




NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation
Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands

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Reducing the incidence & impact of homelessness on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

A response to the House of
Representatives' inquiry into
homelessness in Australia

SUBMISSION

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About NACCHO

NACCHO is the national peak body representing 143 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) Australia wide on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing issues. NACCHO's work is focussed on liaising with governments, its membership, and other organisations on health and wellbeing policy and planning issues and advocacy relating to health service delivery, health information, research, public health, health financing and health programs.

Our Members provide about 3.1 million episodes of care per year for about 350,000 people across Australia, which includes about 800,000 episodes of care in very remote and outer regional areas.

Sector Support Organisations, also known as Affiliates, are State based and also represent ACCHOs offering a wide range of support services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs to their Members including advocacy, governance training and advocacy on State and Territory Government health care policies and programs.

Affiliates also support ACCHOs to deliver accessible, responsive and culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The leadership and support provided by Affiliates strengthens governance and financial expertise in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health sector. Affiliates provide a strong interface for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health sector with the national reform agenda occurring in the health system. Together NACCHO and Affiliates harness better coordinated, more cohesive and cost-effective mechanisms for stakeholder and community engagement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues, and providing advice to Federal, State and Territory Governments.

ACCHOs range from large multi-functional services employing several medical practitioners and providing a wide range of services, to small services which rely on Aboriginal Health Workers/Practitioners and/or nurses to provide the bulk of primary care services, often with a preventive, health education focus. Our 143 ACCHOs operate approximately 700 facilities, including about 450 clinics. ACCHOs and their facilities and clinics contribute to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing through the provision of comprehensive holistic primary health care, and by integrating and coordinating care and services. Many provide home and site visits; provision of medical, public health and health promotion services; Allied Health; nursing services; assistance with making appointments and transport; help accessing childcare or dealing with the justice system; drug and alcohol services; and providing help with income support.

Across the sector we employ about 6,000 staff, 56 per cent of whom are Indigenous, which makes us the single largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the country.

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Introduction

We welcome this opportunity to respond to your inquiry into homelessness in Australia. In making this submission we received valuable input from our Affiliates: Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC); Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA); Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT); and Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, with one in five (20%) of the 116,000 people homeless in Australia identifying as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Overcrowding is increasingly prevalent, making household members further susceptible to the burden of disease, psychological distress and other health and wellbeing issues.¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face a range of issues that prevent them from accessing housing that is affordable, adequate, safe and sustainable.

Future initiatives for increasing housing and reducing homelessness must be developed through formal partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative peak bodies. Such partnership must be built on the three current (and one proposed) Priority Reforms in the current Partnership Agreement between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments in developing the Closing the Gap 2020-30 Framework.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss our recommendations with you.

Key points

- Affordable, adequate, safe and sustainable housing is essential for health and wellbeing.
- Issues that contribute to homelessness, and also escalate during a period of homelessness, are disproportionately experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include chronic disease, mental health issues, long standing inequity issues related to access to and provision of health and other support services, and pervasive educational, social and economic disadvantage.
- A disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience inadequate housing, resulting in severe overcrowding and rough sleeping and exacerbating a range of health conditions, increasing the proportionately higher burden of disease suffered by our community.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the least likely of any group within the corrections system to be able to find appropriate accommodation on release—particularly if they have dependent children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women released from prison find it difficult to find stable accommodation and often remain homeless or return to prison after nine months.
- ACCHOs deliver a wide range of comprehensive primary healthcare services that assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless, and with additional funding these services can be further expanded.
- Without housing being addressed, closing the gap targets cannot be achieved.
- Addressing the homelessness and housing disadvantage experienced by generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is essential to the achieving outcomes set up in the Australian Government's health and broader social policy platforms.
- Formal agreement making that aligns with the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments is essential to the development and delivery of future housing and homelessness initiatives at national, state, territory and local levels.

¹ Shanaka, H., Bentley, R. (2017). *Crowding, housing and health: An exploratory study of Australian cities*. Accessed 24/1/2020.

