Report

Housing conditionality, Indigenous lifeworlds and policy outcomes

Palm Island case study

authored by

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ACRONYMS

AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited
ATL	Aboriginal Trust Land
BAS	Building Asset Services (Qld Government)
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSM	Client Service Manager
DATSIMA	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DHPW	Department of Housing and Public Works
DoC	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disabilities
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
DPMC	Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet
DSS	Department of Social Services
FaHCSIA	Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
HACC	Home and Community Care
HOT	Home Ownership Team, DATSIP
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
ICAN	Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network
ICHO	Indigenous Community Housing Organisation
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IMYRP	Indigenous Multi-Year Regional Project
LHA	Land Holding Act
NPARIH	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing
ORIC	Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
PIALT	Palm Island Aboriginal Land Trust
PIASC	Palm Island Aboriginal Land Council
PICC	Palm Island Community Company
RJCP	Remote Jobs Community Program
RTA	Rental Tenancy Agreement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study is part of the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project (IMYRP), which commenced in 2013 and focuses on understanding the interaction between Indigenous lifeworlds, housing conditionality (in policy and practice) and intercultural negotiations and decisions.

The case study was based on Palm Island in Queensland and collected primary data on different forms of housing conditionality which are being applied in the management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social housing tenancies and to the Indigenous Home Ownership Program on Palm Island, Queensland.

Since the initial proposal for this research, there has been an evolution of questions that have emerged with each stage of research and implementation. All of the research questions fall under four broad headings:

1. problematising the effectiveness of conditionalities
2. hypothesising the recognition space
3. enabling the recognition space
4. policy uptake and sustainability.

During the field research each case study examines the headings above from the context of tenants, service providers and Indigenous organisations. This provides a triangulation of perspectives on housing conditionality.

The findings provided a rich perspective on housing circumstances and aspirations on Palm Island, on what is working effectively and what is not.

The following findings and recommendations were drawn from conclusions in the report.

Palm Island is experiencing an era of development, positive change and 'progress', and many ideas are being implemented and tested. Within this emerging era, there needs to be serious consideration given to a more collaborative working method between government service providers, Indigenous organisations and tenants—one in which tenant voices are heard and valued. Tenant perspectives and opinions are currently secondary to the voice of the local shire council and government agencies and workers, and other Indigenous service providers.

There is currently no interagency housing working group on Palm Island and cross-pollination and coordination with other service providers on and off the island is not reaching its full potential as a result. To determine whether a housing working group is necessary, there could be an audit of all the functional working groups on Palm Island to identify which groups work best and why; to understand their aims, protocols and processes, and to establish where housing matters would best fit. There may not be a need to create another interagency working group if there is one on the Island in which housing is complimentary.

Tenancy policies and procedures that are at odds with Indigenous lifeworlds and behaviours, such as notification of absences (mobility) and sub-letting (crowding and kinship obligations), could be reviewed in the context of reducing unnecessary breaches of tenancy. The rules of tenancy are often communicated in forms not readily understood by Palm Islanders. New communications protocols could be developed that acknowledge Indigenous literacy and modes of communicating.

To improve housing outcomes between service providers and Indigenous organisations and tenants on Palm Island, there should be work focusing on the

overall wellbeing of parties, their respect and acknowledgement of other human beings, and their commitment to working together. To maintain the momentum of the recognition space and people working effectively in it, there should be emotional and social wellbeing programs available to non-Indigenous and Indigenous people working in the space.

The Indigenous Home Ownership Program on Palm Island has been successful to date due to the financial and physical commitment of many stakeholders. The cost and effort that has been applied to home ownership on Palm Island should be acknowledged by government, and the model streamlined and examined for its sustainability. This should then be considered in the application of home ownership to other remote communities.

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Case study overview and aims

The case study provides a description and analysis of housing experiences on Palm Island set in the context of the broader aims of the Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project (IMYRP). There have been a series of AHURI publications related to the IMYRP including *Case study rationale and location scoping study* (Moran et al. 2014) and *IMYRP Work in progress report 1* and *2*. The study gathers information and examines data from multiple viewpoints: from the perspective of tenants of social housing; from the perspective of the housing service provider (Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW)); from the local Indigenous Shire Council who are charged with administering private home ownership leases and advising on new housing allocations.

The IMYRP case studies are guided by four holistic questions. These questions are:

1. What are the characteristics of different types of housing conditionality and how effective are they in achieving positive housing outcomes for Indigenous people?

2. How does the intersection between these types of housing conditionality, Indigenous lifeworlds and Indigenous governance arrangements, influence housing outcomes for Indigenous people?

3. Is there an identifiable form of conditionality which enables a recognition space that permits shared understanding of the values and constraints of government workers, Indigenous tenants, housing managers and community leaders? What are the conditions of its emergence, and to what extent does it support improvements in Aboriginal housing?

4. Are there identifiable good practice and policy principles that have specific use in particular contexts or that are useful across all contexts that can be elicited from this analysis?

The case study is structured with the methodology for the study described first in Chapter 1, followed by an overview of the history, context and background to housing and life on Palm Island generally in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 gives an overview of not only social housing on Palm Island, but also Indigenous Home Ownership policy and the major capital works program that has occurred on Palm Island between 2012 and 2015. Chapters 3 to 5 comprise the main body of the document and interview findings, and provide unique and distinct perspectives on housing experiences from the point of view of the tenant, housing service provider and Indigenous organisation respectively. Chapter 6, the Recognition Space, describes how and when the three proponents mentioned above interact positively or negatively in relation to housing conditionality. In the Recognition Space, the nature of the flux and flow of intercultural relationships is explored and the core conditions that affect housing and home ownership circumstances and outcomes are highlighted. The conclusion synthesises the findings of Chapter 6 and proposes some strategies for government and community to improve housing processes, relationships and outcomes on Palm Island.

1.2   Case study method

The case study method for Palm Island included ethnographic data from 22 formal interviews with residents and service providers and 23 informal and unstructured discussions with government agencies and service providers over a period of approximately 15 months from late 2013 to March 2015. Professor Mark Moran contributed two other field visits to the research in November 2013 and February

2014. The unstructured discussions with service providers and agencies occurred in Cairns, Townsville and on Palm Island, while almost all of the tenant interviews occurred on Palm Island. For those service providers involved in unstructured discussions, all were advised verbally of the context of the research and work, and were happy to contribute. Some specifically did not want their discussion documented as a formal interview, but were happy to accept that their dialogue with the author would be noted and observed and contribute in a general way to the research. Observation was an important part of the research and considerable time was spent purposefully paying attention to people's interactions and emotions during field visits and meetings.

It should be noted that service providers working on Palm Island are often operating in very complex social conditions, which are overlaid with bureaucratic systems and role descriptions that can be hard for local residents to understand if they have not worked in larger non-Indigenous organisations. The opinions of tenants throughout this report can be quite critical of non-Indigenous service providers working for government, and the author believes that this is partly because local residents do not understand the full role of government service providers and the systems they have to work within. Tenants' opinions should be considered in this context.

There were four field visits to Palm Island specifically associated with the project from February 2014 to February 2015, each lasting between three and five days. Of the interviews with residents and social housing tenants, approximately 60 per cent were with people in either full-time or part-time employment on Palm Island, and 40 per cent were with people who have no employment and are dependent on welfare benefits. Approximately five people interviewed had a person with a disability living with them, which made their life circumstances more complex than people not living with someone with a disability.

The core research for this case study was also supplemented by observations made from the author's working relationships on Palm Island while working on other projects on Palm Island in 2011. This included work in Indigenous home ownership between 2011 and 2013, after 2013 for Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) on occasional Palm Island Aboriginal Land Trust (PIALT) business, and in mid-2014 as a research consultant for the Queensland Government Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW), undertaking post-occupancy evaluations of social housing on Palm Island.

Having an understanding of the housing and home ownership context on Palm Island and of the existing relationships at the commencement of the case study added value to the case study. It enabled the research to run smoothly, and for thoughtful and detailed conversations relating to housing conditionality and home ownership to occur.

2   CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Palm Island has a complex history, which is difficult to summarise briefly. Its housing history has not been formally researched or recorded in any systematic way, but references to housing issues on Palm Island can be found in the work of Fien et al. (2008, 2011) and Watson (2010), and have been drawn upon for the purpose of this case study.

Palm Island is 65 kilometres off the coast of Townsville and has a population of approximately 2500 (ABS 2015). The population includes an extensive mix of people from all over Queensland and some from the Northern Territory. The Manbarra people are informally recognised as the traditional owners of the island (there is no native title determination for Palm Island), and locally everyone is known as 'Bwgcolman'. Bwgcolman is the name ascribed to Palm Island by Dick Palm Island (dec.) and more than 55 different language groups are represented on the island (Watson 2010, p.143).

Palm Island was established after the Tully Heads settlement on the mainland was destroyed in a cyclone in 1913, and the Queensland Government sought to establish Palm Island as a penal settlement for 'troublesome' Aboriginal people. The people of Palm Island have generational memories of appalling living conditions in which people were separated by gender and age, forced to sleep in dormitories, suffered under violent superintendents and experienced a high mortality rate. Watson (2010, pp.50–53, 92) cites that in the 1930s, up to 14 per cent of the population per year died from illness, accident or drowning in attempts to escape the island.

There are many residents of Palm Island who remember living in dormitories, separated by age and gender, and being kept away from their families except during visiting time, which was once per week. The dormitories were not demolished until the 1970s and, in essence, many Bwgcolman people have only been living permanently with their families in government-provided housing for about 50 years. Palm Island was also known as a repository for illnesses including tuberculosis and leprosy, and a leprosy hospital was established on Fantome Island (near Palm Island) in 1934. The leprosarium ran until 1973, and at times held over 100 people (Watson 2010, p.101). As a general statement, health and housing conditions on Palm Island were not a priority of the Queensland Government until after the 1970s.

2.1   Housing situation on Palm Island

Since 2004 there have been more than 150 new houses constructed on Palm Island under a variety of different government-funded capital works programs. In 2014, there were approximately 400 social housing dwellings on Palm Island, and the average population per house listed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) is around five people per dwelling. However, the interviews undertaken during this research indicated that the average population per house was closer to nine people. There are also many informal, private family camps on Palm Island, scattered around the coast in locations nominated by historical family use and occupation. Family camps are either self-constructed, makeshift dwellings, or just camping areas that families occupy on their holidays. Most of these residences do not have any services provided to them and are not part of the social housing system managed by DHPW.

The majority of people living on Palm Island live in social housing dwellings that are managed by the DHPW. There is one 99-year lease for a privately constructed dwelling, and there are a small number (less than 10) of council-owned and maintained dwellings. In addition, there are a significant number of houses for government employees for health, education and housing service providers. There

are also over 120 informal family camps, and a percentage of these are occupied full-time by families who cannot access (or choose not to access) social housing (PC: PIASC Land Officer 2014).

Figure 1: Map of Palm Island
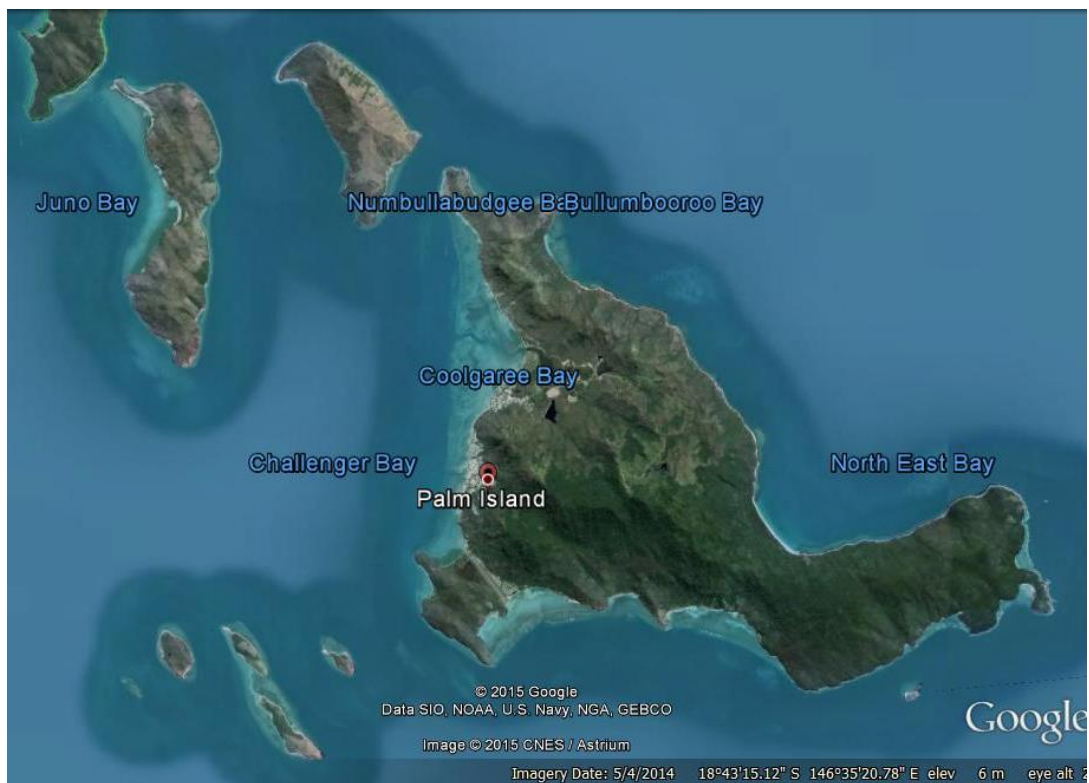
Figure 2: Map of Palm Island town centre
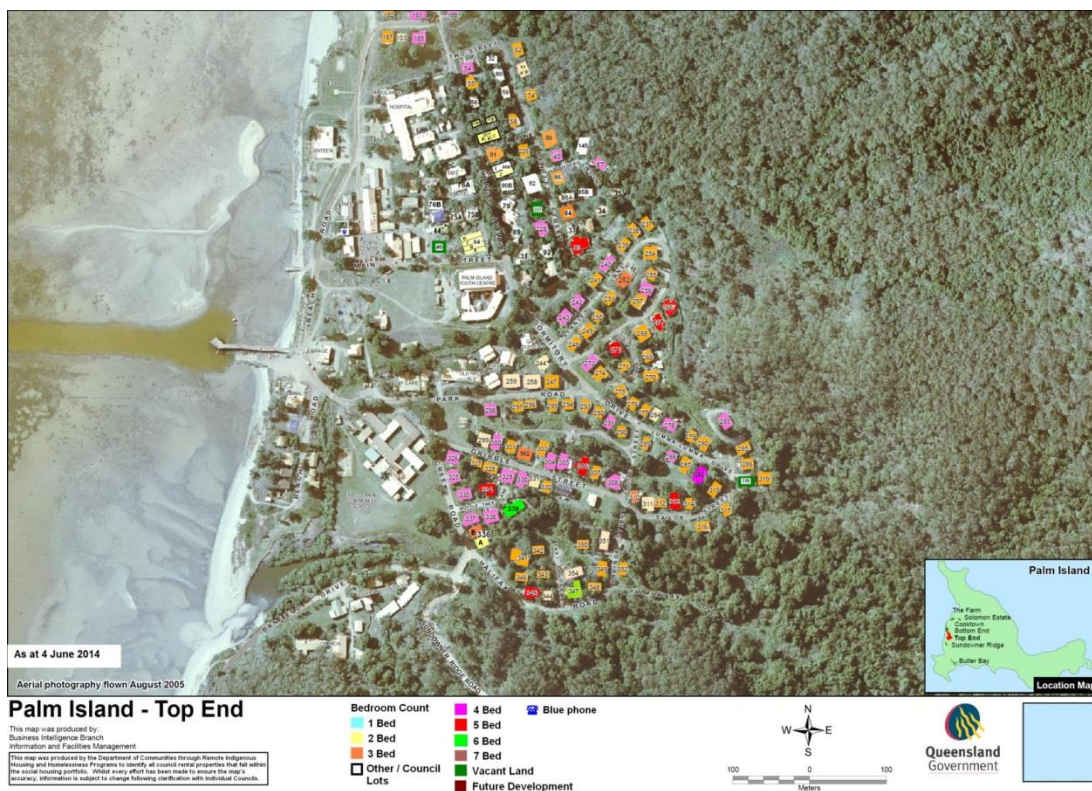
The majority of social housing stock on Palm Island has been built since the 1980s. Between 2012 and 2014, 45 new houses have been completed and another 60 are due to commence construction in 2015 (personal communication, Chief Executive Officer, PIASC). All of the new housing currently being constructed on Palm Island is funded through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) between the state and federal governments.

