parity

chp
council
to homeless
persons

Responding to Indigenous Homelessness
in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand
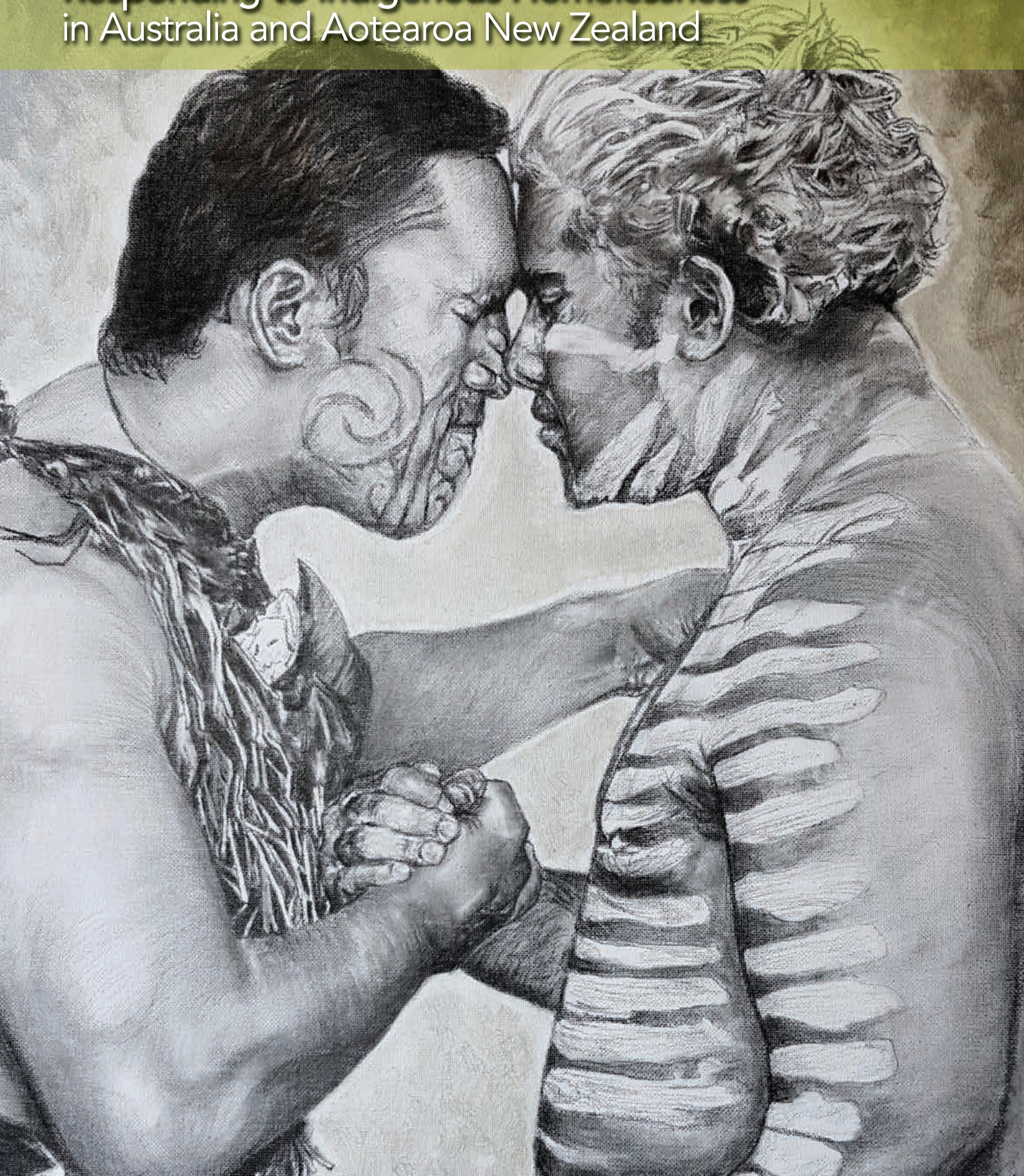
Contents

Council to Homeless Persons

Jenny Smith	Chief Executive Officer
Kate Colvin	Manager — Policy and Communications
Ian Gough	Manager — Consumer Programs
Lynette Deakes	Office Manager
Noel Murray	Publications Coordinator, *Parity* Editor
Lanie Harris and Catherine McGauran	Media and Communications Officers
Angela Kyriakopoulos	HAS Coordinator
Cassandra Bawden	Peer Education and Support Program Team Leader
Trish Hackney-Westmore	Capacity Building and Policy Officer
Leonie Kenny	Service Coordination Project Manager
Natasha Trajanovska	Accountant
Address	2 Stanley Street Collingwood Melbourne VIC 3066
Phone	(03) 8415 6200
Fax	(03) 9419 7445
E-mail	parity@chp.org.au
Website	www.chp.org.au

Promotion of Conferences, Events and Publications

Organisations are invited to have their promotional fliers included in the monthly mailout of *Parity*.
Rates: $90 National distribution, $70 Statewide distribution only.

Write for *Parity*!

Contributions to *Parity* are welcome.
Each issue of *Parity* has a central focus or theme. However, prospective contributors should not feel restricted by this as *Parity* seeks to discuss the whole range of issues connected with homelessness and the provision of housing and services to people who are homeless. Where necessary, contributions will be edited. Where possible this will be done in consultation with the contributor.

Parity on the CHP Website

www.chp.org.au/services/parity-magazine/
Contributions can be sent by email to *parity@chp.org.au* in a Microsoft Word or rtf format. If this option is not possible, contributions can be faxed on *(03) 9419 7445* or mailed to CHP.

Proposed 2016 *Parity* Publications Schedule

NB: Please note that this may be subject to change.
Please check out the CHP website: *www.chp.org.au* for updates.

October: Sustaining a Home: New Directions in Housing Support
November: Responding to Homelessness in NSW

Cover artwork

The cover art for this edition was provided by Australian artist Ahmed Al-zoubeidi (see page 12)

The views and opinions expressed in *Parity* are not necessarily those of CHP.

Editorial

Jenny Smith, CEO Council to Homeless Persons

The Indigenous peoples of both Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia experience homelessness at both much greater rates than the general population, and in ways that are often not comprehensible from within the frameworks of each country's dominant white culture.

This edition of *Parity* aims to build our knowledge of these experiences of homelessness, and explore the range of current and potential responses. The rich collection of articles reveals that there is much to learn from comparing and contrasting the experiences of, and responses to, the homelessness of Aboriginal Australians and the Māori people of Aotearoa.

The articles here underline the shared experiences of dispossession and colonisation, assimilationist policies and the perpetuation of structural disadvantage. They also demonstrate the significant differences in both the experience of, and response to, Indigenous homelessness in both countries.

In Australia, our Aboriginal brothers and sisters make up a quarter of those who experience homelessness.

Aboriginal Australians have been and continue to be rendered homeless many times over. This takes place through: the dispossession of their lands and country; the attempted alienation from and destruction of their culture through assimilationist policies; the break-up of families through the Stolen Generations; the many failures of government policy to provide access to appropriate and sustainable housing; and the impacts of endemic racism.

This edition of *Parity* brings together the voices of Aboriginal Australians and Māori people of Aotearoa through organisations and bodies representing many and diverse groups and interests. CHP worked closely with Dan Laws, state-wide Aboriginal Homelessness Network Co-ordinator from Ngwala Willumbong in Victoria, in the development of the framework for this edition. Hence most of the voices heard in this edition are those of Indigenous organisations and people from both Australia and Aotearoa.

These voices make it clear that the cultural or 'spiritual' dimensions of the experience of homelessness are central to the understanding of and response to Indigenous homelessness in both Australia and Aotearoa. This is more than a 'definitional' issue affecting how homelessness is 'counted', this is a dimension of understanding that must inform all aspects of policy and service development.

Several articles in this edition demonstrate that to be effective, the response to Indigenous homelessness in both countries must be led and organised by representative Indigenous organisations and bodies. That is, Indigenous organisations and bodies making the policies and developing the programs and services required by and for their peoples.

The contributions to this edition emphasise that the role of governments, is to help facilitate and properly resource Indigenous organisations to develop and implement *their* responses to Indigenous homelessness.

This message presents a challenge to both government and our sector to proactively work towards creating a stronger role in program and policy development for Indigenous leaders and organisations.

Glossary for *Parity* September edition

This glossary has been prepared using the online version of *Te Aka Māori–English, English–Māori Dictionary and Index*. This glossary is not definitive, and refers to this publication only.

Ahi kā *(noun)* burning fires of occupation, continuous occupation — title to land through occupation by a group, generally over a long period of time. Refers to those who have the right to occupy the land. The group is able, through the use of *whakapapa*, to trace back to primary ancestors who lived on the land.

Atua *(noun)* ancestor with continuing influence, god, demon, supernatural being, deity, ghost, object of superstitious regard, strange being. Many Māori trace their ancestry from atua in their *whakapapa* and they are regarded as ancestors with influence over particular domains.

Hapū *(noun)* kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe — section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. It consisted of a number of *whānau* sharing descent from a common ancestor, usually being named after the ancestor, but sometimes from an important event in the group's history.

Hau kāinga *(noun)* home, true home, local people of a *marae*, home people.

Ira tangata *(noun)* the passing down of genes from parent to child.

Iwi *(noun)* extended kinship group, tribe, nation — often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory.

Kāinga *(noun)* home, house, residence.

Kaupapa *(noun)* topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme, issue, initiative.

Kawa *(noun)* protocols which are determined at a *iwi/Hapū/marae* level and can change over time.

Kāwanatanga *(loan) (noun)* Government, governance

Kōrero *(verb) (-hia,-ngia,-tia)* to tell, say, speak, read, talk, address; *(noun)* speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse, statement, information.

Marae *(noun)* fenced-in complex of buildings and grounds that belongs to a particular *iwi* (tribe), *hapū* (sub tribe) or *whānau* (family).

Mauri *(noun)* life principle, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions — the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. Also used for a physical object, individual, ecosystem or social group in which this essence is located.

Ora *(verb)* to be alive, well, safe, cured, recovered, healthy, fit, healed; *(modifier)* healthy, fit, well; *(noun)* life, health, vitality.

Ōritetanga *(noun)* equality, equal opportunity.

Pā *(noun)* fortified village, fort, stockade, screen, blockade, city (especially a fortified one).

Papakāinga *(noun)* original home, home base, village, communal Māori land.

Papatūānuku *(personal name)* Earth, Earth mother and wife of Rangi-nui — all living things originate from them.

Pūmanawa *(noun)* inherent talents inherited from our parents, grandparents and ancestors, intuitive cleverness; *(modifier)* talented, gifted, consummate.

Rangatahi *(noun)* younger generation, youth.

Rohe *(noun)* boundary, district, region, territory, area, border (of land).

Rūnanga *(noun)* tribal council, the tribal administrative unit.

Taniwha *(noun)* water spirit, monster, dangerous water creature, powerful creature, chief, powerful leader, something or someone awesome — *taniwha* take many forms from logs to reptiles and whales and often live in lakes, rivers or the sea. They are often regarded as guardians by the people who live in their territory, but may also have a malign influence on human beings.

Te ao taiao *(noun)* natural world, environment, nature.

Te pani me te rawakore *(phrase)* The poor and dispossessed, sometimes used to describe those experiencing homelessness; **pani** *(noun)* bereaved person, orphan; **rawakore** *(noun)* poor, destitute, underprivileged.

Te reo Māori *(noun)* The Māori language.

Tikanga *(noun)* correct procedure, rules.

Tuatahi *(noun)* first.

Tuarua *(noun)* second.

Tūrangawaewae *(noun)* domicile, standing, place where one has the right to stand — place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and *whakapapa*.

Whakamā *(verb)* to be ashamed, shy, bashful, embarrassed; *(modifier)* ashamed, shy, bashful, embarrassed; *(noun)* shame, embarrassment

Whakapapa *(noun)* genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent.

Whānau *(noun)* extended family, family group.

Whanaungatanga *(noun)* relationship, kinship, sense of family connection — a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging. It develops as a result of kinship rights and obligations, which also serve to strengthen each member of the kin group. It also extends to others to whom one develops a close familial, friendship or reciprocal relationship.

Whenua *(noun)* land — often used in the plural; *(noun)* placenta, afterbirth.

The following are place names:
Kaeo
Whangaroa
Wainuiomata

Kāinga Ora — the name of a research programme at the University of Otago.

Part 1. Responding to Indigenous Homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand

Problem Definition: Māori Homelessness in New Zealand

Shiloh Groot* and Jenni Mace**

In New Zealand (NZ) many Māori live in impoverished and overcrowded conditions and, as such, are overrepresented in the homeless population. In this paper, we consider colonialism and societal developments that have impacted *whānau* (extended family) economically, culturally and socially, contributing to high rates of homelessness among Māori today.

Defining Homelessness

Homelessness has been a feature of urban life in NZ for over a century, inciting public deliberation as government officials and service providers contend with sourcing an adequate definition to respond effectively to the needs of those affected. No existing definition is fully adequate due to the complexities of homelessness and differing views on causes and solutions.[1] Most agree that a continuum of housing situations, ranging from street life (the absence of a dwelling) to inadequate and insecure housing, is useful.[2]

In 2009 Statistics NZ formulated a report with the aim of producing an official definition of homelessness. This national development reflected an acknowledgement of a gap in official statistics that needed to be addressed so government and community groups could better respond to homelessness. The concepts and definitions utilised were adapted from the European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS), while also attempting to recognise the societal, cultural, and environmental contexts particular to NZ. It also constitutes an acknowledgement of movement between the different forms of living rough, temporary shelter, and depending on the generosity of others.

The intersections of the social, physical, and legal domains within the housing sector are used as the basis for the Statistics NZ framework and subsequent updates. It is with reference to the intersections between these domains that a more complex conceptualisation of homelessness emerges. The resulting conceptual categories are: 'without shelter' (living on the streets and inhabiting improvised shelters, including shacks and cars); 'temporary accommodation' (hostels for people experiencing homelessness, transitional supported housing, women's refuges, and long-term motor camps and boarding houses); 'sharing accommodation' (temporary accommodation for people sharing someone else's private dwelling); and 'uninhabitable housing' (people residing in dilapidated dwellings). If complemented by lived understandings and everyday cultural practices we can develop a more contextualised understanding that supports the needs of Māori people experiencing homelessness.[3]

Such official definitions are produced for administrative and governance purposes.[4] However, when defining homelessness it is important to consider what the loss of a 'home' entails. Moore[5] defines home as not only a physical place that provides protection and warmth but a centre for our activities, and a vital source of identity, and belonging. If we consider the loss of these dimensions then it might be argued that the majority of the population at some stage in their lives may have experienced a sense of homelessness. Perhaps this is why many nation states omit qualitative ideas of the loss of home and emphasise 'accuracy' of measures and house-based definitions.[6] The development of a NZ definition of homelessness is an example of this.

A narrow focus on homelessness as the absence of physical shelter and as evidence of social pathology in urban settings, effectively detaches Māori experiences of homelessness from the broader socio-political context of colonial societies. The situations in which many Māori are located require us to extend such official definitions of homelessness.[7]

We argue that homelessness is endemic to experiences of colonialism, not only at the personal, but also at the *hapu* (sub-tribe), *iwi* (tribe) and national level where many Māori have experienced over 150 years of being rendered out of place in their *hau kainga* (ancestral homelands). Memmott and colleagues[8] refer to 'spiritual homelessness' in an effort to explain situations in which Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are displaced from ancestral lands, knowledge, rituals and kinship relationships. Similarly, Māori often experience homelessness as a loss of physical connection with *whanau* (family), *hapu* (sub-tribe) and *iwi* (tribe) which results in cultural and spiritual disconnection to varying degrees.[9]

In reaching an agreed definition of homelessness, it is necessary to seek Māori input and acknowledge the cultural, spiritual and experiential dimensions of homelessness. Such complexities surrounding homelessness, home and place are particularly apparent in research on Māori homelessness. For example, Groot and colleagues[10] demonstrated through the accounts of Māori who are homeless that tensions can be evoked between the profound sense of *whakamā* (shame and humiliation) at being dislocated from *whanau* (family) and *hau kāinga* (ancestral homeland), wanting to reconnect back with such places and relationships, and affiliating with life somewhere new.

5

Responding to Homelessness

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights every person has the right to adequate housing.[11] While many New Zealanders may support the abstract principle of all citizens being entitled to decent housing, their comprehension of the nature and extent of homelessness in their own country is minimal.[12] For example, in NZ many Māori live in impoverished and overcrowded conditions and, as such, are overrepresented in the homeless population.[13]

In rural communities, Māori seeking connection with *whanau* (family) and whanau land face limited rental and employment options and often must accept properties in poor condition.[14] Those whose *hau kainga* (ancestral homelands) are located in coastal areas are confronted by high rental costs and are subsequently displaced.

Despite this situation there is no coordinated response to homelessness or nationally resourced program of research and action in New Zealand. Further, in housing initiatives, Walker and Barcham [15] have argued that NZ has lagged behind Canada and Australia in supporting initiatives that recognise Indigenous self-determination in the design and delivery of social housing.

In New Zealand, cultural adequacy issues have arisen around the size and design of state-housing stock, including the need for low-cost communal housing.[16] No single government department has a statutory responsibility for people experiencing homelessness or for coordinating services. As a result, service provision has developed in a fragmentary and chaotic manner in New Zealand. Alongside private charities and faith-based social services, government agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development, Housing NZ Corporation, the Department of Corrections, Child, Youth and Family Services, and District Health Boards are involved in addressing the complex needs of people experiencing homelessness.

In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was an agreement, written in *te reo Māori* and English, that was made between the British Crown and Māori. As a founding document it provides a framework for social justice. Article 1 relating to *kawanatanga*/governance requires the Crown to provide services that meet the needs of Māori. Māori service users and providers need to be included in the research, definition, planning, implementation, and evaluation of homelessness prevention services to ensure they are informed by Māori values.

Government agencies and many non-Māori service providers are frequently not well equipped to offer culturally competent service due to an undersupply of speakers in *te reo* Māori, staff trained in bi-cultural protocols and referral processes that allow for working constructively with Māori service providers. This often leads to short-term solutions which result in many Māori people experiencing homelessness re-entering the cycle of homelessness on multiple occasions.

Article III of the Treaty refers to *oritetanga* or equity of health outcomes for Māori. Māori are over-represented in the areas that compound the risk of becoming homeless. It is important that people have access to Māori specific services to reduce the negative impact of homelessness on health and to assist in their re-integration longer-term. For example, *Marae*-based programs are doing preventative work to address problems that create and put people at increased risk of homelessness.[17] This typifies the type of partnerships that need to be formed around service providers as a means of integrating it into a broader service mix.

Conclusion

Despite a lack of official statistics or national recognition, homelessness is a serious societal issue in New Zealand. Māori people are over-represented among NZ homelessness populations. The colonial legacy of dispossession and exclusion also play a role in exacerbating and maintaining Māori homelessness. These unique features emphasise the need for culturally appropriate initiatives with respect to Māori homelessness and the involvement of Māori organisations in designing and delivering responses.

* Shiloh Groot is a Lecturer in social psychology at the University of Auckland and the Co-Chair to the Māori Caucus of the NZ Coalition to End Homelessness (NZCEH)

** Jenni Mace is a Lecturer in occupational therapy at the AUT and a member of the Tangata Tiriti Caucus of the NZCEH.

Endnotes

1. Moore J 2007, Polarity for integration? Towards a fuller understanding of home and homelessness, *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 24, pp.143–159.

2. Laurenson P J M 2005, *Public space and anti-homeless regulation: Local government responses to homelessness in three NZ cities* (Unpublished master's thesis), Otago University, Dunedin, and O'Brien M and de Hann I 2002 Empowerment research with a vulnerable group — homelessness and the social services: The story of a research project, *Social Work Review*, vol.14, no.1, pp.29–34.

3. Groot S, Hodgetts D, Nikora L W and Leggat-Cook C 2011, A Māori homeless woman, *Ethnography*, vol.12, no.3, pp.375–397.

4. Whiteford M 2010, Hot tea, dry toast and the responsibilisation of homeless people, *Social Policy and Society*, vol.9, no.2, pp.193–205.

5. Moore J 2007, op cit.

6. Human Rights Council 2015, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context* (A/HRC/31/54). Retrieved from *https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/294/55/PDF/G1529455.pdf?OpenElement*

7. Groot S et al 2011, op cit.

8. Memmott P, Long S, Chambers and Spring F 2003, *Categories of Indigenous 'homelessness' people and good practice responses to their needs*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Queensland Research Centre.

9. King P, Hodgetts D, Rua M and Te Whetu T 2016, Emplaced cultural practices through which homeless men can be Māori. In Christensen J and Peters E (2016) *Indigenous homelessness in Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

10. Groot S, Hodgetts D, Nikora L W and Rua M 2011, *Māori and Homelessness*. McIntosh T and Muholland M 2011, *Māori and Social Issues*, Huia Publishers, Wellington.

11. Human Rights Commission 2010, *Human rights in New Zealand: Nga tika tangata o Aotearoa*. Retrieved from Auckland, N.Z.: *https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/7014/2388/0544/Human_Rights_Review_2010_Full.pdf*

12. Winter P and Barnes J 1998, Why Research Homelessness in Hamilton? Paper presented at the *Sociological Association of Aotearoa (NZ) Annual Conference*, Hawkes Bay, 27–29 November 1998.

13. Groot S et al 2011 op cit.

14. Human Rights Commission 2010, op cit.

15. Walker R and Barcham M 2010, Indigenous-inclusive citizenship: The city and social housing in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, *Environment and Planning*, vol.42, no.2, pp.314–333.

16. Human Rights Commission 2010, op cit.

17. King P, Hodgetts D, Rua M and Te Whetu T 2016, op cit.

Māori Homelessness: Basic Statistics

Kate Amore, Research Fellow, University of Otago Wellington

This article presents key homelessness (or 'severe housing deprivation') statistics for Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZ). With the help of other researchers, Statistics New Zealand and many community agencies, I have so far produced these national prevalence or 'snapshot' statistics for 2001, 2006, and 2013, using census data and administrative data from emergency housing providers.[1,2] Unless specified, all statistics in this article are from 2013.

Definition

I define homelessness, as it pertains to physical living situation, as 'lack of access to minimally adequate housing', a definition that is both consistent with the official NZ Government definition and has been adopted by the Institute of Global Homelessness.[3] Classification of this population by living situation produces categories that are mostly similar to those used in Australia, but users should be aware that what is actually measured is quite different, and thus our trans-Tasman homelessness statistics are not comparable. Research that applies our respective definitions to each other's data would be useful to permit direct comparison, hopefully advancing conceptual and technical debate.

In essence, I identify a person as homeless if they are living in 'severely inadequate housing', have nowhere else to live, and are income-poor.[4]

How Many Homeless?

Our most recent national homelessness statistics are for 2013, when approximately 41,000 people, or one in 100 New Zealanders were identified as homeless. Of these, about a third, or 13,000 people, were Māori.

Overall, homelessness has grown at an accelerating rate, with an average growth of 2.0 per cent per year between 2006 and 2013, compared with 1.8 per cent over the preceding five years.

Ethnic Overrepresentation

Māori are overrepresented in the homeless population: consistently the prevalence of homelessness among Māori compared with Europeans is 5:1. The most overrepresented ethnic group is Pacific people: prevalence of homelessness among Pasifika compared with Europeans is 10:1.

Living Situations

Compared with Europeans, homeless Māori are almost twice as likely to be staying with family or friends (82 per cent of the homeless Māori compared with 44 per cent of Europeans). This finding is important because the Government have been arguing that the statistics cited in this article do not represent 'homelessness'; that 'normal people' regard homelessness as just rough sleeping.[5] Such construction of course seeks to minimise government responsibility both by shrinking the size of the problem and restricting it to the realm of 'other'. In New Zealand (and elsewhere), homelessness predominantly manifests as staying with others — especially among Māori and other ethnic minorities. Among Māori, and other ethnic groups, extending mana-ā-kītanga — unconditional offering of hospitality, love, and support for others — is culturally important, if not obligated. In refusing to acknowledge such situations (for example, living in a lounge room or garage) as homelessness, the Government disproportionately rejects responsibility for non-European homelessness, including, in contradiction to their Treaty obligations, Māori homelessness.

Iwi Affiliation

Contrary to stereotypes of homeless people as socially disaffiliated 'outsiders', homeless Māori are consistently more likely to identify with their iwi (tribal group). In 2013, 84 per cent of homeless Māori identified with at least one iwi, compared with 80 per cent of Māori overall. This potentially bodes well for Māori homelessness services, perhaps particularly iwi-based services, but more work is needed to unpack this finding.

Further Research

I will be publishing more detailed breakdowns of homelessness over the coming year. Please get in touch with me if there are specific analyses that you would find useful (kate.amore@otago.ac.nz). We hope to explore what can be learned about homelessness from administrative data in the Integrated Data Infrastructure, and to work toward a basic national data collection among homelessness services.

