Working together for a better housing future

Improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders
Artwork designed by Cairns-based design studio, ingeous studios, and depicts families that live in communities throughout Queensland. The elements are symbolic of both the land and sea.
The Palaszczuk Government has committed an additional $40 million towards a modest remote housing program for 2019 to sustain housing construction and protect jobs whilst negotiations for federal funding continue. This funding is in addition to the $145.7 million already committed by the Palaszczuk Government to remote housing in 2018-19.

This is a decisive response to address the significant remaining overcrowding and housing demand in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and is not a substitute for long-term Commonwealth funding.

As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, I am committed to ensuring that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslander has access to safe, appropriate and sustainable housing that respects culture and connection with community.

Ensuring we work with community leaders to provide safe, appropriate and sustainable housing, especially in response to challenges faced by some of our community’s most vulnerable people, is essential to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. A stable home environment contributes to supporting communities where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families can thrive, children can grow up safe and healthy, and future generations are afforded the best start in life.

Working together for a better housing future provides a strong foundation that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to pursue education, training, employment and other economic opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential.

The Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 recognises the importance of giving every Queenslander a pathway to a safe, secure and affordable place to call home. That is what this strategy is all about.

No matter where you are in Queensland, or your circumstances or background, a safe and secure home is at the heart of family wellbeing. A home provides the firm foundation for improved health and wellbeing, greater education and employment opportunities, providing pathways for participation in our economy and broader society.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to working closely with communities and community leaders to develop concrete actions to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

On 10 October 2018 I announced the appointment of Mick Gooda to the role of First Nations Advisor to help improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Mr Gooda will facilitate discussions and provide advice to inform development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan and a new Housing Body.
A word from
Mick Gooda, First Nations Advisor

“I believe that it’s a fundamental right for every Queenslander, and equally a right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have safe, secure and stable housing.”

Building strong relationships
More than any other agency, the department has a close and important relationship as a landlord. Often this relationship lasts a lifetime.

The department needs to recognise its important relationship and role in communities, and as a partner in supporting and improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To reset this relationship a new partnership approach is required based on more open and honest communication. This approach at the local level will see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a greater say in how housing is delivered in their communities through the development of place-based community-led housing plans. This will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and better respond to the unique housing and homelessness circumstances of each community.

Indigenous Community Housing Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Governments will play an important role in the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Body.

A shared commitment
There will be conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Department of Housing and Public Works on developing a shared commitment on housing. Tenants should pay rent, look after the property and be good neighbours. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should have access to stable housing.

Stable home environments are vital for better outcomes across every indicator of wellbeing, including better health and education outcomes and less contact with the justice and child protection systems. More person-centred housing solutions and service responses will help facilitate better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The importance of owning your own home and the positive impact it can have for families and future generations cannot be underestimated. These discussions will explore how pathways to home ownership can be improved and barriers removed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
A shared vision

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland have safe, appropriate and sustainable housing to advance better health, safety, wellbeing, education and economic outcomes for current and future generations.

Real change, real partnerships

To achieve this, we will work towards five key focus areas:

**Person-centred services**
- support sustained tenancies
- more support for homeless and vulnerable people
- support and enhance broader social outcomes.

**Place-based community-led housing plans**
- work with community leaders to improve coordination and governance
- empower communities to manage housing and homelessness priorities and outcomes
- deliver housing in accordance with local strategies and plans.

**Better housing choices**
- target the supply of social housing to meet the needs of communities
- ensure proactive housing maintenance to enable healthy, long-lasting homes
- build on opportunities with the private sector to increase the supply of affordable housing
- develop and improve pathways into private rental and home ownership.

**Increase benefits for communities**
- improve local training and employment opportunities
- develop education programs to provide information on home ownership, tenancy and maintenance.

**Strengthen the sector**
- establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing body
- strengthen capacity and sustainability of community housing providers, including Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs)
- build capability within the private sector to support tenancies.