2.2   The policy landscape on Palm Island

Housing policy has been considered in terms of both new housing (capital investment on Palm Island), and existing social housing. At the time of the research, Palm Island was the recipient of a large capital investment in new housing, and this had an impact on the research and Bwgcolman people's thoughts and opinions on housing and housing conditionality.

The current arrangement for delivering new housing into remote Indigenous communities is managed through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). This is an agreement between state, territory and federal governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The agreement runs for 10 years from 2007–08 to 2018 and is the conduit for major capital expenditure for delivering new housing and housing renovations into remote Indigenous communities. The agreement followed a targeted policy by the Federal Government to 'Close the Gap' of Indigenous disadvantage.

From the beginning of NPARIH in 2007–08, the Federal Government required a range of objectives to be achieved. These included reducing crowding in housing, improved technical standards in construction, cost targets and Indigenous employment targets, but also required state and territory governments to take responsibility for ensuring housing management was consistent with public housing standards and that tenancy management and repairs and maintenance were performed to sustain the assets. In general terms, this framework was established to deliver healthy, appropriate, safe and sustainable housing to residents in remote Indigenous communities (see National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing—Review of Progress, 2008–13, pp.14–16).

NPARIH also has prescribed capital costs and house construction targets to be achieved, which if not met can have negative implications on future funding for the state and each community.

NPARIH also required states to reform tenure and was accompanied by the Queensland Government implementing 40-year leases over existing and new social housing in remote communities to enable the Queensland Government to become the tenancy managers and maintenance providers for all community housing. The change from council-managed community housing to state-managed housing was given the title 'One Social Housing System', and aims to provide standardised access to and policies for public and community (social) housing services across Queensland (DHPW 2013, *Housing 2020*).

The majority of housing on Palm Island is managed by the Department of Housing and Public Works under remote tenancy management policies and practices that are largely consistent with the *One Social Housing System* and most dwellings on Palm Island are now under a 40-year lease. Tenants within these dwellings have signed a standard Rental Tenancies Agreement (RTA) with conditions and rental payment arrangements broadly in line with mainstream urban tenancies. The process of transferring all the dwellings to 40-year leases and tenants to new RTAs commenced

in 2011 and was almost complete on Palm Island at the time of writing (Housing Officers, DHPW Palm Island, personal communication, March 2015).

Palm Island is also one of Queensland's leading communities with regard to 99-year residential leasing to enable private home ownership on Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) communities or Aboriginal Trust Land (ATL). The Queensland Government enabled home ownership leases on remote communities through changes to *The Aboriginal Land Act 1991* made in 2008. Palm Island was targeted as a potential home ownership site because of its Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) between the council and the Manbarra people, which allows for long-term leasing over parts of the island, and because of the local council and Land Trust's support for the initiative. The idea of home ownership is supported by PIASC who see it as an opportunity for Bwgcolman people. Prior to the most recent home ownership initiative, Palm Islanders were also engaged in consultations relating to a perpetual *Land Holding Act* 2015 (LHA) or Katter Leases in the 1980s, but none of these leases were administered through to implementation.

2.3 Conditionality in policy and practice

2.3.1 Conditionality in rental policy

Most social housing tenants on Palm Island have an RTA with DHPW (Queensland Government 2015b). RTAs vary in length from six months to much longer and list the tenants and the residents as occupying a particular dwelling. To support tenants in understanding their responsibilities, DHPW produced a calendar that describes a different tenancy rule on each calendar month. The calendar is meant to reflect the rules in the RTA and help tenants manage their obligations. Below is an example of two pages from the calendar, which was released in early 2014.

Figure 3: DHPW tenant calendar 2014

You and your neighbours

You are entitled to live in a safe, healthy and peaceful environment. Sometimes, this environment can be disrupted by neighbours.

- If you are having problems with a neighbour, try talking to them about it.
- If you do not want to talk to your neighbour, let us know and we will try to help where we can.
- If the problem is serious and you feel in danger, call the police straight away.

The key RTA conditions are around the rules of paying rent, providing notification on when a tenant will be away (and for how long), nuisance to neighbours, sub-letting, reporting repairs and maintenance, and keeping a tidy yard.

Rent is calculated as either approximately 25 per cent of the household's total assessable income or the maximum rent for the property, whichever is less. The maximum rents for tenants living in social housing dwellings are: one bedroom $90; two bedrooms $105; three bedrooms $120; and four bedrooms $150 (Queensland Government 2015c). This rent can be split so that more than one resident contributes through direct deductions for wages or Centrelink benefits. The three strikes policy on tenant behaviour is part of the new RTA by the Queensland Government, but its application on remote Indigenous communities, including Palm Island, is still under consideration and discussion (Housing Officers and Client Service Manager, Palm Island personal communication, March 2015). An extract on the policy is provided below:

> An Anti-social behaviour management policy was introduced from 1 July 2013. Under this policy, when tenants engage in unacceptable behaviour and receive three strikes within a 12-month period, the department will take action to end their tenancies. Where behaviour is considered to be dangerous or severe, immediate action will be taken to end the tenancy. This strikes-based process will make it clear to public housing tenants what is and is not acceptable behaviour. The department will tell you if your behaviour is putting your tenancy at risk and you will be given the opportunity to change this behaviour. The policy will aim to balance the needs and rights of other tenants, private owners and the broader community with the need to support you to sustain your public housing tenancy.

> There are three categories of anti-social behaviour:

> 1. Minor general or nuisance behaviours—these are activities that could reasonably happen occasionally in a household, but which disturb the peace,

comfort or privacy of other tenants or neighbours. For example, excessive noise from televisions or stereos, a loud party or an untidy yard.

2. Serious behaviours—these are activities that intentionally or recklessly disturb neighbours, or could reasonably cause concern for the safety or security of a tenant, household member, neighbour or their property, or damage to the public housing property. For example, harassing neighbours, intentional disturbances including using aggressive or obscene language, or damaging departmental property.

3. Dangerous or severe behaviours—these are activities that pose a risk to the safety or security of residents or property and may result in Police charges, and/or conviction, or significant damage to the public housing property. For example, illegal or alleged illegal activity at the property such as drug production, supply or trafficking, physical assault or acts of violence against other tenants, neighbours or departmental staff, or extensive malicious damage to departmental property.

Strikes can be issued for any confirmed incident of these types of behaviours. For dangerous or severe behaviours, a first and final strike will be issued and immediate action taken to end your tenancy (Queensland Government 2015d).

This policy is problematic when implemented in remote Indigenous communities where social housing is the only accommodation available and access to housing is generally limited. If tenants are evicted because of anti-social behaviour, they cannot apply for social housing for at least three months following their eviction.

2.3.2 Conditionality in home ownership policy

Palm Island is at the forefront of the Indigenous home ownership movement in remote communities in Queensland, through 99-year residential leasing arrangements. Home ownership policies have been implemented by the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council and Land Trust (which is one and the same) with assistance from the Queensland Government. Many local residents have expressed an interest in private home ownership on the island. The Home Ownership Team within the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) had recorded more than 200 expressions of interest in home ownership on Palm Island in 2011. However, at the time of writing, only one lease has been followed through to implementation and resolution (PC Land Liaison Officer, Palm Island, March 2015).

Policy development for home ownership on Indigenous lands in Queensland is led by the Department of Housing and Public Works, but the day-to-day operations for home ownership activities are run by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multi-Cultural Affairs (DATSIMA, recently changed to Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships—DATSIP), through the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office (The Program Office). This has transpired because when 99-year home ownership leasing was first possible in the legislation, both work groups were within the Department of Communities. After changes of state government, the work groups have split into different departments, but continue to work on the initiative together.

There are 'fact sheets' available that provide an overview of home ownership policy in Queensland that can be found through the DHPW website. (see DHPW 2015).

The fact sheets cover seven topics in general overview:

→ Overview of 99-year home ownership leases.

→ Things to consider before buying a 99-year home ownership lease.

→ Councils' roles and responsibilities.

→ Trustees' roles and responsibilities.

→ How do I become a home owner?

→ How much will I pay?

→ Home Insurance.

The fact sheets *do not* provide advice or guidance on important information that relates to conditions of agreement between the buyer and the vendor, such as: that the sale price is set and agreed upon between DHPW and council prior to offer to the buyer; the extent of works on the house that has to be agreed prior to sale; and that the buyer's finance has to be confirmed prior to sale.

Finance for 99-year leases on Indigenous land was at the time of writing only available through Indigenous Business Australia (IBA). Mainstream banks have not yet entered the market of 99-year leasing in remote communities (Memmott et al. 2009). Some banking and credit unions are providing micro-finance loans of under $50 000 to Indigenous communities, but only IBA currently finances home loans on DOGIT or ATL. Information on IBA's loan products and process for obtaining finance can be found online (see IBA 2015b).

An applicant's ability to access home ownership finance is dependent on a range of conditions including their existing income and assets base, the location of the property and its condition, the land tenure for the site, access to services for the site and prospects for future salability. More specifically:

→ At least one applicant must be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. This condition is part of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*.

→ There is a potential subsidy of the purchase price (20%, up to $50 000 maximum) conditional on a 'good renter' history. This is an IBA and Australian Government incentive.

→ Ongoing loan arrangements are subject to loan repayments and maintenance of the asset.

→ The home owner must also live in the house, or apply to IBA for special permission if they wish to rent it out and then for only a short period.

→ Planning approval and payment of rates and charges to the local government authority.

→ Native title agreement with native title groups and land, generally through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). This condition is part of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*.

→ If granted a lease over a vacant block, a house must be built on it within eight years. This condition is part of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*.

→ To buy an existing social housing dwelling under the DHPW policy, you must also be a tenant of that dwelling for a minimum of 12 months. If you are not a tenant, then you are not eligible for home ownership. However, if you earn over $80 000 a year, you are not eligible to be a tenant, and there are many people on Palm Island who are residents in houses but not tenants because their income is too high.

All of the information relating to the process for home ownership for an individual applicant can only be ascertained if an applicant submits an Expression of Interest and then enters negotiations for purchasing a house with the council, the state government and their financier. On Palm Island DATSIP, DHPW, IBA and the PIASC all then work together with the applicant to ascertain whether home ownership is a possibility for that person and location.

2.3.3 Conditionality in rental practice

Tenants on Palm Island know that there are rules and policies around their rental arrangements, but generally do not know the detail in relation to the tenancy agreement. Their main priority is paying the rent and reporting maintenance issues. In interviews with tenants, many were asking for more information and education around their own rights and responsibilities as renters. There is a disconnection between tenants and housing service providers on Palm Island and tenants are not aware of the constraints that the housing staff are working within. As a result, many residents were critical of housing service providers in the interviews that were conducted.

On Palm Island, tenants feel that DHPW is not consistently keeping to the conditions it prescribes for itself in relation to maintenance of houses and communication about rental rules, new leasing arrangements and entry into houses. This is a source of frustration for tenants. Tenants stated that there is and has been minimal communication about the rules of renting or the new 40-year leasing arrangements.