Endnotes

1. Amore K 2016, *Severe housing deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand: 2001–2013*. He Kainga Oranga / Housing and Health Research Programme. Retrieved from *http://www.healthyhousing.org.nz*

2. Amore K, Viggers H, Baker, MG and Howden-Chapman, P 2013, *Severe housing deprivation: The problem and its measurement, Official Statistics Research Series, 6.* Retrieved from *www.statisphere.govt.nz*

3. Busch-Geertsema V, Culhane D, Fitzpatrick S 2016, Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness, *Habitat International*, vol.55, pp.124–132

4. Amore K, et al 2013 op cit.

5. MacKay J 2016, August 29, Bill English — Auckland civil emergency is over-exaggerated. *New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from *http://www.nzherald.co.nz/the-country/news/article.cfm?c_id=16&objectid=11701496*

Why Are Our People Overrepresented Amongst *te pani me te rawakore*?
Reflections on the Root Causes of Māori Urban Homelessness

Jade Kake, Program Manager, Te Matapihi He Tirohanga mō te iwi Trust[1]

Homelessness is a growing problem in Aotearoa New Zealand, and evidence from numerous studies suggests that Māori are significantly over-represented amongst those experiencing homelessness. Recent research has identified Māori as constituting 34.5 per cent of the severely housing deprived (homeless) population nationwide, despite making up only 14.6 per cent of the usually resident (overall) population.[2]

Definitions
Statistics New Zealand[3] defines homelessness as 'living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing'. International definitions generally divide homelessness into two distinct categories — primary homelessness (or rooflessness), and secondary (often described as hidden) homelessness.[4]

New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness[5] proposes that this definition be extended to encompass the displacement from ancestral lands, knowledge, rituals and kinship relationships, which reflects the lived experience of many urban Māori.

Impacts of Colonisation
Any discussion on Māori social issues must begin with an overview of the impact of colonisation, however cursory. The current state of Māori urban homelessness is deeply rooted in historical and contemporary colonial practices, which both dispossessed Māori from their lands, and proved detrimental to Māori culture, language, identity and economic development. The *whenua* provided a stable intergenerational economic base, and was a source of not only nourishment but also collective identity, as evidenced through our *whakapapa*, which as Māori links us directly to *Papatūānuku*.

Upon the signing of the Treaty in 1840, the majority of Māori land remained in Māori possession. Through a series of unlawful Crown acquisitions and land sales, Māori land ownership declined as the settler population grew, and by 1911, the Māori land base had declined to just under seven million acres, or 11 per cent.[6] Today, Māori freehold land comprises a little over 3.5 million acres, or 5.5 per cent of the New Zealand landmass.[7]

Successive legislative mechanisms were instituted by the Crown to justify the alienation of Māori people from Māori lands and included the Native Lands Act 1862, the Suppression of Rebellion Act 1863, the Native Schools Act 1867, the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 and the Native Health Act 1909.[8]

Māori Rural-Urban Migration
Many rural Māori were subsequently forced, either through direct land seizures or coercion, to move into paid employment within settler society, away from *whānau* and cultural supports. This state-sponsored urban shift formed part of the broader colonial project, intended to systemically alienate Māori people from their lands whilst also providing the growing urban economy with the much-needed Māori labour force.

In 1945, the Māori population was largely rural, with only a quarter of Māori living in urban areas. Post-World War II, the Māori population became increasingly urban, and by 1996 approximately 83 per cent of Māori lived in urban areas.[9]

For those shifting to urban areas, housing was mostly provided through Māori Affairs and State Housing loan schemes, or through housing provided by their respective employment. The passing of the 1986 State Owned Enterprises (SOE) Act had a particular impact on Māori urban unemployment (and subsequent homelessness), with the passing of the Act seeing many Māori evicted from forestry and railway homes, which were then onsold to developers.[10] Notably, the implementation of the Act also saw the withdrawal of State support for *papakāinga* housing, presenting significant barriers for those wishing to return to their home communities.

Intergenerational Historical Trauma

Colonisation, and the accompanying systemic alienation of Māori people from Māori land, has resulted in the increasing over-representation of Māori in negative socio-economic statistics. The ongoing impact of colonisation worldwide cannot, and should not, be underestimated, with deficit statistics in education, employment, poverty, addictions, mental health, suicide, crime and prison statistic comparable across Indigenous cultures affected by colonisation.[11] According to Waretini-Karena,[12] the underlying themes behind such deficit statistics stem from intergenerational impoverishment, lack of cultural identity, lack of cultural language, lack of understanding of cultural heritage, lack of whakapapa knowledge, and lack of understanding of *tikanga/kawa*.

Historical trauma is often held and transmitted over generations, and, particularly within Indigenous communities, the resulting trauma often impacts a significant proportion of the community. This has a negative and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of subsequent generations. According to Dr Karina Walters, an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and noted expert on Indigenous historical intergenerational trauma, historical trauma can be defined as:

> *'an event or set of events, perpetrated on a group of people, including their environments (not just the people themselves), who share a specific group identity, in this case tribal identity, with genocidal and/or ethnocidal intent… a group is targeted with the intent to systemically either eradicate the group as a people, or eradicate their culture and lifeways'.*[13]

As noted by Walters,[14] colonisation, and the resultant trauma, has caused disruption in our relational ways of being, in our relationship to our ancestors, and to future generations. This disruption has extended to our culturally-defined spatial obligations and relationships, leading to a breakdown in our boundaries, in terms of our physical, mental and spiritual relationship to the land, which in turn creates systems of dependency on the colonial nation state. The process of addressing social issues associated with Māori urban homelessness is therefore necessarily one of healing historical and multi-generational trauma, whilst also critically examining ongoing colonial practices.

Cultural Landscapes and Spiritual Homelessness

The concept of place-based identities, which *'are thought to arise because places, as bounded locales imbued with personal, social, and cultural meanings, provide a significant framework in which identity is constructed, maintained and transformed'*[15] is particularly pertinent within the context of a Māori conceptualisation of home and homelessness. Our identities are formed by our relational ways of being, through a *whakapapa* that connects us to the *atua, to whānau, whenua* and *te ao taiao* — aspects which are place-based and constitute our wider cultural landscape.

Post-War Māori Affairs Housing — Waitara Late 1940s

The concept of Indigenous cultural landscapes, as articulated within the Australian context, denotes a traditional estate that is part of a wider landscape, encompassing a range of sacred sites and other culturally significant sites, which are significant not just to the individual, but to the wider clan.[16] To be homeless in this context means, *'to be without country, to have no such set of intimate connections, to have an incomplete identity and only a set of unanswered questions about who one's ancestors were and what the meaning of their country was'*.[17] The applicability of this concept to other Indigenous groups has seen the term 'spiritual homelessness' adopted by researchers within both the Canadian and New Zealand contexts.

The concept of spiritual homelessness within a Māori context can be best understood through a discussion of the uniquely Māori concept of *tūrangawaewae*, which can be roughly translated to 'place to stand'. A person's *tūrangawaewae* is their place to stand and be heard, a place to which they belong, and is *'something that is engaged, nurtured and sustained through* whanaungatanga *(relatedness, the establishing of relationships) and* ahi kā *(keeping the home-fires burning) — connections that are lived in the present'*.[18] To be physically and spiritually disconnected from one's *tūrangawaewae* is to be homeless in one's own land, and to experience a state of both physical and spiritual homelessness. This is the lived reality for many urban Māori.

Social Exclusion and Cultural Connectedness

Mead[19] outlines four attributes of Māori identity — *ira tangata* (the passing down of genes from parent to child), *whakapapa*, *tūrangawaewae*, and *pūmanawa* (inherent talents from our parents, grandparents and ancestors). These attributes show that for Māori, identity is not solely an expression of personal identity, and is deeply rooted in notions of kinship and place. Research shows that disconnection from ones place of origin and culture leads to fragmentation of identity, whereas access to ones culture and a sense of belonging (both physically and spiritually) creates a secure identity. Markers of cultural identity include ability to speak *te reo Māori*, knowledge of *tikanga*, connection to,

and knowledge of, one's *marae*, *hapū* and *iwi*, access to *whānau*, and access to *whenua*.[20]

A study by Coupe[21] found that Māori lacking contact with *Māoritanga* lacked a sense of identity and place, and were three times more likely to attempt suicide that those who were culturally connected. Urban Māori who are disconnected from their *tūrangawaewae* experience both isolation and a sense of spiritual homelessness — however, this is often mitigated to some extent by the enactment of traditional family-based relationships in the form of street families and gangs. In addition to this, there is a tendency for Indigenous people to feel like outsiders in urban areas due to the domination of settler culture (even those living within their traditional tribal boundaries).[22]

This suggests that the solution to Māori homelessness is not so much about building houses, but about rebuilding connections that link the homeless person with their respective *iwi*, *hapū* and *whānau*.

A consideration of the cultural and spiritual aspects of a Māori conceptualisation of home, place and identity, points to potential roles for *Iwi* in meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of homeless people within their *rohe* through culturally-based, holistic interventions.

Endnotes

1. Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust was established in 2011 to advocate for Māori housing interests at a National level. We operate as an independent voice for the Māori housing sector, assisting in Māori housing policy development at both central and local government levels, supporting the growth of the sector through existing and emerging regional forums, and providing a platform for sharing high quality resources and information.

2. Amore K, Viggers H, Baker M G and Howden-Chapman P 2013, Severe housing deprivation: The problem and its measurement, *Official Statistics Research Series*, 6. Retrieved from www.statisphere.govt.nz.

3. Statistics New Zealand 2009, *New Zealand definition of homelessness*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/housing/homelessness-definition.aspx

4. United Nations 2009, *Enumeration of Homeless People*. Retrieved from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/censuskb20/Attachments/2009MPHASIS_ECE_Homeless-GUID25ae612721cc4c2c87b536892e1ed1e1.pdf

5. New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness 2012, *Submission to the Productivity Commission: Housing Affordability for Māori*. Retrieved from http://tinyurl.com/kvmerb9

6. Kingi V 1997, The alienation of Māori land and public works legislation *(Ko Ngaa Take Ture Māori)*, Auckland University Law Review, vol.8, no. 2, pp.563–570.

7. Isaac, W. Chief Judge 2011, *Judge's Corner: Māori Land Today*. Māori Land Court. Retrieved from http://www.justice.govt.nz/courts/maori-land-court/judges-corner-1/judges-corner-previous-articles/documents/judges-corner/Maori per cent20Land per cent20Today.pdf

8. Waretini-Karena R 2012, Takitoru: From Parallel to Partnership, *MAI Journal*, vol.1, no.1, pp.61–75.

9. Te Puni Kōkiri 2001, *Te Māori I Nga Rohe: Māori regional diversity*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Māori Development.

10. New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness 2012, op cit.

11. Memm A 1991, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon Press.Boston, Massachusetts.

12. Waretini-Karena R 2014, *Transforming Māori experiences of Historical Intergenerational Trauma* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/Rawiri/transforming-mori-experiences-of-historical-intergenerational-trauma-ppt-presentation-may-2014

13. Walters K 2012, *Embodiment of historical trauma and microaggression distress* [Video]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzPNWTD56S8

14. ibid.

15. Cuba L and Hummon D 1993, A place to call home: Identification with dwelling, community and region, *The Sociology Quarterly*, no.34, pp.111–131.

16. Memmott P, Long S, Chambers C and Spring F 2003, *Categories of Indigenous 'homeless' people and good practice responses to their needs*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute: Queensland Research Centre.

17. ibid p.14.

18. Groot S, Hodgetts D, Nikora, L W and Rua M 2010, *Tōku tūrangawaewae*: Culture, identity, and belonging for Māori homeless people. In Te Rito J S and Healy SM (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th International Traditional Knowledge Conference 2010* (pp.125–133). Auckland: *Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga*: New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence, p.127.

19. Mead H M 2003, *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori Values*, Huia Publishers, Wellington.

20. Durie M 1998, *Te Mana, Te Kawanatanga: the politics Māori self-determination*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, cited in Hoskins J 2007, *Whānau* transformation through tribal reconnection, *MAI Review*, no.1, pp.1–8.

21. Coupe N 2005, Whakamomori: Māori youth suicide prevention (Unpublished PhD). Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

22. Anderson J T and Collins D 2014, Prevalence and Causes of Urban Homelessness Among Indigenous Peoples: A Three-Country Scoping Review. *Housing Studies*, vol 29, no.7, pp.959–976.

Policy Responses to Māori Urban Homelessness

Jade Kake, Program Manager, Te Matapihi He Tirohanga mō te iwi Trust[1]

As the National Māori Housing Organisation, one of our core functions is to monitor and support the development of government strategies, policies and products relating to Māori housing. We spoke to this aspect of our work as it relates to New Zealand's homelessness crisis at the recent Cross-Party Homelessness Inquiry hearing at *Te Puea Marae* in *Mangere, Tāmaki Makaurau.*

Homelessness is a complex issue requiring multi-sectoral policy responses and new governance structures, accountability mechanisms and partnership models to both formulate and implement cross-sector policy.[1] Given the overrepresentation of Māori amongst those experiencing homelessness, it is vital that Māori/*Iwi* values and perspectives on homelessness be considered in the formulation of policy.

Housing Affordability

Due to economic and other disparities, many Māori families have been effectively locked out of attaining home ownership (and the benefits of inter-generational equity) through conventional means, yet are unable to leverage their remaining ownership interests in Māori land to secure home ownership. The benefits of good housing are linked to diverse wellbeing indicators, such as the wellbeing of children, education, health, employment and the intergenerational accumulation of wealth.[3]

Nationwide, Māori have a much lower rate of home ownership compared with the general population, and in 2013, 28.2 per cent of Māori owned their own home, compared with 49.8 per cent for the overall population. Personal income and age both have a significant impact on Māori home ownership rates, with the Māori population being both more youthful, and earning a lower median income than the general population.[4] Recent analysis indicated that Māori home ownership rates have plummeted in the last 25 years, with falls of over 25 per cent in cities and close to 40 per cent in the Whangarei, Southern Auckland, Tauranga, Rotorua, and Hastings urban areas.[5]

Policy responses to housing unaffordability must be appropriately targeted to ensure that the needs of Māori — who on average have significantly lower home ownership rates and median incomes — are met. These include targeted affordability provisions and other support mechanisms established through local government, increased support for home ownership education and financial literacy programs, and financial products that are fit for purpose for Māori aspirations and economic realities.

Housing First

Housing First is a philosophy that emerged in response, and as an alternative to, Continuum of Care (CoC), which moves homeless individuals through different levels of housing, contingent on compliance. The basic approach of Housing First is to provide housing, with no preconditions, and then provide support to ensure that the person stays housed. Housing First is a philosophical position premised on two key assumptions:

1. Housing is a basic human right.

2. The provision of housing is not contingent upon behavioural changes or anything other than abiding by standard tenancy obligations.[6]

Recent research from Canada[7] indicates that although more successful than CoC, outcomes for Aboriginal people accessing Housing First appear to be much less impressive than those seen amongst non-Aboriginal participants. The report concludes that a one-size-fits-all approach to Housing First is not viable, and that Housing First programs need to represent the unique needs of the participants and communities they are serving. To be effective, Housing First initiatives must be adapted to suit the specific needs of Māori populations. Additionally, services specifically providing for Māori women, children and youth must be retained, and the implementation of Housing First initiatives must not result in programs servicing these groups being defunded.

Considered within the context of the whole housing continuum, access to clean, safe, culturally-appropriate emergency and transitional housing is vital to ensure those experiencing homelessness are able to access and maintain secure housing. There will continue to be a need for emergency

Percentage living in an owner-occupied dwelling and percentage change
By Māori ethnicity and selected main urban areas
1991 and 2013 Censuses
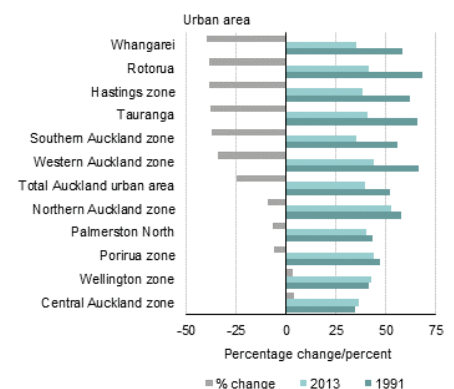
Source: Statistics New Zealand (2016). *Changes in home-ownership patterns 1986–2013: Focus on Māori and Pacific people*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz

Ahmed Al-zoubeidi — 'I am a 22 year old self-taught artist and I have always had a fascination with art and what the mind can create. I have been experimenting with techniques, styles and tools ever since two years ago and I learned that I'm best at portraying emotions through the use of realistic art. My purpose in art is to invoke certain emotions and have the viewer reflect upon the subject of the art piece.'

housing while the supply of affordable housing is grown, and while Housing First and other programs are more widely implemented.

Housing First should be seen as a playing a role in a wider, whole-of-system approach to homelessness, which includes; a renewed investment in social and affordable housing, poverty reduction initiatives and programs targeted at at-risk populations to prevent homelessness, and emergency and transitional housing to support the sustainable transition to being stably housed for those experiencing homelessness.

Endnotes

1. Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust was established in 2011 to advocate for Māori housing interests at a National level. We operate as an independent voice for the Māori housing sector, assisting in Māori housing policy development at both central and local government levels, supporting the growth of the sector through existing and emerging regional forums, and providing a platform for sharing high quality resources and information

2. Exworthy M 2008, Policy to tackle the social determinants of health: using conceptual models to understand the policy processes, *Health Policy and Planning,* no.23, pp.218–327.

3. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2008, *Final Report of the House Prices Unit: House Price Increases and Housing in New Zealand.* Wellington, N.Z.: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Retrieved from *http://www.dpmc.govt.nz/ dpmc/publications/hpr-report/.*

4. Statistics New Zealand 2013, 2013 *Census QuickStats About Housing,* retrieved from *http://www.stats.govt.nz.*

5. Statistics New Zealand 2016. *Changes in home-ownership patterns 1986–2013: Focus on Māori and Pacific people.* Retrieved from *http://www.stats.govt.nz*

6. Stefancic A and Tsemberis S 2007, Housing first for long-term shelter dwellers with psychiatric disabilities in a suburban county: A four-year study of housing access and retention. *Journal of Primary Prevention,* no.28, pp.265–279.

7. Stock M 2016, *Ending Homelessness? A Critical Examination of Housing First in Canada and Winnipeg.* Retrieved from *https://www.policyalternatives.ca/ publications/reports/ending-homelessness.*

New Zealand's Cross-Party Inquiry Into Homelessness

Angie Cairncross, Communications Co-ordinator for Community Housing Aotearoa

We are at a crossroads here in New Zealand. With previously unseen rates of homelessness we need to look long-term and collaboratively to find sustainable housing solutions that meet the needs of everyone, but particularly those most affected by housing deprivation.

On the night of the 2013 census, 41,705 people were counted as having a 'lack of access to minimally adequate housing'. Of these, some 37,508 had some shelter on census night, whilst some 4,197 were without shelter: sleeping rough.[1] This is an increase of nearly 25 per cent since the 2001 census. Indications from emergency housing providers and social services show that this trend has continued over the last three years.[2]

People identifying as Pacific, Māori, or Asian groups are over-represented in the homeless population.

Emergency housing and social service provider statistics show that a high proportion of the people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are Māori.[3]

The homeless situation in New Zealand recently prompted the Labour, Māori and Green Parties to co-ordinate a cross-party inquiry into homelessness in New Zealand.

Culminating in Wellington on 5 September 2016 the terms of reference for the inquiry included:
- Consider whether the official definition of homelessness needs updating, and recommend accordingly.
- Assess the evidence on the current scale of homelessness, whether it is changing and how, and what the causes of that change might be.

- Evaluate possible policy responses to homelessness, including international best practice, and recommend accordingly.
- Consider how homelessness is experienced by different groups in society and evaluate policy responses that respond to that experience. For example, Māori experience of homelessness and Māori-led initiatives to respond.

Māori Party Co-Leader Marama Fox says the issue of homelessness is too important to use as a political football. *'Homelessness is a blight on our society and we need to work together to find enduring solutions. This is a valuable opportunity for us to hear more from whānau, experts and those most impacted.'*

Community Housing Aotearoa's (CHA) Submission

Community Housing Aotearoa and He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Program presented a two-part submission to the inquiry along with some 450 other submissions.

CHA's submission strongly advocates the implementation of a nationwide Housing First policy while also finding better ways of working to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness in New Zealand.

The main points in the CHA submission are:
- Emergency housing funding and provision is needed while the supply of permanent affordable housing is grown and Housing First is widely implemented.
- Extend the needs assessment and housing prioritisation process beyond the Ministry of Social Development Social Housing Register, including an initial period of non-recoverable support,

face-to-face assessment and appropriate outcome tracking for all who present with housing need.
- Adopt a commissioning /social procurement approach that includes providers at all stages of the development, implementation, contracting. Price-based competitive tendering is leading to poor outcomes, both for people in need and providers.
- Housing First approaches need to be adapted to effectively meet the range of cultural needs that exist. For example, when working with Māori participants, culturally safe and appropriate service is vital, which requires resourcing and support for Māori providers, encourages partnership between Māori and non-Māori providers, and provides cultural training.
- Adopt a benchmarking and caseload basis for funding that fosters innovation backed up by clear and transparent measurement.
- Develop a national housing plan: central to the plan is a recognition that permanent, secure, appropriate and safe housing is a basic human right.

In July 2016, an additional $41 million of funding for emergency housing become available from the New Zealand Government. While that has been well received from both people facing homelessness and from emergency housing providers, CHA believe we need to look longer-term and build a sustainable approach.

One rough sleeper currently costs New Zealand around $65,000 per year through use of temporary and emergency services. Based on overseas evidence and preliminary evidence from Hamilton's Housing First program, The People's Project,

'We need to know that there is a ten year capital fund, and a ten year rent subsidy fund, and a 10-year supportive services fund ... so that everybody has certainty that it's going to be here year-in and year-out through multiple political cycles.'

After hearing all the submissions, Māori Party co-leader Marama Fox said whatever the New Zealand Government is doing, it is not nearly enough.

'Kiwis in this country do not want to live in a country where our people sleep in cars, where our people sleep on beaches. This is not the New Zealand that we were brought up in, that we've grown up in, and it's not the New Zealand we want to see our children grow up in.'

'Kiwis are outraged and they must absolutely stand up and bring pressure to bear on this government, as we will,' she said.

The Inquiry will prepare a report to present to the Select Committee and then make recommendations to the New Zealand Government. Go here to see more on this inquiry: *www.homelessnessinquiry.co.nz.*

* Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) is the peak body for the community housing sector that provides emergency, social and affordable housing throughout New Zealand. Our 97 members include community groups, housing trusts, Māori and Pacific housing providers.

Endnotes

1. Amore K 2016, *Severe housing deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand 2001–2013*, He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Program Department of Public Health University of Otago, Wellington.

2. Salvation Army 2015, *Invisible in the Supercity,* http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/ sites/default/files/uploads/20151118SPPU Invisible per cent20in per cent20SuperCity per cent20Web per cent20PDF.pdf Citizens Advice Bureau; *Spotlight on Emergency Accommodation 2015,* http://www.cab.org.nz/submissions/ Documents/CAB-Spotlight-emergency-accommodation.pdf

3. Downtown Community Ministry and Tai Tokerau Emergency Housing submissions to cross-party inquiry to homelessness; *www.homelessnessinquiry.co.nz/submission s;* retrieved 6/9/2016.

4. Western Massachusetts Opening Doors, *A Collective Impact Framework to Prevent and End Homelessness 2015,* http://westernmasshousingfirst.org/ wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Western-MA-Opening-Doors-_Final-June30-2015.pdf

Housing First is cost neutral — it will end the rough end of homelessness for free. Housing First is cost-effective and most importantly, improves the lives of those housed.

Implementing Housing First nationally will require a commitment from government, local governments, emergency housing providers, community housing groups, the private sector, and services such as alcohol and drug counselling, to work together to ensure provision of sufficient quality housing and funding for ongoing support.

Housing First will work best in a context where there are stable resources for working with those who are experiencing homelessness, encompassing emergency housing, assessment and prioritisation, procurement, funding models, and housing.

Emergency housing funding and provision is imperative while the supply of permanent affordable housing is grown and Housing First is more widely implemented.

Further, needs assessment and housing prioritisation processes must move beyond the existing Social Housing Register so that we understand all housing need. Currently only those who are deemed eligible for the Social Housing Register become documented. CHA says that is undermining our ability to find cost effective solutions that resolve the need.

Of central importance is the development of a national housing plan which recognises that permanent, secure, appropriate, and safe housing is a basic human right.

Better ways of working and Housing First will ensure that New Zealand is looking after our most vulnerable individuals and families in ways that work for them and that invest in the capability and capacity of providers to do the job-at-hand. We will know we are succeeding when we can measure homelessness as *'rare, brief and not recurring'*.[4]

Fundamental for these approaches to work, CHA says, New Zealand will need an adequate supply of permanent housing to ensure that people in emergency housing are able to move into their long-term housing of choice as soon as possible.

