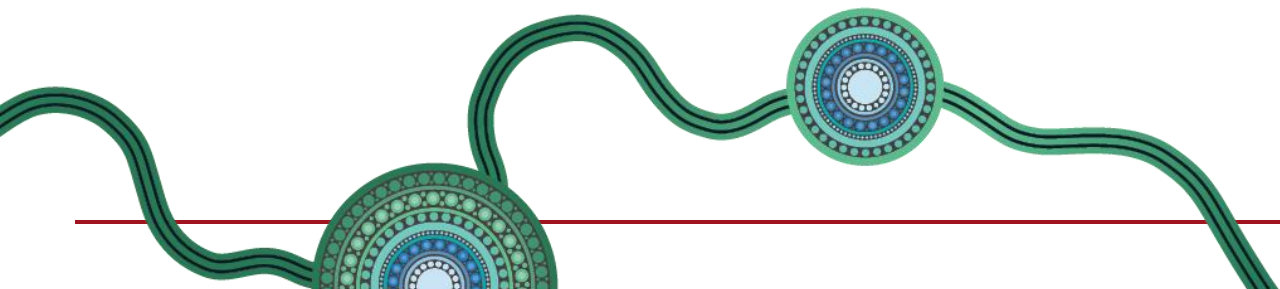
- Chronic underfunding for Indigenous households has resulted in high rates of current unmet housing need.
- Recent upscaling in Australian Government investment in social and affordable housing – little transparency as to how Indigenous householders are benefiting
- CTG targets and reforms are now linked to National Agreement of Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH), but without additional resources
- HAFF is challenging for Indigenous organisations
- Current commonwealth rental assistance does not guard against rental stress and is too low to address operating shortfalls
- While successful where they operate, the small scale of home ownership support programs has limited their impact. Current lending products not suited to remote areas

“So the most obvious [issue] is that the rents don’t sustain any long-term asset management strategies. But secondly, we’re dealing with complex needs, and the percentage of complex needs in Aboriginal housing is far greater than any I encountered in mainstream.”

(Indigenous community member)

A National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Investment Plan is crucial

