# Report

# Housing conditionality, Indigenous lifeworlds and policy outcomes

# Tennant Creek case study

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for the

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# CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES IV							
LIS	LIST OF FIGURES IV						
ACRONYMSV							
EXE		/E SUMMARY	1				
1	INTR	ODUCTION	3				
1.1	Case	e study overview and aims	3				
1.2	Case	e study method	4				
2	CON	ITEXT AND BACKGROUND	6				
2.1	Hous	sing situation in Tennant Creek	6				
	2.1.1	Social housing	7				
	2.1.2	Transitional housing	9				
2.2	The	policy landscape in Tennant Creek	9				
2.3	Cond	ditionalities in practice	11				
	2.3.1	The NTDoH tenancy agreement	11				
	2.3.2	The Anyinginyi tenancy agreement	12				
	2.3.3	The BRADAAG residency agreement	12				
	2.3.4	The TTAP tenancy agreement	13				
3	TEN	ANT PERSPECTIVES	15				
3.1	Socia	al cultural capital and constraints	15				
	3.1.1	Aboriginal cultural networks	15				
3.2	Tena	ant agency	17				
	3.2.1	Working with the rules	17				
	3.2.2	Issues around alcohol	18				
	3.2.3	Barkly Work Camp prisoners					
3.3		nomic development potential					
3.4	Towa	ards government and Indigenous and community organisations	22				
4	GOV	ERNMENT PERSPECTIVES	25				
4.1	Cons	straints in implementing policy	25				
	4.1.1	Lack of appropriate, affordable housing	25				
	4.1.2	Tenant cultural beliefs and practices	25				
	4.1.3	Community engagement	27				
4.2	•	ncy of frontline workers					
4.3	Towa	ards tenants and Indigenous and community organisations	30				
5	INDI	GENOUS ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVES	32				
5.1	Cons	straints in organisational capacity	32				
5.2	•	ncy of frontline workers					
5.3		ards tenants and government					
6		OGNITION SPACE					
6.1		oding and dissolving					
6.2	Form	native and sustaining					

6.3	Enablers	38
6.4	Strategies	40
6.5	Key summary points from case study	41
7	CONCLUSIONS	43
REFE	ERENCES	44
APPE	ENDICES	46
Арре	ndix 1: IMYRP generic questionnaire	46
Appe	ndix 2: Anyinginyi Aboriginal Staff Housing Program residential tenancy agreement	48
Арре	ndix 3: BRADAAG agreement	54
Appe	ndix 4: Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project tenancy agreement	57
Appe	ndix 5: NTDoH housing rules	60

# LIST OF TABLES

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of the Barkly Shire and the service centre of Tennant Creek	3
Figure 2: Movements of Aboriginal people from the Barkly Region in Tennant Creek showing flows between rental housing and transitional housing at the commencement of the IMYRP Project in 2012	e
Figure 3: Social housing in Tennant Creek managed by NTDoH14	4
Figure 4: Restricted alcohol sign posted near front door of a NTDoH property1	8
Figure 5: Barkly Work Camp20	0
Figure 6: Views around Tennant Creek	1

# ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics			
AERC	Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland			
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited			
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour			
ASCC	Alice Springs Correctional Centre			
BRADAAG	Barkly Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group Inc.			
BRAG	Barkly Regional Accommodation Group			
BWC	Barkly Work Camp			
CERP	Council of Elders and Respected Persons			
COAG	Council of Australian Governments			
CEO	Chief Executive Officer			
CHOs	Community Housing Organisations			
CLAs	Community Living Areas (formerly town camps)			
FV	Family Violence			
HACC	Home and Community Care			
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia			
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre			
ICLO	Indigenous Client Liaison Officer (now called Housing Officer)			
IMYRP	Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project			
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement			
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness			
NPARIH	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing			
NT	Northern Territory			
NTDoH	Northern Territory Department of Housing			
NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response			
PHSS	Public Housing Safety Strategy			
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act			
SIHIP	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program			
TCWR	Tennant Creek Women's Refuge			
ТО	Traditional Owner			
TSP	Tenancies Sustainability Program			
ΤΤΑΡ	Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project			

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The majority of Indigenous people in Tennant Creek are social housing tenants and their housing choices have been limited by the lack of sufficient, affordable rental properties in this small, remote town. Despite being the major provider of social housing, the Northern Territory (NT) Government has not built a new house in Tennant Creek for nearly 30 years and so current stock is ageing and often not adequately maintained. During our investigations, waiting times for social housing in Tennant Creek ranged from five to eight years depending on the size of the house. This housing crisis is compounded by other factors of Indigenous disadvantage which characterise communities in the region.

Through specific policies designed primarily to protect the housing stock so that they can continue to provide services at current levels, the NT Department of Housing has demonstrated a lack of commitment regarding the futures of Indigenous people in Tennant Creek. On the other hand, some local organisations have initiated new pathways for Indigenous tenants to achieve better housing outcomes. The Anyinyinyi Health staff housing program has been developed by Indigenous staff and the Board to provide supported tenancies for employees. The program has become a 'game changer' for Indigenous people who are constantly challenged to make responsible choices in a difficult social environment. With similar goals, the program for prisoners from the Barkly Work Camp has been the result of an innovative and future-oriented approach to change the lives of young men who have experienced serious setbacks to achieving training, employment and tenancies. The success of these programs has relied on committed collaboration of many stakeholders in the Tennant Creek community, including businesses and service providers.

This case study has documented the perspectives of tenants, government employees including frontline workers and managers and also employees of Indigenous and community organisations involved in Indigenous social housing in Tennant Creek. From this information it was possible to define a recognition space in which the values, understandings and practices of each group may inform more effective policies and programs to deliver housing to Indigenous tenants.

#### Summary of findings

Tenant perspectives:

- → Aboriginal cultural networks based on kin and country as well as historical connections motivate behaviour that often conflicts with tenancy rules.
- → Alcohol and associated anti-social behaviour (ASB) persists as a destructive force against housing.
- → Dimensions of Indigenous disadvantage including low levels of education and employment have significant negative impact on achieving and sustaining tenancies.
- → Tenants' experiences of social housing depended on the type of conditionality and level of enforcement followed by the tenancy managers.

Government perspectives:

- → Lack of funding for maintenance and repair of ageing stock constrained NTDoH's approach to the administration of social housing tenancies.
- → Most government employees believed that Aboriginal cultural practices should be separate from the rules of tenancy and that the rules should not change.

- → Experienced and long-term local frontline workers were willing to compromise with individual tenants regarding the rules.
- → Staff welcomed further inter-agency engagement to support vulnerable tenants.

Indigenous and community organisation perspectives:

- → Anyinginyi Health, the only Indigenous organisation that participated in the study, demonstrated the importance of special tenancy programs for Indigenous people in Tennant Creek.
- → The demise of the Council of Elders and Respected Persons (CERP) and the reduced role of Julalikari in tenancy management have destabilised the effectiveness of Indigenous governance in Tennant Creek.
- → The Barkly Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group Inc. (BRADAAG), which focused on teaching and reinforcing mainstream behavioural norms around living in houses, saw a need for strong rules and clear conditionality.
- → The Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project (TTAP) program, which linked accommodation and training, struggled to enforce rules for Indigenous clients with high needs because of the negative social pressures on the clients and the lack of staff and other funding.
- → All workers in community organisations were critical of the lack of government funding for social housing in Tennant Creek.

#### Enhancing the recognition space

From the responses to our investigations, it appeared that tenants, government employees and also representatives of Indigenous and community organisations held similar ideas about the need for secure, affordable housing in Tennant Creek. Tenants were often frustrated by their housing, particularly inadequate maintenance, which they have been experiencing for a long time. Views from government, however, were focused on the need for certain services to reduce the load on the government. With some awareness of Aboriginal cultural responsibilities and practices, the NTDoH employees saw the need to enforce the tenancy rules generally, but also to change the behaviour of the minority who were engaged in anti-social behaviour. Other agencies were convinced that they had to find solutions outside NTDoH for long-term improvements to housing for Indigenous tenants in the town.

The evidence from this case study suggests that inter-agency cooperation has much potential to enhance services for the most disadvantaged tenants. A primary concern is the level of alcohol abuse and family violence in Tennant Creek which results in high human costs. Various agencies have had opportunities to collaborate to reduce the problem, but there are many issues involved. The strong, local Indigenous persons within organisations are ideally placed to ensure better communication between groups, but they need greater support.

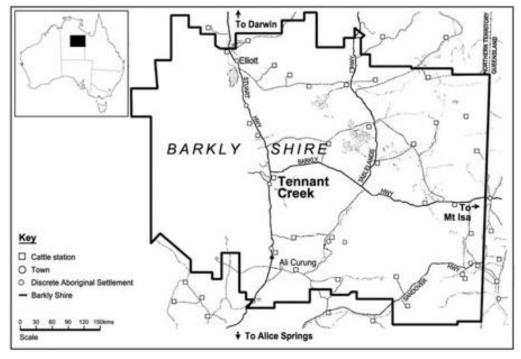
Negative impacts of colonial history in Australia and in the Barkly Region can be further addressed by greater commitments from all levels of government towards closing the gap that characterises Indigenous disadvantage such as in achieving positive housing outcomes.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Case study overview and aims

The Tennant Creek case study report focuses on the housing conditionality, lifeworlds and policy outcomes for Indigenous social housing tenants in a remote town in the Northern Territory. Together with four other case studies including Mt Isa, Logan and Palm Island in Queensland and the Goldfields region of Western Australia, this report contributes to the diversity of sites in the AHURI-funded Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project (IMYRP).

Tennant Creek is a small regional town located just south of the intersection of two major highways where the Stuart Highway crosses the continent from Darwin to Adelaide and the Barkly Highway extends from this point eastwards to Mt Isa. The town is the service centre for a population of 5722 who live in small towns, cattle stations and Aboriginal settlements spread throughout the vast Barkly Shire (ABS 2013b). The closest towns to Tennant Creek are Elliot which is 252 kilometres to the north and Alice Springs 507 kilometres to the south.





Source: AERC archives

At the 2011 Census, Tennant Creek recorded a total population of 3061 people including an Indigenous population of 1592 which is 52.0 per cent of the total population (ABS 2013c). The Traditional Owners in the region are the Warumungu speaking people, and many people today identify as Warumungu. Through colonisation and resettlement, people from other groups, including Warlpiri and Alyawarr, have also moved into Tennant Creek. The area around Tennant Creek began to be settled after a relay station on the Overland Telegraph line was established in 1875, just to the north of today's town site. Since that time, mining and pastoral industries have developed, accounting for the main economic activities in the region. Public administration and the service sector, however, provide most employment in Tennant Creek. Although Tennant Creek is not highly disadvantaged across the whole population, factors of disadvantage impact disproportionately on the Indigenous population as demonstrated by the following statistics. Employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is less than 37 per cent but over 90 per cent for the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2013a); and, approximately 48 per cent of Indigenous households in Tennant Creek reside in social (state and community) housing (ABS 2012).

The main managers of social housing tenancies in Tennant Creek were the Northern Territory Department of Housing (NTDoH) and the Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation (Julalikari). Managers of transitional accommodation included the Barkly Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group Inc (BRADAAG) and the Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation (Anyinginyi), both having developed their roles over the last few decades. In November 2012, the Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project (TTAP) began operations, providing accommodation and employment/training opportunities for Indigenous people in housing crisis. Other specialised service providers included the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge (TCWR) and also the emergency relief office of CatholicCare (the latter not consulted for this study). Located 2 kilometres east of Tennant Creek, the Barkly Work Camp (BWC) is a lowsecurity correctional work camp which offered various programs for offenders, including work placement and transitional/supported housing. As this context suggests, Tennant Creek offered a unique set of characteristics for examining the dynamics of Indigenous transitional accommodation and tenancies, which have been relatively under-researched.

As for the other IMYRP case studies, the primary aims of the Tennant Creek case study were to explore the perspectives of Indigenous social housing tenants, government and Indigenous organisations in relation to conditionalities, in order to identify good practice and policy principles that promote positive housing outcomes. At an analytical level, the study also aimed to contribute a better understanding of the recognition space in which these perspectives coexisted.

Four overarching research questions were set out to guide the IMYRP case studies. 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, and 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?

#### **1.2 Case study method**

Preliminary investigations were underway in Tennant Creek from 2012 as the authors were already in contact with several stakeholders and some tenants, for related housing and homelessness research. The current study was carried out through several visits to Tennant Creek over the following 18 months. Initial discussions occurred with a wide range of people in state and local government and local service

providers, such as the Regional Executive Director of NTDoH, the Mayor of the Barkly Shire Council, the CEO of Julalikari and the Manager of the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge (TCWR) and the Manager of the Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC). Following the approved IMYRP ethical protocol, key informants in the social housing sector were selected for in-depth interviews, including managers and/or employees and tenants of NTDoH, BWC, BRADAAG, Anyinginyi and TTAP.

Social housing tenants were consulted on the advice of the key informants and also based on the researchers' established relationships with members of the Indigenous community. All of the tenants approached were interested in participating in housing-related discussions. Meetings and interviews with transitional accommodation clients at BRADAAG were facilitated by management, similarly for Anyinginyi and TTAP. The pre-release and post-release prisoners from the BWC were contacted at their workplaces following initial liaison with the NT Department of Correctional Services in Darwin and later with the extended cooperation of the local manager of the BWC.

In-depth interviews were undertaken with 33 people and each received a payment of \$30. Most NTDoH tenants were interviewed in their homes, whereas government and organisation staff were interviewed at their workplace. The interviews with tenants/clients (26) and tenancy managers (7) followed the customised IMYRP survey instrument comprising 21 questions (Appendix 1). Other participants were involved in semi-structured interviews based on the prompts from the IMYRP questionnaire. In accordance with the ethical protocol, interviewees gave their written consent to be involved in the research, but have not been identified in this report. Each interviewee quoted herein has been given a code (e.g. TC\_23) for de-identification purposes and the quotations have been coded accordingly.

A broad cross-section of Indigenous tenants/clients was interviewed, including 14 men and 12 women. Most NTDoH tenants lived in the town in DoH housing and transitional accommodation and only a few in the Community Living Areas (CLAs) (the former town camps). Tenants ranged in age from 20 to over 70 years of age with the majority being under 50 years old. Most tenants had traditional connections to the local area and/or the Barkly Region where they had lived for most of their lives. Most also indicated that they intended to remain in the region.

The interviewees from the three participant groups, including social housing tenants, government and Indigenous and community organisations, were chosen to represent as much as possible the range of views in Tennant Creek. It was regrettable that the Indigenous housing organisation, Julalikari, was not able to participate beyond preliminary discussions. Despite its increasingly reduced role in tenancy management, Julalikari staff would have been able to provide valuable historical perspectives on the changes that have occurred since, and the effects of this on a long-standing local Indigenous service provider. During the longitudinal course of the project (2012–15) and also prior to that time, there was a consistent and long-running set of political tensions of local and regional dimensions operating for and between Aboriginal organisations in Tennant Creek which influenced their decision-making processes (a governance circumstance not uncommon in many regional centres where there are multiple resourced Indigenous organisations). One of the impacts of these tensions was that the relevant organisation of Julalikari and also certain Indigenous people were unable to incorporate the potential demands of our research into their working priorities.