Presenting the submission at the cross-party inquiry, Community Housing Aotearoa chief executive, Scott Figenshow, said that the community housing sector is ready to deliver more affordable housing. But the sector needed certainty about long-term funding before it committed to increasing capacity.

Service Responses to Māori Urban Homelessness

Jade Kake, Program Manager, Te Matapihi He Tirohanga mō te iwi Trust[1]

There is a need for Māori-driven interventions that work with homeless individuals and communities to confront feelings of isolation and lack of belonging, and address core issues of trauma, violence and oppression that stem from historical intergenerational trauma.
These must be appropriately resourced alongside and in conjunction with shelter and housing.

This points to potential leading roles for urban Māori authorities and urban Marae in responding to Māori urban homelessness. Their urban physical location(s), long-held relationships with *mataawaka* populations and experience administering *Whānau Ora* programs would suggest a logical fit for initiatives targeting homelessness across both mana whenua and mataawaka groups.

Building relationships with long-established non-government organisations, who know their clientele and have the necessary skills and experience to deliver on frontline services, is foundational. Partnership with mainstream organisations can be considered as both an interim

measure (to build internal capacity to deliver on projects), and as part of an ongoing effort to develop mutually supportive working relationships with sector stakeholders.

Culturally-appropriate Primary Services

Cultural competence has been defined as *'a set of behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a continuum to enable a health care system, agency or individual practitioner to function effectively in trans-cultural interactions'.*[2]

Developing cultural competence has been identified as an effective mechanism to remove or mitigate structural barriers to care for Māori, including failure by providers to identify, treat or follow up with those in greatest need; and cultural barriers, including the acceptability of services to Māori and the provision of culturally appropriate information to Māori.[3]

Despite best intentions, mainstream organisations are generally under-resourced and insufficiently equipped to deal with issues of

intergenerational trauma and cultural disconnectedness experienced by urban Māori. It is therefore vitally important that providers of essential services such as food, shelter and primary health care be supported through the provision of cultural competency training for all frontline staff.

'In the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi, Article 1 relating to kawanatanga/governance requires the Crown to provide services that meet the needs of Māori… Government agencies and many non-Māori service providers are frequently not well equipped to offer a culturally sensitive service, lacking elements such as te reo Māori, staff trained in bi-cultural protocols and referral processes to Māori providers. This often leads to short term solutions which result in Māori homeless re-entering the cycle of homelessness on multiple occasions'.[4]

Foundation courses in cultural competency have been developed and successfully delivered by national organisations such as Mauriora Health

Education Research and Te Hau Maia (the training arm of Te Rau Matatini), and similar programs and other training materials have been funded through or facilitated by District Health Boards at a regional level.[5] This points to potential roles for Māori organisations in developing training materials to support mainstream providers.

Working with mainstream organisations to deliver cultural competency training could be both a dedicated work stream and an interim step to develop the working relationship, engendering the trust and confidence necessary to partner on more substantial projects.

Culturally-based Restorative Justice

Given the high rates of low-level public offences and subsequent high rates of recidivism amongst homeless populations (of which the overwhelming majority are Māori), a discussion of restorative justice is relevant to both cultural rehabilitation more generally, and the need for cultural responsiveness within the justice system.

Principally, restorative justice is concerned with community connectedness as a means to prevent reoffending, and to reintegrate the offender back into their community. This model enables parallels to be drawn between Indigenous and contemporary law, and is in essence closer to Indigenous law than most alternatives. Indigenous restorative justice programs have been successfully

trialled in Aotearoa and Hawai'i, with the focus of these programs on restructuring offenders' sense of self-worth and belonging, and reinstating cultural connectedness through *whakapapa* and *whanaungatanga*.

From a *kaupapa Māori* perspective, *tikanga Māori* and customary laws are best placed to address justice issues within our own communities. A Māori view of restorative justice states that, in accordance with Article 1 of the Treaty of Waitangi, the rights of Māori communities to manage their own affairs must be restored. This reinstatement of *tikanga Māori* would enable Māori communities to regulate relationships between their own members according to the values and protocols of their own community.[6]

The applicability of restorative justice models to homelessness interventions can be demonstrated through the 'Special Circumstances Court'. *Te Kooti o Timatanga Hou* — the Court of New Beginnings (TKTH) was established in Auckland in 2010 as a result of advocacy efforts by Lifewise, an agency working with inner-city homeless. The Court applies principles of therapeutic jurisprudence, and is intended to reduce re-offending, link people to appropriate services and supports, and provide pathways into housing and financial stability.

In an evaluation of cultural responsiveness within *Te Kooti o Timatanga Hou* — The Court of New Beginnings (Auckland's homeless court), stakeholders felt that in addition to providing access to

housing and services, reconnecting with *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi* was critical to resolving the issue of homelessness within the Māori population. *'It felt critically important that Māori participants work with* hapū *and* iwi *to build their identities and re-connect with their histories, culture, and* tikanga*'.*[7]

The evaluation reported reduced rates of re-offending, some reported health improvements, improved housing outcomes, and some improvement in financial stability.

As a therapeutic, rather than punitive, intervention, TKTH provides a potential working model for *iwi*/Māori-led homelessness interventions that apply restorative justice principles under tikanga Māori.

Endnotes

1. Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust was established in 2011 to advocate for Māori housing interests at a National level. We operate as an independent voice for the Māori housing sector, assisting in Māori housing policy development at both central and local government levels, supporting the growth of the sector through existing and emerging regional forums, and providing a platform for sharing high quality resources and information.

2. Leavitt R L 2012, *Developing Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World, Parts 1 & 2* [Lecture notes]. Retrieved from *http://www.udel.edu/PT/current/PHYT600/2012/Lecture4Handouts/CES_25_Cultural Competence_012003 per cent5B1 per cent 5D.pdf*, p.1.

3. Crengle as cited in: ACC 2008, *Te tūoro Māori me o mahi (the Māori patient in your practice): Guidelines on Māori Cultural Competencies for Providers*. Retrieved from *http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD_EXT_CSMP/groups/external_providers/documents/guide/wcm2_020645.pdf*

4. (NZCEH 2012, p.11). New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness 2009, *Homelessness in Aotearoa: Issues and Recommendations*. Retrieved from *http://nzceh.org.nz/about/Publications/homelessness_in_aotearoa.pdf*, p.11.

5. Wairarapa District Health Board 2010, *Te Huarahi Oranga Māori Health Plan 2010–2015*. Retrieved from *http://www.huttvalleydhb.org.nz/content/0b23c5aa-ff16-46b1-a723-e39cf150d15d.cmr*

6. New Zealand Māori Council and Durie Hall, D 1998, *Restorative Justice: A Māori Perspective*, in Consedine J and Bowen H (eds) *Restorative Justice: Contemporary Themes and Practice*, Ploughshares Publications, Lyttelton.

7. Woodley A 2012, *A Report on the Progress of Te Kooti on Timatanga Hou — The Court of New Beginnings*. Auckland Homeless Steering Group. Retrieved from *www.lifewise.org.nz/Content/Files/User/homeless-court-evaluation.pdf*

Responding to Homelessness Among Rural *Whānau* in Northland

Toa Faneva, Chief Executive Officer, Te Rūnanga o Whaingaroa

Historical Context

Prior to colonial contact, our people of Whangaroa were a proud sea-faring tribal nation and we were grouped in *whānau* (families), *hapū* (sub-tribes) and *iwi* (tribes) based on Whakapapa (genealogical connections) and kinship. We were ordered and living in accordance with our laws and rules and were holders of dominion and imperium over our lands and resources.

Politically and constitutionally we were autonomous and were recognised as such by external others which drove successful economies which were self-managing, self-sufficient and self-sustaining. We were living a culture of great antiquity.

From 1840 to the present day and despite the Treaty of Waitangi, our ancestors were systematically deprived of our economic bases, social structures, spiritual domains and cultural capital through aggressive and neglectful policy instruments, practices and laws. These included:

- the Crown's direct policy of total land acquisition
- acts of aggression including invasion and confiscation
- unilateral imposition and enforcement of the cash economy
- the detribalisation of Māori society
- the destruction of culture and loss of language
- disregard of the Māori political voice
- assimilationist policies
- the uncontrolled influx of immigrants
- the use of Māori as an unskilled, itinerant labour force
- the transition of Māori to hardship and poor living conditions.

Homelessness for Māori is as much a consequence of these historical processes as it is of modern day impacts such as globalisation, multinational impositions, climate change and environmental destruction.

Homelessness in Kaeo/Whangaroa

Te Rūnanga O Whaingaroa is a Mandated *Iwi* Organisation under the *Māori Fisheries Act 2004* and an *Iwi* Aquaculture Organisation based in Kaeo, Whangaroa, Northland, Aotearoa (New Zealand). Our geographic service delivery area is across large proportions of the eastern northland area. We deliver integrated health, education, social, justice and housing services to approximately 500 *whānau* annually.

We have experienced ongoing homelessness challenges and find ourselves working with many *whānau* both within the *Iwi* boundaries and those recently arriving from the bigger urban centres.

We define homelessness as those *whānau* who are sleeping rough in our parks and reserves, in abandoned buildings, couch surfers living with *whānau*/friends but of no fixed abode, those in temporary shelters often on *whānau* owned land and those in a dwelling that is inadequate for basic needs and especially those experiencing severe overcrowding.

There also exists a growing trend for *whānau* who are moving out of the urban cities like Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland) back home due to affordability issues — many families have been priced out of Auckland. Much of this population is transient, moving around in the rohe (tribal area) from *whānau* to *whānau* and who end up putting excessive strain and pressure on the already stretched infrastructure of these homes.

Our *whānau*, as with many struggling with homelessness, live extremely precarious lives, existing without predictability or security. This manifests itself as a languishing of *Mauri* (the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity), and is often displayed through signs of trauma, poor health and persistent chronic conditions, mental illness, violence, hurt, hate and hunger.

Whānau whose *Mauri* is languishing often have limited or no access to economic, social and cultural capital. This means non-engagement, non-participation in order to access means for survival, subjugation to growing external forces that enforce compliance to overlapping government policies. A tough life is further compounded by government interference and unnecessary bureaucracy.

Homelessness and Economic Development

Homelessness for the Te Tai Tokerau (Northern) region is also a by-product of an underperforming and segregated economy. Many policies have missed the mark and do not consider the potential of the Māori economy in Northland.

The Economic Growth Study for Te Tai Tokerau Māori Economy, *He Tangata He Whenua, He Oranga* — commissioned by the Te Tai Tokerau Iwi Chief Executives Consortium and released in 2015, made the following observations about the Māori economy in Northland:

- higher population growth rates
- lower levels of human capital (60 per cent of Māori had little to no qualifications)
- lower income per capita (60 per cent lower than for non-Māori in Northland)

- higher levels of poverty and under-nutrition
- an underdeveloped labour market
- predominance of agriculture and lower levels of industrialisation.

The Tai Tokerau Māori economy is a *developing* economy within a *developed* economy. This means that policy responses should be tailored to support both parts of this complex economy.

Many *whānau* then struggle to make ends meet and are either underemployed in primary industries as itinerant seasonal labour, orchard work, processing plants etc or are unemployed or suffering long-term illness and disability. In these scenarios *whānau* cannot earn a living wage to make provision for the most basic necessities of life. This leads to often long periods of homelessness/ overcrowding, poverty and insecurity among families.

With little investment in economic development that is likely to improve

whānau circumstances from regional and central government, the *Rūnanga* is developing and investing in its own projects to stimulate economic activity and employment for the whole community.

Homelessness and Wellbeing

A key measure of inequity among Māori facing homelessness is identified in the health sector with higher incidence rates for Acute Rheumatic Fever, which show the greatest health inequity of all in Te Tai Tokerau. Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) does not affect individuals in our community randomly — its incidence is closely associated with socio-economic deprivation and high rates of household overcrowding and extended periods of homelessness.

Recently the government has set the reduction in ARF as a Better Public Service target and this has stayed the number of reported ARF cases, however this has not eradicated this third world disease.

Our focus on health has always been that the future for health services should be about knowledgeable *whānau* (health literacy) and addressing the causes of poor health. Wellbeing or *Mauri Ora* is founded in the premise that the determinants of good health are to be found in the home; that is, in warm, dry, safe, functional homes. The quality and quantity of appropriate housing and overcoming homelessness challenges are fundamental to achieving positive Māori health outcomes.

Solutions-Kaᐧinga Ora

The Rūnanga Housing strategy is informed by an approach for *whānau* called *Kāinga Ora*. *Kāinga ora* settlements in Kaeo predate *Pā* (fortified village), and were the first economic units for sustainability for *whānau*.

Kāinga Ora is an approach where a secure and stable home life is the source of *Mauri Ora* for *whanau*. The essential determinants good heath, good educational outcomes and positive economic participation emanate from having a stable home and a predictable secure home life.

Our spectrum of housing services and supports has grown and now includes short-term emergency housing providing respite for families who are homeless, longer-term social housing for families, home repairs for families with unimproved housing in need of remediations, and affordable home ownership programs.

All these services are delivered through our *Kāinga Ora* approach which starts with a *Whānau Ora* self-assessment and outcomes identification plan and provides wrap-around supports for *whānau* including social service supports, alcohol and other drug (AOD) and other dependency supports, Māori mental health assessments and supports, financial capability training, positive parenting, pre-employment preparation and training, home ownership programs, home repairs programs, cooking classes and so on.

Most of these supports are provided in-house or with trusted partners so we minimise unnecessary transitional stress on *whānau* accessing the right sorts of supports.

Dame Whina Cooper begins Māori Land March to Parliament, 1975

Toa and Alex talk about the 'next steps' for the driveway and other overdue repairs to their home.

As part of our *Kāinga Ora* outcomes framework we have identified three key goals in overcoming homelessness:

Long-term Goals

- housing within *rohe* is eco-compliant, energy efficient and utilises alternative energy sources
- Rūnanga has social housing available for *whānau* who need it
- Rūnanga transacts affordable Home Ownership options for *whānau*
- Rūnanga initiates housing partnerships with *whānau* who have a strong intergenerational focus.

Medium-term Goals

- increase amount of Rūnanga social housing for *whānau*
- facilitate home ownership for *whānau* on their own land, on their *Marae*
- continue to coordinate stakeholders influencing the determinants of unimproved housing and overcrowding, that is, the health sector.

Short-term Goals

- address short-term housing needs for *whānau* in unsafe or overcrowded situations
- improve linkages and coordination with the Housing Sector
- provide emergency housing and homelessness support services
- review the current *Kāinga Ora* outcomes framework and logic model.

Homelessness remains hidden in our rural communities as the government focuses on the more visible and rising levels of homelessness in the urban centres. However, while the impacts are the same, the solutions are different — and we are leading the housing sector because we cannot wait for others to get mobilised.

By default the Rūnanga *is* the housing sector in our community. Our goal is a responsive policy across the housing sector to eradicate homelessness, increasing the amount of safe secure homes and provide ongoing social housing for *whānau* in our community.

Our leadership in the sector has been supported by the Māori Housing Network that was established through *Te Puni Kōkiri* (The Ministry of Māori Development) to build our capability and enable us to transform our community — these supports have been game changers driving positive change for our community.

In the words of our eponymous *Tupuna* (ancestor) Dame Whina Cooper:

> *'I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.'*

Everyone Has a Story

Written in collaboration with young people from Wainuiomata and Lower Hutt, the Hutt Valley, Aotearoa New Zealand.[*]

Māori history tells the story of two taniwha, Ngake and Whātaitai who lived in Wellington Harbour a long time ago. At that time the harbour was just a lake. As Ngake and Whātaitai grew bigger, the lake began to feel too small for the taniwha and they longed to escape into the ocean to the south.

One day Ngake crossed to the north side of the lake and used his tail to spring himself forwards and towards the southern shores. Ngake was thrust across the lake and smashed a passage way through to what is today known as Cook Strait.

The force of the release of Ngake's coiled tail carved Awakairangi — the Hutt Valley. Awakairangi can be translated as 'river of food from the sky'. As the name suggests, the Hutt Valley was once densely forested and held abundant resources of birds, tuna and other food sources.[1]

Today the Hutt Valley is still renowned for its river and hills. However, for some young Māori living in the rohe today, resources are not so abundant

This article captures insights into the lives of young people in the Hutt Valley who have experienced homelessness and severe housing deprivation.

Kōrero tuatahi: Overcrowding is Homelessness Too

One type of housing deprivation is unhealthy homes and this is something these rangatahi have lived with their whole lives. Moving from state house to state house, sometimes they had up to 20 people living in one three-bedroom house.

'I don't know how we all fit into that house but we did — marae styles'.

This first story follows two *rangatahi* from Wainuiomata — a tight-knit community in a valley within a valley. Their story is one of growing up in a series of substandard, dilapidated and crowded houses. The houses are cold, damp, have rotting wood and holes, at times no power and a backdoor that doesn't lock. This type of homelessness is most often hidden. As they so eloquently put it.

'Our type of homelessness is a different type of homelessness. We will always be all right, we will always look after ourselves'.

In another of their many state house homes, there was a fire in the kitchen. When they got moved to their emergency housing, one of the bedrooms experienced a flood and one rangatahi ended up in the local hospital with pneumonia.

These *rangatahi* are living in homes that do not meet their physical needs.

In addition, the pressures created by the society they live in mean they have had to grow up too fast. Drinking alcohol from age 12, hanging out with friends aged 20 and 25, and everyday responding to the problems and challenges that are thrown their way, is the reality for these young people.

So what does a good home look like for them?

'Give us some chores, go to school, live normally with nothing to worry about'.

Their story is one that makes up the wider picture of homelessness.

Kōrero Tuarua – Whanau Breakdown

'Hitting rock bottom' is how another group of *rangatahi* from the Hutt Valley describe their experience of homelessness. And the trigger that lead them to living rough on the streets?

Whānau breakdown — an all too common pathway into homelessness for young people.[2] For this young couple, while they dream of living together in a safe and secure home, the reality is they have both grown up in a variety of family and foster homes that have been unsafe. For them, a lack of options led them to living on the streets. Being kicked out of home, with no job and faced with a complex array of waitlists, identification requirements, age restrictions and paperwork they had already sought help from everyone they felt they could. Living rough meant that every night they asked themselves: *'Where are we going to sleep tonight?'*

Moving each morning, forever searching for shelter and warmth. The words these *rangatahi* use to describe their time on the streets include 'coldness, darkness, sadness, and hunger'. And probably the worst thing about sleeping rough — the cold.

'We had nights when we've been freezing. Nights when I've shivered so much my ribs hurt'.

Understandably mental health suffered during this time. Being homeless lead to feelings of hopelessness.

'A lot of the time I felt suicidal. I thought it was going to be forever. I had lost all hope'.

Ngake and Whataitai Mural

Alcohol became a way to escape reality. While living rough, their coping strategies included drinking: *'To get through the day … we drank every day that we could. I became an alcoholic pretty much'*.

But also connecting with friends and each other were key coping strategies during this time. While they were working with some services, there was only so much a YOSS (youth one stop shop) could provide, and unfortunately emergency housing is not on the list. Trying to find a safe and secure home for this young couple has been an ongoing, frustrating journey, at times seemingly pointless with such little luck going their way.

Common Themes

Throughout these stories there are some common threads that weave the experiences of this group of young Māori together. Threads of pride and love towards being Māori and being *tangata whenua*: *'I'm proud of who I am because of my ancestors'*.

The stories also share a common thread around education. These young people display an amazing commitment to education despite the complex lives they lead. And finally, threads of solid bonds with *whānau*, friends or each other. More than services and agencies it is strong relationships that have provided these young people with the support and strength they need to keep going. These common threads are also some of the protective factors that have helped this group be the remarkable and resilient young people they are today.

So what does this mean for policy makers and service providers?

Something different needs to happen because currently the housing issues and homelessness affecting young people is robbing them of their childhood and potentially leads to a devastating waste of potential.

Policy makers and service providers need only look at their environment for inspiration from Ngake. Unfurl your tails and create an environment that allows youth to grow in a nourishing and abundant environment! *Mauri Ora*.

* Prepared with the assistance of Hannah Molloy, Public Health Advisor — CAYAD, Tobacco, Alcohol and other Drugs Team, Regional Public Health

Endnotes

1. *http://www.upperhuttcity.com/ arts-culture/our-maori-heritage/*

2. Chamberlain C and Johnson G 2011, 'Pathways into adult homelessness' *Journal of Sociology*, vol.49, no.1, pp.60–77.

Glossary

Taniwha: water spirit

Rohe: region

Rangatahi: younger generation

Whānau: family group

Tangata Whenua: Indigenous people

Kōrero tuatahi: first story

Kōrero tuarua: second story

YOSS: Youth One Stop Shops provide free, youth-friendly health and social services to young people aged 10 to 24 years. Community-based, they share a philosophy of positive youth development. There are currently 11 YOSS located across New Zealand including one in the Hutt Valley and one in Wellington central.

The *Treaty of Waitangi*, Local Government and Indigenous Homelessness in New Zealand

Brennan Rigby, Principal Advisor, Social Outcomes, Independent Māori Statutory Board[*]

Introduction

This article focuses on Auckland Council's (the Council) obligations to Māori and its responses to Māori homelessness.

A trans-Tasman discussion of Indigenous homelessness invites consideration of the relevance of the *Treaty of Waitangi* (the Treaty) to the response to rough-sleeping in Auckland, as a key trans-Tasman colonial difference.

The *Treaty of Waitangi* and Homelessness

Homelessness is disproportionately experienced by Māori with Auckland's rough-sleepers identifying as Māori at around twice the rate of the population at large.

The Treaty is relevant to homelessness in its guarantee of undisturbed possession of lands (a proxy for economic stability), and equal citizenship. Breaches of the former occurred in the alienation of land just as Indigenous lands were alienated in Australia. Breaches of the citizenship guarantee compromised Māori access to state social and administrative services, and education services where differences in Māori achievement can determine employment and economic outcomes. The resulting unequal outcomes imply unequal access, just as Aboriginal social outcomes defy their legal rights as equal citizens. This is colonisation.

But arguing a Treaty breach is no silver bullet. Even while the settlement of historic grievances draws to its apparent final chapters, the Treaty's place in society and law remains opaque and contentious. The Treaty has never been enacted in legislation. In court it was deemed a simple nullity[1] until references to it appeared in legislation. Today a range of legislative references acknowledge the Treaty while generally narrowing its interpretation.

The relationship between local authorities and the Treaty has also been tested. Māori advocates have argued that the governance powers of local authorities derive from the Treaty and therefore carry the Treaty's obligations. However, local authorities begin from the view that the Treaty relationship is with the Crown as signatory, and have successfully relied on Parliamentary supremacy through legislation to limit their obligations to those written in statute. In New Zealand's unwritten constitution the Treaty remains eternally avoidable.

For these reasons the Treaty does not readily address the over-representation of Māori among the homeless population, and the trans-Tasman question of 'Treaty versus no treaty' has little bearing. The colonial experience in both countries had similar devastating effects, with the alienation of resources and the marginalisation of Indigenous communities universal to the experience of colonisation.

The Treaty is unique to New Zealand, but its legal and administrative obscurity is representative of the muting of Indigenous rights globally, whatever the source of those rights. The notion of silencing is possibly contentious as the Treaty is widely and often loudly talked about, but I would argue that the discourse approaches the really thorny issues with immense caution if at all. For example, the alienation of land in breach of the guarantee of undisturbed possession is rarely canvassed.

Homelessness in Auckland

Auckland faces a significant housing affordability crisis. Along with a housing shortage, the state's Social Housing portfolio is undermined by a legacy of limited investment in, and deferred maintenance.[2] Local government has also moved away from social housing and its mandate over social outcomes is reducing.[3] The invigoration of the community social housing has emerged belatedly[4] amidst growing tenure insecurity, over-crowding and homelessness.

Māori Homelessness

Māori have reportedly constituted 60 to 70 per cent of Auckland's rough-sleepers although a recent count suggests 40 to 50 per cent among a vastly increased cohort.[5] Contributing factors for Māori include colonisation and the heritage of land-loss. Urbanisation, inter-generational reliance on Māori labour in primary industries — with inter-generational implications, and the oppression of culture and language are also factors among a range of generic population factors. The efficacy of government-funded services in reaching and supporting Māori equitably is critical. Failure of the state education system to reach Māori, for example, can determine on-going economic outcomes with inter-generational consequences.[6]

While other social issues such as addiction can impact on tenure security, for Māori, issues relating to colonisation — past and present — are simply bigger factors.

Auckland Council and Māori Homelessness

In a current snap-shot of Council funding to address homelessness there are two key features. Firstly and most notably, on September 22nd (2016) the Council approved a budget amendment to contribute $2 million to Auckland's only inner-city emergency

housing provider.[7] The provider's $4 million project will increase bed numbers, deliver necessary maintenance, and align practice with the Housing First model. The hostel's 'through-put' will increase and the sector supports the move fully. Central government funding for wrap-around services provides conditions for the Housing First model to emerge.

This Council funding derives from Auckland's City Centre Targeted Rate, charged against commercial and residential land in the Central Business District. Homelessness by its nature scratches on the shiny veneer of a city's commercial enterprise. For those concerned with social wellbeing this observation is insensitive, but it is also a lever to ensure that commercial entities with a vested interest contribute. The intriguingly interdependent relationship between homelessness and commercial enterprise must be explored further and not over-looked.