Recommendations

1. That a formal partnership between the Australian, State and Territory Governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives be established to:
 - expand the funding and timeframe of the current National Partnership on Remote Housing to match at least that of the former National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing
 - as an immediate action, improve the availability of and access to emergency and temporary housing (with wraparound support services)
 - invest in supporting people who are homeless into permanent secure housing (with wraparound support services)
 - conduct an audit of the number of new and refurbished houses required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia
 - reinvigorate rent-to-buy social housing initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - make a larger and long-term investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations, and increase their capacity to be registered housing providers
 - create a greater number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified VET and higher education programs, as well as jobs housing construction and maintenance, and
 - invest in data collection, reporting and evaluation programs to better monitor the impact of Aboriginal housing policy against health indicators and ensures Aboriginal data sovereignty by aligning with the fourth Reform Priority proposed by the Coalition of the Peaks.
2. That the Australian Government:
 - extend the current rate of Jobseeker Allowance for the duration of the pandemic and that the rate be significantly increased from the pre-existing level once the pandemic has passed, and
 - increase Rent Assistance to more closely align with actual rental rates.
3. That funding be redirected from mainstream service providers to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to provide permanent accommodation and wrap-around services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless and at risk of being homeless.
4. That funding be redirected from mainstream service providers to ACCHOs to deliver Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) services to people who are homeless and at risk of being homeless.
5. That greater funding to community-controlled transitional and crisis accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exiting prison is sustainably funded.

Homelessness and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Homelessness is a significant and growing issue in Australia, with more than 116,000 Australians estimated to have been homeless in 2016. Of these, around 51,000 (44%) were living in severely crowded dwellings, over 21,000 (18%) were in supported accommodation for the homeless and 8,200 (7%) were rough sleepers.² Many Australians who 'couch surf' are at risk of becoming rough sleepers.³

Affordability of rent and mortgage repayments is a major issue, with around 1.3 million Australians experiencing rental stress and near or below poverty levels.⁴ Even before the pandemic, one in five

² AIHW, 2019. *Homelessness and homelessness services*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/>

³ Pawson, H., 2020, *Coronavirus lays bare 5 big housing system flaws to be fixed*, <https://theconversation.com/>

⁴ Pawson, H., 2020, *Coronavirus lays bare 5 big housing system flaws to be fixed*, <https://theconversation.com/>

mortgage holders were struggling to meet repayments.⁵ Further compounding the national issue are long waiting lists for social housing.⁶

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately impacted, with one in five (20%) of the 116,000 people homeless in Australia identifying as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.⁷ The situation is particularly dire in the Northern Territory, where the rate of homelessness is 12 times higher than the national rate, and of those who are homeless 88% are Aboriginal, 83% are in severe overcrowding and 71% live in remote communities.³

The actual rate of homelessness may be higher than recorded levels due to overcrowding not being reported to landlords (due to the risk of eviction or rent being increased if there are excess people living in the house) and not everyone taking part in the census. Living temporarily in the home of a friend or family member for cultural, community or country responsibilities, temporary employment or to access services is commonly not perceived as comprising a period of homelessness. In addition, exact homelessness figures are difficult to measure because some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, regardless of how and where they are sleeping, do not perceive themselves as being homeless provided they are on Country.

The rate of homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is at great risk of significantly increasing due to current housing stock not sustainably accommodating our current and growing population. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia is expected to grow to around 1,060,000 by 2031, which is a 63% increase from the 650,000 people counted in the 2016 Australian census.⁸ Housing policy frameworks and investment must account for this expected growth in population (and the burgeoning housing and health needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

People who rent their home are more susceptible to housing insecurity and homelessness compared to those who own their home, with inadequate protection for tenants in tenancy laws being a large cause of instability. Housing rental and tenancy issues are particularly pertinent to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to a greater proportion (57%—or around 151,000 households) renting their residence as compared to owning it (38.1%). This is compared to two-thirds of other Australians (5.4 million households) being homeowners and only 32% (2.6 million) renting their residence.⁹ Housing affordability is particularly an issue in remote communities, where incomes are lower and unemployment, underemployment and dependency on income support payments are higher. Inability to afford rent results in overcrowding or rough sleeping.