# 2 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

As the traditional land owners, the Warumungu Aboriginal people have been a continuing presence in the settlement and housing history of Tennant Creek, despite being dispossessed of their lands from the late 1800s. This dispossession has been marked by conflict between the settlers and the traditional owners which has only recently had partial resolution in the form of the granting of rights to some land through the land rights and native title processes. Following the report by the Land Commissioner, Justice Maurice (Warumungu Land Claim 1991), the first land was handed back soon after. Considerable dissension still exists among Aboriginal groups in Tennant Creek and between Aboriginal groups and governments over rights and the provision of services.

With the early settlement by miners and pastoralists, Aboriginal people in the Tennant Creek region were directed to live on government reserves and their access to the town was very limited and controlled. In the 1950s they were moved to the government settlement of Warrabri (along with other tribal groups). but many used to come from Warrabri and camp for periods outside Tennant Creek in make-shift shelters. In the 1960s, an area of land was gazetted for people who wanted to work in the town (Brady 1988). Over the years more camps were established, either officially on special purpose leases or informally, where people could establish them on the outskirts of town. Aboriginal groups living on cattle stations to the north of Tennant Creek camped on the northern side of the town whereas the people from Warrabri camped on the southern and eastern side. These town camps have become the Community Living Areas (CLAs) of today.

The first housing for Aboriginal people was built in the 1970s through the Warumungu Pabulu Housing Association and soon after a few government rental properties were designated for Aboriginal people. At the same time, Warumungu people were moving to outstation communities in the Barkly Region where housing was also being planned and built. In this period Aboriginal people were establishing other local organisations to influence the kind of services for Indigenous people in the region. While the Warumungu Pabulu Housing Association no longer exists, there is a dynamic and changing network of other local organisations and local Aboriginal people working in this field who are very concerned about the lack of housing and services in the town.

#### 2.1 Housing situation in Tennant Creek

At the time of this research, the residential housing market in Tennant Creek was characterised by high demand for relatively few properties, particularly for more affordable private rental housing. A local real estate agency staff member stated that there was a total of about 70 houses and 100 units rented by agents in the town, but also many other properties were managed by private owners themselves. A senior employee of that agency said that '[W]e have six properties available today but they will go in the next two or three hours' (personal communication Andrews Real Estate employee, 28 October 2014), demonstrating the pressure in the private rental sector. Weekly rents ranged from \$400-\$600 for a three-bedroom house and \$250-\$400 per week for a one-bedroom unit.

It is understandable that many of these properties were beyond the reach of most Indigenous people in Tennant Creek whose incomes derive from social welfare payments. Furthermore, Aboriginal people are unlikely to apply because they cannot compete successfully as they generally do not have strong rental histories nor sufficient money for the bond. Under Newstart, for example, the fortnightly payment for a single person with no children is \$516.20 (equivalent to \$258.10/week).

	Home owners/mortgage	Renters		
		Total renters	% Social housing renters	
NT	36.3%*	49.1% <sup>+</sup>	30.0%++	
Tennant Creek	24.6%*	$56.9\%^{+}$	42% <sup>#</sup>	
Indigenous in TC*	18.9%	70.6%	68% <sup>1</sup>	

Table 1: Housing tenure in the NT compared to Tennant Creek for Indigenous and non-Indigenous households

Source: \* ABS 2011, Census of population and housing; <sup>+</sup> ABS 2011, QuickStats: Tennant Creek; <sup>#</sup> ABS 2011, Census of population and housing: Community profiles: Tennant Creek; <sup>++</sup> ABS 2011, Census of population and housing: Community profiles: Northern Territory.

#### 2.1.1 Social housing

With no new government housing built for almost 30 years, it is easily understandable that social housing properties in Tennant Creek are old and degraded. Just as for private rentals, the vacancy rate is close to zero. In contrast to the cost of private rental properties, however, rent for social housing is calculated as not greater than 25 per cent of household income so it is more affordable for low-income earners. As Table 1 above illustrates, just over 70 per cent of the total number of rental households in Tennant Creek are Indigenous and 68 per cent of Indigenous renters are social housing tenants. Most social housing in Tennant Creek is in the town, apart from the former community housing properties located in the CLAs (town camps). Since 2010, rents for social housing in the CLAs have been brought into line with other public housing which is managed by NTDoH. The CLA houses were recently refurbished under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) causing some resentment from social housing tenants in the town where housing was not covered by this funding structure (see also Section 2.2).

The role of Indigenous organisations as housing managers has been reducing as government has taken over responsibility for Indigenous community housing. During the time of the study, Julalikari continued to manage the CLA housing under the current agreement with NTDoH. However, in 2014 NTDoH took over the Julalikari-managed housing in the town. As NTDoH catered mostly for low-income earners in Tennant Creek, the majority of their tenants are Indigenous:

The NTDoH is the main provider of social housing in Tennant Creek and over 90 per cent of their clients are Indigenous—higher than any other town in the NT, including Katherine.<sup>TC\_4</sup>

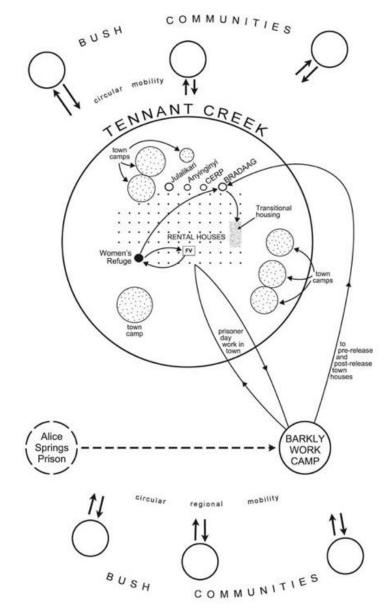
For the NT generally, it is well-known that 'recent years ... have been marked by a shortfall in crisis accommodation, increased public housing waiting lists, ageing public housing and an overall reduction in stock numbers, along with a commensurate reduction in housing affordability' (NT Shelter 2014). A similar situation has existed in Tennant Creek for some time. The lack of available affordable housing has resulted in severe crowding (e.g. up to 25 people in a three-bedroom house). Consequently some tenants have inappropriate housing; for example, for the aged and also people with disabilities needing special features and fittings. Furthermore, people from the Barkly Region visit Tennant Creek as the regional service centre for a range of reasons and often stay with relatives (see Figure 2 below). The cycling of visitors

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This is likely a conservative estimate as the ABS lists other rental categories for which the tenure and landlord types are unknown.

creates extra wear on housing infrastructure, but also can cause psychological stress for the tenants and visitors. Crowding and alcohol (substance) abuse have contributed to family violence (FV) and significant damage to housing has also resulted from related behaviours. Human costs of these conditions have been exacerbated at times because crisis accommodation has not been able to meet the demand, such as at the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge (Memmott et al. 2013).

Over recent years, waiting lists for social housing in Tennant Creek have been increasing. As of December 2005, the waiting time for a three-bedroom house was 27 months (NT Shelter 2015), and as of 31 March 2015, the waiting time for the same sized house was 98 months, that is over eight years (NTDoH 2015b), reflecting the ongoing and deepening problem. There is a system of Priority Housing, however, whereby NTDoH (n.d.) will house people with special circumstances within a shorter timeframe, but once again the demand exceeds the number of houses available. Overall it is clear that there was insufficient housing for demand.

Figure 2: Movements of Aboriginal people from the Barkly Region in Tennant Creek, showing flows between rental housing and transitional housing at the commencement of the IMYRP Project in 2012



#### 2.1.2 Transitional housing

For the purposes of this case study, transitional housing refers to accommodation with supporting programs aimed to build capacity of clients in readiness for mainstream tenancies. Governments have funded a number of managed, supported and transitional accommodation in various locations in the NT, but the NTDoH website does not list any places in Tennant Creek. Instead community and Indigenous organisations offer specific programs that may receive some government funding, but also rely on other sources. This study focused on the following three main sites of transitional housing for Indigenous people in Tennant Creek:

- → Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation is a multi-focused service organisation providing health care services to the people of Tennant Creek and the Barkly Region using income from Medicare for medical services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. The Anyinginyi Board, together with their employees, developed a staff transitional housing program in response to the lack of suitable affordable housing. There was also a recognised need for staff to be supported in their tenancy so that they could sustain employment. It is proposed that staff who continue to be re-employed will be able to contract to own their home. Since the program began in 2013, seven Indigenous staff members have successfully taken-up Anyinginyi houses in the town, with their tenancies managed according to a customised agreement. The program does not receive any specific government funding.
- → Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group (BRADAAG) operated three kinds of transitional accommodation: a 20-bed residential rehabilitation facility for men and women, a house for post-release male prisoners (maximum of six) from the Barkly Work Camp and 13 one- and two-bedroom units. BRADAAG conducts a range of programs including training and support around life skills as well as appropriate behaviour for mainstream tenancies. As prospective social housing tenants and home owners, these clients highlighted a critical area of housing need in the town. A pre-release prisoner program also operated through which BRADAAG, in association with the BWC, provided accommodation and prisoner support, building capacity for mainstream tenancy and employment. We have been recently informed that both of the residential prisoner programs were curtailed at the end of 2014, following a directive from the NT Department of Correctional Services.
- → Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project (TTAP) began in November 2012 and operated to capacity most of the time until the last few months of 2015. The project was founded by two local businesses, the Eldorado Motor Inn and Karen Sheldon Catering. In partnership, they developed programs around transitional accommodation and education/training in work, with the support of Anyinginyi staff who conducted life skills programs for tenants residing there. The circumstances motivating the project were the severe lack of safe and affordable housing as well as the educational and employment disadvantages of Indigenous young people in Tennant Creek. While in operation, the centre was able to accommodate about 100 people in 30 ensuited rooms. In line with TTAP aims, the Eldorado Motor Inn had employed pre-release prisoners as laundry workers and in-house cleaners to help them build a successful employment history.

#### 2.2 The policy landscape in Tennant Creek

A most significant change to policy in the NT over the last decade came in 2007 with the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) which brought a heightened level of conditionality within the policy landscape of Indigenous affairs. Various measures were imposed on most residents of discrete Aboriginal communities, including income management which quarantined a certain percentage of welfare payments for essential spending, particularly on food and housing. Consistent with this policy direction, Australian governments enabled the leasing of Indigenous community land by government with the intention of improving the state of public housing. The NT Government also implemented a new form of local government based on shires with regional centres, such as Tennant Creek in the Barkly Shire.

Since 2007, the main 'policy drivers' have been the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). In 2008, following on with the NTER, the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) moved management of remote Indigenous housing away from the Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) to the NT Government. In Tennant Creek, the NTDoH took over the public housing in the Community Living Areas (CLAs), formerly town camps, but no new housing has been built on CLAs or on communities outside Tennant Creek under these policies. By 2009 under NPARIH, remote social housing in the CLAs in Tennant Creek (78 properties) was prioritised for refurbishment and this has since been completed. Three new houses were also planned, but none were built. Furthermore, as mainstream public housing in the town was not included under NPARIH, major refurbishment and maintenance has not been carried out there.

Throughout this period, the frontline workers as well as regional and state managers of NTDoH have had concerns about the state of the housing, their limited funds and the extent to which tenant behaviour has contributed to property damage. In 2012, the NTDoH (2012) introduced the Public Housing Safety Strategy (PHSS) in which the Three Strikes Policy was a key component. This policy was aimed to improve management of antisocial behaviour (ASB) with respect to public housing tenancies. Levels of tenant infringement were linked to three categories of behaviour, namely minor (e.g. excessive loud noise), moderate (e.g. threatening behaviour) or severe (e.g. assault) and corresponding breaches against the *Residential Tenancies Act* 1999 (*NT*). Under certain conditions, a breach becomes a 'strike' and eviction may follow depending on the severity and number of breaches—after three strikes, eviction is certain.

New alcohol restrictions also came into force under the PHSS and were significant for tenants. Signs could be posted on the premises declaring it an alcohol-restricted zone, either at the request of the tenant or the NTDoH on behalf of the tenant, following the advice of police<sup>2</sup>. The system was administered by the NT Licensing Commission and was a strategy to assist tenants in the control of alcohol-fuelled ASB in order to reduce neighbour complaints and damage to property. Also, liquor outlets were patrolled by police to identify where customers were intending to drink their take-away alcohol. As the CLAs were 'dry', the customers needed to nominate a town address, putting added burden on those tenants.

Current policy in the NT dictates that social housing is allocated on the basis of greatest need which means that the tenants are those with the lowest incomes and so their rents are also very low. In Tennant Creek, where there is a high concentration of disadvantaged tenants, there is relatively little money available from rents for maintenance. Major maintenance is done at change of tenancy with only essential work being carried out when requested. Although the NTDOH has not built a new house in Tennant Creek since 1987, managers were aware that:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> NTDoH provided information for tenants on Alcohol Restricted Premises on their website <a href="http://www.housing.nt.gov.au/public\_housing/safety\_strategy/alcohol\_restricted\_premises">http://www.housing.nt.gov.au/public\_housing/safety\_strategy/alcohol\_restricted\_premises</a>.

In Tennant Creek, there are more households than houses ... Also, as in other parts of NT, many people are presenting with multiple and complex issues. The department has seen a dramatic increase in this category of tenant in the last year or so and the majority were Indigenous clients (NTDoH employee, Darwin).

This view has been confirmed for Tennant Creek in other research (e.g. Memmott et al. 2013).

Through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) 2014–15, the NTDoH has committed to foster inter-agency engagement to tap into the intensive case management support that is provided through the NGO sector. For example, in Tennant Creek, the regional office has undertaken collaboration with Julalikari to provide a Tenancy Sustainability Program which was mandated by government for tenants having difficulties (NTDoH 2011). If the NPAH is not continued and funding ceases then there will be an impact on local service providers who are currently working to capacity.

#### 2.3 Conditionalities in practice

Conditionalities are implemented through a range of specific tenancy agreements which provide the contractual basis of the relationship between tenants and providers. For private rentals, the NT Residential Tenancies Act tenancy agreement form (eight pages) requires two pages of details about the tenant, the property, the payment commitments of the tenants and other rules, such as pet approval. The remaining six pages (44 sections, each with multiple parts) set out the terms of the agreement, including rights and responsibilities and rules about subletting. Although the standard form is used in private rental agreements, the NTDoH and other social housing providers have developed their own forms. NTDoH and Julalikari use the same tenancy agreement form customised by the NTDoH. Anyinginyi, BRADAAG and TTAP use an adaptation of the standard Residential Tenancy Agreement form. As such, all agreements have a core set of similar rules, namely: pay the rent and bond; maintain the house; and respect neighbours. It is evident from the responses that the large majority of interviewees understood that these rules were the basic conditions of their tenancy. The following discussion demonstrates the relevance of the different agreements and the types of conditionality practised by NTDoH (and Julalikari), Anyinginyi, BRADAAG and TTAP.

#### 2.3.1 The NTDoH tenancy agreement

In the tenancy agreement with the NTDoH, the social housing tenant signs a very short agreement that names the landlord, that is the Chief Executive Officer (Housing), the tenant, the term or period of lease and the weekly rent payable. This is accompanied by a long list or Schedule of Common Provisions relating to the tenancy agreement. It is highly unlikely that any tenant has read these conditions (given the levels of literacy in the Indigenous community) but instead tenants have most probably relied on the Housing Officer's interpretation of them at the time of signing.