The 'three strikes' policy is not being actively implemented on Palm Island as it is in Townsville and other regional centres, and some tenants on Palm Island understand this as an opportunity to ignore tenancy conditions relating to noise and nuisance. Some interviewees indicated that a range of tenants understand that housing service providers are in a bind due to the lack of alternative accommodation available after eviction, and that some tenants flout this situation. Three interviewees noted that it was easier to live on Palm Island than in Townsville because you were unlikely to get evicted from your house, and it would stay in the family. Keeping the house in the family was described as important for most residents who were interviewed. In comparison, at least one interviewee described losing a house in Townsville due to the three strikes policy, and that this had been very hard for the family as it was their 'Grannie's house—we lost it after she died because no-one was looking after it properly'.[T11]

There were no evictions described during any of the field visits on Palm Island, and the majority of tenants interviewed stated that they wished that DHPW would take more action towards those tenants who were disruptive or problematic for others.

DHPW staff noted that the three strikes policy would be difficult to implement on Palm Island for a range of reasons: because there were no other housing alternatives for tenants once evicted; that the staff lived on the island and enforcing eviction could lead to threats of violence; and that people on Palm Island have long-term housing histories in particular locations and evicting families created problems of disconnection from historical places and could make people homeless.

Contractually, DHPW is responsible for providing housing repairs and maintenance through their Building Asset Services (BAS) section. There is a prescribed process by which housing maintenance requests are reported and work orders generated. Tenants are asked to use the 'blue phone' or the maintenance 1300 number, which connects to DHPW in Brisbane to report maintenance issues. Many tenants do not like using the 1300 number, sometimes because of language barriers and sometimes because of the technical questions they are asked by the call centre operator. Tenants also advised that when they report maintenance issues there can be a long

waiting time until the maintenance is completed—months in some cases. The lack of maintenance reporting leads to high levels of unreported problems in some houses, which can develop into major housing remediation works if maintenance is not attended to promptly (Barker et al. 2014).

2.3.4 Conditionality in home ownership practice

Home ownership leases on Palm Island can be implemented within the existing ILUA area and over land and social houses that are not affected by flood, inundation or storm surge events. Houses that are deemed in poor condition by DHPW are not for sale, nor are houses within storm surge or flood inundation zones. To apply for purchase of a social housing dwelling on Palm Island, the applicant must be a current tenant of the dwelling and show a consistent rental history for the past 12 months. The first steps in applying for home ownership are to lodge an Expression of Interest with the PIASC and to contact IBA as the financier to enquire about your lending capacity. These two steps commence a chain of events that slowly and eventually lead to the applicant being offered an 'Agreement to Lease' by the council (with consent from the Queensland Government). The average timeframe on Palm Island for this to occur has been over three years to date.

There are a number of steps each applicant and lease must move through to achieve home ownership, and these are more extensive than purchasing a house on freehold land in a city or town. It became clear during the research that the procedural steps for purchasing a social housing dwelling were still to be resolved between the Queensland Government and the council. Items of particular note included:

→ Stakeholder communication on the home ownership process has not been clear and changes in policy, government and staff have created confusion for buyers. Some applicants noted that they have been waiting for home ownership for more than three years, and that communication on their application has been very disjointed.

→ The sale price of the social housing dwelling has taken a long time to be determined and agreed: under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991* it has to be agreed between DHPW and council. In some instances, these negotiations have taken a long time and the applicant has not been given a regular update on the status of discussions.

→ There is a question of how home owners will maintain their dwellings when there are no established businesses on Palm Island that provide building maintenance services. There is no clear policy or administrative position or service in relation to this on Palm Island.

→ The extent of works on a house prior to sale is unclear. DHPW have recently determined in 2015 a process for agreeing the scope of works to be undertaken on an existing social house prior to sale (PIASC, personal communication, March 2015). A conditional sale contract called an 'Agreement to Lease' is offered to the tenant which sets out the conditions required to be met by the buyer and the vendor before the lease can be transacted, and contains an annexure of agreed works on the house.

→ Many questions about the long-term vision for home ownership have been left unanswered for Palm Islanders, and this has created a sense of caution in the community around home ownership. For example: what will happen when the tenant passes away or when the lease comes to an end in 99 years?

PIASC are in the process of developing its local home ownership policies and procedures, which interlink with its local ILUA, the Palm Island Planning Scheme and

development application process, the state government and IBA policies and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*. This is a complex task given regular changes in legislation, program funding and staff. In February 2015, there were an additional eight Agreement to Lease documents offered to potential home owners on Palm Island (Land Liaison Officer, personal communication, February 2015).

3 TENANT PERSPECTIVES

The research included informal and formal interviews with 22 residents and tenants of Palm Island. Some interviewees were council and housing workers, while others were referrals through health agencies and other Palm Island support services, and a couple were people that the researcher met at the Palm Island shop. The mix of tenants was diverse and included old and young people, male and female, those with jobs and those on welfare, and families living with disability. Tenant perspectives on Palm Island varied depending on their individual circumstances including employment, housing experiences, family composition, and educational background. Generally, tenants who worked for the council or housing knew more about housing rules and home ownership than tenants without jobs or who were on welfare benefits.

3.1 Social cultural capital and constraints

The population of Palm Island is large for an Indigenous community and includes representatives of approximately 55 different clan groups. The history, size and mix of people on Palm Island has created a community with a very complex set of social constraints and capital. Bwgcolman people come together in a collective way for community events such as sport, cultural activities, open days, music concerts, funerals and protests. However, kinship ties and family histories still dominate in situations of conflict or stress.

In relation to housing, sub-divisional areas on Palm Island were originally established based on kinship groups and where people came from (Tully people, central Queensland people, Fraser Island people, etc.). They established camps and housing areas that were oriented towards their traditional homelands. Housing allocation was made to families who would fit within the area where the house was built. However, new subdivisions constructed since the early 2000s are not following this pattern. Due to a shortage of land for building on Palm Island, subdivisions have now occurred in areas where building is physically possible, and not related to kinship or homeland preferences. Housing allocation is following suit in the sense that families are not always staying within their original kinship subdivisions. To gain access to new housing, people are moving away from their original kinship-based subdivisions.

With regard to social housing rules, tenant feedback was consistent on a number of issues: there is insufficient communication around renting rules; and there are not many obvious 'rules' on Palm Island except for that of paying the rent. The second most common rule stated was that 'you have to look after your house'. Interviewees also consistently stated that they wished there were more rules that were enforced, particularly around nuisance and noise.

Following are responses to the first few interview questions about tenant understanding of the rules that demonstrate the request for more communication:

> Keep everyone in check and breaking it down for everyone. What rule applies to what—needs to be understood.[T10]

> No-one has ever spoken to me about rules.[T17]

> Never seen any rules. I make sure rent is up-to-date. Tenancy Agreement—saw it recently—but no one really explained it to me—40-year lease thing.[T1]

> What rules? Only that you had to pay your rent.[T21]

> Not enough communication around housing issues, both [council and DHPW] pass the buck. If you are unhappy with service, can't get a response.[T1]

> Not talking to people on the ground—in the office—tending to calls [in reference to DHPW].[T10]

> Never come to my place. Want them to come and see my place.[T9]

> Rules around visitors, noise, crowding that has not been told to us. The rules are not working, need enforcing. If people are paying their rent, it's not fair that we have to put up with noise and maintenance issues.[T14]

> Get housing to change the way they work, how they communicate. They need to keep tenants informed of what they are doing; two months to get work done since reporting it; shouldn't have to chase it all the time.[T11]

Tenants commented that DHPW had little direct interest in who was staying in their house, for how long, or what activities they did in their house. Nor were they overly concerned with the way people used houses and generally left tenants alone, which tenants were reasonably happy about. Most tenants stated that they had fires in their yards in winter time and small numbers of regular visitors and these activities were accepted by DHPW with no ill effects. Many residents said they had visitors for short periods of time, for funerals, for the school holidays or special events, but people did not come and stay for a long time. DHPW contacted them or came to visit when they were behind in their rent, creating nuisance for others, or causing damage to the house. Otherwise tenants were generally left alone.

When tenants were asked what they thought Housing were trying to achieve, many interviewees did not respond, but a few made the following statements:

> Trying to manage information, find a better way to manage the process. Trying to maintain system properly—manage it. Priorities is to allocate and build quickly—hard because of politics and information is not always correct.[T20]

> Make up the money they've cost over the years through rent etc. Have accumulated much lost rent.[T17]

> Council allocation is different to housing allocation—waiting list is first priority now—not crowding or other things. People are planning ahead and putting themselves on the waiting list early to get a home.[T10]

Tenants also advised that when they report maintenance issues there can be a long waiting time until the maintenance is completed—months in some cases. One interviewee asked for an explanation of what is defined as a 'priority issue' versus a 'non-priority issue' in relation to repairs and maintenance. This tenant understood that some reported maintenance issues might take longer than others to fix, but was interested in a fact sheet that set out what would get fixed quickly versus what would take a long time to fix.

Although there is a formal pathway of reporting maintenance issues by using the 1800 number, tenants often used more than one method. The various ways of reporting maintenance requests included ringing the maintenance number (Townsville and Brisbane-based call centres), going into the DHPW office, and calling the DHPW Building Asset Services (BAS) workers on the island directly. Tenants stated they often used more than one way to try to get their repairs done. One interviewee explained that if she rang the call centres then she did not know who would come out and when, as opposed to ringing the local BAS workers whom she knew. Interviewees consistently complained that they were never notified when maintenance people

would be coming to visit—'no communication—they just turn up and expect to do the work'.

3.1.1 Living on Palm Island is easier than living on the mainland

For many tenants, living on Palm Island in social housing is preferred to living in Townsville in social housing. Living in Townsville is perceived as tougher and more isolating by tenants, but better for raising children away from potential abuse and violence on Palm Island. The reasons behind this are complex and tenants provided a sliver of insight into the difficulties that Palm Islanders face around family connections and obligations, historical housing experiences, access to vehicles and transport, childcare and raising children, caring for people with disabilities and managing income and resources. For many people, moving to Townsville is not a realistic, affordable option unless they have other close family there or full-time, secure employment.

A number of interviewees had lived both on the mainland and on Palm Island and stated their preference for living in the community. Being close to family and being able to draw on kinship networks made it easier to live on Palm Island than on the mainland. If a resident on Palm Island needs something (food, transport, money), there is someone close by to ask for help. They also commented that there was better fishing and hunting on Palm Island than on the mainland, which meant that access to bush foods was easier. Residents explained that bush foods cost little and are healthier than takeaway foods.

One tenant stated:

> Very hard on mainland to pay rent and electricity and budget, at least here you can borrow off family—bigger economy to support one another. Plenty of resources, fish, possum—it's easier.[T19]

Another resident, who had lived in Townsville for many years as well as on Palm Island, explained how her family had a house on the mainland for over 20 years in her mother's name. When her mother died there was only one child on the tenancy listing and they were incarcerated at the time. As a result, the house was taken away and everyone was evicted. She said that she:

> … felt very sad because of history in that house, everyone grew up there and now everyone is all split up—living in different places. There was no consideration for the family history and circumstances in the eviction.[T11]

The interviewee also commented that this would not happen on Palm Island as readily because everyone knows each other and knows that houses 'should stay in the family'. She explained that tenants should be given time to sort out succession of a rental house if someone passes away without a will or a plan. Observations of the DHPW service on Palm Island indicated that the staff worked with older tenants to identify who should share the tenancy with them to keep houses within families.

3.1.2 Crowding and housing on Palm Island

Tenants generally did not state that there were not enough rooms in their house, but some interviewees talked about the need to provide housing for young people and young couples so that they 'can stand on their own two feet,' and take on the responsibilities of renting and managing a house for themselves. Although crowding in houses on Palm Island has reduced with the construction of new housing, there is still a need for more housing specifically tailored to young couples and older people.

Interviewees who are living with family members with a disability described feeling stressed and not having enough time and room to 'get away and have a break' from the family members they were caring for. In these instances there were enough rooms

in the house, but the interviewees were emotionally and physically drained from being carers or assistant carers to the person in the family who needed help.

Tenants explained that in some houses the lounge room was being occupied for sleeping at night. This tended to occur when all the other rooms were occupied, often with the senior person or couple in the house sleeping in the lounge. Other tenants stated that they sleep in the lounge on 'movie night with the kids for fun'. [T13]

One tenant stated that she travelled for native title business and often had many visitors in her house. She said:

> This is our custom and should be respected; 15–20 people or more for funerals. Why do we have to justify when we leave for a trip? If it's two months, community gets upset. [T8]

It is interesting to note, she uses the word 'community' and did not say that 'housing' or 'the housing staff' get upset. Jealousy around housing can be a prominent issue on Palm Island and people closely observe and report on each other's housing activities. Many tenants noted that it is important to have someone 'looking out for your house' when you are away.

Jealousy in relation to housing was not discussed in detail at the interviews, but a number of interviewees used the term in relation to new house allocation or being 'off island' for a long period of time, and when referring to some households who had consistent and regular maintenance or upgrades over a number of years. Access to new, renovated and well-maintained housing is valued by people on Palm Island and the majority of social housing dwellings do not fit into this category. As such, conflict can arise over new house allocations and perceptions of whose house is getting regularly maintained or upgraded.

Most interviewees specifically noted that they do not encourage visitors who do not live on Palm Island to stay with them, because non-Palm Islanders were often the cause of nuisance for others, and became an economic drain on the family. More than 60 per cent of interviewees said that family members all contribute to rent and chores. They noted that visitors generally were harder to control than family and other tenants and many interviewees had an informal 'no visitors' policy.