Racial discrimination is often reported as a large contributor to tenancy issues, involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people not being able to secure and keep a rental property. Rent models for remote housing implemented in various jurisdictions are inconsistent, and need to come into closer alignment with social housing policy objectives of affordability and fairness.¹⁰

The concept of ‘spiritual homelessness’—of being disconnected from one’s homeland, kinship networks, heritage, family and community, must also be considered.¹¹ Spiritual homelessness can involve someone feeling homeless when absent from Country despite residing in adequate housing, and conversely someone who is living on Country but sleeping rough can feel that they are not homeless. Accordingly, adequate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Country is essential. .

⁵ Pawson, H., 2020, *Coronavirus lays bare 5 big housing system flaws to be fixed*, <https://theconversation.com/>

⁶ Pawson, H., 2020, *Coronavirus lays bare 5 big housing system flaws to be fixed*, <https://theconversation.com/>

⁷ ABS, 2016. Homelessness. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/2049.0Media%20Release12016>

⁸ Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), (2011). CAEPR Indigenous Population Project 2011 Census Papers, Paper no.14 Population Projections. Australian National University.

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). A Focus Report on Housing and Homelessness. Canberra.

¹⁰ Australian Housing Urban Research Institute (AHURI). (2019). What is a funding gap and ways to fund it. [Accessed 12/2/2020](#).

¹¹ Spinney, A., & Habibis, D., 2016. *How funding mix affects homelessness support for Indigenous Australians*. AHURI.

The legacy of colonisation, including the displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their ancestral lands, has exacerbated issues associated with inadequate housing and homelessness. The impacts of homelessness and inadequate housing can persist across multiple generations, and contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being more vulnerable, distrustful and resistant to engaging with government and mainstream services.³ While ACCHOs and other ACCOs deliver services to people who are homeless, very few ACCOs specifically are funded to provide accommodation and wrap-around services.

Accordingly, it is imperative that the Australian, State and Territory Governments redirect funding from non-Aboriginal mainstream services to establishing an Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing sector, including tenancy, rent-to-purchase and housing maintenance programs.

Contributing factors

Various factors that impact homelessness include low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment and income support payments, physical and mental health conditions and the harmful use of substances.¹² The lack of adequate income and limited access to affordable and available housing escalate the risk of homelessness.¹³ Issues that contribute to homelessness, and also escalate during a period of homelessness, include chronic disease, mental health issues, long standing inequity issues related to service provision and access to health and other support services, and pervasive social and economic disadvantage. Poverty enhances and entrenches the impact of inadequate housing and homelessness, making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people more susceptible to preventable illness and premature death.¹⁷

Over a quarter (27%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in overcrowded houses, which is largely a result of needing to share housing due lack of supply, low incomes and high rent. Constructing homes with poor-quality materials leads faster rates of deterioration,⁷ which in turn perpetuates overcrowding as people may need to stay with family and/or friends. Some people may have been evicted from elsewhere, recently moved from another region, be facing family problems, be needing to access local services or be fulfilling funeral or other family, cultural and/or country obligations.¹⁴

There has been a disproportionate increase in the number of families who are homeless due to family violence,¹⁵ with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also more likely to experience family violence than other Australians.¹⁶

A disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared to other Australians have greater contact with the criminal justice system. Families often relocate to be closer to kin in gaol and in so doing reside with another family, which contributes to overcrowding.¹⁷

Overcrowding

Overcrowding is the most common form of homelessness. People living in 'severely' crowded dwellings, defined as requiring additional bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there, has been the greatest contributor to Australia's increase in homelessness.¹⁸ Of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were homeless in 2018, three in four (75%) were living in severely crowded households.¹⁹ It is not uncommon in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for up to 17 people to share a 3-bedroom house, and Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT) have reported

¹² Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., & Johnsen, S., 2013. *Pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness*. Urban Studies..

¹³ Wood, G., Batterham, D., & Cigdem, M., 2015. *The structural drivers of homelessness in Australia 2001-11*. AHURI.

¹⁴ AHURI. (2012). Australian Indigenous House Crowding. Final Report No. 194. Accessed 12/2/2020.