Secondly, the Council's long-term plan (mandatory 10-year budget) allocated $360,000 in both 2015–16 and 2016–17 including $250,000 for emergency housing and $110,000 for regional homelessness.[8] The related Council work program targets outcomes including enhancing amenities, supporting learning/employment opportunities, contributing to improving emergency housing and supporting service development. While initiatives for rough-sleepers come and go, these outcomes are population-generic and responses to Māori homelessness among them are only inferred.

A recent Council resolution (August) also directed staff to undertake further policy work to determine Council's role and position on homelessness,[9] but falls short of a call for policy itself. A written policy provides for review and analysis both in the drafting and once complete, while the absence of policy recalls the opacity of the Treaty.

As for Māori homelessness, Council reports recognise the over-representation of Māori. Yet despite a Council-wide Māori responsiveness drive and the Auckland Plan's transformational shifts for Māori,[10] opportunities regarding rough-sleeping Māori are ill-defined and the policy gap seems untouchable. One

Council committee report noted that *'Māori and Pasifika-led solutions are a key focus…'*[11] Further reference to this focus could not be found, and the co-focus on Māori and Pasifika confirms this was un-related to Treaty obligations, legal or otherwise.

Auckland Māori and Homelessness

Beyond policy, budgets, and political pressure, and side-stepping colonisation and the Treaty, Māori community-based responses to homelessness have emerged. These are the antithesis of colonisation, over-turning reliance on the state as the source of mandate and funding.

The best way to illustrate the achievements of Te Puea Memorial Marae in acting on Auckland's homelessness is to invite you to *Google* 'Te Puea Marae Homlessness.' The Auckland *marae* opened its doors to Auckland's rough-sleepers in May, 2016. No, not just to Māori. And yes, they did this off their own back.

While the *marae*'s stance was steadfastly Indigenous, that is values-based and apolitical, the publicity became a real pressure point for government. The question of 'where to next' focused debate on government responsiveness and resourcing. While long-term outcomes were not prioritised, short-term needs were met, and many of those accommodated have been fast-tracked into (permanent) state housing.

The *marae* was soon calling for specific support to optimise the goodwill generated and calls for Council support were met.

The success of this Indigenous/inclusive solution elevates Māori cultural practice (tikanga) as a supervening mandating source of Indigenous policy and power independent of the Treaty, its legal place, and the Crown.

However, the Treaty transferred a power of governance from Māori to the Crown, and the delegation of that power from Crown to Council clearly empowers Council to act on homelessness through Auckland's rates-take in particular, and to address Māori homelessness in a local and responsive way. Council's role must include innovative short-term action

and longer-term views, as well as a robust outcomes-focused data gathering regime to measure progress. Beyond September's ad hoc investment, a further strategic approach to stimulating on-going investment in Housing First is required. But other activities must also be assessed including sustainable support for sustainable Indigenous solutions.

Overall, Māori responsiveness must be fundamental — including via 'for Māori' initiatives — because Māori are equal citizens and homelessness implies inequality, because Māori are vastly over-represented, and because homelessness can and must be addressed. The current increase in traction must be captured and leveraged.

* This article is based on insights gathered working for Auckland's Independent Māori Statutory Board (the Board). This article represents the views of the writer and does not represent the views of the Board.

Endnotes

1. The legal citation for this statement is *Wi Parata v The Bishop of Wellington* (1877) (SC).

2. National Party government press release 2011, *'Stimulus package delivers jobs and better homes'*; Hon Bill English, Finance Minister, comment: *http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/269479/govt-to-spend-$1-point-5b-fixing-up-state-houses*.

3. Local Government law reform since 1974 introduced *general competence* increasing accountability and de-popularising discretionary holdings and non-essential capabilities. A social-wellbeing framework (2002) has also been reduced.

4. Social housing providers feature in the Social Housing Reform Program (see Ministry of Social Development website).

5. Auckland City Mission, 2016, *200 and counting — Central Auckland's rough sleeper population reaches record high*, Auckland City Mission press release, Auckland.

6. New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2015, *The Auckland Māori economy*, Auckland, p12.

7. Auckland Council, October 2016, *Finance and Performance Committee report: Budget Update September 2016*.

8. Auckland Council, March 2016, *Community Development and Safety committee report: Update on Long-term plan homelessness budget activity*.

9. Auckland Council, September 2016, *Regional Strategy and Policy Committee report: Recommendation from the Community Development and Safety Committee — 3 August 2016 — issue of homelessness*.

10. The Auckland Plan is Council's statutory planning document.

11. Auckland Council, March 2016 op cit.

Part 2: Responding to Indigenous Homelessness in Australia

Evidence of Increased Vulnerability of Homeless Indigenous Australians

Louise Tierney, Housing and Specialised Services Group, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

It is well known that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in the Australian homeless population: an estimated one in 20 Indigenous people were homeless on Census night 2011 while making up just three per cent of the Australian population. They are also over-represented among users of services provided by specialist homelessness agencies: nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) of clients were Indigenous in 2014–15.

Research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) indicates that Indigenous specialist homelessness service (SHS) users are also over-represented in vulnerable homeless populations, including domestic and family violence,[1] and drug and alcohol misuse.[2]

Characteristics of Indigenous Clients in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), 2014–15

The number of Indigenous clients seeking assistance for homelessness services has been increasing over the four years of the SHSC, and at a faster rate than non-Indigenous clients. In 2014–15 an estimated 53,301 Indigenous people approached a SHS agency because of housing difficulties, 8.7 times as high as the non-Indigenous rate and this gap is widening, up from 7.8 times in 2011–12.

Women and young children were particularly vulnerable. The majority of Indigenous clients were female (62 per cent), higher than the non-Indigenous SHS population (58 per cent), and one in four (23 per cent) were children under the age of ten (compared with 14 per cent non-Indigenous clients).

The main reason Indigenous clients continue to seek assistance is domestic and family violence (24 per cent), similar to the general SHS population (25 per cent). The majority of Indigenous clients (70 per cent, or 37,099) needed accommodation and 51 per cent required short-term or emergency accommodation (compared with 36 per cent non-Indigenous clients). Providing independent housing continues to be problematic for Indigenous people who find themselves in housing difficulty, with nearly 19,000 Indigenous clients requesting long-term housing in 2014–15, yet only five per cent receiving it.

Sixty-three per cent of Indigenous SHS clients lived outside major cities. One in five Indigenous clients lived in either remote or very remote areas (Figure 1) and the rate of service use in remote areas is the fastest growing (11.4 per cent average annual growth rate).

The most common housing outcome for Indigenous clients ending support was public and community housing (39 per cent), a nine per cent increase from first presentation to a SHS agency (Figure 2).

This reflects not only the assistance provided by agencies to obtain a stable housing outcome for their clients, but also the crucial role that social housing plays in accommodating Indigenous clients.

Figure 1: Indigenous and non-Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by remoteness, 2014–15

Legend: Major cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, Very Remote
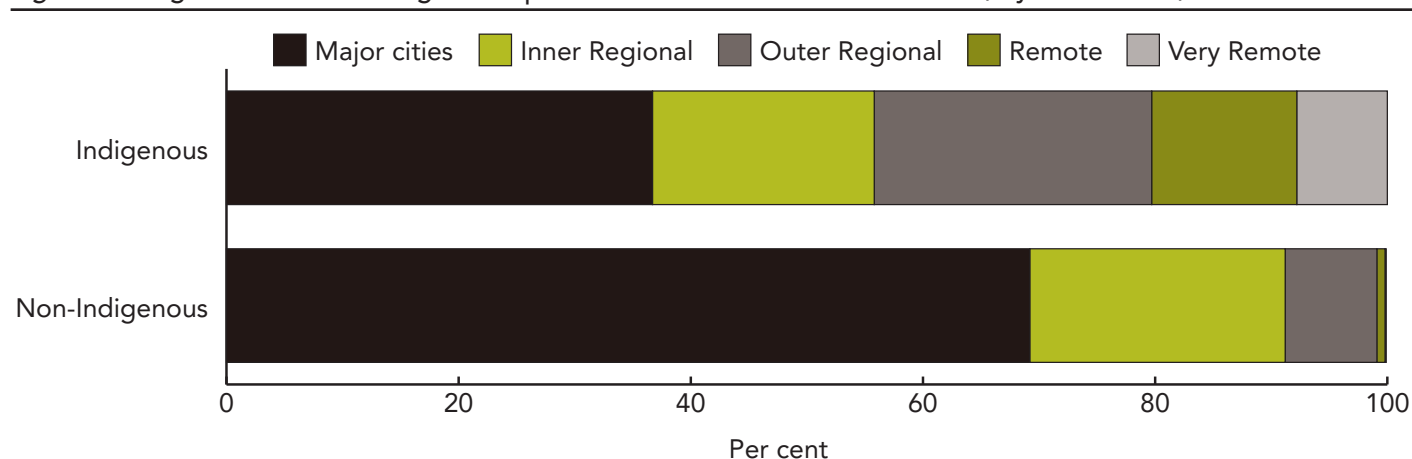
Note: Clients have been assigned a geographical area based on the location of the SHS agency from which they received assistance.
Source: AIHW Specialist homelessness services Annual Report, 2014–15.

Figure 2: Indigenous and non-Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by housing outcomes at the end of support, 2014–15

Legend:
- Rough sleeper
- Short-term temporary accomm
- Couch surfer / no tenure
- Public or community housing
- Private or other housing
- Institutional settings

(Bar chart showing Indigenous and Non-Indigenous, Per cent, scale 0 to 100)

Source: AIHW Specialist homelessness services Annual Report, 2014–15.
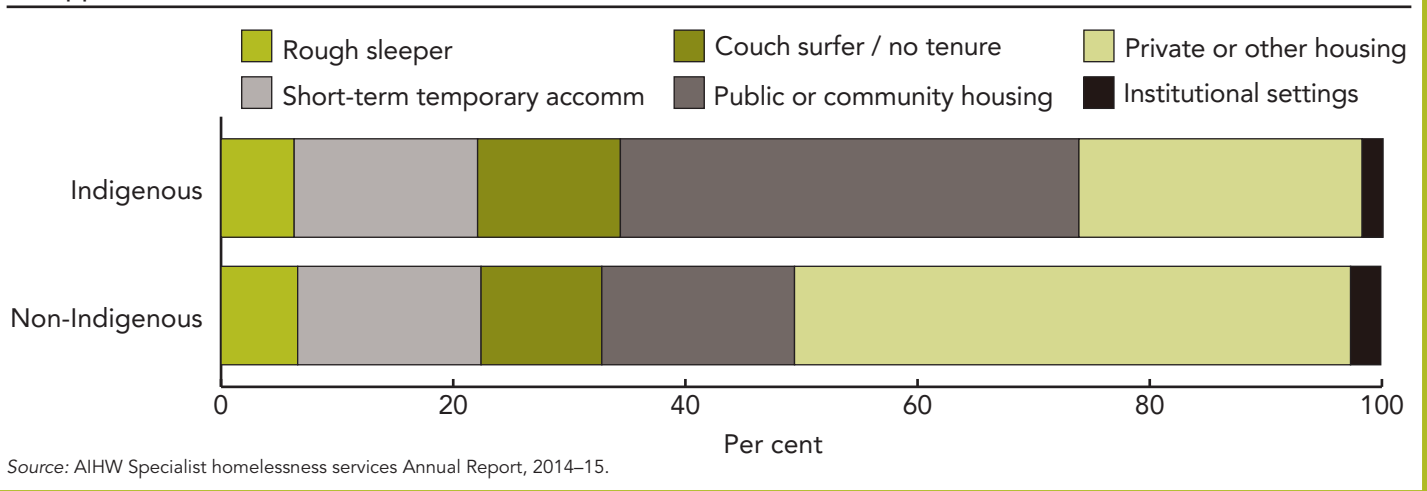
About one-third (34 per cent) of Indigenous clients were homeless at the end of support, either rough sleeping, couch surfing or in short-term emergency accommodation.

Indigenous Women, Homelessness and Domestic and Family Violence

A three-year study of SHS clients experiencing domestic and family violence identified Indigenous women as being particularly vulnerable.[3] 19,601 Indigenous women experiencing domestic and family violence were provided over three million days of support and nearly one million nights of accommodation between 2011–12 and 2013–14.

While the majority of these women needed accommodation (72 per cent needed short-term or emergency accommodation), many additional services were also sought. In particular, specialist services such as health, medical and counselling services (43 per cent), and family services (24 per cent) consistent with many of these women being single parents (37 per cent).

The pattern of service engagement suggests Indigenous women experiencing domestic and family violence encounter multiple barriers in achieving stable housing. Many of these women returned multiple times to SHS agencies, and for over one-third (38 per cent), their service engagement spanned the greatest length (> 300 days).

This repetitive, persistent use of SHS services together with the wide range of additional services needed, and the very low level of employment (eight per cent), suggests that independent living is particularly difficult for these Indigenous women experiencing domestic and family violence and economic hardship.

Street art — Fitzroy, Victoria

Indigenous People, Homelessness and Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Research has established a strong link between alcohol and other drug misuse, and homelessness. Many present to both alcohol and other drug treatment services (AODTS) with a variety of substance use issues, and to specialist homelessness services either at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. Forty-thousand clients of both services were identified by linking data from AODTS and SHS services between 2011–12 and 2013–14; 27 per cent were Indigenous, much higher than either of the service populations

(13 per cent AODTS-only and 22 per cent SHS-only population).[4]

The report identified four cohorts vulnerable to both homelessness and substance misuse. These were people who had experienced domestic and family violence, mental health issues, young people aged 15 to 24 and older people aged 50 and over. In all four vulnerable cohorts, Indigenous people were over-represented.

The highest rate of Indigenous clients (33 per cent) was in the cohort where risk factors for substance misuse, homelessness, and domestic and family violence occurred together.

All vulnerable groups had poorer housing and drug treatment outcomes than clients of one service.

The over-representation of Indigenous people in all these vulnerable, disadvantaged cohorts provides evidence that for some, a range of issues may be posing a barrier to obtaining independent living.

Endnotes

1. AIHW 2016a, *Domestic and family violence and homelessness 2011–12 to 2013–14.* Viewed 15 September 2016. *http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/ domestic-violence-and-homelessness/*

2. AIHW 2016b, *Exploring drug treatment and homelessness in Australia: 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2014.* Cat. no. CSI 23, AIHW, Canberra.

3. AIHW 2016a op cit.

4. AIHW 2016b op cit.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria's Journey to Self-Determination

Darren Smith, Director Executive Coordination, Aboriginal Housing Victoria

It was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us.[1]

It is not often that these pages have been graced by a discussion on self-determination. However, on 5 September 2016 the Hon. Martin Foley MP, the Victorian Minister for Housing announced that *'the gradual transfer of 1,448 properties from the Director of Housing to Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) advances self-determination for Aboriginal people through the ownership of housing.'* It was a decision of enormous symbolic importance that extends well beyond the practical benefits to AHV, our tenants and even beyond the community housing sector.

The transfer of housing assets to AHV valued at almost five hundred million dollars is one of the most significant acts of self-determination in Victorian history. It has an enormous impact on AHV. AHV was already one of the largest community housing managers in Victoria with approaching ten per cent of Victoria's Aboriginal population residing in our properties.

The transfer is the largest transfer to any single housing agency in Victorian history and makes AHV the largest Aboriginal community housing owner in Australia and one of the largest owners of community housing in Victoria.

It is particularly meaningful in Victoria that the transfer of ownership is premised on self-determination.

From an Aboriginal perspective the acquisition of Aboriginal land and sovereignty is unfinished business in Victoria.

Many in the broader community commend the High Court for their landmark native title decision overturning the legal fiction of terra nullius. Fewer still understand the native title compromise reached by the High Court. The ancestors of the majority of Aboriginal people were forcibly removed from country and dispersed. They suffered the injustices of forced assimilation, intentional destruction of language, culture and cultural authority, enforced poverty and social exclusion.

For the vast majority of Aboriginal people in south east Australia there was no remedy, no justice only continuing denial.

The Victorian Government's self-determination agenda outlined by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, in her speech to the Aboriginal community forum[2] is clearly restorative and purposeful, it is:

> *'not just giving you a chair at the table, but giving you the table and giving you the voice to actually say what it is that you want.'*

The Victorian Government's self-determination agenda is consistent with evidence in addressing health inequalities which emphasises the importance of status and control of resources. The transfer of properties to AHV is the first substantive act under the Victorian Government's self-determination agenda. As such it is a microcosm of what the broader self-determination agenda might achieve.

Self-determination, through ownership of the properties that AHV has managed for the Director of Housing (the Director) is enormously significant to AHV. The raw emotion was palpable as AHV's Chairperson Tim Chatfield signed the Deed of transfer with the Director and Housing Registrar and reflected on the journey that had led to this moment.

Ownership of the social housing properties has been a long held aspiration of community members and Elders instrumental in the formation of the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria (the forerunner to AHV) in 1981.

It was an ambition kept alive as AHV's role evolved from an advocate for Aboriginal people facing adversity in public housing and the homeless, to a manager of Aboriginal social housing tenancies in 2008 and property maintenance manager in 2013.

The Aboriginal political movement has always been sophisticated in Victoria. By the early eighties the importance of self-determination as the philosophical underpinning of Aboriginal service delivery was well understood.

The transfer of property ownership to AHV ensures that in Victoria, for Aboriginal housing, *'Aboriginal people have a central role in shaping the decisions that affect them.'*

While AHV's journey to self-determination has taken 35 years the journey of self-determination is about to begin. And it is a journey high in expectation.

The reality is that far from being gifted the properties by the Director, AHV earnt the right to ownership. As a pre-condition to transfer AHV was required to achieve registration as a Housing Association.

Through the registration process AHV was required to demonstrate the capability to meet performance standards, to manage the housing stock and remain financially viable in the long-term. The difference between previous stock transfers is that the transfer is not accompanied by any capital funding or requirement to grow the portfolio.

In accordance with the principle of self-determination, AHV is required to maintain the housing portfolio. This also acknowledges the extreme disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal tenants and the highly dispersed nature of the portfolio.

Control over the properties will deliver real and tangible benefits to AHV and the Aboriginal community served by AHV. While it is unrealistic for tenants to expect immediate improvements to levels of service and quality of housing, over time it is anticipated that improvements will be achieved. This is despite that the single biggest challenge facing AHV is to effectively manage the ageing and deteriorating housing stock.

Considerable effort has been invested in establishing best practice asset management to meet this challenge. Free of the Director's restraints, AHV can more aggressively pursue asset recycling to dispose of uneconomic properties, and better align properties to meet Aboriginal needs.

Ownership and control of the stock provides the opportunity for Aboriginal tenants, community members and staff, to identify and build housing to meet Aboriginal needs and cultural expectations. Over time it is expected to transform the housing stock.

Ownership also provides the ability to take advantage of development opportunities to grow the housing stock. As AHV's building experience consolidates, so too will the capability to exploit larger scale and more complex development opportunities. Ownership also provides the ability to leverage existing housing in order to fund the capital developments.

It is anticipated that ownership of the properties will have a profound impact on future housing services.

As a property manager AHV strives for excellence as an Aboriginal landlord adept at sensitive delivery of culturally attuned housing services. As a property owner AHV is the custodian of housing assets for the Aboriginal community.

Custodianship reinforces the deep sense of responsibility and accountability to the Aboriginal community that also serves to deepen community ownership of AHV. Not only will it ensure delivery of services consistent with Aboriginal cultural values, it will challenge, influence and shape delivery of housing services so they are delivered holistically as part of a broader concerted effort to close the gap.

This influence is evident in the delivery of AHV's housing services. It underpins AHV's focus on client centred housing service delivery outcomes and the establishment of AHV's Life skills program which focuses on prevention and early intervention to work intensively with tenants to link them up with services and provide them with the support they need to manage and sustain their tenancies.

It has also influenced formative thinking regarding a place based approach in Whittlesea, funded by Aboriginal health, which seeks to assertively connect tenants to services that meet needs and also influence and encourage positive behaviours leading to improved health, social, education and economic outcomes.

It will spur us on further in future to reimagine the role of housing as an enabler of future Aboriginal success. We will be challenged to consider how social and affordable housing can not only be a safety net for the most vulnerable but also provide a pathway to the private rental market and home ownership for Aboriginal tenants.

It is our hope that the transfer of ownership of properties to AHV might have a ripple effect in the community housing sector. Importantly it might serve as a model for housing transfers to other Aboriginal housing providers in other jurisdictions. It may also raise awareness of Aboriginal housing needs among housing agencies and result in improved access to community housing for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal demand for social and affordable housing is off the scale. On every available measure of housing Aboriginal people are over represented in negative measures such as homelessness and under-represented in positive measures such as home ownership. AHV's growth in supply is constrained and AHV alone is unlikely to be able to meet future Aboriginal social housing demand. With continued high growth in the Aboriginal population forecasted, social housing demand is anticipated to continue growing and the community housing sector, in Victoria will need to rise to the challenge.

The transfer of housing to AHV is a significant act of self-determination and a significant moment in Victorian history. While the transfer serves a higher symbolic purpose for the Victorian Government and is part of a broader self-determination agenda, it also serves a very practical purpose for AHV and our tenants. Significantly it imparts Aboriginal control over housing decision making which will drive future improvements in property and tenancy management toward the original vision of AHV's founders of housing providing a pathway to improved lives and stronger communities.

The transfer should also raise the profile of Aboriginal housing in the community housing sector and stimulate further interest in how Aboriginal housing needs might be better met in the future.

Endnotes

1. The Hon. Paul Keating MP, 1992, *The Redfern Speech*, launching International Year of Indigenous Peoples, Sydney Australia.

2. The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, 2016, *Aboriginal Victoria Forum Speech*, 27 May 2016, Melbourne, Australia, *http://consult.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/ Open-Meeting*

A Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Homelessness

New South Wales Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO)

'The AHO is aiming to bring a more holistic lens to the issue, where support is provided at many critical points in a person's life and where we acknowledge how the issues of housing and homelessness interplay with other government portfolios such as health, education, employment and training.'

Shane Hamilton, Chief Executive
NSW Aboriginal Housing Office

Addressing Aboriginal homelessness is not simply about meeting demand on a wait list, but proactively identifying points of vulnerability and risk, sustaining existing tenancies and building community resilience. Critically, years of government policy have highlighted the need to bring a whole-of-life approach to homelessness that builds on community strengths, if we are to have any real chance of tackling this issue.

The New South Wales (NSW) Government's latest Discussion Paper, *Foundations for Change — Homelessness in NSW*, has once again highlighted the high numbers of Aboriginal Australians experiencing homelessness. In 2014–15, of the almost 49,000 people in NSW who accessed specialist homelessness services, 25 per cent identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The Discussion Paper aims to not only develop a *new* strategy for reducing homelessness, but to also broaden the conversation and thinking about what homelessness means and how it can be prevented. This is particularly relevant for Aboriginal communities.

As the paper identifies, homelessness is closely linked to Aboriginal disadvantage meaning that they are disproportionately represented across the risk factors for homelessness.

It could be argued that in the past, the housing continuum has not really taken care of Aboriginal people.

According to the NSW AHO Chief Executive Shane Hamilton, 'On the whole, housing programs don't respond particularly well to Aboriginal community needs and don't always reflect a cultural understanding of homelessness in the Aboriginal context.'

'With that setting, the AHO is aiming to bring a more holistic lens to the issue, where support is provided at many critical points in a person's life and where we acknowledge how the issues of housing and homelessness interplay with other government portfolios such as health, education, employment and training.'

'With that in mind, the AHO provides multiple responses to the issue of Aboriginal homelessness in NSW. Firstly, the AHO uses existing data to identify where the points of vulnerability and risk are. This is done to help people stabilise their lives at critical times.'

'One of the practical actions the AHO has taken is to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Corrective Services NSW, to support Aboriginal women transitioning back into community life, by providing short-term accommodation as they exit prison'.

Aboriginal women in NSW are overrepresented in the custodial system and are much more likely to return to custody after release — 39.9 per cent within one year — if they are not provided with safe and secure accommodation.

'It is recognised that safe and secure accommodation and the opportunity

to gain employment are both significant factors in reducing reoffending rates.

Importantly, one of the outcomes of this partnership is to support the women to transition to longer term housing and enable them to reconnect with their families and community.'

The AHO also has a partnership with the Aboriginal 'out of home care' service KARI, which provides immediate housing assistance to young people in need.

'Under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between KARI and the AHO, Aboriginal children and young people under the care of KARI can access temporary accommodation as they transition to independent living, thus acknowledging that housing is a key component to realising this vision,' says Shane.

The AHO also has also taken a decision to invest in programs and initiatives that support people to sustain their existing tenancies, so that their risk of homelessness is significantly reduced.

In September 2016, the AHO held a 'Festival of Energy' in the regional city of Dubbo, an area where many people experience extreme energy hardship.

'We focus a lot on telling tenants to make sure they pay their rent, but if our families and communities have big energy bills, they have competing costs. If we can support them to reduce their energy costs, it can help to keep a roof over their head.' explains Shane.