Houses or rooms are not closed upon the death of a person at Palm Island, but the entire community may shut down for half a day for an important funeral or death—generally houses are kept open. As a result, death does not directly affect crowding of housing in that it does not create long-term vacant houses on Palm Island, as it can in some other communities. DHPW noted that sometimes a house will rotate within a family after the death of person, or be smoked in a cleansing ceremony. The council noted that each new subdivision also had a smoking ceremony around the time when the new houses were being constructed. One senior older male interviewed explained that there are places on Palm Island where people believe bad spirits reside, and the sites needed to be smoked before people moved in to that area. [T19]

3.1.3 Tenants and families living with disabilities

Approximately seven interviews on Palm Island were with tenants whose households included family members with disabilities. They described a lack of integration between housing and other social services and their inability to get a break when in the 'caring' role. However, some stated that the affected family member visited the health centre every day for bathing and medical support. Many residents stated that it was their responsibility to get their family member to the health centre every day and that this was difficult if there was no car or if it was raining, as the roads and paths are muddy after rain. DHPW have a service where they work with Queensland Health's

Occupational Therapists and provided some disability modifications to houses. Tenants appreciate receiving housing upgrades, but also said having more people as carers and program support made looking after someone easier than having your house fixed up. One tenant stated, 'fixing up the house is just one part' and in relation to caring for her mother she stated:

> Hard to look after her; my mother has to be a resident on a tenancy agreement for two years before she can be on her own RTA; the house was upgraded with disability mods before she moved in, but waited a long time for it.[T26]

Visits were made to two of the interviewees' houses who lived with family members with disabilities. They requested that the interviews occur at their house. During these visits, a number of observations were made. DHPW had made modifications to the bathrooms, toilets and entries to the houses to allow for access by wheelchair, but in both houses the bathrooms were not necessarily used by the family. In both houses, they were used as storage rooms because the family member with a disability went to the health centre for washing and medication. However, one carer stated that this was all that was offered on Palm Island; medication and cleansing. When talking about her adult child, who is a paraplegic as a result of an accident, she stated:

> There are no programs through the health centre—she just sits in her place on her [marijuana] bong—went into town on Friday with her cousin sister for fun. She stays with her sister in Townsville. She is in Townsville now getting her new wheelchair—went last Friday for the weekend. Everyone needs a break.[T7]

3.1.4 Noise and nuisance

Party houses and their related noise and fighting were described as some of the most difficult housing issues to deal with by tenants on Palm Island. The flow-on effects of party houses impact directly on families and children and their wellbeing. One interviewee described how she had been on the housing waiting list for 16 years. During that time she was a boarder in other peoples' houses. Boarders on Palm Island can pay up to $150 per week for a room in a house. At the time of the interview she was pregnant with her fifth child and had another school-age child with her. They were living as boarders in another person's house, sleeping on the couch. She commented that getting her child to school each day was very hard because the house was noisy and the child was tired every morning. She had previously been living with her mother and not paying board, but had left that house because another family member with a mental illness had been causing problems for her child. The relationship had become stressed so she moved out.

Health providers on Palm Island reported this as a common problem. Children without proper sleeping arrangements were falling asleep at school or not attending school. Another reason cited for this behaviour was that children fall asleep at school because they know they are safe there, whereas if they are boarders in other people's houses then they may be subject to physical and sexual abuse. One health provider noted that to avoid these situations the children stay awake, join up with friends in similar circumstances and roam Palm Island streets at night. When they attend school the next day they sleep to catch up.[T8] This is an extreme scenario but one that is not uncommon in Palm Island. When asked if people ever reported party houses to DHPW or the police, a common response from the tenants was that 'police never come at night; they come the next day when it's all over' and

> [There is] jealousy around housing, business. Men get more say than women. Women will argue about housing issues … can cause community conflict. [Most] People just trying to keep the peace.[T8]

Interviewees explained that many people on Palm Island were interrelated and speaking up could create a lot of conflict in the community between families. After so many years of constant strife, Palm Islanders are champions of conflict avoidance within their kinship networks.

This was a sensitive topic to talk about with tenants, but a few indicated that this cycle was common place and that 'keeping the peace' perpetuates the cycle of adults and children being exposed to harm, which was the experience of a number of tenants interviewed on Palm Island. The issue is a negative binding ingredient of social capital relating to housing on Palm Island. By comparison, some tenants have chosen to send their children to boarding school on the mainland to avoid potential harm and provide them with secure living and learning environments off the island.

3.2   Agency of tenants

There is a range of ways in which tenants create informal agency within the housing system. Some ways are anchored around kinship, management and surveillance of each other's houses, and tenant patterns. Some ways are about speaking up and maintaining communications with housing about tenancy issues. The other agency observed by the interviewer—which is part of a negative binding social cycle of behavior—is through neglect and damage to housing stock to influence the likelihood of the house being upgraded in the future. This requires the residents to live in difficult conditions in a house that is not functioning very well, but it also means that the house will eventually come to the attention of the DHPW and be earmarked for a major upgrade. DHPW enforce a policy of tenants paying for intentional damage to houses and implementation of this policy was observed during the field research, but a lack of reporting housing maintenance issues was not seen as purposeful neglect on behalf of the tenant by DHPW.

3.2.1   Looking out for one another and the 'squeaky wheel gets oiled'

Tenants display agency in interpreting housing policy on Palm Island on a regular basis. Tenants stated that they 'looked out for one another' and each other's houses when people were away. If a house was unoccupied for the weekend because the occupants went to Townsville, it was commonplace for neighbours and family members to watch the house while it was vacant, or even to check on the house. This kept the house safe from intruders and also notified the tenant if a housing officer (or someone else) came to visit while they were away. A number of tenants described residents who had a private home in Townsville (usually in their partner's name) and a social housing home on Palm Island, and that they moved regularly between both.

Interviewees commented that because the DHPW staff were so busy they had to go and see them in the office to get something resolved—telephoning or putting in a form was not enough during busy times. On busy days, the interviewer observed up to five people waiting in the housing office to see a housing staff member. This number was constant and did not wane throughout busy periods. Many tenants commented that the wait time on maintenance items being fixed was very long and that to get things fixed in your house you had to be like a 'squeaky wheel'.

> Get housing to change the way they work, how they communicate. They need to keep tenants informed of what they are doing; two months to get work done since reporting it; shouldn't have to chase it all the time.[T11]

> If housing came around more people would feel like their privacy was invaded. But they should do condition assessments. Housing came, but nothing got done. Had leaking hot water for a month, had to chase up BAS to find out what was wrong. No communications with tenant on maintenance problems.[T11]

One interviewee who was in full-time employment made the comment:

> Smash your house = get an upgrade! They keep fixing up the same houses. Trying for streamlining in maintenance, but now there is not a local R and M office—so disjointed.[T10]

She went on to explain how the houses that are most often renovated and upgraded were usually those that are regularly damaged, and that some families were known to invite purposeful damage so that their house would be fixed up. This can be a cause of housing jealousy in the community. Two older home-ownership applicants made the comment that they had looked after their house for many years, but got no benefits from being a good tenant, because their house had never had an upgrade. This pattern of some houses being consistently damaged and renovated was confirmed by DHPW staff.

3.2.2 Mobility and sub-letting

Most residents interviewed as part of the research travel to Townsville on a regular basis, on weekends, or to visit family on the school holidays. Mobility between the mainland and the island is very high and residents most commonly travel by passenger ferry or by a regular charter organised through the Palm Island Community Company, because these modes were less expensive than the regular commercial air service.

A number of interviewees spoke of other family members who had houses in both Townsville and Palm Island, even though this is not allowed under the RTA housing policy. Many people described having boarders in their house for additional cash income.

DHPW had recorded a small number of houses where the tenant was living in Townsville and sub-letting to other family members. DHPW advised that in 2014 most of these arrangements were brought to an end, by the tenant giving up their house and staying in Townsville, or moving back to Palm Island to reside in the house. However, this appears to be a fairly common activity that is very hard for DHPW to monitor, and the tenants usually describe this arrangement as 'family is just looking after my house while I am Townsville for business [or for health]'. Some tenants commented that they shouldn't have to tell housing every time they go away for short periods of time.

Some houses also contain young, educated and working people who earn over $80 000 per year gross income. On this income you are not eligible to be a tenant for social housing and cannot be placed on the waiting list. This means that those people continue living with relatives in social housing even when they earn enough money to move out. They stay because there are no other housing options available to them on Palm Island. They cannot get on the waiting list for new housing, and cannot apply for home ownership without being a tenant, but they do have sufficient income to pay high levels of board money to others. This creates an economic opportunity for tenants on Palm Island that is less available in Townsville where there is a larger pool of housing stock from which to choose, such as private rentals and mainstream home ownership on freehold land.

3.2.3 Vehicles for tenants' ideas

A number of interviewees contributed useful ideas and strategies for improving housing services, but there are limited vehicles for their ideas to be heard or discussed on Palm Island. There is no interagency working group relating to housing or housing issues on Palm Island. The main way for people to be heard is through Delegation or Engagement Day. This is a day held once per month by council at

which the public can come and present their ideas to the council, or raise their concern about an issue with the council.

> Council hold a delegation day. This can help people get outcomes because council can influence activities. Housing just roaming around talking to people, but delegation day, stuff gets done.[T11]

> With the new houses, young people getting them—good example of stakeholders working together; council and housing have come together on allocating new houses, disaster management committee, and on home ownership initiative.[T10]

One interviewee discussed initiatives that were available in the past, but were not currently used by DHPW or council to resolve tenant disputes:

> There was a time—if the neighbour disputes, elders would come for mediation. Role modelling in families—teaching young people how to look after their house—feeling good.[T18]

3.3 Economic development potential

3.3.1 Home ownership

The idea of home ownership is well entrenched on Palm Island, and most interviewees knew about the home ownership initiative by the council and state government. Of the tenants interviewed, it was noticeable that those with full-time employment were more interested in home ownership, and knew more about it, than those who did not have jobs and were on welfare benefits. Six of the tenant interviewees were also home ownership applicants and many expressed concerns about how they would maintain their houses once they were owners and what the full costs of home ownership would be. Most people were interested in home ownership from the perspective of wanting to 'leave something for their families,', but very cautious about actually becoming home owners.

Many interviewees were concerned about the potential costs of home ownership in relation to maintenance and rates. Repairs and maintenance on Palm Island are either completed by the local council works depot, the DHPW Building Asset Services team or by family members who have experience or qualifications in a trade skill. If a tenant enters private home ownership, they will be required to pay for their own repairs and maintenance and this may mean engaging a contractor to fly from Townsville to the island to undertake the work. The cost of freight to Palm Island for a shipping container of materials is $670, although families said it was often not feasible to fill the entire container for a simple job. When the cost of freighting materials is combined with the cost of flights, the rate for engaging a contractor from Townsville to do work is much higher than on the mainland. One interviewee commented about most tenants on Palm Island that

> They don't really care. They don't have pride to say 'that's my house, it's deadly'. Homeownership might change this. People are happy just renting. It's easy to get maintenance, not have to worry too much. Always will be renting—don't see the advantages of homeownership.[T14]

Palm Island contains some vacant land available for residents to build their own homes on, provided they pay for the cost of the land survey, development application and infrastructure (e.g. power, water and sewerage). These are in addition to the cost of building the house. For many people this is not affordable, but buying a social housing dwelling is more affordable if the applicant is an existing tenant. Older social housing dwellings are for sale for as little as $80 000 (not including the lease price of

the land which is $4000 up front and then $1/year for the remaining 98 years). However, the condition of older housing is often a liability for residents because of the potential repairs and maintenance costs. DHPW policy states that houses in poor condition are not for sale, but houses in fair condition, which are for sale, may also require considerable repairs and maintenance.

In March 2014, Mrs Luella Bligh was the first person to register a private home ownership lease in Queensland on Palm Island. Mrs Bligh's circumstances were slightly different to most Palm Island residents. She and her husband had built a house on their 'Family Camp' at Wallaby Point away from the main township. The house they built was self-funded and not a social housing dwelling. Mrs Bligh then applied for a 99-year lease over the land on which the house was constructed. The council and state government assisted Mrs Bligh with the administrative and legal process, but she had to pay for the cost of the lease, the survey of the land, the development application to council, and the registration of the lease herself. This was a considerable outlay over an 18-month period, but she did not have to finance a loan for the house as it had already been constructed.

Figure 4: Mrs Bligh and her granddaughter: first home owner Palm Island

Negotiations relating to the purchase of social housing dwellings often take a very long time, because some houses will require works prior to sale. One interviewee on Palm Island who is in negotiations to purchase his house has been waiting for over 12 months for the house to be assessed for repairs, for the repairs to be completed, and for the house to be valued for sale.

Home ownership is generally supported by interviewees during this research, but there is some trepidation about how it will work over time on Palm Island. The council, state government and IBA have committed considerable resources and effort into launching and maintaining interest in home ownership on Palm Island, but there is also hesitation from tenants as to who will 'go first' and be the first tenant to buy a social housing dwelling to 'test the new system' on Palm Island. Individual Palm

Islanders are wary of committing to a proposal that is not completely explained or examined from a long-term view.

3.4 Towards government and Indigenous organisations

Residents on Palm Island live in a state of constant change of government policy, funding and staffing. There is rarely a funded housing program that continues for longer than an election cycle of three years, and this is a source of frustration and disengagement for the local Bwgcolman people. Interviewees were ambivalent about the housing-related services provided by either DHPW or PIASC. Having said this, they also speak positively about the potential for improvement in services.

Interviewees were also often aligned emotionally with different organisations based on whom they worked for and were related to. Council employees were very supportive and positive about council initiatives and business, but less generous about state government departments working on the island. It was also clear that there are two main Indigenous organisations on the island: Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) and Palm Island Community Company (PICC), and interviewees sometimes had stronger alliances to one organisation than the other. Government agencies were generally happy to work with both council and/or PICC. PICC was established in 2007 and provides a range of family and justice-based support services including the women's shelter, the family and children's centre, diversion programs, and are a partner in the Remote Jobs Community Program (RJCP) (PICC 2015). Council and PICC work together on issues such as community events, disaster management, and are currently collaborating on economic development initiatives. Two of the five Councillors currently work part-time for PICC and another was a director of PICC prior to being elected to Council.

