Final Report

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Reviewing changes to housing management on remote Indigenous communities

authored by

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ACRONYMS

ALT	Aboriginal Land Title (or Trust)
APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
ARHP	Aboriginal Rental Housing Program
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
BAS	Building and Asset Services (Qld)
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAT	Centre for Appropriate Technology
CDP	Community Development and Employment Program
CHIP	Community Housing and Infrastructure Program
CH	Community Housing
CHPs	Community Housing Providers
CHRP	Community Housing Rent Policy
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSHA	Commonwealth State Housing Agreement
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DCSI	Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
DHPW	Department of Housing and Public Works (Qld.)
DIDO	Drive In Drive Out
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
DoH	Department of Housing
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FIFO	Fly In Fly Out
FRC	Family Responsibility Commission
HMAs	Housing Management Agreements
HMMA	Housing Maintenance and Management Agreement
HRG	Housing Reference Group
ICHO	Indigenous Community Housing Organisation
ICO	Indigenous Community Organisation
RJCP	Remote Jobs and Communities Programme
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGAs	Local Government Areas
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAAJA	North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency

NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPA	National Partnership Agreements
NPARIH	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing
NPARSD	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Delivery Service
NTDHLGRS	Northern Territory Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services
NTDHLGRS	Northern Territory Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services
NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
OSHS	One Social Housing System
RISC	Remote Indigenous Service Centre
RSP	Recommended Service Provider
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act
SHA	State Housing Authority
SHO	Senior Housing Officer
SIHIP	Strategic Indigenous Housing & Infrastructure Program
WA HA	Western Australian Housing Authority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY[1]

The shortage of housing in remote communities, and their deteriorated condition, has long been associated with high levels of crowding, homelessness and serious health and social problems affecting the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. A contributing factor to poor housing standards was the diversity of housing providers and grants as well as complex and confusing land tenure arrangements. To address these problems, the Commonwealth, states and the Northern Territory established the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, (NPARIH) in 2008. NPARIH was a 10-year, $5.5b Commonwealth-funded tenancy management and capital works program of new housing and refurbishment of existing housing (DSS 2013a). Under NPARIH, remote Indigenous housing came under a single regime managed by the state and territory governments, through their public housing agencies, The aim was to introduce robust and standardised tenancy management consistent with public housing standards and a repairs and maintenance program that increased the life cycle of housing, improved housing conditions and expanded housing options in remote Indigenous communities (COAG 2008a: 5).

This divestment of historical Commonwealth responsibility to the states and territories was an audacious policy change, involving an attempt to mainstream remote Indigenous housing that was formerly mostly managed by the Indigenous community housing sector. With NPARIH now ending, it is timely to review how tenancy management arrangements are working given the substantial investment and the need to ensure arrangements are sustainable over the long term. This project builds on research undertaken in 2013 that investigated the tenancy management arrangements that followed the introduction of NPARIH in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014). It is not a review of NPARIH itself, and includes some consideration of non-NPARIH communities.

This second phase of the study commenced in mid-2014 and investigates how well tenancy management arrangements are working under NPARIH, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the tenancy management policy and service delivery approaches, and the efficiency and value for money of the service delivery models. It aims to identify and share across jurisdictions, and nationally, the policy and practice lessons gained from the NPARIH experience.

NPARIH and the remote Indigenous housing context

An understanding of the remote Indigenous housing context is essential in assessing NPARIH's achievements between 2008 when NPARIH commenced, and when data collection took place in 2014. Tenancy management on remote communities is vastly different, more demanding and more costly than in mainstream settings (Memmott, Long et al. 2003; Habibis 2013; Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014; Milligan, Phillips et al. 2011). Many Indigenous communities are distinct from non-Indigenous remote and regional communities in their form of dispersed self-governance which is often highly informal, and comprised of local, kin-based councils, which vary considerably in their level of activity and control. There is usually no housing market, so constructs such as 'market rent' and 'housing market' do not apply. The collective nature of Indigenous land tenure requires special provisions and the establishment of state leases or agreements before the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA) can apply. In many

[1] In presenting these findings it is important to note that although this investigation is of national relevance, the findings are not generalisable to all locations within the case study jurisdiction. The issue of representation goes beyond statistical validity to the comparability of communities across and between jurisdictions. The findings provide useful information about what factors contribute to best practice and what policy and practice principles may be transferable to other locations and sites to improve housing service delivery to remote communities. They are not evaluations of state and territory performance in delivering the NPARIH reforms but are indicative findings only as they are based on data collection in only five remote Indigenous communities across the four jurisdictions.

locations native title considerations and limited or non-existent service infrastructure restricts where buildings can be located. Almost everything is more costly, from power, to store goods, labour and housing components.

Tenancy and property management programs are constrained by the availability of service delivery infrastructure including office space and staff. Communities are often located many kilometres from service centres, with unsealed roads that are dangerous and demanding to travel. This creates OH&S and practical challenges, impacts on staff time, is stressful, costly and makes it difficult to oversee and support community-based staff. Repairs and maintenance are constrained by a low rent base, extreme weather events, and expensive contractor services. Travel times can rapidly blow-out a community's housing repairs and maintenance budget and distances make accurate scoping of jobs and monitoring and regulation of suppliers challenging.

There are also substantial social and cultural differences between remote Indigenous populations and mainstream ones. Large, multi-family households with high levels of crowding, generate high repairs and maintenance needs. Frequent population movement between houses and communities make identifying occupants and collecting rent difficult. The residents of communities often have low skills and educational achievement, high levels of disability and language and cultural differences. Some tenants have high support needs and understanding of tenancy roles, rights and responsibilities can be weak.

Before NPARIH, housing infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities came from a range of granting bodies, with complex and often legally ambiguous tenure arrangements, resulting in difficulties in managing assets and delivering services. Housing was mostly managed by Indigenous community housing organisations (ICHOs) which were often small, local, family-based and poorly resourced. Tenants often paid little or no rent, and transfer and allocations were understood as a family or community matter. Low rent collection meant low maintenance and low expectations of landlord responsibilities. The new arrangements represented a radical change for tenants, requiring extensive work with them to understand their rights and obligations.

It is also important to note that the NPARIH reforms have not been implemented evenly across all jurisdictions and locations. The capital works program to improve housing stock through provision of new housing and refurbishments has been applied in only some locations, leaving crowding levels in other locations unchanged. The tenancy management program has only been introduced into those communities willing to agree to leases over their land, and where the SHA has been prepared to manage their housing, leaving significant numbers of communities outside of NPARIH arrangements, especially in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Methods

To answer the study questions a mixed methods approach was adopted involving case studies and an analysis of costings. Five case study sites were selected in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, providing a mix of remote and very remote, provider and service delivery arrangements and types of housing. Data collection involved tenant surveys (N=144) and interviews (N=37) and semi-structured interviews with housing managers and providers and stakeholders (N=37). A cost analysis examined tenancy management, repairs and maintenance and rents. A policy forum held in October 2015 provided an opportunity for managers and CEOs from the Commonwealth, states, Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) and Community Housing Programs (CHPs) to confirm the findings and provide feedback on the study's conclusions.

What have the NPARIH reforms achieved for improved tenancy management on remote Indigenous communities?

The study's findings show that state housing departments have come a considerable way in implementing public housing like tenancy management standards to some remote Indigenous communities. Where NPARIH investments have taken place, this is generating some improvements in the lives of tenants. Tenancy management is beginning to be systemic rather than crisis driven and there is greater consistency in the quality of housing and housing management. Most tenants surveyed agreed that housing and living conditions had improved and that overall things in the community are better. Those in new and refurbished housing reported being satisfied with them. Respondents understood requirements for paying rent and were keen to maintain their homes in good condition. They were aware of policies on visitors and on reporting property damage.

The most successful arrangements were those in Western Australia, where a hybrid model prevailed, with tenancy management services delivered in partnership with the community sector, and service delivery included a high level of Indigenous employment. In Ngukkur, in the Northern Territory, the condition of housing, high levels of crowding and a perceived lack of cultural responsiveness by the Northern Territory Department of Housing (DoH) was associated with perceptions of little or no improvement. In the Cooktown communities, just under half of respondents believed that things 'were about the same' for housing conditions in the community and levels of satisfaction with tenancy management arrangements were also relatively low.

The variation between jurisdictions arises partly from levels of capital investment in communities, the severity of existing crowding, the quality of existing housing stock, the extent to which mainstream housing policies were adapted to local contexts and whether service delivery arrangements were centralised or provided with a strong local presence. Northern Territory communities are characterised by high levels of crowding, deteriorated housing and a large number of communities, and in South Australia and Western Australia there are many small, widely dispersed, very remote communities that are particularly challenging to service.

The achievements of the program are balanced by the many areas that require further development. The complexity, fairness and extremely high administrative costs of income-based rents raises questions about whether mainstream rent models are the most appropriate for remote communities. Repairs and maintenance programs are similarly problematic with a need to develop new approaches. Allocations, tenant support programs, tenants' understanding of their rights and the information they receive about rents are all areas where much remains to be done.

Improving service delivery through an adaptive service that is adjusted to the local context

Our analysis shows that a hybrid model that is adapted to the local context and includes knowledgeable, preferably Indigenous, third party providers delivering a culturally appropriate service is the most effective arrangement for service delivery. While it is clear that there is no single model that will apply in all locations, and direct management may be the only option in some locations for now, the goal of state housing authorities should be to work with alternative providers who have the capacity and cultural knowledge to provide housing services to remote communities. Effective tenancy and property management requires maximising opportunities for local service delivery to generate cost savings, and improved tenant and property management outcomes. The goal of state housing departments should therefore be to develop a tenancy management system that is flexible and adapted to context.

Increasing local service delivery requires a capacity building approach to Indigenous individuals, organisations and communities. This is especially important in the post-NPARIH

environment, where there may an expectation that Indigenous housing policy should be brought into line with mainstream housing policy in which the community sector plays an increasingly prominent role. Governments need to develop policies and commit resources to building ICHO capacity so that they develop the knowledge and organisational structures that will enable them to meet housing management regulatory hurdles. This research adds to the existing evidence base which shows that the best services are those that are delivered by Indigenous people. The Kununurra case study also shows that where CHPs employ Indigenous people and deliver culturally appropriate services, they can achieve a high level of acceptance by communities and provide a quality service.

While a hybrid system appears to work best, it is also essential that housing authorities remain responsible for remote Indigenous housing and provide the regulatory framework to assure the maintenance of standards through monitoring and quality assurance procedures. If this is not maintained, there is a risk that the impact of remoteness on costs and the difficulties of oversight, will result in a deteriorating service that is unable to sustain effective tenant education, maintain properties to appropriate standards, reduce rent arrears and ensure allocations meet the guidelines. As well, housing authorities will be able to make provision for future housing on the basis of known housing lifespan as they do for public housing more generally.

The gains that have been achieved by NPARIH require sustained and continued investment by the Commonwealth, in partnership with the states and the Northern Territory. It is essential for Commonwealth funding to address continuing high levels of crowding, deliver adequate tenancy management and repairs and maintenance. Remote Indigenous communities will always require housing subsidies. Tax subsidies provided annually per household to owner-occupier households in Australia amount to $8,000 or more (2005–2006 figures) (Yates 2009) which our analysis estimates to be considerably more than the equivalent annual expenditure on housing services to remote communities under NPARIH. Without adequate investment, the gains that have been achieved under NPARIH will be swiftly lost, and within a decade or two we risk once again facing a national crisis in Indigenous housing. Funding for remote Indigenous housing should also be quarantined from other programs to avoid pressures on the remote budget from other programs.

The involvement of both the Commonwealth and states is essential to a broad, long-term approach to increasing housing options in remote communities, including forms of home ownership. This requires working with communities to reconcile community aspirations for community land tenure and economic development.

There are problems with applying mainstream social housing approaches to determining and collecting rent because the contexts in which they are applied are so different. There are inefficiencies in the current approach with housing providers expending substantial resources on administrative costs. Rent models are currently inconsistent with social housing policy objectives of fairness and affordability, given the high levels of disability and costs of living in remote communities and difficulties determining occupancy. Alternative models or adaptations such as community-wide levies and property-based rents are needed to address this.

Repairs and maintenance in the remote context will always be difficult, but more work is needed to develop systems and strategies that proactively manage assets. Regular inspections and maintenance work should be applied in a way that maximises opportunities for local employment and partnerships. There was criticism of centralised systems across almost all the case study sites. Strategies to improve tenancy management services include developing partnerships with local providers, such as local councils, environmental management services, and health and aged care services. This could include joint appointments so that full-time positions can be offered to local people. Where possible, repairs and maintenance should be integrated with tenancy management at service delivery

sites to save travel costs and pool knowledge. Components and fittings should also be standardised and tenant education programs to improve home maintenance should be undertaken.

For both tenancy and property management there are opportunities to partner with employment and training programs such as the Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP), to increase skills and employment in communities and reduce expenditure on travel, poor oversight of contractors and inadequate scoping of jobs.

There is scope to build institutional knowledge through the sharing of policy and practice learnings. This applies especially at the level of Commonwealth and state governments to provide opportunities for informal exchange away from the negotiation table. State/territory asset managers would benefit from cross-jurisdictional workshops where they can share experiences and compare costings. Consideration could be given to establishing a clearing house for remote Indigenous housing and opportunities for exchanges between jurisdictions in areas such as ICHO capacity building.

Finally, there is the lesson provided by the experience of the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) and NPARIH's capital works program, where the pressure to deliver within tight timelines resulted in many lost opportunities. It is to be hoped that the programs that follow NPARIH will avoid rapid policy development and implementation, provide time for innovative policies to be tested on the ground, and take a medium- to long-term approach, that provides incremental, consistent policy development without policy u-turns. This would provide the policy consistency and certainty necessary to provide sustainable, appropriate and adequate housing on remote Indigenous communities.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study background and aims

The aim of this study is to review the progress and achievements of tenancy management reforms to remote Indigenous housing that followed the introduction of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) in 2008. These reforms marked a new stage in a major policy change in remote Indigenous communities involving the transfer of housing services from the Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) sector to the states and the Northern Territory. The reforms are part of a suite of policies under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement that aim to improve the lives, living conditions and wellbeing of Indigenous people. The study is not a review of NPARIH itself and because it is concerned with the remote Indigenous communities nationally, it includes some consideration of non-NPARIH communities.

NPARIH establishes a 10-year (2008–18) housing strategy comprising a $5.5b Commonwealth funded tenancy management and capital works program of new housing and refurbishment of existing housing (DSS 2013a). It is expected to address issues of crowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages through the following policy goals:

- Safe and adequate housing that will contribute to improved living standards.
- Robust and standardised tenancy management of all remote Indigenous housing that ensures rent collection, asset protection and governance arrangements consistent with public housing standards.
- A program of ongoing maintenance and repairs that increases the life cycle of remote Indigenous housing (COAG 2008: 5).[2]

This research is concerned specifically with tenancy and property management aimed at achieving long-term benefits for tenants and communities as well as extending the life of dwellings.

NPARIH involved the transfer of housing management from the Indigenous community housing sector to state and territory housing departments. The way the reforms have been implemented has resulted in considerable variation of arrangements both within and between jurisdictions, with different mixtures of direct, local government, Indigenous and mainstream community provider roles, as well as some private sector contractors in the NT. Understanding how well these arrangements are working is critical for the future of these communities as governments continue to debate how housing services are best delivered.

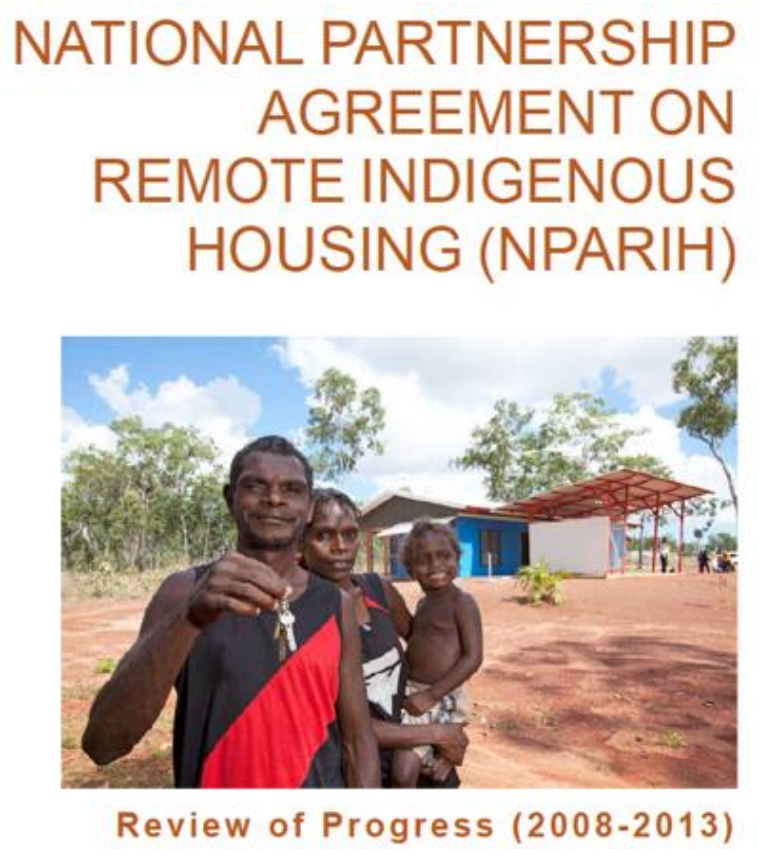
The report builds on earlier research undertaken in 2013 involving a review of the progress of the implementation of the NPARIH reforms and the way these were being implemented in the four jurisdictions of the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014).

This second phase of the study commenced in mid-2014. It has investigated empirically and in some depth, how well those arrangements are working, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the tenancy management policy and service delivery approaches, and the efficiency and value for money of the tenancy and maintenance service delivery models. The

[2] Under NPARIH, the states are responsible for essential and municipal services which were formerly provided by the Commonwealth (see Part 3, para 17; Part 4, para 20, and the Interpretations section on EMS at (b) and Normalised Service Delivery at (e)). This, together with the transfer of housing management, means that, under NPARIH, most responsibility for remote communities is transferred from the Commonwealth to the states and territories.

research has identified the policy and practice lessons gained from the process of the implementation of NPARIH and aims to share these across jurisdictions, and nationally.

Figure 1: Cover page of the NPARIH Review of Progress 2008–2013



Source: Department of Social Services, NPARIH Review of Progress (2008–2013), Cover page: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/indigenous/NPARIH%20Report%20Version%207%2028%20May_Web%20accessible%20FINAL_2%20(2).pdf.

1.2 Research and policy significance

The substantial investment in housing capital works under NPARIH has attracted considerable research interest and public scrutiny. By contrast, the housing management reforms have engendered limited research or public attention in spite of the important role that ongoing tenancy and property management plays in contributing to positive tenant and community outcomes, ensuring acceptable housing amenity and maximising protection of housing assets (a review of this literature is provided in Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014). This gives this study an important role in assessing the progress of these reforms and whether they are benefiting Indigenous communities and resulting in sustainable improvements in the management of remote Indigenous housing stock over the medium to long term.

The timing of this study in the final years of NPARIH, and at a time when national policy is operating in the opposite direction, towards increasing the housing management role of community housing providers (CHPs) provides it with particular relevance for the development of policy settings and service delivery models in the post-NPARIH era. It is also unique in providing an opportunity for cross-jurisdictional comparison of arrangements for housing service delivery to remote Indigenous communities while also paying careful attention to how these arrangements are shaped by their particular context. The cost analysis is especially important in analysing costs of rent setting and collection and repair and maintenance programs in different settings and in identifying the drivers and possibilities for improvement.

2 METHODS

This study aims to identify the impact of NPARIH's housing reforms on Indigenous tenants and communities. It seeks to provide a contextualised analysis of the costs associated with different arrangements for the delivery of housing services. More specifically, it focuses on changes to tenancy management in remote Indigenous communities and aims to inform these by:

- Providing a robust evidence base on how NPARIH reforms are contributing to stable housing outcomes, tenant satisfaction, effective arrangements for repairs and maintenance and non-housing outcomes.
- Providing an analysis of how cost-effective different provider arrangements are in achieving improvements to Indigenous housing outcomes in particular geographical and community contexts.
- Identifying opportunities for improvements and to share these policy and practice learnings across jurisdictions to improve practice and support planning for the post-NPARIH era.

The guiding question for this project is:

> *What are the optimal arrangements for the delivery of tenancy management services to remote Indigenous communities that are cost-effective and provide positive housing and non-housing outcomes for Indigenous communities?*

This is operationalised empirically through the following subsidiary questions:

1. How are tenancy management reforms in remote Indigenous communities progressing in their goal of improving housing and non-housing outcomes? How do policy settings, activities and the mix of service modes and providers, impact on these outcomes?
2. What are the critical factors influencing rent revenue and costs of tenancy and asset management?
3. Are some arrangements for tenancy management, including the mix of activities and service modes/providers, more cost-effective and sustainable in some contexts than others?
4. What has been learnt so far about how best to deliver tenancy and asset management services to different types of remote communities, and to what extent can these learnings be applied to remote Indigenous housing more broadly?

To answer these questions, a mixed methods approach was adopted involving case studies and analysis of administrative data. Case studies in five sites across four jurisdictions provide the empirical evidence for detailed analysis of the appropriateness, effectiveness and the nature of the outcomes being achieved.

The empirical component of the study only investigated those communities that had been subject to the NPARIH reforms. Consideration of the impact of the reforms on remote communities not subject to NPARIH is included in the discussion (see Section 3.7).

2.1 Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following terms are used:

Remote Indigenous community refers generally, but not exclusively, to rental housing located in remote and very remote discrete Indigenous communities, as defined by the accessibility/remoteness index of Australia.

Tenancy management services includes housing allocations, rent setting and collection, tenant education, tenant support, repairs and maintenance, visitor and occupant

management, good order, tenant participation, housing transfers and termination as well as liaison with third party providers.

Improved housing outcomes includes improvement in tenancy stability, tenant satisfaction, reduced rent arrears, effective repairs and maintenance, fairer housing allocations.

Improved non-housing outcomes includes improvements in community amenities, better physical environment, employment and school attendance levels, better health outcomes and strengthened community capacity.

Cost-effectiveness refers to the level of outcomes compared to the relative cost of achieving that outcome.

Sustainable models of housing refer to service delivery systems that are operationally and financially viable over time for the location and context.

2.2 Case study sites and data collection methods

The five case studies cover the jurisdictions of the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Two sites in WA are included because East Kimberley communities around Kununurra include a mainstream CHP and Fitzroy Valley includes an ICHO provider. Fitzroy Valley is also a regional centre and priority location under the NPARSD. Criteria for selection were that their land was leased to state/territory departments in return for new and upgraded housing under NPARIH, and they included a mix of remote and very remote, provider and service delivery arrangements and types of housing including new and upgraded housing (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Site visits and selection criteria

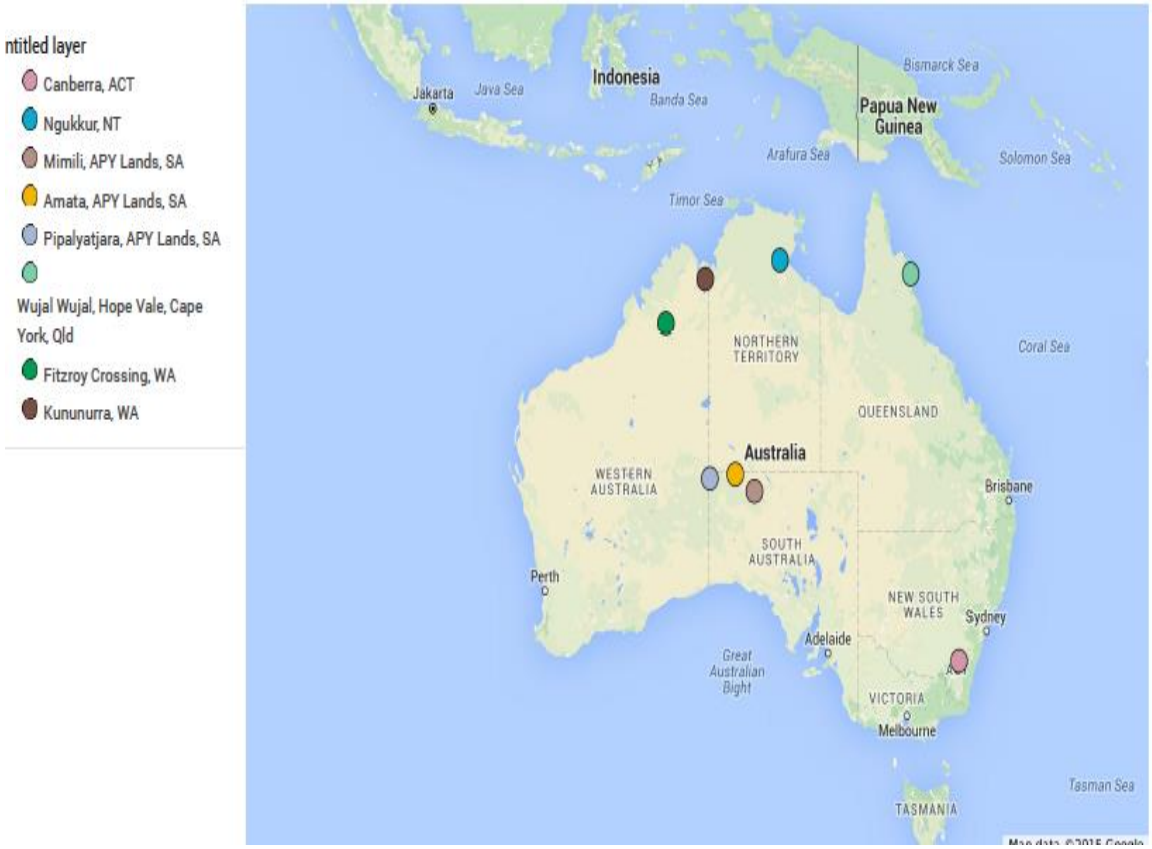
Location	Remoteness	Provider mix	Service approach	Housing
Ngukurr, Roper Gulf Shire communities, NT	Very remote	SHA, Local Authority	DIDO (SHA), RSPs with local presence	New, upgraded, existing
Wujal Wujal, Hope Vale, Cape York, Qld	Remote	Direct SHA	DIDO from sub-regional hub; SHA employed local housing officers	New, upgraded, existing
Amata, Mimili, Pipalyatjara, APY Lands SA	Very remote	Direct SHA	Regional office DIDO	New, upgraded, existing
Bayulu, Yakanarra, Fitzroy Valley, WA	Very remote	SHA, ICHO	DIDO (SHA) RSPs with local presence	New, upgraded, existing
East Kimberley communities, WA	Very remote	SHA, Mainstream CHO		New, upgraded, existing

Table 2: Case study field visits: respondent numbers

Respondents		N
All		
Tenants	Survey	144
	Interview	138
Housing provider	Interview	37
Stakeholder	Interview	34
Ngukkur, Northern Territory		
Tenants	Survey	30
	Interview	29
Housing provider	Interview	6
Stakeholders	Interview	8
Cooktown region, Queensland		
Tenants	Survey	30
	Interview	23
Housing provider	Interview	5
Stakeholders	Interview	7
APY Lands, South Australia		
Tenants	Survey	29
	Interview	28
Housing provider	Interview	9
Stakeholders	Interview	4
Fitzroy Valley, Western Australia		
Tenants	Survey	29
	Interview	33
Housing provider	Interview	11
Stakeholders	Interview	12
Kununurra and surrounds, Western Australia		
Tenants	Survey	26
	Interview	25
Housing provider	Interview	6
Stakeholders	Interview	3

The data collection period for each case study site was three weeks, undertaken in blocks of one to two weeks. Field trips to communities took place over July–August 2014 (Queensland), September 2014 (Ngukkur), October 2014 (Western Australia) and November (South Australia). Data collection involved survey (tenants) and semi-structured interviews (tenants, housing managers and providers and stakeholders) (see Table 2 above).

Figure 2: Remote tenancies case study communities



A total of 144 surveys and 37 interviews were held with head tenants and tenants from communities with sampling to ensure diversity in variables of gender, age, household size, house condition, length of tenancy, distance from regional centre and community size (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Survey respondent profile (valid per cent)

	Item	N=144
Gender	Male	33
	Female	67
Age	18–25	7
	26–45	51
	46+	42
Tenancy agreement	Yes	84
Tenant status	Head tenant	74
Housing	New	34
	Refurbished	45
	Legacy/not upgraded	21
Tenancy length	< 6m	8
	6m – 1y	7
	1+ – 5y	38
	5+ y	48
Household	Live alone	5
	Couple only	8
	Couple/single with children < 18y	26
	Multiple family	61
Household size—adults	1–2	45
	3–4	30
	5–8	23
	9+	2
No of children <18	0	34
	1–2	16
	3–4	34
	5–6	32
	7+	10

The survey obtained the age and gender of respondents, their tenancy status and type of housing (new, refurbished, legacy) and household composition about the tenants. It used a 5-response Likert scale to ask tenants about levels of satisfaction in relation to housing infrastructure, rent, repairs and maintenance, contact with tenancy managers, information, support and consultation, and knowledge about making a formal complaint. Attitudes towards whether housing and living conditions had improved as a result of the change to state/territory housing management, were sought via a 5-response Likert scale. It also sought tenant priorities for tenancy management and who their preferred provider was. To reduce missing data through respondent disengagement, the survey was in plain English and short.

Semi-structured interviews with tenants supplemented the survey data. Topics included housing history, satisfaction and experiences with housing services, allocations and sign-up, repairs and maintenance, tenant education, support, participation and the impact of DoH

tenancy management on housing stability, homelessness, visitors, damage, and non-housing outcomes including employment, school attendance, health and access to services.

Interviews were also held with 37 housing providers, policy-makers to obtain their understanding of the service model including how contractual arrangements are managed and services are interacting, their effectiveness for tenants, communities and state governments, which areas are working well, and which remain challenging including perceived reasons for this, how services might be improved, how sustainable the arrangements are, and what policy and practice lessons can be obtained from service implementation. Respondents included senior policy and operational managers, regional managers, maintenance manager and providers, local tenancy managers and frontline staff and support workers. A further 34 interviews were held with non-housing stakeholders, including community members, representatives from organisations such as councils and shires, community advisory bodies, and other government and NGO service providers, to identify how the broader community is experiencing the tenancy management reforms, and what improvements and limitations they can identify. All respondents were recruited on the basis of their strategic location within their organisation. Details of respondent profiles by case study location are provided in Table 4 below.

2.3 Data analysis

The survey included 15 items on satisfaction with housing and tenancy management services. To make comparisons across the various issues, the overall level satisfaction was determined by calculating the rating average for each response. Each response category was given a rating weight to denote a level of satisfaction with a higher rating weight indicating greater satisfaction and a lower value indicating greater dissatisfaction—that is very satisfied was given a value of 5 and very dissatisfied was given a value of 1. The count of each response category was multiplied by the rating weight then divided by the count of all response categories to provide a rating average of each response category. Each response category's rating average was summed to produce a rating average for item overall. Higher rating averages indicate higher levels of satisfaction. For items capturing tenant respondents' views on improvements in housing and living conditions, the level of improvement was determined by calculating the rating average for each response.

Table 4: Survey respondent profile by case study location (valid per cent)

		Fitzroy	Kununurra	Ngukkur	Cooktown	APY	All
Item		***N=26***	***N=29***	***N=30***	***N=30***	***N=29***	***N=144***
Gender	Male	42	21	37	43	21	*33*
	Female	58	79	63	57	79	*67*
Age	18–25	12	3	3	7	10	*7*
	26–45	58	45	53	47	52	*51*
	46+	31	52	43	43	38	*42*
Tenancy agreement	Yes	92	90	80	93	66	*84*
Tenant status	Head tenant	73	66	67	83	59	*74*
Housing	New	31	34	50	14	38	*34*
	Refurbished	31	48	20	66	59	*45*
	Legacy/not upgraded	38	14	30	21	3	*21*
Tenancy length	< 6m	16	7	3	0	14	*8*
	6m – 1y	24	4	3	3	3	*7*
	1+ – 5y	36	61	27	17	48	*38*
	5+ y	24	29	67	79	34	*48*
Household	Live alone	8	0	0	14	0	*5*
	Couple only	16	7	0	3	14	*8*
	Couple/single with children < 18y	24	36	10	34	21	*26*
	Multiple family	52	57	90	48	64	*61*
Household size-adults	1–2	54	75	7	57	34	*45*
	3–4	31	18	33	32	34	*30*
	5–8	15	7	60	7	24	*23*
	9+	0	0	0	4	7	*2*
No of children <18	0	0	35	3	0	38	*34*
	1–2	19	71	13	65	24	*16*
	3–4	31	6	43	35	28	*34*
	5–6	12	6	13	0	10	*32*
	7+	4	6	27	0	0	*10*

In this section, the results of survey respondents' most important housing management issues are presented. These results are derived from Question 15 of the survey, which asked respondents the following question: *What are the first, second and third most important things that matter to you about how your housing is managed?* Respondents were allowed only to select three of nine housing management issues.

2.4 Cost analysis approach

The method for the cost analysis is described in Chapter 7.

2.5 Policy forum

To confirm the findings and provide an opportunity for feedback on the Final Report, we held a policy forum in Perth in October 2015. In addition to the research team, there were 12 respondents from Indigenous housing policy and operations program managers from each jurisdiction, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, as well as CEOs and managers from mainstream, Indigenous community and state Indigenous housing organisations. A Briefing Paper containing the findings and conclusions of the study formed the basis of a presentation by the research team, followed by discussion about the implications for service delivery and the sustainability of arrangements beyond the life of NPARIH. The findings from the forum were used to refine the study findings and are reported in Chapter 8.

2.6 Data collection limitations

The findings from this study should be interpreted with an understanding that generalising the findings to whole jurisdictions should be done with caution. They are based on small tenant sample sizes, data collection only took place in one or two sites, and the way services are adapted to local contexts varies. Factors such as the size of the community, the distance to the regional centre, the availability of other service providers, the strength of community organisations, the quality and quantity of existing housing, the length of the relationship with the state or territory housing department, and the quality of the relationship between the community and service providers locally and in regional and head office, all influence the way tenancy management services are delivered and experienced.

The views of tenants are affected by local conditions. If tenants have lived in sub-standard homes, with health hazards such as leaking sewage tanks, houses manufactured with asbestos, holes in the walls and almost no maintenance, where a lack of security means people walk through their yard to get to the town store, they are going to be very satisfied with a refurbished or new home, with gates that lock, wide verandas and enough room for the family. In communities where the problems were less severe the level of satisfaction may be comparatively less.

Response rates were excellent as tenants were strongly motivated to participate in the surveys and interviews because of the high value they placed on housing, but there was some bias towards older women. There were language and cultural constraints on the willingness of tenants and some Indigenous stakeholders to go deeply into their experiences. These included:

- Language barriers that affected the interpretation of questions and answers, even when translators were used.
- Cultural differences in understandings of time. Respondents often struggled to answer questions accurately in relation to the length of a period, such as how long it was since they had seen a housing officer. They tended to measure time by events rather than measures such as weeks or months which may have compromised accurate responses to questions about the frequency of service delivery.
- Respondents' uncertainty about how who was delivering what service so that sometimes their response referred to another service.
- Community sensitivities regarding some topics especially allocations and the future of non-NPARIH communities.
- Data collection conditions (heat) that limited the willingness of respondents to answer questions for lengthy periods.

Every effort was made to account for these limitations, including keeping the survey short, using translators where possible, and asking probing questions to check for accuracy of responses.

3 THE POLICY CONTEXT: A DECADE OF INDIGENOUS HOUSING REFORM

3.1 Indigenous housing from ATSIC to NPARIH

In order to understand the drivers, complexity and contentious nature of remote Indigenous housing policy, it is instructive to consider the historical policy context. The idea of a national Indigenous housing policy in Australia can be traced to the late 1960s when the Commonwealth acquired powers over Indigenous affairs. From this time, the movement for Indigenous self-determination saw the emergence of the homelands movement in which Indigenous people established communities on their traditional lands and other locations where they had historical and cultural attachments, as well as their own service delivery organisations. However, policy commitments to self-determination, funding levels and support for Indigenous controlled service delivery waxed and waned between the early 1970s, the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)[3] in 1990 and its demise in 2005. Throughout these three decades the Indigenous community housing sector grew continuously and Indigenous housing organisations (ICHOs) throughout Australia formed the nucleus for responses to employment, economic development, social services and community engagement.

One downside during this period was a lack of coordination in functional responsibilities and funding programs between the Commonwealth and states/territories. Another was a lack of attention to building capacity for governance, financial, asset and tenancy management within the ICHO sector. Many ICHOs were not financially viable due to low levels of rental revenue and high costs and this led them to use a range of survival strategies including cross subsidisation with other programs such as the Community Development Employment Program[4] (CDP) and deferment of maintenance (Eringa, Spring et al. 2009).

Following the abolition of ATSIC, responsibility for the national Indigenous housing funding program, the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), which had supported the homelands movement, transferred to the Commonwealth Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). In 2007, a Commonwealth Government-initiated review of CHIP found that the program was failing to provide adequate housing for Indigenous people resident in remote communities and recommended its abolition and replacement with a program managed by state housing authorities. The recommended goal was to establish housing management standards equivalent to those in public housing programs in comparable locations elsewhere. These recommendations were consistent with Commonwealth Government policy preferences to restrict Commonwealth involvement in housing provision and to only provide dedicated Indigenous funding for remote housing to states and territories. This meant that Indigenous housing in non-remote areas became the responsibility of mainstream social housing programs administered by states and territories under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). It also meant that no dedicated funding sources were available to ICHOs.

A summary of the evolution of remote Indigenous housing programs and administrative arrangements is provided in Table 5 below. This demonstrates the continual change and disruptions that have occurred in Indigenous housing policy and governance over the past decade. Since 2004, there have been two changes of Federal Government and changes of government in most states and territories, and the housing program, funding arrangements

[3] ATSIC was a national elected Indigenous body with responsibility for administering Indigenous funding, including funding for community housing.

[4] CDEP was an Indigenous work for the dole scheme that provided a low-cost labour source for housing construction and maintenance. CDEP was phased out from the mid-2000s.

and the national government agency with responsibility for Indigenous housing have also changed several times.

Table 5: Evolution of remote Indigenous housing programs and administration 2004–14

2004	July	Abolition of ATSIC
		Transfer of CHIP to FaHCSIA
2005	Dec	Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreements negotiated (signed by each state/territory government by May 2006)
2007	Feb	Review of CHIP
	June	Northern Territory Emergency Response announced
	Sept /Oct	MOU signed and funding for NT housing reforms allocated under Indigenous Housing, Accommodation and Related Services program
2008	April	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) announced
	July	Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Program replaces CHIP
	Dec	NPARSD signed
2009	Jan	NPARIH signed
		NAHA commenced to replace CSHA—ARHP funding moved to NPARIH
	Aug	Strategic Indigenous Housing & Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) reviewed
	Dec	Renegotiation of NPARIH
2013	Sep	Change of national government
		Restructuring of the Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to become the Australian Department of Social Services. Indigenous Affairs moved to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
2014		Re-negotiation of NPARIH under bi-lateral agreements with individual states and NT

Source: Modified from ANAO 2012 and Milligan, Phillips et al. 2011.

Over the past decade, there have also been changes to other Indigenous programs, community governance institutions and land tenure arrangements that have implications for housing. Examples include the abolition of the Community Development and Employment program (CDP), the replacement, in the Northern Territory, of Aboriginal Community Councils with large mainstream Shires, the dismantling of state Indigenous housing authorities and administrative units and, in many remote communities, the establishment of 40-year leases of Indigenous land to the state.

The enormity of these changes should not be underestimated, nor the disruptions caused to Indigenous communities, organisations and tenants as well as to the Australian federal, state and territory governments. More radical policy proposals came and went, such as in jurisdictions such as Queensland where state government policy to exit from direct housing management and progressively transfer all social housing management to the CHP sector, including in remote communities, was commenced by the Newman government but is unlikely to be continued following a change of government.

In May 2014, the 2014–15 Federal Budget foreshadowed further policy changes to Indigenous funding with the establishment of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Under this strategy,

the government proposed reforms to the National Partnership Agreements, with the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Delivery Service (NPARSD) superseded by the Remote Community Advancement Network, but continuing the NPARIH over the next five years through a $2.2 billion investment in line with more stringent rationalising and consolidating of communities considered unviable and as outlined in the government reform priorities. In both cases, adopted policies will be negotiated through bilateral agreements with each state and territory, rather than through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (ABC 2015; RA 2014). Further changes, over the remaining years of NPARIH, are being proposed by the Commonwealth that include closer links to employment programs, an emphasis on tenant rights and responsibilities and on increasing home ownership.

3.2 NPARIH: the national policy framework

The NPARIH involves a partnership between the Commonwealth and the states and the Northern Territory to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities (COAG 2008a: 3). More broadly, the intent of the reforms was to contribute to outcomes under the NPARSD and National Indigenous Reform Agreement that emphasise closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, through targeting areas including healthy homes, safe communities and schooling and economic participation (COAG 2008b: 5–6).

The program aims are to deliver 4,200 new houses by June 2018, and rebuild or refurbish approximately 6,700 existing houses by the end of June 2014 (see Figure 3) (DSS 2013a). At June 2013, just over one year prior to data collection, 2,025 new houses and 5,887 refurbishments had been completed, ahead of schedule (DSS 2013a). Refurbishment targets were exceeded overall and met or exceeded in all jurisdictions except SA. New house targets were close to half way met overall and in most jurisdictions. A notable exception was the NT where approximately two-thirds of the new house target was achieved. By June 2016, the program had delivered 3,233 new houses and 7,350 refurbishments, with capital works received by 350 communities (DPC 2016).

Figure 3: NPARIH Capital Works as at 30 June 2016

Source: DPMC 2016

To complement the capital investment, tenancy management reforms were a pre-condition for communities to receive capital works funding. These reforms aimed to establish support structures for sustaining tenancies, reformed rent strategies, increased employment opportunities and improved data collection capacity. The reforms required altering land tenure on community titled land to facilitate government and commercial investments and opportunities (COAG 2010).

Bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and each of the states and the Northern Territory provide detailed targets for each funding period. This was supported by joint steering committees that reported progress and reviewed targets. There were many challenges to managing the political and practical complexities of NPARIH implementation in communities while also ensuring appropriateness in remote contexts (DSS 2013b; Elvin, Sonja et al. 2010; Larkins 2012; Pholeros and Phibbs 2012). As detailed in Phase 1 of this study (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014), they included the political and practical complexity of negotiating with communities on land tenure and adapting public housing tenancy management policies and practices to remote Indigenous contexts.

The initial stages of the NPARIH program focused on meeting capital works targets (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014). As these were achieved, attention turned to tenancy management arrangements to develop these services and ensure they were delivered as effectively as possible.

It is noteworthy that the transfer away from the ICHO sector to state housing departments occurred in opposition to national social housing policy where a significant proportion of mainstream public housing is being transferred to management by CHPs and the establishment of a new national regulatory and registration system for not-for-profit housing providers. This national housing policy direction is influencing current policy developments as we move towards the post-NPARIH policy environment, a development discussed in our analysis of the implications of the study findings.

3.3 The impact of reforms on the ICHO sector

One of the area's most profoundly affected by changes to Indigenous housing policy in recent years is the ICHO sector. This has undergone considerable decline as a result of the NPARIH reforms due to the loss of dedicated national funding, with the impact especially strong in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia and in remote Indigenous communities generally (see Table 6 below). The ICHO sector is predominantly comprised of localised, kin-based, community organisations managing housing portfolios of less than 100 dwellings, with the majority managing less than 50 (Porter 2009).

The removal of funding attached to delivery of housing services has meant that many ICHOs have become unviable. This decline in numbers is partly due to mergers as a result of efforts to increase the competitiveness of ICHOs against the mainstream CHP sector through the creation of larger organisations. But the withdrawal of contracts for the provision of housing services also played a substantial role in the demise of many ICHOs. Table 6 below shows that between 2001 and 2011 the number of ICHOs declined from 616 to 330. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of permanent dwellings managed by ICHOs declined from 22,364 to 16,773 (Productivity Commission 2014). The impact has been greatest in remote locations with 53 per cent of all ICHO-managed dwellings in 2012 located in remote or very remote locations (AIHW 2013: 90). However, in non-remote locations, ICHOs are also increasingly subject to mainstreaming. The exception is NSW where adapted policy, funding and regulation are in place (Milligan, Phillips et al. 2011).

Under the NPARIH, there is great variation in the treatment of the ICHO sector by state housing agencies, but even if state housing agencies are willing to enter partnerships with them, there are many barriers to their integration as registered providers within state systems.

This includes economies of scale, their ability to resource regulatory hurdles including complexities around legal frameworks, and their remoteness affecting IT access and availability of qualified personnel or training opportunities (Eringa, Spring et al. 2009).

Table 6: Indigenous community housing organisations by state or territory: 2001, 2006 and 2012

State or territory	All ICHOs		All ICHOs	Funded ICHOs
	2001	2006	2012	
NSW and ACT	205	169	207	122
VIC	25	22	19	18
QLD	116	91	33	33
SA	31	37	34	33
WA	125	92	7	7
TAS	3	3	2	2
NT	111	82	28	28
Total Australia	*616*	*496*	*330*	*243*

Source: Adapted from Milligan, Phillips et al. (2010) ABS (2007, Table 2.2), AIHW (2013: 63) and Productivity Commission (2014, Table 17A.8)

Direct management of housing by the state in remote Indigenous communities and the corresponding decline in CHO sector provision runs counter to national trends of an increased role for the CHO sector in social housing (Pisarski, Lowah and Langdon 2010; Milligan, Phillips et al. 2010). In every state and territory, state housing departments are transferring a substantial proportion of their housing stock to CHPS and reducing their management role. The proportion of stock transferred varies between jurisdictions, as well as whether the transfer includes the property titles. In NSW, for example, a third of public housing stock is being transferred to CHPs, while the Queensland Government has announced its intention to transfer only a small amount of stock selectively, on a case-by-case basis (Tlozek 2013).

These developments have been accompanied by a new, three-tier national regulatory system for CHO providers that requires all CHO providers to register in order to manage any tenancies. The regulatory requirements present particular challenges for Indigenous bodies and community organisations that may not be incorporated as a company and where restrictions of size and resourcing make it difficult for them to meet the administrative and regulatory requirements. While there are indications in some jurisdictions of some willingness to support capacity building for ICHOs, for example in NSW through the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, the focus or scale of such interventions is unclear and in most jurisdictions there seems little appetite to develop the ICHO sector so that it can compete alongside the mainstream CHPs. Unless this support is provided, it is difficult to see what future there is for Indigenous community organisations to become involved in the delivery of housing to Indigenous people.

3.4 Demographic and housing service delivery context

The remote and very remote Indigenous population of Australia comprises 142,900 people, or 21 per cent of the total Indigenous population in Australia (ABS 2011). The Indigenous population in remote areas comprises 15 per cent of the total remote population, rising to almost half of the very remote total population (Baxter, Hayes et al. 2011). The Northern Territory includes the highest percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in any jurisdiction and the highest number of discrete Indigenous communities, but Queensland has the numerically highest Indigenous population. The Northern Territory has the highest

number of remote communities followed by Western Australia and Queensland (see Table 7 below).

Table 7: Australia's estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by state and territory (at 30 June 2011)

	NT		WA		Qld		SA	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Proportion of jurisdiction Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (%)	29.8	68,901	3.8	88,277	4.2	188,892	2.3	37,392
Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (%)	10.3		13.2		28.2		5.6	
Per cent of national remote and very remote Indigenous communities	63		27		12		8	

Source: ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011, Cat No 3238.0.55.001, available at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001.

It is well known that housing for Indigenous Australians is inadequate. Problems include the material condition of housing such as facilities, materials, services, and infrastructure, and housing accessibility—for example affordability, security, cultural appropriateness and location. Housing inadequacy is more acute in remote and very remote locations due to a complex range of factors, including higher Indigenous populations, cultural issues, and location and isolation (Bailie and Wayte 2006; Memmott, Birdsall-Jones et al. 2011). There is no housing market in most remote locations, with most government-provided, either for service workers or Indigenous residents, and a small percentage constructed by Indigenous community organisations or self-built by individuals. This is why, in remote and very remote areas, only 10 per cent of homes are owned by an Indigenous person, and almost 60 per cent of Indigenous households are renters (AIHW 2013: 30). The absence of a housing market contributes to the shortage of housing and causes the high levels of crowding that NPARIH aims to address.