In the first instance, the rules are enforced by NTDoH through regular inspections (three or four per year) and also through inspections in response to a complaint either by the tenant or by another person about behaviour at the property or about the property itself. A system of breach notices acts as warning to tenants and also 'strikes' can be recorded against the tenant for non-compliance with the rules, as set out in the agreement. In Tennant Creek, three Housing Officers managed the properties in the town. To supplement the official enforcement approach, the unit complexes with (about 20 tenancies) were visited almost daily by one officer. The idea was that

getting to know the clients and at the same time informing them of their rights and responsibilities might bring better relations and encourage responsible behaviour some of the units were in areas where drinkers congregate on a nightly basis. Other properties were visited at the time of regular inspections and on request. NTDoH has limited funds and Tennant Creek has had a history of damage to housing due to ASB, so the regional office has sought to reduce maintenance and damage costs as much as possible with a local approach for some tenants.

#### 2.3.2 The Anyinginyi tenancy agreement

Based on the notion that Indigenous people have a right to secure, safe, sustainable tenancies, Anyinginyi has developed an Aboriginal Staff Housing Program. There are three customised forms involved in the tenancy: a tenancy agreement, a property condition report and a household and yard checklist (Appendix 2). The tenancy agreement is based on the RTA standard form but includes many other specific clauses. Most of the rules relate to paying the rent, visitors, and maintaining the property, and the tenant is required to meet with the tenancy manager once per month.

The rules have been designed to reinforce the main conditions of the tenancies which are as follows:

- → Houses are available only for Aboriginal staff on relatively low wages.
- → Anyinginyi staff are eligible after one year in their job and for the term of their employment (currently only two-year contracts).
- → If one loses their job then they lose their house; and conversely, if they lose their tenancy, then they cannot continue employment with Anyiningyi.

There are some 'strong' rules in the agreement which were negotiated by staff and ratified by the Anyinginyi Board, such as maximum stay of 48 hours for visitors, where 'visitor' is defined as a member of the tenant's immediate or direct family. Initially this was the most controversial issue for staff/tenants and subsequently has been highly relevant to the recent (first) eviction. It should also be noted that an eviction is not necessarily a barrier to re-employment by Anyinginyi. Furthermore, Anyinginyi planned to offer home ownership for responsible tenants as the next phase of the program.

#### 2.3.3 The BRADAAG residency agreement

BRADAAG has specific agreements (see Appendix 3) for the residential rehabilitation clients and for the post-release prisoners in the Transitional Housing Unit Complex and for clients (including staff) at BRADAAG units. The residential clients have to agree to a range of specific terms (13 clauses) for their behaviour and rehabilitation treatment specifically relating to alcohol use and related medical testing. The agreement for post-release prisoners is much longer (29 clauses) but with less focus on alcohol use. It does, however, contain clear behavioural directives regarding alcohol and other potential actions, such as immediate eviction for receiving an intoxicated visitor.

The agreement signed by the rehabilitation clients 'does not form a lease or rental agreement and grants no rights of tenancy with BRADAAG', as stated on page 5 of the Residency Agreement. The consequences for any breaches of the agreement are detailed, including fines, termination of the agreement and eviction. Rent payments are auto-deducted from welfare payments through Centrelink.

For the post-release prisoner program (no longer operating), clients entered a Resident Agreement with BRADAAG to reside in a particular house in the complex.

There were only six beds in the 'prisoner house' (two to three each for pre- and postrelease) and depending on conditions of their parole, prisoners had the opportunity to go into transitional accommodation at BRADAAG. Prisoners who had been admitted to the post-release program had to be engaged in voluntary or paid work in the town. Most of the Barkly Work Camp prisoner population, which had grown to about 75 since the camp opened in April 2011, worked in Tennant Creek during the day for various agencies and NGOs, carrying out voluntary work. In a small number of cases where they performed well, they were paid a salary. The aim of the program was to normalise the prisoners into daily work routines and then eventually into rental housing via BRADAAG.

#### 2.3.4 The TTAP tenancy agreement

The tenancy model operating at TTAP centred around the tenants' commitment to training and/or employment for the tenant and school attendance for children.

Rent was calculated according to social housing rents and payments made mostly by automated debit through Centrelink. The rent included the room and its ensuite bathroom as well as furniture including beds and linen, and a microwave oven. Breakfasts for school-aged children were provided free-of-charge, followed by transport to school. Other food was available for reduced rates at the partner business (Red Rooster) across the road.

For the tenancy agreement, TTAP used a modified version of the RTA agreement with 22 clauses, each applied more specifically to the TTAP, such as clause (k) 'All schoolaged children must be showered, fed and be ready for the school bus at 7:45 am every morning ...'; (m) 'There is to be no illegal conduct or nuisance on the premises, including humbugging or stealing. The result will be an eviction after three warnings' and, (u) 'Visiting hours are strictly between 9am–7:30pm'.

The compulsory induction meeting between tenant and management included specific notification of the 'Alcohol and violence no tolerance expectations'. There was also a Personal Agreement component of the tenancy agreement aimed to draw commitments regarding participation in the TTAP community meetings as well as direct actions for cleaning rooms, linen and also the supervision of children.

Management provided the support, which they believed would facilitate good tenancy behaviour, cleaning equipment, and payment plans if in difficulty with rent. The number and nature of the rules in the TTAP tenancy agreement demonstrated a prescriptive or normalising model of conditionality. In practice, the model had many strengths, but its weaknesses were definitive. Lack of resources made it impossible to enforce the rules and administer the model as management intended. Also the situation was exacerbated by the influences of visitors whose behaviour often undermined the tenants' abilities to follow the rules. Further details of the program's performance are contained in the following discussions on tenant, government and other organisational perspectives.

Figure 3: Social housing in Tennant Creek managed by NTDoH



Source: Daphne Nash and Jonathan Keeffe

# **3 TENANT PERSPECTIVES**

This chapter draws on the responses of participants who were social housing tenants managed by NTDoH in Tennant Creek town and those who were managed by Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation in the Community Living Areas (CLAs). There is also a focus on transitional housing managed by BRADAAG and TTAP as well as staff housing run by Anyinginyi Health which together highlight the particular areas of housing needs in the town.

A preliminary analysis of tenants' responses suggested that most tenants knew the basic rules of tenancies and thought that the rules were working well enough. It was also evident that only a minority of respondents understood and/or could articulate the intended purposes of the rules that they followed. Most tenants and transitional accommodation clients seemed to realise that they needed to abide by the rules or risk their eviction, and chose not to openly question government or other authorities.

This analysis does not mean that participants were completely satisfied with the housing situation. On the contrary, they were aware of the insufficient housing in Tennant Creek and that many Indigenous people struggled to maintain tenancies for a range of reasons. Their perspectives can be explained further with reference to social and cultural capital, their perceptions of agency within their tenancy agreements and the potential for economic change.

#### 3.1 Social cultural capital and constraints

#### 3.1.1 Aboriginal cultural networks

The many problems relating to housing and tenancies mentioned by the participants existed alongside aspects of strong social capital within the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal people's commitment to extended family is well documented and from their responses, it is clear that participants hold strengths based in kin, family, extended family, elders and friends.

A small majority of participants said that they relied on community leaders, but some participants were adamant that there were no community leaders in Tennant Creek or if there were, they did not call on them. This suggested some lack of social cohesiveness in the Aboriginal community or at least a range of experiences. Some tenants named men or women who played a leadership role for them, such as a CLA resident recalled the role of a particular elder:

He used to talk and help. He'd say: 'Tell me and I'll talk to these people. They don't know our ways.'  $^{\rm TC_{23}}$ 

Many tenants believed that the most significant support in their tenancies came from their family. The participants with disabilities and most of the aged pensioners mentioned how they relied on adult children or other close relatives in Tennant Creek for help, either as paid carers or as family helper. As two older women said: '... only family help me—family,' <sup>TC\_22</sup> and:

I've lived here all my life and I know a lot of people. I'm not lonely. And I've got family—grown up grandsons who come and help me if I need them. <sup>TC\_10</sup>

The majority of participants mentioned that family visitors and visitor behaviour had a significant impact on their living conditions. While many tenants accepted visitors they acknowledged the limited space to accommodate them:

A three-bedroom house with too many people ... it's always been like that with Aboriginal people. It's about taking care of each other. <sup>TC-31</sup>

Despite this apparent acceptance, many tenants suggested that their family obligations and responsibilities and the potential consequences of not allowing visitors to stay made it difficult for them. One Aboriginal woman explained her dilemma:

Family visiting ... you feel sorry for your family. In the Aboriginal way there are kadaitcha [evil spirit men] running around. If you send family away and they get hurt, you get into trouble. Like Greeks, Italians, Chinese—they stay with families. You want to be easy on family, but what if they get raped or something ... so you say, yes, stay here for the night. Every night I see this at my place, but I tell them it's only a little flat. I need a mansion!  $^{TC_{15}}$ 

Participants also acknowledged the prevalence of visitors from bush communities and the limited options for local Aboriginal visitors in Tennant Creek. As one elder commented:

People who come in from communities in the wet season, they have nowhere to stay. They have to crowd in with families.  $^{\rm TC_{-18}}$ 

Although some reported that visitors often stayed too long, others were confident they were in control of visitors. Most tenants felt they were behaving responsibly by letting them stay. A middle-aged Warumungu woman living in a CLA explained as follows:

We like living together—family should always be together. Family can stay— I've got family that come from Wave Hill. My son is staying with me for a while now. Right now it's 'sorry time' and people have got to come and live with me and others. Where else are they going to live? Aboriginal people are different. They can camp outside too. Aboriginal people like to live and sleep under the stars. <sup>TC\_23</sup>

Apart from social and cultural imperatives, there was an awareness of negative impacts on wellbeing. Often people have their grandchildren or an elderly family member to stay for short periods, and although they expressed a desire to have their family around them, they had to weigh this against potential problems, particularly the emotional and physical effects of living together in crowded spaces. One tenant appreciated the benefits of being away from that pressure:

It's about a healthy lifestyle. Helps you to get it to work; less stress in house. Overcrowding leads to health issues. <sup>TC\_9</sup>

A few Aboriginal participants lacked traditional links to the region, but instead have strong associations with Tennant Creek as long-term residents. Their social capital was based on shared histories and experiences in the town. Although they recognised their lack of kin relatedness and comparatively narrow support base compared to the local families, they also talked about the advantages of not being as readily pressured ('humbugged') by others. With his family interstate, one tenant was able to say this about family behaviour that he has observed in Tennant Creek:

Strength is the same as weakness—bludging on grandparents. Cultural beliefs are strong here.  $^{\rm TC\_12}$ 

While all participants seemed very aware of the issues in Tennant Creek surrounding visitors and the potential for anti-social behaviour involving alcohol and violence, most participants from rehabilitation/transitional housing at BRADAAG and TTAP and the prisoners from the BWC had experienced this kind of behaviour themselves. Their residential agreements included many rules which related specifically to alcohol abuse and violence. While the rehabilitation clients appeared quite confident that they could follow the rules about renting a house and controlling their visitors, they had different opinions about the rules. As one young woman stated:

Out bush, people live the way they lived before. But people can change. Territory Housing has a rule of five people in house ... I don't want lots of people in the house—not 20 people under the roof! I need privacy.  $^{TC_5}$ 

Another young woman was not so concerned about the visitor rule, but unlike most participants, she questioned the existence of tenancies for Aboriginal people:

We talk about how to live in the house  $\dots$  I can say 'no' to visitors. Anyway, the rules should change—Aboriginal people should be able to have a house but not have to sign any agreement. <sup>TC\_7</sup>

Tenancy success for these clients will most likely depend on how well they have assimilated the training at BRADAAG and their ability to resist any negative pressures from their social and cultural networks.

#### 3.2 Tenant agency

The lack of suitable, affordable housing in Tennant Creek is the key constraint effecting Aboriginal tenants' capacity to change or improve their housing circumstances. Some of tenants' understandings about the opportunities and challenges under the rules of the different agencies are presented here.

#### 3.2.1 Working with the rules

Many of the participants expressed satisfaction with their current rental properties and were not looking to change. Those who were motivated to move elsewhere, knew that there was little affordable, alternative housing. The few who had attempted to rent privately or who had experienced private rental in Tennant Creek demonstrated their dissatisfaction by returning to social housing. As one tenant explained:

I'd been on the waiting list for 18 months and I was grateful to get it. Was private renting before that—too dear.  $^{TC_{-12}}$ 

Reasons for wanting change of tenancy related to location and size of dwellings and suitability in relation to the tenant's health and life-stage. Older tenants expressed desire to move away from areas known to be centres of anti-social behaviour particularly favoured drinking/socialising spots, such as the wide and deep storm-water drains on the eastern side of town. One elderly woman expressed a view typical of older tenants:

Family come drinking—want food off me. I want to move away from families [relatives]. It's very hard.<sup>TC\_22</sup>

The same tenant also wanted her grandchildren to live with her, but she did not have enough room:

My grandchildren are in Alice Springs and when they visit in this unit they have to squeeze into the lounge room. I want to have a place where my grandchildren can come and live with me and go to school here. <sup>TC\_22</sup>

Elderly tenants were mostly living in small premises—one- or two-bedroom flats. Most were dissatisfied about the lack of space for both carers and also visiting family. Although some were on the waiting lists for bigger houses they were waiting for a long time and vowed to 'keep asking'. It is well known that the waiting lists are long (as discussed in Section 2.1.1) and that there has been no new houses built for a long time. In this regard, some commented on the new housing over the years that had been provided for non-Indigenous people by the private sector in Tennant Creek:

Caravans and houses for workers—the Europeans get jobs, get housing  $\dots$  not Aboriginal people.<sup>TC\_21</sup>

As social housing tenants, the majority were frustrated by the level of maintenance that their houses required but was not done. They were aware of the recent refurbishment to houses in CLAs that did not take place in the town. The youngest tenant interviewed lived in a former Julalikari house in town. She expressed frustration about the degraded state of her house and the effect on her family, particularly her children. Unable to move to other accommodation, she had taken action in a cultural way:

I need my house to be renovated for my kids. I want it to be fresh, a new start. You can feel a lot of people that have been living there—the vibe. Spirits that are in there don't want to go. We smoked the house two times with baby White Gum leaves in a bucket—walked through the house smoking it. <sup>TC\_17</sup>

The tenant and her family demonstrated the strength of their cultural beliefs by using Aboriginal practices as a way of coping, when the rules and the lack of alternative housing seemed to be working against them.

Compared to the tenants interviewed, most prisoners did not demonstrate detailed knowledge about agency issues relating to tenancies. One young man, however, who had been living on a bush community and had also stayed in Tennant Creek at times thought that maintenance was the biggest issue. He saw it as a tenant's right for paying rent in a system of reciprocity:

The owner [i.e. tenant] offers their place for visitors to have a shower and things but they give back to owner, such as food in the fridge ... 'sharing and caring' they say nowadays. But how can you pay rent when your house is not completely fixed ... with broken fence and lights? Well they can't expect us to go back to living in humpies or caves! I want a place for me and my kids. I'm still with my wife and kids. <sup>TC\_31</sup>

This man articulated the common dilemma experienced by tenants who wanted to look after their kin and visitors but were clearly aware of the problems of crowding.

#### 3.2.2 Issues around alcohol

There have been constant issues around consumption of alcohol in Tennant Creek for decades, including damage caused to people and property. With the cooperation of NTDoH, tenants could choose to have a sign posted on their house declaring it an alcohol restricted place. Alternatively, the police would post the sign in order to reduce the amount of drinking at a known drinking venue where they have been called to on numerous occasions, following complaints from neighbours.