Tenants seem to observe and understand the pressures placed on housing staff and have some sympathy for people in that role, but still noted that there was a lack of communication between the housing office and tenants. Over a period of three or so years, there was a change of local Indigenous housing staff about every three to six months. When interviewees were asked about working for DHPW one person said:

> I wouldn't want a job at housing—too hard. They are nice girls, they try. [The manager] … he is a bit [hand movement for talker] …. Home ownership is taking too long.[T18]

> Never come to my place. Want them to come and see my place. Good to work with—very nice to talk to.[T9]

There are opportunities in housing for local people on Palm Island, but residents and DHPW need to work together to mentor and train staff to work in confidently in their role as housing officers for their community.

When asked to compare the services of each organisation one tenant commented:

> Not enough communication around housing issues, both [PIASC and DHPW] pass the buck. If you are unhappy with service, can't get a response. Council contracted to do maintenance work, but nothing much.[T5]

Generally tenants feel as though the services and support they receive from government agencies is not sufficient or ineffective, particularly in relation to housing noise and nuisance:

> No help with domestic violence and drunks (not even from police), won't come around to events with lots of people.[T8]

A number of tenants noted that the police did not respond to incidents reported from party houses at night, and that they visited the house the morning after when everything was all over. One resident commented that, since Mr Doomadgee had died in 2004, the police would only respond in groups during the daytime to reported incidents, and that their own internal rules had changed since that time.

The current Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council was elected in 2011–12 and will have to run for re-election in 2015–16. Since 2011, the council has been focused on economic development, housing and promotion of the island for tourism.

4   GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES

During the course of this research, meetings were held with people from a range of government and non-government service providers at local, state and federal levels. This included PIASC, DATSIP, DHPW, FaHCSIA (now Department of Social Services—DSS), Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disabilities (DoC), Queensland Health, Palm Island Community Company (PICC), Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN). The information and circumstances described below have come from observations of people doing their jobs, sitting in their offices and working with them over the course of fieldwork.

Prior to commencing the research the author had been in a contract role with DATSIMA as the Program Manager for Indigenous Home Ownership across Queensland. This has enabled a thorough understanding of the policy and practical context of 99-year home ownership leasing on Palm Island.

4.1   Constraints in implementing policy

4.1.1   DHPW staffing and resources

As noted previously, there are approximately 400 dwellings on Palm Island and between 3000 and 4000 people, depending on where the population statistics are drawn from. The majority of the population lives in social housing. To service this population, there are three full-time housing staff, including a Client Service Manager and one part-time local housing support officer, who are employed by DHPW. The full-time workers (three total) are non-Indigenous and live on the island in staff accommodation. All of the staff have been working on Palm Island for a number of years and are very committed to their jobs. Field visits to Palm Island since 2011 have consistently shown that there are insufficient staff resources on Palm Island for DHPW to strictly maintain rental tenancy conditions.

The Housing Office on Palm Island employs one local Indigenous person part-time. During the time of the research, the person in this position changed three times over an 18-month period. Tenants and residents indicated that working in the Housing Office was not something many people wanted to do, as the role can be fraught with local politics, conflict and jealousy. The local role is mostly administrative and does not play a significant role in tenant liaison. Both local officers declined to be interviewed as part of the research process.

The DHPW office on Palm Island has a working relationship with other state government departments including DoC and Centrelink, which enable them to coordinate services around issues such as tenants with disabilities, specific health needs, and rental payments. The working relationship with PIASC and Land Trust is less developed for the tenancy officers, but is managed by the Client Service Manager (CSM). The CSM's role includes working with PIASC on housing allocations for new dwellings, transitional housing and upgrades and home ownership.

DHPW workers are required to perform a range of roles such as managing rental arrears, taking new housing applications, updating existing applications, taking maintenance requests from residents who do not want to use the 'blue phone' or 1800 number, working on housing allocations, working with Queensland Health and DoC on upgrades and renovations for tenants with disabilities, and organising transitional housing for tenants while housing upgrades are undertaken. Time is spent on bureaucratic processes including maintaining housing databases, reporting on housing issues and data to senior bureaucrats, or chasing rent arrears from tenants.

This component of DHPW work is not well understood by tenants and often confused with housing staff not wanting to be in the field or make house-based visits. They also manage case files on each dwelling and on Palm Island tenancy agreements. There is limited time available in the schedule of housing workers to build meaningful relationships with Palm Island tenants and other service providers.

In relation to new housing being constructed on Palm Island, the pressure from funding agencies to control capital costs and maximise the number of houses being built has seen some reductions in the standard of housing being delivered such as reduction in floor areas, reduction in climate responsive design, reduced quality in materials and hardware, and deterioration in the quality of work being supplied (Barker et al. 2014). The cost/time imperative has seen DHPW use a Design and Construct model of procurement and delivery (since approximately 2010), which has resulted in the dominance of transportable, factory-built and factory-component systems being used for the 45 houses built at the Kitchener Bligh subdivision on Palm Island in 2013–14. These systems can be installed quickly, but have had numerous construction quality and design faults.

The findings from this research show that the pressure and timeframes for the completion of new housing has placed housing and council staff under stress. Few additional resources have been provided to support staff with the additional load of administering and managing the new housing allocation process. The community-based staff undertake this role in waves as new housing packages are confirmed for Palm Island, and they fit this work in and around their usual tenancy or council administrative roles.

4.1.2 'We know where you live!'

As noted above, the working environment for housing and tenancy staff on Palm Island can be very stressful and appears to follow cycles which peak when housing allocation and government policy changes are being implemented. The ratio of staff to housing stock is also quite low when compared with other remote communities in Queensland (Barker et al. 2014). The staff have limited access to vehicles; there are two DHPW cars for four staff to use and share with visitors to their office and this can contribute to stress around logistics.

Palm Island has a volatile history, which includes some incidents of rioting and violence. For their own safety, housing staff minimise their exposure to situations that might create inflammatory actions on behalf of the tenants. Three staff members were interviewed and indicated that in some circumstances they weighed up the consequences of following through with DHPW rules (particularly punitive actions), because in the past threats of violence had been made towards them when they strictly adhered to tenancy policy. There was no record of housing officers being assaulted or of physical violence against them, but housing staff described being verbally abused by residents on a fairly regular basis. This was also observed by the researcher during one visit when housing allocations were being made.

4.1.3 Overall communication at a program level with higher levels of government

The housing staff based on Palm Island were often not aware of decisions that had been made at the program management or policy level in Brisbane or Townsville for a considerable amount of time (if at all). Nevertheless, they remained focused on their day-to-day jobs. The housing officers have a process-oriented role that they adhere to unless they are specifically advised of changes to their role requirements. No senior DHPW staff, from Townsville or Brisbane, were observed on the island during any of

the field visits. Local staff advised that they went to Townsville for training sessions or larger DHPW or interagency meetings from time to time.

In relation to housing maintenance at Palm Island, there is some disconnection between the tenancy staff and the Building Asset Services team who are undertaking housing maintenance. BAS is part of DHPW and they manage the housing upgrade program, but do not necessarily undertake the cyclical repairs and maintenance to houses. Sometimes this is undertaken by BAS and sometimes by BAS contractors, which includes council and other contractors. Tenancy staff were often not aware of the work that BAS was undertaking on different houses as part of their upgrades and maintenance, and BAS did not consistently communicate with the tenancy team to provide notifications of entry to tenants. From a tenant's perspective, this makes DHPW appear disorganised as different teams of people in maintenance and tenancy did not necessarily know what the other was doing, or on which houses they were working.

4.1.4 Other departments and service providers

Other key government agencies involved in housing matters on Palm Island are DATSIP (home ownership), FaHCSIA (now DSS) and IBA, who provide home loan finance to potential buyers. The Home Ownership Team (HOT) in DATSIP are the operational arm of DHPW home ownership policy.

The HOT works with IBA, the PIASC and Land Trust to implement home ownership through 99-year leasing. The PIASC employs one person full-time as a Land Liaison Officer. Part of this role is to work on home ownership matters, helping applicants through the process, as well as to be the secretary for the Land Trust. From 2011 to 2014 the Land Liaison Officer position was funded through a grant from the Australian Government to the council. The HOT and Land Liaison Officer do not get involved in day-to-day tenancy matters. They may have home ownership applicants who are tenants, but only work with DHPW on a few key stages where the services overlap. These include the step in the home ownership process where a house might require an upgrade before sale, or on other tenancy queries such as clearing rent arrears or confirming who is on the rental tenancy agreement. There is no regular working group on housing or home ownership based on Palm Island.

IBA have an Indigenous Manager for Emerging Markets, and this person works across Queensland and the Northern Territory in this role. Information on IBA home loans and the Emerging Market can be found at the IBA website (see IBAa 2015). IBA coordinate with the HOT and DHPW and visit Palm Island at critical stages during a resident's financial application:

→ first to meet with them and gather financial information

→ then to provide them with confirmation of their ability to secure a loan

→ to assist them through a home ownership education program

→ to provide them with Agreement to Lease and Lease documents, and legal advice from an independent solicitor during this stage

→ and finally to assist them with the execution of the Lease and Mortgage documents.

This is a summary of the stages IBA move through, but often it is not as linear as portrayed here. DHPW and the HOT have their own steps that interweave and are interdependent on IBA's processes. Many applicants on Palm Island reported being stuck between the second and third steps for over two years. This has transpired because the implementation of home ownership policy has taken a considerable time

to tease out and work through. Residents commenced the process with IBA before all the steps were worked through and as a result some steps had to be repeated a number of times (Manager, Emerging Markets, IBA, personal communication, August 2014).

4.2   Agency of frontline workers

Housing staff understood the importance of, and expressed interest in, building positive, mutually respectful relationships with tenants. However, the under-resourcing and stress they faced on a daily basis limited time for regular meaningful discussions with tenants. In return, housing staff were at times perceived by tenants as stressed, non-responsive and sometimes rude. It should be noted that because the housing staff have been on the island for three years (on average), the local residents know them quite well and have some empathy towards the plight of the staff. Residents get frustrated with the lack of service, but then say 'but they are nice girls'.[T9]

Housing staff were observed using negotiation skills, housing allocation opportunities, and saving incentive schemes (through rental credits with Centrelink) to work with tenants on a range of issues. An informal saving scheme operates around social housing, where people are encouraged to pay an amount (typically $20) in excess of their rent, which could then be drawn down, for Christmas or other unforeseen events. This is locally described as 'The Christmas Club'. In the absence of banking facilities at Palm Island, frontline staff were successfully using this saving scheme as an incentive for people to pay their rent. An alternative and more incentive-based approach would be to waive the rent payment for the month of December, if people made all of the preceding 11 month's payments successfully.

The CSM was best equipped at these negotiations and able to interpret the policies and rules of DHPW to suit the circumstances required, and the CSM usually undertook any complex tenant discussions about sub-letting, nuisance and potential evictions. The housing coordinators used their relationships with BAS and other agencies daily to influence and coordinate changes requested by tenants to their housing circumstances (e.g. phone numbers, bank details, changes in head tenant, household mobility changes). For example, the housing staff have had to take up the role of organising transitional housing for tenants whose houses are being upgraded under NPARIH. This was originally the role of BAS, but the position was cut during funding adjustments after the 2013 Queensland election. As a result, the housing staff have 'picked up the job, otherwise it would never get done' (Housing officer, Palm Island, personal communication, August 2014).

The frontline staff working for DATSIP and IBA do not live on Palm Island. They live in other regional centres of far north Queensland and travel to the island on a cyclical basis, usually about once per month for one to two days. During their visits they meet with the Land Liaison Officer of PIASC and home ownership applicants, but do not always connect with the housing staff. Although these agencies do not have a permanent presence on the island, they still undertake some agency and advocacy on behalf of housing applicants. Both agencies work hard to communicate with Queensland Health, Centrelink, Department of Communities and DHPW Brisbane team to undertake case work for each home ownership application. They do this to understand the range of issues affecting an applicant and to find the best path through the homeownership process for that particular applicant.

4.3   Towards tenants and Indigenous organisations

The non-Indigenous Housing officers on Palm Island are patient and polite with tenants, but appear to have undergone minimal cross-cultural training. They often

struggled to understand the world view of the residents and tenants. This becomes clear when tenants get frustrated over rules relating to sub-letting and tenancy changes, and housing staff wonder about the fairly constant changes in family composition in houses.

During discussions with housing staff they were careful not to comment negatively about tenants and residents, but they did note that when new housing allocations are being discussed in the community, the number of agitated tenants coming into the office increases. In this way the housing staff find that the new housing process can upset their workflow and tenant relationships. Housing officers also noted that they often have to repeat a message to some tenants many times before it is understood, and that tenants come into the housing office repeatedly asking the same questions.

The author observed that the housing staff were not paternalistic towards the tenants, but they were doing a process-oriented job in a normal bureaucratic way, i.e. a normal non-Indigenous way of operating in a Queensland Government office environment. The conditionality of their role and work scope then played out in their day-to-day interactions with tenants. They perceived some Indigenous tenants as disorganised, chaotic and emotional, and in return the tenants felt as though the housing staff did not communicate effectively or explain things to them in a way that they understood. The part-time Indigenous housing officer assisted to broker this space, but not always directly because of kinship obligations and the prevalence of housing jealousy.

Government workers on Palm Island generally took a proactive view to working with PIASC and PICC, but only on areas specific to their day-to-day role. For example, DHPW worked with PICC on issues around tenants relating to special needs and health support, as it related to housing, but there were limited discussions on a strategic level between DHPW and other government stakeholders that occurred in the community. These discussions occurred off island on the mainland. As mentioned previously, DHPW mainly interacted with PIASC on housing matters relating to new house allocations and home ownership.