'By taking a creative approach to the causes of homelessness, these

education and awareness initiatives will be critical moving forward, as they address some of the big risk factors to homelessness 'head on' and in ways that make a real difference to Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness.' adds Shane.

Shane says this initiative indicates how the AHO is taking a longer-term view of housing assistance and how housing programs can address other areas of social disadvantage, such as education and employment, to support people on their life journey.

As an example, the AHO's Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) Program connects people who need to relocate from regional areas to metropolitan areas, to take advantage of work or study.

'In the AHO's view, this is an important program because historically the system has been set up to disincentivise people to enter employment.

We want to challenge that idea and provide wrap-around support for someone who might need housing assistance to take up an opportunity. In the long run, this will support both individual and community resilience.

Simply providing a house is not where our job should start and stop,' says Shane.

Earlier in 2016, the AHO also entered the affordable housing market by purchasing eight NRAS (National Rental Affordability Scheme) properties. Up until now, the AHO has not had any properties that target the 'affordable housing' market and as such has had limited opportunities for tenants to transition through the housing continuum, out of social housing.

In addition to the range of practical measures it is taking, the AHO is also asserting itself as a strong leader in the housing sector.

Most recently, the AHO co-hosted an Aboriginal Housing Master Class, which brought together a range of stakeholders to discuss the future sustainability of the housing sector for Aboriginal people. The Master Class explored a range of issues including

identifying opportunities for community development in remote Aboriginal communities; the importance of Aboriginal Housing being led by Aboriginal people; and preparing for future growth in the sector, particularly beyond 2018.

'Aboriginal Housing has a voice and a place in the broader housing sector, but it needs its own platform to inform policy going forward.

Nationally, things are done in isolation, but there are many common things we could all agree on that could help influence policy across the country.'

The AHO believes it is important that it takes a lead in these kinds of projects, and is aiming to provide increased leadership and advocacy in the space by participating in a range of initiatives.

One such initiative is White Ribbon, Australia's campaign to prevent men's violence against women. Shane is a White Ribbon ambassador and the AHO as an organisation is currently in the process of becoming a White Ribbon Accredited Workplace.

Violence can lead to homelessness for Aboriginal women and children. By advocating to prevent men's violence against women, the AHO is essentially advocating for the rights of all tenants affected by, or experiencing this type of violence.

Shane is determined to look at what else the AHO can do to put an end to homelessness, especially amongst the Aboriginal community.

'I'm questioning what we can do better to improve and support people so they don't actually get to the point where they become homeless,' says Shane.

The AHO's vision is to ensure that every Aboriginal person in NSW has equal access to and choice in, affordable housing. The AHO is committed to doing all it can to put an end to homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

In essence, the AHO's overall approach is becoming more

coordinated and integrated. It demonstrates a subtle shift from simply meeting demand, to being strategic about service provision and building individual and community opportunity.

'Looking at homelessness in context, we have to take a longer term view and identify, mitigate and reduce risk by building up the strengths that already exist in our communities.

At a broader policy level, there needs to be a shift to this thinking as well,' says Shane.

Two of the traditional policy responses to homelessness have been to subsidise rental markets and to place people in households where there are spare rooms available. The latter approach is something the AHO argues Aboriginal families have been doing for generations.

It proposes that as a sector, there could be consideration given to how we might be able to support people who are already providing housing for family members and friends.

'The way tenancy agreements are currently structured doesn't allow for much flexibility, but perhaps this could be reviewed to support a system that is already functioning across our state,' suggests Shane.

Shane also suggests we need to invest more in supporting people to maintain and sustain a tenancy.

'Many of our families live in homes with a large number of people, which in turn puts pressure on energy use and bills, for instance. We know Aboriginal people tend to exit social housing at higher rates than non-Aboriginal people and the reasons are generally not positive.

It is not simply an exercise in meeting an immediate housing need; it is about actively supporting people once they are there.'

The launch of the NSW Government's Discussion Paper will be an opportunity to bring a more holistic view to the issues and explore how housing can in turn support the broader health and wellbeing of our Aboriginal communities.

Māori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness

Dan Laws, Aboriginal Homelessness Network Coordinator, Ngwala Willumbong Ltd

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the rightful and traditional owners of this country. Our deepest respect and thanks is paid to elders who ensured the survival of Aboriginal communities and culture, and to the elders who continue to fight for equality in their own land.
We acknowledge the Māori community of Aotearoa and pay our respect to their elders both past and present. It is with respect for our affinity with disproportionate representation in homelessness in both cultures that this is written.

The statistics have been clear for decades that Aboriginal people are disproportionately over represented in homelessness in Australia. As with our Māori Brothers and Sisters, the same issues affect their communities.

It is widely believed by Australians that Aboriginal people have a cultural affinity with homelessness. It is commonly thought that Aboriginal peoples' cultural norm is to live in over-crowded situations, outdoors, and that structures such as houses are not respected. These untruths go on and on, but I can tell you without a doubt that our people live in over-crowded conditions because it goes against Aboriginal culture to turn away your family. What we have, we share. That is our cultural norm. In our work at Ngwala Willumbong we have often seen a mother occupy a property and within weeks she has taken in elders, family and especially children who would be otherwise homeless and without kin.

Historical impacts reverberate today affecting our communities. It was only in the mid-1960s that Aboriginal people were recognised as citizens and were given the right to vote in Australia. The stolen generations only ended in 1970, which saw the forced removal of at least 100,000 Aboriginal children. It was in 1965 that Uncle Charlie Perkins fought to end segregation with the Freedom Ride. When you look at the consequences and impacts of the historical trauma and its ongoing effects, it puts Aboriginal homelessness in 2016 in a new perspective. Perhaps the answer to why is this still an issue for our community is simply that the same effort at destroying Aboriginal culture has not been put into reversing the damage done.
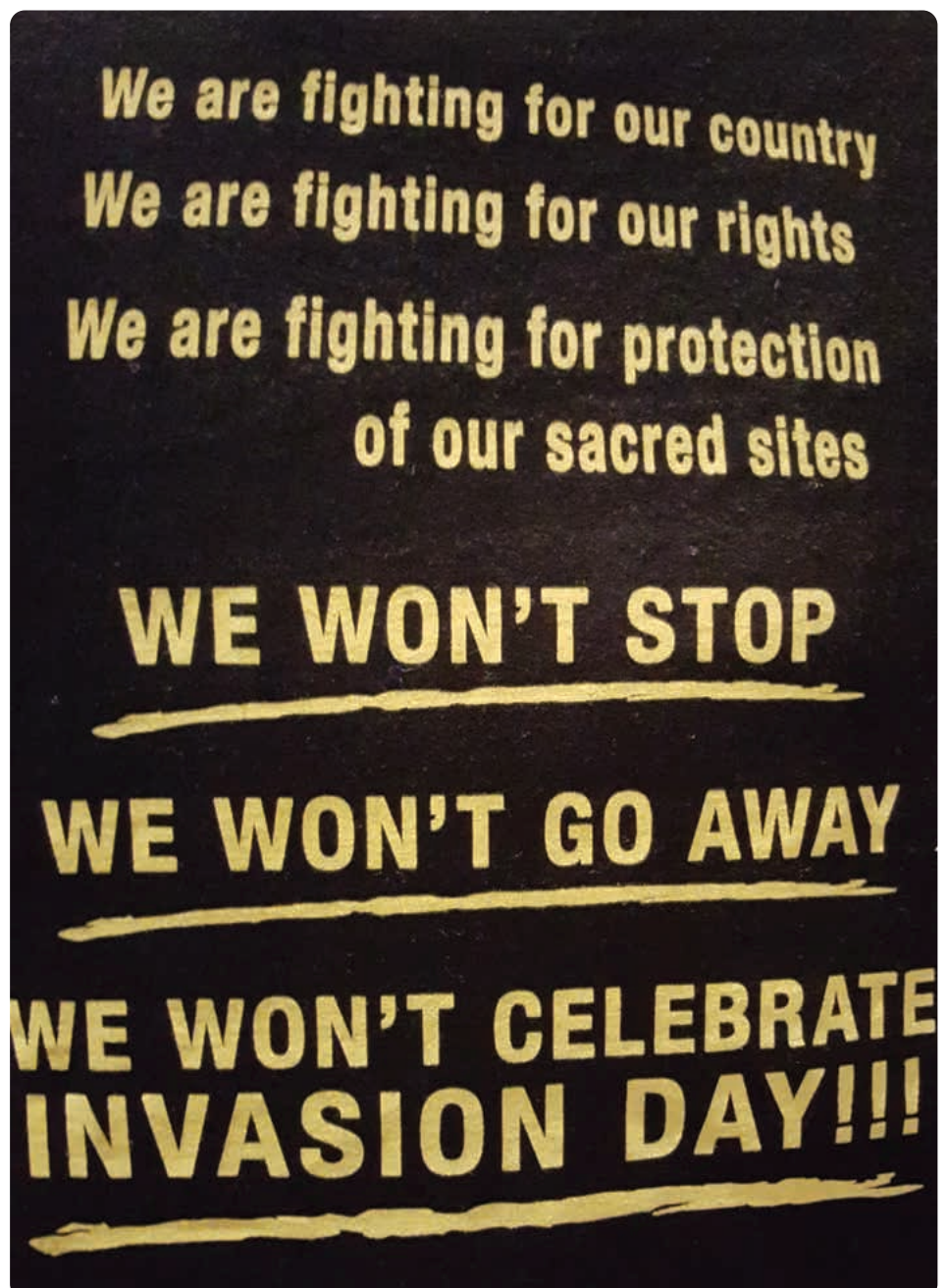
In my role as the Victorian Aboriginal Homelessness Networker, I have experienced first-hand and from community, the discrimination that exists within the homelessness sector. We are often at the mercy of organisations that, whilst having empathy for our people and our plight, can still turn us away as they do not have Aboriginal cultural values instilled into their decision making. Aboriginal people are still put into the 'too hard basket' due to so called complexity and are therefore often turned away. In a sector where there simply is not enough to go around, it leaves Aboriginal people at a greater disadvantage. We face discrimination with private rental and have been refused access to hotels for crisis accommodation.

Aboriginal people are still not prioritised across the homelessness sector, despite priority lists highlighting Aboriginal people as more vulnerable. Aboriginal organisations are not funded to a level of autonomy which leaves us reliant on non-Aboriginal organisations for funding, properties, emergency accommodation, support workers and programs.

If supply and demand is in question then being the highest number of any one race in this country experiencing homelessness should mean that we are prioritised across the sector.

When we visited Aotearoa, and met with our Māori friends, we found a kinship in our experiences, our communities being overrepresented in homelessness, incarceration, suicide, poor health, shorter life expectancy, more frequent removal of children and targeting by police. The greatest difference in our country being lack of autonomy, lack of acknowledgement for our first nations' people and the history of genocide inflicted on us, lack of services and a lack of respect.

When we saw the acknowledgement paid to Māori culture in schools and at a government level we were in awe. When we visited Māori run and owned holistic organisations, we were in awe. Every area of Aotearoa is covered by both Māori and general electorates, a concept our people can only hope for.

AUSTRALIA DAY
INVASION DAY

Invasion, Murder, Rape, Dispossession, Deaths in Custody, Attempted Genocide.

Celebrate . . .
You're Joking!
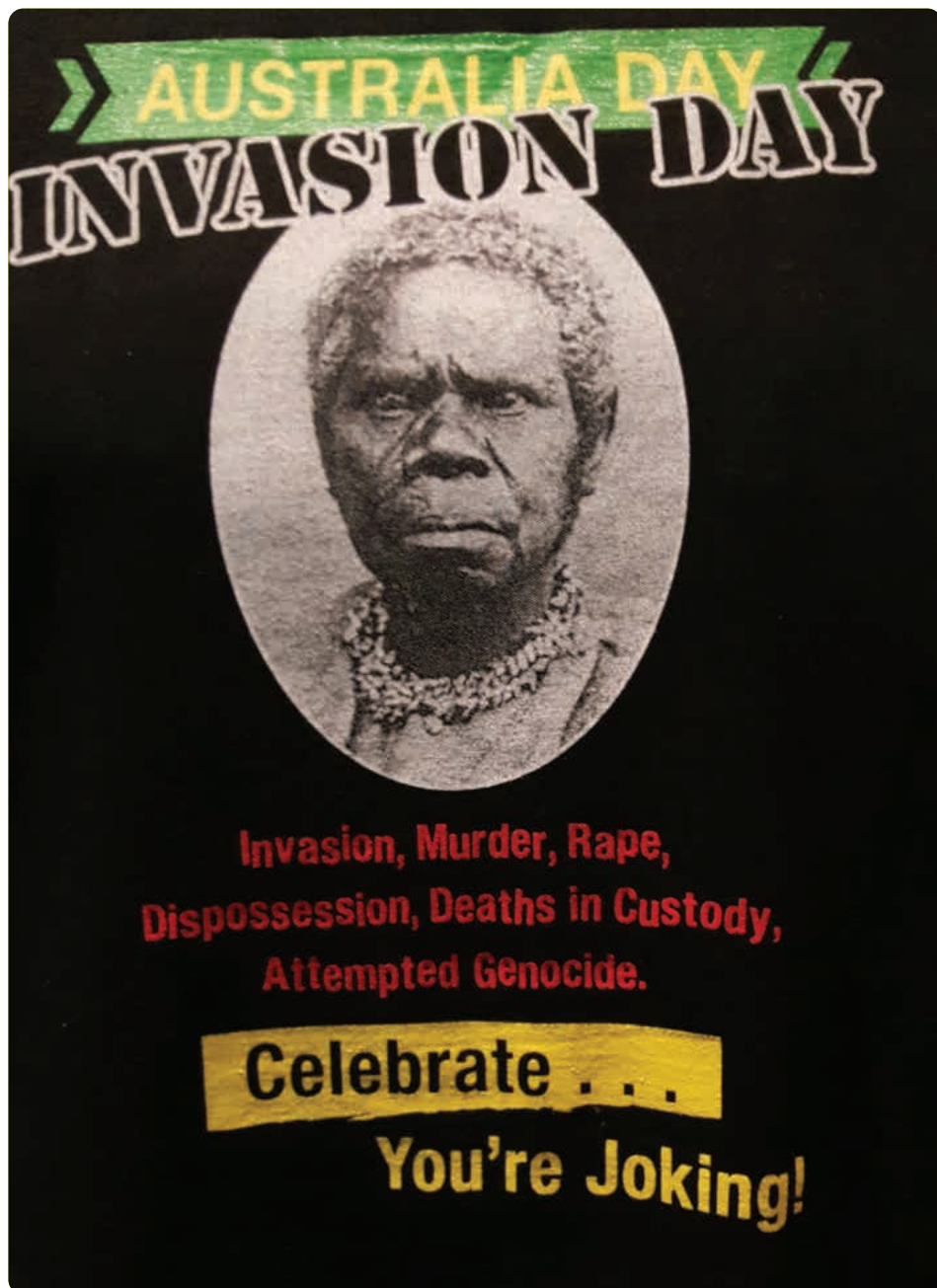
Aboriginal homelessness is not a priority for Australian government because it repels voters in our country. Aboriginal people are seen as welfare recipients and often discriminated against. Despite these barriers we have worked together to try and end Aboriginal homelessness. The cycle of asking for help, relying on other organisations and being grateful for their help is ongoing.
The homelessness sector does not work to the advantage of the most disadvantaged.

I manage the largest Aboriginal Homelessness team in Victoria at Ngwala. Our success is not measured by how many people we house, because we cannot house any independently, we have no properties. We have less crisis

funding than other organisations and we have fewer support workers. However, we are more successful because we are Aboriginal people working in our own community.

We understand that our people need a home, to extend our life expectancy, to have our children educated, to break the cycle of trauma. We work with entire families to promote an entire generation of wellness. We assist families to keep their children in school, to engage with healthcare and to address issues affecting their wellbeing.

When we were in Aotearoa we learnt that they had success when Māori people work within their communities, and even greater success when Māori organisations are owned and run by Māori community.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing: Now and in the Future?

Emily Kennedy, McCusker Centre for Citizenship, University of Western Australia and Stephen Hall, Communications and Engagement, Shelter WA

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) was to provide a new direction for remote Aboriginal housing with $5.5 billion in funding. It was a comprehensive Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform strategy that aimed to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages within a ten-year time frame (to June 2018).

In 2006 the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on adequate housing (Milloon Koothari) reported:

'Most disturbing is the absence of adequate and comprehensive participation processes for Indigenous communities in decision-making forums, resulting in some cases in culturally inadequate solutions ... There is an urgent need to establish decision-making processes and institutions, that are representative of all communities, and allow for proper self-determination of Indigenous Peoples.'[1]

NPARIH Obligations

Commonwealth obligations under NPARIH:
- funding for additional Indigenous housing and housing-related infrastructure in remote Australia conditional on secure land tenure being settled, to significantly reduce overcrowding and homelessness with the aim that a significant level of unmet housing need is met by the end of this period
- funding for the provision of some municipal and essential services under existing arrangements to Indigenous communities pending the development and take up of agreed funding responsibilities with the states and the Northern Territory
- agreeing a process with each jurisdiction on the scope and timing for comprehensive audits of the state of municipal and essential services within relevant Indigenous communities to be undertaken from 2009. The audits will assess the level and need for municipal and essential services as well as an assessment of required housing related infrastructure.

State obligations under NPARIH:
- the provision of housing in Indigenous communities for State housing authorities who should be the major deliverer of housing for Indigenous people in remote areas
- ensuring provision of standardised tenancy management and support for all Indigenous housing in remote areas consistent with public housing standards of tenancy management including through, where appropriate, existing service providers
- developing and implementing land tenure arrangements to facilitate effective asset management, essential services and economic development opportunities.

The Western Australian government in submissions to the Commonwealth Grants Commission has noted there is no agreement beyond the life of NPARIH (2018).

In anticipation of the expiration of NPARIH, Shelter WA and The Aboriginal Health Council for WA (AHCWA), hosted a forum in order to gain community perspectives on the implementation of the agreement in Western Australia.[2] It was attended by over 40 stakeholders.

The participants engaged in a process of group discussions around three key questions:
- What does NPARIH do well?
- What are the key problems or gaps associated with NPARIH, and

From UnitingCare Wesley Western Adelaide Homelessness Services' *'A Place to Call Home'* Exhibition

Street art — Fitzroy, Victoria

• What would you like NPARIH to look like in the future?

In answer to the first question the groups had several common responses including positive employment outcomes, increased housing rights and responsibilities for remote communities, the successful completion of NPARIH goals and better housing consultation and management processes.
Some comments were made around the sense of security inherent to long-term funding, improved cohesion between key stakeholders and the growth of housing capital.

The second question encouraged a greater number of responses including: employment gaps, inequity in the funding distribution, ill-suited and inadequate housing stock, maintenance and refurbishment problems, ill-suited housing management, and unclear responsibilities for key service providers. Most of these critiques seemingly contradict the responses to the first question. Rather than discrediting the initial responses though, the contradictions seemed to highlight the vastly different experiences, not only of stakeholders, but of different communities involved in the program.

Responses to the third question logically flowed from the second set, with participants suggesting increased employment opportunities, a renewed focus on significantly increasing housing stock, greater integration of services and increased community consultation. Driven by the concerns for adequate community consultation, a shift in the overall approach was suggested, moving towards linking broader outcomes with housing goals. Finally, there was a clear consensus that a commitment to longer-term funding was needed.

As mentioned above, the answers to these questions were hugely varied and often contradictory, reflecting the diverse group of stakeholders in the room. This of course represents the Indigenous housing sector in general. In addition, the contradictions focused attention on the gaps in information between groups and the differences in experience of the implementation of NPARIH. This is perhaps one of the most pertinent observations of the forum: the need for improved clarity, communication and cohesion between all stakeholders.

This appears to echo the UN Special Rapporteur's comments of a decade ago. Furthermore, the general consensus amongst Indigenous leadership is that nobody is doing any substantial policy work on Aboriginal housing policy anywhere in Australia.

Endnotes

1. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'UN expert on adequate housing concludes his visit to Australia, Australia, identified hidden national housing crisis' (Press Release, Release, 23 August 2006).

2. Perth on Monday the 8th of August 2016.

Resetting the Homelessness and Housing Button for the Northern Territory?

NT Shelter Policy Team

There are encouraging signs that the newly elected Norther Territory (NT) Labor Government acknowledges the failure of past governments to deliver the social and remote housing required to address the NT's affordable housing and homelessness crisis.

Homelessness and housing issues in the NT are particularly challenging given the large distances involved, the logistics and costs associated with servicing remote communities and the heavy reliance on the vagaries of Federal funding.

In the NT, the homelessness rates have been estimated at 15 times the national average. Some 7.3 per cent of all people in the NT are experiencing homelessness with one in four being Aboriginal. Over 85 per cent of people defined as homeless in the NT live in over-crowded dwellings.

In addition, we are witnessing growing numbers of socially, culturally and economically vulnerable Indigenous Territorians moving to the fringes of urban centres. Here they are unable to access the private rental market and even when public housing is available, it is not always appropriate.

However, to date, no formal homelessness targets have been set for the NT.

It can be argued that the NT has some of the worst remote public housing conditions in Australia. In Darwin and regional towns, there has been a slow trend of the government selling off housing assets to private developers with no guarantee that any social housing will be replaced, or that the funds realised from sales will be re-invested in social housing.

In the NT in the years between 2003/4 to 2014/15, public housing dwelling numbers have declined from 4,535 to 3,493 in Greater Darwin and 1,350 to 832 in Alice Springs while the household waiting list for social housing has jumped 69 per cent in Darwin (up from 1,293 to 2,183) and in Alice Springs 82 per cent (367 to 704).[1]

The realities of aging housing stock and overcrowding for Indigenous tenants in remote communities are well established. Unfortunately, the only policy response in recent times has focused on punitive (red card policy)[2] housing tenancy and tenancy management policies. This has in turn led to what Territorians have now come to refer to as urban drift — homelessness in the towns as the result of housing shortages in remote communities.

The Policy Context

The Commonwealth and Territory governments made significant changes to remote housing management in 1 July 2008. Further changes resulted from the compulsory acquisition of the five year leases held over many remote communities as part of the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER).

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)

The NPAH spanned five years from 2009–14 and this Commonwealth led initiative was seen by the broader community as recognition of the need to address homelessness.

Following the 2013 Federal election, the new Coalition government extended the NPAH until June 2016 and 2017, but with reduced funding. No forward estimates for funding

beyond 2017 have been announced for the NPAH. Of further concern is that the Federal Government is arguing that the NPAH has not resulted in the reduction of homelessness rates.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)

While Australia has seen some significant improvements in social housing stock availability, over the last decade the NT has not kept pace with other states and the ACT. The NT Government currently owns and manages 5,025 houses in remote areas, and 4,947 in regional and urban areas. It leases over 570 houses to community service agencies to provide crisis and transitional accommodation services and provides rental subsidies on a means-tested basis to ensure housing is affordable to tenants.

Unfortunately, the 2016/17 Federal Budget did not contain any new initiatives to address homelessness and improve housing affordability despite recommendations from the Affordable Housing Working Group.[3]

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPRIH)

Aboriginal housing in the Northern Territory has changed significantly over the last eight years. In the 1970s and '80s, many Aboriginal housing organisations were set up to manage housing in communities as part of the push for self-determination. In 2007, as the Australian Government began rolling out its secure tenure policy, self-management was replaced by public housing policies, procedures and contract arrangements.

The NPRIH was aimed at addressing overcrowding, homelessness, poor

housing conditions, dilapidated housing stock and severe housing shortages in remote communities within a ten-year time frame to 2018. Targets included 4,200 new homes and upgrades to 4,800 existing homes.

According to Department of Housing NT as of June 2016,[4] the funding supported the building of 1,189 new houses, 2,929 rebuilds and refurbishments and 998 upgrades to existing houses. The Department has argued that a further 2,000 new additional houses were required in 73 remote communities and that the biggest challenge would be to meet the gap between rental revenue and the cost of remote housing.[5]

It has been reported that the Turnbull Government will replace the NPRIH with a new remote housing partnership; but again, no forward estimates have been provided.

Affordable Housing in the NT

In the NT, the current supported housing model is limited to transitional, short and medium term and there are few pathways for people on low to very low income to move between the social safety net and the private market. Apart from National Rental Affordability Scheme houses, there are few suitable exits into private rental.

From a structural point of view, there is limited social and community housing with no alternative social housing provision for the Not-For-Profit (NFP) housing sector except through the Central Australian Affordable Housing Corporation (CAAHC). The NT Governments' first venture into social housing was in 2012 through the Real Housing for Growth Plan which has to date delivered 700 houses through head lease agreements.[6] It supported the development of the Venture Housing Company through the transfer of some government assets including the recent rebuild of 35 units in Parap.[7] The two other community providers are Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation and Kalano Community Association, but unlike CAAHC, they are not registered community housing providers.

While the new Northern Territory Labor Government is to be commended for committing $1.1 billion in the next ten years towards housing, particularly remote housing, it is yet to lay out a clear plan on how it can support the development of the still fledgling community housing industry.