Figure 4: On the road to the APY Lands

Source: Authors

Although NPARIH aims to establish public housing-like tenancy management in remote Indigenous communities, it has been well established that there are substantial policy differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenancies (Memmott, Long et al. 2003; Habibis 2013; Milligan, Phillips et al. 2011), especially in remote settings. Some of these are summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Policy implications of remote Indigenous tenancy management

Context	Policy issue
Mixed housing stock including housing that does not meet public housing standards	Rent setting
	Housing maintenance
Frequent travel within and between communities	Identifying tenants
	Establishing principal residence
	Crowding and provision of visitor accommodation
	Notification of absence
	Termination and abandonment
Customary obligations	Enforcing policies on head tenants
	Allocations
	Occupancy
	Tenancy transfer
	Tenant participation
	Property damage
High and complex needs	Tenant support
Language barriers	Tenant communication

Source: Habibis, Phillips et al. (2014: 22).

As well as the shortage of housing and high levels of crowding, key differences include:

- Large households, low skills and education, high levels of disability, expensive food and other consumables and a lack of consumer choice.
- The impact of crowding on poor health, education levels and behaviours detrimental to individual and community wellbeing (Memmott, Birdsall-Jones et al. 2011).
- Strong cultural norms of reciprocity and demand sharing that impact on individual and household budgets and capacity for rent payments.
- Seasonal and cultural geographical mobility between communities, with implications for unstable tenancies due to extended family absences, empty properties, visitor over-crowding and challenges in identifying rent-payers.
- Language barriers and cultural differences in the meanings of terms such as house, land, home or tenant can make communication with service providers including maintenance workers, difficult—a high percentage of Indigenous people in remote communities speak English as their second or third language.
- High levels of short-term population mobility, language differences, long distances between communities and from regional centres, and the lack of mobile phone and internet coverage, make consulting with communities, meeting tenants and arranging inspections difficult.
- Cultural practices such as vacating dwellings for extended periods following a death in the household or the belief that particular houses are cursed.

The experience of renting is also different because public housing providers operate a standardised, centralised, policy driven approach to managing rent collection, that is very different from the localised, flexible approach of ICHO providers who previously managed Indigenous housing in most remote communities. CHOs are usually small, local, kin-based organisations whose decision-making is based on flexible and customary tenancy arrangements where rent-setting, occupancy numbers and management of property damage tended to be personalised and poorly enforced (Porter 2009). Diverse rent-setting arrangements are also characteristic of these organisations, for example, a poll tax system in which all residents in a property paid either what they could afford (see Habibis et al. 2013) or little or nothing for rent and utilities. Under ICHO management the cost of power was often included within the rental payment, so the introduction of separate billing was new for tenants in many locations. Levels of housing maintenance by many ICHOs had also been relatively low (see Eringa, Spring et al. 2009) so tenants' understanding of what is required for reporting maintenance needs and any property damage is often limited. Substantial behavioural change is therefore required for tenants to manage tenancy requirements expected under state/territory housing management regimes.

This cultural and geographical context meant introducing public housing standards of tenancy management was challenging (see Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014 for a detailed analysis of the service context in the early years of NPARIH). Housing managers had to manage the complexities of negotiating with communities on tenure and management arrangements, and legislative reform was required to establish the legal foundation necessary to manage property on Indigenous land. Many locations were not covered by residential tenancy or planning legislation and tenure arrangements were often highly complex. Tight timelines imposed by the Commonwealth, together with financial incentives, also placed pressure on the states and the Northern Territory to implement the reforms quickly, making it difficult to undertake lengthy consultation procedures with communities and stakeholders (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014 provides a full account of the early years of NPARIH implementation).

The establishment of service delivery arrangements often involved building programs from scratch, and without a blueprint for how public housing policy and operational procedures

were to be applied. In most locations, operations were initially undertaken with little or no housing management infrastructure. Local offices had to be established and staff employed and trained to deliver services in an environment in which policy settings and operational procedures for everything from rent settings and collection to repairs and maintenance were only beginning to be formulated.

A priority was to collect and confirm information about the number and condition of properties on communities, and household occupants, and to identify where investment should be expended. In some cases, these decisions were constrained by whether leasing arrangements had been achieved and the absence of any service infrastructure. These tasks were undertaken when IT systems were inadequate or non-existent and required substantial development. In most locations data entry was manual so accuracy and efficiency of data entry was problematic. Considerable work was required to establish monitoring and compliance mechanisms and to change administrative systems.

Figure 5: Fixing a blow-out on the way to Umuwa

Source: Authors

The remote contexts also mean that skilled housing and maintenance workforces are scarce, as are facilities for safe workplaces and adequate information technology equipment and infrastructure. The poor quality of the roads makes driving hazardous and tiring. Roads are generally unsealed and signage often non-existent. Blow-outs are common and you can travel long distances without passing another vehicle. In the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, the drive from the regional office at Umawa to Pipalyatjara takes 3.5 hours each way. Housing SA managed the safety risks of travel by requiring staff to travel in pairs and only during daylight hours, adding to the cost of service delivery. In the Fitzroy Valley, some staff regularly travel distances of 1,800 kilometres per month. Distance, and the absence of accommodation for housing workers in some communities, means they travel with a swag and camp out. Many communities are located at a distance from Centrelink offices and financial institutions, so establishing direct debit arrangements for rent and debt collection is time consuming and costly.

A well run repairs and maintenance system is a cornerstone of any housing program but the low rent base, high service costs, extreme weather events, isolation, cost of contractor

services and difficulties in regulating suppliers working remotely make effective and cost-efficient service delivery difficult. To manage their budgets, most Housing Departments limit service to addressing urgent health and safety requirements only, once funding allocations have been expended, resulting in deteriorated housing stock and unsatisfied tenants.

Few communities have qualified staff to undertake repairs and maintenance, requiring a journey by a town-based contractor often located many kilometres away. In some locations, such as the Fitzroy Valley and the APY Lands, contractors may be located many hours' journey away yet they usually have no way of communicating with tenants to make sure they have understood what the problem is, what equipment and parts they need to repair it, whether the identified property is the correct one or whether the tenant will be there to provide access when they arrive.

These conditions make it difficult for housing managers to supervise contractors so the system is liable to price gouging. Language and cultural barriers may compromise accurate identification of repair and maintenance needs, especially if communication is not face-to-face. Establishing tenant liability for any damage is also hard.

3.5 The service delivery models

The implementation of NPARIH was influenced by a number of factors. These include:

- The size and geographical distribution of communities—Territory Housing, for example, had an enormous task in taking on responsibility for approximately 5,000 remote Indigenous tenancies, effectively doubling their tenancies under management. This was a factor influencing their decision to contract some housing management functions back to shires and ICOs.
- Differences in land tenure and leasing arrangements—for example, 85 per cent of Western Australia is subject to native title claims and much of Indigenous land is held under Aboriginal Land Title (ALT) or Crown Title. In these cases, leases are held with the relevant corporate body which usually represents the community, or, if the community is large, it may be sub-leased to smaller communities or families.
- Provisions in residential tenancies and planning legislation and requirements for their amendment.
- The presence of service delivery infrastructure and the distribution and profile of housing stock.
- The size and capacity of the ICHO sector, and its relationship with the relevant state government as well as the availability of other possible service partners.
- The management philosophy of the state housing provider. For example, the NT model of direct delivery is rooted in the highly politicised context of the NTER that saw the NT and federal governments dramatically increase their service delivery presence in remote communities and town camps. Concerns about the past housing management performance of community councils and local government reforms also played a part.
- Whether NPARIH funds were supplemented by additional state/NT funding.

Table 9: Tenancy management arrangements for remote Indigenous by state and territory communities, by state and territory, 2013

	Northern Territory	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia
Tenancy service model	Mixed Regional service providers and direct SHA management through five regional centres DIDO	Direct SHA management from regional offices and sub-regional service hubs. FIFO/DIDO	Direct SHA management through six regional offices FIFO/DIDO	Mixed regional service providers and direct SHA management through local housing offices FIFO/DIDO
Policy settings	Mainstream with some adaptation	Mainstream with minimal adaptations	Mainstream with local operating procedures	Mainstream with some adaptation
Third party tenancy management providers	Tendered and contracted to: ICHO (regional centres, town camps) Shire councils Private sector contractors	None for tenancy management	None	Five ICHO One CHO
Tenant support	In development	In development	In development	NGO agencies
Repair and maintenance	Tendered and contracted to: ICHOs, shires and private contractors, shire councils (remote)	Mainstream through central call centre	Mainstream with local notification system through regional office	Mixed RSP and direct
Community consultation	Housing reference groups	Indigenous shire councils	Housing committees Community councils	Community councils and community

Note: Direct = state housing authority; RSP = Regional Service Provider; ICHO = Indigenous Community Housing Organisation; FIFO = Fly-in, Fly-out; DIDO = Drive-in, Drive-out; RIS = Remote Indigenous Service Centre; CHO = Community Housing Organisations.

In South Australia and Queensland, tenancy and asset management are provided directly by the SHA, although Queensland moved to a more mixed model, after we had collected our data. In Western Australia and the Northern Territory, a mixed model prevails, combining direct management in some locations and third party arrangements (including ICHOs or shire councils) in others. A summary of arrangements is provided in Tables 9 and 10.

3.6 Evaluations of NPARIH and remote tenancy management

There is limited independent, accessible research on the housing management practices that have followed the NPARIH reforms. There are five NPARIH-related investigations that offer some insights into their progress, although their focus on tenancy management aspects of the NPARIH is partial or indirect (Allen Consulting 2013; Larkins 2012; National Shelter 2012; CAT 2012a, 2012b; DSS 2013b). The DSS review (2013b) published by FaHCSIA is the only report to provide a comprehensive, national picture of the NPARIH implementation but

focuses predominantly on the capital works program and provides only limited coverage of tenancy management issues. The Allen Consulting Group, Commonwealth Ombudsman and DSS reports recognise the challenges inherent in achieving standards of housing delivery and tenancy management in remote areas that are comparable to those in urban areas and acknowledge some achievements. The Allen Consulting Group report found high levels of tenant understanding of the new arrangements in relation to rental payments and responsibilities for repairs and maintenance. Both Northern Territory reports acknowledge the efforts of Territory Housing to explain the requirements of tenancy agreements.

The DSS progress review (2013b) acknowledges some progress in implementing tenancy management reforms but points to variable performance across jurisdictions, emphasising the importance of tenant engagement and support to assist tenant understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the new arrangements. The report recommends improved benchmarks and reporting regimes for tenancy management under the NPARIH and greater emphasis on building ICHO capacity and employing and training more local Indigenous housing workers.

Table 10: Policy, legislative and land holding arrangements for state and territory management of housing in discrete Indigenous communities

	Northern Territory	Western Australia	Queensland	South Australia
Key legislation	*Residential Tenancy Act* 1999 (NT) *Housing Act* 1982 (NT) *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* 1976 (Cwth) (ALRA) *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act* 2007 (Cwth)	*Housing Act* 1980 (WA) *Residential Tenancies Act* 1987 (WA) *Land Administration Act* 1997 (WA) *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act* 1972 (WA) *Aboriginal Housing Legislation Amendment Act* 2010	*Residential Tenancies & Rooming Accommodation Act* 2008 (Qld) *Housing Regulation Act* (2003) (Qld) *Aboriginal Land Act* 1991 (Qld) *Torres Strait Islander Land Act* 1991 (Qld) *Aurukun and Mornington Shire Leases Act* 1978 (Qld)	*Residential Tenancy Act* 1995 (SA)) *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act* 1981 (SA) *Aboriginal Lands Trust Act* (SA) 1966
Policy frameworks & instruments	→ Remote Public Housing Management Framework → Contracts with shire councils and Indigenous housing providers	→ Housing Management Agreement (HMA) between WA HA and RSP → Agreement to construct between WA HA and Aboriginal entity → Service Level Agreements between WA HA and contractors for property maintenance → WA HA and RSP—Service Level Agreement to manage and maintain housing → Remote Area Essential Services Program (repairs and maintenance) → Contract for Services Indigenous Land Use Agreements → Ascertaining the wishes of Aboriginal Inhabitants protocol	→ Building a tenancy management system framework for discrete Indigenous communities → Deeds of Agreement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils	→ MOU with APY → MOU with ALT → Housing SA operational policies for Aboriginal communities → Working Together Agreements with communities → Local operating procedures
Land holding arrangements	→ 40–99-year head leases with subleases for individual tenants at Wurrumiyanga and Groote Eylandt communities → 20–40-year housing precinct leases in 10 communities → Voluntary leasing arrangements under negotiation for remaining prescribed communities → Negotiations continue at Yuendumu and Yirrkala → Legacy housing managed under occupancy agreements.	→ Housing Management Agreements over crown and freehold land, including Aboriginal Lands Trust and Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority for 40 years	→ 40-year leases with 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Councils (34 discrete Indigenous communities) → Deeds of Agreement where 40-year leases are not yet in place	→ 50-year ground lease with APY → 40-year under leases with ALT communities

Other areas identified for improvement in these reports include:

- An increased role for, and oversight of, third party service providers (Larkins 2012; Allen Consulting 2013).
- Better processes and technologies around rent setting and collection (Larkins 2012; CAT 2012a; Allen Consulting 2013).
- Greater attention to tenant communication and support, managing visitors and occupancy numbers, tenant participation and repairs and maintenance (Allen Consulting 2013; CAT 2012a; DSS 2013b; Larkins 2012; National Shelter 2012).

The findings from this study are largely in accordance with these reports, insofar as it agrees with the partial success of the program and identifies many areas for improvement, including in relation to rent collection, rent setting, repairs and maintenance, tenant communication and support, and the management of visitors. It also provides more detail on the difficulties of managing remote Indigenous housing within a public housing framework.

3.7 Non-NPARIH Communities

While state housing departments are now managing the housing on most of the larger remote Indigenous communities there remain many smaller communities which are outside arrangements. The future is especially uncertain for those communities where there has been no NPARIH investment, where the RTA does not apply and responsibility for essential services between the Commonwealth and the states is disputed. This is especially an issue for South Australia and Western Australia where the bulk of these communities are. Formerly the Commonwealth funded their essential services including diesel for generators, generator or solar system repairs and road grading, but with NPARIH the Commonwealth negotiated with all the states and the Northern Territory, apart from South Australia, to withdraw its contribution. The Commonwealth's rationale for insisting the states take over municipal and essential services under NPARIH is because these services are critical for effective housing use and maintenance. However, the withdrawal of the Commonwealth affects all communities, not only those that have accepted management of their housing by state housing departments. Those communities outside of NPARIH arrangements may close unless the Commonwealth or state/Northern Territory governments step in.

The Commonwealth's position has taken place against the leaking of a 2010 Commonwealth Government document identifying communities deemed too small and/or remote and lacking any economic foundation to be sustainable, and suggesting that in future investment should only go to communities deemed economically and socially 'viable' (O'Connor 2015).

The response of state/territory governments has varied, partly depending on the size and geographical distribution of communities, and the extent to which they are covered by NPARIH arrangements.

In South Australia, 80 per cent of housing in the APY Lands is covered by NPARIH. Communities outside NPARIH arrangements included approximately 100 properties in about 25 homeland communities.

In other areas of South Australia, non-NPARIH communities include:

- Thirty-seven houses in the Gerard and Carlton in the Murray Riverland area.
- Forty-eight houses at Umoona.
- Twenty-one houses at Nepabunna.
- Thirteen houses at Oak Valley.

Rents are not charged on non-NARIH properties and service provision is limited to emergency repairs with a federal funding allocation of $2,350 per annum per property. The

Commonwealth has agreed to continue to provide municipal and essential services to all remote communities. The South Australian Government is on record as maintaining its commitments to these communities. It refused the Commonwealth's 2015 offer of $10M transitional funding to state responsibility and at this stage the Commonwealth has agreed to maintain funding. It may be that this has been influenced by the fact that large parts of South Australia's remote areas are not incorporated as Local Government Areas (LGAs).

In Queensland, the only significant non-NPARIH communities are Yarrabah, Cherbourg, Kowanyama (some houses) and Torres Strait. In these communities, the Aboriginal Shire Council manages housing and they are required, under the Housing Act, to register under the National Regulatory System or be ineligible for housing assistance. Discussions are occurring with these communities about their preferred long-term tenancy management arrangements and how prepared they are for registration. In some other communities, including Hope Vale, some dwellings do not yet have 40-year leases in place and may or may not be managed by the Queensland DoH under agency contracts. The only other remote housing not located in NPARIH communities or within mainstream housing programs is housing on a small number of outstations that are generally not permanently inhabited, and some housing in remote towns managed by a small number of ICHOs that opted not to participate in state government contractual and regulatory regimes. The future of this housing is uncertain.

In the Northern Territory, the 2013–18 NPARIH implementation plan emphasises sustainability and a commitment to:

> … holding discussions before the expiry of the NPARIH to discuss the ongoing management of remote public housing in the Northern Territory, particularly in light of both Governments' commitment through long term housing leases in communities across the Northern Territory. (p.1)

Policy and service delivery managers from NT Housing indicated significant concern about what will happen post-NPARIH. Since then the NT government has announced the Remote Housing Strategy which provides $350 million to build more than 380 new houses and complete over 1,000 upgrades over the next two years. It also establishes the Remote Housing Development Authority, which is described by the Northern Territory government as a partnership between it and Aboriginal people living in remote communities (NT Govt 2016). This would have responsibility for the administration, construction delivery, tenancy management and the repair and maintenance of remote housing in the Territory's remote communities, town camps and homelands. The commitment of the RSDA to giving communities more say is also emphasised (Giles and Price 2016).

In Western Australia, there has been widespread concern about the future of many small, remote communities. In 2014, the Commonwealth's offer of a $90 million one-off payment for it to take over responsibility for the provision of essential services to remote Indigenous communities was initially refused by the Western Australian government. This was the context of the premier of Western Australia's October 2014 announcement that the state government was considering the closure of up to 150 remote Indigenous communities, mainly in the Kimberley region, if the Commonwealth did not maintain their funding of essential services (Kagi 2014). The result was widespread anger and concern, especially since there appeared to be little in the way of planning what would happen to the community's residents (Howitt and McLean 2015). Since then, the state government has accepted the Commonwealth's payment and agreed that it will be responsible for service provision to all of its remote Indigenous communities (ABC News 2015). Following consultation with Aboriginal communities and leaders, in July 2016 the WA government released its plans for the future of regional and remote Aboriginal communities (Government of WA 2016). The focus is on funding and support for larger communities, and a withdrawal of the minor services currently delivered to small communities. While some smaller communities are self-sufficient, this will leave some

without essential services or housing services and it is hard to see how those living there will be able to remain.

Box 1: A small community's concerns for its future

Mary and Edie live over 100 kilometres from Fitzroy Crossing in a community of less than 10 houses. It was established on traditional lands about 25 years ago. They stay there to care for country and say: 'That's where my heart belongs'.

Their community is not an HMA community and they are very concerned about housing. The houses are not in good condition and although they are inspected every six months by Marra Worra Worra 'it's not enough'.

> What will happen if there are no new houses or upgrades? We would have to move to other relatives in Bayulu or Fitzroy Crossing. We wouldn't move to [another community] because of conflict, language and skin differences. We could go to [another community], but it's kilometres away and already crowded. We'll stay at [community] even if the houses are not upgraded. We're determined to stay.

Data from this study suggests that uncertainty is already emptying some communities and creating crowding elsewhere. One respondent observed:

> I see communities abandoned for the last 10 years or more because of the new system where bigger communities have houses—no jobs, funding cuts. Elders have to come to town for health so younger ones live there (too). It causes crowding in the bigger communities. Now the problem is where do they move to. 'Capable people, younger people, capable of contributing to their community. But there's that mob that want to go into town … [they] shouldn't abandon their community.' (Rob, Indigenous Elder)

In all locations, many of the people on communities outside of NPARIH arrangements are living in crowded and/or unmodernised properties. People we spoke to were both hopeful that their accommodation will be improved and very concerned that their community would close, but were determined to resist this. Addressing their concerns and providing them with some assurances about what will happen to their community is a critical policy priority. This should include working with Indigenous stakeholders to distinguish between permanent and non-permanent communities, and to identify appropriate levels of support for some non-permanent communities of cultural, or other significance.

4 TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

A detailed description of tenancy management arrangements was provided in the Final Report of Phase 1 of this study (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014). At that time service delivery arrangements were still in development and there have been some changes since then.

These are captured in this account which provides a short description of policy settings and operational arrangements for each of the four jurisdictions covered by this study.

4.1 Northern Territory

The Northern Territory has experienced ongoing policy adaptation in the management of remote Indigenous housing with an initial shift to mainstreaming. Interestingly, the problems and inappropriateness of mainstream approaches for remote communities was explicitly acknowledged in the Housing Strategy Consultation Draft. (NT DoH 2014: 11, 34). Evidence of these shortcomings and community advocacy resulted in release of a revised policy approach, HousingAction NT 2016 (NT Government 2016) that includes continued funding for new and upgraded housing and proposes establishment of a statutory authority, the Remote Housing Development Authority. The Authority will be responsible for the procurement, tenancy management and maintenance of housing in remote communities, outstations and town camps. This represents a significant departure from the policy and service delivery approaches of the past decade and, according to the policy statements, an opportunity to re-engage communities in decision-making and improve housing and employment outcomes.

4.1.1 Leasing and tenancy agreement arrangements

Prior to the NPARIH reforms, Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory was mostly managed by Indigenous community councils in remote communities and by ICHOs in towns and cities, including town camps. The establishment of the NTER in 2007 signalled the beginning of changes that anticipated those rolled out nationally under NPARIH. One key feature of the NTER and associated SIHIP reforms was compulsory acquisition of five-year leases by the Australian Government over remote communities to enable housing constructions and refurbishments as well as transfer of tenancy management responsibilities to the NT Government. Subsequently, longer term leasing arrangements were negotiated under NPARIH and this occurred concurrent with governance reforms that abolished Indigenous councils and replaced them with larger mainstream Shires.

Subsequent leasing arrangements under NPARIH takes two forms:[5]

1. Whole-of-township leases of between 40 and 99 years administered by the Executive Director Township Leasing on behalf of the Australian Government and managed by the NT Government through a sub-lease. This applies in Wurrumiyanga (Nguiu) in the Tiwi Islands and the Groote Eylandt region, covering Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra.
2. Housing precinct leases of between 20 and 40 years negotiated at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), Wadeye, Maningrida, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi, Ngukurr, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Lajamanu and Numbulwar. The NT Government is the landlord under a housing precinct lease and is responsible for property and tenancy management.

Territory Housing enters into tenancy agreements with tenants that operate under mainstream residential tenancies legislative requirements for most dwellings, although ‘legacy dwellings’ that are considered too deteriorated to meet acceptable community standards are managed

[5] Initially, when the NTER was introduced in 2007, leases over remote Indigenous communities were compulsorily acquired with five-year terms. When these ended they were gradually replaced with either whole-of-township or town precinct leases.

under ‘agreements to occupy’ rather than tenancy agreements, with the intent of keeping the properties habitable.

4.1.2 The service delivery model

The Northern Territory has a mixed housing management model with Territory Housing maintaining overall responsibility for housing management but contracting out discrete tenancy and maintenance functions. The aim is to strike a balance between locally responsive service provision and meeting state responsibilities including high levels of performance, quality and accountability in both tenancy and property management.

Remote housing is delivered under the broad mainstream structures of Territory Housing with operational policy aligned closely to mainstream policies although there are some remote adaptations.

Initially the NPARIH reforms were implemented through a dedicated Remote Housing Office and specific remote housing tenancy management policies. The Remote Housing Office, based in Darwin, had state-wide responsibility for remote Indigenous housing policy, capital works and tenancy management service delivery. A Remote Public Housing Management Framework was developed that initially based its policy settings on those operating in Territory Housing’s metropolitan locations. At that time, efforts were focused on managing the implementation of mainstream policy and practice to the unique conditions and on-the-ground realities of remote communities.

In 2014, a Housing Department organisational structure abolished the Remote Housing Office and integrated its functions with those of mainstream/urban public housing. At the same time, tenancy management policies were being reviewed to achieve greater alignment with those of public housing. This amalgamation of urban and remote housing policy signalled an intention to impose mainstream public housing policies for remote communities, with adaptations made only where a strong case exists for differentiation.

Territory Housing faced a significant challenge when it took over responsibility for remote housing which doubled the number of tenancies under management. The enormity of the task is evident when considering that Territory Housing needed to gear up from managing approximately 5,000 public housing tenancies in towns and cities to take on as many again in remote Indigenous communities. This required significant investment in the establishment of a workforce, information systems, policies and procedures at the same time as negotiating leases with communities, signing up tenancy agreements and establishing rent collecting and maintenance delivery systems.

Remote housing tenancy and asset management is delivered through five Territory Housing regional centres. Pragmatic and policy factors, including the challenges of providing and sustaining a presence in many dispersed and small-scale remote locations, led to an early decision to contract ICHOs and shires to provide a local tenancy management presence in some communities as well as contract out maintenance and capital works services.

The remote Indigenous tenancies were originally managed through dedicated remote teams comprising Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing support officers who drove to communities on a regular basis. They were assisted by shire-employed local community housing officers who undertake a range of customer service, tenant engagement and administrative tasks. Housing Reference Groups were established in each community to provide advice and represent the interests of the community (NT DoH 2014).

These local community housing officer and maintenance services were re-tendered in late 2013 to provide for expanded provision of non-trades maintenance, longer term contracts and more explicit and detailed funding conditions. This reflected some concerns that the previous arrangements did not provide optimum clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of Territory Housing and the Shires. The new arrangements rolled out in early 2014 saw

private sector contractors replace Shires in all but one location (Big Rivers—our case study site). In many cases these contractors had no or a limited prior presence in communities.

4.1.3 Rent setting and collection

Maximum dwelling rent is $120–$200 per week for refurbished houses and $150–$250 per week for new and rebuilt houses. Rent is calculated on household income with a rent ceiling for each house type. This rent policy was phased in over two stages to enable tenants to adapt to the increases and to enable Territory Housing to establish new IT systems and to cleanse and update their data.

4.1.4 Repairs and maintenance

Asset management inspections and maintenance coordination are managed regionally and undertaken by Territory Housing regional teams, with third party contractors engaged to undertake the maintenance work. Tenant initiated requests are directed to the regional team, often through the local housing worker. The tenancy agreement stipulates a minimum of four inspections each year to determine whether houses are being looked after and to identify maintenance and repair needs. Initially repairs and maintenance work was mostly provided by shires, but since 2014 private sector contractors replaced Shires in all sites apart from the Big Rivers where our case study is located.

4.1.5 Support, allocations and community consultation

Eligibility and allocations decisions are determined by the state housing department. No income threshold is applied, but the advice of housing reference groups is sought to confirm eligibility according to community criteria. Housing officers also work with the CHO locally to ensure tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and are able to maintain successful tenancies (Allen Consulting Group 2013). Community consultation takes place through Housing Reference Groups established in each community to provide advice and represent the interests of the community (NT DoH 2014).

4.2 Queensland

The scope of NPARIH in Queensland, including capital investment and tenancy management reforms, is limited to remote Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) discrete Indigenous communities that are governed by Indigenous councils established under mainstream local government statute. In response to concerns about the poor state of housing, tenancy management and maintenance regimes in remote communities, the Queensland Government progressively applied a more interventionist and mainstreaming approach to regulation, procurement and management of remote Indigenous housing from the late-1990s. Along with having larger communities, this history meant that Queensland was in a relatively strong position to implement the NPARIH reforms.

Housing policy in Queensland, since the implementation of NPARIH, has seen significant disruption due to two changes of government and five housing ministers. While not impacting significantly in the short-term on the NPARIH-driven tenancy management reforms, the changing political environment has created uncertainty about the longer term future for remote Indigenous housing. Following the 2012 election, the Newman government announced plans, under the Housing 2020 policy, to outsource management of almost all social housing by 2018, including the housing in remote Indigenous communities. Before clear plans were in place for how this would occur, the government changed again in early 2015 and this policy was discontinued. The new government's social housing management transfer and Indigenous housing policies are expected to be announced during 2016 as part of a 10-year housing strategy. There are clear indications, however, that the previous Queensland Indigenous housing policy and service delivery emphasis on undifferentiated mainstreaming

is being reconsidered and there is increasing recognition of the benefits of adaptive approaches, community capacity building and ICHO sector development.

4.2.1 Leasing and tenancy agreement arrangements

To meet NPARIH requirements, the Queensland Government introduced legislation to allow it to hold long-term and renewable leases of up to 40 years over DOGIT land to enable public infrastructure provision and for purposes under the *Housing Act* 2003, including the construction of social housing. The 40-year lease provisions provide for the state to pay rates and make annual lease payments to the councils who function as both local governments[6] and trustees of the DOGIT land. Indigenous councils operate under mainstream local government legislation, with funding for these functions coming from a range of sources. Legislative changes to land tenure arrangements for DOGITs were introduced to allow for 99-year home ownership leases and subsequently, legislation enabling freehold was also introduced.

4.2.2 The service delivery model

The implementation of 'public housing like' management practices in Queensland, including the case study locations, progressed quickly with most dwellings subject, in the early years of NPARIH, to 40-year leases, tenancy agreements between the state and tenants and with regular rent collection, maintenance and asset management systems well-established. More limited progress has been achieved, however, in community engagement, tenant support and employing local Indigenous tenancy management staff.

NPARIH implementation in Queensland was less complex than in some other jurisdictions because there are a smaller number of larger communities and the state was already heavily involved. However, land tenure, native title, infrastructure provision and governance challenges were encountered and these slowed the NPARIH construction program. One example of the complexity in negotiating 40-year leases was in Hope Vale, where unusually, two DOGITs operated with Council the Trustees for land and houses in town area and Hope Vale Congress (comprising 13 Clan groups) trustees for the remaining 30 houses and all undeveloped land. While council had signed 40-year leases by late 2012, the process of signing up the Congress houses was far more protracted.

In Queensland, interactions with communities under NPARIH occur through three separate government agencies. Almost all of the tenancies in the NPARIH communities are managed by the Department of Housing through public housing service centres, The Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office (Program Office) within the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) is responsible for facilitating land tenure and native title resolution, land development and capital works, including associated issues such as town planning and surveying for communities. Building and Asset Services (BAS) within the Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for property management, including housing maintenance. While these arrangements ensured that a range of specific expertise was available for NPARIH implementation, they also create significant coordination challenges.

The Queensland tenancy management model is direct provision by the state, using a fly-in fly-out (FIFO/DIDO) workforce supported in some communities by local housing workers. Most housing workers are employed on fixed term contracts for the life of NPARIH. The service delivery model has been modified over time based on experience, and enhancements have included the establishment of sub-regional service delivery hubs in Weipa, Cooktown and Thursday Island and employment of community-based local housing workers in some communities. Property management is the responsibility of a separate team based in Cairns

[6] Since 2004, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Councils in Queensland have operated under mainstream Local Government legislation and are responsible for municipal infrastructure and services.

that undertakes FIFO/DIDO property inspections. Responsive maintenance is reported by tenants on a 'blue phone' connected to the public housing state-wide call centre managed by BAS. Maintenance and upgrade works are either undertaken by BAS teams where they are in proximity or are contracted to the Aboriginal Shire Councils or private contractors.

The main focus of the housing officers is to follow up arrears, manage allocations and undertake home visits/property inspections. Other tasks that are less common in mainstream settings include encouraging people in crowded housing to submit application forms; actively chasing applicants to be offered an allocation who may be camping out or transient and difficult to contact; and assisting tenants by reporting or following up on outstanding maintenance requests. The local housing officer has a more restricted role providing support to the housing officer but avoiding potentially conflictual roles that could be compromising for a local community member.

4.2.3 Rent setting and collection

The rent policy in Queensland mirrors that for mainstream social housing with only minor modifications in practice. These include signing up additional residents to pay rent and arbitrary rent caps.

4.2.4 Repairs and maintenance

The target is for the housing officer to inspect homes every three months, although this is extended to six months for tenancies where there are considered low risk of tenant damage and are where houses are well looked after. The priority is new and refurbished houses and older un-renovated houses may be inspected less often. The inspections are mainly for tenant management purposes—cleanliness, damage etc. Urgent health and safety maintenance identified by the housing officer in these visits is reported by the housing officer to the maintenance call centre. Housing officers also manage charging for tenant-responsibility damage. Head tenants are now charged 50 per cent or the cost of these repairs, but they are not charged if the damage is caused by someone else and is reported to the police.

The property management team undertake property inspections, maintain property condition information systems, and manage planned maintenance and upgrade programs. The housing officer have only peripheral involvement in this asset works planning but are responsible for managing temporary transfers to enable major upgrades. Property team inspections are intended to occur six-monthly but often don't due to travel budget restrictions and weather. Housing officers have access to property condition data but cannot alter it. They do, however, report inaccuracies by email to the property team.

4.2.5 Support, allocations and community consultation

In Queensland, the allocations policy largely mirrors the public housing policy of allocation on the basis on need and allows allocations to any Indigenous applicant who has nominated that community among their preferences. Shire Councils have only a limited role in allocation decisions, primarily through an opportunity to provide feedback to the Department of Housing and Public Works about any cultural concerns about proposed allocations.

Once 40-year leases were finalised with local councils (as trustees for the land) and tenants were signed up to tenancy agreements, there was an extended period of FIFO and DIDO service delivery during which minimal engagement occurred with communities and tenants regarding housing management issues. The presence of housing workers was intermittent and contact with tenants largely centred on property inspections, tenancy administration and rent arrears. More recently, the depth and frequency of engagement has increased as a result of negotiations with councils offering the possibility of a greater role as head contractors in housing construction and maintenance and consultation about future tenancy management models.

Queensland has no tenant support programs in place and relies on referral by housing to other community and government services, where they are available, to assist tenants who are struggling to look after their homes or pay rent. The availability of services and referral arrangements differ across communities, but evidence suggests poor linkages between housing and support agencies (Moran, Memmott et al. 2016: 61).

4.3 South Australia

4.3.1 Leasing and tenancy agreement arrangements

The APY Lands cover an area of 102,000 square kilometres, an area slightly larger than the state of Victoria, with the distance between its eastern and western borders up to 400 kilometres. Title is held by the APY Lands Council as inalienable freehold under the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytajatjara Land Rights Act* 1981 (SA). The population is approximately 2,800 people, of which over 86 per cent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

In South Australia more generally, Indigenous land tenure is a mixture of Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT) land, Indigenous Land Corporation purchased land, and freehold land subject to caveats. Population numbers in communities range from less than five to 366 residents.

Housing SA now holds leases over almost all of the 400 APY Lands properties managed by Housing SA in regional and remote Indigenous communities. In other areas, the SA Department for Families and Communities has negotiated lease arrangements with ALT communities where an under-lease or a Deed of Agreement is agreed between the community, the ALT, the Minister for Social Housing and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation. Lease negotiations include rent settings and commencement dates. The capital works program is negotiated as part of the lease and land parcels identified.

The APY Lands were given priority under NPARIH, especially in relation to increasing the supply and quality of housing and the establishment of a public housing service. Under NPARIH, the SA Government was provided with $292 million for improvements to remote Indigenous housing including 241 new houses and 206 refurbishments. Implementation was undertaken through the Strategy, Policy and Aboriginal Outcomes directorate of Housing SA within the SA Department for Families and Communities.

4.3.2 The service delivery model

Housing SA directly manages its remote Indigenous tenancies through a regional office model. The small size and extreme remoteness of communities, the absence of viable alternatives and the history of housing in the APY Lands were critical factors in this decision. With no state funding for housing programs for Indigenous people, remote services are funded entirely through NPARIH funding, resulting in limits on the capacity of the state government to supervise and build the capacity of third party providers.

Policy development has been an ongoing process to identify how mainstream procedures should be applied. Operational and strategic direction has been provided by a centrally located Policy and Practice team that establishes the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for implementation and adaptation to local operating procedures. Policy development was developed in consultation and in collaboration with housing committees formed on the advice of community councils. These provide advice on eligibility, waiting list management, allocations, evictions and debt management.

4.3.3 Rent setting and collection

The initial rent-setting model was initially established on a per capita basis applied to all household residents over 18 years. Due to problems associated with identification of occupants and perceived inequalities due to high occupant numbers, a market-based rental system based on property size (bedroom numbers) was phased in from July 2013. Rents are

now determined by property assessments by the SA Valuer-General with the head tenant responsible for meeting rental payments, subject to reduced rents in extenuating circumstances and a safety net where rent exceeds 20 per cent of combined household income.

Rent collection has been made a priority; both because it is considered to be advantageous to Indigenous Australians living in remote areas to learn to comply with the rent payment obligations of tenancy agreements and to fund maintenance rental income.

4.3.4 Repairs and maintenance

Asset management is centrally-managed with reporting of repair needs via telephones that have been installed in communities. Housing staff also deal with repair requests when they are in the communities and tenants also call regional offices with requests. Properties are subject to a programmed maintenance and servicing regime, which includes electrical safety, plumbing and air-conditioning checks. The contractors used for repairs are chosen by price and capacity. Repair budgets are managed by Regional Managers.

4.3.5 Eligibility and support

Eligibility for housing is treated as a matter for local Indigenous governance organisations because the properties are on Indigenous land and the criteria relate to kin and language. For this reason there are no caps on income eligibility.

Tenant support originally included a Home Living Skills program that focused on nine healthy living practices with progressive incentives for tenants who achieve milestones within the program. However, the recruitment and retention of local staff was a challenge and tenancy support is now concentrated on assisting the most vulnerable tenancies to adhere to their tenancy agreements.

4.4 Western Australia

Western Australia has the third largest Indigenous population among all Australian states and territories, with 17,522 individuals living in remote and very remote areas. This represents 40 per cent of WA's total Indigenous population, a much higher figure than the national average of 21 per cent (ABS 2011). About 80 per cent of these are in the Kimberley region. The total number of remote communities is about 265, with about 60 of these occupied on a seasonal basis while the rest are permanent. Almost 80 per cent of the population live on 54 of the larger communities, and about 357 individuals live on 60 small communities of less than 10 people (less than 3% of the total remote population). When NPARIH was introduced, there were 2,583 properties on remote and very remote communities. By 2016, 566 new properties had been built, and 1,391 major refurbishments with commencement of another 22 properties at the end of the 2014–15 year (Hansard 2016).

4.4.1 Leasing and tenancy agreement arrangements

Most (80%) remote Indigenous communities are on ALT land and this led to unique arrangements in WA that did not require leases or changes to land tenure. With the introduction of NPARIH, the WA DoH developed Aboriginal Housing Management Agreements (HMAs) as the legal framework for managing housing on Indigenous land and to apply the *Residential Tenancies Act* 1987. HMAs operate on the principle that the state provides tenancy management services at the request, and with the agreement, of the Indigenous community and that housing meets public housing-like standards (WA DoH 2013). HMAs apply for 40 years and identify which areas (housing and community planning lots) are covered by the Agreement, the role of the community council, rent setting and allocation principles.

Where the WA DoH does not directly manage housing, Service Level Agreements are in place. An *Ascertaining the wishes of Aboriginal people protocol* sets out how the state housing agency will enter into the relationship with the Indigenous community.

At the time of data collection, the WA DoH had a relationship with 124 communities of which 57 have an HMA, and a further 70 were transitioning to an HMA. The total number of remote houses managed by the department in remote communities is currently 2,557, rising to 2,853 by 2018. The department has no relationship with 129 communities which together have about 800 houses and about 357 individuals. This represents about 2.8 per cent of the remote Indigenous population. Sixty of these communities comprise less than 10 individuals and some of them are only occupied seasonally.

4.4.2 The service delivery model

NPARIH funding for Western Australia is $1.8 billion over 10 years, supplemented by $14 million per annum from the state government. Tenancy and property management arrangements are a mix of direct management and contracts with third party providers. Nine regional offices provide tenancy and property management services to Government Employment Housing, public housing and Remote Aboriginal Housing. In six regions, these include RSPs who provide housing services to Indigenous communities (see Table 11 below). Five of these are operated by ICHOs and one by a mainstream community housing organisation. Although Remote Aboriginal Housing is mainstreamed within the WA DoH structure, its funding is attached to specific roles which ensures retention of its budget.

Policy, procurement, contracting, quality assurance and training are located at the head office in Perth, with visits to regional offices undertaken as required. At the regional level, Area Regional Advisors negotiate with local communities for the department, for example, to establish or revise the HMA.

In Broome and Derby, services are provided directly by Indigenous housing officers recruited from, and employed to work within their community and nearby outstations, supported by the regional team leader and Head Office staff. In Broome, the local team comprises four staff plus the regional manager and two administrative staff. In Halls Creek and the mid-west Gascoyne region, staff are located in the regional office and travel out to communities, with the frequency depending on proximity to the regional office. For remote communities, visits might be for periods of a week or two. Details of communities, houses and providers are provided in Table 11 below.

The RSPs are located in regions which would be difficult for the WA DoH to establish direct management because of the lack of infrastructure and the additional costs that come with remote service delivery. Funding, beyond that provided under NPARIH, is provided to build the capacity of the RSPs and ensure quality assurance. This includes a training website and biannual quality assurance visits to ensure compliance with policy and procedures. The team work closely with the RSPs to ensure they meet their targets. Under NPARIH, the Western Australian Government committed to achieving 20 per cent of Indigenous employment in areas of construction, maintenance, tenancy management, planning negotiation and service delivery, which was achieved. In all locations there is a policy of employing Indigenous people wherever possible, although respondents spoke of the difficulty of attracting and retaining Indigenous staff.

Table 11: Direct and regional service providers, Western Australia

Region	Organisation	Regional Office	Houses
Direct management			
West Kimberley	WA DoH Direct management	Broome/Derby	611 houses
Mid-West Gascoyne	WA DoH Direct management	Geraldton, Carnarvon	115 houses
Halls Creek	WA DoH Direct management	Halls Creek	378 houses
Regional Service Provider			
East Kimberley	Community Housing Ltd *	Kununurra	338 houses
Derby	Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation	Derby	101 houses
Fitzroy Crossing	Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation	Fitzroy Crossing	423 houses
Pilbara	Meta Maya	South Hedland	143 houses
Goldfields	Community Housing Limited	Kalgoorlie	120 houses
Ngaanyatjarra Lands	Ngaanyatjarra Council	Alice Springs/Perth	338 houses

* Community Housing Limited is a mainstream community housing provider (CHP) and the first CHP nationally to provide housing management services to a regional Indigenous community.

4.4.3 Rent setting and collection

Rents have been transitioning to public housing-like settings after they were initially set at $50/house or $35 per person. The maximum rental level is the same as for public housing tenancies, capped at 25 per cent of assessable household income or market rent (for town based) or maximum rent (for remote communities) whatever is the lower, for all tenants over the age of 16. In remote communities (i.e. not town based communities), rent setting takes into account the cost of constructing the dwelling over a 25-year period. Different income types have different assessable rates from a flat fee (usually $30 per person or $50/house) to 25 per cent of 'assessable household income' or market rent (for town based) or maximum rent (for remote communities) whatever is the lower.

To establish the status of household occupants in the context of high levels of movement between houses and communities, a concentric model of household status was developed in consultation with housing officers. This identifies an inner circle of individuals who have signed the tenancy agreement, a middle circle of those who live permanently in the house, and an outer circle of visitors. The formal policy is that after eight weeks visitors are considered tenants, though with some flexibility in implementation.

Rental income is reinvested in the community where it is collected for repairs and maintenance with no administrative fee applied.

Rents were introduced in four phases involving an initial process of stakeholder engagement and then, successively with community councils, whole communities and individual tenants. The HMA requires a whole-of-community meeting before the HMA can be varied. Dissemination strategies to inform communities of changes include posters and local radio services. For tenants, the housing office meets them, obtains details of household members and puts them on the first step of the rent.

Different arrangements apply in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands where an individual levy system is being trialled. The new rents are capped at 25 per cent of household income for all tenants in remote communities over the age of 16.

4.4.4 Repairs and maintenance

Repairs and maintenance are managed through a centralised head contracting system with the budget per house set the same as for urban areas, at $4,000 per annum plus whatever rent has been collected. Once this has been expended for the community, only essential services are repaired.

4.4.5 Allocations, community consultation and tenant education and support

Processes of eligibility and allocations form part of the HMA. Eligibility is usually decided by community councils apart from applicants who have an existing public housing tenancy. There is a strong emphasis on tenant education. New tenants are visited by a housing officer who goes through the community education program and a tenant matrix (see Habibis, Phillips et al. 2015) that uses images and local language to explain tenant roles and responsibilities including who is included in the household for rent collection purposes. Tenants complete a living skills form that identifies areas where they may need support.

Allocations are based on recommendations from the WA DoH based on priority wait lists. These are presented to the community council for approval with rejection only possible on the basis of cultural reasons or disputes.

Tenant support was in development at the time of research and only in operation in some locations, including Fitzroy Crossing. Tenders require providers to be regionally based and predominantly Indigenous to have demonstrated expertise in servicing Indigenous clients. There is a strong focus on case management and early intervention in relation to flags such as rental subsidy. In some locations, the provider is a different arm of the Indigenous RSP partly because they are well placed to provide the service and partly because there are no other providers. The aim was to have six-weekly meetings with case managers, and for the housing officer and contracts officer to review the progress of the tenant action plan. A tenant matrix was developed to support tenant education about their tenancy rights and obligations. It uses a story-telling approach to inform tenants and is available in three Aboriginal languages. It is designed as a place mat with a copy provided to every household member so it can be used as a communication tool for housing officers with tenants and within families. It informs tenants how and when they should address problems and the consequences of not addressing them.

5 CASE STUDY FINDINGS

This section of the paper is the first of three sections that summarises the findings from each of the case study areas. Each case study begins with a brief outline of the service context and service delivery arrangements, followed by an analysis of what the data suggest about what has been achieved as well as areas where there are problems and difficulties. This, together with the next two sections on the survey findings and the cost analysis, forms the basis of our analysis of how tenancy reform in remote Indigenous communities is progressing.

5.1 Ngukkur, Katherine region, Northern Territory—direct management

5.1.1 Service context and service delivery arrangements

Ngukurr is an Indigenous community of between 1,200 and 1,500 people, located approximately 320 kilometres by road south-east of Katherine. This is approximately four hours driving time each way. There are approximately 150 houses in Ngukurr under tenancy management by Territory Housing.

Tenancy management for the Big Rivers region is based in Katherine where remote housing and mainstream public housing teams have recently been amalgamated. Tenancy and property management functions are coordinated within the Katherine regional office. A housing officer and asset manager, based in Katherine, visit Ngukurr and nearby communities in alternate weeks, staying over for several days (or even two weeks at a time) as required. The housing officer manages approximately 200 tenancies across Ngukurr and four other communities. The housing officer has a similar portfolio and also looks after government employee housing in the communities. Where possible, the tenancy and asset officers try to coincide visits to improve efficiency and safety. They each have a vehicle and a house is available in Ngukurr for staff to sleep over and use as a base while in the community.

The housing officer main work activities include following up on tenancy details, rent payments/arrears as well as undertaking house inspections maintaining tenant information in the IT system. The housing officer is responsible for organising and facilitating the Housing Reference Group and liaising with council. The housing officer also supervises the Community Housing Officer (CHO) and under the contract with the Shire, provides a detailed work plan for the CHO to follow.

The Shire is contracted to provide specified tenancy management and maintenance services. They are funded to employ two community housing officers (CHOs), located in the Shire offices to take enquiries and maintenance requests from tenants, and to provide information and advice to Territory Housing about local issues, tenant engagement strategies and also visits or contacts with tenants to have paperwork (e.g. rent deduction forms) signed. This is especially important in the wet season when access is only possible by air or barge from Roper River Bar and housing staff based in Katherine are unable to visit the community. Only 1 CHO has been employed to date. She has worked for a number of years as CHO and is well known in the community.

5.1.2 What outcomes have been achieved?

The basics of tenancy management are in place in Ngukurr including tenancy agreements and rent payment arrangements. The new and upgraded housing has contributed to pride by tenants in their homes and aspirations to ‘look after the house’ and create gardens. Strong community attitudes were evident that emphasised taking responsibility for paying rent and for damage to houses. These positive aspects, are, however, outweighed by the extreme crowding and the deteriorating condition of housing.

Crowding

It is not possible to quantify improvements to crowding in Ngukurr because no reliable baseline is available. The available evidence suggests that the overall supply of housing has not significantly increased as a result of the NPARIH investment. Crowding levels remain very high in Ngukurr with 18/30 respondents reporting living in a multi-family house where five to eight adults reside and 12/29 reported living in households with five or more children. This is because so many houses were demolished due to their poor condition. Often, two-bedroom duplexes were built on the demolition sites, resulting in only a small net increase in bedrooms that is insufficient to respond to demand as the population grows and young people form new families.

Informants reported that this creates significant problems that include:

- family conflict over space, food, belongings and different child rearing
- high levels of wear and tear
- health problems relating to maintaining hygienic conditions, infection control, healthy food storage
- problems managing cultural norms such as avoidance customs.

Allocations

There was broad support among community respondents for the allocation process that involves Territory Housing making decisions after consulting with the Housing Reference Group (HRG). Where Territory Housing do not act on this advice, the HRG is given feedback on the reasons. There is little turnover of houses, so most allocations are either to newly constructed houses or are a result of the tenant passing away. In most cases reported, people who lived in the demolished houses were allocated the new houses built on the same site, and following a tenant death houses are usually allocated to another family member resident already living in the house. Most concern about allocations was expressed by residents in over-crowded households who did not understand why they could not obtain a house of their own. This is increasingly the case as the capital works program comes to an end.