There was no overall housing working group on Palm Island and it appeared that strategic level discussions occurred between senior government staff based in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns and PIASC, not with government staff living on Palm Island.

5   INDIGENOUS ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVES

The main Indigenous organisations involved in housing matters on Palm Island are the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) and the Palm Island Aboriginal Land Trust (PIALT), and to a lesser degree the Palm Island Community Company (PICC) and Manbarra Nanggarra Wanggarra Aboriginal Corporation (Manbarra). In relation to housing matters, the PIASC and Land Trust are involved in new housing allocations, sub-division design and construction, the management of all leasing (including home ownership leasing), and the management of family camp permits. PIASC is the local government authority and council which is elected every three years. The Palm Island Aboriginal Land Trust is the trustee of the land on Palm Island. Manbarra is an Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) registered corporation and the traditional owners of the Palm Island group. However, there is no settled native title claim over the island group. PIASC and the Manbarra have an Indigenous Land Use Agreement that sets out the responsibilities of each party in relation to development on the island.

The Manbarra Nanggarra Wanggarra Aboriginal Corporation was established by Manbarra traditional owners in 2002 under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*. This Aboriginal corporation is the peak organisation for cultural heritage management on Palm Island. It is a signatory to the Palm Island Improved Land Management Practices Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) (National Native Title Tribunal File no. QI2011/001) (ATNS 2015). It also has influence in land and lease negotiations over a large portion of Palm Island.

5.1   Constraints in organisational capacity

PIASC is a well-organised council with strong governance and leadership led by the current Mayor Alfred Lacey. Its constraints in organisational capacity are in coordination of all its programs and staff, not in its energy and drive to make positive change on Palm Island. PIASC made considerable changes to its structure and staffing in 2014 to improve efficiencies in business after funding cuts by the Queensland Government to local shire councils. Prior to 2011, council managed the housing stock on Palm Island. Over the past two years, the majority of the housing stock has progressively been transferred to DHPW to tenancy manage and to undertake repairs and maintenance. PIASC employs a local Land Liaison Officer who facilitates home ownership lease applications and family camp permits with the Land Trust. In addition to this, the Land Liaison Officer is also the secretary for the Palm Island Land Trust, which meets once per month.

During this research, there was no observation of PIASC getting involved in DHPW tenant business, except during the housing allocation process for new dwellings or if a resident brought a tenancy or housing issue to Engagement Day—a monthly forum for any community issue to be discussed. Until 2015, it was known as 'Delegation Day'. It is also an avenue for people to raise their housing concerns with council, who are then able to consider their concerns and advocate or negotiate with DHPW on their behalf. A number of tenants noted that they had made use of Engagement Day to assist them with housing issues.

5.2   Agency of frontline workers

Council frontline workers apply agency mainly through their informal kin and friendship networks, through Engagement Day and through their contacts in the state government:

> We are trying. Council doesn't have much to do with housing. Not much say in allocation. Someone local should be in charge [of housing], not fly-in fly-out people.[T10]

This is a comment by a PIASC staff member who was interviewed during the research. It occurred during a discussion around housing allocation, particularly the DHPW waiting list versus perceived family needs on the Island:

> A lot of people blame the council [for the lack of housing and maintenance]. Maybe if council once every three months met with housing and others and had a working group and got referrals from other businesses to meet their needs, it might help. Needs to be accurate, open and transparent. The same story for all parties.[T14]

There is confusion on Palm Island about the roles of PIASC versus DHPW. PIASC is sometimes contracted to BAS of DHPW to undertake housing repairs and maintenance or upgrades, but it is not a clear standing offer arrangement. It appears to be on an as-needed basis. Most tenants do not understand this and get confused when sometimes maintenance is done by BAS and at other times completed by council. The staff at the council are not in charge of managing communications around housing, other than home ownership. If someone comes to the council asking maintenance questions they are sent across to the housing office.

In relation to home ownership, the Land Liaison Officer meets with potential home ownership applicants and explains the process to them, collects expressions of interest from applicants, and works with the HOT in DATSIP, on the specific housing circumstances and conditions of the applicant and the location. PIASC mainly works with DHPW on home ownership at a strategic level, on policy and high-level operational procedures. These negotiations are usually around the condition of the house prior to sale and the detail within the contractual leasing documents.

The home ownership staff working for council know that if they are struggling with an application they can ask the HOT in DATSIP for support and assistance. The previous Land Liaison Officer would engage with government workers on how best to manage different applicants. In this way, she was mentoring government staff on how to approach and work with Indigenous home ownership clients.

5.3   Towards tenants and government

Council works professionally with government on many different projects and is dependent on government funding (through NPARIH) for new housing and major works to existing dwellings. The councillors and their CEO actively build relationships with government ministers and the director-generals of government departments. Prior to the 2015 Queensland election, the PIASC was lobbying the community on social media to vote for continuity and to maintain the status quo in government. From their perspective, consistency in government leadership and staff is important because it helps programs and initiatives maintain momentum. Changes in government often mean an overhaul of programs and policy and new government staff to build relationships with (CEO, PIASC, personal communication, September 2014).

Council staff met with tenants who were interested in progressing an interest in home ownership. All the council staff interviewed thought home ownership was a good initiative and were happy to support and assist applicants. Sometimes family politics and kinship complicated these discussions, and when this occurred the state home ownership team assisted the local staff with their negotiations.

The current Land Liaison Officer made the following comments about home ownership and different generations in the community:

> ... have a big interest in having a home to come back to if we go away. If we go away now, we will lose our house. Doesn't want to be the first young person in the community to own their own home. Only 24 years old. Partner is a carpenter and brother-in-law is a plumber [so confident about doing own maintenance].[T14]

> Mum is interested to have a home for all the kids to come back to.[T14]

> We always wanted to design our own home. People around my age it's not a topic to talk about and never will be a topic. [Young] people are just interested in moving out. None of my sisters talk about it … not on their radar. We travel around a lot and see different things.[T14]

> Older generation talk about it, those with jobs. Old people who don't work and stay home are not interested.[T14]

The previous Land Liaison Officer made the following statement about home ownership and why residents viewed it positively:

> On Palm Island because so many people were brought here and uprooted from where they came from. Not a good history here. As Bwgcolman people— Bwgcolman is what we all grew up here as, historical owners. We all have a sense of sharing or understanding of this place. This issue [jealousy] mainly comes up for family camps, not for social housing.[T18]

On Palm Islanders generally, she said: 'They got to learn to work hard for it too. We need to work harder. Have to stop the welfare mentality. Change them within the individual'.[T18]

6   RECOGNITION SPACE

6.1   Introduction to 'Recognition Space' concept

The meaning of the Recognition Space is drawn from the analysis in Habibis et al. (2013. p.22), which is anchored in the work of Honneth (1996). It refers to the intercultural field in which the competing demands of the state, Indigenous governance and lifeworlds, and the responsibility of stakeholders in each come together.

Figure 5: The recognition space
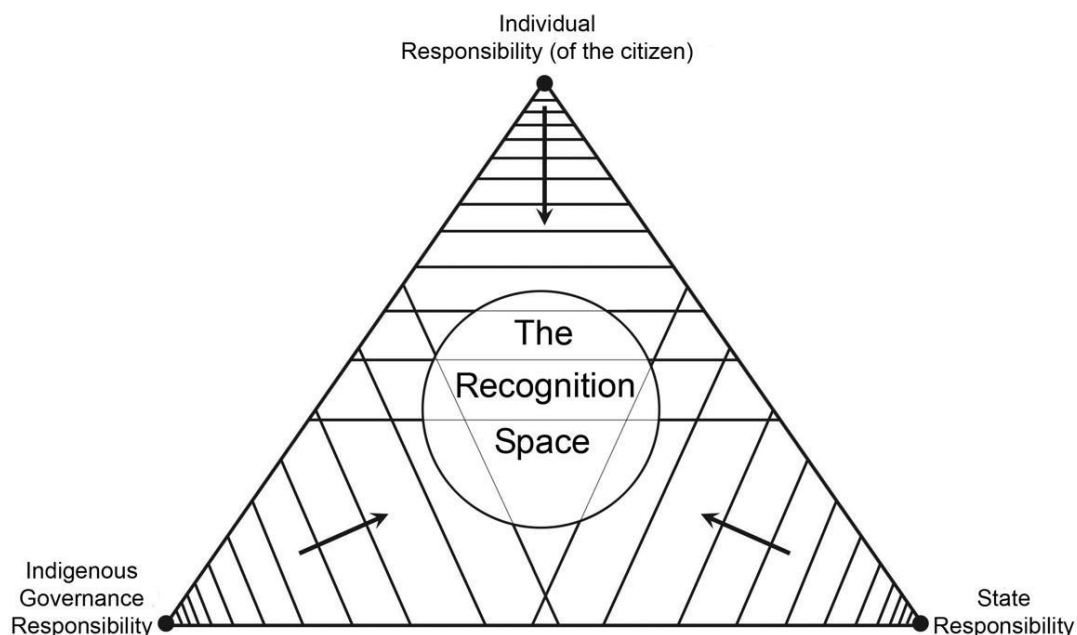
The idea of a recognition space reflects this understanding by emphasising the potential for relations between Aboriginal people and the state to take place on a shared terrain for social, political and economic exchange through consensual, negotiated relations of mutual understanding and respect. (Habibis et al. 2013, p.22). Fantin and Fourmile have previously published on the nature of intercultural design and working in the recognition space in 2014. The paper, *Wabu Gadun Bulmba Gurriny Mukanji Centre: A case study of intercultural design practice*, explores the intricacies of the recognition space in an Aboriginal design context in North Queensland:

> I met with GudjuGudju and his family and started a conversation about families and Country, gardening and design. And we found a common place where comfortable and easy discussion about culturally responsive design, building things, about trees and plants, local landscapes and families could flourish. This is what in the non-Indigenous literature is called the intercultural space (Merlan 2005; Radovic 2004; Martin & Casault 2005). This is a space for listening, sharing, learning and attempting to understand the world through someone else's eyes. In this space also lies much uncertainty, questioning of values, challenge of cultural assumptions and need for self-reflection. It is a meandering and exploratory space, where it is easy to make mistakes and create confusion (p.3).

However there are deep historical forces that create psycho-cultural barriers to establishing an effective recognition space on Palm Island in the manner that

happened in the above project. Palm Island (established 1918) has had a particularly violent, suppressive and punitive contact history in comparison with many other Indigenous communities in Australia. When people were taken to Palm Island they were separated into work camps and dormitories based on gender and age, and families were not allowed to congregate together. Many people were transported to the island in irons. It had a history of violent and punitive superintendents, many deaths due to poor nutrition and lack of health services, and more recently deaths in custody (Watson 2010; Hooper 2009).

The history of Palm Island and government policy relating to Indigenous people in Queensland has rendered the Bwgcolman people suspicious of government services and non-Indigenous people. Many people are still living with the trauma of their families' past. The legacy of poor treatment and discrimination has created barriers to building respectful and healthy working relationships, both with outsiders and within the community. This is coupled with government staff who are not specifically trained in working cross-culturally or with people with a history of trauma. As a result, the Recognition Space can be very hard to establish, enter and maintain on Palm Island. It is also not a familiar space that many Bwgcolman people operate in on a daily basis.

The perspectives of Indigenous tenants, government staff and council are analysed here with reference to the responses set out in the three preceding sections. The aim of the section is to identify and highlight the forms of conditionality in which good practice in Indigenous tenancy management can emerge on Palm Island. The section is structured under the following descriptors: 'corroding and dissolving', 'formative and sustaining', 'enablers', and finally, 'strategies for building a recognition space'.

6.2 What are the precursors to entering the recognition space?

A key hypothesis that is to be tested during this research is:

> … that for positive outcomes, an 'intercultural recognition space' is required involving mutual recognition of the moral relationships of duty and care between housing administrators, Indigenous community leaders and tenants (Moran et al. 2014).

The recognition space is a positivist construct and assumes a functioning intercultural zone where people interact in a somewhat meaningful way. It is not understood as a dysfunctional zone and assumes a level of respect, trust, interest and willingness to interact in the first instance.

What is the alternative to the Recognition Space? It is a place of disconnection, avoidance, disinterest and mistrust. In *An ethnography of stress*, Burbank (2011) discusses the links between historical and personal experiences as precursors to stress and ill health in Numbulwar in the Northern Territory. She describes below how people can remain engaged in a heightened emotional and stressed state. When this is a continuous and regular state of being, there is limited capacity for people to engage in the 'Recognition Space'. The research in this paper indicates that a portion of people on Palm Island are in a regular state of stress in relation to housing conditionality and that calm and productive negotiations are not a priority for people in these circumstances:

> Feelings such as 'anger,' 'fear,' 'exclusion,' and 'disappointment,' to use English constructions of such feelings, may be read as manifestations of an activated stress system …. When, however, the source of perceived threat is a more or less continuous one and when people experience a 'lack of

predictability' and 'lack of control,' have little or no means of understanding the sources of their distress or expressing their frustration with them, and when they receive little support in their social environment, then the stress system may remain engaged in a manner that can have major negative consequences for physical and mental health (Brunner & Marmot 1999; Sapolsky 2004, pp.396–397; Burbank 2011, p.5).

For some people on Palm Island, there is little interest in entering the Recognition Space, and day-to-day life is consumed with survival and minimising the effects of poverty. The housing conditionality of many tenants' lives begins to illustrate this— particularly those tenants who are boarders in other people's houses and may live in fear of abuse or violence, who have disabilities or who live or care for others with disability or mental illness, or who have drug and alcohol problems. Most of these tenants are in survival mode.

The participants of the research who were able to discuss ideas such as respect, trust, communication, housing processes and strategies were usually in employment and had control over their day-to-day lives.