Future Directions

There are some clear steps forward laid out by key national community peak bodies [8] such as the establishment of a Housing Finance Corporation (HFC), to fund an affordable housing growth fund.

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) in response to the Affordable Housing Working Group recommendations, proposed a set of structural reforms that would be needed to leverage the 80,000 properties currently under ownership or managed in the community housing sector nationwide to attract private capital.[9]

As part of its election pledge, the former Giles government proposed the setting up of the Remote Housing Development Authority (RHDA). The proposed objectives were:
- a place based approach to supporting Aboriginal housing
- including the establishment of community business to deliver remote housing services
- new subdivisions for more new remote housing
- brokering opportunities in remote communities for the delivery of construction projects, repairs and maintenance and tenancy management by Aboriginal people and business
- developing opportunities for private sector investment in remote communities and developing simplified systems to speed up land-leasing arrangements to enable the construction of new houses.

This model recognises that Aboriginal representation is critical to success and that a strong and independent approach to governance and leadership is necessary. Consultations to develop this model are on-going. However, it remains unclear whether the new Labor government will want to engage with the RHDA proposal.

It is, however, paramount that the Commonwealth continue to support remote housing in the next 20 years until there in a significant improvement in housing stock quality. This will be an important policy space going forward and key stakeholders like NT Shelter will be monitoring and contributing to further consultations.

Since its re-election the Federal Government, has not signalled any tax reform, with a focus on budget repair limited to spending cuts. Given the growing affordable housing crisis, it is incumbent on States and Territories to mount the case for tax reform. Suggestions to review negative gearing and capital gains tax arrangements [10] to reduce speculative investment and driving up house prices must remain on the political agenda.

This is the necessary first step to committing to an Affordable Housing Growth Fund both to expand the stock of affordable housing and ultimately attract private investment into the affordable housing sector.

Endnotes

1. NT Shelter 2016, *NT Shelter Housing Factsheets — Ten Year Housing Affordability Report Card*. Available from: *https://ntshelter.org.au/documents/ ?mdocs-cat=mdocs-cat-6&att=null*

2. *https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/ safety-and-antisocial-behaviour-in-public- housing*

3. Australia Government's *Affordable Housing Working Group Issues Paper 2016*, Council on Federal Financial Relations.

4. Department of Housing, Northern Territory Government. Presentation. Remote Housing Development Authority Stakeholder Working Group Meeting, Aug 5th, 2016.

5. ibid.

6. *https://housing.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/ pdf_file/0015/280113/Urban-Housing- Strategy_01062016.pdf*

7. *http://www.venturehousing.org.au/*

8. An Affordable Housing Reform Agenda led by National Shelter the Australian Council of Social Service, Community Housing Federation of Australia, Homelessness Australia (now defunct), National Association for Tenants' Organisations.

9. *http://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp- content/uploads/2016/03/CHIA-submission -to-AHWG-FINAL-March-2016.pdf*

10. Vote Home 2016, *Five Reforms to deliver more affordable housing to end homelessness*. National Shelter, Homelessness Australia, Community Housing Industry Association, ACOSS.

Vera and Her Grannies:
Compromises and Compassion in Housing for Aboriginal Families

Dr Jennie Gray, Regional Manager, South Metro, Anglicare Western Australia (WA)

Anglicare WA delivers a Family Housing Program in the Perth south metro region to assist families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness due to difficulties in maintaining tenancies. The agency has housing stock to accommodate these families in the medium term as they, ideally, transition to more permanent accommodation. Enter Vera.

Vera was referred into the Program through another local service provider. Vera is a proud Noongar woman, with four grandchildren in her care. She is resourceful, capable, clever, wise, articulate, respectful and well respected, and with a great sense of humour. She is also relatively isolated, feels the burden of being solely responsible for an extended family group, has a public housing debt, and experiences some health problems including diabetes.

Vera had to wait for a Family Housing refurbished property to become available. In the context of being homeless (and couch surfing) for more than three years, these waiting weeks were relatively insignificant for Vera. We were able to accommodate Vera and her grandchildren (grannies) in a lovely large home in a quiet suburb close to local amenities.

We all know that the issue of Aboriginal homelessness does not travel alone — there are many factors in Aboriginal people's lives that make it concurrently difficult for them to access and retain housing — and Vera's set of circumstances was no exception.

As a relatively new guest in our Family Housing Program, issues with Vera's tenancy began quickly. Most of these were connected to her adult children, of which she has nine.

Two of these adult children, and their respective partners, were particularly troublesome. Arriving at the premises at odd hours, invariably intoxicated via a mixture of alcohol and drugs, and generally exhibiting antisocial behaviour, their ad hoc appearance was almost always linked with a spike in petty crime and other problematic activities in the neighbourhood. They often overstayed.

Some resident's complaints about Vera's children were informally made and others came via channels requiring a more official response. Theft at a nearby shopping centre was attributed to the extra teenage grandchildren who were unofficially and intermittently accommodated and cared for by Vera (there was no financial recompense for these extra grandchildren either, as Centrelink payments continued to be made direct to their parents).

Vera's household subsequently became well known to local Police and has been subject to a number of search warrants since she moved in.

This havoc in Vera's life was exacerbated by the challenges she encountered in making sure that the primary school aged children in her care attend school regularly, and also refrain from copying their older cousin's and parent's behaviours.

Vera was conflicted. Highly motivated to ensure that the grandchildren have access to stable housing, education and care, Vera applied for six different violence restraining orders (VROs) in an effort to keep her children, and children-in-law, at bay.

These applications were fraught. She wanted to show us (as the housing provider) that her motivations and intentions to uphold the tenancy were serious. But in reality Vera found it very hard to report any rupture of these orders to Police. How could she when they were her own children? Vera's application to be the primary carer of a wheelchair-using daughter whom she also had a VRO out against illustrates perfectly her starkly contrasted commitments.

Vera approached us in much the same divided way. With practically no other choice, as Family Housing was a last option following previous public housing losses, Vera was obligated to engage with our systems and agree to our terms. But her trust was tenuous, highly conditional and torn. Instinctively she did not. Vera was fatigued as she tried to meet her divergent responsibilities to all of us. Her efforts to maintain some sort of equilibrium in hers and her grannies lives was akin to a full time job.

In an unenviable position of being simultaneously responsible for coordinating client support and property management, there were similar challenges for us as the housing provider too.

Our understanding for Vera's predicament was frequently stretched by stories from the neighbours who bore the brunt of a spate of antisocial activity that circled like a cyclone around Vera's family.

As an agency, Anglicare WA has a duty of care to ensure the community's safety and wellbeing as well. Our obligations as a benevolent landlord frequently collided as we struggled to manage the competing demands of Vera and her children with those of the wider community.

Vera's circumstances are not uncommon in Perth as they would be in other cities. Of the almost ten

thousand people counted as homeless in Western Australia in the last census, almost half live in severely overcrowded dwellings and more than one third were Indigenous.[1] And we know that this is underestimated due to the multitude of well documented barriers Aboriginal people encounter completing this national count. Vera is not alone in this either.

Notwithstanding the technical issues in the recent census, which were trying for even the most dedicated of us, Vera did not complete her survey.

Whichever way you look at it, we agree that it is difficult to say how many people were in her household, highlighting the static nature of our national count compared to the fluidity of many Aboriginal family's living arrangements. Also, as a member of the Stolen Generation, Vera's level of wariness and defence were heightened, ever vigilant to any form of statutory involvement in her family's life. Thus the thought of being 'official' in the census caused Vera untold additional anxiety on several levels.

It is 'cases' like Vera's that prompt us as a community service agency, to pause and reflect with a different lens to consider how else we can work well. Sector models of providing housing tend to be linear and inflexible. There are clearly marked entry and exit points, and straying from this pathway invariably hastens the journey through. Our usual 'three strikes' approach of ensuring compliance with tenancy requirements does not work and, worse, sets some families up to fail. The rigorous application of this rule

would have resulted in Vera's departure long ago and guaranteed intergenerational homelessness.

Our progress with Vera does not look like rocket science. What we did and are still doing is quite simple. We are purposely investing time to build a relationship and develop deeper understanding of Vera's lived experience.

We have actively involved Vera in the design of Plan B. Our co-designed solution is simple too, to re-locate Vera and her grannies to another property, further away, less suburban and on a busy road more able to absorb the comings and goings.

We used Vera's move as an occasion to clarify our expectations as well as an opportunity to remind us all of the consequences. In return Vera has made an extra effort to meet all her tenancy obligations.

Vera has also allowed us to make tentative connections for her. We were a conduit for Vera to join a local support group for Aboriginal grandmothers, and also helped her improve her connections with relevant school staff.

Working with and for this family, we have begun liaising with the West Australian Housing Authority to renegotiate the conditions of her debt, so that she might become eligible for a priority listing before this is repaid.

We have assisted other teams as well, to help them to understand that 'victims' often present as aggressive when they are highly fearful of agency
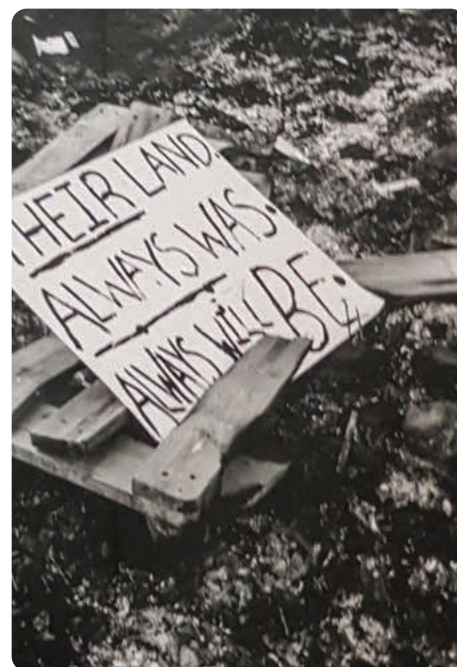
inspection and intervention. Workers who can reframe defence and avoidance as an understandable reaction in a certain context are able to be more empathic and engage them in more helpful conversations.

Sadly Vera's scenario mirrors many of the Aboriginal families we work alongside. Given the multitude of factors undermining her capacity to secure and sustain a house, it is difficult to know where to start — so called wicked problems.

One year later and we are all still here, perhaps less compromised and more compassionate. We are committed to continue providing more meaningful support while Vera finds her feet.

Endnote

1. *http://abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2049.02011*

Street art — Redfern, NSW

Q: When is a homeless person not a homeless person?
A: When they are a Visitor

Sally Langton, CEO Central Australian Affordable Housing

Almost two years ago I came to Alice Springs to work at Central Australian Affordable Housing (CAAH), a community housing provider for Aboriginal people. Every new place has its jargon and almost immediately I found myself puzzled by the concept of the 'Visitor'. I would go to network meetings, action groups and forums and without fail the dilemma of what to do for Visitors was raised. These Visitors were everywhere. And I found myself asking; 'who are they, what do they want and why are they here in Alice Springs'?

Having worked with homeless people for many years; I quickly deduced that the 'Visitor' was more often than not homeless as well. Certainly Aboriginal people come to Alice Springs briefly for services, maybe the football or family reasons and can be described legitimately as visitors. But what about the so called Visitor who stays for months and years? What about the Visitor who comes with an entire family and moves into another family's home? Or the relatives who never leave town and move from one household to another? I quickly realised that perhaps calling people Visitors was a euphemism for 'homeless Aboriginal people.'

I also realised very quickly that it is much easier to regulate Visitors. The town can blame them, move them on, or legislate and punish any behaviour the public view as uncomfortable when someone is called a Visitor.

Visitors can be controlled because they 'are not from here'. They can be told to go back, fined, imprisoned, punished or moved along because it is perceived they have abused their right to visit Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory has one of the highest per capita rates of homelessness in Australia at 7.3 per cent; that is five times the national average. 97 per cent of homeless people in the Alice Springs and Central Australian Region are Aboriginal. (ABS 2011)

Service organisations in the region have intimate knowledge of all the barriers, symptoms and circumstances of homelessness. There is a raft of anecdotal evidence around the reasons for this high rate of homelessness and the needs of homeless Aboriginal people. However, there is no clear data which identifies the true housing and support needs of those without a home in Central Australia.

Visitors can be rightly or wrongly blamed for all manner of social infringements seemingly without any community embarrassment. But what if they were described for what they really are; homeless? It is simple for a community to describe people as Visitors but not so easy to acknowledge them as homeless.....there are scores of people in town without a home.

While service agencies in Alice Springs work well together and are united in their efforts to end homelessness, these services are not formally integrated as part of a strategic system led by current government policy; nor are there clear pathways for homeless Aboriginal people to move from homelessness to home.

The accommodation available for homeless Aboriginal people in the area has been acknowledged by service providers as being in short supply, not always suited to an individual's or family's needs, often

unaffordable and time limited. Homelessness in Alice Springs can be hidden by overcrowding and people constantly moving between locations.

Contracted support services for the client group often have narrowly targeted, under resourced and time limited service contracts. Furthermore, those wishing to move on from homeless centric services to more permanent accommodation confront long waiting lists, insufficient housing stock to meet demand and a lack of continuing support while they wait for accommodation. Coupled with low housing supply is the lack of extended support for people once they are housed to ensure they never become homeless again.

If we did acknowledge the Visitors as homeless would anyone ask the 'why' question?

Anecdotally the Northern Territory is 2,000 houses short of ideal supply; and these numbers relate mainly to Aboriginal households. That is up to 10,000 men, women and children in the Northern Territory without a home. This is a staggering figure when our population hovers around the 250,000 mark.

Urban drift as a phenomenon is touching Remote Communities; where people move to towns for work, health care and education. Remote Communities also have housing shortages and overcrowding; they are touched by homelessness too.

And when people do come to towns; there is no salvation there. The towns are also struggling with affordable housing supply.

Sometimes I think it's easy to become blunted toward the housing crisis in

the Northern Territory. We hear the same stories so often. As a housing service, we at CAAH field many enquiries each week.

There are people receiving dialysis who have come in from bush and are sleeping on family's veranda. Or the woman with cancer requiring a year's treatment and has left her husband home with two children while she tries to find a home for herself and three little ones, or the guy who's just got a job and has to move to town urgently. Or the woman who is due back from Adelaide with her sickly new born and can't go home due to domestic violence.

Then there are people who just cannot get private rental because of discrimination, poor references or no rental history.

And while people are waiting for housing they move in with family or friends, make a bed on a veranda or sleep out in the saltbush. And they get called Visitors.

Developing solutions for homeless people requires listening, creating, having a vision and working together. Strategic direction and leadership must come from the government; along with the development of partnerships and resourcing for not for profit service providers and a mandate for the whole of government to work together on solving this challenge.

Good housing matters; it saves lives, creates community, heals families and gives people the courage to dream, grow and move forward. Developing a well-resourced, strategic integrated service system can end homelessness for Aboriginal People in the Town of Alice Springs.

In Alice Springs local agencies are working together to develop homelessness innovation and are working collaboratively with common clients and to create solutions for the homeless. But we need more than the efforts of resource poor non-government organisations and

goodwill to fix these challenges. In our own small way we are working, lobbying and advocating for the following:

- *we want to know how big the problem is*
- *we want a data system which helps us identify and describe the challenge*
- *we acknowledge the enormous cost that homelessness places on our community and homeless families and individuals*
- *we make a commitment as a not for profit community and invite the Government to partner with us to fix it*
- *we want to devise creative, responsive and timely solutions that apply to the homeless person and their needs.*

And, the sector in Alice Springs has dropped the 'Visitor' word. We are calling people who are homeless people exactly that; homeless. And we are working together to create solutions to homelessness in Alice Springs.

Street art — Redfern, NSW

Remote Housing and the Modern Outback: Problem or Opportunity?

Robert Gough, Policy Officer and Stephen Hall, Communications and Engagement, Shelter WA

In late 2014 the West Australian (WA) Premier Colin Barnett revealed plans to close up to 150 of the 274 remote communities in WA. He said that the WA State Government could no longer continue to service them.

This decision arose following Federal Government funding cuts that were part of a much broader slashing of funding in Aboriginal affairs.[1] In September 2014 the Commonwealth, previously the major funder of about two thirds of the state's Indigenous communities, announced that responsibility was being transitioned to the states over a two year period.

At the time of that announcement, the WA government described the Federal Government's move as 'reprehensible'. The Premier said he had no alternative after the Federal Government announced they would no longer fund essential services to remote communities. The Premier said: *'We are not, and I stress, we are not simply going to replace the amount of money withdrawn by the Commonwealth.'*[2]

Subsequently Tony Abbott, the then Prime Minister, said that Barnett was right to shut down communities if the cost of providing services outweighed the benefits.[3] However, West Australian Liberal and former Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Fred Chaney, cautioned against repeating the 'catastrophic' social degradation of the 1960s when Aborigines were moved into towns, warning that governments must ensure those in remote communities *'have a decent life and don't actually wind up as fringe-dwellers and long-grassers'*.[4]

The WA Government eventually established the *Regional Services Reform Unit* in May 2015 to drive reform to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in regional and remote WA. The reform aimed to bring about long-term, systemic change. In July 2016, the WA State Government released a roadmap for major reforms to the delivery of regional housing, education, employment and human services.[5]

The report outlines:

'A long-term outcome of reform is high-functioning regional networks, based around towns. Towns have the scale to support better infrastructure, services and governance.

On this basis, the State Government will focus its efforts and investment on regional locations that have significant educational and employment opportunities, increasing the likelihood of better outcomes…and progressively work to ensure minimum standards for basic services in larger remote Aboriginal communities.

In concentrating on towns and larger communities, the State Government expects to support fewer communities over time, particularly as migration away from small outstations continues. However, the State Government will not prevent Aboriginal people from living remotely or continuing to access country for cultural purposes.

The State Government will apply the following principles to fund and deliver essential and municipal services in remote Aboriginal communities.

1. *Focus on larger communities: 80 per cent of the State's remote community population live in the largest 50 communities (which all contain at least 50 permanent residents). Larger communities, even if isolated, offer the prospect of greater long-term sustainability due to better economies of scale and demand.*

2. *Tiered services and service standards: based on community size and location, which will enable larger Aboriginal communities to receive services commensurate to those received in settlements of similar size and location elsewhere in the State.*

3. *Transition to self-sufficiency: if any community receives services but would not receive them in the future under these principles, the State Government would support the community to transition to self-sufficiency.*

4. *Transition to become regional towns: the State Government would consult a small number of larger, economically sustainable Aboriginal communities to see if they want to become regional towns, to facilitate better community servicing and future investment.'*[6]

There are about 274 remote Aboriginal communities in WA, with an estimated total population of 12,000 Aboriginal residents. About 9,000 residents and 244 communities are in the Kimberley and Pilbara, with most of the remainder in the Goldfields and some in the mid-west. The WA State Government estimates that there are:
- 16 communities with more than 200 residents
- 19 communities with 100 to 199 residents
- 19 communities with 50 to 99 residents
- 91 communities with 10 to 49 residents

- 60 communities with fewer than 10 residents
- 69 seasonal communities with no permanent residents.

Land tenure has been identified as a key issue with the Reform Unit stating that:

> The underlying tenure for about 180 of the 274 remote communities, all 37 town-based reserves, and the approximately 11,000 people living in those places, is either a Crown reserve or unallocated Crown land. The form of tenure is not appropriate for permanent living areas.[7]

It is hard to know what this Report will mean in the longer-term. There is a clear emphasis on building infrastructure and service in larger communities; initially only ten, possibly up to 50 of the larger communities (based on population), but even that is not clear. The question then remains to what happens to the people from the other 200+ communities and how they are helped towards self-sufficiency? There is no clarity around this in the Report.

However, there may be another way to look at this question.

The Modern Outback

The Pew Foundation has funded a report called *'The Modern Outback; the nature, people and the future of remote Australia'*.[8] The Pew Charitable Trust ranks the Australian Outback as one of only six extensive natural regions left on Earth.

Dr Barry Traill, the director of The Pew Charitable Trusts Outback Australia program, says *''the outback' means many things to many people. Australia's outback is a vast area, covering close to 80 per cent of Australia, but the population is low and there are few politicians who represent outback electorates. … If we don't consistently treasure and value and engage with the outback, we will have a situation which will continue to get worse.'* he said.

'It is a modern place, it needs a modern future and that is what we wanted to focus on.'

The outback is underpopulated and under threat from weeds, feral animals and fire. However, there are management strategies that work. The Indigenous Ranger Program has been incredibly successful nationally, Aboriginal people on their country, looking after it with environmental benefits for all Australians, he said. *'Things such as carbon farming, managing the country, so that there is more ground cover, and more vegetation, which gets real jobs and real dollars working.'*[9]

In addition to the above, the chair of the Natural Resource Management Rangeland Alliance, Andrew Drysdale, says the outback is an important contributor to the Australian economy. *'The rangelands are a wealth generator. They are incredibly productive in an economic sense too, gauged to be about $92 billion to the Gross Domestic Product, but if we don't look after it and we don't keep it in good condition, it will also cost us,'* he said. *'We have to lift the agenda of the rangelands and then there are other biophysical things, such as improving groundcover which will lead to so many flow-on things.'*[10]

Traill and Drysdale suggest the planning for a modern outback partly depends on getting the issue on the national political agenda. Dr Traill says failure to develop a long-term strategy for the 'Modern Outback' is untenable. *'If we don't consistently treasure and value and engage with the outback, we will have a situation which will continue to get worse,'* he said.[11]

To extrapolate this a little: the outback is important to the economy and national interest. Traill's logic is that it is critical for the environment that there needs to be people living on country and caring for it.

Fortunately, traditional groups are strongly connected to particular lands and waters, which provide the foundations of identity. 'Country' in this particular Aboriginal sense includes the animals and plants, along with lands and waters, all of which must be cared for by their traditional owners.

In Aboriginal societies, caring for country includes environmental practices, such as burning off, but more importantly there are special kinds of ceremonial law that needs to be maintained in order to ensure the wellbeing of the land and to reinforce the values of and obligations towards country.

Indigenous people can maintain their dependence and obligations in relation to their traditional country even if they do not live there all the time. These connections are still extremely significant for people whose grandparents and great-grandparents were forcibly moved from their country by governments in the past. If individuals lose connection with country, this can be a great source of grief and disorientation.

There is ample evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits of living in homelands, particularly in relation to maintaining culture and connection to country. Breaking Aboriginal connection to land and culture, and forcing people to move to regional towns will just increase exposure to drugs, alcohol, and crime, with no guarantees of adequate housing or employment.

Even if only for this reason, governments need to engage with and listen to Aboriginal peoples to develop a better understanding of culture, connection to land, and health and wellbeing.

Endnotes

1. *http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-13/budget-2014:-$534-cut-to-indigenous-programs-and-health/5451144*
2. *https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/feb/03/wa-premier-withdraws-royalties-help-for-struggling-aboriginal-communities*
3. *https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/mar/10/remote-communities-are-lifestyle-choices-says-tony-abbott*
4. *http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/fred-chaney-warns-of-fringedweller-indigenous-policy/news-story/98a3c7a84eb7c2568e861325d101afd0*
5. *http://regionalservicesreform.wa.gov.au/p/about*
6. *Resilient Families, Strong Communities: A roadmap for regional and remote Aboriginal communities*, Government of Western Australia, July 2016, *http://regionalservicesreform.wa.gov.au/p/roadmap*, pp.9–10.
7. *http://regionalservicesreform.wa.gov.au/book/land-tenure*
8. Dr Barry Traill, *The Modern Outback; the nature, people and the future of remote Australia* *www.pewtrusts.org.au/outback*
9. ibid.
10. Andrew Drysdale, Chair, Natural Resource Management Rangeland Alliance.
11. Dr Barry Traill op cit.

Consumer Voices

Consumer Voices is a regular feature in *Parity*. Articles are written by and with consumers to ensure they have a say about the issues that directly affect them.

Indigenous Homelessness: Dispossessed

The Peer Education and Support Program (PESP) is the consumer participation program at the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) in Victoria. PESP is a diverse group of people who have experienced homelessness and are trained and supported to undertake a range of activities to improve the response to homelessness, educate and raise awareness about homelessness and promote consumer input into homelessness policy and service design and delivery.

Introduction
Jason is a man who has a strong connection to his Aboriginal culture, heritage and community. His experience of trauma, mental health, addiction and homelessness impacted on these connections. Jason described these issues and his desire to reconnect to his community now that he is permanently housed.

Connection to Aboriginal heritage
Living in New South Wales, Jason was an active member of his community. Working on a community television station, he advocated for Aboriginal rights. The show focused on issues such as: Aboriginal affairs; covering protests, the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, interviews with elders and the sale of 'the block' in Redfern.

Jason also worked in schools, delivering Aboriginal cultural programs to students, incorporating digeridoo playing, traditional Aboriginal dance workshops and storytelling about the Dreamtime. Jason has fond memories of one school in particular, where he was delivered with an official apology for the Stolen generation by the Mayor for Reconciliation week *'It was awesome, brought me to tears'*.