Shared principles

We will be guided by the following principles in delivering on our shared vision for a better future:

- Every Queenslander should have access to safe, appropriate and sustainable housing.
- Social housing will target those most in need.
- Culturally sensitive housing responses and services will be developed in partnership with communities using the best available evidence.
- Maintenance of housing is the shared responsibility of housing providers, families and individuals.
- The delivery of social housing programs will increase local job, training and business opportunities.

What will this look like?

What will real change and real partnerships mean in action?

Under the *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027* the Queensland Government committed to changing the way we work with clients and communities to be more responsive and deliver better services. The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan will continue with this new way of working, by taking the time to listen to clients and tenants to understand their immediate needs and longer-term aspirations. By doing this, we can work through better options and solutions with individuals and families and provide greater choices and opportunities.

It also means a new way of working with communities. We will support the development of place-based community-led housing plans that target the supply of social housing to meet their needs and priorities. By empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and leaders, we can deliver housing solutions that matter.
Bright futures

Here’s just one way we’re providing brighter futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the right to a bright, healthy future, and a new residence for girls and young women in Townsville is set to provide just that.

NRL Girls House will open in early 2019 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and young women from remote North Queensland communities.

Fifty girls aged between eleven and eighteen years will live at the house as they complete school, or undertake further study or training in the Townsville area.

The purpose-built home will be staffed twenty-four hours a day and provide quality health care, wellbeing and academic support along with career guidance from staff and Indigenous leaders.

Mirroring the NRL Cowboys House for boys, NRL Girls House will be operated by the Cowboys Community Foundation backed by rugby league legend Johnathan Thurston.

It will aim to remove housing as a barrier to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and young women attaining education and employment, helping them learn independence and giving them every opportunity to become the best they can be.

Targeted support

Under the *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027*, the department identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a priority cohort. This priority group includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young people, seniors and people with disability that may require additional assistance and support.

We recognise the need to improve housing outcomes for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. We are constructing two new crisis shelters and replacing or renewing shelters in the remote and discrete communities of Pormpuraaw, Cherbourg and Woorabinda.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged 65 or older is growing and is projected to increase. The department provides support for older people, including Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples, living in public housing to age in their homes by increasing the accessibility and adaptability of their dwellings.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability who require housing assistance will be supported with solutions to meet their individual needs. At least fifty per cent of new housing constructed under the Housing Construction Jobs Program will be built to liveability design standards to ensure accessibility. The department’s occupational therapists can provide assessments of individual housing needs to determine any necessary modifications for public housing tenants.
A local approach, across the state

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are unique. First Nations people are connected to the land and need housing that fits their social, cultural and economic needs.

Culture needs to be a key consideration in housing provision and management, with targeted responses that are both local and culturally responsive.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in urban, regional and remote locations will be empowered to develop a vision for housing in their community and manage housing and homelessness priorities through community-led housing plans.

Remote

Remote communities, especially discrete Indigenous communities, face their own set of challenges. Housing drives social as well as long-term economic outcomes and the complexity of Indigenous disadvantage requires a focused approach to provide more opportunities and pathways.

Our priorities are to work in partnership with councils to:

- target the supply of social housing to meet local needs
- increase home ownership opportunities, including resolution of legacy entitlements
- grow opportunities for local training and employment.

Urban and regional

The increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in urban and regional areas has elevated the need for housing assistance. Significant barriers include entry into private market rentals, housing affordability and lack of supply. To reduce and address these issues, we need to:

- support families to sustain tenancies
- strengthen the capacity of housing providers including Indigenous Community Housing Organisations
- build cultural capability across the housing system
- improve pathways into private rental and home ownership
- build on opportunities with the private sector to provide affordable housing supply.
Next steps

1. We will consult with local communities to develop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan.

2. The Action Plan will be launched in 2019.

3. We will partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state to implement the Action Plan and develop community-led housing plans.

Join the conversation

Your voice, your stories and your experiences can help shape the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan and improve housing outcomes.

Go to [www.qld.gov.au/betterhousingfutures](http://www.qld.gov.au/betterhousingfutures) for more information or email housingstrategy@hpw.qld.gov.au