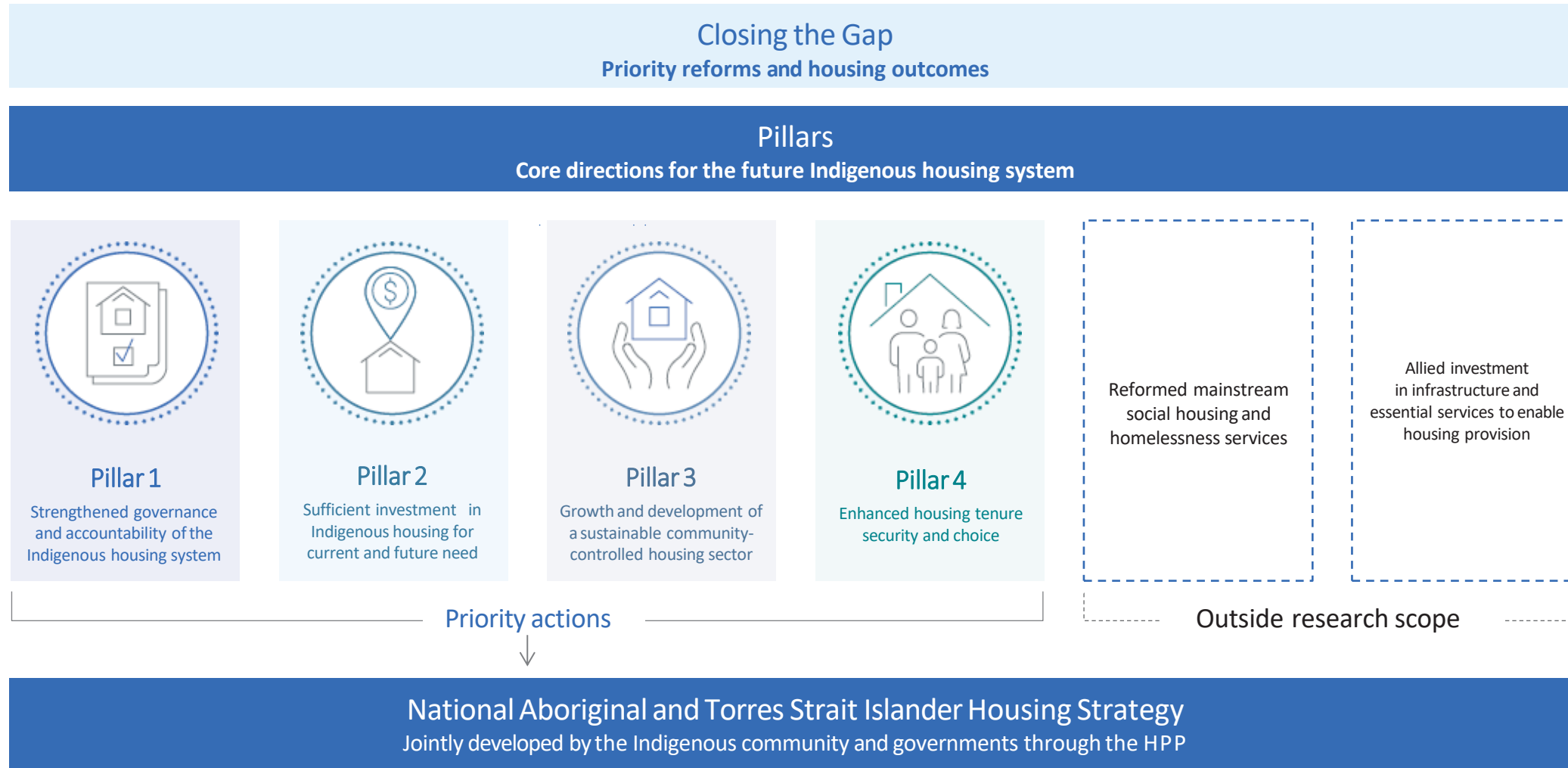
- Social housing agreements reformed to provide specific funding allocations for Indigenous housing.
- Funding levels must be:
 - Informed by accurate projections of housing need
 - Adjusted to reflect remote cost differentials and the higher operating costs faced by many ICCHOs
 - Make provision for added costs associated with low economies of scale of providers, higher maintenance costs, additional tenancy management costs associated with supported housing, and
 - Invest in innovation that support self-determination.
- A national Indigenous housing investment plan is needed
 - Designed to optimise self-determination
 - Long-term in nature and
 - Contains adequate funding commitments from federal, state and territory governments.
 - Incorporate operating subsidy for ICCHOs to ensure growth and business viability in different locations.



The background is a solid medium blue. It is decorated with numerous organic, rounded shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are scattered across the frame, often appearing in small clusters. Interspersed among these larger shapes are many small, white, circular dots, some of which are grouped together, creating a sense of movement or a microscopic view. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and scientific.

Addressing the
research findings

Framework for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy





Pillar 1

Strengthened governance and accountability of the Indigenous housing system

1.1 Strengthen governance by:

- **Legislating key components of Indigenous housing system governance** (e.g. the national HPP) and incorporate international standards on a right to housing and self-determination
- Committing long-term funding to **national and jurisdictional Indigenous housing peak bodies** to enable their effective participation in governance and policymaking
- **Reforming government agencies with responsibility for housing** to provide commitment and capability to effectively partner in governance and policymaking (e.g. an Indigenous-governed statutory authority, Indigenous leadership within government)
- Assigning oversight of development and implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy jointly to the **Housing and Homelessness Ministers Council and the HPP**

1.2 Strengthen accountability and transparency by:

- Assigning agency responsibility, and adequate resources, to maintain and further **develop robust Indigenous housing data and evidence**—disaggregated by region—in accord with Indigenous data sovereignty principles
- **Reviewing and expanding CTG housing targets** such that they include, for example, reducing housing stress and eliminating inadequate housing
- **Establishing additional accountability mechanisms**—for example, a legislated Indigenous housing watchdog, annual reporting on a consistent basis across all jurisdictions, and independent evaluation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy.



Pillar 2

Sufficient investment in Indigenous housing for current and future need

2.1 Dedicate **adequate long-term Commonwealth and state/territory government funding** for:

- **Social housing at sufficient scale** to meet current and future needs of the Indigenous population across urban, regional and remote areas
- Associated **infrastructure and essential services**
- **Capital upgrades to meet agreed jurisdictional standards** for all Indigenous social housing

2.2 **Implement funding** for Indigenous housing through:

- **Regional and local housing plans and resource allocations** informed by Indigenous-led decision-making
- **Culturally appropriate procurement models** for all funding programs
- Housing investment that supports **local employment** and **economic development**

2.3 **Increase and restructure access to Commonwealth Rent Assistance** to better address Indigenous peoples' geographic and household circumstances.