To begin working near and in the Recognition Space on Palm Island, there needs to be some existing conditions present. The list below begins to suggest what some of those conditions are. Only one is specifically related to Palm Island, while many relate to a human being's personal circumstances, their perspective of others, and their capacity to consider topics outside their immediate existence:

→ Acknowledgement of non-Indigenous systems of thinking and working.

→ Respect and acknowledgement of Aboriginal history and culture, pertaining to Palm Island.

→ Being physically and emotionally well.

→ Acceptance of other human beings as having something worthwhile to contribute.

→ Some feeling of control over one's personal circumstances and life.

→ Ability to consider another person's perspective as valid and true for them.

→ Ability to consider a problem from another person's perspective.

→ Agreement to work together on a topic.

→ Time, willingness and capacity to engage in the work, in addition to normal everyday life.

In relation to housing conditionality on Palm Island, there were many factors influencing why people did not always meet the precursors listed above. An individual's ability to work in the Recognition Space can change depending on work, family and personal circumstances.

6.3 Corroding and dissolving

6.3.1 Housing relationships and stress

In day-to-day interactions on Palm Island, tensions between Bwgcolman people and non-Indigenous service providers were often palpable when discussing complex problems. Emotions were clearly evident in discussions on many topics including housing and land. In one public meeting in 2013 held in the community hall on Palm Island, a senior Aboriginal representative of the Island opened the meeting by clearly setting rules for the attendees. After everyone was settled, he sternly announced, 'There will be no yelling in here. If you want to yell at one another, you go outside'.

Working productively in a context where emotive responses are the norm requires patience, the practice of empathy and listening, and discussion about the history and reasons behind circumstances and contexts. Trust was rare in conversations around housing and only developed after building relationships with people. Most non-Indigenous people are treated suspiciously by Palm Islanders, and classified as potential representatives of the government or other organisations who historically have taken rights away from Indigenous people. It takes those parties a long time to build relationships that are mutually respectful, honest and productive, and even then they can disintegrate very quickly.

Relationships between tenants and housing providers on Palm Island appear to move through a cycle of ups and downs dependent on a range of community and individual factors affecting the population on a regular basis. For example, when the DHPW staff undertake their usual role, and also manage house allocation business associated with new houses, then their relationships with tenants can become stressed and tenuous. This can be due to any number of reasons:

→ The staff workload and subsequent stress related to additional work with no additional resources.

→ Tenant expectations and desire for new housing ('housing jealousy').

→ Usual tenancy services not being delivered as promptly as expected.

→ Tenants being upset about nuisance in their neighbourhood and other family matters.

This can be further exacerbated by staff being away on leave, by a change in staff, or by tenants being unwell or having other family stress. When the pressure of extra housing office workload aligns with community change and tenant personal stressors, then relationships corrode, and the triage gap between housing staff, tenants and Indigenous organisations is widened. Commenting on the behaviour of housing staff during stressed periods, one tenant noted: 'They are not always friendly—we want them to be courteous—goes both ways, behaviour'. [T12]

6.3.2 The constant change of funding cycles

One important factor that cyclically corrodes and dissolves opportunities to work in the Recognition Space, is change in government, funding, programs and staff. Since 2011, on Palm Island there has been one change of local government (new Palm Island Indigenous Shire Council), two changes in state government (Labour Party to Liberal National Party and back to Labour Party) and one change in Federal Government (Labour Party to Liberal Party). Regular changes of this scale and frequency lead to staff changes, program changes and overall instability and inconsistency in relationships and service provision. However, it is important to note that throughout these changes on Palm Island, PIASC has had the same CEO and the same councillors and mayor; there has been the same core of DHPW staff and only one change in Land Liaison Officer. Hence, although the state and federal governments have changed, the individuals providing services on the ground have remained relatively constant. This helps to sustain relationships within the Recognition Space.

Home ownership on Indigenous lands policy is complex and requires a skilled and coordinated approach at all levels of government to maximise its potential for success. What has been observed during this research is a slow evolution of home ownership policy and administrative processes that have been coordinated between the Queensland Government (DATSIP and DHPW) and PIASC. However, the process has been regularly interrupted by changes of government, funding for council

positions, funding of associated support programs and changes in staff. As a result, continuity of corporate knowledge has been difficult to maintain and the policy has been revised and reworked with changes in government and staff.

6.3.3 Family needs and family conflict

Family and clan-based conflict on Palm Island also contributes to the corrosion of the Recognition Space. Families and tenants who are involved in ongoing conflict, have substance abuse problems, and/or family members with a disability or chronic illness are often experiencing high levels of stress. Watson, writing on the psychology of Palm Islanders, states that:

> [s]urvivor guilt, a victim mentality, anxiety disorders and depression are amongst the range of psychological disturbances that become masked by intoxication. (p.134)

Many of the interviewees caring for family members with a disability were regularly acting as agents and negotiating on their families' behalf. However, these tenants were at times also exhausted and consumed with their immediate family's needs, and did not always have the skills or energy to engage in conceptual or strategic discussions about how different organisations could work together. The same can be said for families in severe crowding, living with violence, caring for elderly parents or with many young children. For some tenants interviewed, each day was about survival: getting money for food and negotiating transport and child care.

The link between stress, coping and health is recognised but there is minimal literature on how it affects people's ability to undertake forward planning, problem-solving and work productively in the Recognition Space, particularly in Indigenous communities (Reser 1979; Antonovsky 1987; Burbank 2011). This is an area that requires further research, particularly in relation to housing.

6.4 Formative and sustaining

Formative and sustaining activities and behaviours in the Recognition Space are those that help to build relationships and move towards enabling people to work productively together. All too often in non-Indigenous and Indigenous interactions there is little recognition of Aboriginal world views, kinship systems or law. Equivalently, there can be a dismissing of corporate, western working styles as being imposing and 'rough' from an Aboriginal perspective. The key to bridging the chasm in ways of living and thinking between different cultural groups is education—getting each party to glimpse a view of the world from the other's perspective. This is where empathy and understanding can grow.

Formative and sustaining relationships were observed on Palm Island at a range of scales: between Indigenous organisations; between government agencies and Indigenous organisations; between staff; between families and individuals. However, all of these relationships were subject to change at short notice depending on local circumstances and funding cycles, as discussed above. The most sustaining relationships were anchored in family, consistency and shared history.

6.4.1 Time and consistency

In the context of housing, the DHPW staff have been working on the island for more than three years and Bwgcolman people feel familiar with the staff to some degree. They are no longer strangers, and as a result tenants will often give two perspectives on non-Indigenous staff, stating on the one hand that they should be doing more to communicate properly with tenants, and then on the other, acknowledging that they are 'nice people who mean well':

[During busy times] Now they are spending more time talking to people in the office. They need to do follow up visits to see how they are going; provide engagement visits, not just arrears visits; take someone from ICAN with them—to do budgeting, help people understand their [housing] responsibilities.[T15]

This is a good position for DHPW to be in and one they could build upon if the roles of the staff were changed slightly to include more direct home-based engagement with tenants. This would enable the staff, who already have a consistent history on the island, to further build their relationships with tenants and work more often in the Recognition Space.

In relation to home ownership on Palm Island, both the IBA and DATSIP Home Ownership Team have had consistent staff members who have been coming to the island to work on home ownership since 2011. This has led to growing understanding of home ownership and an acceptance of relationships with those teams.

6.4.2   Strength in formal structures

The Palm Island Community Company has been established with both non-Indigenous and Indigenous stakeholders and over 90 per cent of PICC's approximately 80 employees are local Palm Islanders. PICC has a composite board, which includes an independent chair, nominees of the state government, the local shire council, traditional owners and community shareholders. This creates a formal working environment where experienced people from Palm Island and other professional backgrounds come together to establish a successful community-based organisation (PICC 2012).

A similar scenario has been established in the Palm Island Shire Council, which is supported by non-Indigenous business advisors and mentors. These organisations have strengthened and grown in the past five years as a result of sustained and productive working relationships with external parties and the sound governance of a composite board.

6.4.3   Resourcefulness, speaking out and island living

Within the PIASC there are strong relationships between the staff to create a productive work space. This was observed this first-hand in the administrative area of the council where older staff members mentor younger ones, and there is a productive collegial feel among the staff. One council staff member noted that Palm Islanders are:

> … resourceful, help one another out, people are there for another, even if you are a stranger; people pay their respect, very tight knit.[T17]

Residents also provided interesting comments on what they thought the strengths of the people living on Palm Island were. The characteristics described by interviewees below have sustained the Bwgcolman people through the most trying of times:

> Outspokenness. I know my rights. Not scared to have a go at housing (or anyone else).[T10]

> People will listen to leaders—we have strong leadership, loyalty. Need leaders to work together and agree on what is best for the community.[T14]

Speaking out and following Indigenous leadership (rather than non-Indigenous) is a hallmark of Palm Island's history since the 1930s (Watson 2010). Palm Island has a history of strong activism, which at some times has culminated in protests. The most prominent in recent history surrounds the death in custody of Mr Doomadgee in 2004,

but before that in 1957 (wages) and in 1930 (Curry incident and trials). Palm Islanders have fought for their rights. The recognition of this activism, and the strength and endurance of Bwgcolman people is an important formative principle that needs to be acknowledged for effective working relationships to be developed. New government workers, program and staff changes often means there are non-Indigenous people attempting to work on Palm Island with limited knowledge of the history of the place or its people.

Living the island life is also a formative and sustaining characteristic of Palm Island. Many people love where they live and do not want to live on the mainland. They enjoy the view, the coastal location, the access to bush tucker and being among family and the resources of kinship. One resident commented:

> We are located on an island paradise. A lot of people who haven't been away don't realise how good it is here. People should travel and appreciate what we have.[T21]

6.5   Enablers

Palm Islanders identified many strategies for improving services in their community, but had difficulty listing many existing programs or activities that enabled good working relationships. When asked if they had seen organisations working together, particularly around housing, about 50 per cent of interviewees stated that they had never seen an example of this. The interviewees who could give examples either worked for council or another service provider and listed the following:

→ The new housing allocation process, where council works with DHPW and to some extent the community.

→ Home ownership, where council works with the state government and the community.

→ Family camps where the council works with the community.

→ Disaster management committee, getting ready for cyclones.

→ Christmas Club, where tenants use their rent account to save for holidays, white goods and Christmas.

The statements below came from council workers who are able to observe council and housing activities on a daily basis:

> With the new houses, young people getting them—good example of stakeholders working together; council and housing have come together on allocating new houses, disaster management committee, on homeownership initiative.[T10]

> The accommodation allocation process—council and housing will work with families to get housing if people are in crisis.[T17]

Two interviewees (one who worked and one who was on welfare) noted that Engagement Day (previously called Delegation Day) was a useful mechanism for sharing or escalating community concerns and enabled action on sometimes stagnant issues:

> Yes, delegation is a very useful mechanism. Ask for council help to get changes from housing; Council Delegation Day can help people work together.[T11]

Council hold a delegation day. This can help people get outcomes because council can influence activities; CSM just roaming around talking to people [sign language indicated this was not enough].[T14]

Many Palm Islanders have good cross-cultural communication skills and would be effective at teaching non-Indigenous people on the island how to communicate more effectively with locals. One interviewee stated:

Need to break it down to local language. Our people talking in community language and body language, they give people a vision to understand—whitefellas not good at it.[T12]

An important enabler on Palm Island is the housing office staff who are permanently working there, rather than anybody on a fly-in fly-out roster, as housing workers do in many other remote Indigenous communities in Queensland. The housing office has only been able to complete the quantity of work that they have because they work every day with Bwgcolman people on the island. There is no doubt that housing circumstances would be much worse if the housing staff were not full-time on Palm Island.

A number of interviewees mentioned the need for housing for young people and young couples. Many households had multi-generational families living together. Older tenants explained that young people do not learn to look after themselves if they stay living with their parents and grandparents for a long time. One tenant stated:

Need more programs for younger people in share houses to learn how to look after yourself and live with others; Youth housing model. Need to learn how to live independently.[T16]

When younger people are staying with their families it is also hard for them to apply for home ownership unless they are tenants on the rental tenancy agreement. Another tenant[T18] noted that when their daughter had been allocated a new house she was 'feeling proud and happy—feeling good' and now wants to find a job for herself.

There are many service providers on Palm Island working on a broad range of initiatives. Many of the services are led and staffed by Aboriginal people. However, there are only a few cross-service agency groups working together on particular community issues. PICC has working groups on family support issues, youth, and justice, and the RJCP has a working group on employment and training, but there is no working group on the island that currently includes housing. It would be useful to undertake an audit of all the functional working groups on Palm Island and identify where housing would best fit.

6.6   Strategies

Palm Islanders who were interviewed as part of this research had many opinions and ideas on how to improve housing and services generally on the island. This was very valuable and useful and indicates that Bwgcolman people are certainly willing to enter into the Recognition Space and offer ideas about ways of working together when the opportunity is provided.

6.6.1 Appropriate and effective communication

Many people commented on the need for improved communication on housing issues and rules between service providers, the council and tenants. Improved communication, and repairs and maintenance services were critical factors for most tenants. An example of tenant comments on communications is noted below:

They need to change, present the rules so it is easy to understand. Step-by-step approach. Need better tailored communication to tenants. Reword the questions, make it easy for people to understand.[T5]

In regard to communication styles, printed DHPW communications material takes a general approach. The One Social Housing system covers all public housing for people from many different cultural backgrounds. Communications material is created in plain English, but it is still difficult for many Bwgcolman people to read and understand, particularly those with low literacy. It is also written in a very generic way and does not answer any detailed questions about the rules around social housing, and what might be local contingencies on how the rules are administered.