#### Figure 4: Restricted alcohol sign posted near front door of a NTDoH property

Source: Daphne Nash

The efficacy of the signs is debatable and some tenants who were drinkers disagreed with the signs:

Housing could try not to put alcohol signs on my place. I'm responsible. When I have a job I can control my life.  $^{TC_{-15}}$ 

Several tenants, however, were very supportive of the signs and their potential for reducing alcohol consumption mainly through the powers given to police. From the point of view of one young man:

They have rules to stick by so that people don't get carried away and invite people around. There's rules for drunks ... like signs they can't take grog into the unit. Because that's how you can keep your flat [tenancy].  $^{TC_{-19}}$ 

Another Aboriginal man in a NTDoH tenancy complained of drunken people but at that time, he had not applied for a sign, possibly because his family included drinkers:

Noisy drunk mob everywhere. My family here. There's no [alcohol restriction] sign on my home. They can take grog in anytime. <sup>TC\_13</sup>

A middle-aged employed woman living in a CLA spoke about how tenants had been informed by Julalikari staff that they should not sit outside their houses because it could lead to anti-social behaviour:

They told us they didn't want people sitting outside around camp fires in groups. People haven't stopped doing that!  $^{\rm TC_26}$ 

As these comments suggest, Aboriginal people were concerned about any initiatives that might further erode their sense of autonomy and dignity, but they were also aware of potential benefits of alcohol restriction measures for their tenancies.

The participants in transitional housing understood the significance of alcohol-related violence and damage to property from personal experience, but they made very few comments about these issues. In their current situations (prison, rehabilitation or transitional housing) they were subject to alcohol bans and although there were opportunities for them to drink, it would be a serious breach if they did. They were aware that drinking alcohol could impact negatively on their transitional tenancy record and so they needed to make clear and careful choices.

One young rehabilitation client had made decisions about the potential role of cultural practices in her future tenancies where excessive alcohol consumption and violence is an accepted part of living in the Indigenous community:

I don't want to leave the house for 'sorry' and lose the house. No cultural practices. Some Aboriginal people all live together ... leads to arguing, fighting.  $^{\rm TC_5}$ 

This young woman's comment alludes to continuing customary mourning practices which have usually required a house to be vacated after the death of a resident. The tenant/s may stop paying their rent when this occurs and so lose their tenancy or the vacant house may be subject to abuse by others who take up residence and who do not necessarily respect tenancy rules nor pay rent. Either way, the original tenant may lose the house, whether they intended to return or not. Also this tenant (and family) have most likely had to move in with other family causing crowding which often leads to strained social relationships and an increased risk of anti-social behaviours, such as alcohol abuse and violence.

#### 3.2.3 Barkly Work Camp prisoners

The prisoners who were interviewed for the IMYRP project seemed to have relatively little tenancy experience. Most were in their twenties and early thirties and had lived difficult lives characterised by family dysfunction as well as individual disadvantage, including lack of education, training and employment. The majority had been in gaol several times for relatively minor offences, including for non-payment of fines, alcohol/drug abuse and theft:

[I] just need more help. Been in and out of gaol since I was 18—been 11 times in gaol. One day I woke up and I was in for 10 months [sentence] and didn't know why I'm there [had been drunk when apprehended]. <sup>TC\_32</sup>

While this prisoner seemed aware that he would need help to achieve a tenancy, he and others had some ideas of how it might work and made the following suggestions:

They need to make a plan before prisoners get out—where they stay, etc. TC\_32

I need someone here to help get a house ... BRADAAG might help. <sup>TC\_33</sup>

The kind of assistance offered in the pre- and post-release program at BRADAAG is not available for prisoners elsewhere in the NT. Most of the prisoners interviewed spoke about the different conditionalities imposed on prisoners by Alice Springs Correctional Centre (ASCC), the Barkly Work Camp and BRADAAG. At BWC and BRADAAG, coercion is replaced by a more persuasive approach albeit with the aid of force if required. The comparatively relaxed conditionality at BWC compared to the Alice Springs prison, combined with the opportunities for employment and training, was remarked on positively by one Warlpiri man:

At the work camp there are three people in the same room. I've spent six months in Camp, before that in Alice Springs gaol for 10 months. There were 15 prisoners in the dorm cottage, all mixed up ...15 per TV in Alice Springs Gaol, 3 per TV in the Work Camp. Barkly better ... for fans. On weekend, cook fire in a pit—buy meat at shop, cut up. Can go Sunday shopping, spend \$120 and buy noodles, DVD, chicken, phone card. Food alright at Camp. Have lunch here [at workplace]. Call wife on phonecard.<sup>TC\_27</sup>

His one complaint was that the BWC did not allow men of the same family, clan or tribe to share accommodation. The management had found that tensions between groups were controlled more effectively by mixing the close social groups.



Figure 5: Barkly Work Camp

Source: Paul Memmott

Those prisoners who graduated to the transitional/supported accommodation at BRADAAG experienced slightly less stringent rules because they were no longer residing in a correctional institution, however BRADAAG rules encompassed many more aspects of daily living than a mainstream tenancy. In addition, performance in training and employment was closely monitored. The prisoners' abilities to integrate these conditionalities from different domains of life (work and tenancy) depended on the support of the program, but also their individual responses to the opportunity to take greater personal responsibility for their life choices.

As described in Section 3.3, the BWC, BRADAAG and other service providers and businesses in Tennant Creek have been working together with the prisoners in ways to achieve a balance between the rules, on one hand, and support from the different forms of Indigenous social and cultural capital on the other (see also Chapter 6).

#### 3.3 Economic development potential

Most participants were not in paid work nor were they focused on getting a job. Most were recipients of welfare payments through pension or unemployment benefits. Their rents were paid by automated deductions via Centrelink. Specifically, none of the NTDoH tenants interviewed were employed at the time although some had had jobs in the past. Many were on pensions, others on Newstart. Without jobs and other forms of social capital, they have had little opportunity to move out of current housing in the town which, although adequate, is degraded and difficult to maintain.

The residential clients of the BWC were working on a casual basis in local businesses, including Red Rooster (Karen Sheldon Catering) and the Eldorado Motor Inn. The employment/training program was aimed to help the workers transition from prison to the outside world with potentially better housing and employment opportunities. With this increased capacity, the tenant might then move from transitional to sustainable tenancy and eventually to home ownership. In the early stages of the program, the participants realised that they had to try hard to meet the requirements and demonstrate their new work ethic to achieve a good employment record. As two men commented:

Start working, keep busy, work all time, keep going. TC\_33

Coming together, talking. Need planning—something for prisoners when they get out. They get a lot of outsiders who come through the work camp. Lazy ones get flown back if they play up. They come here and too much rules—got to work, 8 to 4, work. <sup>TC\_32</sup>

The tenants' levels of education are a key indicator in their disadvantage. Although school retention rates have improved for Aboriginal people, the level of education in Tennant Creek is relatively low and also Indigenous unemployment is relatively high (Yuhun & Taylor 2013). One young man explained how he understands the relationship between his low level of education, his job prospects and his need for social housing:

I'm trying to keep up and look after myself. I want to have a roof over my head. Not necessarily to buy. Might if I could make the money. I didn't have a good education. I should've pulled up my socks when I was young and do an apprenticeship or something. ... Aboriginal people have moved into houses from bush communities. They have lots of kids and the older people look after their grandchildren. They're still uneducated. It'll get harder in the future to get work for the dole so the young ones need to get an education, get qualifications so that they can get decent jobs. Work for the dole is ok for me for the time being. But I might be better if I'd had an education to get a better job. Social housing is good to get a roof over your head for people like me—I don't have family, wife (but I do have a son) so I've got to work to get money so that I can pay the rent. It gets a bit hard—a bloke can't put his mind to it [too much].

Government work for the dole—I got to do work or my Centrelink money is docked. I come to work to keep my flat and buy [things], do shopping. Lots of mob [Aboriginal people] are spoilt, you could say. They have a house out in a community and live in town. But if I was kicked out of my flat I would have no one to go to. I was born and bred here and don't really want to go. I don't have a trade to jump into. <sup>TC\_19</sup>

With these kinds of experiences, home ownership was not seen as a viable option by most participants. There is significant (c.19%) Indigenous home ownership in Tennant Creek (see Section 2.1) and with institutional support, further opportunities have been opening up for Aboriginal people there. The pilot program at Anyinginyi was showing positive results. Seven people had signed up to the staff rental agreement that may lead to home ownership. As one of those people, a participant had begun to see the possibilities:

We had a staff survey at the beginning and that gave them opportunity to be First Home buyers ... Tenants learning how to live in the house and to maintain it. Home ownership is on offer eventually. At the end, the solution would be to gain own home. ... I want to own my own home.  $^{TC_9}$ 

Further evidence of the value of institutional network connections comes from a participant who was an employee of a community organisation. In the past she had rented from Julalikari, NTDoH and currently is in private rental (about one year) with her family. In recent months they have been planning to buy their own home with the help of the Indigenous Home Ownership program of Indigenous Business Australia (IBA).

I've always wanted to do that. And now I can get a loan.<sup>TC\_16</sup>

These tenants' enthusiasm for home ownership suggests that support in this direction from agencies such as Anyinginyi and also the IBA loans scheme were not only very welcome but also potentially life-changing. Such initiatives can impact significantly against trans-generational disadvantage.

# 3.4 Towards government and Indigenous and community organisations

Although most tenants commented on their good relationships with individual tenancy managers in NTDoH, they held a range of views about the state of tenancy management in Tennant Creek. Most tenants were supportive of the department's regular inspections and some called for stronger application of the rules but with greater support, particularly regarding maintenance:

Keep continuous in applying rules strictly; regular inspections. See that building on corner—a family had that tenancy—only for an old couple with their daughter and son-in-law. But football time, whole lot came here for whole season. Old people couldn't do anything. Complained, but every window was smashed. <sup>TC\_25</sup>

Many tenants, however, have felt a lack of empathy with Housing Officers. A former tenant who is also a community leader pointed out how important it is for NTDoH

... to build good relationships with tenants, for example by doing home visits ... because the first time you go, they don't want you to come inside—they're too shamed. They think you'll be thinking about how dirty the place is. <sup>TC\_16</sup>

One participant remarked about the high vulnerability of some Aboriginal people in relation to housing, together with some advice for NTDoH:

I know old people who live in the bush now near the airport. The woman and her husband who is a renal patient [once they rented a house]. They had house inspections, but with the changes for them in their lives ... the debts got too bad and they couldn't pay. Instead of hitting people hard, Housing should do inspections every month. Change the rules for those who need help. Increase awareness about the need to get damage fixed quickly ... take the fear away. <sup>TC\_9</sup>

Another older woman who was recently ill in hospital and who has since been cared for by her daughter, had been without power for eight days because she had an unpaid bill of \$120. Without power, the house was hot and uncomfortable, particularly during the night, and also the tenants found it very difficult to look after themselves and the house appropriately. Not only did they fear the loss of the tenancy, they felt vulnerable and unsupported.

Other tenants were highly critical of the NTDoH approach towards cultural practices because it left Aboriginal tenants feeling some loss of dignity. As one middle-aged woman explained:

We never live separate. Family stick together and that's how they're brought up. I wouldn't worry if family are living in my house and yard ... I think Housing is trying to change Aboriginal ways. <sup>TC\_23</sup>

And also in relation to mourning practice of vacating the home of the deceased person, the family felt a lack of understanding from NTDoH:

Only cultural practice is when there's a death of a person in the house—you're supposed to move ... it's pretty hard now with the housing ... Nowadays as tenants you have to adjust. Just recently when a family member passed away, the lady is still in the house, but she wanted to move out. Other family members stay with her. She's all right now. First few weeks she felt the pressure. <sup>TC\_26</sup>

Tenants' attitudes towards community and Indigenous organisations tended to be specific to the organisation and based on their individual experience of that organisation, for example some tenants were very positive about Julalikari and the benefits they had received from programs, such as the aged-care services. Others were critical of the service they received.

One old man living in a CLA understood that he needed to take the initiative to contact Julalikari as the housing officer was not visiting regularly:

If I don't go down and see housing mob ... you've got to go there. They don't come here. Sometimes it's pretty hard to catch them. <sup>TC\_21</sup>

Anyinginyi also was reported in a good light:

It's better with Anyinginyi. You put a maintenance report in and things are done. Different perspective. Private rental wouldn't fix anything. <sup>TC\_9</sup>

And, finally, BRADAAG clients were generally supportive of the programs which they understood were helping them train for mainstream tenancies, although they complained about the relentlessness of house-related tasks such as cleaning.

Notably, however, not all comments were positive about Indigenous organisations. Several participants criticised Julalikari on account of perceived inefficiencies relating to financial mismanagement and unfair dealings, including housing allocation. Media reports attest to these criticisms, as reported in the *Tennant Creek Times*, 18 October 2013. During the time of this field research, the authors were made aware of the long-running and very public campaign by many local Indigenous people, regarding alleged corruption by senior management of Julalikari. These events have exposed the considerable disaffection felt by sections of the local Indigenous community. While the publicity has subsequently faded and Julalikari was cleared of any wrongdoing, some groups remain critical of Julalikari which in earlier times had been recognised as a longstanding and effective local Indigenous corporation.

# 4 GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES

Government perspectives on Indigenous social housing have been drawn from interviews with the four frontline staff members employed at the regional office of the NT Department of Housing in Tennant Creek. Selected responses of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers and front-line workers illustrated relevant aspects of tenancy management for local Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, including the constraints in implementing policy, the agency of frontline workers and the broader views of government towards tenants and Indigenous and community organisations.

Brief discussions with other senior government executives for the Barkly region the regional Executive Director, Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional services for the Barkly region and the Acting Director of the Barkly region DoH also informed the following discussion.

#### 4.1 Constraints in implementing policy

Employees of NTDoH who participated in this study were not only experienced government Housing Officers but had lived in Tennant Creek for several years. Their comments regarding housing policy were predicated on their individual understandings that other regional housing centres, such as Alice Springs had greater problems than Tennant Creek. The officers, however, did raise some significant local issues, including lack of housing; maintenance; tenant eligibility; visitors and antisocial behaviour (ASB); lack of staff and administrative load from ASB policy, as well as the need for additional inter-agency support including tenant education and cultural support services.

#### 4.1.1 Lack of appropriate, affordable housing

The government staff who were interviewed were aware that the government had not been fulfilling its general public housing policy commitments in Tennant Creek, that is to provide safe, secure and affordable housing to Territorians most in need (NTDoH 2015a). A senior employee of NTDoH (personal communication, 29 October 2014) stated that the last new public housing rental property was built in Tennant Creek in 1987. Consequently current stock is old and in relatively poor condition resulting in high maintenance costs. As one staff member explained:

There are 11 to 15 houses vacated, waiting to be brought to rentable condition. And it costs \$60 000 to \$150 000 to make R&M—but there is no budget. So the houses sit for months and months—visitors break in and squat and destroy further.  $^{\rm TC_1}$ 

Some of these houses had been seriously damaged and were unavailable for renting, thereby increasing the demand and lengthening waiting times. Staff saw the need to work consistently to reduce the need for unnecessary repairs, particularly resulting from ASB, so that tenants could be housed.