Compliance (rent, looking after the home, property damage)

Most tenant informants indicated that they understand and accept their responsibilities to pay rent, look after their home and not cause damage. However, in practice many struggle to fulfil these obligations for a variety of reasons including:

- crowding and difficulty controlling the behaviour of household members and visitors
- difficulty in restricting access by other community members and high risk of break-ins
- poverty and the high cost of living
- lack of skills and experience in household tasks and absence of support services
- violence, often associated with alcohol, anger and trauma.

Ngukurr informants almost unanimously reported that rent levels are reasonable (in theory) while also reporting that many households have trouble, in practice, maintaining rent payments and arrears are high. This apparent contradiction is explained by the factors cited above, especially poverty and the high cost of living.

Significant damage to houses was reported by housing staff and community informants. Head tenants generally agreed that the person who caused damage should pay, but were concerned that they could be held responsible for damage by household members. Some were prepared to report malicious damage, including that caused by family members, to police. Their reasons included hope that it would: establish their authority over the house;

encourage norms of taking responsibility; and influence the behaviour of the perpetrators and avoid future damage. A minority felt Territory Housing should take responsibility for the damage. The difficulty for tenants in repairing damage they are responsible for is that the Territory Housing work is prioritised by trade contractors because they were concerned about the capacity of the tenants to pay for the work. Territory Housing does not provide the option to tenants, as is available in Queensland, for Territory Housing to arrange for repairs and tenants make repayments of the cost over time. This situation leads to tenant debt and property deterioration.

Visitors

Visitors are common in Ngukurr because the community maintains cultural strong practices, is a centre for ceremonies, and is a significant distance from other communities and Katherine. Ngukurr residents also have widespread family connections across the region and beyond and the community is cut of in the wet season. All these factors combine in attracting visitors who often stay for extended periods. Respondents reported that it was common for visitors to camp in tents but they needed to use bathrooms, toilets, laundries and kitchens. This creates significant additional stresses on already crowded houses and conflicts with other practices such as avoidance.

Pride in house and liveability

Many tenant respondents reported that they struggled, with living in severely crowded conditions and a lack of furniture and food storage facilities, to manage the basics of food preparation and cleaning. However, a significant minority who had new homes were making amazing efforts to create comfortable homes and gardens. These tenants spoke of buying household appliances and creating gardens.

Tenant support

Northern Territory did not provide tenant support services and housing workers are reluctant to take on this role, other than to discuss issues like cleaning methods. The CHO role is critical for Territory Housing in communicating with tenants and is seen by tenants as an important support in explaining rules, understanding housing issues from a local perspective, discussing housing-related problems and acting as a mediator between Territory Housing policies and local realities.

Tenant and community consultation

Housing Reference Groups are the main mechanism for community engagement in NT. The Ngukurr housing reference group meets regularly and is viewed by Territory Housing staff and community members interviewed as representative, well-functioning and effective in articulating community views. It appears to have an important role in advising on allocation decisions, with informants reporting that it is rare for Territory Housing not to follow its advice. They are consulted about policy changes and advocate for issues of community concern such as delays in maintenance and repairs. In Ngukurr, respondents knew about the HRG and their role in advising on allocations and capital works programs and as an opportunity to raise issues with Territory Housing. It appears that the HRG was most active during the busy period when capital works and allocations of new houses was occurring but since then has become less active. During the fieldwork, attempts were being made by Territory Housing to revitalise the group and attract new members.

Making complaints to the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) was reported by several tenants as an avenue for dealing with housing issues. This agency makes regular visits to Ngukurr and is seen by tenants as accessible and responsive in taking up issues with Territory Housing that tenants are unable to resolve themselves.

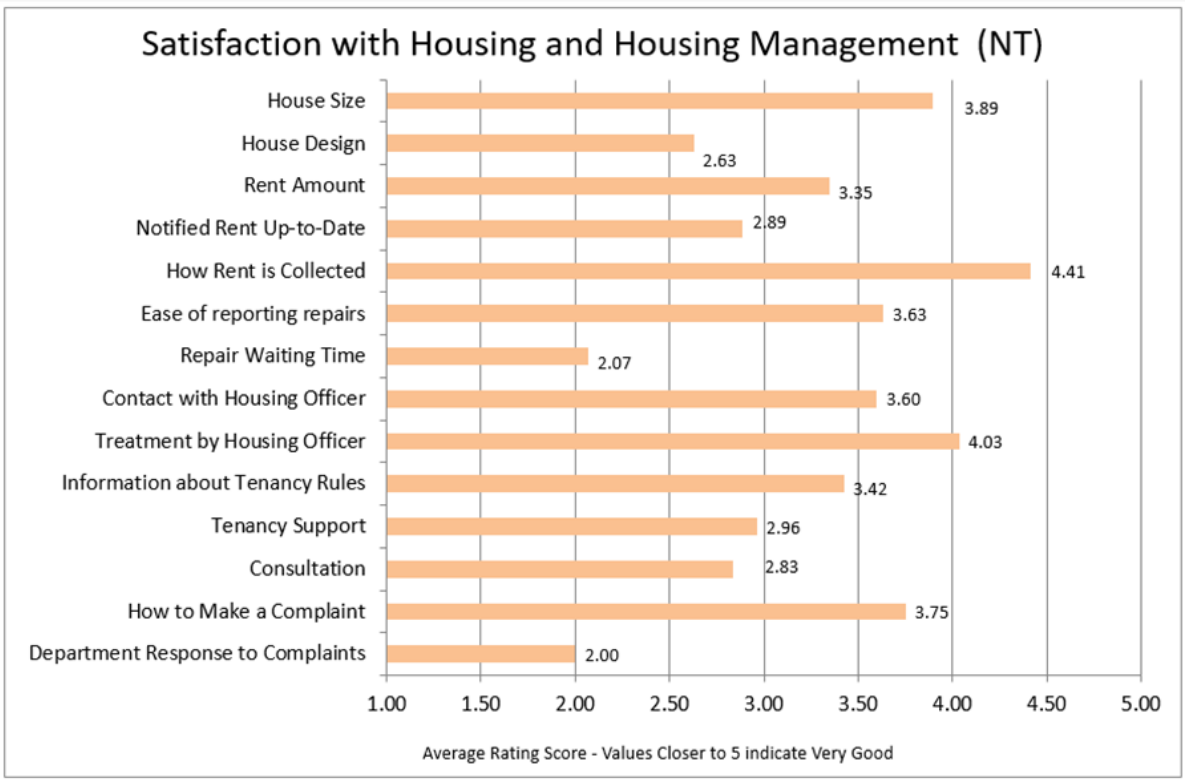
Cultural beliefs and practices are strong in Ngukurr and many people speak English as a second or third language. Issues requiring sensitive responses include vacant houses and extended absences due to sorry-time practices; refusal to live in houses that have or are believed to have been cursed; absences and visitors associated with ceremonial and kinship obligations; difficulties encountered by staff and tenants in complying with avoidance practices; and historical 'ownership' of specific houses and sites by family and clan groups. Crowding and mobility between houses also creates problems and high workload in maintaining accurate administrative records for occupancy and rent assessment and monitoring. Public housing policies and norms are not easily accepted by tenants such as those who expressed the following two quotes by community members:

> I am the leader of the smoking ceremony—got the knowledge, got everything. We have a strong culture from the old generation to the new. My daughter dances and my son plays the didgeridoo. My grandfather's spirit is strong in me.
>
> No one can tell us what to do because it's my Aboriginal land, my Aboriginal land.[7]

Tenant satisfaction and views on housing and community improvements

The survey data for levels of satisfaction among Ngukurr respondents shows that tenant satisfaction is relatively low, with six items below three (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) and only two items at or above four (at least a bit satisfied) (see Figure 6 below). Tenant respondents were most satisfied with the way in which rent is collected, the treatment by housing workers and the size of their house. They were least satisfied with the way in which the Housing Department responds to complaints, the wait for housing repairs and maintenance and the design of their house and yard.

Figure 6: Satisfaction with housing and housing management—Ngukkur, Northern Territory



[7] Throughout this report, quotes are based on field notes that have been very slightly amended to report in standard English.

Tenant concerns about maintenance are also reflected in their identification of repairs and maintenance as their highest priority when it comes to how their house is managed.

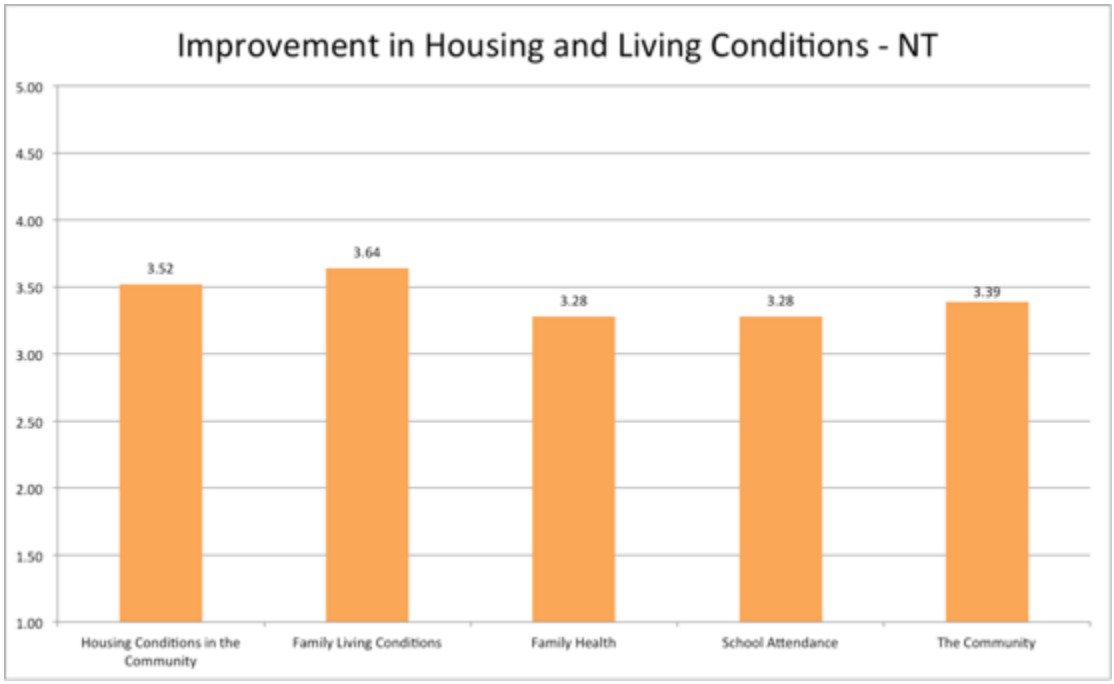
Further discussion about levels of tenant respondent satisfaction is provided in Section 5.1.4 below.

In response to questions about whether things had improved in the community, respondents rated family living conditions as the most improved issue, closely followed by community housing conditions and overall conditions in the community (see Figure 7 below). Family health and school attendance were rated as the least improved. These findings should be qualified by an understanding that Ngukurr has experienced significant change in addition to the housing reforms that made it difficult for respondents to differentiate in their responses to questions about improvements between broader changes from those attributable to the new housing and housing management arrangements.

5.1.3 How well is the model working?

Crowding levels are still very high and there were high rates of tenant dissatisfaction with the size and design of houses. Tenant dissatisfaction with rent and information about rent was high and there are continuing high levels of rent arrears. Ngukurr had high levels of tenant dissatisfaction with timeliness and quality of maintenance that will, in part, be addressed by the new maintenance model. Limited availability of tenant information and support are also of concern. Positives included pride in new homes and aspirations to 'look after the house' and create gardens as well as understanding of the need to pay rent and to deal with perpetrators of damage.

Figure 7: Views on improvements in housing and living conditions—Ngukkur, Northern Territory



The most positive aspects of the model operating in Ngukurr is having a consistent CHO who is well known in the community, and the new, local maintenance model. The CHO provides a constant presence in the community and is well supported by the Shire Council. The new maintenance model enables employment of local people who are beginning to catch up on the maintenance backlog, are improving response times, and have ability to scope trades work. They work well with the territory housing officer who visits regularly to undertake inspections and oversee maintenance and repairs. Unfortunately, there has been

considerable turnover in Northern Territory tenancy management staff and the regularity of these visits was problematic. In part, this irregularity is due to the long distance from Katherine, poor road and the weather, especially during the wet season.

Policy and service delivery managers from NT Housing indicated significant concern about what will happen post NPARIH. Most staff working on remote housing are on short-term contracts and the moves to mainstreaming are seen as a way of integrating responsibilities and managing costs. Concern was also expressed about what would happen when short-term leases expire on non-NPARIH communities and whether any housing services, especially maintenance, would be provided by the state.

Extant changes include the replacement of the local community council (previously the housing manager) with a much larger Shire Council and the cessation of the Community Development Employment program (CDP). These resulted in concerns by many respondents that local control and local employment had suffered as a result of changes driven by the state. Other initiatives such as the school attendance program were also spoken about as more important than housing in driving change in school attendance.

5.1.4 What are the critical problem areas?

Housing management entails significant challenges that include the impact of traditional and cultural practices, especially vacant houses and extended absences due to 'sorry time', curses on houses, and ceremony. Crowding and mobility between houses also creates problems and high workloads in maintaining accurate administrative records for occupancy, rent assessment and monitoring.

Occupational Health and Safety and staff presence

The CHO provides a constant presence in the community and is well supported by the Shire Council. Unfortunately, there has been considerable turnover in housing officers and the long distance from Katherine, poor road and weather conditions in the wet season, results is an irregular presence on the community. By contrast, the AM has a long-term, consistent relationship with the community and a regular presence.

Housing condition and maintenance

In Ngukurr, the Shire is contracted to undertake most of the general maintenance with local staff employed for 'handyman' tasks, while trade-qualified and licenced contractors are sourced from Katherine. Responsive maintenance is reported primarily through the local housing officer or can be phoned into the Katherine Territory Housing regional office. The Shire can action work valued at less than $100. All other requests must be approved in Katherine (or by the Asset Management officer if he is in Ngukurr) and are actioned through work orders to the Shire or private trades contractors

The Roper Gulf Regional Council undertakes most of the general maintenance and employs local staff with trade-qualified and licenced contractors sourced when necessary from Katherine. Responsive maintenance is reported primarily through the CHO or can be phoned into the Katherine housing regional office. Only urgent health and safety maintenance is undertaken and the Shire can immediately action any job valued at less than $100. All other requests must be approved in Katherine (or by the housing officer if he is in Ngukurr) and are actioned through work orders to the Shire or private trades contractors. One advantage of the new maintenance contract arrangements is that is that, in many cases, the Shire maintenance officer can do many jobs on the spot, and can provide an accurate description of the scope of works and urgency prior to engaging external trade qualified contractors.

Property inspections are quarterly and respondents reported that tenancy and asset staff share information about property condition and support each other in managing asset and tenancy issues. While there is a clear delineation between tenancy and asset management

roles, there is inevitable overlap, especially in areas such as tenant responsibility damage. When considered necessary, the housing officer and asset manager visit houses together.

The new maintenance model enables employment of local people who are beginning to catch up on the maintenance backlog, are improving response times and have ability to scope trades work. They work well with the housing officer who visits regularly to undertake inspections and oversee maintenance and repairs.

However, at the time of the field visits, budget constraints meant that urgent health and safety maintenance was prioritised and other preventative and restorative maintenance was restricted. Respondents questioned the way maintenance was prioritised and health and safety matters are defined, pointing to examples where decisions made in Katherine did not reflect an understanding of local conditions and the health and safety risks of delaying critical repairs and maintenance. They raised concerns that due to budget constraints, only work designated by Territory Housing as high priority (health and safety) maintenance can be undertaken, resulting in some work that is important for tenant amenity and asset protection being delayed indefinitely. Given the crowded nature of the housing, this is resulting in significant decline in the condition of houses that is reflected in the high rates of tenant dissatisfaction with the size, design and condition of houses.

A recent report by Territory Housing highlights more recent successes by Roper Gulf Shire in delivering the new maintenance model:

> Roper Gulf Regional Council has employed 8 Housing Maintenance Officers to provide a public housing repairs and maintenance service in the Council's 11 communities. The Council has also employed two trainer/mentors to monitor the Housing Maintenance Officers' work. The trainer/mentors travel between communities ensuring that the officers receive the right training and that quality workmanship is carried out.
>
> A recent audit was carried out across the Roper Region and it concluded that Beswick (77 dwellings), Barunga (73 dwellings) and Kalkarindji (72 dwellings) had no outstanding plumbing related works. This result reflects the great work the Housing Maintenance Officers are doing in the communities.
>
> There has been positive feedback from community members in relation to the response times to maintenance issues. Roper Gulf Regional Council recently published an article in its newsletter acknowledging the improvement in public housing repairs and maintenance (Territory Housing 2015).

5.2 Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale, Cooktown Region, Queensland: direct management

5.2.1 Service context and service delivery arrangements

The following describes the service delivery model in the case study communities of Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale. Wujal Wujal is a discrete Indigenous community with a population of approximately 480 (Shire website) and is approximately 70 kilometres south of Cooktown on the Bloomfield River. Hope Vale is approximately 50 kilometres north of Cooktown and has a population of approximately1,500 (Shire website).

Tenancy management for these communities is provided directly by the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) through a tenancy management team that operates from a 'hub' in Cooktown. Hub staffing includes a Senior Housing Officer (SHO) and two full-time Housing officers. In addition, there is a full-time local housing officer employed by DHPW who lives and works in Hope Vale. There is provision for a part-time local housing officer position for Wujal Wujal, but this position has never been filled. A third attempt at recruitment was happening during fieldwork. The housing officer with responsibility for Wujal Wujal also

manages public housing tenancies in the towns of Laura and Coen, with the 56 tenancies in Wujal reported to make up about 65 per cent of the housing officer's workload (see Table 12 below). The housing officer is scheduled to drive in and out by 4WD from Cooktown to Wujal Wujal two to three days per week. The 70 kilometres journey is partly on unsealed road and takes about 1.5 hours each way. On a 'normal' day, the housing officer leaves Cooktown at 9am and arrives at Wujal Wujal at about 10.30am and then leaves the community at about 3.30pm. A small office on the community is rented from the council.

Another housing officer, supported by the local housing officer, is responsible for over 200 dwellings in Hope Vale. The 50 kilometres journey to Hope Vale on a fully sealed road and the presence of an experienced local housing officer provides flexibility for the housing officer to work in Cooktown and visit the community on an 'as needs' basis. The Department of Housing has a well-appointed, modern office in Hope Vale that is proximate to other services such as Centrelink and the Family Responsibility Commission (FRC).

Internet access to DHPW tenancy management IT system is available in both communities, although speed and reliability are variable with resulting inefficiencies and a need for housing officer to spend considerable time updating records in the Cooktown office. The two communities are generally safe and peaceful, allowing the local housing officer and housing officers to work alone most of the time. In other Queensland communities, housing officer's work in pairs and depending on the community this may be two DIDO/FIFO housing officers or may be one housing officer and the local housing officer.

The main focus of the housing officer is to follow up arrears, manage allocations and undertake home visits/property inspections. The local housing officer has a more restricted role providing support to the housing officer, but avoiding potentially conflictual roles that could be compromising for a local community member. In Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale, arrears are relatively low compared to other remote communities and there are relatively few allocations as the capital works program winds down. Workload for local housing officer and housing officer included a significant level of following up tenants to change or renew paperwork relating to rent setting. This includes confirming who lives in the house and their income sources as well as signing up for or changing CentrePay arrangements. Tenants often cancel or suspend CentrePay payments when they have other financial priorities, often leading to delays in re-commencing payments and resulting in the accumulation of arrears.

The target is to inspect homes every three months, although this is extended to six months for tenancies where they are considered low risk of tenant damage and are well looked after. The priority is new and refurbished houses and older non-renovated houses may be inspected less often. The inspections are mainly for tenant management purposes looking at cleanliness, damage etc. Urgent health and safety maintenance identified by the housing officers in these visits is reported to the maintenance call centre.

Other reported tasks that are less common in mainstream settings include encouraging people in crowded housing to submit application forms; actively chasing tenants to offer them an allocation who may be camping out or transient and difficult to contact. The Housing Officers regularly assist tenants by reporting or following up on outstanding maintenance requests. Housing Officers also manage charging for tenant responsibility damage. Head tenants are now charged 50 per cent or the cost of these repairs, but they are not charged if the damage is caused by someone else and is reported to the police.

Responsive maintenance is reported by tenants on a 'blue phone' and calls are directly connected to the public housing state-wide call centre managed by the Building and Asset Services (BAS) within the Public Works area of the Department. Work orders are then usually forwarded to the local Aboriginal Shire Council works supervisors, and councils either do the work themselves where they have the skills or contract out to qualified tradesmen.

Property management is undertaken by a separate team based in Cairns who undertake property inspections, maintain property condition information systems, and manage planned maintenance and upgrade programs. The housing officers have only peripheral involvement in this asset works planning. Property inspections are intended to occur six-monthly but often don't due to travel budget restrictions and weather. Housing officers have access to property condition data, but cannot alter it. They do, however, report inaccuracies by email to the property team. A third separate team based in Cairns manages the new construction programs.

Table 12: Queensland Department of Housing—Cooktown Region housing stock

Location	Public rental	ATSIHP (SOMIH)	Remote Indigenous Housing	Total Cooktown Hub
Hope Vale			211	211
Wujal Wujal			56	72
Coen		67		67
Laura	3	22		25
Cooktown	7	19	3	29
Total	*10*	*108*	*286*	*404*

5.2.2 What outcomes have been achieved?

On face value, the key NPARIH goal of implementing 'public housing-like' tenancy and property management has largely been achieved in the Queensland case study sites. However, the situation is far more complex in practice, with significant questions remaining about the appropriateness, adequacy, effectiveness and cost of the Queensland model.

Crowding

It is not possible to quantify NPARIH's impact on crowding due to an absence of reliable baseline data and the difficulties in capturing accurate data on household occupancy. These difficulties result from high levels of intra and inter-community mobility and reluctance of households to disclose information about additional residents and long-term visitors. The fieldwork confirmed previous findings that crowding remains prevalent and creates considerable stresses for household members, especially during the wet season and school holidays. Further, inaccurate occupancy data means residents living in crowded houses may be disadvantaged when applying for their own tenancy if the extent of the over-crowding is not evident to the department. It also creates a dilemma for program managers who are required to report to the Australian Government on measures such as crowding.

Allocations

Given the continuing shortage of housing and crowding in the case study sites, it is unsurprising that allocation decisions featured as a major concern for tenants and community stakeholders. In Queensland, the allocations policy largely mirrors the public housing policy of needs based priority and allows allocations to any Indigenous applicant who has nominated that community among their preferences, regardless of community affiliations. Community respondents do not view allocation decisions as transparent and had mixed views about whether they are fair. Participants reported concern about housing being allocated to people who were not community members and perceptions that locals were missing out. The notion of needs-based allocations was also challenged by those who believed that waiting time, being a good tenant or community member or having a job should be the basis for priority. Succession of tenancy for family members is of concern and related to historical practices

where houses belong to particular families or clans. Similarly, strong views were expressed that particular parts of the community 'belong' to specific families or clans and that allocations should enable this to continue and for family/clan members to live in proximity.

Compliance and tenant support (rent, looking after house, damage)

In Queensland the tenancy management focus has been on compliance, especially rent payment, with no formal policy, programs or resources applied to tenant support programs. Information strategies are narrowly directed to promoting tenant understanding of their 'rights and responsibilities'. The establishment of the 'Hub' in Cooktown in 2014 enabled more regular tenancy management presence on communities, greater capacity for tenant engagement and greater ability to work with tenants who are having difficulties meeting tenancy expectations. However, this occurred at a time when policy and procedural changes in areas such as rent assessment, charging for tenant damage and responding to anti-social behaviour were imposing harsher imposts on tenants. Most tenants were not confident that they really understood the tenancy agreement in spite of most reporting that they had met face-to-face with housing workers and signed an agreement. While all tenant respondents were very clear about the requirement to pay rent, many were less clear about the specifics of what other rules entailed and challenged the way these were enforced. Examples were reported of actions by housing staff that were seen by the tenant as unreasonable and rules that they considered should not be within the landlord's powers.

Strong community norms that promote adherence to tenancy responsibilities are apparent in both case study communities as exemplified by the following tenant comment: 'People have to abide by rules—not like the wild days'. This was most clearly expressed by one tenant when asked about the responsibilities of tenants, who responded: 'Look after house, clean house, mow yard, no damage, pay rent'. This sentiment is especially prevalent in Wujal Wujal which has very low levels of arrears and where informants reported a long history, pre-NPARIH, of tenants paying rent and looking after their houses. In Hope Vale, the situation is more mixed with initial resistance to state management of housing and higher levels of arrears. The situation in Hope Vale is reported to be improving, in part due to the role of the Family Responsibility Commission (FRC) in reinforcing community norms and assisting residents to meet tenancy obligations. In both communities there continue to be problems associated with rent arrears, damage to houses, unreported repairs and maintenance, extended absences, non-reporting of additional residents and neighbourhood disturbances. Fewer social services are available to assist tenants in Wujal Wujal than in Hope Vale where the Family Responsibility Commission and other support services are provided under the Cape York welfare reform initiatives. Less than a third of tenant respondents were satisfied with the support provided to them to meet their tenancy obligations. Other stakeholder respondents observed that the Housing Department tends to work in isolation and with a compliance mentality. One stakeholder reported:

> Housing don't really communicate or look at how things could be delivered differently. There are no worked out solutions for local people. They will work with other agencies to get assistance with, for example, rent arrears. They don't … collaborate on issues of concern to community and tenants.

The administration of rent assessment, payments and arrears is central to tenancy management and is the activity on which housing workers spend most time. The rent policy and processes in Queensland mirror those of public housing, except that all income earning residents are encouraged to contribute to household rent and sign up individually for automatic deductions. This reflects the prevalence in remote Indigenous communities of extended and multi-family households with multiple income earners. This approach had strong support from tenant informants and benefits head tenants in that it shares the rent payments and relieves the head tenant from having to collect rent from other household members. The downside is that head tenants are held responsible and this imposes a burden

on them to monitor that all household members are paying rent. This can be onerous because statements are not provided and head tenants must contact the Housing Officers to check on their rent balances.

Few tenants understood how their rent was calculated and many did not know how much they paid. In most cases they agreed to, and were positive about making direct debits for rent and in some cases unconcerned about how their rent was assessed. However, a majority sought to better understand how the rent system worked and to receive regular rent statements.

Tenant responsibility for damage other than fair wear and tear has been a contentious tenancy management issue. Problems include: that it is often difficult to determine fair wear and tear where houses are over-crowded; in poor condition or if property data is not up to date and accurate; tenants may be reluctant to report malicious damage and therefore they become responsible for the cost of repairs; and the high cost and limited availability of trade services makes it difficult for tenants to arrange repairs. Where the damage has been caused by some-one other than the head tenant, they are encouraged to make a police report so that they are not held responsible. When the damage is assessed as tenant responsibility, they are charged 50 per cent of the repair cost for the Department and are able to pay in instalments as a separate and additional charge to their rent. The area manager has some discretion in determining payment in these cases.

Many tenants supported the principle of taking responsibility for reporting and paying for damage they did themselves and reporting damage by family members so that they would pay. Reporting malicious damage to the police was also becoming more common. While most tenants rely on the Department to repair damage, others make good the damage themselves.

Interviewees were reluctant to discuss visitors and generally denied that they had long-term visitors. Most reported only having a small number of people stay at one time and that visits were short and ' … only for funerals' or short family visits. Others reported that visitors camped out by the river or in back yards. Some reported the problems of accommodating visitors in crowded conditions and one suggested that the housing workers 'could help with telling them to leave'.

Some disquiet was evident in the community about a perceived lack of action on ‘party houses’ and ‘buck passing’ between housing, police and council in dealing with this issue. Limited presence on communities after hours and weekends makes it difficult for Housing to respond to complaints, but attempts were in train for a more coordinated approach.

Pride in house and liveability

A significant finding is the lifestyle aspirations of tenants and their pride in looking after their homes, especially new and upgraded houses. In response to a question about how they would spend savings of $1,000 on their home, respondents nominated a range of household items and physical improvements. A common theme was the purchase of items relating to gardening and outdoor living. Others nominated internal items to improve the amenity and liveable of their homes. These responses also indicate the need for housing design standards to better respond to the lifestyles and aspirations of tenants and the climatic conditions in remote tropical communities.

Tenant support

Queensland has no tenant support programs in place and relies on referral to other services, where they are available, to assist tenants who are struggling to look after their homes or pay rent. Few social services are available in Wujal Wujal, but in Hope Vale the Family Responsibility Commission and other support services are provided under the Cape York welfare reform initiatives. Less than a third of tenant respondents were satisfied with the support provided to them to meet their tenancy obligations.

Tenant and community consultation

Community and tenant communication, engagement and consultation were among the areas identified by tenants and community stakeholders as the most problematic. The presence of housing workers was intermittent and contact with tenants largely centred on property inspections, tenancy administration and rent arrears. More regular and consistent housing officer visits have occurred since the establishment of the Cooktown housing hub, and tenants and community stakeholders were positive about the increased engagement but sceptical about whether it would be sustained and whether consultation practices would improve.

Tenant satisfaction

The tenant survey shows that tenant satisfaction with tenancy management arrangements are mixed. Figure 8 below shows that while only three items were below 3 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), only two items were at or above 4 (at least a bit satisfied). Respondents from the Cooktown region were most satisfied with the way in which rent is collected, the treatment they experienced by housing workers and the ease of arranging house repairs and maintenance. They were least satisfied with the level of consultation tenants and the community receive about housing issues, the way the Queensland DoH responds to complaints, and the wait for housing repairs and maintenance.

Tenant respondents were asked whether they thought some things had improved because housing in the community was now managed by the Queensland DoH. The results show that respondents rated housing conditions in the community as the most improved issue followed by family conditions, family health and overall community conditions, which was equally ranked as the fourth most improved issue (see Figure 9 below). School attendance was rated as the least improved issue because of state-managed housing. Overall respondents did not perceive that things are much better except for having upgraded housing and a few new houses. They found these questions challenging because, where improvements were noted, they did not necessarily relate these to housing management but pointed to other initiatives such as alcohol management and school attendance programs that were perceived to have more impact on community outcomes.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with housing and housing management in Cooktown region, Queensland

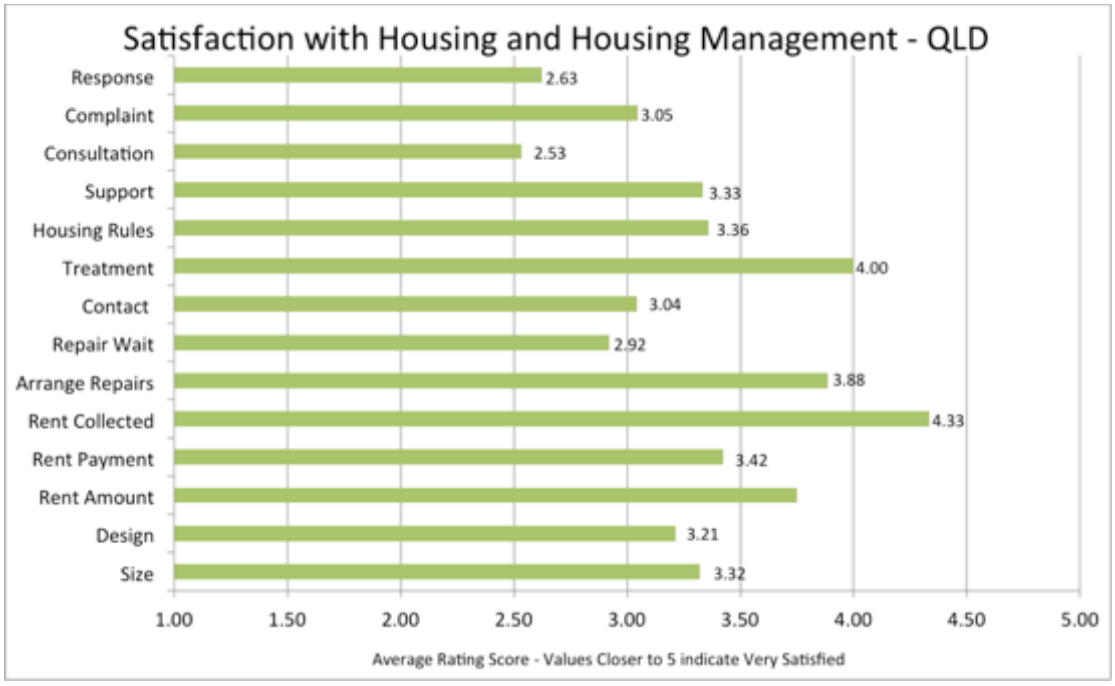
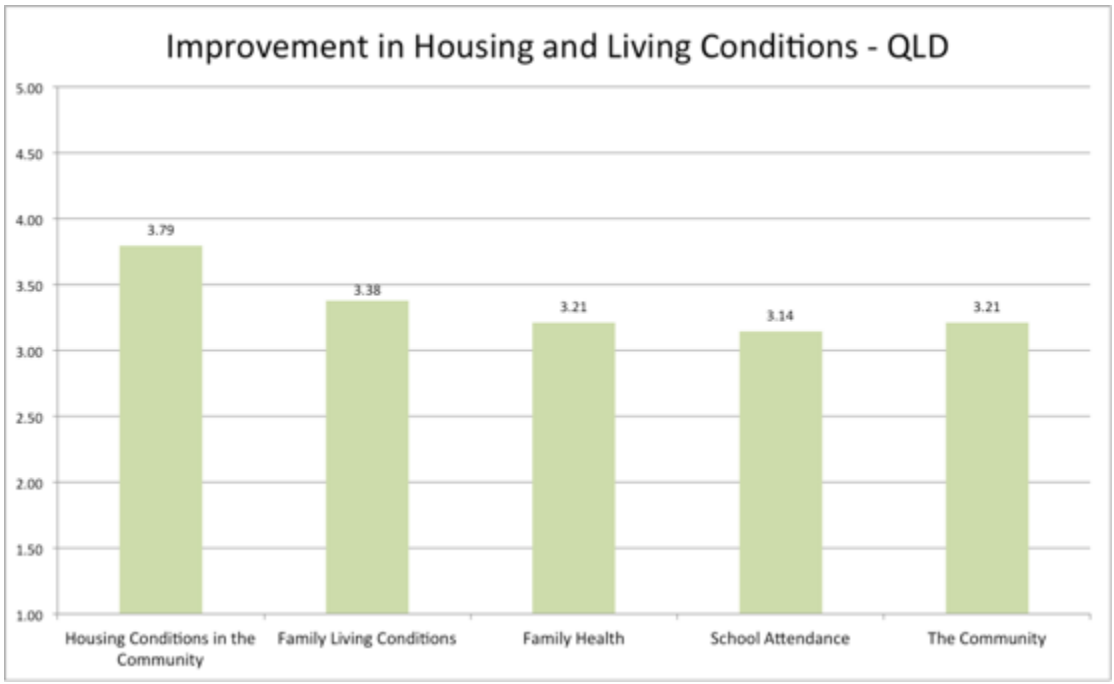


Figure 9: Improvement in housing and living conditions in Cooktown region, Queensland



5.2.3 How well is the model working?

Housing management by the state is well-established in Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale and there is general acceptance by tenants of their responsibilities to pay rent and care for their homes. This has occurred despite concerns about state imposition of the reforms without adequate tenant engagement, community consultation or cultural appropriateness. Stakeholders reported that service delivery approaches and relationships between communities and the state government were improving with the establishment of the Cooktown service delivery

hub. The case study identified a number of areas for improvement including: the highly centralised nature and lack of flexibility of policies and processes; the siloed approach to tenancy, maintenance, procurement and asset management; lack of a local housing officer in Wujal Wujal; maintenance budget constraints; lack of any attention to tenant support and education; a need for greater community engagement and to address uncertainty about future housing management arrangements.

As discussed above, tenancy agreements and rent payment processes are in place and tenants are generally aware of, and accept their tenancy responsibilities. Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale arrears are relatively low compared to other remote communities. There are, however, a number of areas where improvement is needed if objectives in regard to health and social wellbeing, community capacity building and asset protection are to be realised. Initial areas for improvement are outlined below.

5.2.4 What are the critical problem areas?

Adapting to context (mobility and cultural practices)

Tenants and community stakeholders emphasised the need for cultural competency by housing staff and the need for locally adapted approaches that recognise differences between communities in history, cultural practices and cultural sensitivities. In addition, communication can be challenging in the study communities where many tenants have low literacy and numeracy skills and where it is common for English to be a second or third language. Frontline staff recognised the need to respond to the local context and made efforts, based on their skills and experience, to understand and respect the local culture, often requiring creativity in applying inflexible mainstream policies. While some respondents reported examples of cultural sensitivity, others believed that more flexibility is needed:

> Housing are not as open as they could be. They say ‘this is the policy. It’s very black and white, there's not much grey (Stakeholder).

Inter and intra community mobility, movements in and out of work and more stringent activity requirements for social security recipients, contribute to significant workload for housing staff in chasing information on changes in residency and income details and recalculating rent and chasing signatures for new rent deduction forms. This raises questions about whether there is a better, less intrusive and more efficient way to manage this situation.

Some cultural practices are maintained within Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal but these have less impact on housing management than in some other communities. Indigenous languages are still spoken and some community members are not proficient in written and spoken English. Tenants and community stakeholders criticised the cultural responsiveness of the housing department and argued for improved communication and recognition of cultural practices in housing policy and practice. Frontline workers attempt to mediate between the mainstream orientated policies and the cultural reality they face in remote communities. This involves, in some cases, flexible and adaptive approaches to interpreting and implementing policy.

Occupational health and safety and staff presence

Prior to establishing the Housing Hub in Cooktown, there was an irregular presence on the communities. Staffing stability has improved greatly since the Hub has been in place. Tenants and stakeholders in Wujal Wujal reported limited presence of workers and no clear information about times the office is attended. This was confirmed by observation during fieldwork. A local housing officer is in place in Hope Vale providing a full-time local presence.

Repairs and maintenance

Maintenance is the aspect of the model that works least well in the case study communities. A high level of dissatisfaction from tenants and other stakeholders was evident regarding maintenance arrangements. A variety of concerns were reported: blue phones often don’t

work or tenants are reluctant to use them for a range of reasons including delays getting through, language barriers and the call centre operators not understanding the remote community context. Tenants are often give unrealistic response times that operate in non-remote locations and have difficulties following up when there are delays in maintenance being attended to. Tenants rely heavily on local housing staff to report maintenance and follow up on their behalf.

Tenant complaints are about delays in repairs and maintenance as maintenance budgets are stretched and it is increasingly only urgent health and safety maintenance that is undertaken. Tenants also complain about not receiving information about maintenance, including maintenance contractors arriving without notice. This is a particular problem if the tenant is not home at the time of the visit. Stakeholders also raised concerns about the efficiency and cost of repairs and maintenance due to the duplication of effort and cost where the Building Assets Services, council and private contractors are all involved. Worryingly, it is the tenancy management workers who are out of this loop but have most contact with tenants.

The use of 'blue phones' by tenants to report maintenance through the mainstream public housing call centre was the subject of significant concern. Communication difficulties experienced by tenants and call centre staff result in frustration, inaccuracies in identifying the correct property or nature of the problem and tenants not recording reference numbers to enable follow-up. Many tenants were reluctant to use the phones and either did not report maintenance or relied on housing officers or council staff to report or follow up on their behalf. In Wujal Wujal, work orders are then usually forwarded to the local Aboriginal Shire Council works supervisor and council either do the work themselves where they have the skills, or contract out to qualified tradesmen. The councils' ability to plan and develop the necessary workforce are constrained by the irregularity and unpredictability of work and lack of continuity in planned maintenance and upgrade/construction contracts.

5.3 Amata, Mimili and Pipjantjatjara, APY Lands, South Australia—direct management

5.3.1 Service context and service delivery arrangements

The APY Lands includes the most remote of the communities researched, with approximately 2,800 people living in small and dispersed communities. Poverty levels in most communities are among the highest in Australia. Due to a lack of viable alternatives, tenancy and asset management services are provided directly by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) funded entirely through NPARIH. Housing policy is led from the Housing SA offices in Adelaide.

Three APY Lands communities were selected for the case-studies: Amata, Pipalyatjara and Mimili. Pipjantjatjara has 29 houses and is approximately 3.5 hours drive from Umawa, the Regional Administration Centre, which itself is 480 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs. Amata has 66 houses and Mimili has 54. Both are approximately two hours' drive from Umawa. Communities are managed from Umawa on a DIDO basis. Roads are unsurfaced and prone to flooding in the rainy season, which can mean housing staff and repairs contractors have to drive over seven hours in a day. For safety reasons, and due to travel distances, visits are often made in pairs. There is a commitment to face-to-face communication because of the belief that it is culturally appropriate and that a shopfront arrangement would be ineffective. Over 80 per cent of the APY Lands' Indigenous population speak a language other than English at home (ABS 2013).

Umawa is 1,300 kilometres from Adelaide. When fully staffed, its personnel comprise a regional housing manager, who is also responsible for the other remote Indigenous regional office at Ceduna, a housing officer, two housing support program officers, a maintenance services coordinator and administrative support. At the time of the interviews in November

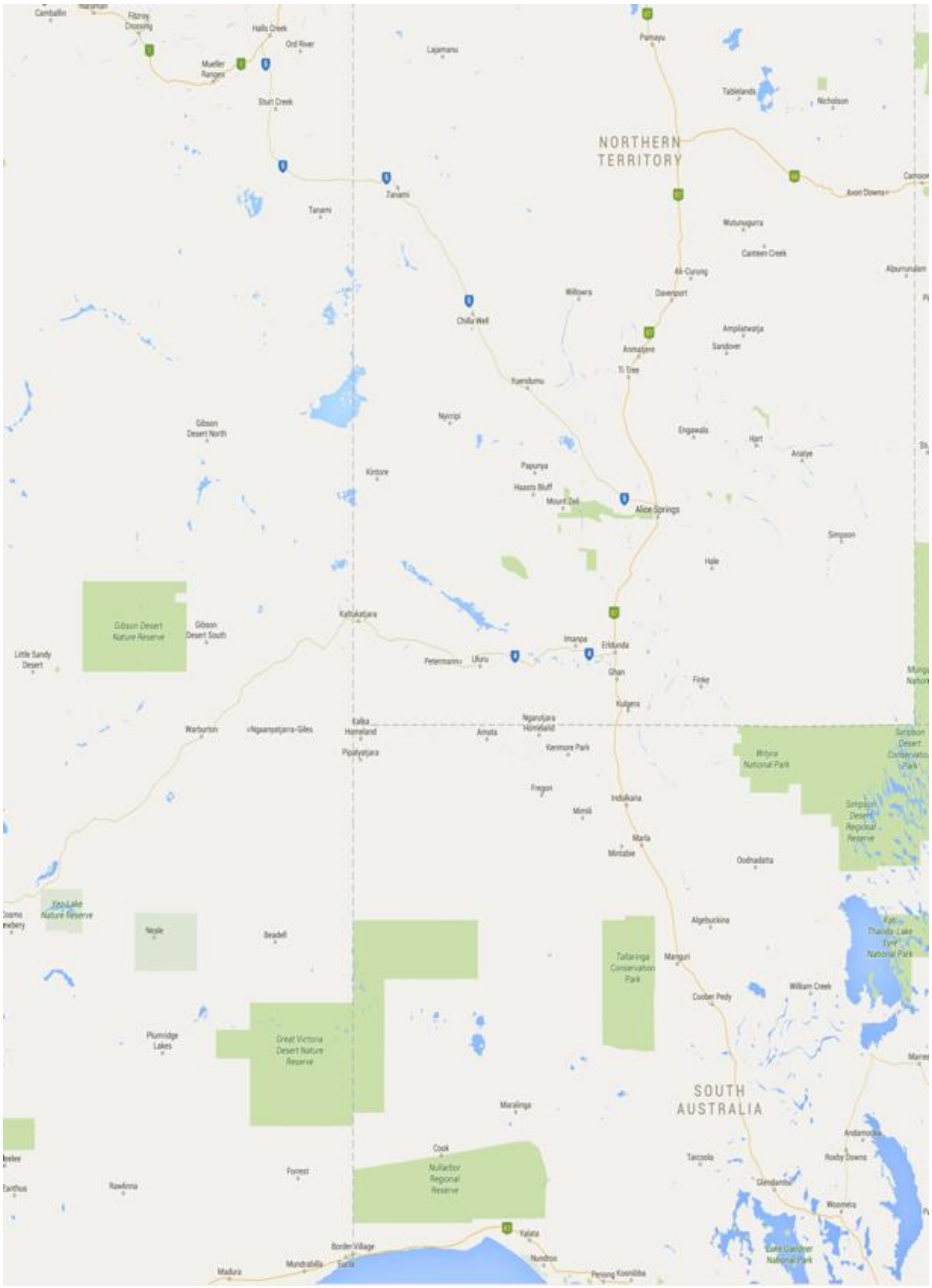
2014, there was a shortage of housing staff. As a result, the housing manager was doing the work of both the manager and housing officers. Although staffing has since improved, attracting and retaining staff to work on the APY Lands is consistently difficult.

Housing SA are concentrating their management of remote Indigenous tenancies on the basic elements of tenancy management; tenancy paperwork, debt, and an emphasis on rent collection. Before NPARIH, housing on the Lands was managed by APY Aboriginal Corporation, with funding provided by the South Australian Housing Trust. Rent collection and repairs and maintenance were subcontracted to their subsidiary AP Services. Rents were set very low and included charges for power and water. The low rent base and other funding demands meant the service had little money to maintain the properties, resulting in very deteriorating housing conditions. However, there are now tenancy agreements for every property and rent collection rates are increasing. Regular tenancy audits have begun to increase knowledge of who is living in each property and to gain knowledge of crowding.

5.3.2 What outcomes have been achieved?

In the APY Lands case-study communities, tenancy and property management has moved towards a public housing type model. There have been improvements to some people's housing conditions and their quality of life. There was agreement and consistency from the APY Lands survey results that things had improved for the better.

Figure 10: APY Lands communities



However, there remain real issues regarding crowding, the impact of increasing rent levels on poverty, repair time scales, and the cost effectiveness of the service.

Crowding

In the three communities of the case-study area, crowding appears to have at least temporarily reduced, although there is no reliable data, and there remains evidence of crowding. Additional properties have been built, but the views of all informants was that these were inadequate to meet the needs of the people living in these communities. At the time of fieldwork in November 2014, the level of crowding among the 29 residents surveyed or interviewed was extensive. Many of the respondents were living in multiple families in two or three-bedroomed accommodation. The capital works program, including upgrading properties and building new properties, was still being rolled out, but not in the three communities studied

for the case-study. It is likely, therefore, that the levels of crowding noted during the fieldwork are increasing in these areas.

Examples of crowding from the tenant surveys include: three-bed house—15 residents, three-bed house—10 residents, three-bed house—13 residents, one-bed unit—4 residents, two-bed house—6 residents. People talked of the stress of living in these conditions

> We don't sleep well at night—the house is too crowded and too noisy.

Swopping and exchange of houses between families in communities is extremely widespread. This occurs between both new and upgraded properties. This is sometimes to minimise crowding, to allow families with young children to access a bath, or to assist families to move away from areas where there have been arguments. It is common for residents not to be living in the house. The SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) has started conducting annual tenancy audits in order to have a more accurate understanding of crowding and the dynamics of the population within NPARIH properties. The audit conducted in June 2015 found that there are new and emerging crowding issues. They will use this information to minimise the number of under five-year-olds who are living in very crowded conditions through targeted allocation of properties. The audit is also counting the number of working adults in each house.

Fair and transparent allocations

The Community Councils are involved in deciding who should live where, and there are no household income limits on allocations. As many of the new builds replaced existing properties, in many cases the original family remained on the block. Additional bedrooms have been delivered as the replacement properties are often larger than those demolished.

Tenants sometimes leave their properties in order to go away for visits, holidays and for medical reasons. If they are away for three to six months or more, one of those remaining in the original house, who is an acceptable choice to the original tenant, becomes the new tenant. When the situation reverts, then the original tenant is placed back on the tenancy agreement of the property. This tenancy rotation is done in order to ensure that people are not at risk of losing their properties. A major role for housing management staff is trying to keep up with these house swaps and movements within the communities and between communities and other areas. Respondents voiced more concern about the size and design of their properties, crowding, and the speed of repair completion and rent levels than they did about allocation decisions. The way allocations were decided was not identified as a major cause of concern or comment. However, people were concerned about the related issue of there not being enough properties to allocate to families.