Pathway to homelessness
Jason's experience as a firefighter exposed him to traumatic events which disturbed him. This trauma started to affect his mental health. He wasn't feeling himself, had trouble sleeping and began to hear voices. Jason went to see a Doctor, who believed these were the signs of schizophrenia and referred Jason to a specialist for assessment. The diagnosis was that Jason suffered from bipolar disorder.

After intravenously using speed for the first time, Jason recalls 'feeling normal'. He continued to use speed recreationally until Ice came on the scene and he was hooked instantly. This was the beginning of a long, painful road through homelessness and drug misuse. Jason did not want the elders to think he was performing while high on ice, so he stopped his work in schools and at events: *'I chose Ice and lost everything; my family, work, home and my community'*.

Jason spent seven years rough sleeping and using Ice heavily and it took a toll on his body which started to fail: *'Ice was killing me'*. Desperate for something to change and knowing it wouldn't if he stayed where he was, Jason made the trip to Melbourne.

Interventions
In Melbourne Jason met other people who were experiencing homelessness who shared information about services that could help him with meals, showers, support workers and housing.

Eventually Jason got housed and supported however he was still struggling with his addiction. He questioned whether the using made him feel good because it was ice or whether it was treating his mental health. A psychotic break took Jason to a hospital where things began to change. Recalling a particular conversation with a Doctor he was seeing, Jason said he 'saw the light' and made the decision to live. He has been clean for the three years since.

Dispossessed
Jason feels a distance between himself and his culture and community now; he feels dispossessed. He would love to reconnect again but doesn't know how *'I wouldn't know where to start and my lack of confidence gets in the way'*.

Jason has a message for other Aboriginal people who may be struggling with issues:

'If I can rise above being dispossessed, addicted and crazy and I can come back from it, anyone can'.

Conclusion
When asked what he would like to see put in place to prevent or address Indigenous homelessness, Jason replied:

'Aboriginal people who are experiencing homelessness need help from other Aboriginal people and services. At one point in my homelessness, I went to stay at an Aboriginal hostel. When the door opened, I was greeted by an Aboriginal man who said 'Come in brother, you're home now.' More people need that experience; it's a welcome home. The Aboriginal service response must be preserved'.

Wadamba Wilam

Jamie Waring, Service Manager, Neami National Wadamba Wilam (Renew Shelter) and Adam Burns, Psychiatric Nurse, Northern Area Mental Health Services

Wadamba Wilam (Renew Shelter in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people) is an innovative and successful way of working with Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness and mental illness. The program offers a holistic, intensive outreach service for Aboriginal people over 16 years of age, in the Melbourne municipalities of Darebin and Whittlesea, supporting up to 30 consumers at any one time.

Many consumers experience significant co-morbidities such as alcohol and other drug (AOD) addiction, acquired brain injury (ABI), intellectual disability and numerous chronic medical conditions. Service provision includes:

- mental health support, both acute and long-term
- ongoing (AOD) support with access to withdrawal, rehabilitation and counselling
- psychosocial support including life skill development, and engagement in meaningful activity
- facilitated support to navigate a complex primary healthcare, housing, justice and mental health system
- care co-ordination
- housing support
- advocacy
- access to cultural resources and promotion of cultural and community connectivity
- family work.

There are a number of factors that have been important in this process, such as an integrated outreach team with representatives from mainstream and Aboriginal organisations combining skills, knowledge and teamwork to meet multiple consumer needs. The incorporation of principles of Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) along with a trauma informed approach have allowed the service to develop cultural safety and work with people in a strength based manner.

The program involves a consortium of four key partners; Neami National as the lead organisation with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS), Uniting Care ReGen and Northern Area Mental Health Services (NAMHS). The team consists of a service manager and community rehabilitation support worker from Neami (CRSW), a senior psychiatric nurse (NAMHS), a Social and Emotional Wellbeing worker (VAHS), a senior AOD clinician (ReGen) and a consultant psychiatrist (VAHS). Half of the service delivery team are Aboriginal and the program supports Aboriginal student placements.

A Cultural Model of Support — Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Wadamba Wilam seeks to de-stigmatise mental health services by adopting a cultural title for the program, employing Aboriginal staff and embedding the principles of SEWB into practice. SEWB for Aboriginal people can be defined as 'a multidimensional concept of health that includes mental health, but which also encompasses domains of health and wellbeing such as connection to land or 'country', culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community'.[1]

Wadamba Wilam aspires to deliver culturally safe and appropriate services to Aboriginal people. Staff have completed cultural responsiveness training and also utilise the cultural knowledge of Aboriginal and VAHS staff. The team participate in cultural mentoring and in joint reflective practice sessions with VAHS.

Team members are supported to attend relevant cultural forums and SEWB conferences and utilise the SEWB framework in conjunction with the Collaborative Recovery Model (CRM) as the engagement models of care. The holistic strength based approach allows staff to facilitate access to many protective factors within the community. *Wadamba Wilam* supports consumers to connect with culture through accessing community groups such as VAHS men's group and women's sister circle, alongside cultural camps and outings to places of cultural significance.

The *Wadamba Wilam* team recognises the importance of connection to land, spirituality and ancestors as integral to SEWB for Aboriginal people. Many consumers have been supported to return to country and the team have observed the many healing benefits of this. Extensive and cumulative grief and loss is a common experience for many consumers and *Wadamba Wilam* supports consumers through sorry business.

Trauma Informed Approach

Levels of trauma exposure are high within this population and it is not uncommon for consumers to have experienced in excess of 30 significant traumatic life events. Many consumers experience symptoms consistent with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD. At the point of referral to *Wadamba Wilam*, no consumer has had a diagnosis of PTSD or Complex PTSD. Following engagement, it has become evident that more than half of the consumers met the criteria for this diagnosis.

The team uses elements of many trauma-informed approaches including Judith Herman's Three Stages of Trauma Recovery Model.[2]

The development of trust is the cornerstone of this therapeutic

process of healing and this is, in many ways, the most important phase of engagement with *Wadamba Wilam*. The assertive outreach model is imperative to building a trusting relationship with consumers; a process that can take six to 12 months of intensive work. *Wadamba Wilam* is underpinned by flexibility and responsiveness when working with consumers. This is made possible by a funding structure which allows for lower consumer/support worker ratios to provide more intensive support when required, while ensuring opportunities for consumers to build resilience and the capacity to manage independently over time.

The experience of significant PTSD and presentations of complex trauma is a significant barrier to consumers remaining engaged with standard service approaches. *Wadamba Wilam*'s holistic and culturally safe approach allows the team to tailor treatment with the consumer's preferences while making the most of resources from partner organisations to meet individual needs in a targeted manner.

Service Access and Collaboration

Through this program we have seen greater collaboration between services. The partners in the consortium have made inroads into improving cultural responsiveness. UnitingCare ReGen now has dedicated beds for Aboriginal consumers in its detox services as does the Northern CCU. The inclusion of VAHS in the integrated model has allowed for Aboriginal services, team members, community and family to vouch for *Wadamba Wilam* as a safe place to receive support. Additionally, the integrated model enhances our capacity to facilitate access to appropriate components of partner organisations, including:

- Psychiatric Inpatient Unit
- Prevention and Recovery Centre (PARC)
- Community Care Units (CCU)
- AOD Residential Withdrawal Unit
- AOD Non-Residential Withdrawal Unit
- Counselling at VAHS.

Assessments for access to these service components occur 'in house',

eliminating the need for the consumer to retell what are often traumatising stories. Facilitation of access to these services has contributed to a significant increase in Aboriginal consumers accessing sub-acute and residential rehabilitation facilities. The use of PARC in particular has proven to be a solid therapeutic option. The program has supported many referrals into Youth and Adult residential support services and the Northern CCU. *Wadamba Wilam* provides continuity of care to consumers while they are in these facilities, and provides effective and ongoing follow up after discharge.

Housing

Since its commencement in 2013, *Wadamba Wilam* has supported over 50 consumers and acquired secure housing for 20 consumers (95 per cent retention rate post 12 months). The team utilise all available options in the community, including Aboriginal Hostels. While we work with consumers experiencing primary homelessness, the vast majority of referrals are in relation to extreme overcrowding. Due to the nature of connectedness between Aboriginal people in the community we invariably work with family members and kinship connections, sometimes having multiple family members receiving support at any one time.

Support needs often increase once a person has moved into housing. The team plans for this and provides targeted additional support during this transition phase. *Wadamba Wilam* has facilitated access to cultural and spiritual cleansing of the space prior to a person moving in, especially if the consumer senses a negative spirit or bad vibe within the house.

Consumer Outcomes

There have been significant improvements in health, SEWB and quality of life for the majority of consumers. Recently, consumers who have experienced long-term homelessness have had an opportunity to trial new treatments for Hepatitis C with positive results. Without *Wadamba Wilam*'s support they would not have met the criteria for consideration of such treatments. There has been a major reduction in risk for many of *Wadamba Wilam*'s

consumers and many positive outcomes including:

- increase in healing from trauma and reducing the impact of transgenerational trauma
- less lapse/relapse of severe mental illness and prevention of acute hospital admissions
- overall decrease in substance use and increased engagement in AOD support programs
- improved management of chronic medical conditions and engagement with primary healthcare services
- decrease in suicidality and deliberate self-harm, increase in ability to manage psychological distress
- decrease in violence and aggression to others, with a marked reduction in offending and less involvement with the criminal justice system. Many consumers have successfully completed corrections orders after many failed attempts in the past
- reduction in the impact of family violence and decrease in vulnerability.

Conclusion

A number of consumers have said that they would be dead if they had not received intensive support from *Wadamba Wilam*. Consumers say the model works because they don't have to continually retell their story and the long-term involvement is important to develop trust, safety and security. The integrated service model with input from mainstream and Aboriginal organisations has increased the capacity and responsiveness to meet the needs of people that have slipped through the gaps of standard service provision. When working with this group the impact of trauma and historical loss is palpable. *Wadamba Wilam* has demonstrated that healing and recovery is possible and achievable with a targeted, sensitive and culturally safe approach to service delivery.

Endnotes

1. Gee G, Dudgeon P, Schultz C, Hart A, Kelly K 2014, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing. In: Dudgeon P, Milroy H, Walker R, eds, *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*, 2nd edition, Department of The Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, pp.55–68

2. Herman J L 1997, *Trauma and Recovery*, Basic Books, New York.

Uniting Communities Aboriginal Community Connect

Ruth Tulloch, Service Manager, *Kurlana Tampawardli* (New House on the Plains)

In the words of our client Jacinta*
'Nganana pitjangu wali nyangangka nyinatjikitja tjuku-tjuku. Ka tjana nganananya alpaminllani wali nyuwana-ku', which in English means: *'We came to this place and stayed for some time so that they can help us to get a new house'*.

The circle in the centre represents Kurlana Tampawardli.

This represents people sitting at home.

Symbol with short tracks represent people coming in to access accommodation support.

Symbol with long tracks represent people moving out in to longer-term accommodation.

Orange dots at edges represent the lands.

The black, red, yellow patterns represent the ground on which we walk.

Service Responses to Indigenous Homelessness

Kurlana Tampawardli is a homelessness service for rural and remote Aboriginal people living in transitory or overcrowded living circumstances or rough sleeping. In evaluating our service effectiveness we were committed to a process that genuinely committed to engaging Aboriginal people, communities, staff and services.

Too much evaluation regarding the wellbeing of Aboriginal people has occurred via mainstream methods and we were determined to let Aboriginal people tell the story of their service.

This article will discuss the strategies we implemented to walk alongside Aboriginal people in developing better service responses to homelessness in South Australia.

As explained by Muecke, Lenthall and Lindeman[1] 'Culture shock' is the term used to describe the stress, anxiety, or discomfort a person feels when they are placed in an unfamiliar cultural environment, due to the loss of familiar meanings and cues relating to communication and behaviour.

The term 'cultural adaptation' has been used to highlight the possible positive outcomes of well-managed culture shock, such as personal growth and development.

In reading this article, I invite you to think about the term 'culture shock' and how this needs to be considered in any undertaking to improve outcomes for homeless Aboriginal people. This article uses the observations of our Aboriginal client's experiences in moving from remote to urban areas.

Jacinta* was a client at *Kurlana Tampawardli* who was living in an overcrowded

45

situation after travelling to Adelaide for health reasons. Jacinta told us her story while painting the picture in this article. She told us about some of the assumptions that were made about her during her initial time in the city and how this made her feel confused and disconnected.

She talked about the sense of confidence and belonging she had felt in her remote community being stripped from her and the feeling that she was not welcome in a busy city environment. While we engaged with Jacinta in the painting activity, she started to relax and provided us with more extensive and detailed information. She told us that people in services often wanted quick answers from her, without taking the time to listen or providing the space for welcoming.

Some of the feedback from clients such as Jacinta forced us to critically examine our responses to Aboriginal people. We started to wonder if our responses could be rushed given the need to address immediate housing needs and longer-term housing. We wondered if we needed to focus more on welcoming rituals that addressed cultural shock and aided cultural adaptation.

Clients like Jacinta spoke about the challenges in navigating their way around urban lifestyle, introduction to so many new services, public transport, job provider requirements, services getting involved with families, Centrelink systems, house searching etc.

What we found through these conversations is the need for an intensive education/living skills program in the short (three to four months) that clients had access to our short term crisis accommodation services.

As a service we wanted to become more than 'just a bed', and really aimed to improve quality of living for remote Aboriginal people choosing to stay and live long-term in Adelaide.

As we allowed Aboriginal people to provide us with a better understanding of remote communities we were able to implement processes around client education about urban lifestyle (systems and community supports) orientation to local community, shared care approach within the homelessness sector and intensive living skills programs. We understand that this needs to be implemented via a community development framework and from a strengths perspective.

As a service we needed to decide how we maximise the time we have with Aboriginal people from remote communities in short-term accommodation. We have asked ourselves about how we build capacity by passing on knowledge and resources to be able to live long-term in urban environments.

At the same time we needed to consider how we could access the cultural strength of Aboriginal families accessing our services to ensure our service was a culturally safe place for Aboriginal people from remote areas.

One example was the changing of our service's physical environment to be more welcoming, a community garden and yarning space around a fire pit and a weekly yarning circle where kangaroo tail is often on the menu.

The term 'Living Skills Program,' is occasionally hackneyed and unhelpful. As a service we had to develop a program that was more than just budgeting, cooking and cleanliness. This educational program needed to occur over a three to four month period and act as the building block for our clients to access long-term housing, maintain a healthy lifestyle and their independent living tenancy beyond our services. In short, our program needed to have empathy for our client's sudden change in environment, systems, structures, and rules when moving to urban living. We also needed to re-engage clients back into the benefits of this educational program that also acknowledges 'culture shock', as our clients had come to perceive our services as 'just a bed'.

The changes in our homelessness services took intensive work for a period of 12 months to review our current systems, procedures, physical environment, relationship building and stakeholder engagement.

Our highlight has been our urban living educational program that has included implementation of local community orientations, community excursion (including other family members) shared care case conferences, educational workshops and post support once a client is living independently.

In the past six months the impact of the service changes has been noticeable. Our rate of longer-term sustainable housing exits has been impressive. Within a three to four month time frame our clients in short-term crisis accommodation are leading their own change by actively participating in getting longer-term housing with either Housing SA, community housing or private rental. Yes! We have broken in to the private rental sector to access accommodation for remote Aboriginal people.

The most exciting aspect is that our clients have taken a lead role in searching for their own long-term housing, attending inspections, searching properties on the internet, and gathering evidence needed for housing applications.

To give you an example; one family who had been submitting an average three housing applications per day were offered a Housing SA, community housing and private rental property all on the same day. To their delight they have just moved into the Housing SA property. Of course our service did not waste the other offers!

There is the other issue of when Aboriginal people from remote communities choose to Return to Country. Kurlana Tampawardli offers a safe tracking service for clients back to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands. In asking the question, how does this transition from urban lifestyle back to remote communities occur? I would suggest the considerations in this could take up another article.

* name changed

Endnote

1. Muecke A, Lenthall S, Lindeman M 2011, Culture shock and healthcare workers in remote Indigenous communities of Australia: what do we know and how can we measure it? *Rural and Remote Health* 11: 1607. (Online), *http://www.rrh.org.au/publishedarticles/article_print_1607.pdf*.

Winda-mara Aboriginal Corporation: Helping Community Members Find a Place to Call Home

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)[1]

Winda-mara Aboriginal Corporation is a community controlled organisation offering a range of programs and services to support the Aboriginal communities of Heywood, Hamilton and Portland in Victoria's South-West. Its vision is to *'be recognised as a progressive leader and a catalyst for positive change enabling Aboriginal people in Victoria's far south-west to lead fuller lives.'*

A key focus for Winda-mara for the next five years is affordable housing. The Board of Winda-mara recognises that affordable, safe and stable housing is fundamental to improving the lives of Aboriginal people. There is a clear link between having access to stable housing and community members being able to positively engage in education, training and employment, maintain or rebuild strong family situations, and lead healthier lives.

In addition, for Aboriginal people access to housing 'on country' is particularly significant to their social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, strengthening their connection to culture and community.

Some 20 years ago Winda-mara took its first steps toward ensuring community members had opportunities to access housing. In a small community where access to the private rental market is difficult due to scarcity, price and in some cases racism or fear on the part of private rental landlords, Aboriginal people were missing out.

When asked about why the Co-op decided to get into housing, the response of Michael Bell the CEO of Winda-mara was simple: *'We had families who had a desperate need for stable affordable housing — it wasn't a hard decision.'* At the time, some houses had become available for sale from Government stock which provided the opportunity for Winda-mara to purchase three houses at a good price, though not necessarily at a standard Winda-mara was happy with, but houses that could be improved and offered to families in need.

Since that time, Winda-mara has continued to build its housing program and currently has 31 properties available, one house under construction and a large block recently purchased in Heywood where at least three additional houses can be built. The Housing Program not only provides housing for families and helps them connect to the other services and programs offered by Winda-mara, it also provides employment opportunities for community members who make up the Co-op's Housing Maintenance team.

For Ros Pevitt, Chair of Winda-mara, the Housing Program is one the Co-op can be very proud of. *'We've managed the program very professionally with robust tenancy management policies and financial rigour. We have never been 'in the red' and so we are confident about the future. We have a stable, sustainable program — and a policy that supports a mix of tenants including the most vulnerable in our communities who will always find it hard to earn an income from working and who otherwise may not be able to access appropriate housing.'*

Tenants are supported to stay engaged with Winda-mara, to make use of the health and other services offered and are encouraged to get involved in community and cultural activities. The Co-op also offers no-interest loans of up to $500 for the purchase of house items like a fridge, a washing machine etc. and will also arrange payment plans if times are tough for tenants, whatever the reason. As Michael says, *'you can literally be born here, live here and die here and Winda-mara will be there for you when needed.'*
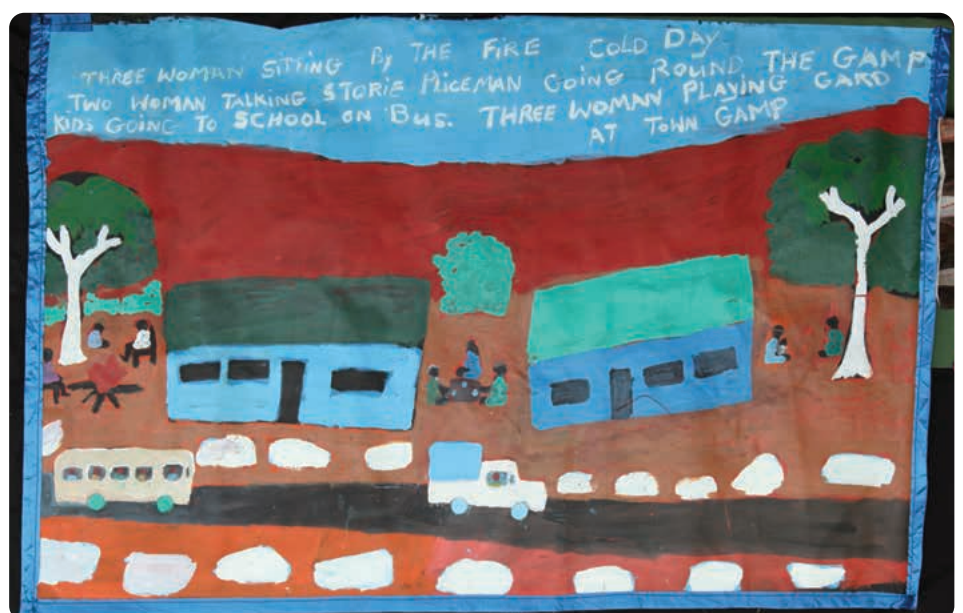
Picture provided by the Larrakia Nation 10 Swags Tour

Through the program Winda-mara is also able to 'keep an eye' on vulnerable tenants, for example those with mental health challenges who can from time to time isolate themselves if they are struggling, and those with chronic health issues. Winda-mara's Housing Officer is able to have those critical conversations with tenants when he is doing inspections and routine maintenance , find out if tenants need help and make sure those supports are put in place.

In recent years Winda-mara has also started offering a 'rent to buy' program. The Board is very committed to instilling in the next generation the message that home ownership is a possibility and that buying a home 'on country' provides a really practical way to stay connected to community and culture and to keep the community strong.

Winda-mara offers a 10 per cent discount on the value of the home which is determined by an independent Valuer. Working closely with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), six tenants have bought their rental properties.

Mary was a single Mum with two small children when she took on a Windamara rental property. At the time she was already living in public housing but made the decision to apply for housing under the Winda-mara Housing Program. *'I know Winda-mara looks after community and I wanted to know my rent was going back into community not to the government.'* When the Winda-mara Housing Officer talked to Mary about buying the house she was living in she was unsure, she had no previous experience in home ownership and was scared about being able to pay the mortgage. After two years of living in her own home Mary is proud to say *'this has given me a sense of belonging — belonging to my community and being part of Winda-mara'*.

Jane is also a good example of how well the 'rent to buy' scheme works. She had lived in the same Winda-mara house as a tenant for 14 years. *'I didn't come from a family where home ownership was normal — my parents always rented. We were a breadline family. Even though my parents worked it was never in high paying jobs. The thought of buying the place was scary. Having a mortgage and obligation was confronting, but in fact what I'm paying on my mortgage is less than I was paying in rent. In fact, my son who is in private rental pays more than I do!'*

A pictorial proclamation issued by the Colonial British Government in Tasmania espousing equality and peaceful relations between Indigenous people and settlers (Museum of Tasmania).

The advisor from IBA talked Jane through her options, pointing out that over time rental prices always go up. The Winda-mara Housing Policy is also clear about Winda-mara being able to ask tenants to move if the Housing Committee decides a house is more suitable for a family on the waiting list. As Jane points out: *'Now I get to keep my house which has three bedrooms even though my kids have moved out. I can have family come and go at any time. And, I have something to leave to my kids when I pass. I absolutely have no regrets and am kicking myself I didn't do it sooner. Of course I have to have things fixed and pay for them myself but even when that happens I can call on the Winda-mara Housing Maintenance team who I know do a good job at a reasonable price.'*

So what next? This is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation with its sights on much more. With the political environment being one in which governments at all levels are pulling back from providing public housing, the shortfall in housing availability from public, social and private rental schemes needs to be filled. Winda-mara is determined to ensure Elders, young people, single people, and families can access housing whether as renters or, when they are ready, as renters who become buyers.

As Michael says with confidence and optimism, *'We are in control of planning, and buying and selling stock to meet community needs. Along the way we can provide all the services they need as well as employment opportunities for community members to provide housing maintenance services. Most importantly, we provide a real opportunity for community members to live safely and securely 'on country', to stay connected to culture and community and to live their lives to the fullest.'*

Endnote

1. The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak body for Aboriginal Health in Victoria. We represent and advocate for our member Community Controlled Organisations who deliver holistic health and wellbeing; housing; justice; education and employment services to Aboriginal communities across Victoria. Winda-mara Aboriginal Corporation is one of VACCHO's Members.

This article has been authorised by:
Michael Bell, CEO, Winda-mara and
Jill Gallagher AO, Chief Executive Officer, VACCHO
© Copyright 2016 VACCHO

Media Enquiries:
Jill Gallagher, VACCHO, (03) 9411 9411

'Connecting People to Place' as a Policy Response to Indigenous Homelessness in South Australia: Political Context and the Use of Housing Responsibility

Daniel Kuzmanovski, University of South Australia

This article examines the relevance of these cultural conceptualisations to the 'Connecting People to Place' policy introduced through the Housing SA Blueprint policy framework, currently guiding social housing reform in South Australia. The article also considers the limits determined by the political context of social housing and the implications of restrictive understandings of housing responsibility in housing policy and tenancy management.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness in Australia

In 2011, an estimated 26,743 Indigenous people were considered homelessness, a rate 14 times higher than experienced by the non-Indigenous population.[1] Indigenous people also experience overcrowding at higher rates and are over-represented in specialist homelessness services.[2]

Whilst Indigenous disadvantage has been consistently identified, the manner in which homelessness is defined and measured continues to change. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released a revised definition of homelessness[3] in 2012, which identifies an individual as homeless if they lack 'suitable accommodation alternatives' and are currently living:

- in a dwelling that is inadequate and lacking basic living facilities
- in a dwelling with no current or extendable tenure
- in a dwelling with no 'control of, and access to, space for social relations'
- in a dwelling considered 'severely' crowded.