#### 4.1.2 Tenant cultural beliefs and practices

From the government staff's perspective, problems around reporting and also payment for maintenance were common for some tenants. At the same time the staff members recognised that 'all customers are low income and don't have the capacity to pay'. <sup>TC\_1</sup> Regardless, under the new policy:

Anything broken, they have to get it fixed—repair and pay for it themselves. We are finding it so hard, because they are low-income clients. But it's one of our new policies of this year. [They] just haven't got money. <sup>TC\_3</sup>

This is clearly a vexed issue for these officers. A related problem is that many tenants often have a large number of visitors, such as for a funeral, when some people engage in excessive drinking which often leads to violence and also damage to property. As the Housing Officers understood it:

[They are] having visitors, because most are their family. 'Can't just tell them to leave, I'll be in trouble.' And visitors are often the drinkers—they don't respect the tenant. Non-drinking visitors respect tenants. <sup>TC\_3</sup>

[The] family connection is Aboriginal culture—the behaviour is not! TC\_4

The Housing Officers knew that they had to monitor certain houses regularly with respect to visitors because 'it's not the wish of tenants to remove their visitors'.<sup>TC\_1</sup>

We have to check tenants who are still doing well [They] say: 'Just family here'. They might stay away all day and come back at night to avoid detection.  $_{\rm TC_3}$ 

Although they understood the social imperative for many Aboriginal people to accommodate family visitors in their homes, individual Housing Officers argued that some cultural practices and beliefs presented an impediment to implementing policy. These included: vacating the house of a recently deceased relative; preferences for outdoor living; and fear of gas appliances in the home with preference for electric stoves or open-hearth cooking.

Vacating a house/tenancy can cause problems unless the DoH is informed and the rent is being paid:

Swapping houses happens after death. Or they can cleanse through smoking by a *ngangkaye* [healer]. But it's not our policy; we don't know about it. We find out two months later that it happened. Tenant still making rental payments. <sup>TC\_1</sup>

As the authors were well aware, Indigenous people in Tennant Creek and other places across Australia are accustomed to living outside to connect with the environment and to socialise outdoors. The Housing Officers also recognised that the houses did not provide for people's preferred ways of living:

It's the way they are used to living. DoH houses don't have undercover outdoor areas—but the Aboriginal tenants want to be outside. <sup>TC\_2</sup>

It is relevant too that certain cultural preferences in domestic behaviour have prevailed for Aboriginal tenants, such as outdoor cooking. These practices can have consequences beyond simple preference and may impinge on the whole style of living in the house/yard space with safety and energy use implications:

Tenants won't use a gas stove. Want electric stoves. Frightened of gas. If there's a gas stove, they'll cook on a fire outside.  $^{\rm TC\_3}$ 

The houses have gas stoves but they are broken; bits pulled off. Most people prefer electricity—they're frightened of being gassed.  $^{TC_2}$ 

Because the Housing Officers understood the constraints, it followed that compromise would be the most effective way forward. Elements of compromise could include better understanding between government and tenants about rules and behaviour, as several employees stated, for example:

It's got to be a compromise. Need a certain leeway. Can't change culture like that. Work over a period of time.  $^{\rm TC\_1}$ 

Bit of both. Housing are trying to make certain changes in terms of issues we're always having, but we're also trying to educate tenants.  $^{TC_2}$ 

Indigenous officers employed by NTDoH have a significant role in liaising with clients because of their local knowledge and social connections. Although limited by their role, the enormity of their potential workload and in their ability to empower tenants these workers do have opportunities to educate tenants. For example, current practice is to give four practical information sheets to tenants on how to look after a house (Appendix 5). According to one Aboriginal leader, however, the information would be better if it used simpler language and communicated in pictures not words. Meanwhile, NTDoH officers depend heavily on their ability to verbally educate people about rules and responsibilities and achieve some results in this regard through building trusting relationships face-to-face.

#### 4.1.3 Community engagement

Some of the staff believed that there was a need for more inter-agency engagement to facilitate policy implementation. In certain neighbourhoods, there are problems around ASB (drinking and fighting) that could be addressed through better education. As discussed in Section 2.2, the NTDoH has placed Officers to work with tenants, neighbours and visitors around ASB in some locations, including Darwin and Alice Springs, but not in Tennant Creek and Katherine. Apparently NTDoH has not recorded sufficient complaints about tenants in those places to warrant the extra staff. According to staff interviewed, the logic was flawed. Their view was that there were

... no complaints because no-one feels the behaviour is inappropriate. One house [for drinking] on one night and the next night, it's another house. <sup>TC-4</sup>

The staff thought that partnering with other agencies might be a more appropriate approach to achieve better policy implementation. NTDoH officers and management recognised that vulnerable tenants have many problems beyond housing and have been long involved with other agencies (e.g. policing, justice and child protection). Without their collaboration, the tenants were more likely to miss out on the services they needed.

Lack of education is a constraint but effective teaching about and connection to services was mentioned by staff as a potentially important component of a successful tenancy:

Education ... by trying to talk with tenants and by referring them to other agencies. By getting more involved other agencies can bring up issues that we don't know about, such as Renal Dialysis Unit at Tennant Creek Hospital; there's no social worker there now but one with the main hospital. As staff come-and-go at the hospital, it changes. A good caring person in the role makes it good. It's not just housing issues that people have to deal with, so it's important to involve other agencies, so we deal also with Stronger Families [Anyinginyi Health], issue-by-issue, as something arises. <sup>TC\_2</sup>

One specific area of support mentioned was interpreter services. NTDoH has recognised the need in Tennant Creek and has committed to having an interpreter, as this officer understood it:

If English is the tenant's second language, we need one interpreter for each of the community languages. If taken seriously in Tennant Creek that would apply to several languages ... [At the time of writing] the Indigenous Liaison Officer doesn't speak all languages. <sup>TC\_2</sup>

A significant gap in Indigenous advocacy has also been identified in the region since the de-funding of the Council for Elders and Respected Persons (CERP). For a number of years CERP played an important role, especially communicating and reinforcing community protocols around visitor behaviour for both Aboriginal people and agencies. The community leaders have remained in the town but they have become less accessible, feeling disempowered and so less able to be effective. One senior NTDoH officer recognised this under-utilised resource:

Yes—there are some really good community leaders, but they are not tapped into enough.  $^{\rm TC\_4}$ 

From the many issues raised in the interviews, there seemed to be a common understanding by NTDoH staff that Indigenous tenants who wished to conform to the rules were struggling against strongly held and continuing cultural beliefs. Their struggle was exacerbated by old housing stock that the NTDoH has not been able to keep well maintained. Nevertheless, the NTDoH staff did not advocate changing the tenancy rules.

#### 4.2 Agency of frontline workers

There were three frontline workers at the Tennant Creek office of NTDoH. They saw their main role as keepers and enforcers of the tenancy rules, particularly rental payment and care and maintenance of houses. To achieve these ends, they relied not only on the procedural mechanisms of government policy and the tenancy agreements, but also on a kind of case-management approach, with a focus on regular face-to-face communication—favoured by one senior worker who had many years of experience in Tennant Creek.

Although a minority of tenants experienced considerable difficulties, the staff thought that with closer contact and also targeted support, these issues were being dealt with effectively in most cases:

We try to educate and assist ... There are not too many issues in Tennant Creek. Some problem tenants, however. In Alice Springs, a Tenancy Office is not allowed to visit alone—they go in pairs. In Tennant Creek we have more respect; we're building up a rapport. Housing has to monitor regularly ... it takes a lot of ongoing work with individual tenants. Some tenants are taking responsibility.  $^{TC_2}$ 

As either a local Indigenous person or a non-Indigenous resident of several years, the frontline workers have experience and knowledge of the local Aboriginal community and the people's ways of living in houses. As one long-term employee pointed out:

Tenants who are first generation in houses constitute 30 per cent, as a rough guess. Most have never had tenancy in mainstream society. Most come from communities. They don't fully understand tenancy rules and regulations.  $^{TC_{-1}}$ 

The frontline workers' understandings are reflected in their tolerance of housing behaviours that might not be approved of by NTDoH in a less remote or non-Indigenous location. A worker explained why DoH staff might appear to have become de-sensitised to some extent, to non-mainstream behavioural norms:

A Child Safety Officer comes in talking about mandatory reporting about kids. A tenant was reported on: 'That house is filthy'. But [when we look at it] that's accepted to us in Housing. As long as the basics are done—sweeping and mopping—doesn't have to be shining. We demonstrate low-cost cleaning agents; bicarb soda and vinegar. Sugar soap for walls.<sup>TC\_3</sup>

In the cases of anti-social behaviour, one officer was able to draw on 'insider' knowledge to counsel tenants about the need to have an alcohol restriction sign for their houses. The officer called on cultural practices about respectful relationships between owners and visitors on traditional country to explain appropriate behaviour:

I'm a TO [Traditional Owner] here, but how would you feel if I ran amok in your country...?  $^{\rm TC\_3}$ 

She was thus able to use her status as a senior Warumungu Traditional Owner, to exert some influence on Aboriginal people from other language groups drawing on traditional Aboriginal Law values. A common theme in the staff responses was that enforcement was needed in order to make tenants aware of the government's view of social housing, despite these new rules being a re-packaged version of former conditionalities.

Rules stay the same, but we are made to enforce them more. DoH hierarchy are looking at government housing as a transitional option, not a 'for life' thing; come in for a while, get a job/training and look to move through and rent privately.  $^{TC_4}$ 

All government staff were aware of negative issues about Indigenous tenants but moreover, non-Indigenous workers tended to blame lack of traditional cultural values for some tenant's behaviour. All felt that drinkers were the primary perpetrators of family abuse, treating family badly and taking advantage of the tenants' belief in the value of family relationships. As a result, government staff felt constrained in their role in terms of implementing change, when the primary need was to curb alcohol abuse.

They advocated greater contact with tenants:

We need more inspections, but there's not enough staff'. TC\_3

Regional office-based changes. Tennant Creek is a small office and each staff member does everything—positive because you can deal across different duties, but it can result in an increase in individuals' workloads. <sup>TC-2</sup>

This worker was keen to point out that the situation is improving and is 'not as bad as it was',  $^{TC_{-3}}$  largely because of the actions of frontline workers and despite the perceived lack of staff.

The frontline workers' approach to behavioural change of tenants accounted for both general and specific interventions. One non-Indigenous worker had been very active in getting to know the clients, such as by visiting a group of mostly single pensioner clients almost every weekday. The tenants were encouraged to communicate with each other and recognise their close living situation. The worker claimed only limited success in creating a sense of community, but the frequent and open communication has maintained good manager-tenant relationships, particularly in relation to maintenance issues which have been a priority for NTDoH.

Another worker gave this practical example of a potentially positive response that does not focus on the tenant as the problem, but rather on appropriate architectural design to suit Aboriginal lifestyles of the region:

... when a tenant vacates, typically cupboard doors are missing so the tenant is charged; new tenant does the same. So why not have cupboards without doors? CLA houses have shelving with stainless steel benches; also no cupboard doors. Crimsafe [window and door screens] have been trialed on two houses .The 'vacates' cost far less.  $^{TC_2}$ 

It is not clear whether these suggestions will be acted on, but meanwhile it was evident that the agency of frontline workers significantly affected tenant-managers relationships in mostly positive ways in Tennant Creek. It should be said that the presence of a local Indigenous worker was integral to this relationship. Most recently, it has become NTDoH policy that there are no 'identified positions'. Previously an Indigenous Client Liaison Officer worked with the Housing Officers, but now there are three Housing Officers who manage tenancies in the town (and four others for remote communities). None of these are Indigenous-identified positions.

# 4.3 Towards tenants and Indigenous and community organisations

The attitudes of NTDoH staff interviewees towards tenants and other housing-related service agencies in Tennant Creek largely reflected their roles as enforcers of the rules. As government managers and frontline workers, they were focused on the tenants as their clients but also the management of the social housing stock. The tenancy managers' roles included administration of the application process, the waiting list, the renovation and maintenance (R&M) requirements of the housing stock as well as maintaining their relationships with individual tenants. In all these aspects of the work, government officers brought to bear their own personal knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal lifeworlds in Tennant Creek, for example they know about the issues of crowded housing; how low-income tenants need to be reminded about their responsibility for maintenance; and the need for direct debit because of pressure to spend in other ways.

There was frequent psychological tension for the government employees between their empathy with people's attitudes, particularly about accommodating family, and their duty to enforce compliance with government rules:

We work to educate tenants about their responsibilities  $\dots$  about visitors, paying rent, paying for damage they cause. We need to keep enforcing the rules. TC\_3

Although there had not been any evictions (under ASB rules from July 2013), staff were acutely aware that eviction would most likely result in homelessness or the need to appeal to another agency, such as the women's refuge which was known to be working to capacity.

It's getting very tight. Eviction process and all that. But where are they supposed to go if evicted?  $^{\rm TC\_3}$ 

NTDoH has had changing relationships with local organisations, particularly Julalikari. During the time of the study, Julalikari managed the tenancies in the CLAs, but in 2014 relinquished tenancy management of 23 houses in the town area. Communication between NTDoH staff and Julalikari appeared limited although housing officers spoke of some continuing cooperation, such as referrals for pensioners to receive HACC (home and community care); and the maintenance contract with Julalikari. Also Julalikari operated the tenancy support programs (see Section 2.2) but once again, NTDoH housing officers were either unsure about the current arrangements and/or were unconvinced of their general effectiveness.

Contracted to Julalikari, but doubtful how ... or if they're running OK. They make efforts. But there's a lot of staff turnover and conflict between families.  $TC_1$ 

This NTDoH officer would have preferred to have a government-managed program and connection with other Indigenous service providers in the region.

Another staff member spoke of a recent example of inter-agency cooperation and information sharing when an Anyinginyi client was put forward as a priority applicant for housing. The elderly woman had 'lost' her tenancy because of damage to the house by relatives. She was assisted by NTDoH staff in her application for tenancy, following contact by Anyinginyi Health staff and was rehoused within a couple of days.

Also a good working relationship was reported for NTDoH and the BWC. Following routine housing inspections by Housing Officers, they would compile a list of house-yard jobs which tenants needed. As agreed between NTDoH and the BWC, prisoners then undertook these tasks as a free service for tenants, building up their community service capabilities.

We do a list for the Barkly Work Camp for elderly and disabled tenants. They do yard, mow, remove rubbish. Trying to get them [another contract] to get firewood.  $^{\rm TC_3}$ 

As the primary social housing service provider in Tennant Creek, NTDoH's perspectives on tenants and towards the relevant organisations captured more of the differences than the common ground between the three participant groups. The following section gives the final perspective of the triangle.

#### Figure 6: Views around Tennant Creek



Source: Jonathan Keeffe and Daphne Nash

# 5 INDIGENOUS ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVES

In Tennant Creek the researchers engaged with Indigenous and community service organisations which owned and managed housing for Indigenous people, included BRADAAG, Anyinginyi and TTAP. Managers in these organisations, as well as their current tenants, were interviewed and the management perspectives are presented in this section. Although Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation has owned and managed community housing in the Community Living Areas (town camps) and in the town for many years, the organisation now has a reduced housing role. An initial discussion was held with the CEO, Pat Brahim, in the early stages of the research, however, when the tenancy management staff of Julalikari were approached for interview recently, senior management chose not to be involved in the research.

