

ABORIGINAL HOSTELS LIMITED – CEO OPENING STATEMENT

I wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I thank the Committee for the request for Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) to appear at today's hearing.

AHL's focus, since our previous Committee appearance last October has been on supporting the safety of residents and staff. AHL has worked responsively to mitigate and manage the risks presented by COVID-19. As we have a national footprint, cooperation with state and territory bodies has been a key aspect of our response. Clear communication takes on greater significance in times of challenge and our messages have been informed by relevant expertise and tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences.

The resilience and flexibility of our staff has enabled AHL to continue to deliver services for our residents. Although trends in local demand have been difficult to predict throughout this period, at a national level, year to date occupancy has been steady, and above our target of 70%. This speaks to the continued demand for culturally appropriate accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a need which AHL will continue to meet, noting that accommodation is a key enabler of effective economic and social participation.

I am proud that we are one of the largest employers of Indigenous people in the Australian Public Service and remain committed to building on this achievement.

AHL's support for the Indigenous economy goes beyond the employment opportunities that we provide. With a strong year to date Indigenous procurement rate of 31%, AHL's backing of Indigenous business has created flow-on benefits to families and communities.

The executive and I welcome the opportunity to assist the Committee with its inquiries today.