¹⁵ Valentine, K., 2020, *Supporting families effectively through the homelessness services system*, AHURI No. 330

¹⁶ AHMAC, 2017. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report*. Canberra.

¹⁷ AHMAC, 2017. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report*. Canberra.

¹⁸ AHM, 2019. https://issr.uq.edu.au/files/3347/FINAL_for_print_AHM_full_report.pdf

¹⁹ AIHW, 2019. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/1654e011-dccb-49d4-bf5b-09c4607eccc8/aihw-hou-301.pdf.aspx>

23 people living in a three bedroom house.²⁰ Overcrowding does not only occur in regional and remote regions but also urban settings.

Overcrowding leads to a wide range of problems that affect a range of life and health outcomes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in overcrowded households at increased risk a range of health conditions and problems (including Rheumatic Heart Disease, scabies and a range of communicable diseases), psychological distress and other health and wellbeing issues.²¹ Figure 1 shows the multiple impacts of residential or housing factors on the susceptibility of developing a range of acute conditions, including gastrointestinal, skin, ear, eye and respiratory conditions.²² These risks and issues have become particularly critical during the current coronavirus pandemic.

Psychosocial stress and ill health due to overcrowded environments is often a result of a lack of food security, the sharing of resources, exposure to tensions and conflict, the lack of privacy and personal space and the prevalence of infectious and chronic disease.¹⁴ Parental engagement, such as reading and doing homework with children, is impeded, as are household rules and routines, including sleep, which in turn hinders a child's development and educational success as well as their general health and wellbeing.²³

The coronavirus pandemic has brought into sharper focus the overcrowded conditions and other aspects of housing disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which severely restricts the ability to self-isolate and increases vulnerability if infected. Overcrowding increases co-morbidity, making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people more susceptible to infection in a pandemic. Poor maintenance of housing stock and a lack of washing, bathing and ablution facilities further increase the risk of spreading the virus.

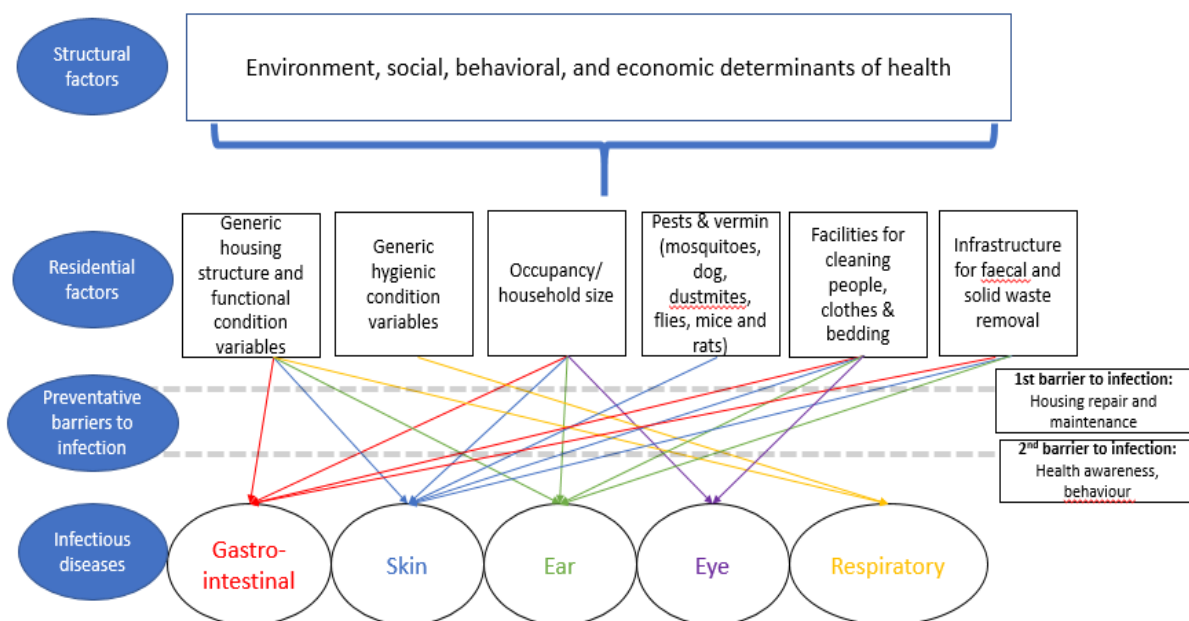


Figure 1 Links between housing and infectious diseases¹⁶

²⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329765983_The_'invisible_homeless'

²¹ Shanaka, H., & Bentley, R., 2017. *Crowding, housing and health*. Accessed 24/1/2020.