Discussions also took place with some members of the Barkly Regional Accommodation Group (BRAG) that includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The majority are long-term residents of Tennant Creek who are experienced in the service delivery sector. The Group, facilitated by the Central Australian Policy Officer of NT Shelter,<sup>3</sup> is an advisory body and not directly involved in tenancy management. Members were not formally interviewed.

## 5.1 Constraints in organisational capacity

Each of the participant organisations has strengths and constraints in their capacity to effectively manage tenancy programs of Indigenous clients. A focus on the constraints can highlight specific areas within each organisation which might be appropriately strengthened.

The drugs and alcohol agency, BRADAAG is managed by the Board including Indigenous members and the CEO is non-Indigenous. There are a number of Indigenous staff and some non-Indigenous staff. The main constraint for BRADAAG has been lack of certainty over program funding, particularly as the tenancy program has had links with other programs. According to one employee:

[The NT Government] funded a program last July for mothers and babies; but that ceased in December. There is difficulty with funding cycles and also adequate levels of funding.  $^{\rm TC\_6}$ 

On the other hand, this employee was positive about the role of a few 'strong community leaders' who are helping tenants with the rules and also the frontline workers, mostly Indigenous, who conduct the outreach service and 'pop in to see how people are going weekly or fortnightly'.  $^{TC_6}$ 

The BRADAAG transitional accommodation is run as a kind of 'tenancy-in-training' for people on parole/under a court order who need to complete an alcohol rehabilitation program and for post-release prisoners from the BWC. The clients are subject to closely monitored behavioural management compared with the conditions of an RTA tenancy agreement used by the DoH. It is of particular relevance to this project and our research questions relating to different types of conditionality that the BRADAAG staff were adamant about the value of their particular set of rules. As one manager stated:

Other organisations have the same goals but have a lot more problems because they don't have the same input as BRADAAG—or power over the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> NT Shelter is the peak NT non-government housing and homelessness advocacy body in the Northern Territory <a href="http://ntshelter.org.au">http://ntshelter.org.au</a>.

tenant. They don't put a tenant in the house with the same [demanding] conditions.  $^{\rm TC\_6}$ 

The BRADAAG houses (3) and supported accommodation was mostly fully booked except for the house for post-release prisoners which had places available on the occasions we visited. Resident clients shared facilities, including bedrooms. Apart from the houses, the other facilities were limited, such as demountable kitchen/dining van; semi-outdoor main recreation/common area which was challenging in terms of thermal comfort because of the extremes of Central Australian summers and winters. The behaviour of residents was guided by strong rules about visitors, drinking and leave/absence from the centre.

A major constraint for BRADAAG is the government's funding model for community organisations and grants. While BRADAAG is an incorporated body and most of its clients are Aboriginal, it is not an Indigenous corporation. According to one staff member, BRADAAG may have had access to a wider range of sources if it were an Indigenous organisation.

Anyinginyi Health Corporation has a different set of constraints as the main regional Aboriginal health care service which also provides staff housing. As mentioned in previous sections of this report, Anyinginyi operates a staff housing program with unique conditions such that a tenancy is linked to employment in the health service. Furthermore, the program is operated on a business model in which much of the rent is used to purchase more housing for staff. Under this model as described by the CEO, damage needs to be minimal and maintenance standards need to be high. In order to achieve this:

The staff [i.e. tenants] need to understand that the house is an Anyinginyi asset ... we educate on tenancy.  $^{\rm TC_34}$ 

The organisation's constraints are related to its ability to communicate this to the staff/tenants. The task was made easier because in the initial phase of the program, the predominantly Aboriginal staff and board 'argued on the need for strong rules as a change agent'.  $^{\rm TC_{35}}$ 

Certain behaviour is discouraged, for example:

Anyinginyi staff want rules to keep [visiting] families out to enforce this ... and so that tenants can avoid 'humbugging' from family. Some staff chose to live at Eldorado [an alternative location where they thought they could do this]. TC\_36

The program is relatively new and so far there have been eight staff accommodated and only one defaulted tenancy (and job). The managers who were interviewed, emphasised the organisation's preference for proceeding slowly and cautiously. Also the board and management seem to have realised that there are many facets to successful tenancy, including building and infrastructure, as well as the social and cultural needs of the tenants. Particular locations and types of housing were targeted for the program. Anyinginyi has decided to only purchase or build brick/cement block houses in approved locations in the town. Many houses on offer for purchase were in poor condition or in locations such as near known drinking spots where a tenant would be exposed to negative social behaviours. Management also favoured a 'salt and pepper approach'<sup>TC\_34</sup> to mix social and ethnic groupings. Future plans include the option for home ownership, but the overarching constraint for Anyinginyi has been a lack of suitable housing—a constant but not insurmountable challenge.

The Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project (TTAP) which began in November 2012, had ceased to take in new tenants by the end of 2014 and had moved almost all of the existing residents to other accommodation. The project's short

history provides a window into the kind of constraints that the organisation faced in the provision of services to a group of Indigenous people experiencing vulnerability. As the manager explained, TTAP had some hard won success:

We're taking in the most difficult, more challenged people from a very difficult environment—severe crowding, abuse, drugs and alcohol; also taking tenants who have been kicked out elsewhere. ... Over the time, we housed eight families.  $^{TC_{-8}}$ 

Funding was the primary challenge for the organisation and was the ultimate reason for closure, particularly because the behaviour of visitors and hence the impact on the state of the tenants' rooms could not be monitored or controlled sufficiently:

We needed funding for staff—for monitoring payments, healthy living, school attendance; Aboriginal practices—visitors and alcohol; security, etc. with no staff [apart from owner/managers of Eldorado]. <sup>TC\_8</sup>

Anecdotally, the closure of TTAP has increased the pressure on other housing in the town that has most likely contributed not only to crowding but also other related social problems.

## 5.2 Agency of frontline workers

The frontline workers interviewed from Indigenous and community organisations were mostly managing tenancies for clients in transitional accommodation. Their responses suggested that they saw opportunities for achieving positive change for clients through the approach of their organisation.

Frontline workers at BRADAAG were both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, including one local Aboriginal woman. BRADAAG staff have community understandings as well as other relevant skills and experience. The main focus of their work with clients included reinforcing the rules as well as education on life skills. In the supported accommodation, the rules were spoken about and explained in simple terms, for example looking after housing means it must be kept clean. A worker believed in enforcing the rule of cleanliness because the behaviours had a positive impact in other areas of living also:

We're trying 'to turn a life around'—be responsible, be accountable, look after your family, look after each other, make sure your kids get an education. It takes a whole lot for people to realise that they can be social without being drunk ...  $^{TC_6}$ 

The workers believed that relationship-building was essential to achieve the trust of the clients. Each commented in some ways on the value of communication, for example:

The rules are getting a bit lighter as we know a bit more; rapport with the staff has developed so they ring me, for example if someone is harassing them.  $^{TC_6}$ 

Communication was a priority, but this employee spoke also about valuable, practical assistance:

Continue to talk ... Continue to follow and talk about the way it's working. Have booklets and show in pictures how to live in the houses. Support families—they need support from their Aboriginal family and from other organisations and other white people can help.  $^{TC_{-16}}$ 

The efforts of frontline workers in Tennant Creek, however, were placed in context by this general comment from a staff member: 'There's not enough housing. Rents are astronomical.'  $^{TC_6}$ 

## 5.3 Towards tenants and government

The various organisations have developed their version of rules for housing tenancy and for transitional accommodation to suit their clients' needs. The staff who were interviewed reported that most clients had some difficulties, but they were relatively minor compared with their experiences in mainstream (NTDoH) social housing tenancy. Rules were targeted for specific behaviour, such as in the rehabilitation accommodation of BRADAAG houses. A BRADAAG staff member made the following comment about Indigenous clients at the rehabilitation centre:

Clients at the moment are very good, but previously we had to clean and show them how to clean every few days. If the place is repeatedly dirty, such as cockroaches, dirty nappies, etc., then two weeks' notice is given. To me, hygiene is not cultural. We should all live the same—hygiene, clean houses—doesn't matter what colour you are. You keep your kids cleaned, get them to school. If they don't keep the place clean etc., then they can't move on to transitional housing.<sup>TC\_6</sup>

Similarly for Anyinginyi and TTAP, the approach towards tenants was based on informed and realistic ideas about how difficult it was for disadvantaged people in Tennant Creek. The small scale of operation at Anyinginyi and the necessary link between housing and work made a solid basis for respectful relationships. In contrast, the relationship between tenants and TTAP staff were relatively remote with very little contact after the initial induction meeting.

The perspectives of the organisations' frontline workers on government focused on their knowledge of NTDoH and their understanding of the success or otherwise of the majority of social housing tenancies under NTDoH management, not only in the town, but also in bush communities. The workers believed that the housing needs of some Indigenous tenants were not being met by NTDoH and that more housing and specifically-targeted services were required to address the complex and multiple issues of disadvantage.

# 6 **RECOGNITION SPACE**

The preceding sections on tenant, government and Indigenous organisational perceptions have provided the basis for discussion of the recognition space in Tennant Creek. As set out in the scoping report for this project (Moran et al. 2014) and from the responses to the interview questions, it was clear that the three groups had competing objectives at times, and also within groups, there was considerable diversity of views on some topics. The views of individual tenants reflected the typical circumstances in which they were accommodating an average of ten people (and sometimes up to 20 or more), often under stress of substance abuse and family violence, as well as the legal constraint of their tenancy agreement. From another perspective, the NTDoH employees aimed to manage rental housing in line with current policies, in the knowledge that there is insufficient housing stock for the number of residents and that there is no demonstrated capacity or political will to obtain more stock in the short-term. On the other hand, Indigenous and community organisations were focused on providing a range of services, including transitional housing, in a complex and changing political field. As set out below, these different and often conflicting perspectives framed the recognition space, which sometimes appeared to be corroding, but at other times demonstrated more positive sustainable features.

## 6.1 Corroding and dissolving

As Aboriginal people living in a remote region of Australia, the participants have been subject to the effects of colonisation and racism that have existed in various forms. Tenant perceptions of how officers of the NTDoH related to them is marked by this history and also by ongoing Indigenous disadvantage, often resulting in considerable uncertainty and stress over tenancies. While land rights and native title have been highly significant for shifting the balance of authority in favour of local Aboriginal groups in Tennant Creek, the lived daily reality for Indigenous people suggests that there is a long way to go to 'close the gap' in areas such as educational attainment, health, employment, and particularly, housing. Also, from our experience, the political tensions of the type which are prevalent in and between Indigenous organisations in Tennant Creek are part of many cities and towns with Aboriginal populations and can impact on the recognition space.

During the time of the project, the forced demise of CERP through de-funding within Julalikari was a significant corrosive influence for good relationships in the town. For almost ten years, this group performed an important advocacy role for Aboriginal people, earning respect from most government and non-government agencies, until funding ceased in 2014. CERP also provided advice and information for some tenants who lacked housing experience and knowledge of their tenancy rights. A local service provider and manager of the women's refuge explained how clients needed this kind of support:

Tenants who have lots of house damage due to domestic violence, often do not report it and they end up with a big debt. If the damage is reported and it's not their fault then Housing fixes it straight away, at no cost to the client. Tenants don't understand that!  $^{TC_{37}}$ 

The combined effects of insufficient affordable housing and poor rental histories have created a situation where Indigenous people are unable to enter the private rental sector. Government and community organisations, however, do not always have the same ideas about how to solve this problem. NTDoH has stated a preference for

social housing as temporary except for people with very high needs. As one staff member summed it up:

For some, we are their housing for life. Rental history is the main barrier. <sup>TC\_4</sup>

Employees of BRADAAG, however, took another view:

There's not enough housing. Rents [in the private market] are astronomical ... [Governments need to be] building more housing and making tenants more accountable [is the way to go]. Don't let it get to a Three Strikes situation.  $^{TC_6}$ 

It should also be noted that alcohol has been a highly corrosive influence against wellbeing and sustainable tenancies for many Aboriginal people in Tennant Creek over several decades (Wright 1997). It would seem that there is an ongoing need for further work towards a whole-of-community approach to the management of alcohol sales in the town. As one employee from Anyinginyi aptly described it:

We [Indigenous and community service providers] are the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff ... and it's got to change.  $^{\rm TC_34}$ 

#### 6.2 Formative and sustaining

Across the interviews of all groups (tenants, government, community organisations), there was a baseline of recognition in one common goal—the provision of secure housing. In their comments about the government's approach to social housing, the employees of NTDoH appeared to understand and endorse the government's aims: 'What are we trying to achieve? Sustainable tenancies!' <sup>TC\_2</sup> At the same time another staff member balanced this view with the tenant's responsibilities:

DoH is providing housing to those most in need and asking in return ... we ask that you pay your rent and respect others.  $^{\rm TC\_4}$ 

On the other hand, the Indigenous Client Liaison Officer (ICLO) understood that the tenants were low-income earners with strong cultural obligations that often made it difficult to abide by the tenancy rules:

We're trying to get people to buy their own houses ... but that's impossible. Because our R & M budget has blown out, houses remain smashed—due to visitor management ... and most not tenant's fault. It depends ... sometimes family has a member that tries to help them understand, but others might just want to live with tenant and not pay rent or contribute. It's part of their culture—they can do that just because they are family. <sup>TC\_3</sup>

The employee was drawing attention to the seemingly impossible task of financing house repayments for tenants on low incomes as well as pointing to the degraded state of some housing as a disincentive for purchasing. But also the comments are notable in terms of understanding the recognition space. As a local Indigenous person, the ICLO (now called Housing Officer) believed in the ongoing Aboriginal cultural traditions and understood the conflicting choices that tenants often face, particularly regarding visitors. Her presence in the day-to-day administration of tenancies has been positive for tenants and constructive for building good relationships between DoH and the local community.

Indigenous and community organisations expressed similar goals around the need for secure housing based on local knowledge about social and economic constraints for tenants. Anyinginyi staff knew that 'the Western and Aboriginal sides are always in conflict ... [when tenants say] 'I want to decide on a mix of lifestyles'<sup>TC\_35</sup>. Also the manager of the TTAP recounted the immediate needs as tenants had told him:

Common things people say: I want a place to stay because where I am has no beds (or something) ... They want their space ... sick of crowding.  $^{TC_{-8}}$ 

Through various programs, organisations and NTDoH have collaborated with tenants, although at times the outcomes have not been highly successful, such as the Tenancy Sustainability Program. Nevertheless, tenants revealed that their goals were compatible with the NTDoH and community organisations' understandings and goals regarding secure housing:

- → I want a nice place to live and look after my siblings. They are looking for jobs.<sup>TC\_15</sup>
- $\rightarrow$  I want to have a quiet life for myself and my family.<sup>TC\_17</sup>
- $\rightarrow$  I'm trying to keep up and look after myself. I want to have a roof over my head.  $^{\rm TC_{-19}}$
- $\rightarrow$  I want a nice place to live with my family, with my son.<sup>TC\_23</sup>
- → Quiet place, where I can stay for a long time and where family can visit me.<sup>TC\_24</sup>

These aspirations were acknowledged to some extent by the government staff as they recognised that ASB is changing. According to one long-term Housing Officer:

I have seen change happening ... Tenants are saying to their visitors: 'You got no respect for me when you come in'. More education is happening now from within here [DoH]. Schools and police are working in with us. Change is due to both stronger personnel and policy.  $^{\rm TC_2}$ 

The attitudes contained in the stated goals of government employees, Indigenous and community housing staff and also the tenants suggested a solid foundation for building a stronger recognition space. Regardless of their difficulties in achieving and sustaining tenancies, Indigenous tenants have remained in the Tennant Creek region and will most likely continue to do so because of their traditional and historical connections. The need for more housing will continue and service provision for social housing tenants therefore will also continue to be an important feature in the field of intercultural relations in the town.