Compliance and tenant support (rent, looking after house, damage)

The tenant responses indicated an understanding of the importance of paying rent and preventing the accrual of rent arrears. The DCSI have been prioritising rent collection within communities as for many tenants this was a relatively new concept. The tenants we interviewed were not always sure of the current state of their rent account, but understood that they would be told if they got into arrears. Many of the tenants are in receipt of Centrelink payments. Breaches occur regularly for such reasons as not keeping up with paperwork (Centrelink staff only visit the communities every six to eight weeks and tenants often do not realise that they can submit paperwork elsewhere while away on visits). Breaches lead to loss of Centrelink payments, and also leads to rent arrears because the change of income results in direct debit payments ceasing.

Housing staff considered that most rent arrears were accrued inadvertently by a lack of understanding of systems, processes and procedures rather than by deliberate non-payment of rent.

Partly because the former tenancy management arrangements under the APY Aboriginal Corporation had included some services not provided by DCSI some tenants expected more services, such as yard clearance and also wanted properties painted.

It was sometimes unclear who tenant respondents considered to be visitors and who were permanently living in the property. The household situation was fluid and not easily translatable into western culture definitions of 'residents'. Of greater concern to the locally-based staff (because of the cost of repairs in this very remote area) were tenants inadvertently misreporting repairs. An example was given of a reporting of lights not working in two bedrooms and the stove not working. Before sending in tradespeople, the local staff checked the property and discovered two blown bulbs in the bedrooms and that the wall switch for the stove was turned off. This was not an issue of non-compliance, but rather of non-familiarity about electrical goods. In the last year, additional training has been given to call centre staff to increase their understanding of those living in remote Indigenous communities and to assist tenants with accurate repairs reporting.

No differentiation is made between 'damage' and 'wear and tear' and tenants are not asked to contribute towards repair costs in most cases.

Following a general campaign to encourage tenants to keep properties clean and tidy at the start of the management agreement period, a more interventionist and targeted tenancy support is now centred on the five (of a total of approximately 400) tenancies most at risk. This includes referrals with agencies that can provide assistance with managing money and with physically helping with cleaning and tidying properties. DCSI informants commented that young people are generally finding it easier to understand and comply with the terms of the tenancy agreement than some of the older tenants and their families.

Rent

DCSI's tenancy management focus has been on ensuring that tenants are paying their rent and taking early action on rent arrears. Tenancies are in single name only but in a few cases there are two official rent payers at the property. Residents are encouraged by housing management staff to share the cost of the rent among themselves, and to pay a set regular amount to the tenant. However, tenant interview responses indicated a lack of understanding of whether individuals were named on the tenancy agreement or not was common.

Of those residents we interviewed and surveyed, most were happy with the way that their rent was collected (mostly through direct deduction from benefit payments or salary), but there was considerable dissatisfaction with rent levels. These were deemed to be expensive and there was a lack of understanding about whether and how this money comes back to the community in the form of repairs etc. Before NPARIH rents were set very low (approximately $20 a week) in these communities, and included power and water. Housing SA at first set rents based on the number of occupants of the houses, which resulted in very high rents for some households because of the extent of crowding in the properties. Rents are now based on property size, and although in many cases this has meant a rent reduction from the interim headcount policy, the move towards mainstream public housing rent levels has caused resentment and hardship. Tenants made the following comments:

> There is not enough money to pay for food after rent.
>
> The rent was less before.
>
> I used to pay $20 and now I pay $150.

At the time of data collection, no tenancies have been terminated for non-payment of rent and there is currently no intention that this will occur in South Australia’s remote communities, as this would only lead to greater crowding. It is, however, perceived by the department that getting used to regular rent payment is an essential life skill, and that it will help people who

decide to move to a township or non-Indigenous areas at a later date. Rental income is also vital to help pay for the cost of the repair service.

Damage

It is inevitable that houses as crowded as those in the APY Lands will experience damage and wear and tear. Locks and windows are the most frequently damaged items caused by non-residents trying to break in, or residents breaking in because they have lost the key. Key loss was a major issue in the communities visited. In some cases tenants have been recharged for these items. Some lock repairs are carried out by local staff in an attempt to keep repair costs down and because it can take a while for repairs to be completed otherwise—such repairs are 'bunched up' where possible in order to reduce costs and so that tradespeople are not visiting a community for a single non-urgent repair.

Our interviews did not reveal high levels of malicious or non-malicious damage by visitors. The major malicious damage is by those breaking locks and windows in order to get into the property to take food and other goods. It did not appear that the police are often involved in dealing with break ins. Cultural obligations mean that people are reluctant to involve the criminal justice system.

Visitors

As discussed above, some of the tenant respondents did not draw a clear distinction between who is a visitor to the house and who is a resident. Interviewees were most interested in topics about crowding, rent levels, and speed of repairs. Visitors, and any problems they might potentially cause, was not a topic many chose to discuss in detail.

Neighbourhood disturbances

The communities visited were very small. Neighbourhood disturbances were not something that either residents or locally based staff chose to discuss. Police are based at Umawa, Amata and Mimili and work a three-week rotation on and off The Lands.

Pride in house and liveability

The extent of the poverty of many of the people living in the fieldwork communities meant it was difficult for some of them to exhibit visible pride in their houses, although housing staff did note the efforts that some tenants are going to in order to develop gardens. In response to a question about how they would spend $1,000 on their home, respondents suggested sun shelters so they could sit outside, outside security lights and fencing to prevent theft, and basic living facilities such as cutlery and furniture. Many we spoke to did not have beds, and most had to share mattresses or sleep on the floor, or outside. Even for those who do have adequate incomes, it is extremely difficult for people to access goods that are not available for sale at the local small shops. Local staff stressed the need for more charitable and philanthropic involvement regarding the delivery of furniture and goods. The regional manager considered that the high cost and limited types of food available from the community stores increases the poverty and ill health of communities and that 'surely it must be possible for Coles and Woolworths to set up a cold store at the road junction to The Lands on the highway and get drivers to drop stuff off instead of thundering past'. This could then be collected and sold in local stores at mainstream prices.

Tenant support

As stated above, the current arrangements are to provide direct assistance to the five most chaotic tenancies on the APY Lands. This has been led by an understanding that such work will be the most effective with the limited staff resources available.

Transitional housing models, as developed for First Peoples in other countries and states, are being actively explored for those remote Indigenous housing residents who wish to move to

larger centres of population. Movement between communities, townships and urban areas is frequent and there are perceptions that it is increasing, especially in terms of individuals and families visiting, and then choosing to stay in urban areas. The transitional housing would support those tenants to develop the living skills to manage a mainstream public housing tenancy by spending 12 months or so in temporary supported accommodation in the urban area. They would be assisted with relevant skills and knowledge acquisition before being offered a mainstream public tenancy where non-adherence to rules and regulations could potentially lead to their eviction.

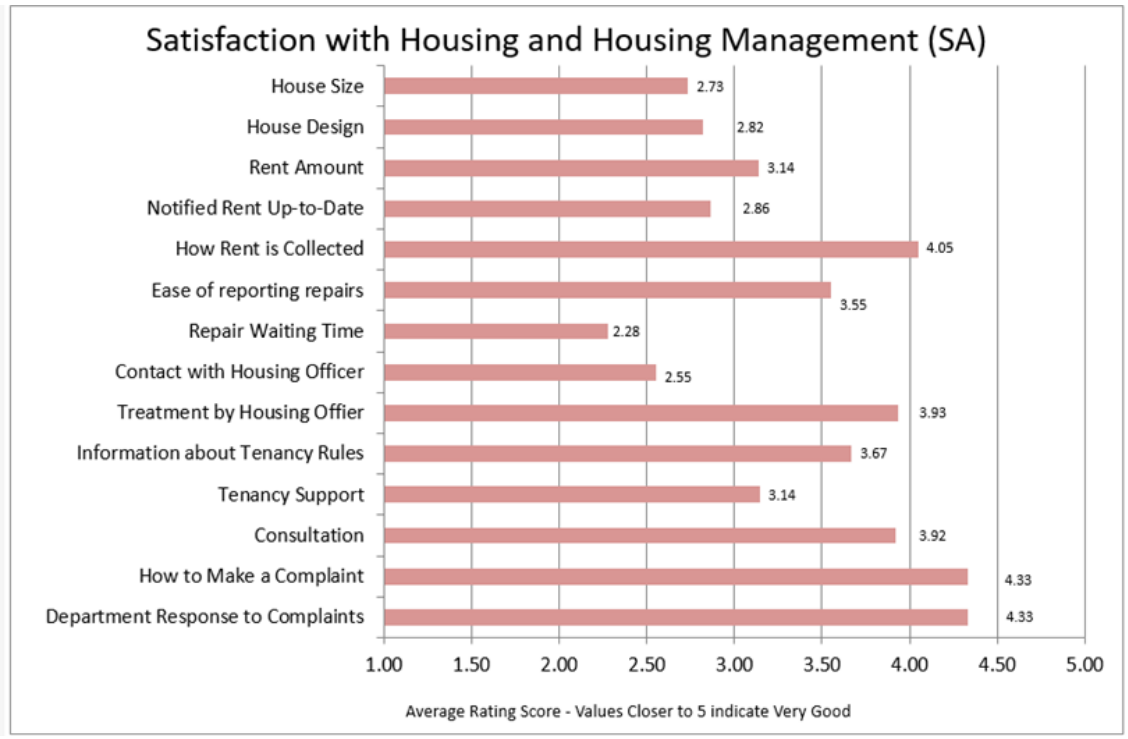
Community/tenant engagement

The housing staff are out and about in the communities frequently, but the shortages of staff, the driving distances, the impassibility of roads at certain times of year, and the need to be off the roads before dusk when risk of road traffic accident is much higher because of animal activity, meant that time spent in communities is limited. Those community residents we spoke to had a high level of regard for their housing staff. Language difficulties, cultural and comprehension differences and lack of time contribute to a process where it is extremely difficult to create a fully consultative process about day-to-day matters with residents. Residents we spoke to did not raise this as a major concern, but there was some support for an Indigenous organisation taking over the management of the properties at the end of the NAPARIH arrangements.

Tenant satisfaction

Tenant respondents from the APY Lands were surveyed for their level of satisfaction with 14 items related to the management of their tenancy. The findings show there were three items rated at or above 4 (at least a bit satisfied) and five items below 3 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) (see Figure 11 below). These respondents were most satisfied with the complaints process (how to make a complaint and how the SA DoH responds to complaints), and by the way rent is collected. They were least satisfied with how quickly someone comes to fix things, how often they see the housing officer, and the size of their house.

Figure 11: Satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—APY Lands, South Australia



Tenant respondents' views on whether Improvement rating averages in housing and living conditions are presented in Figure 12 below. The results show they rated community-housing conditions as the most improved issue because of state-managed housing closely followed by family living conditions. The third most improved issue rated by South Australian residents was family health. School attendance and overall conditions in the community were rated as the least improved issues.

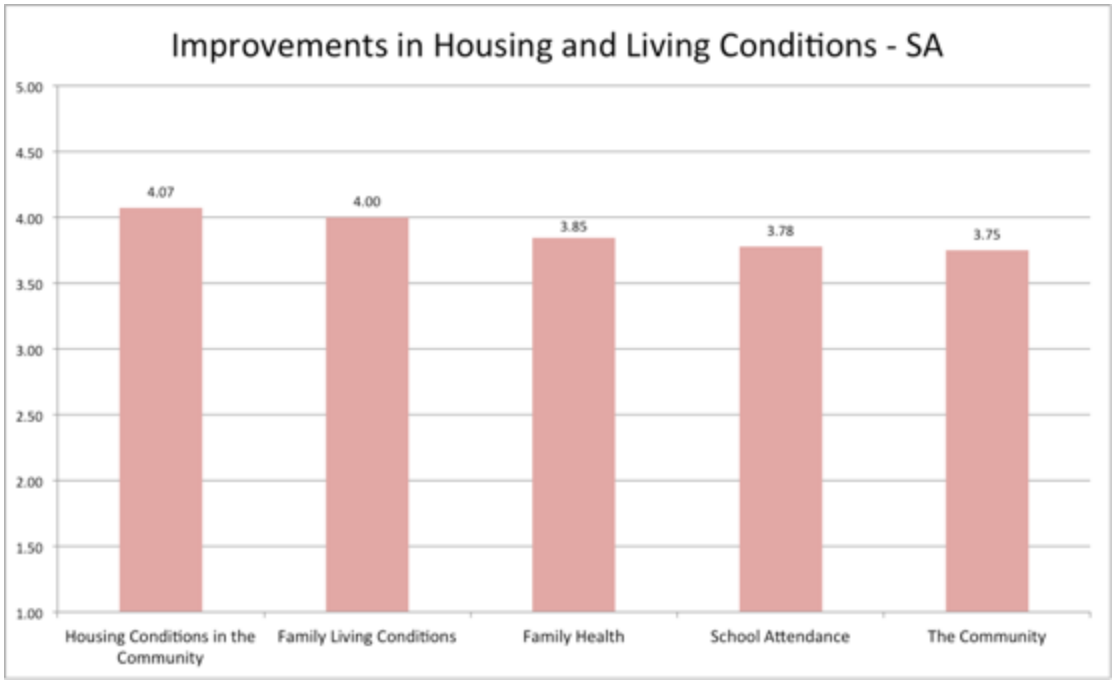
5.3.3 How well is the model working?

Tenant respondents understood they are required to pay rent although there is confusion and uncertainty about all the requirements of a tenancy agreement, and why rent levels have increased to such a degree. Residents of the APY Lands did not meet white settlers until the 1920s and most do not speak English as their first language. Some DCSI informants spoke of the need to make changes slowly because the cultural differences and size of the gap between the new tenancy arrangements and tenants' past experience was especially large.

Rent levels are a major concern, with affordable rent seen as the most important housing management issue; two-thirds of respondents ranked it as the most important issue. This was followed by the speed of housing repairs and maintenance and having an Indigenous housing officer. The least important issue was housing allocation.

The critical issue in terms of capital works is that increases in bedrooms in the communities has not sufficiently addressed crowding. Crowding is a real and pressing issue.

Figure 12: Views on improvements in housing and living conditions—APY Lands, South Australia



In terms of management, the critical problem area is the workload pressure on staff working in the Lands. There is a very high turnover of local community officer Indigenous staff, who stay for only six months on average

The length of time that it takes for repairs and maintenance to be completed are a major concern to tenants. The repairs and maintenance budget rests with the Housing Manager and the work is carried out by contractors. The Manager tries to control overspend by 'bundling up' work such as air conditioning repairs. However, one of the notable complaints by tenants

surveyed and interviews was that repairs take too long, and are notably longer than when the community used to manage repairs of the houses. They told us:

> It was better before when the community were managing repairs. They fixed things quickly. With Housing SA, I have to wait five months.
>
> I am still waiting for my air conditioning and stove to be fixed. They have had a look and have said they are going to replace them, but there has been no action for six to seven months.
>
> When the community did the housing maintenance, it was done much quicker than now and the rent was lower.
>
> It takes a while for maintenance to be done now. It used to be much quicker.

5.3.4 What are the critical problem areas?

Crowding

As discussed earlier, there is still a real and pressing problem of crowding in the three APY Land communities visited for this study. The population is increasing and the benefits of the gains in housing stock built through NPARIH risk being quickly eroded.

Housing repairs and maintenance

Tenant respondents are unsatisfied with the length of time that repairs are taking, especially for items such as air conditioners that impact on health and wellbeing. Some tenants resent paying higher rent, especially if they also perceive repairs are too slow.

Rent

Some tenant respondents are dissatisfied with their rent levels, and spoke of it causing difficulties in managing their budgets and buying food for themselves and their children. In this area food and travel costs are considerably higher than in most other parts of Australia. The cost of rent collection is high, as housing staff spend much of their time ensuring that tenants have signed the necessary paperwork to be able to receive their entitlements and maintain direct debit arrangements for rent payments. This raises the question of how realistic a mainstream rent model is if it increases the vulnerability of those it is designed to assist, and is also unable to meet the cost of maintenance.

Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)

The distances on unsealed roads between communities and the Regional Administration Centre at Umawa are an OH&S issue for staff. At the time of the interviews in November 2014, the Housing Officer had been unable to carry out her normal duties for several months as a result of a neck injury incurred because of driving long distances on unsealed roads.

Staffing

Recruiting and retaining staff has been an ongoing problem. Tenants expressed a preference for Indigenous workers who speak their language, but staff recruitment and retention are difficult.

5.4 Fitzroy Valley, West Kimberley, Western Australia—ICHO management

5.4.1 Service context and service delivery arrangements

The Fitzroy Valley lies in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, nearly 500 kilometres east of the coastal town of Broome. There are an estimated 43 communities in the Fitzroy Valley, with a concentration in and around FItzroy Crossing. The total number of residents in the Valley comprises 570 adults and 586 children. The communities are mostly small and

dispersed, with the largest community having a population of about 300. Many other communities are small and have 10 or fewer houses, and lack any service infrastructure.

The two case study communities were Bayulu and Yakanarra. Bayulu community has 246 residents and 62 houses, and is located 10 kilometres south of the town. It serves as a second hub for many Valley communities, especially during the wet season when those who need to access services as clients or employees, move into the town to avoid being cut off. The Yakanarra community is located 60 kilometres south-west of Fitzroy Crossing, and is a 1-½ hour journey away, on an unsealed road. It has 95 residents and 26 houses.

At the time of data collection, tenancy, property management and tenant support services were provided by the Indigenous community organisation, Marra Worra Worra, whose offices are in Fitzroy Crossing. It is a major employer in the town and the largest Indigenous Community Organisation (ICO) in the Kimberley region. At the time of research, Marra Warra Warra was managing 35 communities including 1,000 WA DoH tenancies and those communities and properties that either had no relationship with the WA DoH or were HMMA communities and likely to transition to an Housing Management Agreement (HMA) in the future. Where there is no agreement with the WADoH, Marra Worra Worra provides only essential services and maintenance, through an arrangement with the department.

Housing staff comprised a manager, a repairs and maintenance supervisor, a housing supervisor, five full-time housing officers, one located at Yiyilli community, and three part-time officers located at Bayulu, Yakanarra and Muludja. A tenancy support team of nine full-time staff, including two supervisors, provided case management, tenant education and community clean-up services. Administrative support was provided by three full-time and two part-time positions. At the time of data collection, there were vacancies in some of the housing officer positions, especially those on communities.

All staff, apart from one position, were Indigenous, and with the exception of community housing officers, they were located at the Fitzroy Valley office. Training was undertaken on the job and supported by WA DoH's online training program.

Maintenance was managed by the repairs and maintenance supervisor arranging for jobs to be subcontracted to local, and other trades services. Unless there is a housing officer in the community, jobs were usually identified by the tenant or other reporting, such as a health service or community council member. Completion times were 28 days for routine jobs and 24-hours for those that involved emergency services.

Most of the work of housing officers is taken up with signing up tenants, following up rent arrears and undertaking inspections. The tenancy support team provides case management services to tenants not compliant with rental payments or home maintenance requirements for periods of two to three months or longer. Each case manager has a caseload of about 20 tenants. Common problems are rent arrears, family issues, disruptive behaviour, crowding, visitors staying beyond the notifiable period and property damage. Case managers will also bring in other agencies, such as Centrelink, Home and Community Care services, the women's health shelter, justice services and money management services.

5.4.2 What outcomes have been achieved?

This section draws on the tenant survey and interviews and the interviews with housing and other stakeholders to identify what outcomes have been achieved as a result of NPARIH's capital works program in remote Indigenous communities and the associated changes to tenancy management arrangements.

Crowding

Firm data on the impact of NPARIH on crowding was not available, but neither the survey nor interview data suggested that crowding was a problem in either Bayulu or Yakanarra. This

suggests that, at least in these locations, NPARIH has reduced the amount of crowding. Some stakeholders reported that crowding remained a problem in Fitzroy Crossing, Joy Springs, Mindaradi (Wonkajuda) and Kangari. The waiting list for housing in communities managed by Marra Warra Warra in October 2014 was 300. This may be an undercount because some people may not put their names on the list. Large family sizes mean that houses are often too small and a number of tenant respondents complained that they wanted bigger houses, especially in the wet season.

Allocations

Allocations are managed through community councils, following the rules set by the WA DoH. Respondents varied in the extent of their understanding with some referring only to the waiting list, while others understood the community council played a role. A few believed properties could be 'passed on' by family members. They were divided in their views on whether allocations were fairer and more transparent than in the past. Some believed that 'they don't stick to the rules' (R1), and that kin continued to be favoured over those experiencing high levels of need or who had a greater claim. Others suggested that 'the rules work' (R2) and although allocations were a source of conflict within families and communities, the processes were better than in the past. This may explain why the question was a difficult one for some respondents to answer, because of sensitivities about commenting on the dynamics within the community.

Compliance (rent, looking after the home, property damage)

Policy managers described significant improvements in rent collection, with compliance levels at 85 per cent for the first step of rent settings. In the Fitzroy Valley, at the time of data collection rents were transitioning to the second stage and the survey data suggests most tenants were comfortable with rent levels, with almost three-quarters of those surveyed agreeing that they were at least a bit satisfied with 'how much rent you pay on your house' (3.80 rating average). Some stakeholders also noted that tenants were becoming used to the idea of paying rent. One housing manager noted how compliance had improved over time:

> It started getting better because at the beginning—and it's because people don't carry ID, they don't have their last payslip, they don't know how to access it … What we're finding now is that you rock up to a community and say, 'We're doing the rent' and they already have a lot of that paperwork with them, so again, it's improving stuff and not just for that, but now they can go and get a bank account or go for their licence and they've got all of the required paperwork.

However, few respondents knew how much rent they were paying because of direct debit arrangements and few stated that they understood how rents were set. It may be that tenants' sense of whether rent levels are affordable is determined by whether they are able to purchase goods they can normally afford. Some tenant interview respondents described the difficulties they had paying rent and being unable to buy things they needed, such as bread and school expenses. One respondent observed:

> I only get $200 per f/n after rent. Sometimes I spend that money and find things … maybe clothes for the kids. Money will go straight out.

Tenants also spoke of their worries that they would get into about housing debt, and that, as rent levels increase, they may find maintaining payments difficult to sustain. Marra Worra Worra service provider informants identified rent arrears as a continuing housing management issue.

Achieving compliance in relation to property damage remains problematic. Most tenants believed the one who caused the damage should pay but understood they would be held responsible for the debt, and were concerned about this. Many understood that if they notified the police of malicious damage they would not be held liable for repair.

Visitors

Very few respondents identified managing visitors as a problem and only one respondent wanted more support to manage them. All respondents understood their obligations for managing visitors and it is possible this may have influenced their responses.

Pride in house and liveability

The survey data shows tenants were satisfied with the design and size of their homes and this was supported by the interview data. A small number of respondents wanted bigger or smaller houses or larger rooms, verandahs and level yards. At Bayulu, old infrastructure meant there were some sewage problems, even in the new houses. Many respondents were unhappy and concerned about power arrangements as a result of the introduction of power cards.

Almost all respondents described the new and improved housing as making a difference to their lives. They displayed a strong sense of pride in them and were committed to meeting their tenancy obligations so they could remain in them. As one respondent put it: 'People are living better. Cleaner homes. They look after them'.

A number of respondents spoke of their desire to improve their homes and had made efforts to beautify their yards, but many homes lacked basic furniture such as tables and chairs. Bedding was often a mattress on the floor raising questions of health and hygiene. The cost of these items in the community store was prohibitively expensive.

Tenant education and support

The survey and interview data suggests that progress has been made in tenants' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. When asked to identify their tenancy obligations most tenant respondents referred to paying rent and keeping the house clean. A few were able to describe some other areas of tenancy expectations and other informants noted that tenants were beginning to develop higher expectations for service delivery, as indicated by this observation by a housing manager:

> The tenants, their expectations are starting to get higher … 'Look, it's not okay if my septics (septic tanks) are six months into it and it's rolling back through the house (waste)—that's not okay' and that just drives a lot of change, you know. Low level change drives a whole lot of impetuses so—expectations on council to be able to negotiate with housing and the different service departments (community members say), 'We need you to provide us a voice'.

Marra Worra Worra had the contract for the WA DoH tenant support program and both the survey and interview data suggests this is operating well. However, the survey found that levels of satisfaction with how often respondents saw a housing officer was in the mid-range, and below 'a bit satisfied'. Although respondents had difficulty identifying when they had last seen a housing officer, and few could name one, they also described housing officers spending an hour with them when they signed the tenancy agreement and a number spoke of seeing them at least every six months.

Tenant and community consultation

All respondents were aware of the existence of community councils and most understood and accepted that the community council contributed to housing management decisions.

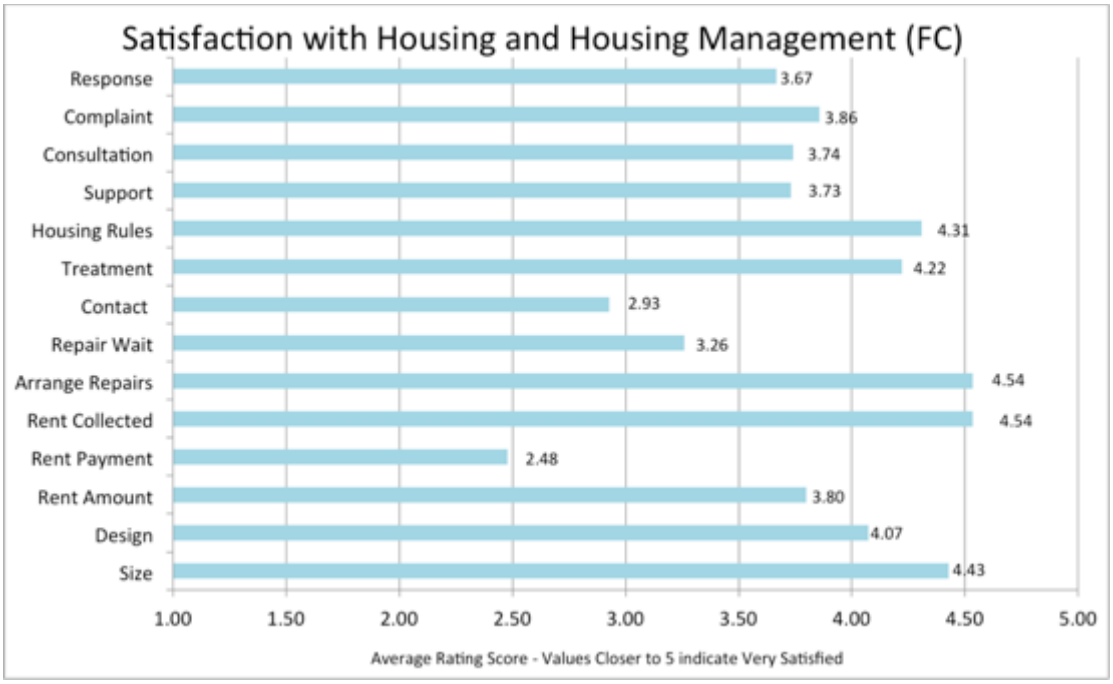
Tenant satisfaction

When asked to compare past and present tenancy management arrangements, most respondents indicated that current arrangements were better. While this sometimes related to having a new or improved home, respondents also identified repairs and maintenance as better. This was qualified by having formerly had no or lower rental payments and two

respondents identified maintenance problems as the same or worse. There were three respondents who believed that tenancy management arrangements were better in the past. One respondent observed:

> We had more control. Had our own housing officer and did things on our own. Rent was paid and we had a housing crew as well as a housing officer and environmental health workers so (there was) more employment. We used to have three plumbers in the community and did all our own refurbishments.

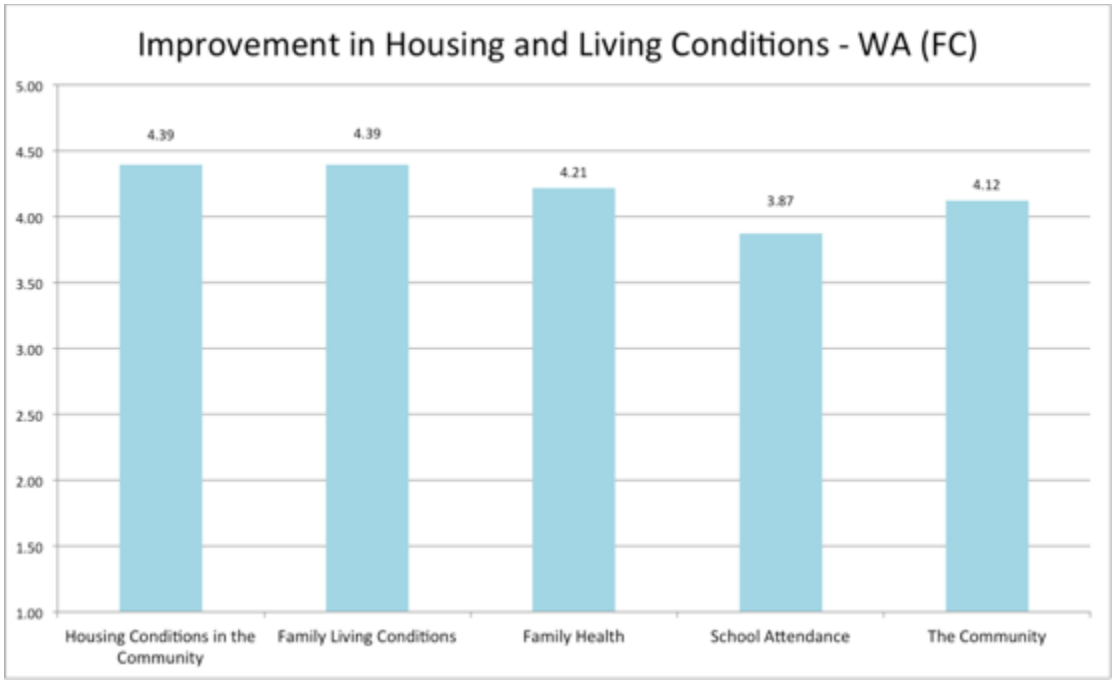
Figure 13: Satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds, Western Australia



The survey of tenants indicates that most are satisfied with the many aspects of their housing service (see Figure 13 above). We asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale extending from very satisfied to very dissatisfied in areas covering the size and design of housing, rent amounts and collection arrangements, arranging repairs and waiting times, tenant education, contact, treatment and support from the housing office, and complaints processes. The results, summarised in Figure 13 above, show that, apart from rental payments and how often they see housing workers, most are satisfied, with all response rating averages at or better than 'a bit satisfied'. There were no response rating averages at, or below, 'a bit dissatisfied'.

For improvements in housing and changes to other aspects of living on the community as a result of WA DoH management of housing, respondents from Fitzroy Crossing were generally positive with levels mostly at or above 'a bit better' (Figure 14 below). Family health was the housing and/or living condition that has improved the most because of housing being managed by the state department. In order of rating, this group rated family living conditions, community housing conditions and the overall conditions in the community as the second, third and fourth most improved in Fitzroy Crossing. The least improved was the school attendance of children.

Figure 14: Improvement of housing and living conditions in Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds, WA



The survey data is supported by the interview data. Here a housing provider and local stakeholder describe improvements to communities and the capacity of tenants to look after their homes and families:

> Yeah. I mean some of these houses that are knocked down and the new ones replaced, you want to see them. I don't know, it was bloody—because they were half fallen down and people just didn't give a stuff anymore. It was at the stage where they were spending more money on renovation than it would've cost them to get a new house. And that in itself just makes people give up. But now they've got these new houses, they do feel better about themselves and they're starting to look after what they've got …. So they change and then somewhere down the line their kids change. They're more responsible, they're making better decisions.
>
> I think it's having a tremendous amount of impact. It was a tough gig and I guess you've looked at the outcomes and the outcomes I think on the whole were a lot more positive than what they were negative.

5.4.3 What are the critical problem areas?

In the two communities visited, standards of housing appear to have improved, and tenancy management arrangements are operating effectively and to the satisfaction of most tenants. However, it is also not surprising that there remain many problem areas. The most important of these are rent collection, repairs and maintenance, occupational health and safety, community consultation and allocations.

Rent collection

The rent model remains problematic. Collection costs are high and rent arrears were reported to be high in some communities. The biggest cause of rent arrears is vacation without notice, which often results in tenants accumulating a substantial housing debt.

Tenants are not provided with rental accounts with both the survey and interviews showing that this was a concern. The survey found the rating average for satisfaction with information

about whether rental payments are up-to-date was 2.48 (see Figure 13 above). This failure to inform tenants of their rent arrears is a concern.

The head tenant system was also a concern because of the vulnerability of some community members whose position in the family made it difficult for them to apply expectations that other residents would contribute. A housing officer explained:

> I think the difficulty … is that the family groups find it hard to ask the other family members to contribute. Everyone should contribute for, as we say, they should chuck in for your power or you will have to pay for your rent. Everyone contributes. They find it really difficult to manage that concept. You cannot ask your family, so that's what we're finding it hard as you roll out this rent that we say to them: 'Well everyone's got to contribute to rent', which is fine for us to say, but it's hard for them to manage.

Repairs and maintenance

The data suggests that managing repairs and maintenance efficiently and well remains challenging. Housing managers and stakeholders identified all the problems of managing repairs and maintenance that are outlined in Chapter 2. These are compounded by the small and dispersed nature of communities, difficulties of access during the wet season and tenants who rarely had mobile phones and were often more than an hour's journey distant. Unless there is a housing officer in the community, the service relies on tenants whose information may be confused and unreliable. For some jobs, the nearest contractor is in Broome, a four-hour, 400 kilometres journey away from Fitzroy Crossing. One informant commented on the impact of distance:

> For a distant community … it's very difficult to get jobs done. For example, there was a requirement to repair septic system but tenants weren't able to articulate what the problem was, and without this we don't know who to send or what materials to bring, or which house to go to. We also don't know whether the tenant is liable.

The demands of the job and the distance to communities makes monitoring job completion and quality difficult. The requirements of the job seem inadequate for a single position to manage.

Wait times continue to be long for some jobs. The survey shows that while most tenants were satisfied with how to contact someone for repairs, only half of the respondents were at least a bit satisfied with how quickly things were fixed.

A number of service providers expressed concerns about whether the standard of the homes would be maintained over time. Although the budget provided by the WA DoH was described as adequate if properly managed, informants also explained that emergency jobs can blow the budget very quickly.

The WA DoH has since brought repairs and maintenance in remote communities into the mainstream public housing system, but most of the challenges of service delivery described here still apply. Continued efforts need to be made to improve the management and operation of repairs and maintenance systems to ensure the sustainability of the achievements to housing standards in the Fitzroy Valley.

Occupational health and safety and staff presence

Staff turnover and retention were identified as a major problem by housing operational staff and policy-makers. Within the housing staff, there was a low level of professionalisation, and few had a background in housing.

Community positions are difficult to fill and staff are often young and inexperienced. Indigenous staff working in their communities face particular problems, as described by this housing manager:

> There is a lot of staff turnover, not only in direct management but (also where there is a) regional service provider. It's probably more Indigenous staff that the turnover is, because it's very hard for them to deliver housing management on the ground for their own community, because of the conflict and things like that. Family comes in, so they all say, this is all too hard, I don't want to do this anymore.

The distance from Fitzroy Crossing makes regular contact for training and supervision difficult. Staff face the safety concerns of driving long distances across dirt roads, dogs on communities, domestic violence and feuding, humbug for money and transport, and some hygiene concerns. Travel times are high, with some staff travelling around 1,800 kilometres a month. When visiting communities they often have to carry large amounts of paperwork and most communities have no office facilities or internet connections and office equipment is unreliable and minimal. Staff sometimes have to stay overnight, and if there are no visitor facilities they are provided with a swag so they can camp out. If housing officers are working in communities where they have family, they may have difficulty performing their professional roles due to avoidance relationships and cultural norms around status.

Other areas of concern

Interviews with tenants and stakeholders suggested there was variability in the capacity of community councils to perform a consultative role, with one respondent suggesting that about 30 per cent of the councils in the Fitzroy Valley were functioning effectively, compromising arrangements for community consultation.

Systems to manage property damage were not yet in place with income from tenant liability reported to be low. Housing managers had difficulty establishing liability and in distinguishing between property damage and normal wear and tear. At the same time many tenants displayed an attitude of 'if it's my damage I should fix it' suggesting strong norms of responsibility in these communities.

5.5 Kunnunurra and surrounds, East Kimberley, Western Australia: community housing provider management

5.5.1 Service context and service delivery arrangements

Kununurra is the service centre for the East Kimberley and is the base from which Community Housing Ltd (CHL), as the regional service provider contracted by the Department of Housing (DOH), manages remote Indigenous housing across the East Kimberly. CHL is a mainstream community housing provider, originating in Victoria, that delivers social and affordable housing across Australia and internationally.[8]

In total, CHL manage 273 remote tenancies across 21 communities. These comprise 56 in Kununurra (based on two town reserves), 74 in Kalumburu (very remote and accessible only by plane), and 21 in two communities in Wyndham (one-hour drive on major road). Three other communities with 17, 17 and 11 houses respectively are approximately 100 kilometres or more from Kununurra on unmade roads, and the rest are in very small communities within 10–30 kilometres of Kununurra. Of these, 173 houses are fully managed under Housing Management Agreements with the communities. The other 100 houses where HMAs are not in place are only provided with urgent health and safety maintenance. At the time of the fieldwork, CHL were responsible for tenancy management and maintenance. However, at that time, DoH was in the process of re-contracting the tenancy management services and moving all maintenance responsibilities back to public housing under their mainstream head contractor model. Housing procurement and asset management are managed by the DoH.

[8] Following a competitive tender process in 2015, CHL expanded to the Goldfields region with management of seven remote Indigenous communities. It also manages properties in Kalgoorlie, Halls Creek and Exmouth.

CHL rents an office in Kununurra and employs seven staff based in Kununurra: one manager, four housing officers (one manages non-remote tenancies), a maintenance coordinator and an administration officer. Each of the three remote housing officers has notional responsibility for approximately 90 tenancies, although often two housing officers travel together to more remote communities. Two housing officers are Indigenous and from the local community.

CHL is responsible for full tenancy management including applications, allocations, rent reviews, arrears, neighbourhood complaints, property inspections, maintenance. They are required to liaise with Community Councils where they exist to consult on issues covered by the HMA including allocations, arrears and maintenance.

5.5.2 What outcomes have been achieved?

Crowding

Crowding in the Kununurra region does not appear very prevalent and this is reflected in high levels (20/26) of tenant satisfaction with the size and design of their housing. Some individual houses have high occupancy rates with tenants reporting concern about crowding, especially in the Kununurra town camps of Nullywah and Mirima, in older houses and when visitors are present. Informants reported that the remote settlement of Kalumburu has some crowding, but it was not possible to visit this community during the fieldwork.

The more generous size of housing and inclusion of large covered outdoor living spaces in the design of housing (especially the new housing), makes it possible to accommodate increased household numbers and lessens stress on the core household.

Allocations

Allocation processes are negotiated through HMAs with community councils. In most cases, councils have significant influence in allocation decisions. In practice, many allocations to new NPARIH housing have been to the pre-existing tenants from the demolished houses. Succession of tenancy to family members is also common as described by one tenant interviewee:

> We were lucky that we got succession of tenancy when [our] grandmother died—we were caring for her. Grandmother stood up to get a new house.

Respondents indicated overall satisfaction with the housing allocation process. Some tenant/Indigenous stakeholder respondents were of the view that it was an improvement on past practices where that were perceived to preference the families of community council directors.

> CHL talk to the community and community members have the last say. Sometimes they are happy. A couple of family members are not happy. They used to put their own family in. It's more fair now.

Respondents' support was strongly conditional on the continuation of genuine consultation with communities and allocations being in accordance with the priorities and processes agreed in HMAs.

Compliance and tenant support (rent, looking after house, damage)

Many Indigenous tenants and community leaders who participated in the study occupy life-worlds that reflect values and norms informed by tradition and culture. It is common for them to speak English as a second or third language, have low literacy levels and alcohol related disabilities. Some of these tenants reported that they did not fully understand, or even remember signing, tenancy agreements. Nevertheless, most understood their basic tenancy obligations regarding paying rent and looking after the house. Kinship obligations and the impact of widespread alcohol consumption in some communities made it difficult for some tenants to adhere to the rules, even when they reported supporting their intent.

Tenants in HMA communities, especially those in proximity to the urban centres of Kununurra and Wyndham, mostly felt rent was affordable and were conscious of the cost of private and public housing rents. One said: 'That's affordable. I don't mind paying the rent when I have house I appreciate'.

Those in more remote locations, where food and transport costs are much higher, were less positive about the affordability of their rent. The cost of power was a widespread concern. In one case where one parent worked and they had several children, the respondent felt their rent was too high and unfair. This was a new house and the tenant was paying maximum rent which is based on a percentage of replacement value rather than on market related rents, as in other states. This tenant said: 'Go on partners income. Not fair—it's too much. They don't look at how many kids I have. Was fair if on Centrelink'.

Tenants were positive about paying rent through direct deposits and having other residents contribute. A common sentiment was: 'We all chuck in for rent and repairs'. Many could not recall how much they paid, did not understand how rent was calculated and were concerned about whether other household members' rent was up-to-date. This was expressed by one tenant who said: 'Don't know [whether rent is up-to date]. I want to find out if other two are paying'. As a result, many tenants sought to better understand these issues and to receive regular rent statements. Others were content to wait to be advised by housing staff if they were in arrears as illustrated by one tenant who replied: "[Indigenous housing officer] will talk to us if there is a problem'.

Other tenants, especially those living in small outstations in driving distance to Kununurra, are well educated, employed, hold responsible positions, have a strong Indigenous identity, and acute political consciousness. Many of these tenants resided in non-HMA communities and strongly objected to state intervention in managing homes they believe they own and are concerned about loss of funding for essential services.

Most tenants supported the perpetrators paying for intentional damage, especially when the person doing the damage was drunk or trying to break in. A typical response was:

> We have to report damage. They make people pay. We report who it is. Yes, it's fair, they have to pay. If they don't pay, they cannot come again. It's good that rule. It was the same under Council that others pay. Yes, I do worry that visitors might damage the house.

As this quote shows, some respondents were worried about damage and about being held responsible. There were mixed feelings about reporting family damage to the police and whether tenants should be responsible for accidental or unavoidable damage. This view is reflected in the following quote from a tenant:

> Kids break things. I had to force getting into the bedroom when the kids locked themselves in. I had to pay for the repair. It's not fair. The amount of rent we pay should cover the cost (of repairs). What if it's an accident?

Visitors

Tenants expressed very different views about visitors. Some reported having regular visitors and having very little control over who came to the house. This was particularly a problem in town reserves. Others said that they attempted to limit visitors to immediate family and short visits, and to discourage visits from those who drink excessively and might damage the house. The responses indicated a high level of recognition, especially by head-tenants of their responsibilities, and variable capacity to manage visitors. One tenant explained the importance of being assertive when she said: 'They know where I stand. I have to be strong. It's part of being the head tenant'.

Pride in house and liveability

Tenants who had new and renovated houses expressed pride in their homes and were positive about the improved security that allowed them to control who entered the house, protect children, food and possessions and avoid damage to the house as well as their increased ability to keep the house clean and prepare healthy meals. Many of these tenants expressed a desire to establish gardens and buy furniture and appliances for their homes. Tenants in older houses struggled with keeping them clean and habitable; especially where the security was not good and they had lots of visitors and drinking in the house.

Safety issues were of considerable concern, especially in the town reserve communities of Mirima and Nullyway where visitors from town and outlying communities and high levels of alcohol consumption were seen as problematic by many residents. The associated problems of ‘loud music’ and ‘party houses’ were also of concern in these communities. One tenant was hoping to move from the community for these reasons: he said: 'Want HomesWest [mainstream public housing] house. Don’t want kids to grow up in that environment. Grog a problem'. Others wanted better security, especially at night and where toilets were outside. The following quotes are typical of these concerns:

> Bathroom and toilet are outside. There's no security. Drunks come in to use the toilet. I worry for the kids so an adult always goes with the kids.
>
> The yard and outside areas—people can just come in. It's not safe for the children.
>
> Not when outsiders come from out of town. We need better fences.

A significant concern, especially in the Kununnurra town reserves of Nullywah and Mirima, was that the communities did not receive basic municipal services that other town residents take for granted. The following quotes provide examples of resident concerns:

> The rubbish is not picked up.
>
> The street lights are not on and my niece was bitten by a snake.
>
> Things like basketball for kids—the council could do more.

Tenant and community consultation

Tenants and stakeholders in communities with functioning community councils, or those involved as directors were generally positive about their relationship with CHL and the level of consultation regarding housing. Active community members’ comments include: 'Community meetings—we always attend. It's not only about housing, but they do tell us about new houses', 'Yes we invite CHL to come to the Directors' meeting', and 'Yes, we have meetings, I have my say. I’m not frightened to talk to anybody'.

Residents raised some concerns about the regularity of meetings in other communities where governance was less strong. These included:

> I thought there should be community meetings. We've had no meetings for a while. There should be more meetings to bring up issues for housing and the community.
>
> (There have been) some meetings at [community name] but lately it's been slacking off. It's good to have meetings to talk about issues.

One previously active community member was pleased that the community council was no longer responsible for housing, and admitted to being 'happy to have a rest now'.

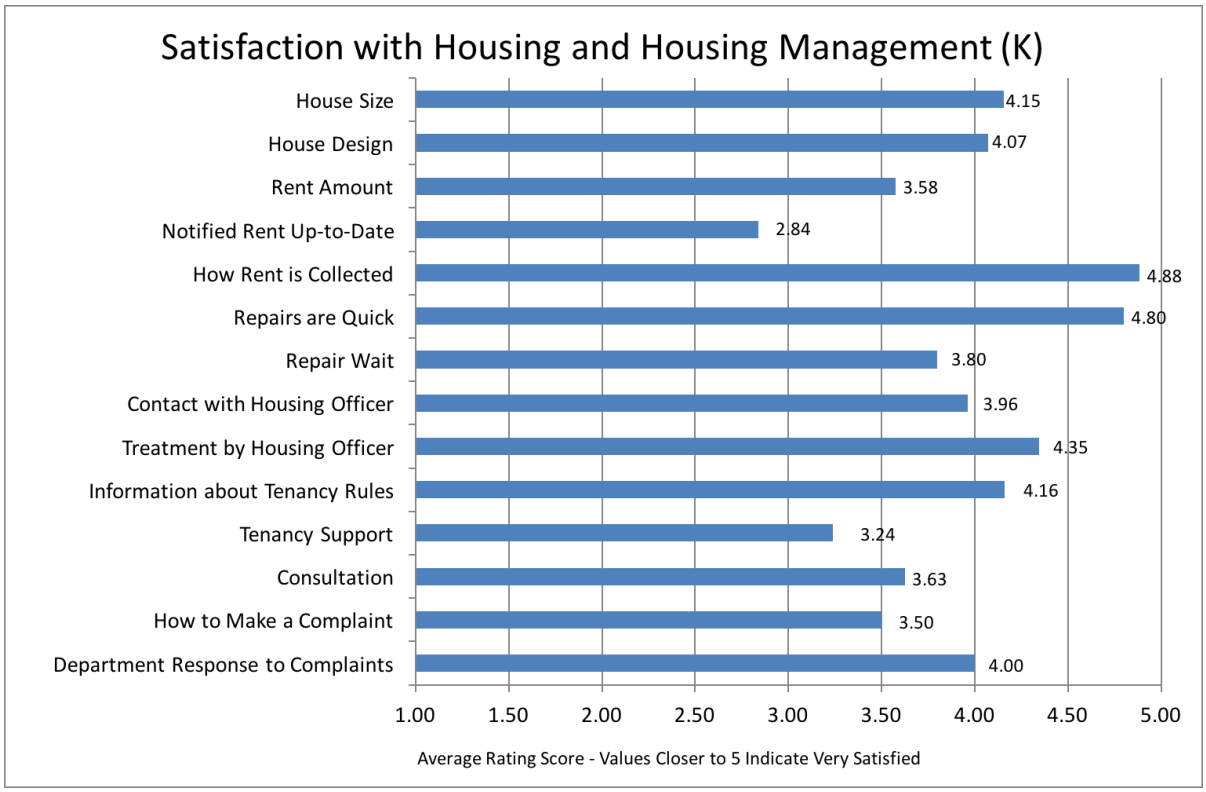
The employment of Indigenous housing workers who had strong credibility and relationships within the community was of particular importance in how tenants and community leaders perceived the housing management: 'CHL does a good job. They get on well with community people. It's important to employ local people'.

The situation was more fraught in other communities, especially the small, non-HMA communities where there was much anger about not having had a say in the changes in housing management and concern about other related changes that reduced funding available for infrastructure provision.

Tenant satisfaction

The tenant survey shows that, overall, tenants in the East Kimberley expressed high levels of satisfaction with the management of their housing and their interactions with CHL (see Figure 15 below). Of the 14 items, half were rated at level 4 (at least a bit satisfied) and only one item was rated at less than 3 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied). At least three-quarters of respondents were at least a bit satisfied with the size of their home, its design, how rent was collected, how easy it is to contact someone to come and fix things, how often the respondents see a housing officer and how they are treated by the housing officer. Over half of respondents were at least a bit satisfied with how much rent they paid and how well tenants and the community were consulted.