Pillar 3

Growth and development of a sustainable community-controlled housing sector

3.1 Develop and fund an **Indigenous community-controlled housing sector and workforce development strategy** that reflects jurisdictional and geographic differences in organisational and service delivery models

3.2 Progressively and sustainably **increase the housing stock owned and managed by the Indigenous community-controlled housing sector**—including by investing in new housing and appropriate transfers of public housing and land for redevelopment

3.3 Foster the **sustainability of Indigenous community-controlled housing organisations** by:

- **Establishing geographic cost benchmarks** for all service cost components, including tenancy management, tenancy support, asset management, and community development
- Providing suitable **subsidies that address funding gaps** between rent revenues (including any rent assistance) and benchmarked operating costs for the services offered by providers

3.4 **Adapt the National Regulatory System for Community Housing** so that its performance code and reporting requirements reflect the cultural norms, practices and capacity of all ICCHOs, including in remote areas.



Pillar 4

Enhanced housing tenure security and choice

4.1 Governments to actively promote and facilitate culturally appropriate (individual and collective) **home ownership tenure pathways** to meet demand

4.2 Protect and facilitate rental access and security in all jurisdictions by:

- Strengthening **anti-discrimination legislation**
- Funding **dedicated Indigenous rental advice, advocacy and support services**

4.3 Ensure **mainstream housing programs provide culturally appropriate and culturally safe** services to Indigenous clients

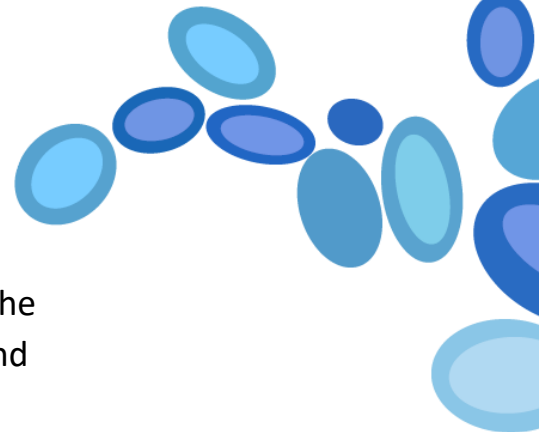
4.4 Ensure **other programs that fund housing for Indigenous households** align with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy (e.g. Indigenous Business Australia, Specialist Disability Accommodation, and Housing for Health)

4.5 Support **Indigenous community-controlled led housing innovation** by:

- Establishing a **Housing Innovation Fund** for new models—such as community land trusts, shared equity, and local housing designs
- Enabling **supported/specialised housing developments** in accord with life-stage needs—such as for youth, aged and disabled
- Removing **policy and regulatory barriers that inhibit diversification**.



Pathway to Indigenous housing system reform



In October 2025, our Inquiry Panel of government officials and Indigenous leaders reviewed the Inquiry's research findings and the Framework for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy and endorsed them as a strong evidence base and 'blueprint' for action.

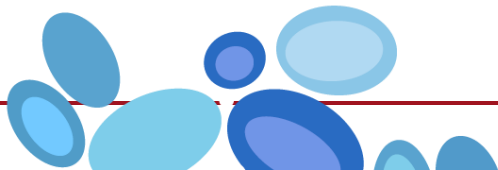
Panel members proposed that:

- Strategy development be led by the Housing Policy Partnership in line with its workplan commitment to develop a five-year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Plan
- An Australia-wide Indigenous-led and community-based consultative process to develop the Strategy be facilitated by the Housing Policy Partnership
- The Strategy be devised to achieve national housing policy reforms and investment pathways, as well as flexibility for differing jurisdictional strategies, regional plans and local place-based approaches.

To safeguard the Strategy's development and ensure its success, there should be an immediate commitment by the National Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council to:

- Secure the future of a strong Housing Policy Partnership
- Continue funding national and jurisdictional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak bodies, and provide additional funding for sector-capacity building
- Commit to an initial five-year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing investment plan that enables the supply of additional targeted housing that addresses urgent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need and promotes tenure pathways and innovation.

Future research programs should align with this Framework in order to provide further evidence to inform the proposed Strategy's development.



Thank you