### 6.3 Enablers

Our findings from the interview responses suggest that there were several enablers which have assisted tenants to meet the terms of their social housing conditionality, including:

- → Social and cultural capital of Aboriginal residents through links to kin and country.
- $\rightarrow$  Local Indigenous organisations with Aboriginal staff who worked proactively across the various agencies.
- → Staff and leaders employed within local Indigenous organisations who were all concerned about housing issues; similarly, frontline staff of government agencies.
- → Local Aboriginal community member employed by NTDoH formerly as an Indigenous Client Liaison Officer, and now as a Housing Officer.

Most tenant participants belonged to local Aboriginal families with traditional landowning as well as historical connections to the region and the town. These people have long-standing and dynamic social and cultural networks which have developed over recent decades in response to changing powers and economic influences. Aboriginal people in Tennant Creek have negotiated their engagement with a range of institutions and power structures, including Indigenous and community organisations and government agencies (Christen 2009). The ways in which these networks operate not only influenced the social and cultural enablers but also the constraints for Indigenous people in their tenancies.

Several participant tenants were in paid employment with these organisations at the time of their interviews: Anyinginyi (1), BRADAAG (2), TCWR (2) and TTAP (5). Most were casual full-time workers. As employees, they had access to support which is relevant to future tenancies, particularly in the form of references, and in the case of residential clients, the references contributed to their rental history. One participant rented from Anyinginyi Health as an employee in their staff tenancy program. She talked of the respect between staff and the organisation and how well issues were addressed for her as a tenant and employee. This tenant had a prior history of unstable tenancies over several years but through her enhanced position as a staff tenant she was meeting her renting responsibilities to her landlord/employer. Success in this tenancy was also linked to other life goals. In the tenant's words:

What Anyinginyi have given me is a safe home. I can lock the doors and everything—an opportunity to grow as a person, to learn responsibility.<sup> $TC_9$ </sup>

The staff housing program developed by Anyinginyi staff and Board was an enabling program achieved through collaboration by the Board and employees who were Indigenous, local, and, ideologically committed to empowering Aboriginal people in Tennant Creek. These elements combined were arguably the key to its success.

BRADAAG programs were also designed to build client capacity. Two participants who were residential clients saw the potential for improving their positions with respect to future tenancies by participation in the programs. As young women who had been convicted for violent and/or alcohol-related incidents, they knew that they would have to work hard to demonstrate their readiness for mainstream social housing. With good tenant behaviour, a residential client of BRADAAG could be confident of the organisation's support if applying for tenancy with NTDoH. According to one young Aboriginal woman:

BRADAAG programs—health and living skills—teach you to keep your house clean and not broken so when you move out, you get your money [bond] back. Teach you to have a nice place for the kids to grow up. When we're looking after ourselves and the house, following all them rules, it's good. They give you an idea here, and then you can do that when you get out. TC\_5

Several clauses of the BRADAAG agreement with residential clients related to alcohol because the clients have been referred specifically for alcohol rehabilitation. In this regard, the staff were confident of their enabling approach:

BRADAAG don't require total abstinence It doesn't work! Teach responsible drinking—98 per cent who have gone through BRADAAG Family Program have not re-offended. These people visit family who have become clients and also staff, [perhaps] to show-off new babies. They talk to you in the streets—about their child who had a merit badge from school [or some other personal detail].<sup>TC\_6</sup>

With reference to the prisoners, there were many enablers in the pre-release program but particularly in terms of program opportunities and prisoner engagement:

- → Cooperation between stakeholders (BWC, BRADAAG, NTDoH, businesses and employees) has developed positive working relationships.
- → Each day of successful involvement with the program was empowering for the prisoners; the aim being to normalise the work-day for clients who have not achieved in that area of life skills.

The BWC accommodation and work programs were building the capacities of the prisoners to be able to live more responsible lives. The programs constituted a normalising approach in which limited numbers of post-release prisoners have passed through the BRADAAG house. With a commitment to empowering individuals, all parties (BRADAAG, BWC, employees) have been able to focus their support for those few clients. The pre-release program was an important part of this training through which the prisoners were able to establish some good work-behaviours before having to cope with the responsibilities of tenancy. It is of particular concern therefore that the prisoner programs have ceased to operate. From the point of view of senior staff at BRADAAG, the programs were working effectively for the prisoners, but now this avenue for personal and skills development has been removed.

The extent to which the customised tenancy agreements of the organisations contributed to the success of tenancies is open for debate—it would seem, however, that the more simplified models of conditionality were working well for the most disadvantaged clients who had experienced difficulties in either achieving or maintaining tenancies. Individual relationships between clients and staff have also been critical. On the other hand, it is clear that the demise of two innovative housing programs in Tennant Creek (TTAP and the pre- and post-release prisoner accommodation programs) have resulted from a lack of government support particularly regarding funding but also a lack of commitment to relevant policy directions.

## 6.4 Strategies

The findings and analysis presented in this case study highlight the need for critical strategies to develop good policy and practice principles in order to facilitate secure social housing for Indigenous Australians in Tennant Creek and the Barkly region, where there is a huge shortfall in sufficient housing stock. Participants from government, Indigenous and community organisations as well as tenants contributed ideas to this end. The following list includes effective practical strategies currently operating and also strategies yet to be realised:

- → Better integration and cooperation between housing and other service networks to support tenants experiencing vulnerability, such as Tenants Sustainability Program.
- → Support for strong, respected, local Aboriginal community leaders (formerly represented by CERP).
- → Funding for local service providers who are working to (or over) capacity, including the TCWR.
- → Expanded inter-agency cooperation and collaboration, for example between police, schools and NTDoH, particularly over ASB.
- → Empowering local programs for prisoners, including community service, employment/training, transitional housing and Elders' support.
- → Visitor accommodation to support people who travel to Tennant Creek for medical (e.g. regular renal dialysis), court, recreational or familial reasons, thereby reducing the pressure on tenants by visiting kin.
- → Transitional accommodation with supported programs to build tenancy capacity for all vulnerable groups.
- → Locally initiated research and engagement to promote an understanding of Indigenous housing issues in the Barkly region.

Many of these strategies were listed as priorities in the 'Closing the Housing Gap in the Barkly' seminar held in Tennant Creek in October 2014, hosted by NT Shelter and BRAG. The authors reported on this case study and other homelessness research to the workshop which was attended by NTDoH staff and local service providers (see also Memmott & Nash 2014). The above strategies are centred around the understanding that effective change management must be based on wide consultation (including with Aboriginal tenants) in order to develop a clear statement of agreed goals and relevant collaboration. It is also important to define how success will be measured which can assist the process of articulating precise goals. Strong Indigenous leadership was a feature of successful strategies for without the support of local community people with cultural and other authority, it is difficult for an organisation to gain acceptance for a new program or another way of delivering services. Finally, these initiatives require the ongoing commitment of funding bodies so that the recipients can be adequately supported through change in ways that can be maintained.

## 6.5 Key summary points from case study

**Tenant perspectives** 

- → Aboriginal cultural networks based on kin and country as well as historical connections motivate behaviour that often conflicts with tenancy rules.
- → Alcohol and associated ASB persists as a destructive force against housing.
- → Dimensions of Indigenous disadvantage including low levels of education and employment have significant negative impact on achieving and sustaining tenancies.
- → Tenants' experiences of social housing depended on the type of conditionality and level of enforcement.

Government perspectives

- → Lack of funding for maintenance and repair of ageing stock constrained NTDoH's approach to the administration of social housing tenancies.
- → Most government employees believed that Aboriginal cultural practices should be separate from the rules of tenancy and that the rules should not change.
- → Experienced and long-term local frontline workers were willing to compromise with individual tenants regarding the rules.
- → Staff welcomed further inter-agency engagement to support vulnerable tenants.

Indigenous and community organisation perspectives

- → Anyinginyi, the only Indigenous organisation that participated in the study, demonstrated the importance of special tenancy programs for Indigenous people in Tennant Creek.
- → The demise of CERP and the reduced role of Julalikari in tenancy management have destabilised the effectiveness of Indigenous governance in Tennant Creek.
- → BRADAAG, which focused on teaching and reinforcing mainstream behavioural norms around living in houses, saw a need for strong rules and clear conditionality.
- → TTAP program, which linked accommodation and training, struggled to enforce rules for Indigenous clients with high needs because of the negative social pressures on the clients and the lack of staff and other funding.

→ All workers in community organisations were critical of the lack of government funding for social housing in Tennant Creek and the lack of continuity in funding for other supportive programs.

Enhancing the recognition space

- → A common platform for all participants existed around the need for more secure affordable housing in Tennant Creek.
- → Inter-agency cooperation has shown positive results that has allowed NTDoH, the main housing provider, to enhance service for the most disadvantaged tenants in certain ways, such as alcohol restrictions.
- → Strong, local Indigenous persons within organisations were ideally placed to ensure better communication between groups.
- → Respectful and flexible approaches were received well by tenants.
- → Research and engagement on Indigenous housing issues with input from local Indigenous people has highlighted current successes and challenges.
- → Negative impacts of colonial history in Australia and in the Barkly region can be further addressed by greater commitments from all levels of government towards closing the gap that characterises Indigenous disadvantage, such as in achieving positive housing outcomes.

# 7 CONCLUSIONS

Comparison of the different types of conditionality pursued by the NTDoH and other agencies in their tenancy management reflected the agencies' underlying assumptions about services for Indigenous people. The NTDoH's approach is based on rules aimed to ensure that rents are received and properties maintained. The maintenance regime, however, will continue to fall short in providing safe, secure and affordable housing in Tennant Creek because there is not sufficient housing to meet current demand. More housing needs to be built and current ageing housing stock upgraded. The innovative ideas and flexible approach of some Housing Officers cannot overcome this barrier which demoralises tenants. By contrast, the recent staff housing initiative developed by the local Indigenous health organisation, Anyinginyi Health, has taken a more equitable approach. The success of the program will be tested further as the first staff move to home ownership, but meanwhile the balance of case-managed support and opportunities for individual behaviour change within an employment context is proving effective. In a similar way, the collaborative programs for prisoners at the Barkly Work Camp have added a new dimension to those young men's housing, employment prospects and life-path options. Their progress is marked by increased capacity to make better life choices facilitated by developing skills and positive cross-cultural experiences. From the models of conditionality discussed in this case study, it seems clear that locally-developed and Indigenous-managed solutions have opened up new pathways for Indigenous people to achieve positive housing outcomes.

Our conclusions are informed by the knowledge that Indigenous Australians have been subjected to many forms of conditionality since the colonisation process began. For the Warumungu traditional owners and other tribal groups in the Barkly region, their lives have been dominated by the demands of the state regarding where and how Aboriginal people can live, supported by modern laws over traditional Aboriginal lands. Without consultation, Aboriginal people were forced to live marginal lives in tin sheds providing labour for the pastoral industry, or relocated with neighbouring groups into government settlements such as Warrabri (now Ali Curung) out of their own lands. Their day-to-day existence was regulated and their freedom of choice curtailed. Although the Waramungu Land Claim and later native title claims have kept alive the idea of Aboriginal rights in the region, the Aboriginal community has not been able to achieve broad social and economic benefits or even development. This continuing history of disadvantage is embedded in the community's response to imposed rules of all kinds, including housing conditionalities.

Government policy on housing, although based on principles of social inclusion, is not perceived as supportive by the most vulnerable tenants who experience lack of agency and loss of dignity in their dealings with NTDoH. As a result, the effectiveness of the housing conditionality is limited until greater respect can be built between government and the Indigenous community. Government policies and procedures around tenancies have been tightened in an attempt to salvage the old and degrading stock of housing. This approach to managing change in policy settings has not prioritised the housing futures of Aboriginal people. As such, the findings from this case study suggest a case for further humanising the bureaucratic processes around Indigenous social housing tenancies to achieve more effective outcomes and sustainable tenancies, as some local programs have demonstrated to be possible. This kind of attention to principles of respect for cultural difference and to the importance of equity and justice can help to deliver the rights of Indigenous Australians which include the right to safe, secure and affordable housing.

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix 1: IMYRP generic questionnaire

#### IMYRP generic questionnaire

#### **Current rules**

- 1. What are the rules that you/tenants have to follow for your/their house? (Code)
- 2. What is the intended purpose/objective of each of these rules? (Code)
- 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 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 orgs 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]

# Appendix 2: Anyinginyi Aboriginal Staff Housing Program residential tenancy agreement

#### Contents:

#### Aboriginal Staff Housing Program Residential Tenancy Agreement

- 1. Tenancy Agreement (5pp) included in Appendix 2.
- 2. Property Condition Report (5pp) includes items list not included in this Appendix.
- Household and Yard Check List (1p) not included in this Appendix.
   Appendix 1: Residential Tenancies Regulations Schedule 2 (5pp) not included in this Appendix.

TENANT:

.

Address:

**Date Agreement Commenced:** 

# ABORIGINAL STAFF HOUSING PROGRAM RESIDENTIAL TENANCY AGREEMENT

## CONTENTS:

1. Tenancy Agreement

2. Property Condition Report

3. Household and Yard Check List

DRAFT – Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation (Anyinginyi) Aboriginal Housing Policy November 2013 Version 4

#### Appendix 1 – Schedule 2 TENANCY AGREEMENT – RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

#### AGREEMENT made this day ???

BETWEEN the owners Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation (in this agreement called the Landlord) whose address is 1 Irvine St, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory

And (Tenant Name) of (Address??) Tennant Creek, Northern Territory (in this agreement called "the tenant")

WHEREBY the Landlord agrees to let the Property being the house and grounds at (address??), Tennant Creek (hereinafter referred to as the Property)

To the Tenant together with the use of the grounds and access deemed as common property with the Landlord and all other authorized persons.

A bond amounting to (1 month's rent) due and payable on the date of this lease but may be paid in fortnightly payroll deductions of (fortnightly rental amount) per fortnight and completion of payment will be 8 weeks from commencement and will be refunded to the Tenant on termination of this lease if the Property is returned in good order and condition. Standard bond is (1 month's rent), however if you have animals an extra \$100 is required to cover damages should any occur. Property must be pet approved.

Flat Accommodation is \$160 per week.

Utilities: Power, Gas, Landline usage is at your own cost. Ensure all Power Accounts are in Tenants name and they pay for connection of same, if not on power card. Prior to vacating premises, a final power reading must be obtained and receipt of payment given to Anyinginyi. If not paid any monies owing to tenant will be deducted from final payout.

The term of this agreement is to commence on (date) This Lease will be for the term of employment with AHAC.

DRAFT - Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation (Anyinginyi) Aboriginal Housing Policy November 2013 Version 4

Tenant will vacate the accommodation provided by AHAC within 30 days after the end of employment. Weekly rental payments are still required to be paid during the 30 day period. Rent will cease upon departure. If the Tenant wishes to vacate the Property at any time the prior to the end of their Contract Date, Tenant must first give to the Landlord not less than four weeks notice in writing of their intention to do so.

Property Inspections: Property Inspections will be carried out every 3 months for which you will be given seven (7) day's notice in advance.