Figure 15: Satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—Kununurra and surrounds, Western Australia

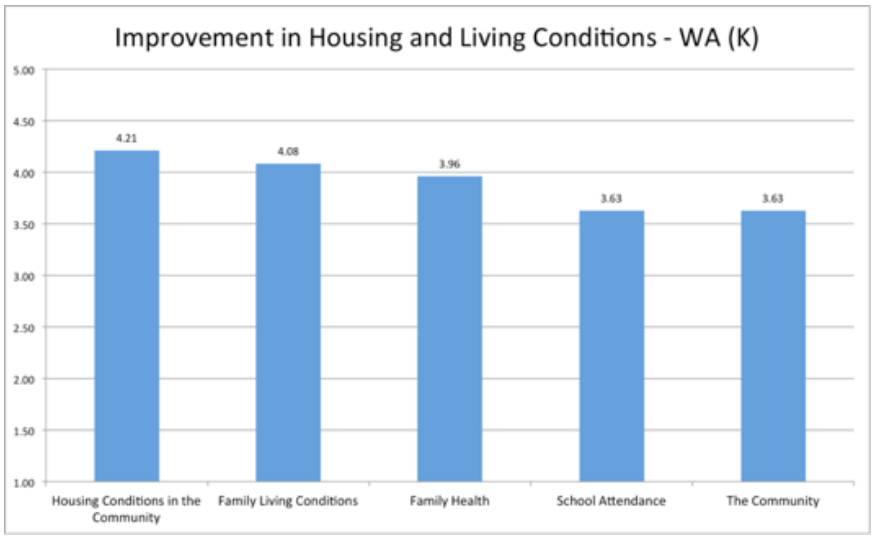


Areas of low satisfaction among respondents were information about rent arrears, the support they receive to manage their home, and what they need to do to make a formal complaint.

Tenant respondents were also asked about whether they believed that some things had improved because their housing was now managed by the WA DoH. Their responses show they had mixed views about whether broader community outcomes had improved (see Figure 16 below). Respondents rated community housing conditions as the most improved issue, while the second most improved issue was family living conditions followed by family health and the school attendance of children. Overall conditions in the community were rated as the least improved by Kununurra residents. However, although there was continuing concern about school attendance and community safety, interview data shows that respondents generally did not see that these issues were directly related to housing. Rather they were

attributed to late night noise and violence associated with alcohol consumption within their communities. Some tenants believe health has improved as a result of better housing but safety concerns continue where outstanding maintenance or outside facilities make it difficult to secure houses and protect children.

Figure 16: Improvements in housing and living conditions—Kununurra and surrounds, Western Australia



5.5.3 How well is the model working?

The high tenant satisfaction, positive relationship with CHL, and the responsiveness of maintenance service indicates that aspects of this model are working very well for HMA communities. Contributing factors to this success are the local presence of CHL and their employment of local Indigenous workers; the individual negotiations that occurred with communities in development of the HMA; the quality, quantity, design and size of the new housing; and having an adequate maintenance budget.

5.5.4 What are the critical problem areas?

Significant challenges remain in servicing the more far-flung communities, improving rent collection, and dealing with the continuing negative impact of alcohol, especially in the town reserves and larger communities, on community safety and housing damage.

For non-HMA communities and those that have seen limited NPARIH investment, the story is far less positive and the future uncertain. Residents on these communities face uncertainty about funding for essential services and utilities. Water quality, fuel for generators and maintenance of solar panels were raised as particular concerns.

Further issues of concern for the tenancy management model include loss of efficiency caused by the double work in reporting to the department by RSPs, intensive scrutiny in contract management practices by the department; the impact of rolling out the next stage of the rent changes; the new maintenance model; and growing concern about the post-NPARIH future.

The most significant issues facing tenants and communities is the lack of municipal services. This is not a tenancy management responsibility, but lack of rubbish collection, poor lighting and lack of animal management impact severely on tenant health and safety as well as their ability to maintain yards and houses.

Repairs and maintenance

Tenants in new and refurbished houses were generally very positive about the timeliness and quality of maintenance services and many understood that rent is re-allocated back to communities for maintenance. Tenants in older, legacy housing or who lived in non-HMA communities were generally less positive because only limited maintenance is provided. Satisfaction appears to relate to the ability to report maintenance requests and discuss progress with CHL staff.

The major problem identified by tenants, housing providers and other stakeholders was the uncertainty about responsibility and lack of provision of municipal services. This was a particular problem in the communities of Mirima and Nullyway that are located on the outskirts of Kununurra and do not have regular garbage collections services.

6 TENANT SURVEY COMPARISONS AND COSTS AND REVENUE ANALYSIS

A comparison of survey data provides some indication of the factors influencing good practice. In the case of the tenant survey findings, these are presented in relation to levels of satisfaction and views on improvements. There are very significant limitations in making these comparisons for the following reasons:

1. The substantial contextual differences between locations strongly influence responses. In particular, responses to questions about levels of satisfaction or perceptions of improvements, will be influenced by pre-NPARIH tenancy management experiences and what NPARIH has delivered in the particular communities studied. Respondents from a community that has experienced good pre-NPARIH tenancy management can expect to be less positive about the extent of improvements than a community where the pre-NPARIH tenancy arrangements saw few or no repairs or visits to tenants. The quality and quantity of the housing stock will also impact on responses. Housing in Wujal Wujal in Queensland was in reasonable condition pre-NPARIH, crowding was not a substantial concern, and Wujal did not get a lot of new houses/upgrades. This compares with Ngukurr in the Northern Territory where crowding is very high and, although NPARIH saw the replacement of many houses, there has been only some improvement in amenity. These differences will influence tenant respondents' perceptions about whether living conditions on the community have improved.
2. The changes to tenancy management occurred at a time when there were many other changes taking place in communities as a result of Closing the Gap and the Stronger Futures programs as part of the ongoing process of reconceptualising the Aboriginal community sector following the abolition of ATSIC. Respondents found it difficult to separate out what changes were due to the new tenancy management arrangements and what were due to other improvements, such as the presence of police or new policies for schools. In some jurisdictions, this influenced the willingness of respondents to answer these questions, resulting in low response rates to these questions.

Despite these concerns, we are presenting the data because it tells a consistent story about what arrangements work best that enables the research to identify some of the principles for good practice. It is essential to note, however, that the goal of the comparisons is not to provide a 'league' of performance outcomes, but to identify where arrangements are working well and the principles that underpin these.

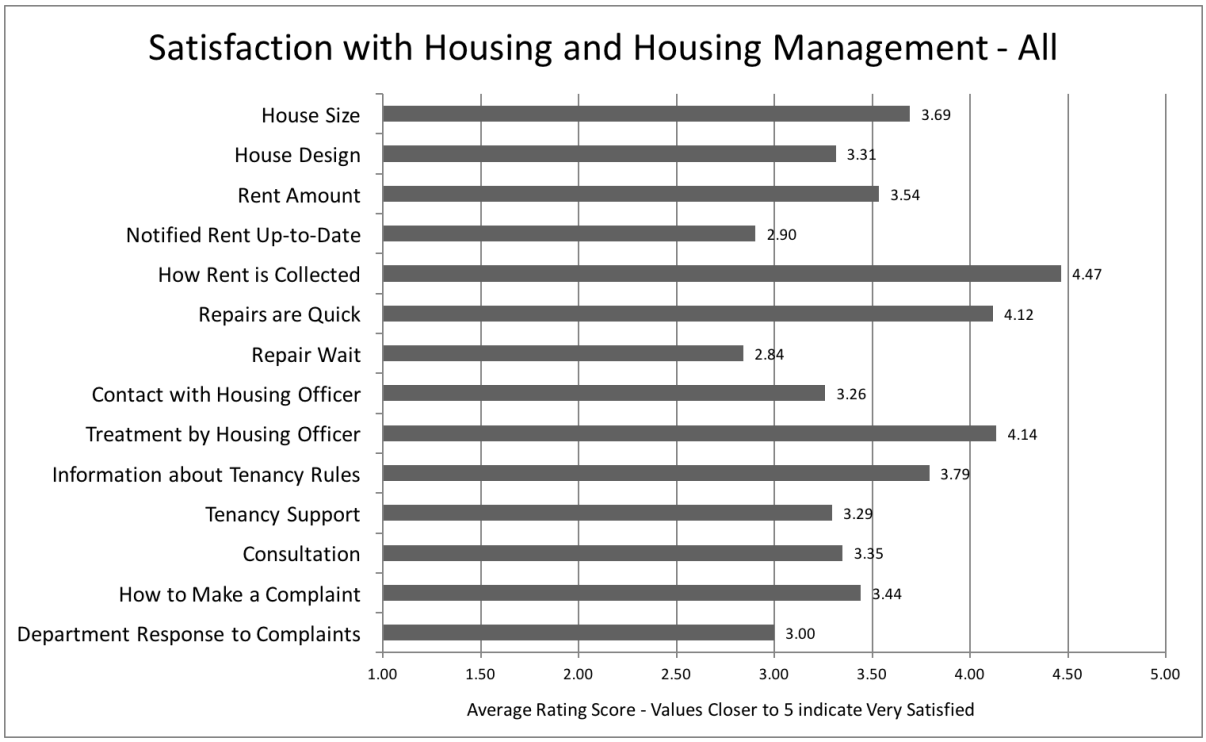
6.1 Satisfaction with housing

To make comparisons across the various dimensions of satisfaction with housing, the overall level of satisfaction from the tenant survey was determined by calculating the rating average for each response. Each response category was given a rating weight to denote a level of satisfaction with a higher rating weight indicating greater satisfaction and a lower value indicating greater dissatisfaction—that is 'very satisfied' was given a value of 5 and 'very dissatisfied' was given a value of 1. The count of each response category was multiplied by the rating weight then divided by the count of all response categories to provide a rating average of each response category. Each response category's rating average was summed to produce a rating average for the item overall. Higher rating averages indicate higher levels of satisfaction.

Figure 17 below shows that across the whole sample levels of satisfaction were mostly above 3, neither satisfied or dissatisfied, and for many items, respondents were at least satisfied. Respondents were most satisfied with: (1) the way in which rent is collected; (2) the treatment by housing workers; and (3) the ease of arranging housing repairs and maintenance. Across the sample, respondents were least satisfied with: (1) the wait time for housing repairs and

maintenance; (2) the information given to them about their rent payment; and (3) the way in which the Housing Department responds to complaints.

Figure 17: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—all



In all the communities, maintaining an effective R&M program was a major concern and there was no evidence that this was different in any of the case study sites. Kununurra was the only location where tenant satisfaction with how quickly repairs were made was more than 50 per cent, and in all locations operational staff described the difficulties they had in identifying jobs, managing contractors and keeping costs down. Although Ngukkur performed poorly on repairs and maintenance, the field visit suggested that the new handyman system is having a positive effect and may lead to improved outcomes.

The inability of state housing departments to inform tenants about housing debt is a major concern as is the way departments of housing respond to complaints.

6.1.1 Logistic regression of satisfaction with housing

This section shows the results of a series of logistic regressions undertaken to estimate respondents' level of satisfaction with aspects of their house and housing management. Logistic regression was undertaken to predict the odds of being satisfied or dissatisfied according to predictors, such as housing occupancy or state, for example. These results are derived from Questions 1–15 of the survey, which asked respondents how satisfied they were with their housing and a particular housing management issue. Respondents were given five response category options to indicate their level of satisfaction: (1) very satisfied; (2) a bit satisfied; (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; (4) a bit dissatisfied; and (5) very dissatisfied.

Analysis

To preform logistic regression on the improvement measures, each variable was recoded into a binary response variable in which 0 indicates dissatisfied and 1 indicates satisfied. The 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses were recoded as 0 to preserve sample numbers. The predictors for the logistic regressions were a series of binary response variables: state, proximity (1 = located in a central area), House Upgrade/Refurbishment (1= respondent living in a newly-built or upgraded/refurbished household) and number of occupants in the

household. The reference category is Western Australia–Fitzroy Crossing and as such coefficients are estimates of differences between the state and Fitzroy Crossing. For interpretation, the exponential function of each coefficient has been calculated to indicate a percentage change in the odds of being more or less satisfied. The results of logistic regressions for Q1 (Size of house); Q2 (Design of House); Q5 (How is rent collected?); Q7 (How quickly someone comes to fix things) are presented. The remaining questions from this section of the survey are not presented because the logistic regression models were not significant.

Table 13: Logistic regression of satisfaction with size of house

Variable	Coefficient ± SE	*z*	*P*
State (Reference: WA (FC))			
WA (K)	-1.38±0.93	-1.48	0.139
SA	-2.46±0.92	-2.68	0.007
NT	-1.88±0.93	-1.96	0.052
QLD	-1.37±0.93	-1.46	0.145
Proximity (centrally-located)	0.60±0.67	0.89	0.373
House refurbished	0.32±0.49	0.67	0.505
No. occupants in household	-0.23±0.08	-3.37	0.008

Table 13 above shows the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with the size of the house. The coefficients for South Australia and the Northern Territory are significant, indicating that their levels of satisfaction are statistically different from Fitzroy Crossing residents' satisfaction with size of house. Further, the odds of residents in South Australia and the Northern Territory being satisfied with the size of their house are 91.5 and 87.3 per cent respectively lower than those of the residents in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is also significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the size of the house are 82.6 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas. Number of household occupants is also significant, indicating that for every increase in the number of persons within the household, there is a 21.2 per cent decrease in the odds of being satisfied with size of house.

Table 14: Logistic regression of satisfaction with design of house

Variable	Coefficients ± SE	%	*z*	*P*
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	-0.66±0.75	-48.3	-0.87	0.382
SA	-2.14±0.72	-88.3	-2.95	0.003
NT	-1.51±0.79	-78.1	-1.9	0.058
QLD	-1.65±0.76	-81.1	-2.19	0.023
Proximity (centrally-located)	-0.29±0.60	34.6	-0.49	06222
House refurbished	0.56±0.45	75.2	1.24	0.215
No. occupants in household	-0.17±0.08	-16.3	-2.12	0.034

Table 14 above shows the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with the design of the house. The state coefficients for South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland are significant, indicating that their levels of satisfaction are statistically different from Fitzroy

Crossing residents' satisfaction with the design of their house. The odds of residents in South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory being satisfied with the design of their house are between 78.1 and 88.3 per cent lower than those of the residents in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the design of the house are 34.6 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

Table 15: Logistic regression of satisfaction with the way rent is collected

Variable	Odds ± SE	%	*z*	*P*
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	-0.48±14	-38.1	-0.32	0.747
SA	-2.04±1.27	-87	-1.60	0.108
NT	-1.30±1.28	-72.8	-1.01	0.312
QLD	-0.49±1.23	-38.9	-0.40	0.690
Proximity (centrally-located)	2.32±1.19	927.2	1.95	0.052
House refurbished	0.34±0.12	41.8	1.14	0.256
No. occupants in household	0.14±0.12	15.8	1.14	0.256

Table 15 above shows the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with the 'way rent is collected'. The state coefficients are not significant indicating that there is no statistical difference among the different states and their attitudes towards the way the rent is collected. The only other predictor that is significant is proximity, which indicates that the odds of being satisfied with the way rent is collected is 92.7 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

Table 16: Logistic regression of satisfaction with how quick repairs are done

Variable	Odds ± SE	%	*z*	*P*
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	1.08±0.63	195.8	1.72	0.086
SA	-0.63±0.06	-45.3	-0.93	0.352
NT	-0.10±0.80	-9.8	-0.13	0.898
QLD	0.36±0.70	44.3	0.52	0.604
Proximity (centrally-located)	0.97±0.55	163.9	1.74	0.081
House refurbished	-0.26±0.44	-23.3	-0.60	0.552
No. occupants in household	-0.08±0.08	-8	-0.98	0.327

Table 16 above shows the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with how quickly repairs are done. The state coefficient for Kununurra is significant indicating that there is a statistical difference between Kununurra and Fitzroy Crossing' residents. The odds of residents in Kununurra being satisfied with how quickly repairs are done is 195.8 per cent higher than residents in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the design of the house are 163.9 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

6.2 Improvements in housing and living conditions

In this section, the results of survey respondents' attitudes towards whether housing and living conditions in their communities has improved is presented. Respondents were asked if things have improved because [state/territory housing department] is managing their house. Responses were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement. The results are presented as rating averages for each response. Each response category was given a rating weight to denote a level of satisfaction with a higher rating weight indicating greater satisfaction and a lower value indicating greater dissatisfaction—that is 'very satisfied' was given a value of 5 and 'very dissatisfied' was given a value of 1. The count of each response category was multiplied by the rating weight, then divided by the count of all response categories, to provide a rating average of each response category. Each response category's rating average was summed to produce a rating average for the item overall. Higher rating averages indicate higher levels of satisfaction. If everyone was very satisfied, the average score would have been 5 and if everyone was very dissatisfied, the average would have been 1.

There was a high consensus that the condition of houses in the respondent's community had improved, with a rating of 4—'a bit better' across the whole sample. The lowest rating (Northern Territory) was only slightly below this, and the highest (Fitzroy Crossing) only slightly above. Over 50 per cent of Fitzroy Crossing' respondents, 50 per cent of APY Lands' respondents and one-third of Kununurra residents, indicated that housing conditions were a lot better. This compares with Queensland and the Northern Territory, where the figures are 25 per cent, and 16 per cent respectively. The differences seem to be related to the form of delivery rather than the formal administrative arrangements, with more localised arrangements in the Western Australian and South Australian jurisdictions, than those in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Table 17: Level of improvement in community housing conditions

Rank	State	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	WA (FC)	53.57	35.71	7.14	3.57		4.39
2	WA (K)	37.5	50	8.33	4.17		4.21
3	SA	50	21.43	14.29	14.29		4.07
4	QLD	25	29.17	45.83			3.79
5	NT	16	36	36	8	4	3.52
	Sample						*4.00*

The pattern for improvements in family living conditions is very similar (see Table 17 above). The Western Australian and South Australian case study sites all have rankings above 4 and higher proportions of 'better' ratings indicating a strong consensus among these groups. This was much higher than the response rates for the Northern Territory and Queensland respondents. Over 60 per cent of Queensland respondents and just under 50 per cent of Northern Territory respondents felt that family living conditions were about the same.

Table 18: Level of improvement in family living conditions

Rank	State	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	WA (FC)	46.43	46.43	7.14			4.39
2	WA (K)	50	25	12.5	8.33	4.17	4.08
3	SA	35.71	35.71	21.43	7.14		4.00
4	NT	32	12	44	12		3.64
5	QLD	16.67	16.67	58.33	4.17	4.17	3.38
	Sample						*4.02*

For improvements in family health, the overall sampling rating is 3.70 indicating that overall, respondents felt that family health had not really changed because of state-territory-managed housing. The most positive results are for the two Western Australian case studies, followed by South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland (see Table 19 below).

Table 19: Level of improvement in family health

Rank	State	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	WA (FC)	46.43	28.57	25			4.21
2	WA (K)	41.67	25	25	4.17	4.17	3.96
3	SA	23.08	38.46	38.46			3.85
4	NT	16	20	48	8	8	3.28
5	QLD	12.5	12.5	62.5	8.33	4.17	3.21
	Sample						*3.70*

For improvements in school attendance ('Have your kids gone to school more often?') the overall sample rating is 3.56, which indicates overall that respondents across the sample did not think school attendance has changed because of state and territory-managed housing (see Table 20 below). Over two-thirds of the Fitzroy Crossing sample, and about 50 per cent of the APY Lands and Kununurra samples, indicated that their children were attending school more. However, most respondents in all locations except Fitzroy Crossing and Kununurra at 50 per cent, felt school attendance had not changed.

Table 20: Level of improvement in school attendance

Rank	State	Much more	A bit more	No change	A bit less	Much less	Rating
1	WA (FC)	26.09	39.13	30.43	4.35		3.87
2	SA	33.33	11.11	55.56			3.78
3	WA (K)	12.5	37.5	50			3.63
4	NT	12	8	76	4		3.28
5	QLD		14.29	85.71			3.14
	Sample						*3.56*

Whether overall conditions in the respondent's community were better because of state/territory housing management, the overall sample rating average is 3.61, which suggests that across the whole sample, many respondents felt that community conditions had

not changed (Table 21 below). However, there was wide variation between communities. In Fitzroy Crossing, the APY Lands and Kununurra, over two-thirds indicated that overall community conditions were better, whereas in Queensland and the Northern Territory, about two-thirds indicated that there had been no change or that conditions in the community were worse. In all communities, some respondents identified problems of grog and violence that made life difficult.

Table 21: Level of improvement in overall community conditions

Rank	State	Much more	A bit more	No change	A bit less	Much less	Rating
1	WA (FC)	40	40	16		4	4.12
2	SA	16.67	50	25	8.33		3.78
3	WA (K)	20.83	37.5	29.17	8.33	4.17	3.63
4	NT	13.04	21.74	60.87		4.35	3.39
5	QLD	16.67	20.83	37.5	16.67	8.33	3.21
	Sample						*3.61*

These results suggest that overall, the new housing and housing management arrangements have been positive for the communities we visited. They are supported by the interview data with many respondents describing tidier, cleaner and safer homes. One service provider respondent remarked in relation to the Kununurra communities of Mirima and Nulleyway:

> I've just come back from Kununurra to where I thought those two communities … you're never going to see change. And I just couldn't believe, driving into this community, the change.

Another, Indigenous stakeholder, remarked:

> Some of the houses that were knocked down … were half fallen down and people didn't give a stuff anymore … And that in itself makes people give up. But now they've got these new houses, they do feel better about themselves and they're starting to look after what they've got.

While housing and family living conditions appear to have improved in the communities visited, most respondents do not believe that the changes to tenancy management arrangements have improved non-housing outcomes in areas of family health, school attendance and the community more generally.

6.2.1 Logistic regression on improvements to housing and living conditions: occupancy, proximity and housing improvement type

This section shows the results of a series of logistic regressions undertaken to estimate respondents' agreement that housing and family living conditions in their communities have improved because of state or territory managed housing in their community. Logistic regression was undertaken to predict the odds of indicating that things had improved or not according to predictors, such as housing occupancy or state, for example. This section focuses on Questions 15, 16 and 17 of the survey which asked respondents whether things have improved because [state/territory housing department] is managing their house? For Questions 17, 18 and 19, respondents were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse.

Analysis

To preform logistic regression on the improvement measures, each variable was recoded into a binary response variable in which 0 indicates no and 1 indicates conditions are better. The ‘about the same’ responses were recoded as 0 to preserve sample numbers. The predictors

for the logistic regressions were a series of binary response variables: state, proximity (1 = located in a central area), House Upgrade/Refurbishment (1 = respondent living in a newly-built or upgraded/refurbished household) and number of occupants in the household. The reference category for state is Western Australia–Fitzroy Crossing and as such as coefficients are estimates of differences between the state and Fitzroy Crossing. For interpretation, the exponential function of each coefficient has been calculated to indicate a percentage change in the odds of agreeing that conditions were better or worse. Proximity was derived by how close each community in the study was to the regional housing provider's head office.

Table 22: Results of logistic regression for improvement in housing conditions in the community

Variable	Coefficient ± SE	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	0.20±0.04	0.1	-0.01	0.999
SA	-1.05±0.97	-65.2	-1.09	0.275
NT	-2.56±0.97	-92.3	-2.63	0.009
QLD	-0.75±0.84	-54.4	-0.930	0.351
Proximity (centrally-located)	1.59±0.85	391	1.87	0.062
House refurbished	1.01±0.57	176	1.76	0.078
No. occupants in household	0.22±0.10	25.8	2.16	0.030

In Table 22 above, the results of the logistic regression for improvement in housing conditions in the community are presented. The coefficient for the Northern Territory is significant, indicating that there is a statistical difference between Fitzroy Crossing and Northern Territory respondents in their attitudes towards whether they agree that housing conditions in the community have improved because of state or territory-managed housing in their community. The odds of residents in the Northern Territory agreeing that housing conditions in their community have improved because of territory managed housing is 92.3 per cent lower than the odds of the residents in Kununurra. Proximity is also significant, indicating that the odds of agreeing that family living conditions have improved are 391 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas. The odds of those living in newly-built or upgraded/refurbished houses agreeing that housing conditions have improved is 176 per cent greater than those who are living in households that have not been refurbished. The number of household occupants is also significant, indicating that for every increase in the number of persons within the household there is a 25.8 per cent increase in the odds of agreeing that housing conditions have improved.

Table 23: Results of logistic regression for improvement in family living conditions

Variable	Odds ± SE	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	-0.87±0.97	-62.3	-1.00	0.315
SA	-1.65±0.99	-80.8	-1.67	0.095
NT	-2.87±1.0	-94.3	-2.73	0.006
QLD	-2.53±0.96	-92.1	-2.61	0.009
Proximity (centrally-located)	0.21±0.96	23.8	-2.61	0.794
House refurbished	1.58±0.59	389.4	2.66	0.008
No. occupants in household	-0.01±0.09	-1.1	-0.12	0.906

In Table 23 above, the results of the logistic regression for improvement in family living conditions are presented. The coefficients for South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland are significant indicating that there are statistical differences between respondents in those areas and respondents from Fitzroy Crossing on whether family living conditions have improved in their communities because of state or territory-managed housing. The odds of agreeing that family living conditions have improved in their community because of state or territory managed housing is between 80.8 and 94.3 per cent lower for respondents

living in South Australia, the Northern Territory or Queensland than the odds of living in Fitzroy Crossing. The odds are lower for respondents living in the Northern Territory. The odds of those living in newly-built or upgraded/refurbished houses agreeing that family living conditions have improved is 389.4 per cent greater than those who are living in households that have not been refurbished. Proximity and number of occupants in household are not significant in this model.

Table 24: Results of logistic regression for improvement in family health

Variable	Odds ± SE	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	0.41±0.71	-17.9	0.58	0.563
SA	-0.19±0.78	-87.2	-0.25	0.802
NT	=2.05±0.97	-89.4	-2.36	0.018
QLD	-2.24±0.82	-61	-2.73	0.006
Proximity (centrally-located)	1.19±0.49	231.6	2.42	0.016
House refurbished	-0.94±0.71	-4.3	-1.32	0.188
No. occupants in household	-0.04±0.09	-17.9	-0.48	0.063

In Table 24 above, the results of the logistic regression for improvement in family health are presented. The coefficients for the Northern Territory and Queensland are significant indicating that there are statistical differences between respondents in those areas and respondents from Fitzroy Crossing on whether family health has improved in their communities because of state or territory-managed housing. The odds of agreeing that family health has improved in their community because of state or territory managed housing is 89.4 61 per cent lower for respondents living in the Northern Territory or Queensland respectively than the odds of living in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is also significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the size of the house are 231.6 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas. The number of household occupants is also significant; indicating that for every increase in the number of persons within the household, there is a 17.9 per cent decrease in the odds of respondents agreeing that family health has improved. House refurbishment is not significant in this model.

These results show that, as well the state/territory jurisdiction proximity, whether houses are new, refurbished or legacy and occupancy levels are also a factor on tenant respondents' views on levels of satisfaction. This is especially relevant for Ngukkur where occupancy levels among the sample were almost double that for the other case study communities (see Appendix 1).

6.3 Tenant priorities and preferred provider

Tenants were asked to identify the first, second and third most important things that mattered to them about how their housing is managed, from nine options covering repairs and maintenance, allocations, and the relationship with housing officers. The frequency of each rank per response was tabulated at a state/area level to highlight state/area-by-state/area differences and to show which housing management issues were the most important in rank order across each state/area. The overall importance of the response items was then compared by calculating the ranking average for each response. The value of each rank was reversed so that the first or most important issue was assigned a ranked value of 3 and the third or least important issue assigned a value of 1. The count of each rank per response was multiplied by the ranking weight, then divided by the sum of each rank to provide an average of each rank. Each rank was summed to produce a ranking average for each response. The

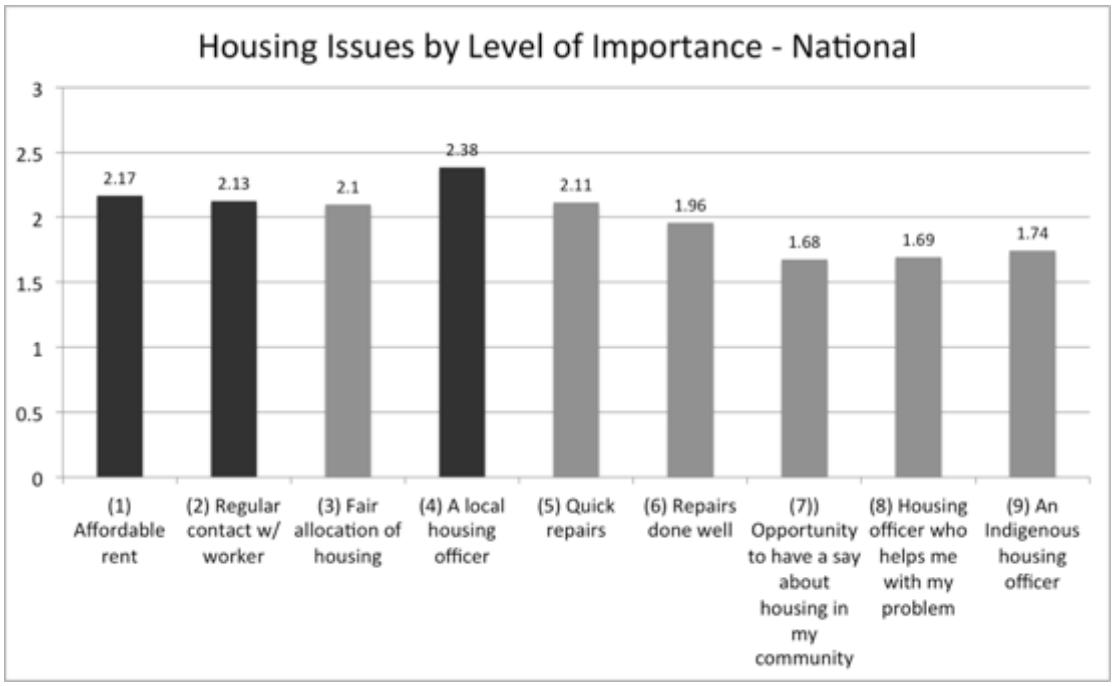
response item with the largest ranking average in the last column of each table is the most preferred choice. The ranking average was calculated for each response and cross-tabulated and graphed by state/area.

Table 25: Housing management issues by importance, whole sample

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	RAVG
1	Affordable rent	28.0	22.0	15.3	1.43
2	Quick repairs	20.6	13.8	13.6	1.13
3	An Indigenous housing officer	11.2	17.4	22.9	0.91
4	Repairs done well	13.1	17.4	13.6	0.88
5	Opportunity to have a say about housing	6.5	10.1	16.1	0.56
6	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	6.5	3.7	12.7	0.40
7	Regular contact with worker	5.6	5.5	3.4	0.31
8	A local housing officer	4.7	7.3	0.0	0.29
9	Fair allocation of housing	3.7	2.8	2.5	0.19
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

Table 25 above and Figure 18 show that across the whole sample, the most important housing management issue across is rent with half of the sample ranking affordable rent as either their first or second most important housing management issue. The second and third most important housing management issues ranked across the whole sample are the speed of housing repairs and maintenance followed by having an Indigenous housing officer.

Figure 18: Housing issues by level of importance, national—mean score



This finding supports arguments that, although respondents are generally satisfied with their rental payments, they are concerned about their capacity to maintain payments and the risk of falling into arrears. It also suggests that they value their homes and want them to be well maintained. The priority given to having an Indigenous housing officer shows the importance of the employment of Indigenous staff.

Although fair and transparent allocations is ranked as the least important housing management issue across the sample, this should not be interpreted to mean that allocations are not important. The qualitative data strongly suggests respondents care about allocations

procedures even if this data tells us having an affordable rent and an effective repair and maintenance program is even more important.

The details of the data for each of the jurisdictions is provided in Appendix 1. This shows that the ranking of the housing management issues follows the same pattern as the whole sample, with some differences. The most important issue among the Fitzroy Crossing and Ngukkur samples was repairs, with over half Fitzroy Crossing respondents ranking quick repairs as either their first or second most important housing issue, and just over two-fifths of Ngukkur respondents ranking the quality of repairs as the most important issue. Respondents in Kununurra, the APY Lands, Wujal Wujal and Cooktown, ranked affordable rent as the most important housing management issue. While the ranking of affordable rent as the most important housing issue ranged between 22 and 32 per cent in each case study area, the percentage was much higher for South Australian respondents (67%) and much lower (7%) for Northern Territory respondents.

We asked survey respondents who they would prefer to manage housing in their community, providing five response category options: state/territory housing department, an Indigenous organisation, a mainstream community organisation, a local/Shire council, and 'Other'.

A cross-tabulation of their preferences is presented in Table 26 below. In Fitzroy Crossing, the overwhelming majority of respondents have a preference for an Indigenous organisation. In Kununurra, respondents are divided between an Indigenous-led organisation and a mainstream community organisation with just over 60 per cent of Kununurra respondents indicating a preference for a community organisation and the remaining 39 per cent expressing a preference for an Indigenous organisation.

Table 26: Preference for housing by state

	State/territory Department of Housing	Indigenous organisation	Mainstream CHP	Town/Shire Council	Total
WA (FC)	11.54	88.46	0	0	100
WA (K)	0	39.13	60.87	0	100
SA	40	52	0	8	100
NT	34.62	57.69	0	7.90	100
QLD	43.75	31.25	6.25	18.75	100

In South Australia, 52 per cent of respondents have a preference for an Indigenous organisation to manage their housing followed by 40 per cent of respondents who have a preference for a state/territory DoH. In the Northern Territory, almost two-thirds of respondents preferred an Indigenous organisation, but 35 per cent preferred state/territory DoH. In Queensland, the majority of respondents have a preference for state/territory DoH, but a third also expressed a preference for an Indigenous community organisation and a further fifth indicating preference for a town/shire council. As these were Aboriginal shire councils in the Queensland and Northern Territory case study areas, this means that half of the respondents prefer an Indigenous-run organisation.

In the Northern Territory, those stating a strong preference for an Indigenous organisation referred specifically to Yungal Mangi Corporation. This corporation was established when large Shires were formed to replace local community councils and to take over some of the social enterprises within Ngukurr, including the general store. Yungal Mangi has a high profile in the community and is active in employment, economic and community development. Those who stated a preference for the state, referred to the ability of Territory Housing 'to deal with

difficult issues that community cannot'. This support was conditional on increasing local employment and retaining a local housing officer.

In Queensland, the stated rationale of those preferring management by the state emphasised the benefits in terms of the pressure it relieved for council and concerns about past favouritism, especially in allocation decisions. There were, however, some reservations about the experience to date in how the department respected culture, engaged with and listened to the community, and the constant changes in policy and staffing. They also wanted greater employment of Indigenous staff, more presence on the community and improved maintenance services. Those who preferred the Council indicated that things hadn't improved much under the state administration; objected to rent increases and were of the view that the department did not understand the community. An Indigenous organisation was preferred by those who valued cultural alignment and community engagement.

In the APY Lands, experience of housing management was limited to ICHOs and the state DoH. There was strong support for Indigenous housing management. Reasons included: 'Would like someone who talks our language' and the range and speed of repairs.

For both the Fitzroy Crossing and Kununura case studies, the high levels of satisfaction with the existing provider are reflected in their choice of preferred provider. For both locations, the reasons for this preference related to the employment of local people and the possession of cultural knowledge. These remarks were typical, the second made in relation to an Indigenous housing officer employed by CHL in Kununurra:

> Marra Worra Worra is OK. Local people work there and they understand us.
>
> He knows our ways and can explain both ways.

Tenants in Kununurra were also positive about the positive engagement by CHL with communities. But in Kununurra there were still 40 per cent of respondents who preferred an Indigenous organisation and, for many, this was their community council. This was especially the case in the very small, family based communities in proximity to Kununurra. No respondents indicated support for the state to manage their tenancies.

Although these findings need to be interpreted in light of the respondents' limited experience of different housing managers and providers, they add to the weight of evidence that Indigenous residents in remote communities strongly prefer community and Indigenous housing service providers to state ones. The evidence from Kununurra is especially important because it shows that where a CHO employs a high proportion of Indigenous staff and is culturally adaptive to local conditions it can be successful in providing services to remote Indigenous communities.

6.4 Costs and revenue analysis

The cost and revenue analysis undertaken for this project examined three separate elements:

- tenancy management costs
- repairs and maintenance costs
- rents.

6.5 Method

A survey form was circulated to each jurisdiction asking for estimates of tenancy management costs for each of the case study sites, as well as costs for selected repairs and maintenance costs and rent data. Clarification about the request was provided through either phone conversations with the relevant officer, or in the case of one jurisdiction through a face-to-face meeting. Tenancy management costs were split into local costs as well as regional and head office overheads. The overhead charges were best-estimates, often based on the proportion

of the region or state's dwellings located in the particular case study region. While the overhead charges included indirect labour costs and travel allowances, they do not include other office overheads, such as rents and IT, and hence are underestimates of the total tenancy management costs. Note that tenancy management excludes all direct repairs and maintenance costs. The final tenancy management estimates are expressed as a per dwelling cost.

While originally total repairs and maintenance costs were going to be collected for each case study region, discussions during the earlier study (Habibis, Phillips et al. 2014) suggested that the outcomes would simply reflect the quality and age of the existing stock as well as crowding levels and may do little to assist a comparison of approaches to maintenance across the jurisdictions. As a result, this initial approach was replaced by an examination of the costs of three typical maintenance items:

1. Fixing a broken window pane.
2. Replacing an internal door.
3. Replacing a stove.

An attempt was made to split the costs of these three items between labour, materials and travel. However, because of the nature of the maintenance contracts in some jurisdictions this was not possible and as a result costs are reported as a combined labour and materials charge, and travel.

The data on rents includes the total potential rents for each case study region as well as the total collected rents.

All data collected was for the 2014–15 financial year. It was agreed that in the reporting of the data the actual locations would not be revealed and instead would be reported as case study 'region' 1 to 4, representing each of the jurisdictions where the case study sites were located.

6.6 Results

Table 27 below shows the tenancy management costs for four case studies. The variation between cases is reasonably striking as well as the magnitude of the management costs. These tenancy management costs exceed other reported costs for social housing. Pawson, Milligan et al. (2015) describe direct tenancy management housing costs for community housing providers at about $1,500 per dwelling, while the equivalent figure for public housing is approximately $2,000 per dwelling.

Table 27: Tenancy management costs per household

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Annual costs per household	1,767	4,500	5,667	3,629

Some of the variation between case study sites could be explained by the relative remoteness of the three case study regions but there is also a significant difference in the levels of service between the jurisdictions (see Chapter 5).

While the numbers in Table 27 are higher than other forms of social housing, this is not surprising given additional costs associated with the remoteness of the case study sites. It should be borne in mind that these annual tenancy management costs are still substantially lower than the annual subsidies provided to owner-occupier households in Australia.[9] Yates (2009) estimated these at over $8,000 per household for 2005–06. Given the substantial

[9] These subsidies comprise exemptions from capital gains tax, income tax on imputed rent and land tax.

increases in capital gains in Australian housing markets since 2005–06, these subsidies are now likely to be substantially higher.[10]

Table 28 below shows the repairs and maintenance costs for the four case study regions for each of the three items.[11] The reported figures do not include travel costs—these are included in brackets. Case 3 was able to analyse their 2014–15 invoices for the case study region and estimate the total travel costs per item. Two other jurisdictions simply provided their current travel cost allowance to the region, while Case 4 did not supply travel costs. In most cases, the tradesmen would be able to spread their travel costs over a number of jobs and hence the travel costs per completed job would be much lower than these maximum estimates (e.g. for Case 3). Note that in all cases repairs and maintenance was undertaken by contractors, except in Case 1 where a local maintenance officer deals with non-trade jobs such as fixing a broken window.

Table 28: Repair and maintenance costs (with travel costs in brackets)

Item	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Repair window pane	$130	$170 ($2,500)	$554 ($163)	$314 (na)
Replace internal door	$1,440 ($2,600)	$832 ($2,500)	$516 ($163)	$428 (na)
Replace stove	$1,640 ($2,600)	$1,648 ($2,500)	$2,454 ($163)	$1,425 (na)

Table 28 above highlights a number of issues. First, the relatively high costs of repairs and maintenance largely driven by remoteness and how it would be possible for repairs and maintenance costs to quickly exceed tenancy management costs for individual households. Second, there is a significant potential saving from the use of a local housing maintenance officer. This person could also potentially be a contact point between contractors and the community to help manage the maintenance task and perhaps be skilled up to handle even more complex jobs such as replacing internal doors. Third, there does seem to be some significant costs differences between regions for each of the items. In the case of the stove, this might just be the quality of the stove purchased—in the case of the internal door, the differences seem harder to explain. The high costs of the travel allowance to the communities in Case 1 and Case 2 highlights the repairs and maintenance dilemma for the jurisdictions. Prompt service, which would obviously please tenants, will lead to large travel costs and hence lead to significant increases in the repairs and maintenance budget. A further discussion of asset management issues is contained in the next section.

Table 29: Rent collected for each of the case study regions

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
% collected	66%	89%	84%	97%
Weekly rent per dwelling	$147	$70	$103	$236

There are significant variations in the percentages of the rents collected as well as the weekly rents. The latter reflects the different rent models in jurisdictions as well as different dwelling types while the differences in the percentage of rent collected may reflect the quality of the tenancy management in each jurisdiction as well as the rent model. Case 1 in Table 29 above is the only region where the tenancy management costs are being recovered via the rent collections. A further discussion of rent policy is contained in the next section.

[10] Personal communication with Judy Yates, January 2016.

[11] The two Queensland and two WA cases have been combined into a single case study average for each state.

6.7 Conclusion

The analysis in this section shows some interesting results and a number of conclusions can be drawn.

- The first is the amount of variation in all the data collected. In many cases there are explanations for these differences, notably the differences in accounting systems and methods across the states. A process where the state jurisdictions had an opportunity to explore the reasons for these differences through a national conference/workshop approach would be a positive opportunity.
- A particular issue is the variation in rents. The discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 has highlighted the financial pressures on Indigenous housing as a result of the high costs of remote living. Weekly rents in some jurisdictions need to be examined in the context of these financial pressures.
- While the tenancy management costs are higher than other social housing they are substantially less than current subsidies to taxpayers in owner-occupied housing. A clear finding from the analysis is that when you examine the satisfaction levels described in Chapters 5 and 6, jurisdictions with higher tenancy management expenditure generate higher levels of satisfaction. This finding underlines the unsurprising conclusion that higher levels of both capital (through new housing) and recurrent expenditure (through management) generate higher satisfaction outcomes.
- The large costs associated with repairs and maintenance highlight the importance of generating better systems for maintenance, particularly when an aim is to improve employment opportunities within communities. This issue is further addressed in Chapter 8.

7 POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS

7.1 The achievements of NPARIH

The case study data suggests there has been mixed outcomes as a result of NPARIH investment and tenancy management reforms. Improved housing conditions have been achieved and basic tenancy management functions are in place. However, crowding remains high, maintenance is inadequate, and tenancy management regimes are inefficient, lack cultural appropriateness and fail to adequately support local employment, community empowerment or broader social benefits.

Overall, around two-thirds of the tenants surveyed agreed that housing and living conditions were at least a bit better, and just over half felt that overall things in the community are better. Tenant respondents in new and refurbished housing report being satisfied with their homes. Most tenant respondents understand requirements for paying rent and are keen to maintain their homes in good condition. They are aware of policies on visitors and on reporting property damage. There is also a high level of satisfaction with the way they are treated by housing officers although some would prefer to see them more often. In most locations there was agreement that tenancy management arrangements had improved under state housing departments. However, there were also aspects of tenancy management that were problematic or unsatisfactory. This included the speed of repairs and maintenance, tenant support, tenancy allocations, information about rent payments, community consultation and the handling of complaints. Problems were especially prominent in the Northern Territory and Queensland case study locations. In Ngukkur, the condition of housing, crowding and a perceived lack of cultural responsiveness by the Northern Territory DoH was associated with perceptions of little or no improvement. There were similar concerns in the Cooktown area with most respondents believing that things have not improved beyond having upgraded housing and a few more houses, although this may be partly because the housing in the communities visited and tenancy management was already of a relatively high standard prior to NPARIH.

The findings suggest that, as NPARIH has rolled out, state housing departments are improving their capacity to deliver appropriate, efficient and effective housing services to remote communities. Remote Indigenous housing is now understood as part of the state's public housing program and this has brought with it a systemic approach to improving and managing it. The significance of this is captured in this senior manager's observation:

> Some of [the states] still have a way to go, but … across all of the … jurisdictions they have suddenly started to think about the people living in public housing in remote communities as being part of the broader public housing tenancies rather than where there were no systems … Whereas before it was completely crisis driven … they are starting to think about, how can we plan and be more systemic about how we look after the stock.

State/territory informants report reduced levels of rent arrears, improved local and regional housing management infrastructure and greater expertise in remote housing management. A renewed emphasis on establishing local and regional service delivery hubs in Queensland and enhancing local maintenance in the Northern Territory suggest increased understanding of the importance of local service delivery for effective and efficient practice.

There remain many areas where the hopes for NPARIH have been only partly realised. The goal of public housing-like rents appears to be on track with improvements in compliance and low levels of concern expressed by tenant respondents. However, tenant respondents and stakeholders are concerned about how they will manage as rents increase beyond their current settings given the high costs of living in remote communities and levels of poverty and disability. This is especially the case in the APY Lands where satisfaction with rent levels was

low and affordable rent was the first priority for most tenant respondents. Improving rent collection models is a priority not only to improve operational efficiencies, but also to provide arrangements that are culturally appropriate and adapted to local conditions. The lack of information provided to tenants about levels of rent arrears is also concerning. It is not fair for housing providers to penalise tenants for non-payment of rent when tenants are not informed of whether, and how much, they are in arrears. This is especially important in remote communities where the automatic debit collection system means that tenants have little knowledge of how much rent they are paying or how levels are calculated.

Fair and transparent allocations remain problematic areas for tenancy management. The data suggests an urgent need to improve allocations procedures so that they do not contribute to conflict in communities through inappropriate allocations to individuals who are not welcome there for cultural reasons, but are also responsive to levels of need.

None of the study locations appeared to have established strategies for managing property damage even though respondents demonstrated good understanding of their responsibilities and the importance of both avoiding and reporting damage.

Information on crowding was difficult to source. Official data relies on the 2011 Census and accurate counting of households and need in communities is difficult due to the mobile nature of the remote Indigenous population. Waiting lists are not always an accurate way of assessing demand. The Productivity Commission shows that crowding has declined in all of the jurisdictions we investigated, with the greatest reductions in remote and very remote areas (Productivity Commission 2014: 53). This analysis based on a number of data sources, shows that crowding is most severe in the Northern Territory and this is supported by our own data that shows occupancy levels of our Ngukkur sample were almost double that of other jurisdictions (see Appendix 1). Crowding was also identified as a substantial concern by the tenants surveyed there. Crowding was not raised as much of a concern in our Western Australian case study communities, but appears to still be an issue in the communities we visited in Cooktown and the APY Lands.

Factors affecting the extent of NPARIH's impact on crowding include the demolition of substandard housing, people moving to communities that have received new housing in the expectation that more will be available and, in some locations, including Ngukkur, the inadequate design of homes to address Indigenous cultural norms of large extended families and visiting patterns.

Given the association between crowding, poor health, family conflict and length of housing life, there is a critical need for the Commonwealth to maintain funding to support the states and the Northern Territory governments to increase housing supply in areas of high demand.

7.2 Policy forum responses

The policy forum provided strong triangulation of the findings, which were largely accepted by respondents. Discussion focused on explanations for some of the differences between the states. There was agreement that the state of housing, the prior history of tenancy management and the number and remoteness of communities, were important factors in explaining how well arrangements were currently operating. In the Northern Territory, high levels of crowding were shown to be associated with the lower levels of tenant satisfaction and less positive views on improvement, while in the APY Lands, severe poverty, some crowding and the history of tenants formerly paying no rent most likely impacted on tenant perceptions. A strong theme of the discussion was that substantial differences between, and within, jurisdictions meant what worked in one place might not work in another. For example, in Western Australia, local councils provide no services to remote Indigenous communities and efforts to engage local councils have not proved fruitful. In the Northern Territory and Queensland, the existence of Shire Councils who were already involved in delivering housing-

related services, provided a solid foundation for a partnership. One participant expressed this by arguing it was a case of 'all of the above'. Services needed to be adapted to the context, so that in some areas direct management might be the most appropriate arrangement, but in another location, partnership with an ICO might be best.

Much of the discussion focused on rent models and repairs and maintenance arrangements. The costs of delivery were accepted to be high, making it likely that a subsidy would always be necessary. The researchers' observation that existing rent models lead to financial tensions and contradictions was not challenged (see Section 7.4). One policy participant observed:

> We are spending money on a system that's impoverishing people and costing money, it's not bringing as much money in.