The verbal communication from non-Indigenous staff to Indigenous tenants is also in plain English, but not tailored to Aboriginal styles of speaking or communicating. Tenants often said that they did not understand what was being said to them. DHPW has produced the calendar (featured in Chapter 2), to assist people in understanding the rules, but it is a pan-Indigenous calendar and Palm Islanders would be more likely to put up an image of their community or family members than a calendar with imagery of other Aboriginal people in other places.

The tenants' strategy about appropriate communication is a strong one:

Need to break it down to local language. Our people talking in community language and body language, they give people a vision to understand—whitefellas not good at it.[T12]

Go door-to-door and have a conservation with community people—break it down (the rules). Skills of people giving the message not well developed.[T5]

If more Indigenous people were involved or employed by housing to undertake engagement about housing policy and rules with tenants then there may be better understanding of the rules associated with tenancy. However, for most Palm Islanders, working for the housing office may not be their first choice. Being associated with housing rules and the conditionality which it applies, does not align well with Indigenous kinship obligations on Palm Island. How can you describe the importance of reporting nuisance to a Palm Island tenant when you cannot report your own family members for nuisance in your street because of kinship rules? This would constitute a 'shame job', particularly for younger people. However, there are potential solutions to these scenarios from other communities who have worked through them such as job sharing and training and support from management.

The home ownership program on Palm Island was very successful when it commenced because at the time the original Land Liaison Officer was a mature woman who was respected on the island and trained in mediation. She could speak about the rules around home ownership leasing without feeling embarrassed or ashamed of her own housing circumstances. She could also deftly handle difficult questions or irate applicants. Younger and less experienced officers would not have these skills, which are required in a housing role. The same officer noted that another strategy for solving housing issues was talking to elders in the community. She had used this practice with the Justice Group and had been successful in sorting through complex issues. She thought it would also work well for housing and had been applied in the past:

There was a time—if the neighbour disputes, elders would come for mediation. Role modelling in families—teaching young people how to look after their family and house.[T18]

6.6.2 Housing working group

A number of tenants commented on the lack of coordination between the housing office, the council, and repairs and maintenance teams, particularly around complaints and overdue work orders, and suggested forming a working group around housing issues:

> Trying to get a working group together. Not a big community meeting, small meeting and identify issues and then follow through on each of them. Has never received a response to any of her complaints.[T14]

> A lot of people blame the council. Maybe if council once every three months met with housing, and others met and had a working group and get referrals for other businesses to meet their needs. Needs to be accurate/open and transparent and same story for all parties.[T14]

There are other functioning working groups on Palm Island and there is no reason why a housing working group could not be easily established. However, its role would have to be determined and clear. This aspect was not explored in depth in the interviews, but the topics raised that appear in need of discussion include:

→ housing complaints

→ coordination of different housing services (tenancy, new house allocation, repairs and maintenance, transitional housing and upgrades)

→ coordination of disability modifications, and housing communications.

Any local housing working group should also interact with higher level interagency working groups that are based in Townsville or Brisbane, so that local issues are clearly heard by higher levels of government.

7   CONCLUSIONS

Since the initial proposal for this research there has been an evolution of research questions that have emerged with each stage of research and implementation. All of the research questions fall roughly into four headings:

1. problematising the effectiveness of conditionalities
2. hypothesising the recognition space
3. enabling the recognition space
4. policy uptake and sustainability.

For the Palm Island case study the findings for points 1 and 2 above are captured in the perspectives of tenants, Indigenous organisations and government workers, and the housing conditionality of life on Palm Island is evident in Chapters 3 to 5. The discussions of points 3 and 4 were less obvious for Palm Island, but can be teased out of an analysis of day-to-day interactions and opinions of different interviewees and are presented in Chapter 6.

There were a number of items highlighted that corrode good relations and housing outcomes on Palm Island, and the effectiveness of housing conditionality is dependent on these issues.

To work effectively at Palm Island, its cultural and historical context must be understood and acknowledged, including the inability of some people to connect in the recognition space as a result of its particular traumatic history (and their related personal history). This is often exacerbated by bureaucratic processes provided by government service provision that is disconnected from day-to-day life on Palm Island and Indigenous lifeworlds. This report highlights differences in communication styles between tenants and service providers as a significant issue, and that improved communication methods on tenancy and repairs and maintenance matters might help build a more productive recognition space.

Overworked staff who have limited time to understand and interlink with the service provision of other agencies also have an impact on housing conditionalities for both staff and tenants. Staff may not be able to meet their obligations in a manner perceived as appropriate by tenants and tenants then disengage or protest about the service being provided.

The key rental tenancy conditions of the One Social Housing system applied on Palm Island mainly relate to the rules of paying rent, providing notification on when a tenant will be away (and for how long), minimising nuisance to neighbours, sub-letting, reporting repairs and maintenance, and keeping a tidy yard.

The non-Indigenous constructs of housing policy and process applied through the One Social Housing system are in opposition to some Indigenous ways of working and living, which can be more immediate, spontaneous, and relational. Most tenants on Palm Island understand the priority to meet rental payments, report repairs and maintenance and keep the house and yard tidy, but the other conditions such as providing notification when away and sub-letting counters the mobility of Bwgcolman people and their maintenance of family and kin connections through sub-letting. These rules should be re-evaluated in the context of Indigenous mobility, kinship and reciprocity.

The author observed that the role of housing officers and other state government workers generally can be very process-oriented and bureaucratic (overly concerned with prescribed procedure). This is the plight of most government workers, whose

roles are heavily prescribed and controlled by policy, hierarchy and key performance indicators, risk management or ministerial decisions. In turn the bureaucracy creates a conditionality of the role and workscope of housing officers that plays out in their day-to-day interactions with tenants. They have some agency within their processes, as described in Chapter 4, but are tethered by reporting, workload and constant internal policy and staffing changes.

New policies and local office procedures could be developed that acknowledge mobility and sub-letting without it creating a cause for breach of rental conditions.

Another example of a bureaucratic process that creates its own conditionality in how it is implemented is Indigenous Home ownership. Home ownership on Indigenous lands is extremely complex and requires many parties to work together to achieve outcomes. It is progressing on Palm Island because of a prolonged commitment between state, federal and local governments to work together and provide appropriate resources (staff and funding) to its development. However, it is still hampered by regulatory processes in land tenure, housing management and finance.

The cost and effort that has been applied to home ownership on Palm Island should be acknowledged by government, and the model examined for its sustainability with a view of streamlining the process.

In Chapter 6, the research has highlighted a number of positive housing enablers and strategies on Palm Island. These have included consistency and longevity of housing staff which creates predictability and stability for tenants and residents; the housing Christmas club that has created a formal avenue for personal savings and benefit for tenants; new house constructions that provide a way to reduce crowding and increase control over one's environment, and home ownership which provides an alternative pathway to public housing for a portion of the population.

To make use of these existing conditions and pathways, participants are mostly working within the Recognition Space: they are willing to interact in a meaningful way in a cross-cultural environment to achieve a particular outcome. To achieve productive and meaningful outcomes for service providers and tenants on Palm Island face-to-face, respectful and non-bureaucratic communication is required. Elder mediation and conflict resolution could also be recognised and more effectively employed in housing negotiations.

To improve housing outcomes between service providers and Indigenous organisations and tenants on Palm Island, an ideology should be developed and promoted of caring for the overall wellbeing of all parties, of respecting and acknowledging each other as human beings, and of committing to work together. To further this idea it would be useful to undertake an audit of all the functional working groups on Palm Island to identify which groups work best and why, and to understand their aims, protocols and processes and determine where housing matters would best fit. There is no need to create another interagency working group if there is one on the Island in which housing is complementary and which is an existing model of working in the recognition space.

This paper has described and explored the conditions of housing and home ownership policy and practice for tenants on Palm Island between 2012–15. The study has illustrated the varying and diverse opinions and perspectives of housing providers, Indigenous council staff and housing tenants, and their interpretation of the rules associated with housing.

The impact of new Queensland Government housing policies, including the One Social Housing system and Indigenous home ownership, have had considerable

impacts on Bwgcolman people. For those tenants who are unemployed, live with (or care for others) with disabilities, or who are drug and alcohol affected, very little has changed. Those tenants who are employed, have engaged in the recognition space to get on the housing waiting list, spoken up or made use of the housing services (e.g. home ownership and new constructions), have benefited from the inclusion of the new home ownership policy and the new capital works programs on Palm Island.

In the new emerging era on Palm Island of development, positive change and 'progress', there needs to be serious consideration for a more collaborative working method between government service providers, Indigenous organisations and tenants; one in which tenant voices are heard and valued.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interviews conducted

Palm Island—Formal Interviews Completed

No.	Date	Location	Organisation (if appropriate)
1	26/2/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
2	24/2/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
3	25/2/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
4	24/2/14 26/02/2015	Palm Island	Qld DPHW
5	25/2/14	Palm Island	Qld DPHW
6	02/04/14	Palm Island	Resident and Land Liaison (home ownership) Officer for Council
7	03/04/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
8	03/04/14	Palm Island	Resident and Knowledge Centre Coordinator
9	29/04/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
10	14/05/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
11	14/05/14	Palm Island	Councillor/social housing tenant
12	14/05/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
13	14/05/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
14	15/05/14	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
15	05/08/2014	Palm Island	Resident/Private home owner
16	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
17	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
18	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
19	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
20	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
21	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
22	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Social Housing Tenant/Resident
23	25/02/2015	Palm Island	Aged Care Facility Manager

Stakeholders consulted (but not formally interviewed)

No	Date	Location	Organisation
1	30/08/13 18/11/13	Phone Cairns	Executive Director, Program Office, Qld DATSIP
2	12/11/13 24/02/14	Palm Island	Land Liaison Officer, Palm Island Shire Council
3	12/11/13	Palm Island	Mayor, Palm Island Shire Council
4	13/11/13 04/04/14	Palm Island	Resident, Human Services Manager, Palm Island
5	13/11/13	Palm Island	Resident
6	13/11/13	Palm Island	Councillor, Palm Island Shire Council
7	13/11/13	Palm Island	Resident
8	14/11/13	Palm Island	Resident, home owner
9	14/11/13	Palm Island	Resident
10	14/11/13	Palm Island	Resident
12	17/11/13	Cairns	Program Manager, Town Planning, Program Office
13	18/11/13 24/02/14 04/04/14 05/08/14	Phone Palm Island	CEO, Palm Island Council
14	27/11/13	Brisbane	DMPC (Indigenous Affairs)
15	27/11/13	Brisbane	IBA
16	27/11/13	Brisbane	Director of Policy and Strategy, Qld DHPW
17	25/02/14 05/08/14	Palm Island	Client Service Manager, Qld DHPW
18	03/04/14	Palm Island	Manager, DPM&C, Townsville
19	14/05/14 05/08/14	Palm Island	Housing Officer, Client Services, Qld DHPW
20	14/05/14 13/03/15	Cairns	Project Officer, HOT, DATSIP.
21	14/05/14	Cairns	Program Manager, HOT, DATSIP
22	25/02/15	Palm Island	Land Liaison Officer, Palm Island
23	13/03/15	Townsville	IBA, Loans and Engagement, Indigenous Home Ownership

Appendix 2: Generic research prompts

IMYRP generic interview

Current rules

1. What are the rules that you/tenants have to follow for your/their house? (Code)

(Paying rent; number of people who can live in the house; visitors and how long they can stay; rules about making noise; damage to the house; keeping the yard clean)

2. What is the intended purpose/objective of each of these rules? (Code)

(This is a difficult question and not easily answered by either housing officers or tenants).

3. Is each of the rules working? [elicit each one] (Stop/Continue/Change)

Difficulty of rules

4. Are these rules getting tighter or slacking off (weaker)? (Tighter/same/weaker)

5. What rules are the most difficult for you/tenants to meet? (Elicit)

6. Do your/tenants ways of living/practices run up against these housing rules? (Yes/No, then Which?)

7. Which of these practices are allowed in Aboriginal culture? (Elicit and tick)

OR What Aboriginal people think is OK, but government people do not.

8. Should the rules respect Aboriginal ways of living, or should Aboriginal ways of living change to meet the rules? (Respect/Change/Compromise)

Helping with rules

9. Are family members helping with meeting the housing rules? (Yes/No, then How?)

10. Are community leaders helping with meeting the housing rules? [and elicit identity of community leaders] (Yes/No, then How?)

11. Are frontline workers within housing organisations helping with meeting the housing rules? (Yes/No, then How?)

12. Are frontline workers with government housing departments (or their agents) helping with the meeting housing rules? (Yes/No, then How?)

13. What could community leaders/family/housing frontline workers do to make it easier to follow the rules? [select which agency is relevant to interviewees] (Code)

14. What is the housing department/agent trying to get to happen/achieve? (Record)

15. What is the Indigenous housing organisation trying to get to happen/achieve? (Record)

16. What is the housing tenant trying to get to happen/achieve? (Record)

Good practice

17. Can you describe situations where tenants, leaders, housing organisations and governments reached a shared understanding/working well together in running the rules? (Elicit and tick)

18. If you can get that, how can it be maintained (given the likely changes in policies and politics)? (Code)

19. What community strengths could help people to follow the rules? (Code)

20. What current/proposed programs could help tenants to follow the rules? (Elicit and tick)

21. Do you have any advice as to how good practices can be identified? [for agency/dept. ask for examples] (Code) N.B. This question is too difficult for most Housing officers.

OR: Do you have any good ideas to tell Housing—how they can do their job better and make your house life better? [for tenant]

AHURI Research Centres

AHURI Research Centre—Curtin University

AHURI Research Centre—RMIT University

AHURI Research Centre—Swinburne University of Technology

AHURI Research Centre—The University of Adelaide

AHURI Research Centre—The University of New South Wales

AHURI Research Centre—The University of Sydney

AHURI Research Centre—The University of Western Australia

AHURI Research Centre—University of Tasmania