When vacating premises, Bond monies will not be reimbursed until AHAC have completed final inspection of your property. Should property not be left in appropriate condition or if for any reason there is an issue, you will be given an opportunity to fix the situation otherwise AHAC will use a cleaner for which you will be responsible for payment of. This payment will be deducted from your bond monies and if the cost is more, the balance will be deducted from your final payout.

The terms of this lease will be in accordance with the standard Residential Tenancy Agreement of the Northern Territory (Schedule 2 of Residential Tenancies Regulations) [See Appendix] with the following additional clauses:

The Tenant agrees:

- 1. To maintain and replace electric light globes, tubes and starters.
- To use the Property solely for private residential purposes and not for any other purpose without the written consent of the Landlord.
- Not to create or suffer to be done anything that might render void or voidable or otherwise prejudice any insurance on the property or cause any premiums on the Property to be increased.
- Maintain neat and tidy property and grounds and provide due care to rental property infrastructure.

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5.	Replace at cost at damaged items or damages not caused by the
	Landlord or Landlord services.
6.	Tenants with animals (in approved pet accommodations) are
	required to rectify any caused damages and to ensure restraint and safety of animals towards fellow tenants or members of the public.
	More than three evidenced breaches or severity of these points ma
	result in eviction.
7.	Secure property and grounds upon entry and exit as security
	infrastructure provided by Landlord.
8.	Be respectful of neighbours, especially those living in multi dwelling
	complexes.
9.	Full participation in the Aboriginal Housing Program policy
	conditions.
The	Landlord must:
	Replace major high use capital items, i.e. stove, air conditioning,
	promptly.
•	<ul> <li>Perform repairs and maintenance (not cause by damages by tenant or tenant's associates) as required.</li> </ul>
	Arrange yearly termite and pest inspections and if required
	administer appropriate treatment at no cost to the Tenant.
App	roved persons of Residence.
Roci	dency of non approved residents as per the Aboriginal Housing Policy
	result in warnings and eviction for repeated breaches.

1.0	
2	
	It is noted at any time during tenancy a Housing Rationalization on
	bedroom ratio may occur of which the Tenant must comply with the
	outcomes.
	I serve to the conditions of the losse for tensors, of the present,
	<ol> <li>agree to the conditions of the lease for tenancy of the property at , Tennant Creek.</li> </ol>
	at , Termant Creek.
	Signed Dated:
	Signed
	We, AHAC, herein referred to as the Landlord, agree to the conditions of
	the lease for tenancy of the property at , Tennant Creek.
	SignedDated:
	DDODEDTV CONDITION
	PROPERTY CONDITION
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	2013 Version 4

# Appendix 3: BRADAAG agreement

	RESIDENT AGREEMENT
l,	
Agree \$	to live at Unit, /124 Ambrose Street, Tennant Creek and to pay , per Week to BRADAAG. on the following conditions:
1.	A bond of Four (4) Weeks and Two (2) Weeks in advance is to be paid in advance before moving into the Unit. On departure and once a full inspection of the property and it contents is conducted and is in the same condition that you entered the property and confirmation that payments are up to date. The bond will be refunded to the provider of this Bond.
2.	A key deposit of <u>\$100.00</u> is to be paid in advance and on vacating the Unit and the handing over of all keys prior to departure you will be refunded this deposit.
3.	I understand that I am not permitted to have any extra keys cut. If I requir any extra keys cut I will seek the approval from Bradaag Chief Executive Officer, Corporate Services Manager or Operation Manager.
4.	All Payments of monies will be made by automatic deduction via Centrepay through Centrelink or Employer or direct debits through my Bank Account are arranged prior to me residing at this unit.
5.	Failure to be Two Weeks in advance at all time of payment for staying in this unit without approval from BRADAAG, will result in termination of this agreement and will result in immediate eviction.
6.	I will ensure the Unit is kept clean and tidy and the care of any furniture and fittings are my responsibility while I am living at the BRADAAG Transitional Housing Unit Complex. Excluding general wear of the furniture and fittings.
7.	I will ensure at all times that the area directly around my unit is kept free or rubbish and litter. I will ensure that the lawn and my Back area are to be kept cut and in good condition. A rubbish Bin is provided and is my responsibility to put out for the collection of rubbish on weekly basis.
8.	I will not store or permit to be stored, any petrol, explosives or inflammabl material on the property.
9.	I will not light any fires in or near the property.

Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug A Group Inc	buse Auvisory
29. The period of this Resident Agreement is from the	Đ
of this Resident Agreement will take place no less prior to the expiry date of this Resident Agreemen by BRADDAG Corporate Services Manager in reli- all negotiations regarding this Agreement will take	<ol> <li>You will be contacted ation to this renewal and</li> </ol>
Special Conditions;	
I acknowledge that a breach of any of the above	
in me and any resident in my unit being evicted a being called to take the appropriate action.	and/or the Police
My postal address is:	
Phone:	
Phone: Resident Signature	
Resident Signature	
Resident Signature	

	RESIDENTIAL ADM	ISSION AGREEMENT
Name	:	
Clien	t ID	DOB:
1	accept	t the following terms and conditions for
the le	ngth of my stay in BRADAAG Res	
•	I agree to abide by BRADAAG Res attached)	sidential Attendance Conditions (see
•	I will not possess alcohol and/or ot	her substances both legal and illegal
•	I will not consume alcohol and/or non prescribed drugs at any time whether or or off the premises	
•	I will not possess any form of drugs administered by BRADAAG Staff	s unless medically prescribed and
	I agree to breathalyser testing	
	I agree to inspections of my person	
	allocated work place and any other	es of the BRADAAG Residential Program, r area as directed by BRADAAG Staff
•	I agree to take part in all aspects of motivated to demonstrate improver	f the BRADAAG Treatment Program, being ment of my life skills
•		d board of \$175.00 per week, which is s or the BRADAAG Financial system
•		y income through a Trust Account and o information about this account on my nt management will be on record)
	I agree to a Medical Examination w	가지는 것은 것이 가지 않는 것은 것은 것은 것을 수많이 지지 않는 것이 없다. 것은 것은 것은 것을 하는 것이 없다. 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것을 하는 것은 것을 하는 것은 것을 하는 것은 것을 수 있다. 것은 것은 것은 것을 수 있다. 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것을 수 있다. 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것을 수 있다. 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것은 것을 수 있다. 것은
•	I understand that this agreement d and grants no right of tenancy with	loes not form a lease or rental agreement BRADAAG
•		agreement and am aware that failing to and conditions may result in immediate esidential Treatment Program
Client	Signature:	Date:
Staff S	Signature:	Date:

# Appendix 4: Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project tenancy agreement

	6
	eldorado
1	Tenancy Agreement MUTOR INN #
PO Box 65 Tennant Creek Phone:	gement Pty Ltd T/As ELDORADO MOTOR INN K NT 0861, 195 Paterson Street Tennant Creek NT 0860 C08) 8962 2402 Fax: (08) 8962 3034 orinn.com.au Website: www.eldoradomotorinn.com.au
	<u>~</u>
Contacts	
Date:	
Surname:	First Name:
Room Number:	
Alternative Residential/Postal Addre	*\$5:
Contact Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Emergency Contact Name:	
	<i>¥</i>
Name of any additional persons livin	
Rent	
	ce. Rent can be paid in person by cash, eftpos, and credit card or
via Centrelink payments. In order to Motor Inn staff provide support for 1	move in, the first week must be paid in advance. Eldorado the tenant to work with Centrelink.
Terms	
	Motor inn must agree to the following terms:
	d tidy at the manager's discretion and will be inspected weekly.
b) There must be no excessive	noise and there is to be no noise made during the hours of 9pm
<ul><li>7am.</li><li>c) All residents must be respec</li></ul>	tful of their neighbours.
lPage	

		eldorado	
		Tenancy Agreement MOTOR INN 7	
	_	Newman Management Pty Ltd T/As ELDORADO MOTOR INN	
		PO Box 65 Tennant Creek NT 0861, 195 Paterson Street Tennant Creek NT 0860 Phone: (08) 8962 2402 Fax: (08) 8962 3034	
		Email: info@eldoradomotorinn.com.au Website: www.eldoradomotorinn.com.au	
	d)	Inappropriate language or behaviour towards any guest or resident is not acceptable. This	
		includes threatening, abusing, physically assaulting another person or making racial	
		comments. This behaviour will result in an immediate eviction.	
	e}	No person is to enter another person's room without permission.	
	f)	Guests of residents must park behind the Northern complex (airport side) and not inside the	
		fenced area or on the grass.	
		Water usage rules must be followed.	
0.	h}	You must not intentionally/recklessly cause/permit damage at the Eldorado Motor Inn. Any	
		damage caused by the resident will be responsible for the replacement or repairs at the cost	
	1.00	in full to the person that caused the damage. Repeat offenses will result in eviction.	
	0.000	Tampering with Fire Alarms will result in an immediate eviction.	
	1)	No pets allowed. After three warnings, the animal will be removed. Under no circumstances	
	125	are there to be pets in the rooms.	
	K)	All schools aged children must be showered, fed and be ready for the school bus at 7:45am	
		every morning. Free cereal and toast are available for the children 7 days a week at the	
		restaurant and there are wake up calls for all rooms that have school aged children. If you	
	-	require support in getting your children to school, please see management.	
	1)	Any faults or damage to the Eldorado Motor Inn in your room or on the premises must be	
		reported to the manager.	
	m)	There is to be no illegal conduct or nuisance on the premises, including humbugging or	
		stealing. The result will be an eviction after three warnings.	
5	0.030	No fires are to be lit unless under the supervision of Anyinginyi Men's program.	
e Har	0)	Tenants are not allowed to lend or pass their room or gate key onto anyone else under any circumstances. If another person requires access to a room, please see Management. There	
		will be a \$20.00 charge for replacement gate card and \$20.00 for replacement room key.	
		[일상] 정상 2월 14월 15일 - 16월 18일 - 16월 18일 - 2월 18월 18일 - 2월 18월 18일 - 2월 18월 18일 - 2월 18일 - 29 18] - 29 18] - 29 18] - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 183 - 29 18	
	-1	\$20.00 deposit must be paid to receive your first key.	
	1.2.2.2	Children under the age of 18 are not allowed in the pool without adult supervision.	
	(P	All tenants are required to keep the front of their rooms clean and tidy and remove the	
		rubbish where appropriate. If the Tenant or child uses the lawn, then a daily rubbish removal	
		is required by parents. No chairs are to be left on the lawn and no one is to touch the	
		sprinklers or hoses.	
	r)	All tenants must not touch the fire hoses. They are there in case of emergency and they	
		need to be kept in good working condition.	
	5)	All tenants are responsible for changing the garbage bins over. Bins are emptied every day at the Pacturent	
		the Restaurant. Air-conditioners are not to be used when the tenant is not in the room.	
	u)	Visiting hours are strictly between 9-7:30pm.	

	Tenancy Agreement
	Newman Management Pty Ltd T/As ELDORADO MOTOR INN PO Box 65 Tennant Creek NT 0861, 195 Paterson Street Tennant Creek NT 0860 Phone: (08) 8962 2402 Fax: (08) 8962 3034
	Email: info@eldoradomotorinn.com.au Website: www.eldoradomotorinn.com.au
	v) The Northern block is an alcohol free zone and any resident that is caught drunk or disorderly will be removed immediately from the premises.
	nduction
,	All new residents are required to undertake an Induction. The induction will include the following;
	<ul> <li>Procedures in case of Fire and Fire evacuation plan</li> <li>Room cleaning expectations</li> <li>Introduction to the TTAP Program</li> <li>Additional introduction for school aged children program and school plan</li> <li>Discussion and clarification of the Tenancy Agreement and Financial agreement support (in conjunction with Centrelink if applicable).</li> <li>Alcohol and Violence no tolerance expectations</li> <li>All tenants are required to undertake this one-on-one induction lesson on how the room is to be sept and maintained. The Eldorado Motor Inn provides all the necessary equipment that is required to clean a room.</li> <li>One weeks' notice is required for Tenants wishing to vacate the premises. The Eldorado Motor Inn will support the Tenant to leave the room in the same state the person moved in.</li> </ul>
ہ ۱	f necessary. If Management feels that a tenant is not making reasonable effort to reduce the debt, Management will evict an person with one weeks' notice. The room is fitted with equipment and assets that need to be maintained and kept in good condition. Checklist is to be completed by the tenant prior to moving in.
	Room Checklist Tick Fridge Flat screen television
	Queen bed Single bed Toaster Kettle

# Appendix 5: NTDoH housing rules

(Tennant Creek Housing Office, NTDOH, 29/4/14.)

- PLEASE CLEAN YOUR DIRTY DISHES WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED. WIPE THE BENCHES CLEAN.
- · DO NOT PUT FOOD AND FAT DOWN THE KITCHEN DRAIN.
- ALL FOOD TO BE PUT INTO THE RUBBISH BIN. FAT TO BE POURED OUT IN THE BACK YARD, NOT IN THE DRAINS.
- WIPE OUT CUPBOARDS.
- STOVE TO BE WIPED AND CLEANED AFTER COOKING.
- · DO NOT SPIT ON WALLS.
- DO NOT DRAW ON WALLS.
- CLEAN WALLS WITH SUGAR SOAP.
- · WIPE OVER CEILING FANS WITH A DAMP CLOTH.
- REMOVE SPIDER WEBS WITH A BROOM.
- · CLEAN BATHROOM WALLS AND TILES WITH SUGAR SOAP.
- FLUSH TOILET PAPER ONLY, NOTHING ELSE, AS TOILET WILL BE BLOCKED.
- CLEAN WITH TOILET BRUSH WITH VINEGAR OR DISINFECTANT.
- SWEEP FLOORS AND MOP WITH SUGAR SOAP OR DISINFECTANT.
- PLACE COCKROACH BAITS UNDER THE STOVE AND FRIDGE EVERY 3 MONTHS.
- TURN OFF ALL TAPS.
- KEEP YARD CLEAN BY PUTTING ALL RUBBISH IN THE BIN.
- · CUT GRASS.
- TURN OFF ALL TAPS IN THE YARD.
- NOBODY TO SWING ON CLOTHESLINE.
- DO NOT HANG ANYTHING HEAVY ON CLOTHESLINE.
- · MAKE SURE NO RUBBISH GOES DOWN THE DRAIN, IT IS ONLY FOR WATER.
- BEWARE BROKEN DOWN VEHICLES IN YOUR YARD. YOU MAY BE CHARGED FOR ITS REMOVAL.

INTENTIONAL DAMAGE

- YOU SHOULD NEVER LET ANYBODY DAMAGE YOUR HOME. YOU MAY HAVE TO PAY FOR IT TO BE FIXED. YOU NEED TO REPORT ALL INTENTIONAL DAMAGE STRAIGHT AWAY.
- BREAKING LOCKS ON DOORS
- · BREAKING, PUNCHING OR KICKING HOLES IN WALLS.
- · RIPPING OUT LIGHT FITTINGS, POWER POINTS OR SWITCHES.
- FIRE CAUSED BY SOMEONE SMOKING IN YOUR HOUSE OR LEAVING FOOD COOKING ON THE STOVE.
- RIPPING SHELVING AND OTHER FIXTURES OFF WALLS. HOLES AND RIPS IN FLYSCREENS CAUSED BY PEOPLE OR PETS.
- BREAKING WINDOWS OR LIGHTS.

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