While state and territory respondents showed some willingness to discuss and pilot new arrangements for rent setting and collection, the benefits of a centralised 'one-size-fits-all' system were also rehearsed. For repairs and maintenance, similar points were made. Although the emphasis in the discussion was on the many advantages of forming local partnerships and skilling up local populations, some respondents pointed out the difficulties of achieving this in some locations. For example, the larger communities of the Northern Territory might support the handyman system, but might be difficult to operate in smaller, more widely dispersed communities.

The opportunity provided by the forum for information sharing and knowledge exchange across jurisdictions, levels of government and sectors seemed to be welcomed by respondents. As well as senior policy managers from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the four jurisdictions covered by the study, the forum included CEOs and operational managers from an ICHO, mainstream CHP, Aboriginal Shire Council and NSW's Aboriginal Housing Office. It provided a rare chance to discuss common problems in an informal setting and facilitated a frank, productive and collegial exchange of knowledge, experiences and ideas. Respondents found this valuable as a way of acknowledging successes and failures and exchanging ideas and testing new ways of approaching problems. The participation of Indigenous managers was essential, providing an Indigenous perspective that added considerably to the conversation.

Respondents observed that opportunities for this kind of collaborative cross-jurisdictional, cross-sectoral approach to understanding how well arrangements are working and how they might be improved, are currently not common. One participant remarked:

> I think we have to keep talking to each other about how others are hitting the road really. Like a good idea may have unintended consequences.

There is a need to establish a forum for regular, informal meetings between the Commonwealth and the states, and between government policy and operational staff and the broader sector. This would facilitate the development of a network of remote Indigenous housing experts, it would draw policy and operational sides of management closer together, build relationships across the different sectors and levels of government, and provide an environment where more open and broad discussions between the Commonwealth and the states could be held, separate from funding negotiations. It would give Commonwealth and state government managers the chance to hear a range of perspectives on how best to deliver housing services to remote Indigenous communities.[12]

[12] One of the outcomes of the policy forum was an invitation to the researchers to present their findings to the Indigenous Affairs Programme Integrity Team at the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Canberra.

7.3 Factors driving how well tenancy management arrangements are working

The evidence from the case studies provides many insights into what factors are driving how well tenancy management arrangements are working. This section considers these and their implications for other jurisdictions and locations. Specific recommendations arising from these are provided in the conclusion (Chapter 8).

7.3.1 Levels of resourcing

A key learning of this study is that to achieve and sustain public housing-like standards in remote communities requires substantial resourcing. In Western Australia, NPARIH funding was concentrated on larger communities[13] and was also supplemented by $14 million of additional funding by the Western Australian Government. The additional funding is discretionary and enabled WA DoH policy managers to resource areas of service delivery that it identified as the most critical, but which might otherwise have been under-resourced. For example, the agency was able to commit funds to the development of an online training program that provided all staff, including RSPs, with access to policies and programs as well as staff development resources.

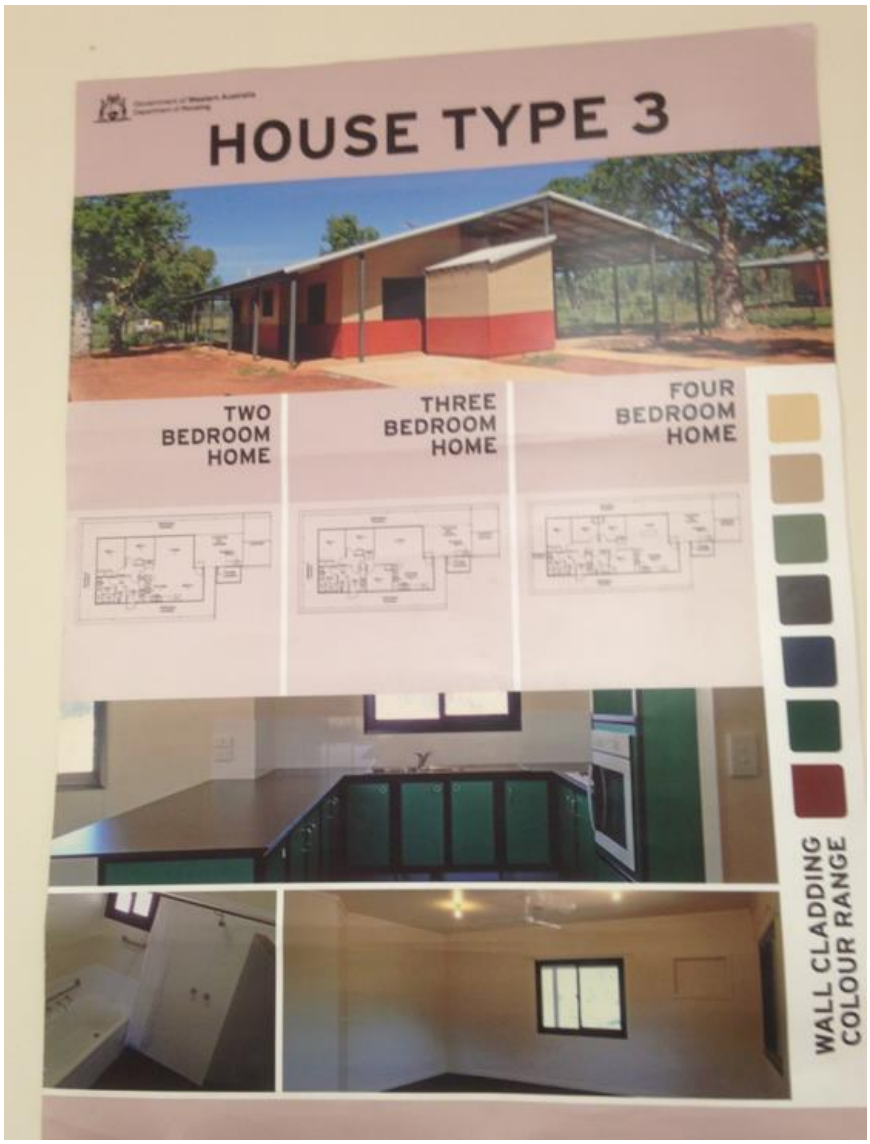
This has had the concerning effect of making the future of smaller communities uncertain (see Section 3.7), but it also allowed high levels of investment in the communities that had a relationship with the SHA. This was evident in the standard of new and refurbished housing in the Western Australian case studies which was notably better than in the other states, with better design, quality material, larger floor space, covered outdoor living spaces and fenced yards. This was appreciated by tenants and contributed to their high levels of satisfaction.

7.3.2 Housing quality and occupancy level

Logistic regression of the tenant survey findings shows that the quality of housing in terms of whether respondents were in new/refurbished or legacy housing, as well as occupancy levels influenced tenant satisfaction with their tenancy management services and views on improvements. This influenced results in Ngukkur because of the high amount of substandard housing and high occupancy rates among the sample. Until tenants' homes are improved, and levels of crowding are reduced, it is difficult to see how even the most effective and well-resourced tenancy management service can achieve improvements in housing and other outcomes.

[13] It was also dictated by which communities agreed to leasing arrangements and the establishment of an HMA.

Figure 19: Western Australia's NPARIH funded remote Indigenous housing



7.3.3 Mainstream vs local service delivery

The way NPARIH was initially implemented was determined by the prevailing policy discourse that favoured mainstreaming, and by practical contingencies relating to the availability of service infrastructure and potential partners. In the Northern Territory and Queensland, housing departments capitalised on the existence of Shire Councils by using their infrastructure and experience in housing delivery to deliver some services. In Western Australia, the existence of some large, well-established ICHOs provided an opportunity for the WA DoH to contract some of them to continue their management of housing on communities. But there were many locations, such as the APY Lands in South Australia, where direct management was the only option.

What our analysis shows is that mainstreaming was associated with more problems than those that existed in locations where a hybrid model prevailed that was adapted to the local context and included knowledgeable third party providers delivering a culturally adapted service. In Queensland's Cooktown communities, the absence of a local office and the centralised maintenance system resulted in low levels of tenant engagement. This showed in lower levels of tenant satisfaction and views on improvements. The opposite applied in Fitzroy Crossing and Kununurra where community organisations had links with local Indigenous

people and communities and employed Indigenous staff. In this case regions, levels of tenant satisfaction were high. These hybrid models of service delivery combine the financial and practical advantages of local service structures and local knowledge and relationships, with the efficiencies, capacity, standards and quality assurance procedures of a state housing department.

Marra Worra Worra's existing relationship with Fitzroy Valley communities and its size and experience in remote housing management made it the obvious partner for delivering services in the region. Both parties made substantial gains. The WA DoH was able to service Fitzroy Valley HMA and HMMA communities without establishing its own infrastructure, or building staff capacity from scratch. Marra Worra Worra retained one of its core services to Valley communities and gained valuable knowledge and systems for housing management. The WA DoH worked alongside Marra Worra Worra staff to support them and ensure compliance. Strategies included providing Marra Worra Worra staff with training, access to an online training program and regular visits by specialist staff for monitoring and quality assurance. Although WA DoH oversight was onerous for Marra Worra Worra and a potential source of conflict with its stakeholders, it allowed it to maintain its role as the most significant social housing provider in the region. Meeting its contractual obligations to the SHA is also generating cultural change both within the organisation and among tenants about what housing standards should be.

The Kununurra case study shows that where CHPs can employ Indigenous people and deliver culturally appropriate services they can achieve a high level of acceptance by communities and provide a quality service. Two factors stand out to explain CHL's success:

- It is operating in the most well-resourced state and in a region where a high proportion of the portfolio is located on town reserves in the Kununnurra environs. It may be that while CHLs can provide services to town-based communities and those within a certain distance from towns, it may not be as viable for them to deliver services to smaller, widely-dispersed communities at a distance from service centres. The contract offered by WA DoH provided levels of funding that made it viable for the organisation to deliver services to the required standard. If CHPs are to be attracted to the sector, funding needs to be set at levels that recognise the resources required to achieve desired service standards. This, together with efforts to engage with the CHP sector to discover what other conditions they require to deliver remote Indigenous housing, should increase the range of providers capable of delivering services to the remote Indigenous housing sector, so that, in some locations at least, there is a multi-provider system.
- The employment of local Indigenous people who were known and respected in the communities was critical to the high level of acceptance achieved by CHL in Kununurra. When respondents spoke about the service, they frequently named an Indigenous housing officer and referred to his understanding of them. The employment of Indigenous staff who are acceptable to tenants, and have high levels of community respect, is probably a substantial factor in the program's success. More generally, CHL staff appeared to have a high level of expertise and understanding of community norms and values and were well received in the communities.

7.3.4 The number, size and remoteness of communities

Unsurprisingly, the number, size and remoteness of communities was a factor in how well arrangements were working. The large number of communities in the Northern Territory, their variation in size, including many small communities, and the distance of many from regional centres, meant that the problems of delivering a remote Indigenous tenancy management service were particularly acute there. The logistic regression of the tenant survey results shows that where communities are further from regional centres, levels of satisfaction and views on whether housing conditions had improved, were lower. Increased remoteness

makes it difficult to maintain a presence on communities, generates longer repair and maintenance times, and reduces opportunities to engage and consult with tenants.

7.3.5 The availability of experienced, knowledgeable managers and staff

One factor that probably contributed to effective policies in Western Australia was that the implementation of NPARIH benefited from the presence of staff within senior management who had experience in the sector. In many other jurisdictions, the mainstreaming of Indigenous housing services had led to a loss of capacity so that staff expertise had to be virtually built from scratch. In Western Australia, capacity was further developed through the establishment of specialist positions to work closely with communities in response to compliance requirements, thereby building relationships with contractors and knowledge of communities.

Respondents in all the case study locations identified substantial problems in training, recruiting and retaining staff. High staff turnover meant that few staff were experienced in either housing management or remote service delivery, or were new to the community. Staff vacancies increased the pressure on existing staff. In the Fitzroy Valley and the APY Lands, positions on communities were vacant partly because positions were not full-time and because of the difficulty of balancing professional and cultural obligations. Staff visiting communities face long and demanding journeys, safety risks associated with dogs, hygiene and feuding in some communities, difficulties in maintaining contact with tenants and a lack of facilities on communities. It is hard to see how local staffing levels will improve unless OH&S conditions are addressed.

7.3.6 Tenant education and support

All stakeholders regarded tenant education and support as fundamental for the maintenance of housing stock, yet achieving this is challenging. Tenant respondents had a good understanding of the need to pay rent and to maintain home standards, yet there remains much to be done especially in relation to vacation without notice, property damage, notification of repairs and home maintenance. Many tenants require support to care for their home, but Fitzroy Crossing was the only location with a tenancy support program. Addressing these problems through well developed and resourced tenant education, and tenant support programs, will go a considerable way to ensuring the sustainability of NPARIH's achievements in housing and living standards.

7.4 Principles for rent setting and collection

Paying rent is fundamental to the residential landlord/tenant relationship and in social housing enshrines the normative concept of ‘tenant responsibility’ as well as the pragmatic requirement to collect revenue for management and maintenance costs. The application of ‘public housing like’ tenancy management policies and practices under NPARIH initially involved all states and territories moving towards policies of income-based rent with a cap, a policy that closely mirrors mainstream social housing approaches. This strategy has involved distinctive approaches in each jurisdiction that have developed over time, in some cases to closer align with mainstream social housing and in others, to adapt to the unique conditions experienced in managing housing in particular remote Indigenous communities.

7.4.1 Rent policies

While the core rent policy features are similar across the four jurisdictions, there has been variation in specific aspects of policy and in the implementation process, staging and timing. These variations reflect jurisdictional differences in their pre-NPARIH contexts as well as different responses to implementation challenges.

Income-linked rent collected primarily through CentrePay or employer deductions is the dominant approach being implemented for new, upgraded and habitable dwellings across the

four jurisdictions involved in this study. The exceptions are sub-standard dwellings that may attract a nominal rent or service charges. One notable variation from social housing norms, in all jurisdictions except SA, is to sign-up residents, additional to the head tenant, to pay a rent contribution. Under these arrangements, the head tenant remains responsible, under the tenancy agreement, for any rent arrears while other income-earning residents are encouraged to enter into voluntary direct debit agreements for a specific contribution.

Other adaptations to mainstream policies included altering the percentage of income payable and differences in how rent caps are determined. In most cases the caps are administratively determined, and in some cases are benchmarked through market rent comparisons. Western Australia is unique in applying a cap for new houses based on a percentage of construction cost. There are considerable differences and a lack of transparency about how rent caps are determined and stakeholders identified this as an area requiring further consideration. As one stakeholder said:

> If you don't have a rental market near your boundary, how does the state determine that the market rent is $120 for a one-bedroom property?

Notably, NSW differs from the case study jurisdictions in allowing a choice of household-based or property-based rent setting by ICHOs and also encourages tenants to access Commonwealth Rent Assistance. A recent innovation in one Western Australian community is to trial a flat-fee payment by all income-earning adult residents that is similar to community levies applied under past policy regimes. The policy aims to collect the same rent as the income based policy, but details of the scheme were under development at the time of the fieldwork.

7.4.2 Key findings

Significant progress has been made in establishing rent regimes and collecting rent, although this varies considerably between communities and between jurisdictions. One of the key findings of this study is that there are significant problems with the policies and practices associated with applying mainstream social housing approaches to determining and collecting rent.

Tenant experiences

Most tenant informants understood the need to pay rent and generally indicated they were happy to do so. They clearly understood that they could lose their house if they didn't pay rent. There was high tenant satisfaction with direct debiting arrangements and they are generally happy that multiple residents contribute to rent. However, few tenants understand how their rent is determined, how much rent their household pays, and head tenants, in particular, want regular rent statements to verify that other household members are contributing as agreed.

There are concerns about affordability, especially in the APY Lands and more remote communities where living costs are especially high. Rent affordability was also a concern to a small number of large higher income, working families in large houses and paying high rent caps (e.g. in WA). Often tenants would say that they could pay their rent, but that left them short for other necessities. The costs of food, power and petrol were of particular concern. Our fieldwork identified that residents in most communities struggle to afford their rent and go without other essentials such as furniture and white goods that are either unavailable or extremely expensive due to constraints and high costs of transport.

Processes for negotiating repayments to catch up on arrears were well understood. The implications of having benefits suspended under new, harsher work-test and work–for-the-dole requirements emerged as a concern towards the end of the fieldwork. One tenant explained:

> We get cut off Centrelink when we don't attend RJCP activities. When payments cut off, community share food and go hunting and fishing. But still have to pay rent. We cut back on power and boil water on the fire.

Housing provider experiences

Housing providers are expending enormous resources responding to changing household composition and incomes. Administrative costs are high for checking who is in the house, sign ups and updating household information, and for reviewing rents and having direct debit forms signed and lodged. These tasks are particularly difficult where there is no local housing worker, inter and intra-community mobility is high, and tenants move in and out of casual/short-term work or between social security payments. There is also considerable evidence that residents and income are under-reported and monitoring compliance is difficult.

Implementation of new rent collection models under NPARIH was initially severely impacted negatively by the legacy of previous problems with direct debiting, lack of accurate data and inadequate IT systems that took a long time to resolve. In the Northern Territory, respondents reported that rent collection systems are now greatly improved, but legacy data and accurately confirming historical arrears remained problematic. In South Australia, many tenants accumulated high levels of debt because of failures to advise of residency changes; delays in reinstating payments following changes to Centrelink payments or breaches; and delays in debiting employment income.

Rent arrears levels differ significantly between communities and generally remain high by public housing standards, although all jurisdictions reported that rent collection and arrears rates are slowly improving.

7.4.3 Alternative rent setting models

The findings regarding the complexity, fairness and extremely high administrative costs of income-based rents does raise questions about whether this is the most appropriate model for remote communities. This was acknowledged by one senior policy-maker who said:

> I think that's an aspect of NPARIH which was probably ill-advised. I understand there were probably other reasons for putting that [public housing rents policy] into place, but I don't think it's an optimum approach.

Mainstream social housing rent policy operates in urban areas where social housing is a small percentage of housing stock and is increasingly occupied by high needs tenants who are long-term recipients of statutory incomes. Even in this environment where tenant mobility and their incomes are relatively stable, income-based rent assessment and review is a significant administrative burden. In remote communities, social housing makes up almost all housing and therefore houses tenants with a range of household compositions and incomes, both of which tend to be very unstable.

Another difference is that applying the concept of 'market rent' to set rent caps is inappropriate in most Indigenous communities where there is no market comparison and the community ownership of land raises questions about whether rent should be discounted in recognition of this community equity. Mainstream rent setting approaches also contribute to poverty, given the high cost of living and other financial imposts on remote residents. Further, it is arguable that social housing rent policies fail to support policy aspirations for increased home ownership in remote communities.

Social housing rent setting policy is underpinned by a number of objectives that are in potential conflict: affordability for tenants, adequacy and predictability of income for housing providers, simplicity, fairness, efficiency and transparency. It is clear that many aspects of the current approach to rent setting and collection is not consistent with achieving these objectives and therefore that adaptations or alternatives should be considered.

Alternative rent setting approaches, including community-wide housing levies and property-based rents, have a long history in the Indigenous housing sector and were prevalent within the ICHO sector prior to the NPARIH reforms. An analysis of the main three rent setting approaches is provided in Table 30 below to illustrate the complexity in designing rent setting policy for remote Indigenous housing.

Table 30: Typology of rent approaches

	Individual Housing levy/flat fees	**Income based**	**Property or household-based**
Description	Levy applied to all or categories of community residents in receipt of income. Usually collected through automatic deduction from wages or social security payments.	Rent assessed as % of household income. Generally, involves a capped maximum rent. Some income may be excluded or applied at a concessional rate. Head tenant responsible for rent, but other residents may agree to contribute through direct debit.	Rent-based on size or amenity of house or the composition of the household. These rents may be determined through government policy, arbitrarily set by landlord, or linked to market or other benchmarks. Head tenant may be responsible, or other residents may agree to contribute through direct debits.
Pros	All residents contribute to housing costs regardless of where they live on the community. Simple, efficient collection.	Affordability for tenants is maintained where income or household composition reduces. Larger households mean most pay the capped maximum.	Easy for tenants to understand, efficient to administer, and provides predictable rental income stream. May provide incentives for home ownership.
Cons	Difficult to enforce payment. May require amendment of residential tenancy legislation.	Difficult for tenants to understand, administratively resource-intensive, liable to under reporting of income and residents, imposes heavy burden on head tenant.	Affordability may be a problem where household income is low. Imposes burden on head tenant.
Other issues	Works best in smaller and discrete communities and where most people work for one employer (e.g. Community Council that also administers CDP).	In many remote communities, most households pay maximum rents that are relatively low compared to urban market rents.	Rent affordability cap could be applied so that property rent is applicable unless tenants request a reduction based on their income.

7.4.4 Improving rent setting and collection practice

The application of income-based rents can have affordability benefits for tenants but also presents considerable implementation challenges for tenants and housing providers in remote Indigenous contexts due to its complexity and high rates of resident mobility and changes in household income. In the context of large households and low capped maximum rents, further consideration of whether income-based rent setting is warranted, and whether some adaptation of property based rents, possibly with a safety net for small households on very low incomes would collect similar income and be as affordable and fair, while being more efficient and transparent.

Consideration of how rent caps are set, and how rent policy intersects with the cost in remote locations of other essentials such as power, food and petrol are also warranted. A further consideration is how rent policy contributes to other policy goals such as encouraging home ownership.

7.5 Principles for asset management

7.5.1 Introduction

Maintaining and renewing dwellings in remote parts of Australia is a challenging task. There are a number of unique issues that make asset management of dwellings in Indigenous communities particularly problematic. Some of these issues are listed below:

1. There will often be not much competition because of the lack of skilled tradespeople in remote areas.
2. It is often very difficult to supervise or check the quality of work undertaken in these areas. Some construction firms, faced with remote locations, government funding, and a lack of independent quality control, may end up 'gaming' the system by overcharging and under-delivering. While this practice might not be widespread, it is a significant risk for asset management of remote tenancies;
3. Travel costs can be very high for tradespeople. Moreover, the transportation of materials is very expensive and often very difficult (see Figure 20 below).
4. Many areas where Indigenous housing is located, such as the desert regions of central Australia and the tropical regions of northern Australia, experience a harsh climate with very sharp differences between the wet and dry seasons, or extreme temperature variations between the summer and winter months. These climatic extremes can generate considerable stresses on dwellings, which therefore need to be specifically designed and constructed for these conditions—and also to mitigate the impact of the climate on the occupants. The climate also makes it impossible to have either construction or responsive maintenance programs that run throughout the year, since travel is often very problematic in the wet season as many local roads are flooded.
5. In a number of regions where Indigenous housing is located, there are particular geological and/or hydrological conditions that generate significant stresses on dwellings. For example, in most parts of non-coastal Australia the mineral content of the local water supplies can badly affect the pipework, taps, hot water system and appliances, thus significantly reducing their life and efficiency. Small ants can damage the electrical wiring of houses in some northern areas, and in desert areas dust can lead to increased maintenance of electrical switchboards, light fittings, switches and power points, and also windows. These local problems need to be considered when designing constructing and maintaining housing.
6. The significant numbers of occupants living in some houses means that fittings and fixtures must be able to cope with large user populations. Often commercial grade materials and fittings will need to be used.

Figure 20: Water over the road on the way to Ngukkur

Source: Authors

On the other hand, the maintenance of dwellings can provide some real opportunities for Indigenous employment, particularly when combined with other employment opportunities.

Pholeros and Phibbs (2012) provided some guidance on the construction and maintenance of Indigenous housing for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Their summary is provided in Box 3 below which lists what works and what doesn't work.

7.5.2 Findings from the field work

Tenants in many cases were concerned about the quality and timeliness of repairs and maintenance. While in some cases this may have been because of unrealistic expectations given the number of difficulties outlined above, it would appear that there is considerable room for improvement. The case studies in the project highlighted a number of issues:

- The use of centralised systems seemed particularly problematic given the unique characteristics of remote communities. There was consistent criticism of these systems across almost all the case study sites.
- There seem to be some confusion among tenants and some staff about how repairs and maintenance processes worked.
- There was some evidence of gaming of the system by contractors.
- There was very limited local involvement in the repairs and maintenance process (the use of local handypersons in the Northern Territory is the exception).
- In some cases tenancy and maintenance/asset management were not locally integrated and this resulted in poorer outcomes and inefficiencies.

Box 2: What we know about construction and maintenance

What works?

- Designing and constructing housing based on the established standards and accumulated knowledge in the National Indigenous Housing Guide (FaHCSIA 2008). This includes a process of consultation with the local community, and designing housing that meets the social and cultural needs of occupants.
- Targeting limited-maintenance budgets for safety and health items to improve the functional performance of the house.
- Using appropriate construction methods and materials, given the particular local environment, especially in rural and remote locations.
- Involving Indigenous communities in planning and implementing programs for construction and maintenance.
- Using local community Indigenous labour to assist with construction and maintenance programs.
- Carefully documenting the performance of Indigenous housing using a set of standard, repeatable tests linked to the principles outlined in the National Indigenous Housing Guide.
- Having rigorous inspection programs at handover after completion of works.

What doesn't work?

There is a great deal of evidence about what doesn't work, based on decades of experience. Common characteristics of a number of troubled construction and maintenance programs include the following:

- Short-term or piecemeal interventions that are not implemented for long enough to make a significant impact.
- A one-size-fits-all approach that doesn't allow for particular local cultural, social and environmental circumstances.
- Interventions that are adopted without collaborating with Indigenous communities to provide a real opportunity for them to let their views be known.
- Maintenance programs for rural and remote areas based on models that apply in capital cities.
- Programs that are based on 'responsive maintenance' (that is, when repair and other work only occurs when a tenant notifies the landlord), rather than on periodic or cyclical maintenance supplemented with local, ongoing testing of houses.

7.5.3 Improving practice

While the large costs associated with asset management in remote communities will always make repairs and maintenance a 'problem' area for tenancy management in remote communities, there is some room for improvement. It is suggested that the following strategies are worth investigation by state asset management authorities:

1. Provide better information to tenants about what are realistic expectations for repairs and maintenance timelines and why delays are sometimes needed to reduce costs (bundling of jobs). An explanation of the 'how the system works' would also be a useful addition to this information strategy.
2. Undertake some tenant education campaigns to help tenants reduce maintenance risks. It is critical to educate tenants on how to manage their houses so that they are properly maintained, such as turning off light switches, cleaning stoves.
3. Increase local involvement in repairs and maintenance. The use of local handypersons (following on from the Northern Territory model) can help improve repairs and maintenance outcomes as well as provide some local employment and upskilling. The

person could undertake simple repairs, help diagnose when external contractors are needed, and liaise with external contractors to ensure they can gain access to properties (see Box 4 below for the advantages of local involvement). While it is acknowledged that training a local person might be expensive, it may be appropriate to make local employment an explicit goal of asset management strategies.

4. Increased local involvement can also be achieved by contracting local governments or community organisations that operate locally and have capacity to play a greater role in housing maintenance and construction. Regular, predictable work over a multi-year time horizon would improve the opportunity for these entities to increase local trade skills and employment.
5. Modifying centralised systems to some sort of hybrid system. Hybrid systems could include having the local handyperson reporting maintenance issues, communities or regions opting out of centralised systems if they could demonstrate similar or better potential performance, or having different processes for remote communities (e.g. using a different call centre with staff with appropriate language and cultural skills).
6. Standardisation of components and fittings (stoves, hot water services, tapware, etc.) and secure stockpiling of commonly required items and parts on communities, would enable cost savings and the ability to undertake repairs and maintenance in the wet season. This would also enable urgent work to be performed in some communities by fly in contractors when communities are inaccessible by road.
7. There should be better information sharing between jurisdictions to help learning across the country. For example, there could be sharing of cost information (e.g. the details provided in Chapter 7). A regular national conference/workshop between asset managers in all states to allow them to examine and evaluate practices across the country might also be beneficial.
8. Increased inspections of finished work is an important strategy to minimise costs. Local handypersons could photograph and/or video completed jobs for review by a centralised audit team. Such a system could also help with the diagnosis of maintenance issues.

Box 3: Highlighting the benefits for local Indigenous involvement: the case of Chris the plumber (from Pholeros and Phibbs 2012)

Chris the plumber turns up with his apprentice in an Indigenous community, having driven 250 kilometres from Regionville. He is a bit worried because it has taken him most of the day to get to the community and he hasn't got his tool box out of his truck yet. He eventually finds two houses that he thinks he has bookings for, but he finds the houses are empty. A dog bites him at another house so he leaves and, just when he thinks things can't get worse, he gets sworn at by a cranky old bloke who is sitting on the verandah of his second last 'booking'. The man speaks very little English, but is obviously not happy about two strangers being on the front steps, so Chris bids a hasty retreat. When he finally finds someone home, he decides to replace their toilet rather than replace their damaged washer in order to pay for the trip (and his apprentice's wages). Chris is not having one of his better days. As he finally drives out of the community he makes a note to himself not to come back unless work elsewhere is very short.

Things could have been very different for Chris if he had had the support of a local Indigenous team, let's call them Ben and Brad, who could have bundled up a larger number of maintenance jobs for him so that his ratio of travel costs to plumbing costs was lower. Ben and Brad could have assessed houses, assembled work lists, met Chris at the start of his visit and acted as guides and interpreters during his visit. They could have helped him by doing simple labouring tasks so Chris could have left his apprentice working on other projects back in Regionville. Ben and Brad could have earned a wage and made Chris's day more profitable and productive through getting more work done in their community.

8 CONCLUSION

NPARIH has now been replaced by the New Remote Housing Strategy (DPC 2016) with agreements in place in the Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia. It is therefore timely to establish the policy lessons that can be learnt to inform this next stage of service delivery to remote Indigenous communities. This study is the first major investigation of NPARIH reforms that focuses specifically on tenancy management arrangements. The significance of the findings extend beyond housing improvements because of the close relationship between housing and wellbeing. Improving housing management is critical to the broader goals of governments to improve the lives of Indigenous people living on remote communities. Our conclusion is that much has been achieved, but much remains to be achieved, and it is vital that governments maintain their investment so the gains can be built on and extended.

In the case study communities, housing standards and tenancy management have mostly improved. Rent arrears are reducing and local and regional service delivery infrastructure has been strengthened. Tenants are beginning to understand their rights and realise that it is not acceptable for showers and taps to be broken, ovens not to work and to have no security locks. They are developing the skills to maintain their homes and understand what is required to meet their tenancy obligations at least in relation to paying rent and maintaining their home. Most significantly, very few tenant respondents expressed a desire to return to pre NPARIH tenancy management arrangements and most regarded the new arrangements as an improvement.

State housing departments have come a significant way in bringing remote Indigenous housing into the mainstream housing system so that management is beginning to be systemic rather than crisis driven and similar policies and standards apply. There is variation between jurisdictions, partly because of differences in the size of the task and the challenges. The number of communities in the Northern Territory, their small size, remoteness and wide dispersal in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, and the deteriorated condition of housing and absence of infrastructure in the Northern Territory and the APY Lands have played an important part in what has been achieved. Decisions about how to deliver the program have also played a role. Western Australia has invested NPARIH money in only some communities and while this has been associated with a quality service, it has left the many small communities that do not have a relationship with the WA DoH with a very uncertain future.

Across all jurisdictions, many areas remain challenging. In answering the study's question of what are the critical factors influencing rent revenue and costs of tenancy and asset management, we found the impact of mainstreaming was problematic. A centralised, income-based system of rent setting and rent collection is poorly aligned with the complexities caused by remoteness and Indigenous culture, where factors such as crowding, population mobility and distance, create inefficiencies and high administrative costs. Repairs and maintenance programs are similarly problematic and inefficient with a need to review new approaches. Allocations, tenant support programs, tenants' understanding of their rights and the information they receive about rents are all areas where there is still much to be done. Crowding is still a concern, especially in Ngukkur as occupancy levels demonstrate, but also in Cooktown and APY Lands' communities.

Our analysis shows that the answer to the study's question of what are the optimal arrangements for the delivery of cost-effective and successful tenancy management services to remote Indigenous communities are those that employ a hybrid model that combines with resources and policy principles of state housing departments with adaptive, local service delivery. We found this was most successful when it involved partnerships with appropriately skilled, effective and efficient third party providers who employed staff who are knowledgeable

about how to deliver a culturally appropriate service. Conversely, we found that mainstreamed service delivery arrangements involving centralised, non-adaptive service delivery were associated with more problems. Our study shows that effective tenancy and property management requires maximising opportunities for local service delivery to generate cost savings, and improved tenant and property management outcomes. The goal of state housing departments should therefore be to develop a remote tenancy management system that is flexible and adapted to context.

8.1 Policy principles for the post-NPARIH era

The study identified a number of policy principles to inform the post-NPARIH era which are summarised below.

8.1.1 Maintain a bilateral Commonwealth/state approach to remote Indigenous housing with quarantined funding

Nationally, the delivery of social housing has been a state responsibility, but historically policy leadership and funding of remote Indigenous housing has been primarily by the Commonwealth. One of the major reforms under NPARIH has been to bring the Commonwealth, states and the Northern Territory into bilateral arrangements that have seen a joint approach to improving living standards on remote communities. The Commonwealth has driven the reform agenda, providing a substantial investment, working with jurisdictions on targets and monitoring delivery. This has been accompanied by major expenditure to increase supply and improve housing, a national approach to improving remote housing standards, a uniformity of goals across jurisdictions and a systemic approach to housing through its incorporation into the broader public housing systems of the states, ending the crisis driven approach of the past.

Under the New Remote Housing Strategy, the Commonwealth has committed $774.131 million to the construction of new houses and refurbishments in larger, sustainable remote Indigenous communities to address continuing high levels of crowding. While the broader housing policy environment is for the withdrawal of the Commonwealth from funding of housing (http://www.ncoa.gov.au/report/phase-one/part-b/8-6-programmes-duplicate-state-responsibilities.html), it is vital the Commonwealth maintain its leadership role of committing resources and overseeing improvements in the living conditions of remote living Indigenous peoples. Although the states and the Northern Territory should contribute resources, it is hard to see how the scale of resources required to provide and manage remote Indigenous housing can be maintained by the states alone within their existing budgets. The Western Australian Government was the only state that provided additional funding to the Commonwealth's contribution to NPARIH, and even then the $14 million provided was far less than the Commonwealth contribution, despite the program rolling out at the height of the resources boom. Clearly, levels of state funding on their own will not meet the requirements of future housing and housing management. Without adequate Commonwealth investment, the gains that have been achieved under NPARIH will be lost, and in a decade or so we will once again face a national crisis in Indigenous housing. These concerns are captured by these observations from a non-housing stakeholder:

> What impact has it had on people actually in the community? A lot, but it's got to continue on for a lot longer before it really takes root in the psychology. It could go backwards pretty easy I think … You might have new houses here in some of the communities now, but there comes a time when them houses are going to be overcrowded and rellies have got nowhere else to stay … and that can create a lot of problems.

This research has demonstrated that although the improvements generated by NPARIH have been uneven, they are very real for those people and communities that have benefited. The

momentum needs to be maintained so that these gains are extended and strengthened across remote Indigenous Australia. The strongest outcomes were in communities where the costs of delivering services to remote communities was recognised in levels of investment in infrastructure and tenancy management services. There is a real risk that in the post-NPARIH environment, funding levels will decline and an inadequately resourced sector—be it direct or third party provider—will find it difficult to deliver anything but an inadequate service.

At both state and Commonwealth levels, funding for remote Indigenous housing should also be quarantined from other programs to avoid pressures on the remote budget from other programs. This is especially important where remote Indigenous housing is mainstreamed.

8.1.2 Establish an adaptable, flexible system that combines partnerships for local service delivery with strong government regulation and oversight

The findings suggest that cost savings are greatest, and service delivery is enhanced, where services are delivered by local providers and by Indigenous people, since infrastructure costs and transport are reduced, services are more likely to be culturally appropriate and opportunities for Indigenous employment are increased. Large, well-established ICHOs, such as Marra Worra Worrra in Western Australia, are one possibility, but so are CHPs who are now entering the sector as is the case with CHL in Western Australia. While it is clear that there is no single model that will apply in all locations, and direct management may be the only option in some locations for now, the goal of state housing authorities should be to work with alternative providers who have the capacity and cultural knowledge to provide housing services to remote communities.

The potential to work more closely with other services extends beyond this to the possibility of joint appointments with other providers in the area, such as local councils, environmental management services, and health and aged care services, so that full-time positions can be offered to local people. This is especially important for the more remote communities where visits are less frequent and the condition of housing is generally poorer and more difficult and costly to maintain. Increasing service integration by establishing regular meetings with other services and discussing shared problems may be one way of increasing the potential for joint positions to be established.

8.1.3 Build ICHO capacity

While a hybrid system appears to work best, it is also essential that housing authorities remain responsible for remote Indigenous housing and provide the regulatory framework to assure the maintenance of standards through monitoring and quality assurance procedures. If this is not maintained, there is a risk that the impact of remoteness on costs and the difficulties of oversight, will result in a deteriorating service that is unable to sustain effective tenant education, maintain properties to appropriate standards, reduce rent arrears and ensure allocations meet the guidelines. As well, housing authorities will be able to make provision for future housing on the basis of known housing lifespan as they do for public housing more generally.

As we move into a new policy era in which the community sector is likely to play an increasing role, it is critical that governments develop policies and commit resources to building ICHO capacity so that they develop the knowledge and organisational structures that will enable them to meet regulatory hurdles and deliver quality services. The NPAs made provision to the states and the Northern Territory to build the capacity of the ICHO sector, but, with the possible exception of NSW, the extent to which this has increased ICHO housing management has been limited. In Western Australia and Queensland there are a handful of remote ICHOs that are recognised as providers by the states, but large numbers are struggling or have disappeared as a result of the loss of housing contracts or refusal to transition to state regulatory and contractual regimes. There is an urgent need to work with the ICHO sector to increase their capacity so that they can compete alongside other

community providers and meet the state's regulatory requirements. Possible ways of strengthening ICHOs include grouping in an umbrella structure or hybrid partnership arrangement with a mainstream CHP.

8.1.4 Encourage CHPs into the sector

There is also a need to develop strategies to encourage CHPs into the remote Indigenous housing sector. The experience of CHL at Kununurra shows that CHPs can successfully deliver remote Indigenous housing services as long as funding levels are adequate and services are delivered in a culturally appropriate way, and build local capacity through the employment of Indigenous people. This point was put by a CHP provider:

> One can distinguish between organisations that may want to be culturally and totally separate, and others which may be more integrated, but as long as there's Aboriginal people having an improved position locally, that's the main gain.

However, there is also the point that unless the housing provider is Indigenous owned, the potential for local, or any, Indigenous people to rise to senior management is probably less likely. This is one major strength of the ICHO, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and other Aboriginal community sectors.

8.1.5 Build local service delivery for cost efficiencies and local employment

The Northern Territory handyman system provides an example of the advantages of local service delivery. By employing local people with sufficient skills to undertake small, low skill repairs and maintenance, they are making substantial savings in travel costs, reducing wasted journeys for poorly identified problems and creating local employment opportunities.

This approach requires flexibility and commitment because there are many barriers to it, and there may be locations where it is especially difficult. This especially applies to small dispersed communities that lack an appropriate skills base. Part-time jobs can impact on Centrelink payments making them unattractive to potential employees and there are cultural factors that can make it difficult for people to work in their own community. But these problems do not apply to the same extent everywhere and there is a need for a more sustained effort to explore strategies to overcome these difficulties as the gains are potentially significant. One possibility is for joint appointments that provide positions across organisations that deliver services locally. It is especially important to engage with CDP providers and Centrelink to find ways of achieving this so that housing service delivery can help to build local capacity and contribute to the local economy.

8.1.6 Keep working towards a proactive approach to repairs and maintenance

Repairs and maintenance in the remote context will always be one of the most challenging areas of service delivery, but it is essential for state housing departments to continue working to develop systems and strategies that proactively manage assets. This requires regular inspections and maintenance work. This needs to be applied in a way that maximises opportunities for local employment and partnerships. There was consistent criticism of centralised systems across almost all of the case study sites where this was not developed. Strategies to improve arrangements include developing partnerships with local providers, integrating repairs and maintenance with tenancy management at service delivery sites to save travel costs and pool knowledge, smarter use of communications technologies, tenant education campaigns to help tenants reduce maintenance risks, increased local involvement in repairs and maintenance as in the Northern Territory's local handyman system, proactive planned maintenance and standardising components and fittings.

Repairs and maintenance programs are already bundling jobs to reduce costs and, although this does mean delays for tenants, the cost savings are substantial. Tenant education may need to include building understanding that, for some—non-essential—parts, the costs of

delivery on a one-off basis are prohibitive, and that they need to be delivered as one part of a number of jobs. At the same time, it should be recognised that the need to bundle jobs would be reduced through a local handyman approach and standardised components that could be stocked closer to the communities, thereby reducing delivery and travel costs.

8.1.7 Integrate the housing service delivery system at the local level

The value of establishing partnerships goes beyond contracting local services to deliver tenancy management services, to building a more integrated system in which there is a strong relationship and communication between its different elements. The case of Ngukkur in the Northern Territory is a good example of this, where both tenancy manager and repairs and maintenance manager are locally based so they are able to coordinate their visits to communities. They save costs by travelling together and are able to pool their knowledge on the best way of addressing particular problems. This contrasts with Cooktown and Wujal Wujal in Queensland, where asset management, maintenance and tenancy management were very siloed and separate, losing the advantage of understanding problems from both property and tenancy management perspectives.

8.1.8 Develop alternative rent setting and collection models

The data tell a powerful story about the challenges of current arrangements to rent setting and collection. While tenants need to pay rent, mainstream approaches create irrationalities that are both costly and unfair. These include the absence of a housing market, the risk that problems of affordability will reduce tenancy sustainability, and administrative costs potentially being greater than rents collected. The view from head office is that a mainstreamed system is administratively efficient. The view from the local office is that they create inefficient, difficult and stressful practices. No system will resolve the tension between affordability and fairness inherent to all social housing rent models, but there is a need to look beyond mainstreamed systems and consider whether alternative models such as including community-wide housing levies or property-based rents might prove more successful.

8.1.9 Incremental policy development and implementation

The fast roll-out of NPARIH resulted in many mistakes. The pressure to deliver within tight timeframes meant that pragmatic, rather than strategic decisions were often made about where capital works programs were undertaken and how services were delivered. This resulted in many lost opportunities, for example, not standardising housing components, or failing to develop a strategy that provided more than short-term local Indigenous employment opportunities. Rather than fast and unstable policy that is costly to both housing providers and tenants, what is needed is incremental change that allows improvements to be introduced in a measured way. This was expressed by one policy forum informant who observed:

> Well, here we want to try this particular model and here we want to try this one. This is what has worked here and we know why it's worked, so let's try that here where we've got a similar place and conditions, that kind of thing.

The complexity and expense of delivering remote Indigenous housing services requires policy change to be undertaken cautiously, with careful assessment, monitoring and review, yet this is not what happens. Finding ways of allowing gradual change that builds on established achievements would be a major achievement in progressing the agenda of improving the lives of remote Indigenous residents and building trust and engagement with tenants and community leaders.

8.1.10 Provide opportunities for increased informal engagement between the Commonwealth and the states

A related point is the need to provide opportunities for informal engagement and information sharing between the sectors involved in delivering housing services to remote Indigenous

communities. Currently there are limited opportunities for informal communication between the Commonwealth and the states and this results in an environment in which it is difficult for genuine knowledge exchange, problem sharing and discussion. The basis of the NPAs was that Commonwealth and state governments would work together to resolve challenging policy problems, but the relationship appears to be one that revolves around funding negotiations, rather than a more productive exploration of shared problems and solutions. For example, there seems to have been little attempt by the Commonwealth to integrate remote Indigenous service delivery to its programs such as CDP, despite the potential for this to support the housing program.

If the dialogue is limited to negotiations over funding arrangements, there is little opportunity for frank discussion of the issues and a genuinely joint approach to finding the best way forward. Establishing forums where the Commonwealth, states and the Northern Territory can meet away from the negotiating table would facilitate this and improve understanding of all parties of their constraints, opportunities and rationales for decision-making. It would support the development of relationships between levels of government and facilitate the negotiation process.

8.1.11 Improve understanding of the remote context

More generally, it is important that staff working in capital cities and regional towns distant from remote communities have opportunities to visit communities to gain an on-the-ground understanding of the issues, and to meet tenants and stakeholders. Policies for housing on remote communities are driven from capital cities, a very long way from where they will be implemented. They concern some of the most thorny and hard to resolve policy and implementation problems and require a firm understanding of context. This understanding cannot be adequately obtained from documents or third parties but requires first-hand exposure to settings and people. It is one thing to know the distance between Umuwa and Adelaide, or Umuwa and Pipalyatjara, it is quite another to drive it. This is especially important for Commonwealth staff based in Canberra where the requirements of the job may provide no opportunity to visit communities. Addressing this knowledge gap is one relatively straightforward way of improving communication and understanding and should support improved policy development.

The demands of delivering housing services to remote communities, the importance of understanding Indigenous culture and lifestyles, and the need for established relationships with communities and leaders, make it vital to ensure staff working in the area get out to communities and develop relationships with key Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders at both local and state levels. The ease with which this knowledge can be lost also requires policies that encourage staff retention and allow the transmission of institutional knowledge.

8.1.12 Develop a clearing house for remote Indigenous knowledge and cross-jurisdictional asset manager workshops

One of the achievements of NPARIH has been a substantial expansion of capacity within state housing authorities on how to deliver and manage remote Indigenous housing. It is also notable that there is a high staff turnover within government agencies and this, together with rapid policy development and policy change, can result in a loss of institutional knowledge. One way of capturing, preserving and disseminating this knowledge across the different sectors is to develop a clearing house for remote Indigenous knowledge. This would be a web-based service that would provide a one-stop shop for research, policy, news articles, opinion pieces and other materials that concern remote Indigenous housing. It should be relatively inexpensive to develop and maintain and would provide policy-makers and practitioners with an invaluable resource that would inform them about what is happening in the different jurisdictions and sectors, while building knowledge about what is, and what is not working.

Establishing workshops where asset managers can meet to talk about their experience and share and compare contract costings across the states will also support the development of shared learning and improved outcomes. There is also value in inter-jurisdiction networking around other specific issues such as rent policy and ICHO capacity building.

8.1.13 Increase the involvement of local governments as a provider of housing and essential services to remote Aboriginal communities

It is essential for the Commonwealth to work with state, Territory and local governments to clarify who is responsible for municipal and utility services for all communities, including small ones. In particular, the role of local government requires clarification to avoid situations as occurs in Kununurra town camps where local governments provide no services because they are on ALT land, despite their location in the town.

More generally, local governments have the potential to be a significant player in the delivery of services to remote Indigenous communities, but currently this occurs to some degree only in the Northern Territory and Queensland. Many of the improvements suggested in this section would be easier to achieve if local government was engaged as a significant player, but under current arrangements they are not resourced for this purpose. Consideration should therefore be given to direct resourcing of local government by the Commonwealth to provide housing and essential services to remote Indigenous communities.

8.1.14 Develop effective mechanisms for community engagement and consultation

One of the factors behind how well tenancy management services were operating from the perspective of tenants was the extent to which providers had engaged with communities. Achieving this requires a strategic approach that includes ensuring a regular presence on communities, housing officers with strong local knowledge and the employment of local staff. In Western Australia, the policy framework of HMAs together with the 'Ascertaining the wishes of Aboriginal inhabitants' protocol provided a firm, legally based, flexible and transparent approach to community consultation. It gives a degree of empowerment to communities by allowing them to decide the boundaries and content of their relationship with the SHA. It ensured that consultation was meaningful and required engagement and investment on the part of the SHA. These strategies were associated with high levels of tenant satisfaction, although the study did not demonstrate this, there is an underlying assumption that this leads to improved compliance and supports the identification of problems before they become hard to resolve.

8.1.15 Maintain the emphasis on tenant education and support

Tenancy management programs need to maintain the emphasis on improving tenant education. Unless community members understand tenancy requirements, there is a risk of increased rent arrears and inefficient repairs and maintenance. This needs to be supported by tenant support programs that identify tenants at risk of non-compliance and provide case management and other support to reduce this.

8.2 Remote Indigenous housing in the post-NPARIH era

The last eight years has been a period of intensive engagement by the Commonwealth, states and the Northern Territory, which has resulted in some progress in raising remote Indigenous housing standards. Under NPARIH's replacement, the New Remote Housing Strategy, the Commonwealth has continued its commitment to improving the standard of housing in remote Indigenous communities, and the states and the Northern Territory have maintained their engagement. At the same time there are indications that having provided the foundation for public housing-like management, the next step will be to bring remote Indigenous housing in line with the mainstream sector by seeking much greater participation of the community

sector. This can be seen in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, where recent years have seen an increase in third party providers.