²² Hall, N., Memmt, P., et al., 2020. 'Pilyii Papulu Purrukaj-ji (Good housing to prevent sickness). Northern Territory. Adapted from Ali, S., et al., 2018. The Relationship between Infectious Diseases and Housing Maintenance in Indigenous Australian Households. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 15.

²³ Lowitja Institute, 2019, Growing up children in two worlds, <https://www.lowitja.org.au/page/research>

Inadequate housing and health hardware

A result of overcrowding is stress and wear and tear on the infrastructure of the dwelling, including food preparation areas, bathrooms, laundry facilities and sewerage systems. More than one in three (35%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households live in dwellings with one or more major structural problems, and nearly one in six (15%) lack basic facilities in working order.¹¹

The lack of affordable, secure and safe housing has a range of negative impacts, including poor physical and mental health, lower rates of employment and education participation, and social exclusion and disadvantage.²⁴ Inadequate housing and poorly functioning health hardware also causes greater incidence of rough sleeping, accidents,²⁵ diseases (including gastroenteritis, parasitic infections, skin conditions and communicable diseases such as Hep A).^{26 27 28} and psychosocial stress and other social and emotional issues.⁹

Homelessness and prisoners

Homelessness is a significant issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when entering and exiting prison. A 2015 report found that 27% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison entrants reported being homeless in the four weeks prior to imprisonment, and 31% of prison those discharged were expecting to be homeless once their prison term finished.²⁹ Homelessness following a prison term increases the risk of recidivism.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the least likely of any group within the corrections system to be able to find appropriate accommodation on release—particularly if they have dependent children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women released from prison find it difficult to find stable accommodation and often remain homeless or return to prison after nine months.³⁰

There is a critical need for more community-controlled transitional and crisis accommodation to be sustainably funded for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exiting prison.

Federal and state/territory government investment

Homelessness and inadequate housing among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in rural and remote communities, is largely a result of inadequate funding and a lack of clear delineation of policy responsibility between Federal, State and Territory Governments. While in 1967 the Australian Government acquired constitutional powers to legislate in respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the responsibility for the majority of policies applicable to Aboriginal people, including housing, was not removed from State and Territory Governments, but became a shared responsibility.³¹

Some recent national initiatives include:

- The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, providing \$1.5 billion a year for three years from 1 July 2018 to states and territories for housing need, including Aboriginal housing in urban, inner and outer regional areas with high overcrowding rates, as well as some remote regions.
- The Federal Government has separate funding agreements over five years for remote Aboriginal housing with Queensland (\$105 million), Western Australia (\$121m), South Australia (\$37.5m) and the Northern Territory (\$550m).

²⁴ AIHW, 2019. *Indigenous housing*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-housing>

²⁵ AIHW & AIFS, 2013. *Housing Strategies that Improve Indigenous Health Outcomes. Resource sheet no. 25*.

²⁶ Bailie, R., McDonald, E., Stevens, M., Guthridge, S., & Brewster, D., 2011. Evaluation of an Australian Indigenous housing programme. *J Epidemiol Comm Health*. 65(5): 432-7.

²⁷ Booth, A., & Carroll, N., 2005. *Overcrowding and Indigenous Health in Australia*. Discussion paper no. 498. Centre for Economic Policy Research, ANU. Accessed 10/1/2020.

²⁸ Farrar, A., Barbato, C., & Phibbs, P., 2012. *How community housing strengthens communities*. Accessed 25/1/2020.

²⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The Health of Australia's Prisoners* (2015) 28

³⁰ Eileen Baldry et al, 'Ex-Prisoners, Homelessness and the State in Australia' (2006) 39(1) *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 8

³¹ AHURI. (2004). *Indigenous Housing & Governance: Case Studies from Remote WA & NT*, No. 66. Accessed 12/2/2020.

The intention of the National Partnership on Remote Housing was to meet around half of the remote housing need.³² However, the Federal Government has withdrawn from their leadership role without negotiation, discussion or agreement with State and Territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This lack of clear responsibility and accountability for housing policy and funding has left Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in limbo while affordable housing supply decreases and housing standards deteriorate.

Greater Australian, State and Territory Government investment in housing construction makes sense based on current and projected housing need and nearly one in ten Australians work in the construction industry. In addition, many more Australians are employed locally in the production of building products.³³ About 6% of Australian jobs are related to housing.³⁴ Investment in social housing would reduce the number of people living in precarious private rentals³⁵, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people disproportionately affected.

Strategies should prioritise routine social housing construction on a scale that at least keeps pace with population growth, which is 15,000 homes a year—around five times the current number, yet still below levels regularly achieved between 1955 and 1975.³⁶ ACCOs specialising in housing and homelessness prevention and responses should be funded to supply culturally appropriate social housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Australian Government's HomeBuilder stimulus scheme targets higher income earners renovating their homes, it does not address over-crowding or homelessness. In order to address homelessness and overcrowding, the Government must prioritise allocating funding to communities facing greatest housing shortages. Allocating funding to build social and affordable housing has the dual impact of stimulating construction and addressing these critical issues.

The Australian, State and Territory Governments should give greater funding to providing permanent supportive accommodation rather than ad hoc services to people who are homeless—in addition to providing holistic support, it also costs less. A University of Queensland study reveals the costs of services provided to people who remain living on the streets versus placing them in permanent supportive housing. While an average of \$48,000 per year was spent helping an individual living on the street, an average of \$35,000 per year was spent on placing an individual in permanent supportive housing.³⁷

Income support payments

NACCHO and its Affiliates and Members (ACCHOs) welcome the Australian Government's recent doubling of the JobSeeker income support payment. The increased payment has reduced the risk of homelessness facing many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NACCHO recommends that the Australian Government extends the current rate of Jobseeker Allowance for the duration of the pandemic, and that the rate be significantly increased from the pre-existing level once the pandemic has passed. Increasing Rent Assistance to better align with real rental costs would also reduce vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to homelessness.

The inclusion of housing and homelessness targets in the Closing the Gap Framework

The Closing the Gap Framework is currently being negotiated between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian governments.³⁸ This provides an opportunity and mechanism for representatives of governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to establish agreed housing outcomes, including the reduction of homelessness, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

³² Dillon, M. (2018). Tactics vs Strategy in Aboriginal Housing, Inside Story, National Affairs. Accessed 23/1/2020

³³ The Conversation, 2020, *Why the focus of stimulus plans has to put social housing first*, <https://theconversation.com/>

³⁴ The Conversation, 2020, *Why the focus of stimulus plans has to put social housing first*, <https://theconversation.com/>

³⁵ The Conversation, 2020, *Why the focus of stimulus plans has to put social housing first*, <https://theconversation.com/>

³⁶ Pawson, H., 2020, *Coronavirus lays bare 5 big housing system flaws to be fixed*, <https://theconversation.com/>

³⁷ University of Queensland, 2019, <https://issr.uq.edu.au/brisbane-common-ground-evaluation>

³⁸ COAG, CoP. (2019). Partnership Agreement on Closing The Gap 2019-2029. Accessed 8/5/2020

The Closing the Gap Framework process must be used to ensure access to safe, quality and secure housing for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, wherever they reside.

Conclusion

To improve health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it is essential that a greater investment be made by Federal, State and Territory governments in housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Priority must be given to those communities with the greatest housing need. It is urgent that a formal and genuine partnership between Federal, State and Territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives be established that allows for shared decision-making on initiatives that better enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access affordable, adequate, safe and sustainable housing, and enjoy longer and healthier lives.