This approach potentially has much to commend it, not least because it may allow access to Commonwealth Rent Assistance. However, it is essential that the Commonwealth and the states remain engaged, and maintain the oversight and strong regulatory framework that has been evident under NPARIH. Equally critical is the need for funding levels to be maintained. The advice from all jurisdictions is that Commonwealth funding in the remaining years of NPARIH is below what they have identified are required for the new buildings necessary to meet housing demand and maintain existing properties. Crowding may be declining, but it still remains at rates much higher than for the non-Indigenous population, especially in the Northern Territory. The investment in remote housing infrastructure needs to be maintained to address this.

The involvement of both the Commonwealth and states in developing a broader, long-term approach to increasing the housing options available in remote communities, including forms of home ownership, is also necessary. Central to this is working with communities to reconcile community aspirations for maintaining community land tenure and for economic development.

Delivering a quality and sustainable housing service in remote Indigenous contexts will always cost more than rent collections will cover in the foreseeable future. This means whatever the service delivery arrangement is, it will need to be subsidised so that housing managers can adequately resource the service, especially repairs and maintenance and tenant education and support. If this is not done, it can be expected that, over time, housing standards will deteriorate and any improvements to the lives of Indigenous residents lost. The potential futility of this was not lost on our state and Commonwealth informants. One observed:

> For all the people that have worked very hard on the program—state and Commonwealth—it would be devastating for it to … And the people living in those communities, it would devastating for it just to all let it go back to how it was. (Kate, Policy Manager)

Attention also needs to be given to the ICHO sector so that the barriers that currently prevent ICHOs from meeting regulatory hurdles and winning contracts are addressed. This means an investment in ICHO capacity and a partnership approach that supports ICHOs so that they can compete with the CHP sector. The more services can take a holistic place-based approach that includes local service delivery and partnerships with local providers, the more likely they are to be both cost-effective and sustainable.

Finally, it is hoped that the lessons of SIHIP and NPARIH's capital works program have been learnt. Rather than producing well-managed implementation and sustainable results, the pressure to deliver within tight timelines resulted in many lost opportunities. It is to be hoped that whatever program replaces NPARIH it will avoid rapid policy development and implementation, provide time for innovative policies to be tested on the ground, and take a medium- to long-term approach that avoids policy u-turns and instead understands the need for incremental, consistent policy development towards achieving the goal of ensuring Indigenous people on remote communities have the same standard of housing as applies in other parts of Australia.

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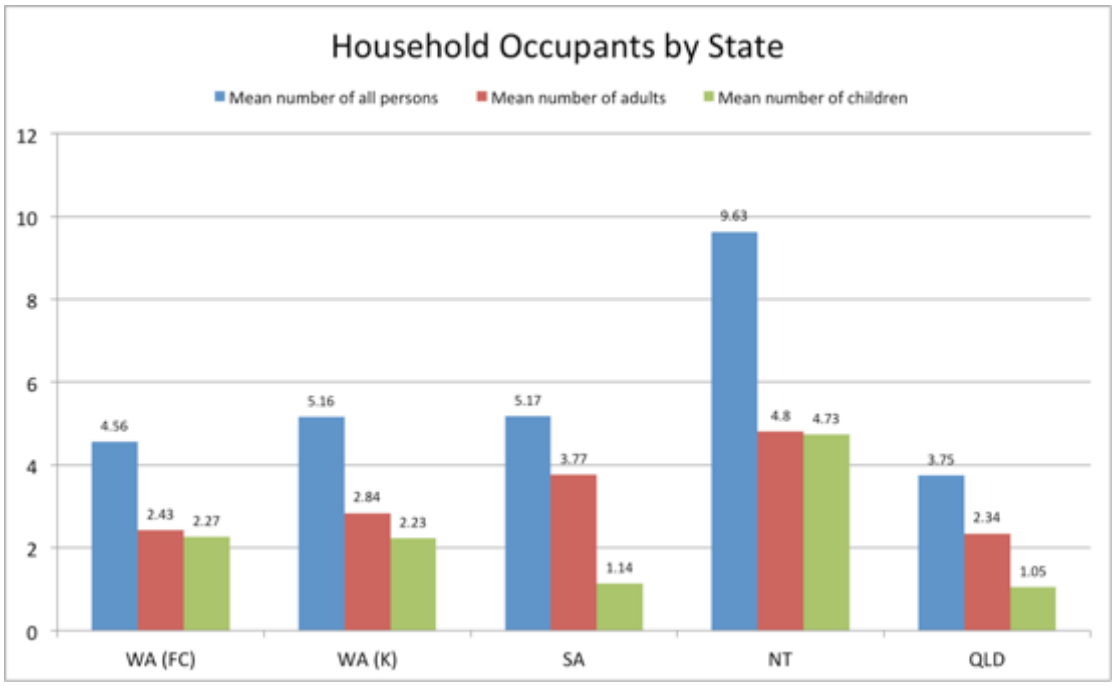
APPENDIX 1: TENANT SURVEY ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this appendix, the results from a tenant survey are analysed and presented (details of methods are provided in Chapter 2 of this report). The survey was administered to respondents in the study between October and December 2014. There were 142 responses across the five study areas: Western Australia—Fitzroy Crossing and Kununurra, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The tenant survey has three main components: (1) brief demographic questionnaire; (2) a battery of items measuring respondents' satisfaction with housing and housing management; and (3) a battery of items measuring respondents' opinions on whether housing and living conditions have improved in their community. The results from these three sections are presented below.

Household occupancy by state

Figure A1: Household occupants by state



In the figure above, a breakdown of household occupancy across the case study jurisdictions is displayed. The Northern Territory has the highest level of persons per household with a mean number of 9.63 persons including adults and children per house. The remaining areas range from 3.75 persons per household in Queensland to 5.17 persons in South Australia.

Preferred housing manager by state

Table A1: Preferred housing manager by state

	State/territory Department of Housing	Indigenous organisation	Community organisation	Town/Shire council	Total
WA (FC)	11.54	88.46	0	0	100
WA (K)	0	39.13	60.87	0	100
SA	40	52	0	8	100
NT	34.62	57.69	0	7.90	100
QLD	43.75	31.25	6.25	18.75	100

In Table A1 above, a cross-tabulation of preferences for organisation type to manage housing in respondents' survey is presented. In Western Australia's Fitzroy Crossing, the overwhelming majority of respondents have a preference for an Indigenous organisation. In Western Australia—Kununurra, respondents are divided between an Indigenous-led organisation and a mainstream community organisation with just over 60 per cent of Kununurra respondents indicating a preference for a community organisation and the remaining 39 per cent expressing a preference for an Indigenous organisation. In South Australia, 52 per cent of respondents have a preference for an Indigenous organisation to manage their housing followed by 40 per cent of respondents who have a preference for a state/territory department of housing. In the Northern Territory, there is a strong preference for Indigenous organisation followed by a state/territory Department of Housing. In Queensland, the majority of respondents have a preference for state/territory Department of Housing, but a third also expressed a preference for Indigenous community and a further fifth indicated preference for a town/shire council.

Satisfaction with housing issues

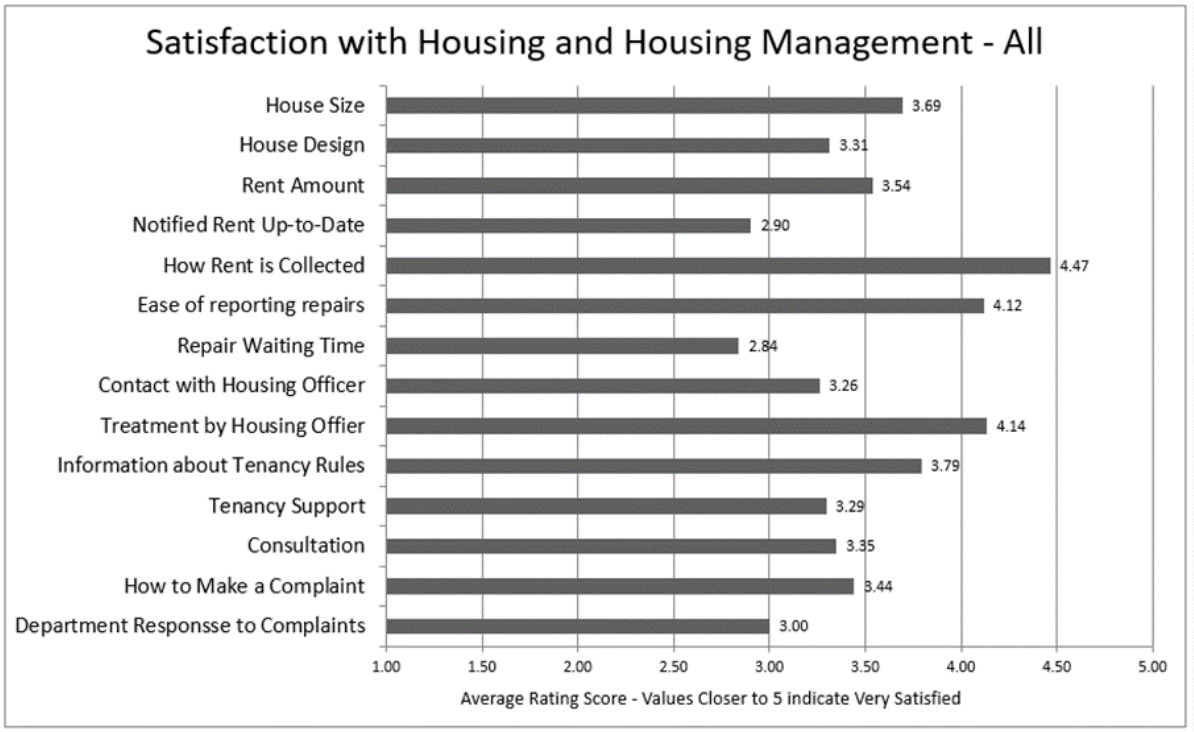
In this section, the results of survey respondents' levels of satisfaction with their housing and housing management are presented. These results are derived from Question 1 to 15 of the survey, which asked respondents how satisfied they were with their housing and a particular housing management issue. Respondents were given five response category options to indicate their level of satisfaction: (1) very dissatisfied; (2) a bit dissatisfied (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; (4) a bit satisfied; (5) very satisfied.

Analysis

To make comparisons across the various issues, the overall level of satisfaction was determined by calculating the rating average for each response. Each response category was given a rating weight to denote a level of satisfaction with a higher rating weight indicating greater satisfaction and a lower value indicating greater dissatisfaction—that is very satisfied was given a value of 5 and very dissatisfied was given a value of 1. The count of each response category was multiplied by the rating weight then divided by the count of all response categories to provide a rating average of each response category. Each response category's rating average was summed to produce a rating average for the item overall. Higher rating averages indicate higher levels of satisfaction.

Satisfaction—All

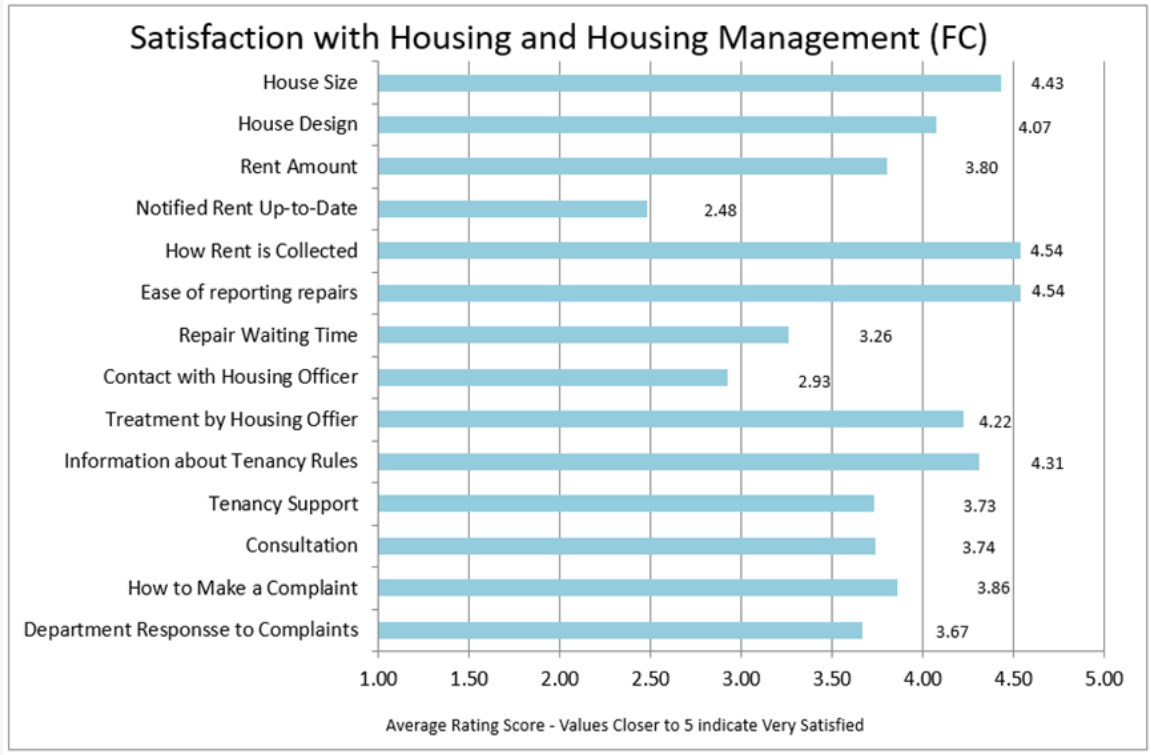
Figure A2: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—all



Satisfaction rating averages of housing and housing management issues across the whole sample are presented in Figure A2 above. Across the whole sample respondents were most satisfied with: (1) the way in which rent is collected; (2) the treatment by housing workers; and (3) the ease of arranging housing repairs and maintenance. Across the sample, respondents were least satisfied with: (1) the wait time for housing repairs and maintenance; (2) the information given to them about their rent payment; and (3) the way in which the Housing Department responds to complaints.

Satisfaction in Fitzroy Crossing, WA

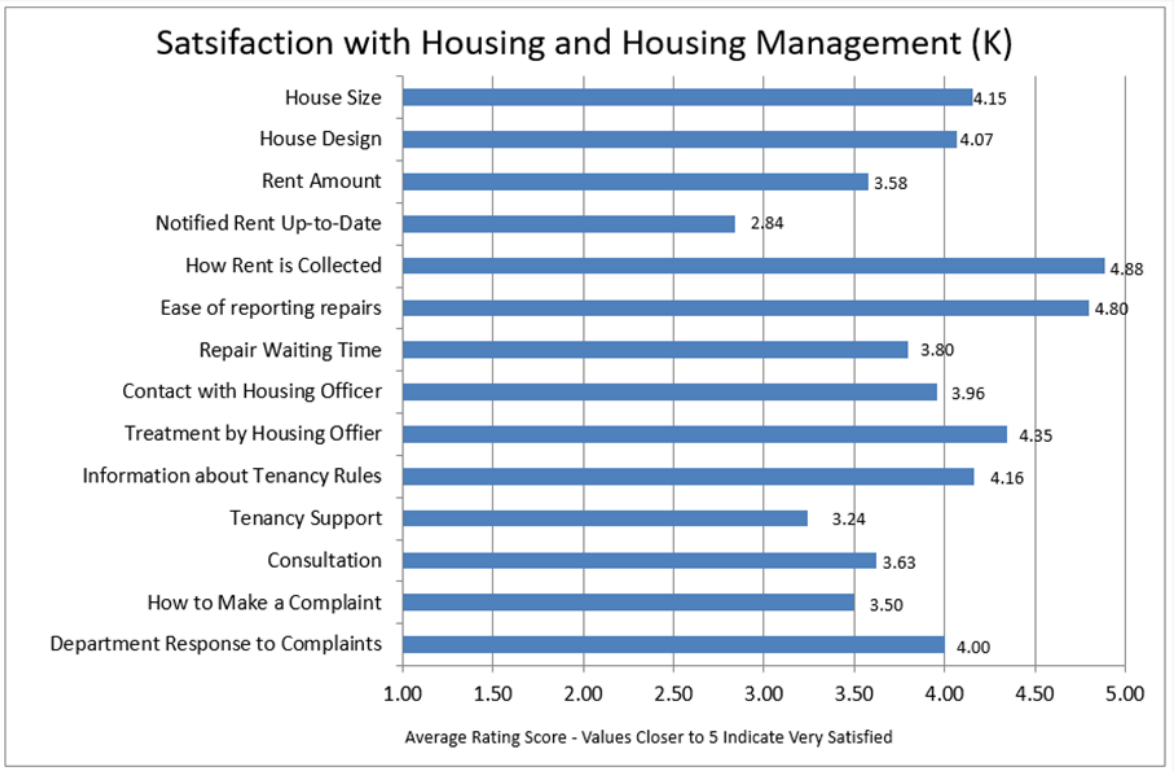
Figure A3: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds, WA



Satisfaction rating averages of housing and housing management issues among the Fitzroy Crossing sub-sample are presented in Figure A3 above. Respondents from Fitzroy Crossing were most satisfied with: (1) the way in which rent is collected; (2) the ease of arranging housing repairs and maintenance; and (3) the size of their house. Fitzroy crossing respondents were least satisfied with: (1) the information given to them about their rent payment; (2) the level of contact with housing workers; and (3) the wait time for housing repairs and maintenance.

Satisfaction in Kununurra, WA

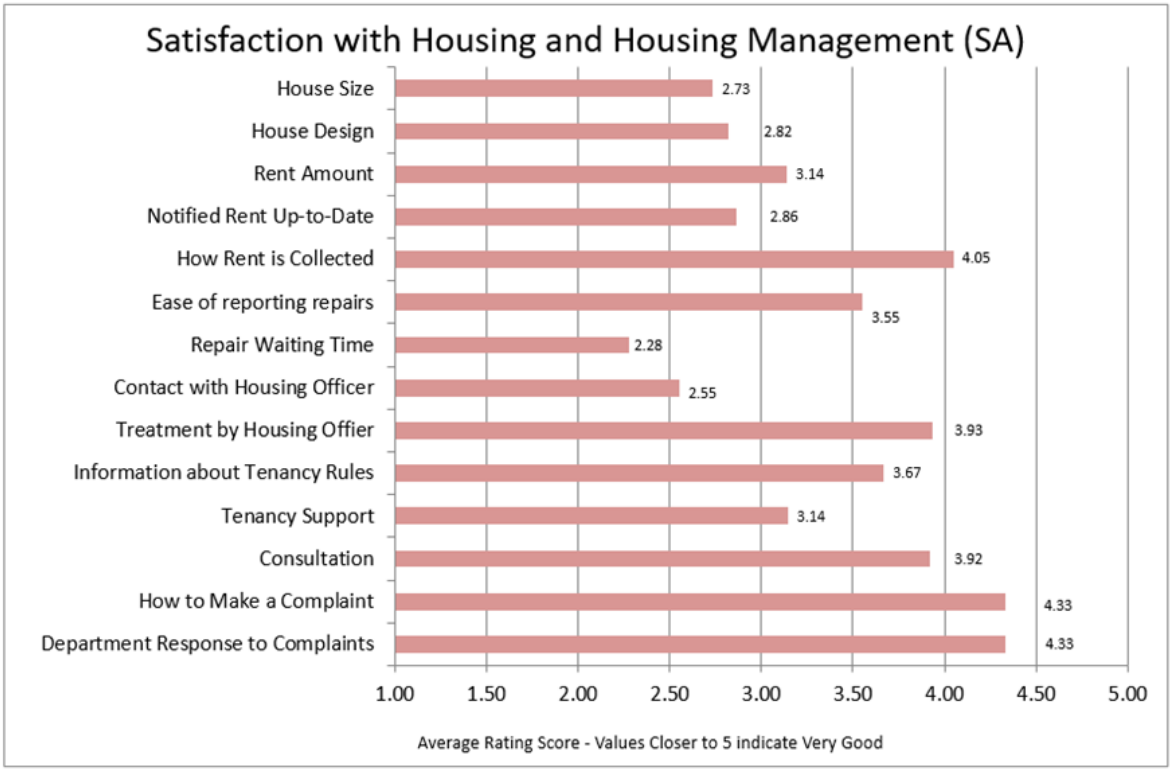
Figure A4: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—Kununurra and surrounds, WA



Satisfaction ratings averages of housing and housing management issues among the Kununurra sub-sample are presented in Figure A4 above. Participants from Kununurra were most satisfied with: (1) the way rent is collected; (2) the ease of arranging house repairs and maintenance; and (3) the treatment by housing workers. Kununurra residents were least satisfied with: (1) the information given to them about their rent payment; (2) the support they receive to manage housing; and (3) the requirements needed to make a formal complaint.

Satisfaction in South Australia

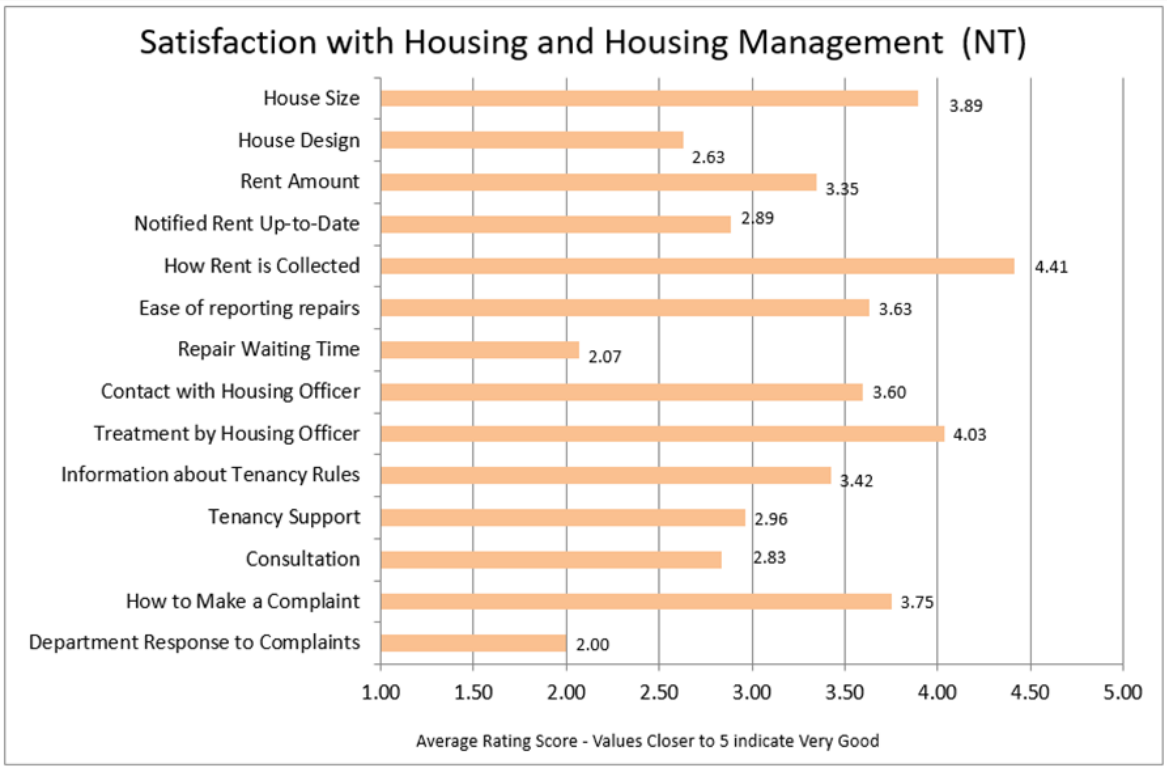
Figure A5: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—APY Lands, South Australia



Satisfaction rating averages of housing and housing management issues among the South Australian sub-sample are presented in Figure A5 above. Participants from South Australia were most satisfied with the complaints process, including both (1) the requirements to make a formal complaint as well as (2) the way in which the Housing Department responds to complaints. Both items were equally ranked as being the issues respondents are most satisfied with followed by: (3) the way in which rent is collected. South Australian respondents were least satisfied with: (1) the waiting period for housing repairs and maintenance; (2) the contact with housing workers; and (3) the size of their house.

Satisfaction in the Northern Territory

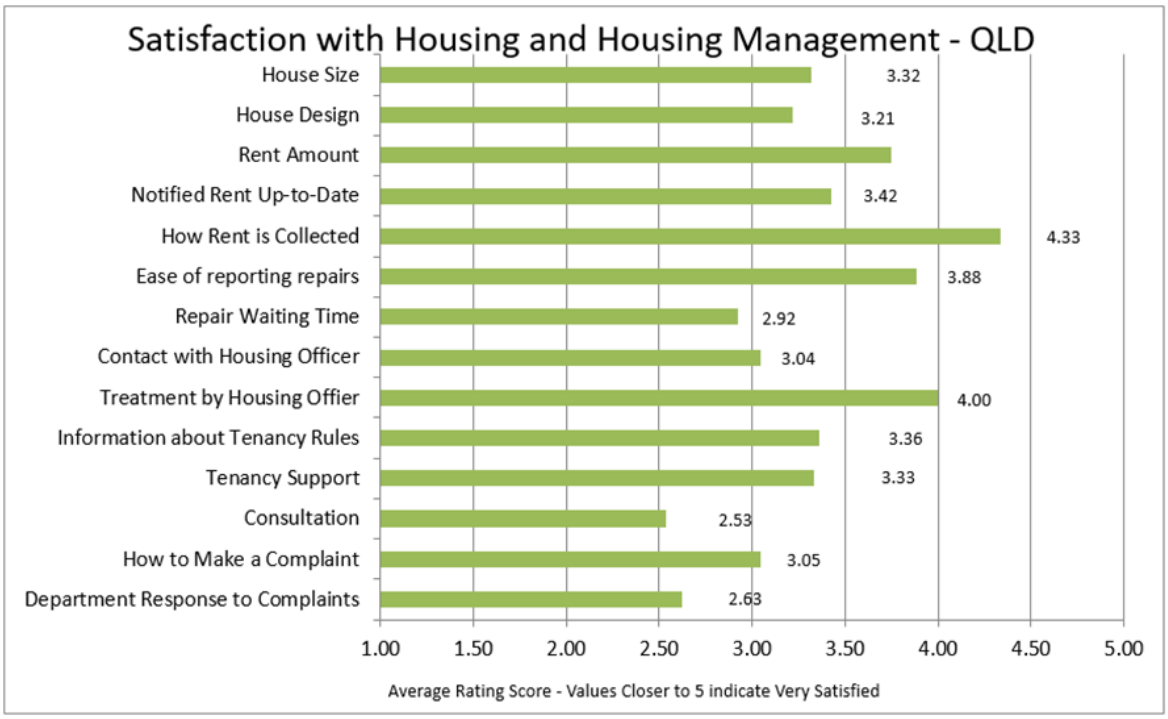
Figure A6: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—Ngukkur, NT



Satisfaction rating averages of housing and housing management issues among the Northern Territory sub-sample are presented in Figure A6 above. Participants from the Northern Territory were most satisfied with: (1) the way in which rent is collected; (2) the treatment by housing workers, and (3) the size of their house. Northern Territory respondents were least satisfied with the following three issues: (1) the way in which the Housing Department responds to complaints; (2) the wait for housing repairs and maintenance; and (3) the design of their house and yard.

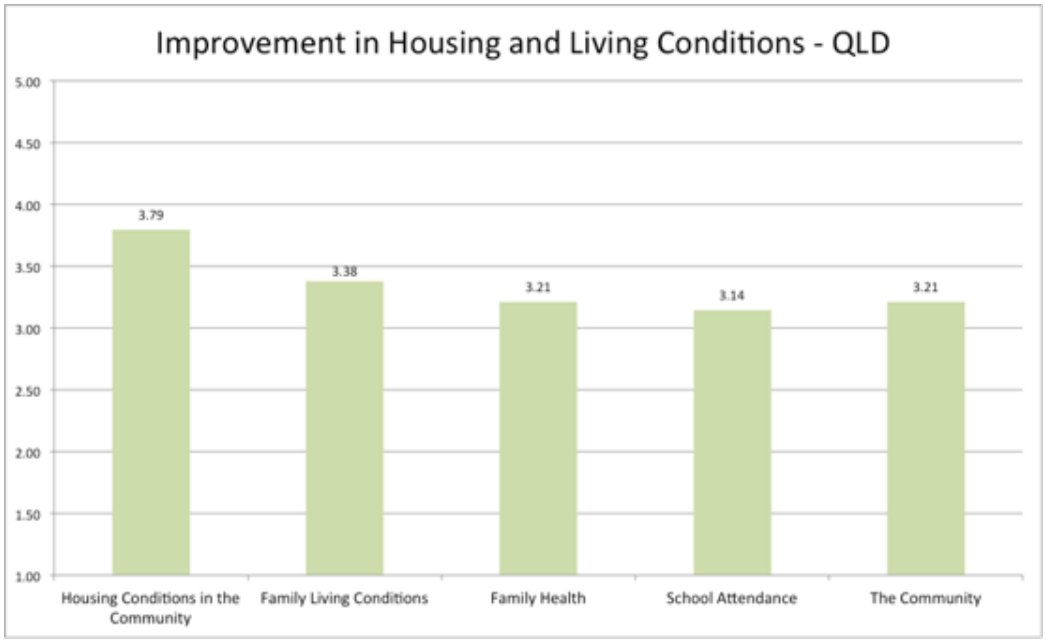
Satisfaction in Queensland

Figure A7: Rating averages of satisfaction levels with housing and housing management—Cooktown region, Queensland



Satisfaction rating averages of housing and housing management issues among the Queensland sub-sample are presented in Figure A7 above.

Figure A8: Rating averages in the improvement of housing and living conditions in Cooktown region, Queensland



Improvement rating averages in housing and living conditions among the Queensland sub-sample are presented in Figure A8 above. Respondents from Queensland rated community-housing conditions are the most improved issue because of state-managed housing. The second most improved issue was family conditions followed by family health and overall

community conditions, which was equally ranked as the fourth most improved issue. School attendance was rated as the least improved issue because of state-managed housing.

Participants from Queensland participating in the survey were most satisfied with: (1) the way in which rent is collected; (2) the treatment they experienced by housing workers; and (3) the ease of arranging house repairs and maintenance. Queensland respondents were least satisfied with the following housing issues: (1) the level of consultation tenants and the community receive about housing issues; (2) the way in which the Housing Department responds to complaints; and (3) the wait for housing repairs and maintenance.

Logistic regression models of satisfaction

In this section, the results of a series of logistic regressions undertaken to estimate respondents' level of satisfaction with aspects of their house and housing management are presented. Logistic regression was undertaken to predict the odds of being satisfied or dissatisfied according to predictors, such as housing occupancy or state, for example. These results are derived from Question 1 to 15 of the survey, which asked respondents how satisfied they were with their housing and a particular housing management issue. Respondents were given five response category options to indicate their level of satisfaction: (1) very satisfied; (2) a bit satisfied; (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; (4) a bit dissatisfied; and (5) very dissatisfied.

Analysis

To preform logistic regression on the improvement measures, each variable was recoded into a binary response variable in which 0 indicates dissatisfied and 1 indicates satisfied. The 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses were recoded as 0 to preserve sample numbers. The predictors for the logistic regressions were a series of binary response variables: state, proximity (1 = located in a central area), House Upgrade/Refurbishment (1 = respondent living in a newly-built or upgraded/refurbished household) and number of occupants in the household. The reference category for state is Western Australia Fitzroy Crossing and as such as coefficients are estimates of differences between the state and Fitzroy Crossing. For interpretation, the exponential function of each coefficient has been calculated to indicate a percentage change in the odds of being more or less satisfied. The results of logistic regressions for Q1 (Size of house); Q2 (Design of House); Q5 (How is rent collected); Q7 (How quickly someone comes to fix things) are presented. The remaining questions from this section of the survey are not presented because the logistic regression models were not significant.

Table A2: Logistic regression of satisfaction with size of house

Variable	*Coefficient* ± *SE*	*z*	*P*
State (Reference: WA (FC))			
WA (K)	-1.38±0.93	-1.48	0.139
SA	-2.46±0.92	-2.68	0.007
NT	-1.88±0.93	-1.96	0.052
QLD	-1.37±0.93	-1.46	0.145
Proximity (centrally-located)	0.60±0.67	0.89	0.373
House refurbished	0.32±0.49	0.67	0.505
No. occupants in household	-0.23±0.08	-3.37	0.008

In Table A2 above, the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with size of house are presented. The coefficients for South Australia and the Northern Territory are significant indicating that their levels of satisfaction are statistically different from Fitzroy Crossing residents' satisfaction with size of house. Further, the odds of residents in South Australia and the Northern Territory being satisfied with the size of their house are 91.5 and 87.3 per cent respectively lower than those of the residents in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is also significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the size of the house are 82.6 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

Table A3: Logistic regression of satisfaction with design of house

Variable	Coefficients ± SE	*%*	*z*	*P*
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	-0.66±0.75	-48.3	-0.87	0.382
SA	-2.14±0.72	-88.3	-2.95	0.003
NT	-1.51±0.79	-78.1	-1.9	0.058
QLD	-1.65±0.76	-81.1	-2.19	0.023
Proximity (centrally-located)	-0.29±0.60	34.6	-0.49	06222
House refurbished	0.56±0.45	75.2	1.24	0.215
No. occupants in household	-0.17±0.08	-16.3	-2.12	0.034

In Table A3 above, the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with design of house are presented. The state coefficients for South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland are significant, indicating that their levels of satisfaction are statistically different from Fitzroy Crossing residents' satisfaction with the design of their house. The odds of residents in South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory being satisfied with the design of their house are between 78.1 and 88.3 per cent lower than those of the residents in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the design of the house are 34.6 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

Table A4: Logistic regression of satisfaction with the way rent is collected

Variable	Odds ± SE	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	-0.48±14	-38.1	-0.32	0.747
SA	-2.04±1.27	-87	-1.60	0.108
NT	-1.30±1.28	-72.8	-1.01	0.312
QLD	-0.49±1.23	-38.9	-0.40	0.690
Proximity (centrally-located)	2.32±1.19	92.7	1.95	0.052
House refurbished	0.34±0.12	41.8	1.14	0.256
No. occupants in household	0.14±0.12	15.8	1.14	0.256

In Table A4 above, the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with the 'way rent is collected' are presented. The state coefficients are not significant indicating that there is no statistical difference among the different states and their attitudes towards the way the rent is collected. The only other predictor that is significant is proximity, which indicates that the odds of being satisfied with the way rent is collected are 92.7 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

Table A5: Logistic regression of satisfaction with how quick repairs are done

Variable	*Odds* ± *SE*	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	1.08±0.63	195.8	1.72	0.086
SA	-0.63±0.06	-45.3	-0.93	0.352
NT	-0.10±0.80	-9.8	-0.13	0.898
QLD	0.36±0.70	44.3	0.52	0.604
Proximity (centrally-located)	0.97±0.55	163.9	1.74	0.081
House refurbished	-0.26±0.44	-23.3	-0.60	0.552
No. occupants in household	-0.08±0.08	-8	-0.98	0.327

In Table A5 above, the results of the logistic regression for satisfaction with how quickly repairs are done is presented. The state coefficient for Kununurra is significant indicating that there is a statistical difference between Kununurra and Fitzroy Crossing residents. The odds of residents in Kununurra being satisfied with how quickly repairs are done is 195.8 per cent higher than residents in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the speed of repairs are 163.9 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas.

Improvement in housing and living conditions

In this section, the results of survey respondents' attitudes towards whether housing and living conditions in their communities has improved is presented. These results are derived from Question 17 to 21 of the survey, which asked respondents: 'Things have improved because [state/territory housing department] is managing your house?'. For Questions 17, 18 and 19, respondents were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse. For Questions 20 and 21, respondents were given slightly different five

response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) much more; (2) a bit more; (3) no change; (4) a bit less; and (5) much less.

Analysis

To make comparisons across the various issues, the respondents' attitudes towards the level of improvement was determined by calculating the rating average for each response. Each response category was given a rating weight to denote a level of improvement according to the respondent with a higher rating weight indicating greater satisfaction and a lower value indicating greater dissatisfaction—that is very satisfied was given a value of 5 and very dissatisfied was given a value of 1. The count of each response category was multiplied by the rating weight, then divided by the count of all response categories to provide a rating average of each response category. Each response category's rating average was summed to produce a rating average for the item overall. Higher rating averages indicate higher levels of satisfaction.

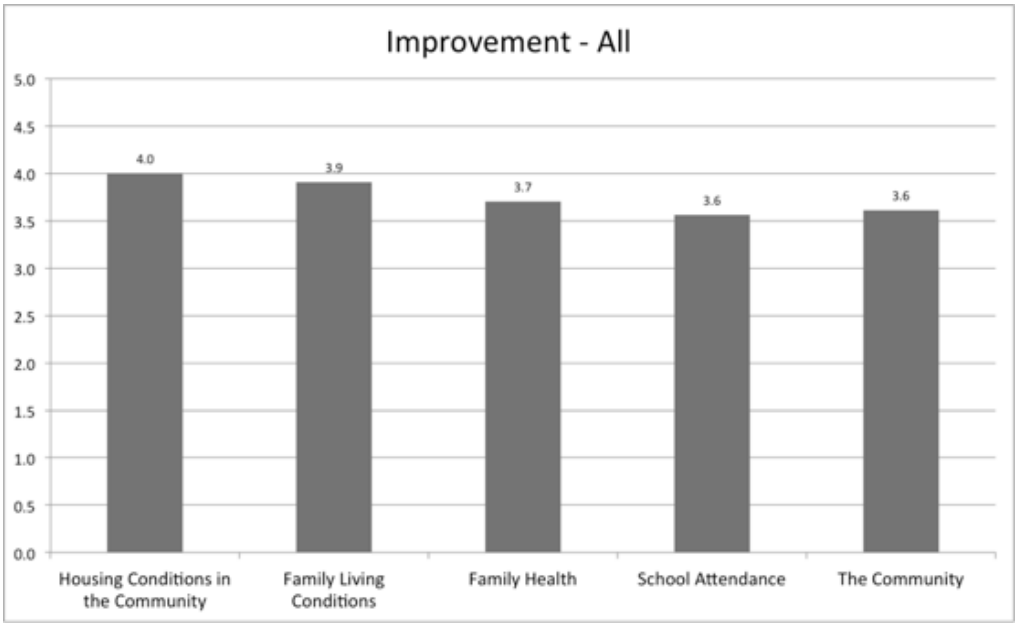
Improvements—all

Table A6: Level of improvement, all

Rank	Issue	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	Housing cond.	35.65	35.65	22.61	5.22	0.87	4.0
2	Fam. living cond.	36.52	26.96	28.7	6.09	1.74	3.9
3	Family health	28.95	23.68	39.47	4.39	3.51	3.7
4	The community	22.22	32.41	34.26	6.48	4.63	3.6
5	School attendance	17.5	23.75	56.25	2.5		3.6

In Table A6 above, the proportions and rating averages for attitudes towards improvement in the five issues are presented. The five issues have been ranked in order according to respondents' rating of the level of improvement across the whole sample. Across the whole sample, respondents felt that housing conditions in the community were the most improved because of state and territory-managed housing followed closely by family living conditions. The third most improved issue was family health. The least improved issues—the overall community conditions and school attendance were equal ranked. A clearer comparison between the study locations can be seen in Table A7 below.

Figure A9: Rating averages of improvement in housing conditions in community



Improvements in housing conditions in the community

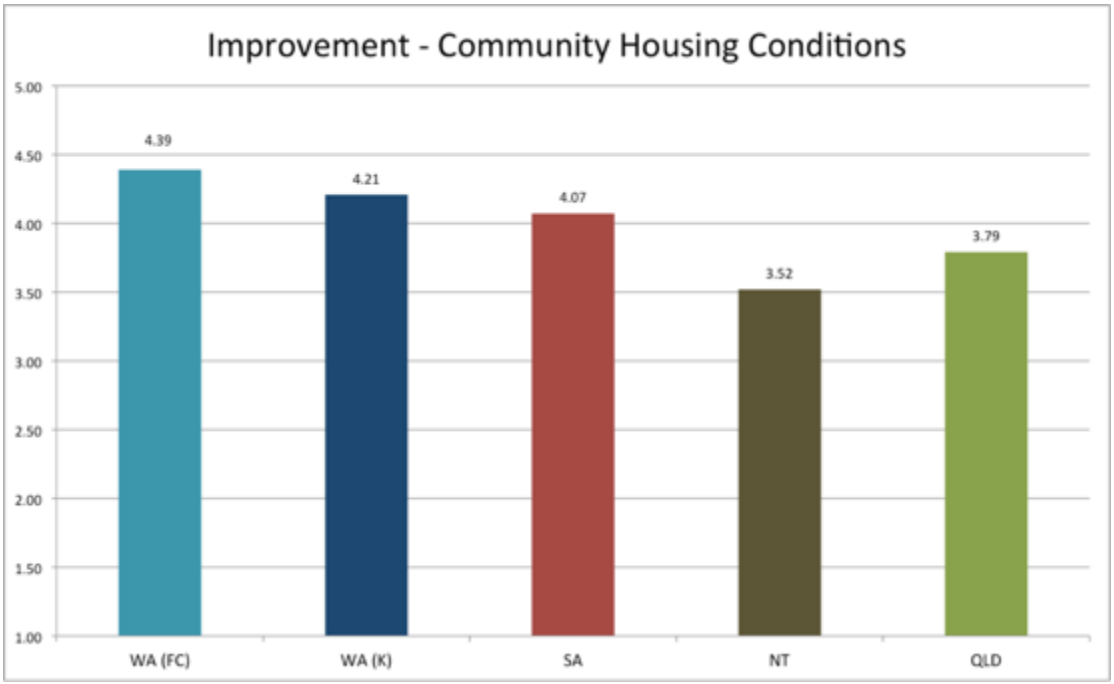
Table A7: Level of improvement in community housing conditions

Rank	State	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	WA (FC)	53.57	35.71	7.14	3.57		4.39
2	WA (K)	37.5	50	8.33	4.17		4.21
3	SA	50	21.43	14.29	14.29		4.07
4	QLD	25	29.17	45.83			3.79
5	NT	16	36	36	8	4	3.52
	Sample						*4.00*

In Table A7 above, the proportions and rating averages for attitudes towards improvement in family living conditions across the sample and the state and territory sub-samples are presented in rank order of improvement. Respondents were asked, 'Has the condition of the houses in your community improved?' and were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse. The overall sample rating is 4.00 indicating that across the sample overall, respondents felt that the condition of houses in their communities were better because of state and territory-managed housing. Among the five study locations, there is a noticeable difference between the Western and South Australian study locations in comparison to the Northern Territory and Queensland. The Western and South Australian locations have rankings above 4 and higher proportions of 'better' ratings indicating a strong consensus among these groups. Fitzroy Crossing is ranked the highest with almost 90 per cent of respondents indicating that houses in the community were better because of the hybrid arrangements involving a partnership between an ICHO and the state housing department. And, of those, over 50 per cent indicated houses were a lot better. Similarly, over 88 per cent of Kununurra residents indicated that houses were better with a third indicating a lot better and in South Australia, 75 per cent of respondents indicated houses in their community were better with 50 of the respondents indicating houses were a lot better. In contrast, sentiment in Queensland was more mixed, with just over half of respondents

indicating that houses in their community were better and the remainder indicating that houses were about the same. In the Northern Territory, over half of respondents felt that houses in the community were better because of territory-managed housing, over a third expressed no difference and 12 per cent felt the condition of houses in the community was worse. A clearer comparison between the study locations can be seen in Figure A10 below.

Figure A10: Rating averages of improvement in housing conditions in community



Improvement in family living conditions

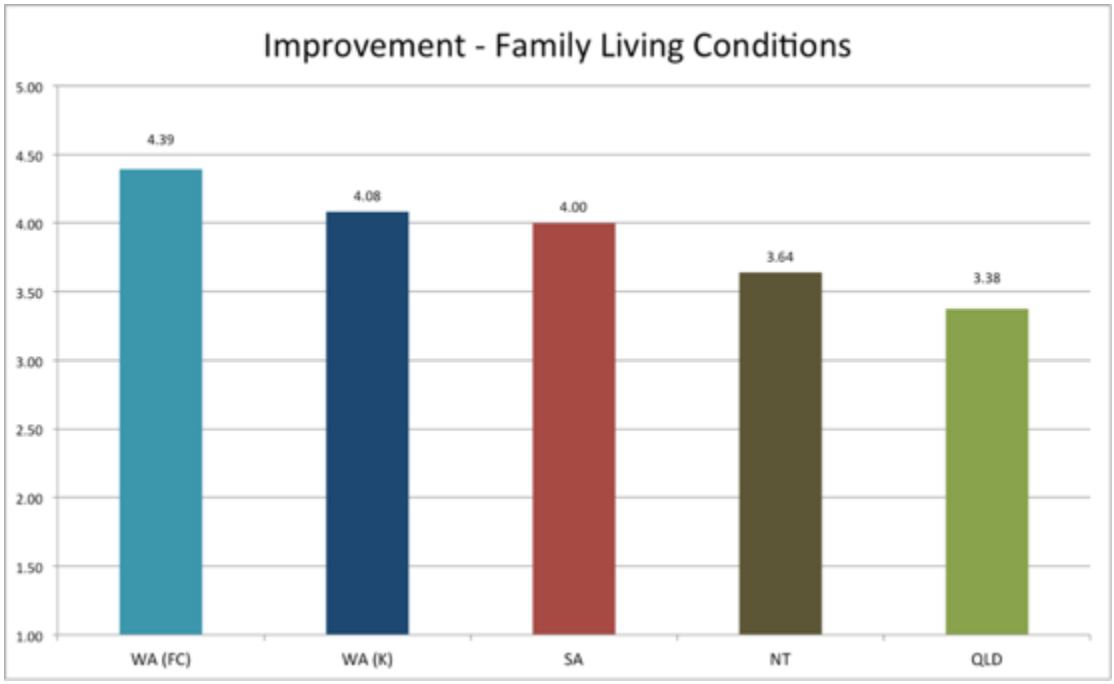
Table A8: Level of improvement in family living conditions

Rank	State	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	WA (FC)	46.43	46.43	7.14			4.39
2	WA (K)	50	25	12.5	8.33	4.17	4.08
3	SA	35.71	35.71	21.43	7.14		4.00
4	NT	32	12	44	12		3.64
5	QLD	16.67	16.67	58.33	4.17	4.17	3.38
	Sample						*4.02*

In Table A8 above, the proportions and rating averages for attitudes towards improvement in family living conditions across the sample and the state and territory sub-samples are presented in rank order of improvement. Respondents were asked: 'Have the living conditions for your family improved?' and were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse. The overall sample rating is 4.02 indicating that across whole sample, respondents felt that family living conditions are better because of state and territory-managed housing. Among the five study locations, there is a noticeable difference between the Western and South Australian study locations in comparison to those in the Northern Territory and Queensland. Those three study locations all have rankings above 4 and higher proportions of 'better' ratings indicating a strong consensus among these groups.

Fitzroy Crossing is ranked highest with over 90 per cent of respondents indicating that family living conditions were better because of state-managed housing. Between 70 and 75 per cent of respondents in both Kununurra and South Australia also indicated that family living conditions were better. In contrast, there was the same proportion of respondents in the Northern Territory who felt that family living conditions were better as there were who felt that things were the same. Almost 60 per cent of respondents in Queensland felt family living conditions were about the same, whereas just over a third felt family living conditions were better. A clearer comparison between the study locations can be seen in Figure A11 below.

Figure A11: Rating averages of improvement in family living conditions



Improvements in family health

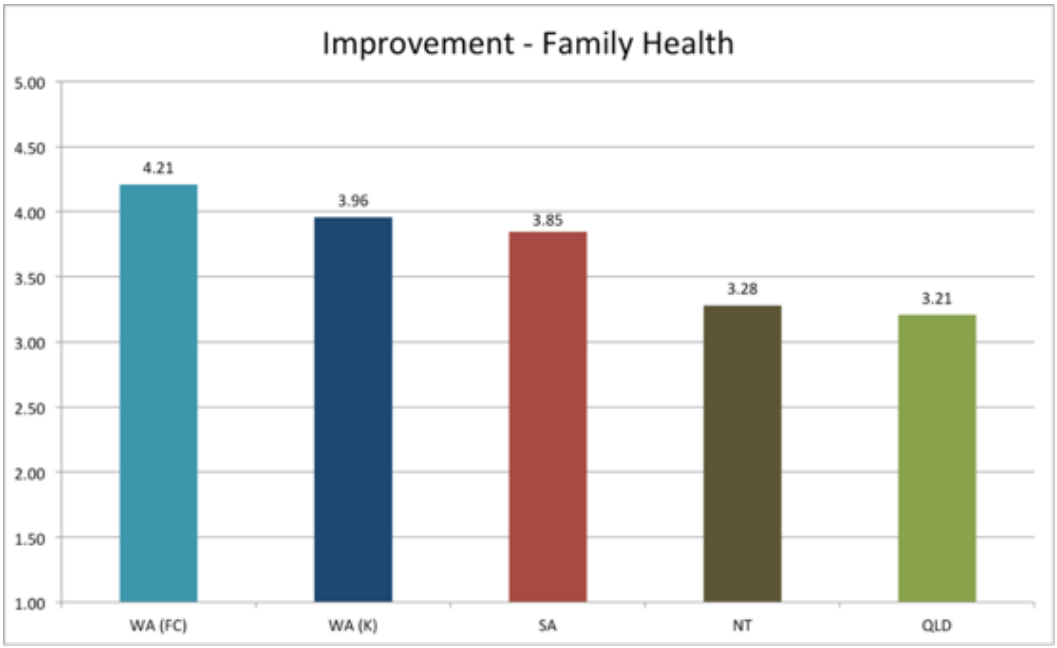
Table A9: Level of improvement in family health

Rank	State	A lot better	A bit better	About the same	A bit worse	A lot worse	Rating
1	WA (FC)	46.43	28.57	25			4.21
2	WA (K)	41.67	25	25	4.17	4.17	3.96
3	SA	23.08	38.46	38.46			3.85
4	NT	16	20	48	8	8	3.28
5	QLD	12.5	12.5	62.5	8.33	4.17	3.21
	Sample						*3.70*

In Table A9 above, the proportions and rating averages for attitudes towards improvement in family health across the sample and the state and territory sub-samples are presented in rank order of improvement. Respondents were asked: 'Has the health of your family improved?' and were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse. The overall sampling rating is 3.70 indicating that overall, respondents felt that family health had not really changed because of state-territory-managed housing. Among the five

study locations, Fitzroy Crossing is ranked first with the highest rating average and around 75 per cent of respondents who felt that family health was better. Two-thirds of respondents from Kununurra and over 60 per cent of South Australian respondents also felt that family health was better. In the Northern Territory and Queensland, just over a third and a quarter respectively of respondents from both locations indicated that family health was better. Almost two-thirds of respondents from Queensland and between 40 and 50 per cent of respondents from South Australia and the Northern Territory indicated that family health was about the same. Comparatively, a quarter of respondents from the Western Australian study locations answered 'about the same' when asked about improvements in family health. A clearer comparison between the study locations can be seen in Figure A12 below.

Figure A12: Rating averages of improvement in family health



Improvements in school attendance

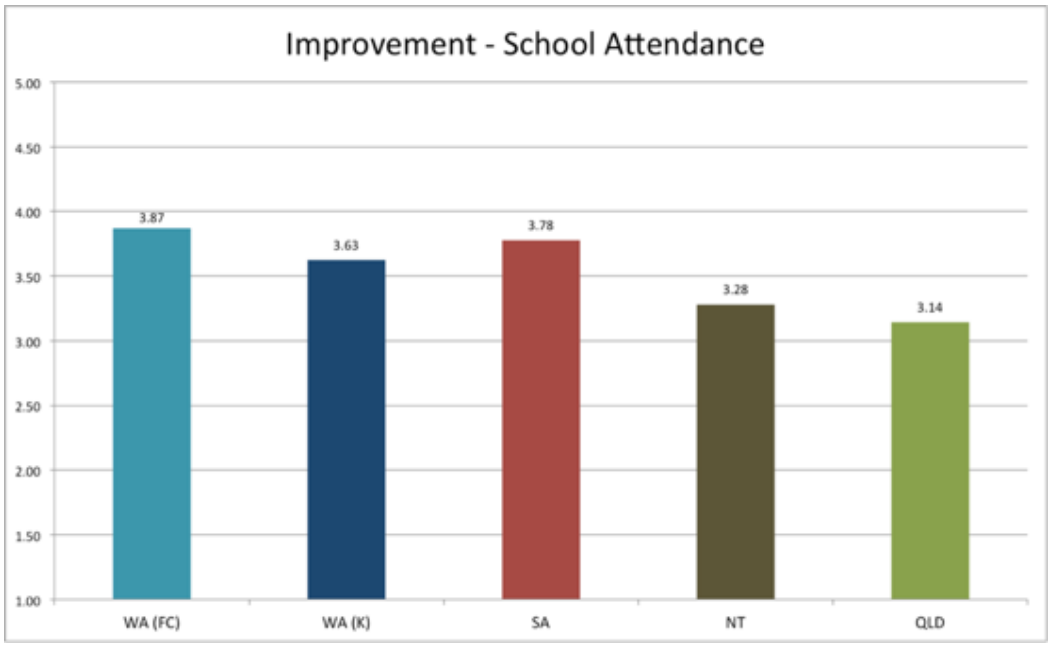
Table A10: Level of improvement in school attendance

Rank	State	Much more	A bit more	No change	A bit less	Much less	Rating
1	WA (FC)	26.09	39.13	30.43	4.35		3.87
2	SA	33.33	11.11	55.56			3.78
3	WA (K)	12.5	37.5	50			3.63
4	NT	12	8	76	4		3.28
5	QLD		14.29	85.71			3.14
	Sample						*3.56*

In Table A10 above, the proportions and rating averages for attitudes towards improvement in family health across the sample and the state and territory sub-samples are presented in rank order of improvement. Respondents were asked: 'Have your kids gone to school more often?' and were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) much more; (2) a bit more; (3) no change; (4) a bit less; and (5) much less. The overall sample rating is 3.56 which indicates overall that respondents across the sample did not think school attendance has changed because of state and territory-

managed housing. Among the five study locations, Fitzroy Crossing was ranked first with over two-thirds of the sample indicating that their children were attending school more. Almost 45 per cent of respondents from South Australia felt that their children were attending more. Residents from Kununurra were mixed in their attitudes as to whether their children were attending school more: half the Kununurra sample felt that their children were attending school more and the other half felt there had been no change. In contrast, over 85 and 75 per cent of residents in Queensland and the Northern territory respectively felt school attendance had not changed. A clearer comparison between the study locations can be seen in Figure A13 below.

Figure A13: Rating averages of school attendance



Improvements in overall community conditions

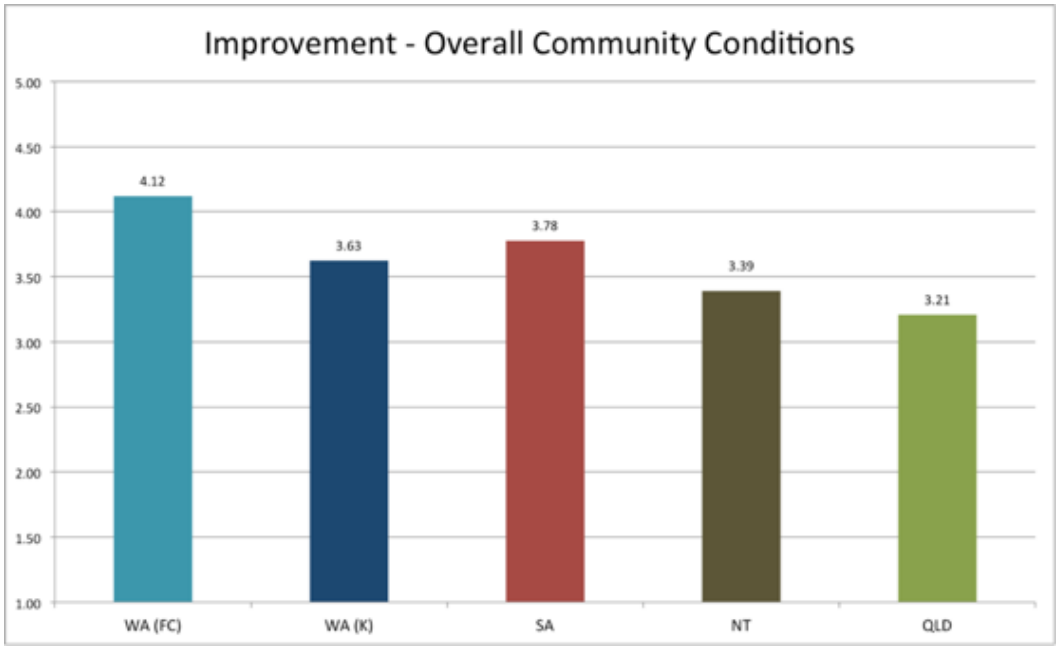
Table A11: Level of improvement in overall community conditions

Rank	State	Much more	A bit more	No change	A bit less	Much less	Rating
1	WA (FC)	40	40	16		4	4.12
2	SA	16.67	50	25	8.33		3.78
3	WA (K)	20.83	37.5	29.17	8.33	4.17	3.63
4	NT	13.04	21.74	60.87		4.35	3.39
5	QLD	16.67	20.83	37.5	16.67	8.33	3.21
	Sample						*3.61*

In Table A11 above, the proportions and rating averages for attitudes towards improvement in overall community conditions across the sample and the state and territory sub-samples are presented in rank order of improvement. Respondents were asked: 'Overall, are things in the community better?' and were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse. The overall sample rating average is 3.61, which suggests that across the whole sample, respondents felt that community conditions had not changed because of state and territory-managed housing. Among the five study locations, Fitzroy Crossing is ranked first with the highest rating average. 80 per cent of respondents indicating

that overall community conditions were better. The lowest ranked among the study locations was Queensland which had the largest proportion of respondents who felt that things were worse. A clearer comparison between the study locations can be seen in Figure A14 below.

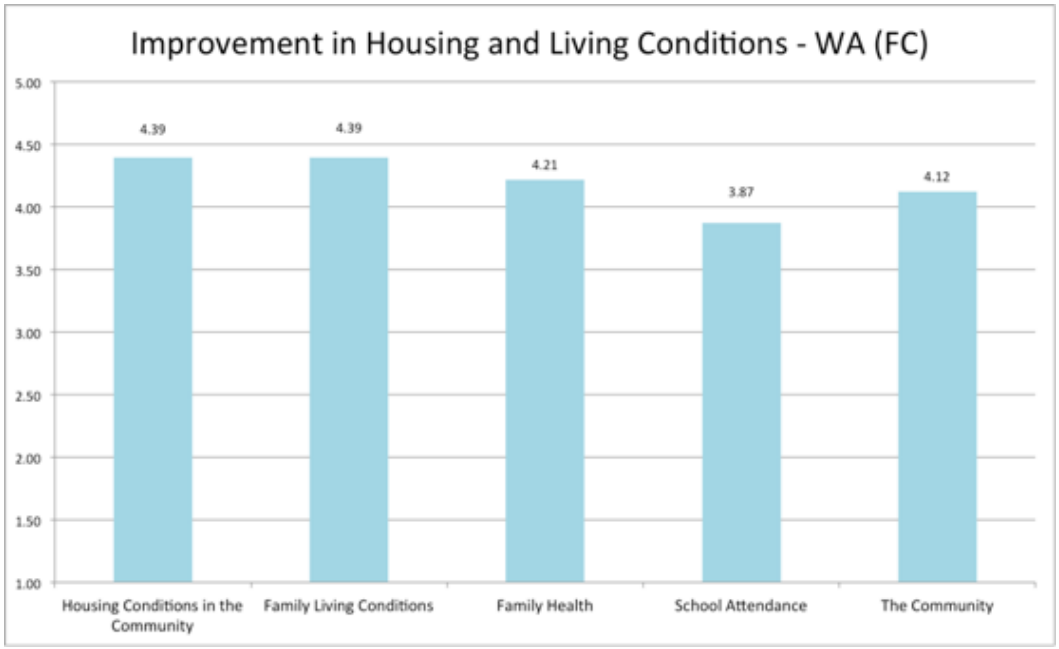
Figure A14: Rating averages of improvement in overall community conditions



Improvement in housing and living conditions by state

Improvements— Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds, WA

Figure A15: Rating averages in the improvement of housing and living conditions in Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds, WA

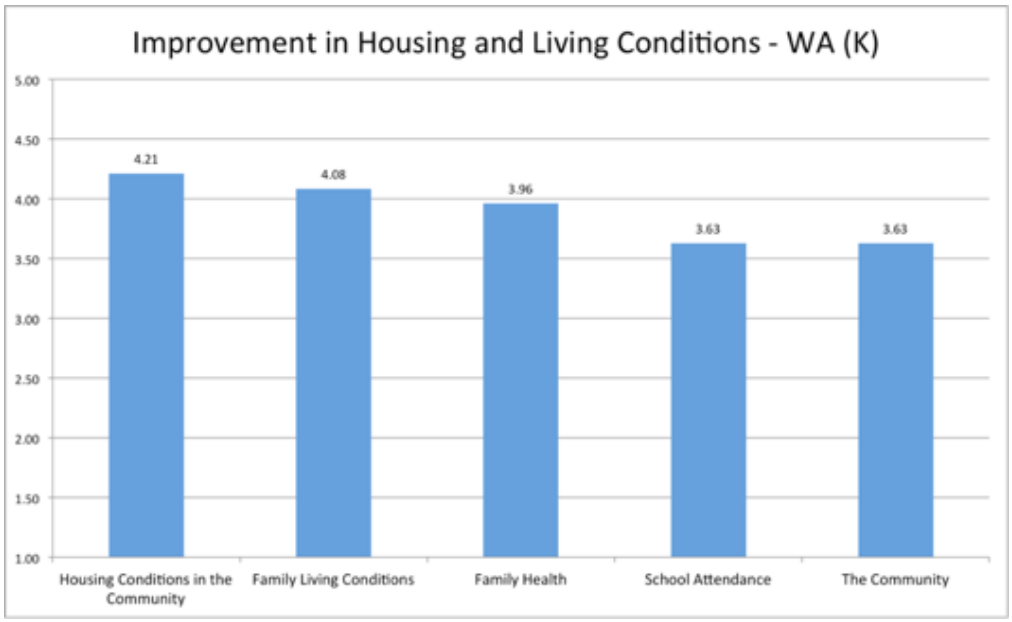


The rating averages for improvement in housing and living conditions among the Fitzroy Crossing sub-sample are presented in Figure A15 above. Respondents from Fitzroy Crossing rated family health as the housing and/or living condition that has improved the most because of housing being managed by the state department. In order of rating, this group rated family

living conditions, community housing conditions and the overall conditions in the community as the second, third and fourth most improved in Fitzroy Crossing. The least improved was the school attendance of children.

Improvement— Kununurra and surrounds, WA

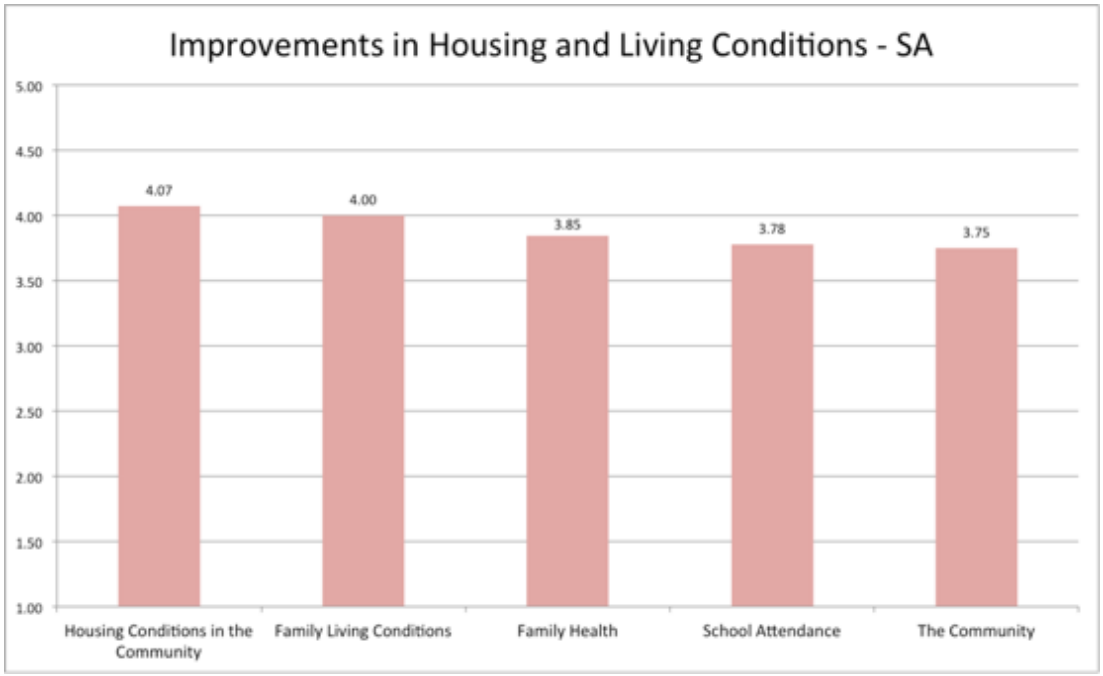
Figure A16: Rating averages in the improvement of housing and living conditions in Kununurra and surrounds, WA



Improvement rating averages in housing and living conditions among the Kununurra sub-sample are presented in Figure A16 above. Respondents from Kununurra rated community housing conditions as the most improved issue because of state-managed housing. The second most improved issue rated by Kununurra residents was family living conditions followed by family health and the school attendance of children. Overall conditions in the community were rated as the least improved by Kununurra residents.

Improvement—APY Lands, SA

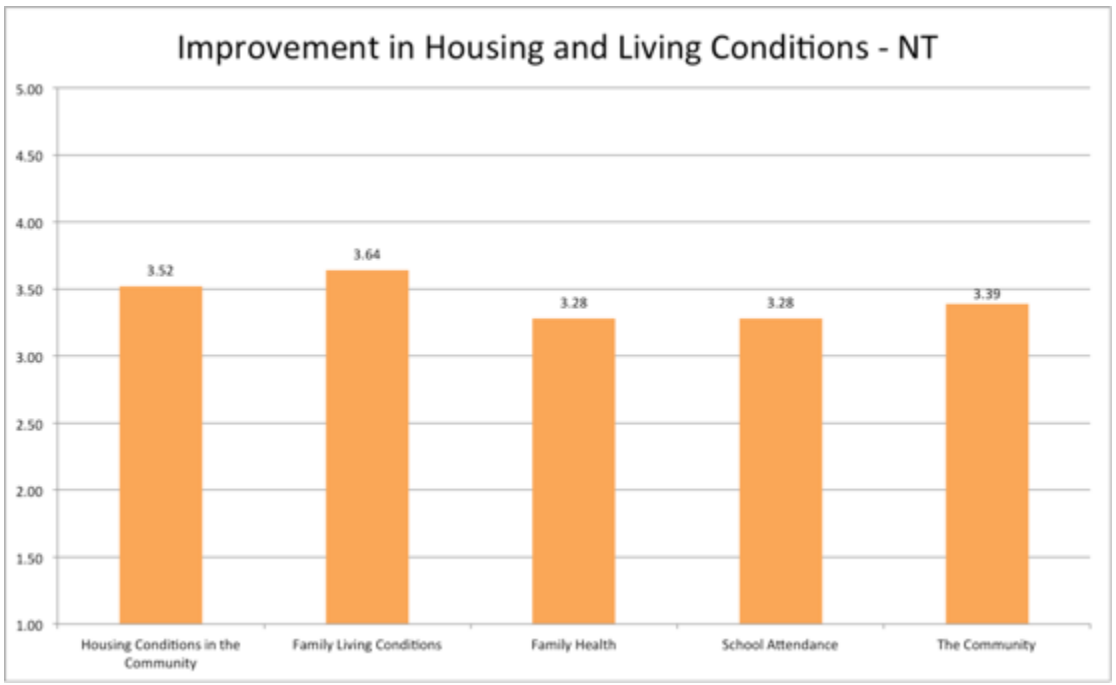
Figure A17: Rating averages in the improvement of housing and living conditions in South Australia



Improvement rating averages in housing and living conditions among the South Australian sub-sample are presented in Figure A17 above. Respondents from South Australia rated community-housing conditions as the most improved issue because of state-managed housing closely followed by family living conditions. The third most improved issue rated by South Australian residents was family health. School attendance and overall conditions in the community were rated as the least improved issues.

Improvement—Ngukkur, NT

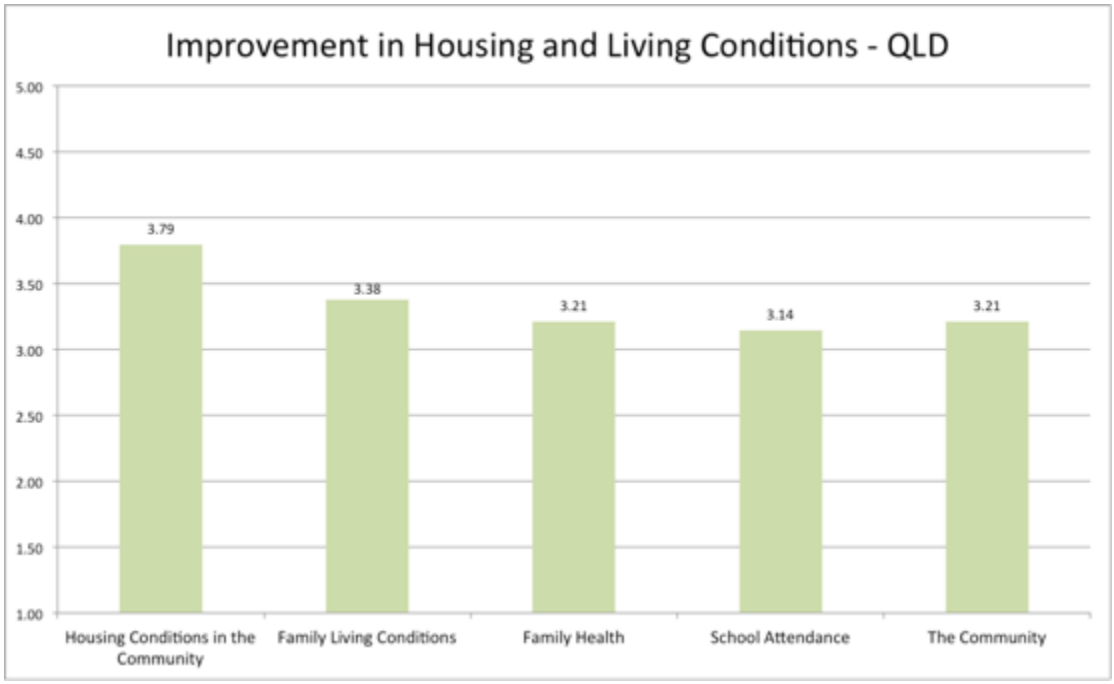
Figure A18: Rating averages in the improvement of housing and living conditions in NT



Improvement rating averages in housing and living conditions among the Northern Territory sub-sample are presented in Figure A18 above. Respondents from the Northern Territory rated family living conditions as the most improved issue because of territory-managed housing closely followed by community housing conditions and overall conditions in the community. Family health and school attendance were rated as the least improved issues because of territory-managed housing.

Improvement—Cooktown Region, Queensland

Figure A19: Rating averages in the improvement of housing and living conditions in Queensland



Improvement rating averages in housing and living conditions among the Queensland sub-sample are presented in Figure A19 above. Respondents from Queensland rated community-housing conditions as the most improved issue because of state-managed housing. The second most improved issue was family conditions followed by family health and overall community conditions, which was equally ranked as the fourth most improved issue. School attendance was rated as the least improved issue because of state-managed housing.

Logistic regression of improvement in housing and family conditions

In this section, the results of a series of logistic regressions undertaken to estimate respondents agreement that housing and family living conditions in their communities have improved because of state or territory managed housing in their community. Logistic regression was undertaken to predict the odds indicating that things had improved or not according to predictors, such as housing occupancy or state, for example. This section focuses on Questions 15, 16 and 17 of the survey, which asked respondents: 'Things have improved because [state/territory housing department] is managing your house?'. For Questions 17, 18 and 19, respondents were given five response category options to indicate their attitudes towards the level of improvement: (1) a lot better; (2) a bit better; (3) about the same; (4) a bit worse; and (5) a lot worse.

Analysis

To preform logistic regression on the improvement measures, each variable was recoded into a binary response variable in which 0 indicates no and 1 indicates conditions are better. The 'about the same' responses were recoded as 0 to preserve sample numbers. The predictors for the logistic regressions were a series of binary response variables: state, proximity (1 = located in a central area), house upgrade/refurbishment (1 = respondent living in a newly-built or upgraded/refurbished household) and number of occupants in the household. The reference category for state is Western Australia—Fitzroy Crossing and as such as coefficients are estimates of differences between the state and Fitzroy Crossing. For interpretation, the exponential function of each coefficient has been calculated to indicate a percentage change in the odds of agreeing that conditions were better or worse.

Table A12: Results of logistic regression for improvement in housing conditions in the community

Variable	Coefficient ± SE	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	0.20±0.04	0.1	-0.01	0.999
SA	-1.05±0.97	-65.2	-1.09	0.275
NT	-2.56±0.97	-92.3	-2.63	0.009
QLD	-0.75±0.84	-54.4	-0.930	0.351
Proximity (centrally-located)	1.59±0.85	391	1.87	0.062
House refurbished	1.01±0.57	176	1.76	0.078
No. occupants in household	0.22±0.10	25.8	2.16	0.030

In Table A12 above, the results of the logistic regression for improvement in housing conditions in the community are presented. The coefficient for the Northern Territory is significant, indicating that there is a statistical difference between Fitzroy Crossing and Northern Territory respondents in their attitudes towards whether they agree that housing conditions in the community have improved because of state or territory-managed housing in their community. The odds of residents in the Northern Territory agreeing that housing conditions in their community have improved because of territory-managed housing is 92.3 per cent lower than the odds of the residents in Kununurra. Proximity is also significant, indicating that the odds of agreeing that family living conditions have improved are 391 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas. The odds of those living in newly-built or upgraded/refurbished houses agreeing that housing conditions have improved is 176 per cent greater than those who are living in households that have not been refurbished. Number of household occupants is also significant, indicating that for every increase in the number of persons within the household there is a 25.8 per cent increase in the odds of agreeing housing conditions have improved.

Table A13: Results of logistic regression for improvement in family health

Variable	Odds ± SE	%	z	P
State (Reference: WA (FC))				
WA (K)	0.41±0.71	-17.9	0.58	0.563
SA	-0.19±0.78	-87.2	-0.25	0.802
NT	=2.05±0.97	-89.4	-2.36	0.018
QLD	-2.24±0.82	-61	-2.73	0.006
Proximity (centrally-located)	1.19±0.49	231.6	2.42	0.016
House refurbished	-0.94±0.71	-4.3	-1.32	0.188
No. occupants in household	-0.04±0.09	-17.9	-0.48	0.063

In Table A13 above, the results of the logistic regression for improvement in family health are presented. The coefficients for the Northern Territory and Queensland are significant indicating that there are statistical differences between respondents in those areas and respondents from Fitzroy Crossing on whether family health has improved in their communities because of state or territory-managed housing. The odds of agreeing that family health has improved in their community because of state or territory-managed housing is 89.4 and 61 per cent lower for respondents living in the Northern Territory or Queensland respectively than the odds of living in Fitzroy Crossing. Proximity is also significant, indicating that the odds of being satisfied with the size of the house are 231.6 per cent greater for those who are located in central areas compared to those in distant/remote areas. Number of household occupants is also significant; indicating that for every increase in the number of persons within the household, there is a 17.9 per cent decrease in the odds of respondents agreeing that family health has improved. House refurbishment is not significant in this model.

Importance of housing management issues

In this section, the results of survey respondents' most important housing management issues are presented. These results are derived from Question 15 of the survey, which asked respondents the following question: 'What are the first, second and third most important things that matter to you about how your housing is managed?'.

Respondents were allowed only to select three of nine housing management issues.

Analysis

The analysis of these data is presented in two ways. First, the frequency of each rank per response was tabulated at a state/area level to highlight state/area-by-state/area differences and to show which housing management issues were the most important in rank order across each state/area. Second, the overall importance of the response items compared with each other was determined by calculating the ranking average for each response. The value of each rank was reversed so that the first or most important issue was assigned a ranked value of 3 and the third or least important issue assigned a value of 1. The count of each rank per response was multiplied by the ranking weight then divided by the sum of each rank to provide an average of each rank. Each rank was summed to produce a ranking average for each response. The response item with the largest ranking average in the last column of each table is the most preferred choice. The ranking average was calculated for each response and cross-tabulated and graphed by state/area.

Table A14: Housing management issues by importance, overall

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	RAVG
1	Affordable rent	28.0	22.0	15.3	1.43
2	Quick repairs	20.6	13.8	13.6	1.13
3	An Indigenous housing officer	11.2	17.4	22.9	0.91
4	Repairs done well	13.1	17.4	13.6	0.88
5	Opportunity to have a say about housing	6.5	10.1	16.1	0.56
6	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	6.5	3.7	12.7	0.40
7	Regular contact w/ worker	5.6	5.5	3.4	0.31
8	A local housing officer	4.7	7.3	0.0	0.29
9	Fair allocation of housing	3.7	2.8	2.5	0.19
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

Across the whole sample, the most important housing management issue is rent with half of the sample ranking affordable rent as either their first or second most important housing management issue. The second and third most important housing management issues ranked across the whole sample are the speed of housing repairs and maintenance followed by having an Indigenous housing officer. At the other end of the rankings, 'fair allocation of housing' was ranked as the least important housing management issue across the sample.

Figure A20: Housing issues by level of importance, national—mean score

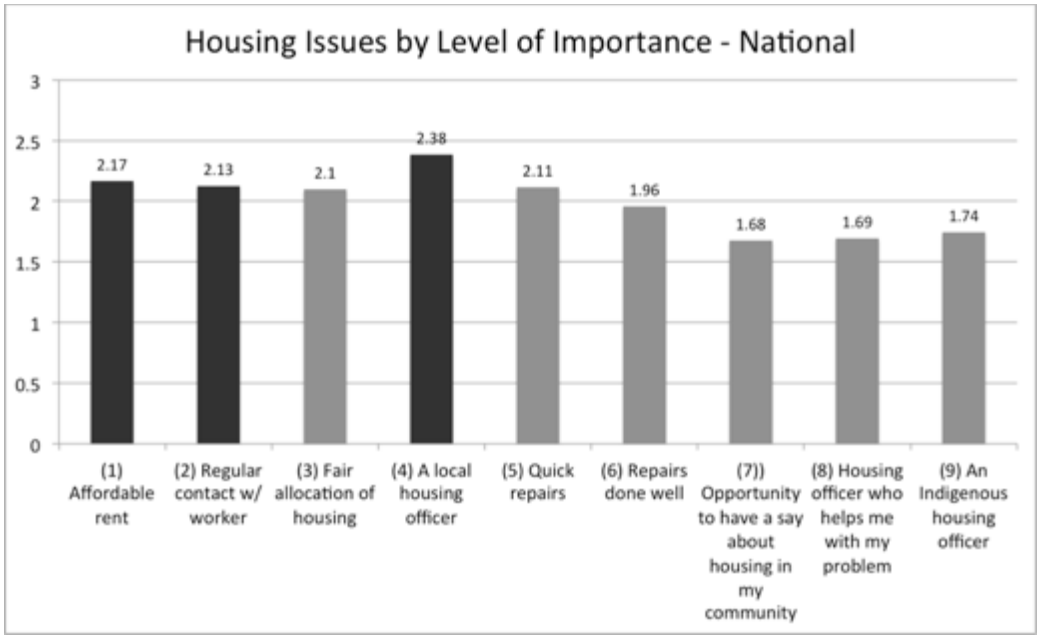


Table A15: Housing management issues by level of importance, Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	M
1	Quick repairs	32.14	21.43	7.14	1.46
2	Affordable rent	28.57	21.43	7.14	1.36
3	An Indigenous housing officer	7.14	14.29	42.86	0.93
4	Repairs done well	7.14	17.86	17.86	0.75
5	Regular contact w/ worker	14.29	7.14	3.57	0.61
6	A local housing officer	3.57	10.71	0.00	0.32
7	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	7.14	0.00	10.71	0.32
8	Opportunity to have a say about housing	0.00	7.14	7.14	0.21
9	Fair allocation of housing	0.00	0.00	3.57	0.04
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

Within the Fitzroy Crossing sample, the ranking of the housing management issues follows the same pattern as the whole sample with some differences (see Table A15 above). The most important issue among the Fitzroy Crossing sample is quick repairs with over half the sample ranking this as either their first or second most important housing issue. Half the Fitzroy Crossing sample ranked affordable rent as their first or second most important housing issue, and the third most important issue is having an Indigenous housing officer. Again, in line with the whole sample, the least important issue among the Fitzroy Crossing sample is the 'fair allocation of housing'.

Figure A21: Housing issues by level of importance, WA (Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds)—mean score

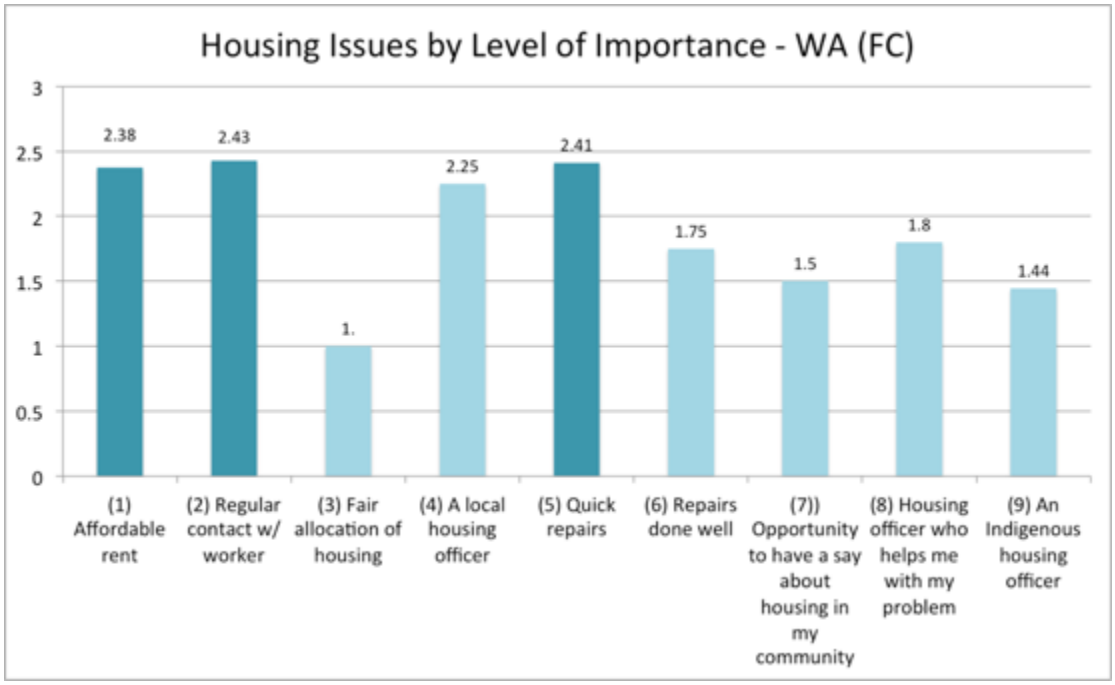
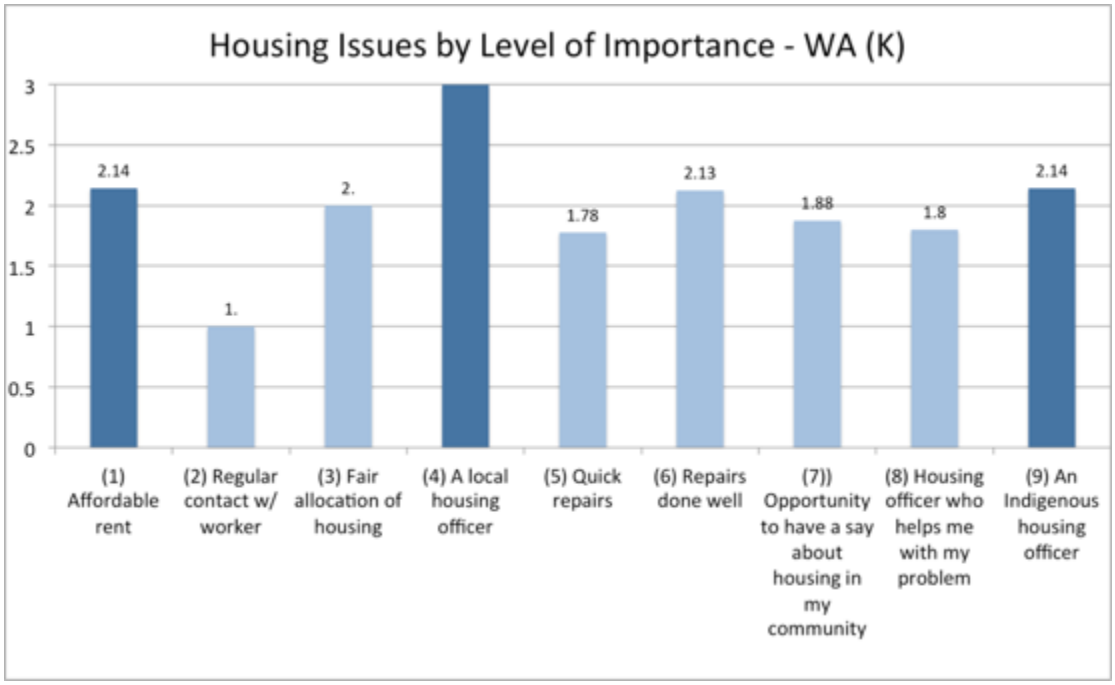


Table A16: Housing management issues by importance, Kununurra and surrounds, WA

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	M
1	Affordable rent	22.22	40.00	11.11	1.58
2	Repairs done well	16.67	15.00	11.11	0.91
3	Quick repairs	16.67	5.00	27.78	0.88
4	An Indigenous housing officer	16.67	10.00	11.11	0.81
5	Opportunity to have a say about housing	11.11	15.00	16.67	0.80
6	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	5.56	10.00	11.11	0.48
7	Fair allocation of housing	5.56	5.00	5.56	0.32
8	A local housing officer	5.56	0.00	0.00	0.17
9	Regular contact w/ worker	0.00	0.00	5.56	0.06
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

Across the Kununurra sample (see Table A16 above) affordable rent is ranked as the most important housing management issue with over 60 per cent of respondents ranking it as their first or second most important issue. The timeliness and satisfactoriness of repair and maintenance work are the second and third most important housing management issues. The least important issue is regular contact with housing workers.

Figure A22: Housing issues by level of importance, WA (Kununurra and surrounds)—mean score



Housing management in South Australia

Table A17: Housing management issues by importance, APY Lands, SA

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	M
1	Affordable rent	66.67	12.50	6.25	2.31
2	Quick repairs	16.67	12.50	25.00	1.00
3	An Indigenous housing officer	5.56	18.75	37.50	0.92
4	Repairs done well	5.56	31.25	0.00	0.79
5	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	5.56	6.25	18.75	0.48
6	A local housing officer	0.00	6.25	6.25	0.19
7	Regular contact w/ worker	0.00	6.25	0.00	0.13
8	Opportunity to have a say about housing	0.00	6.25	0.00	0.13
9	Fair allocation of housing	0.00	0.00	6.25	0.06
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

In Table A17 above, the rankings of housing management issues among the South Australian sample indicate similar trends presented earlier. Affordable rent is seen as the most important housing management issue with two-thirds of the sample ranking it as the most important issue followed by the speed of housing repairs and maintenance, and having an Indigenous office. The least important issue is the 'fair allocation of housing'.

Figure A23: Housing issues by level of importance, APY Lands, South Australia—mean score

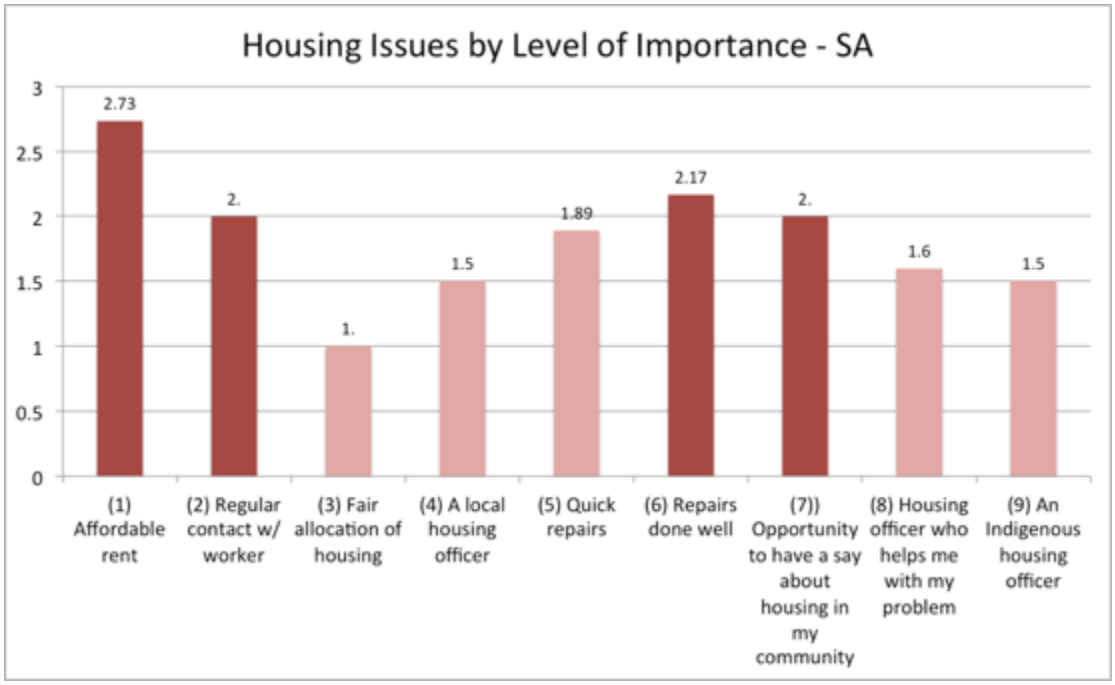
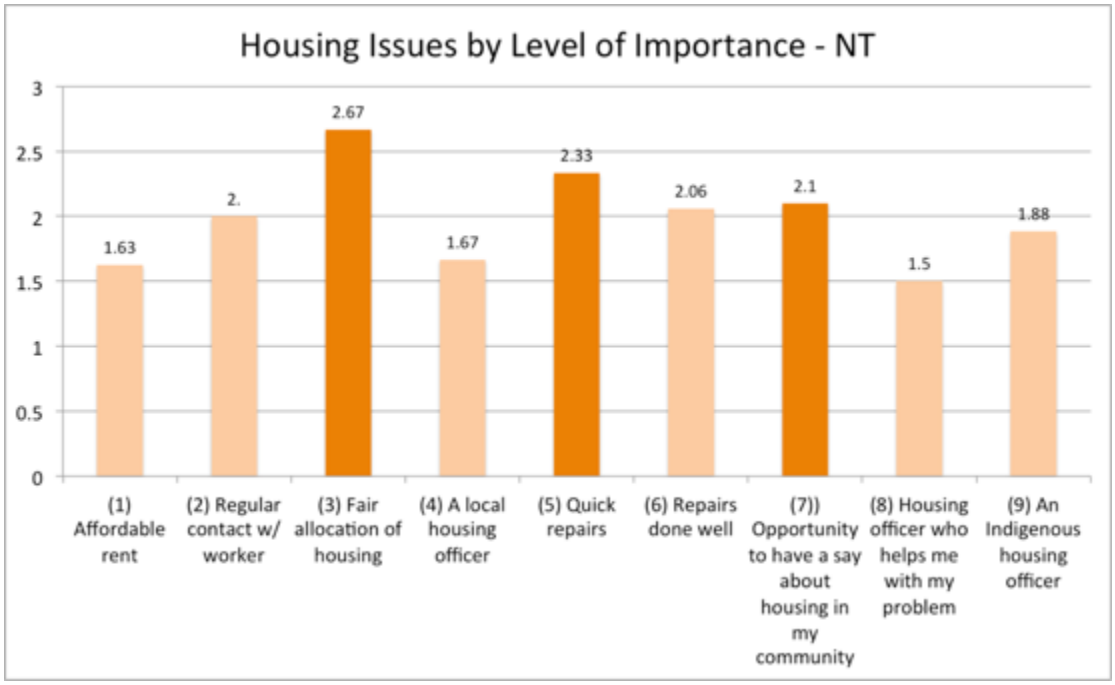


Table A18: Housing management issues by importance, Ngukkur, NT

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	M
1	Repairs done well	20.69	20.69	14.71	1.18
2	An Indigenous housing officer	17.24	17.24	20.59	1.07
3	Quick repairs	20.69	13.79	5.88	0.96
4	Affordable rent	6.90	20.69	23.53	0.86
5	Opportunity to have a say about housing	13.79	10.34	8.82	0.71
6	Regular contact w/ worker	6.90	3.45	5.88	0.33
7	A local housing officer	3.45	6.90	8.82	0.33
8	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	3.45	3.45	11.76	0.29
9	Fair allocation of housing	6.90	3.45	0.00	0.28
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

The speed and satisfactoriness of housing repairs and maintenance are the most important issue for respondents in the Northern Territory (see Table A18 above). Just over two-fifths of the sample ranked the satisfactoriness of repair and maintenance work as their first or second most important housing management issue and the expedience of housing repair and maintenance work was ranked as the third most important issue. The second most important issue is having an Indigenous housing officer. The least important issue was the 'fair allocation of housing'.

Figure A24: Housing issues by level of importance, Ngukkur, Northern Territory—mean score



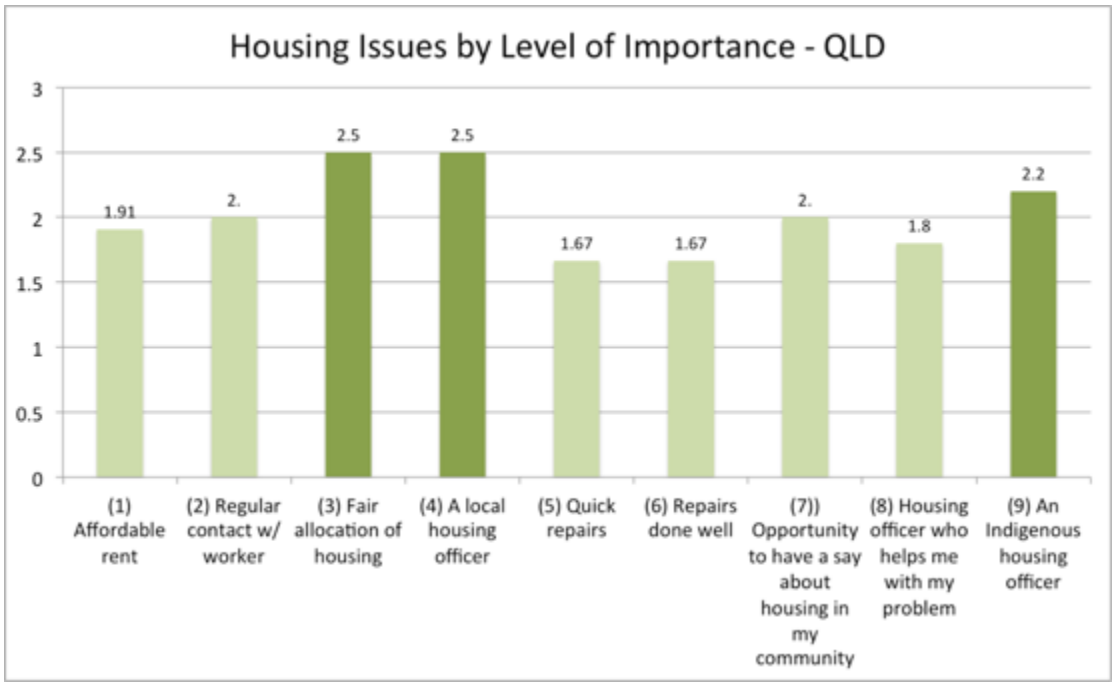
Housing management in Queensland

Table A19: Housing management issues by importance, Cooktown region, QLD

Rank	Item	1st	2nd	3rd	M
1	Affordable rent	28.57	13.33	31.25	1.436
2	An Indigenous housing officer	7.14	26.67	0.00	0.748
3	A local housing officer	14.29	13.33	0.00	0.695
4	Repairs done well	14.29	0.00	25.00	0.679
5	Quick repairs	7.14	13.33	18.75	0.668
6	Housing officer who helps me with my problem	14.29	0.00	18.75	0.616
7	Opportunity to have a say about housing	7.14	13.33	6.25	0.543
8	Fair allocation of housing	7.14	6.67	0.00	0.348
9	Regular contact w/ worker	0.00	13.33	0.00	0.267
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

As Table A19 above shows, affordable rent was ranked as the most important housing management issue for Queensland respondents with over 40 per cent of the sample ranking it as their most or second most important housing issue. Having an Indigenous housing officer was ranked as the second most important housing management issue. Interestingly, 'having a local housing officer' was ranked as the third most important housing issue with just over a quarter of respondents ranking it as their first or second most important housing issue. Comparatively, 'having a local housing officer' was ranked as the second least important housing issue across the whole sample.

Figure A25: Housing issues by level of importance, Cooktown region, Queensland—mean score



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