More recently, a 2014 ABS information paper presented Indigenous perspectives on homelessness, highlighting additional culturally relevant factors.

Firstly, the information paper raised a *subjective component* to homelessness, highlighting that:

> *'some people classified as homeless under the ABS statistical definition may in fact report being satisfied with their housing circumstances. Conversely, some people who have adequate shelter, secure tenure and control of, and access to space may feel homeless if living 'off country' due to being disconnected from family and/or their community'.*[4]

Secondly, this was related to the *significance of family and country* to understandings of 'home', with examples such as:

> *'…in order to avoid being disconnected from their family they may live in crowded conditions.*
>
> *Similarly, if no suitable housing was available on country, people may sleep either outside or in improvised dwellings rather than move to an adequate dwelling that is not on country'.*[5]

The ABS information paper highlights the central role of kinship systems, familial obligations to support those in need of accommodation, and connection to community and country in mediating the homelessness experience. In particular, this adds a cultural dimension to the complex issue of overcrowding.

These perspectives have several policy response implications.

Firstly, for addressing the housing needs associated with specific planning processes, and the wider availability of, and access to, affordable and appropriate housing. Housing needs associated with kinship systems and cultural activities[6] highlight the significance of place and community where one resides. Housing planning processes, including allocation, could consider such factors as the benefits of being housed close to kin, community, and avoiding disconnection.

Secondly, for addressing the housing needs associated with tenancy management. Overcrowding places tenancies at risk. Indigenous overcrowding involves both a lack of access to housing and the impacts of cultural visiting patterns and familial obligations.[7] Eviction can have negative flow-on effects both towards the tenants at risk as well as other tenants providing support for those evicted. Balancing the risk of eviction, on the one hand, and the 'fear of ramifications on their standing in the family community'[8] on the other, creates complexities that any realistic response to overcrowding and tenancy management needs to consider.

Clearly, the manner in which homelessness is understood influences policy responses, which in turn influences direct practice. A consideration of the centrality of cultural factors would provide additional insight into Indigenous homelessness beyond the limitations of conventional responses.

'Connecting People to Place' Through the Housing SA Blueprint 2013–2018

Social housing sector reform within South Australia (SA) is currently guided by the 'Housing SA Blueprint 2013–2018' framework. The Blueprint is partly the SA Government response to decreased Commonwealth funding as well as changing demographics that

have resulted in public housing property transfers to grow the community housing sector and further develop service provider partnerships.[9] This is encapsulated within the vision of 'Connecting People to Place'.

Whilst the Blueprint is not in itself an Indigenous homelessness specific response, sector reform will disproportionately impact Indigenous Australians. Below are some brief considerations of how cultural factors could relate to the Blueprint vision and its service system objectives involving 'People', 'Place' and 'Professionalism'.[10]

'People', 'Place' and 'Professionalism' — Community Involvement Within a Political Context

The Blueprint's 'People System' objective relates to providing housing services which involve multiple service providers and community members within decision making processes.[11] The Blueprint's 'Place System' objective highlights a similar collaborative community involvement principle, with the added emphasis on utilising local resources and 'place based approaches designed to assess community need'.[12]

Opportunities for community involvement and consultation in such processes could provide an Indigenous perspective on issues such as future housing allocation, geographic awareness, what constitutes relevant support services, and the potential role that kinship systems can play in all of these.

The Blueprint's 'Professional System' objective is focused on Housing SA's financial sustainability and its role within a multi-provider system, its partnerships with external bodies, and its links with other regional planning targets.[13] This suggests that the 'people and place systems' are to some degree dependent upon such priorities.

This in itself does not exclude the potential to incorporate Indigenous homelessness and Indigenous housing needs alongside these priorities. However, it may also be helpful to consider the implications of the political context of social housing reform, that is, the increased scepticism towards the public housing sector and the funding shift toward

Rent Assistance (RA) at the cost of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA).[14]

For example, has the Commonwealth disinvestment of its responsibility for social housing had implications for whether people are being connected to place? Further, are public housing transfers sustainable without direct reinvestment in other forms of social housing? Will overcrowding only intensify without increased levels of access to affordable housing? Finally, will calls for community involvement only be tokenistic given the ongoing uncertainties in the social housing sector?

Housing Responsibility — Individual Level Solutions for Structural Issues

A final consideration relates to the issues of tenancy management. As discussed previously, Indigenous overcrowding involves individual factors (that is, providing shelter to family, engaging in cultural activities) and structural factors (that is, lack of affordable and appropriate housing), and the relationship between them. Understanding this complex issue requires an appreciation of both.

At this point it is worth juxtaposing the SA Housing Blueprint with its focus on 'Connecting People to Place' with the New South Wales (NSW) 'Future Directions for Social Housing'.[15] The NSW strategy focuses tenancy management discussion around specific housing responsibilities, and attributes the need for reform to the perceived failure of social housing tenants themselves. The strategy draws upon the 'welfare dependency' argument and highlights a lack of individual responsibility (that is, lack of 'incentives' to access education and employment) as the perceived barrier to accessing housing.[16] Consequentially, it proposes reducing tenancy periods as part of its 'incentives to avoid and/or leave social housing', further eligibility criteria changes, and stricter 'anti-social behaviour policy'.[17]

To deny the complexity of social issues such as Indigenous overcrowding and reduce them to assertions of 'individual responsibility' is to limit potential responses. Consideration has to also be given to

structural factors that a restricted individual level understanding of housing responsibility does not address. Stigmatisation in private rental market, the role and implications of kinship obligations for tenancy management, and overcrowding that is the result of the failure of housing supply, also need to be considered.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to briefly highlight conceptual developments in understanding Indigenous homelessness and how they relate to social housing reform. The Blueprint policy framework itself appears to be supportive of community involvement and could therefore be utilised in responding to Indigenous homelessness in relation to social housing. However, a context of disinvestment in public housing and a restrictive understanding of housing responsibility could limit such responses.

Endnotes

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014, *Homelessness among Indigenous Australians*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, p.vi.

2. ibid p.vi, p.19.

3. ibid p.vi, p.5.

4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2014, *Information Paper: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Perspectives on Homelessness*, cat. no. 4736.0, ABS, Canberra, p.5.

5. ibid p.9.

6. ibid p.6–7.

7. Birdsall-Jones, C, Corunna, V, Turner, N, Smart, G and Shaw, W 2010, *Indigenous homelessness*, AHURI Final Report No. 143, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, p.66.

8. ibid, p.54.

9. Government of South Australia 2013, *Housing SA Blueprint: 2013–2018*, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, Government of South Australia, p.3–9.

10. ibid, p.12.

11. ibid, p.12–16.

12. ibid, p.18–20.

13. ibid, p.25.

14. Monro, D 1997, *Public Rental Housing Policy: Learning the Lessons from Overseas*, Research Paper no. 6 1997–98, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Australian Government, p.14–15.

15. NSW Government 2016, *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*, NSW Government, New South Wales.

16. ibid, p.4–5, p.13.

17. ibid, p.5–6, p.14, p.23.

Reviewing the Aboriginal Tenancies At Risk (ATAR) program in Victoria

Anita Murphy, Masters of Public Policy Post-Graduate Student RMIT

The Aboriginal Tenancies At Risk (ATAR) program was developed in 2002 to respond to high numbers of Aboriginal evictions from public housing. Following a successful pilot, it was rolled out across Victoria and currently employs 14 workers across 11 sites. In 2015, a small project was undertaken to articulate the specialist skills, knowledge and practices undertaken by workers that provide a culturally appropriate response to sustaining tenancies.

Accessing ATAR Programs

Consumers access ATAR programs through formal and informal channels. Formal referrals come from social housing officers, community organisations and Aboriginal cooperatives. A significant number of consumers access ATAR through word of mouth, highlighting the positive reputation ATAR programs have in community.

Eight of the nine workers interviewed worked predominantly with female consumers, often young mothers with children. Only one region reported an even distribution of female and male consumers. Most consumers are aged between 25 and 45 years. Clients accessing ATAR were usually social housing tenants, however clients in private rental, transitional housing and rooming houses were occasionally supported.

Factors that place a tenancy at risk

Workers identified a range of risk factors that place a client at risk of eviction, common also to non-Aboriginal consumers:
- low income
- poor financial literacy
- debt
- family violence
- substance misuse
- antisocial behaviour
- gambling, and
- maintenance and repairs issues

Issues that specifically impacted on Aboriginal tenancies included:
- intergenerational trauma
- cultural disconnection
- kin-care obligations.
- reluctance to visit mainstream/Aboriginal services, and
- history of moving or frequent travelling.

Effective responses for Aboriginal consumers require a high level of cultural sensitivity, that understands both kin-care obligations as well as the impact of intergenerational trauma. ATAR workers understood the interplay between presenting issues and cultural specific issues. Workers suggested that mainstream housing authorities may not understand how kin-care obligations and traditional roles can place a tenancy at risk. For example, funerals may result in frequent travelling, or a cultural expectation to assist in paying for funerals — which can place a household in financial stress.

Working with Consumers

Workers recognise that their first contact with a consumer is an important opportunity to begin to establish trust and diffuse a crisis.

ATAR workers aim to empower clients in their housing journeys and to tailor their approaches and interventions on a case by case basis to find a balance between responding to the crisis and assisting consumers to take control of their situation.

ATAR workers take a gradual and ongoing approach to assessment and recognise that clients can be reluctant to share certain information. This was often based on previous negative experiences with services.

How Workers Prevent Eviction

ATAR workers assist clients to prevent eviction through a variety of flexible and culturally appropriate support and advocacy strategies. The level of assistance provided depends on the client's literacy and comprehension levels, and their existing tenancy management skills.

Advocacy

ATAR workers advocate for clients with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and organisations. The aim is to provide a mutually beneficial mediation and resolution. Consumers may have had negative experiences — particularly with government services — and the advocacy work is seen as particularly helpful for consumers.

Financial Supports

Brokerage is an essential resource for ATAR workers. Despite rental arrears being one of the most frequent reasons consumers access ATAR, funding guidelines stipulate that financial support must not duplicate existing Housing Establishment Funding (HEF) — including arrears and bonds. Workers therefore encourage consumers to prioritise rent payments, and use brokerage to meet other daily living expenses.

Common uses of ATAR brokerage include:
- material aid
- co/payment of utilities
- education expenses
- medical expenses
- transport costs
- purchase of whitegoods
- housing repairs and maintenance.

Brokerage was only used to assist a client in crisis, and workers used brokerage funds strategically to avoid clients becoming dependent on financial support.

Skills for Daily Living

Workers attempt to empower clients to learn to recognise risk factors of tenancy instability, and implement strategies that help clients address these in the future. These include things such as budgeting, encouraging and assisting consumers to set up Centrepay, assistance in shopping and guidance around cooking. Modelling was seen as an effective approach to building skills.

Duration of Support

The duration of assistance given to consumers varies greatly depending on the level of assistance required. Some clients require low-level short term support such as assistance completing forms or responding to letters or complaints. The average length of support was reported by workers as being between two to six months. If a client requires more than 13 weeks of support, the worker will negotiate with management to extend the support period. Some clients with ongoing and complex needs have been supported for up to 12 months.

Even after a support period has closed, workers frequently assist clients with activities that maintain stability in their tenancy. This may include providing an immediate crisis response, when a consumer identified a risk to their tenancy, or, most commonly, because consumers needed one off support such as understanding letters they have received. These brief interventions can significantly reduce the risk of future evictions. Workers viewed clients-driven reengagement as evidence of both successful engagement and professional working relationships that allowed for tenancy sustainment. Consumers also returned to services to share with workers their progress and positive news stories.

The Importance of Worker's Networks

ATAR workers possess strong networking skills and understand that their ability to assist consumers is dependent on building relationships within community and with a range of service providers. This is beneficial when responding to housing crisis and when linking consumers with other relevant supports.

One of the key professional relationships that ATAR workers utilise is with housing officers. Strong relationships assist ATAR workers to facilitate engagement between the officer and the client, that can resolve tenancy issues. These relationships also assist workers to advocate for consumers and negotiate housing outcomes. ATAR workers speak highly of housing officers who possess strong cultural understanding and awareness and actively help support their clients.

While ATAR workers clearly articulated their role as providing housing support, workers also understood that risks to tenancies were often associated with a range of other underlying factors. These issues often needed to be addressed for long term successful outcomes, and many of these issues were identified through successful assessment.

Considering the reluctance Aboriginal clients may face in accessing services, workers were keenly aware of the need to provide appropriate, culturally sensitive referrals. In order to do this, workers spent considerable time establishing and maintaining their professional networks. ATAR workers stay closely involved with local Aboriginal communities and organisations to improve opportunities for consumers to receive support from within community.

Clients are often referred to the following supports:
- financial counselling
- mental health and emotional wellbeing
- drug and alcohol
- medical and dental
- gambling support
- Aboriginal organisations
- family support and children's programs
- legal services.

If an eviction occurs, most workers will refer the consumer to a housing or private rental brokerage program. Some workers can continue to work with consumers to access alternative accommodation, however all workers noted a crisis, no availability of temporary and long-term accommodation options.

Recommendations
Review of funding provided to the ATAR program, to ensure demand is met

Workers struggle, particularly in regional areas to cover very large geographical areas. Often only one worker (or equivalent to one EFT) was covering an entire region. This is also hard for consumers, who may live hours from a service. This is challenging for workers and for clients. Reviewing staffing and funding to the ATAR program would ensure more consumers could access the specialist service that the program offers, in a timely manner. Funding also needs to be ongoing and secure so that staff have the opportunity to grow and develop their skills

Increase in amount and flexibility of brokerage

Brokerage is an essential component of the ATAR program, but is limited in availability and has restrictions around its use. Most consumers present to ATAR in rent arrears requiring a rapid response to stabilize their tenancy. However, the funding model restricts workers from being able to assist consumers with rental arrears. It is recommended that brokerage guidelines be reviewed to allow workers to use brokerage to respond to arrears. Security of tenure is universally acknowledged as the foundation upon which continuity of service provision can be established and maintained. In addition, as demand increases for services this report also recommends a review of the funding levels overall.

Continuation of culturally appropriate approach

The review of ATAR program documents the successes of the flexible and culturally appropriate responses that workers are able to provide and provides inter-agency insight into the good practice approaches of the ATAR program. This capacity for flexibility needs to continue and to be further enhanced. All agencies consider that this flexibility of worker practice is particularly important in supporting Aboriginal clients.

It is also essential that workers, particularly non Aboriginal workers, connect with community leaders and Aboriginal organisations. In this way they receive the cultural benefits of learning from Aboriginal mentors, building relationships with Elders, as well as with community based organisations.

Ask Izzy:
Helping Aboriginal Victorians Find Services

Diana Brown, Infoxchange

Launched in January, the award-winning *Ask Izzy* mobile website is helping people find support, with more than 200,000 searches for shelter, food and other services so far. Free, anonymous and listing over 350,000 services Australia-wide, *Ask Izzy* improves access to housing, health and wellbeing services for people who are homeless or at risk.

Given the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the homeless community, it was imperative that this community was involved in the co-design of *Ask Izzy*. Infoxchange worked closely with specialist service provider, Ngwala Willumbong to engage with the Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

Co-designing with people with lived experience
The co-design process involved over 80 stakeholders, from service providers to people with lived experience of homelessness, in user research, design, branding and marketing. Aboriginal service providers were represented in this group.

Our intent was to ensure that the website responds to their needs, is easy to navigate and gives people the right information so they can take that next step — whether that is going to a food service, visiting a health clinic or finding a place to sleep that night.

Dan Laws, Ngwala's Statewide Aboriginal Homelessness Network Co-ordinator, was instrumental in helping us engage with Victorian Aboriginal communities. He held sessions with Ngwala workers and facilitated interactive sessions with a wider group at the Victorian Indigenous Statewide Housing Network Conferences.

People involved were generous with their feedback and provided invaluable insights that contributed to the design of *Ask Izzy*. They included:

'If they had a list of free meals in certain areas where you can get a swag if you need it, that sort of thing is really, really useful. Really practical information like I don't know, where you can go swimming for free on a 40 degree day, that sort of thing is really, really useful. Practical survival kind of things.'

'Something concise would be really, really helpful — a central information place where you might just be able to put in a postcode, like the Dandenong postcode and all the services in the Dandenong region, you could have like food or health or education, children, family services, like something like that would be just click, click, click, click and then it comes up with a list of places to call or visit.'

'I tend to use what I know, which is a problem, because there's a lot of other services out there I don't know about, that a lot of us don't know about.'
— Homeless Worker, Ngwala

With this information we developed an early version of the product and then went back and asked people what they thought about it. We made a number of changes based on the feedback and then spent time again testing *Ask Izzy* more widely to confirm we were ready to make it available.

The Next Step
Since the launch, *Ask Izzy* has secured further funding from the Victorian Government to focus specifically on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria.

Knowing that homelessness and health and wellbeing are inextricably linked, we wanted to improve access to information about services for our Aboriginal users. To do this, we needed to conduct deeper research to identify what we would need to change or improve in *Ask Izzy*.

With just a small three month trial, we started to uncover some very important insights. Feedback included:

'This tool is something that has been missing for a long time, everything there in the one place.'
— Manager, local ACCO

'Could be more visually inviting so that we know that you have designed it for us to use.'
— Case worker, Aboriginal Housing organisation

'A calendar of events would be good.'
— Aboriginal disability case worker

Whilst we have made some small changes as part of the trial, Infoxchange and the Victorian Government will be doing further work in the larger phase of the project. Beginning with the recruitment of an Aboriginal project officer, the project will launch in October. With a key focus on the co-design, the project officer will be an integral member of the team, working with service provider on community engagement and design.

How You Can Help
If you or your organisation is interested in participating in this project, please let us know. This could be updating your information to include specific program details, letting us know about local services in your area that you recommend to your clients, or participating in user testing. Please get in touch: *support@askizzy.org.au*

Opinion 1
Tammy White
Executive Officer NT Shelter Inc.

Humanising Homelessness in the Northern Territory (NT)

In our feature article in this edition we touched on the renewal of a number of critical National Partnership Agreements, set against a backdrop of the clock that is ticking for the new Northern Territory Government renegotiating the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the Remote Indigenous Housing (NPRIH).

At the very heart of housing issues in the Northern Territory is the undeniable and overwhelming statistic that sets us apart — we are the jurisdiction that has the highest rate of homelessness in Australia.

In the Northern Territory 731 people out of every 10,000 people are experiencing homelessness. Staggeringly that is 15 times the national average. Most of the 15,479 homeless identified in the NT are Aboriginal which means one in four Aboriginal people in the NT were homeless on Census night. The rate of homelessness in the NT means Territorians needing accommodation and other supports are much more likely to go without than other Australians. See Figure 1, below.

In the NT in the years between 2003/04 to 2012/13 public housing dwelling numbers have declined from 5,618 to 5,059 (10 per cent) compared to an Australia wide decline in numbers from 345,335 to 328,340 or (5 per cent). See Figures 2 and 3, opposite.

NT Shelter recognises the following as barriers to growing the supply of affordable housing:
- high land cost and low availability
- high construction costs in remote communities
- lower yield returns to developers for the provision of affordable housing supply for 'very low income' to 'lower income' households
- lack of housing options for people with complex needs
- for prospective 'first home buyer' and 'low income household' owner occupiers, increased time taken to raise finance as a result of inflated costs not matched by income growth
- an immature community housing sector, with limited scope for accessing finance
- high expenditure by the Department of Housing on repairs and maintenance to ageing housing stock which it owns and manages.

There is limited social and community housing in the NT other than that which is owned or managed by the NT Government. Furthermore, there are no organisations in the NT currently registered under the National Regulatory Scheme for Community Housing (NRSCH), and only one organisation that has completed the registration process.

What key groups of people are currently missing out on housing?
Anglicare Australia's 'Rental Affordability Snapshot' reflects the general undersupply of social and affordable housing for 'very low

Figure 1. NT and national comparisons of people experiencing homelessness by homelessness category

No. of people in every 10,000	Rough sleeping	Supported accommodation	Staying with other households	Other temporary lodging	Severely crowded dwellings	All people experiencing homelessness	Per cent of all people experiencing homelessness
Northern Territory	40	27	20	22	622	731	7.3
Australia	3	9	8	7	18	49	0.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2049.0 Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2011

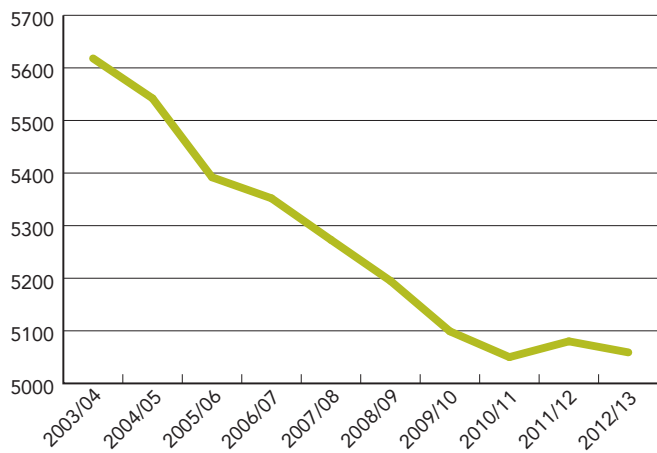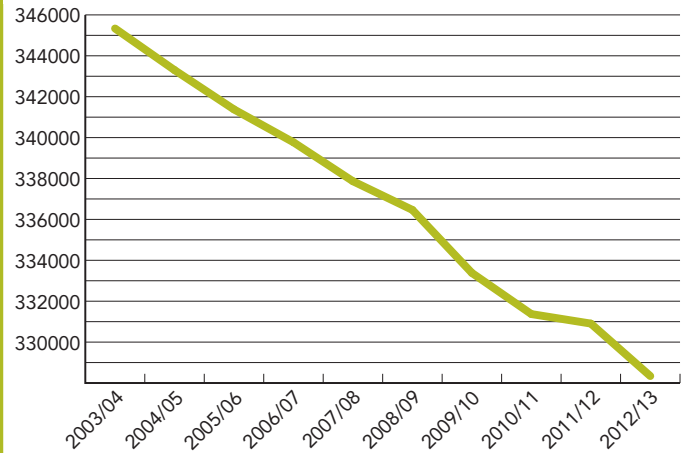**Figure 2.** Public housing dwelling numbers — Northern Territory

Figure 3. Public housing dwelling numbers — Australia

income' to 'lower income' households in the NT. Notably Anglicare's Snapshot found that none (n=0) of the 1,367 private rentals advertised for rent on the weekend of 11 to 12 April 2015, were both affordable and appropriate for people who receive Newstart Allowance, Single Parenting Payment, Disability Support Pension or Youth Allowance. This represents a failure on the part of the private rental market, reflecting the need for a strategy to develop a sustainable social and affordable housing system.

NT Shelter acknowledges the extreme housing stress in both urban and remote communities, as well as the massive investment already undertaken through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPRIHP) to address chronic housing shortages, homelessness, dilapidation of housing stock and overcrowding. Factors in remote communities also contribute to the mobility of people moving into urban areas for short-term visits or to access services, as well as for jobs and other longer-term opportunities.

Growing numbers of Indigenous Territorians moving to the fringes of urban centres are socially, culturally and economically vulnerable. Many people are unable to access the private rental market and even public housing, when it becomes available it is not always the most appropriate housing option due to people requiring relevant living skills, such as financial/money management.

NT Shelter continues to advocate for funding assistance for the development of visitor

accommodation (particularly in Katherine and Tennant Creek), transitional and short to medium term accommodation facilities in regional centres, including allowance

for residents who are unable to sustain social housing. In closing, Aboriginal decision-making must drive the development of remote housing in the NT.

Gigantic lantern sculpture, made by a Larrakia Artist, Peter Garamanak Browne

55

Opinion 2
Patrick Gemmell

General Manager, Te Matapihi He Tirohanga mō te iwi Trust[1]

Aotearoa, Homelessness of House, Land and Product in Rural Māori New Zealand Settings: An Operational Insight

Māori in rural New Zealand have a unique advantage when it comes to, in this instance housing, as they are land rich but resource and cash poor. When it comes to the land piece of the equation one would have thought that over the years and across multiple governments, crown identities and the banking fraternity would have a multitude of housing products to facilitate more housing. Currently Māori have one home ownership product; *Kainga Whenua*[2] facilitated by Housing New Zealand and Kiwibank lending fewer than five loans each year. We believe some of the barriers to access are:

1. a housing product lacking a cultural connection
2. a deeper understanding of the customer by bureaucracy and the banking fraternity
3. culturally constructed policy in relation to Māori Housing matters.

As home ownership in New Zealand is generally out of reach of most Māori, Māori now look to their ancestral pride lands to occupy. Unfortunately with this product unable to facilitate home ownership to at least some amount of volume, this forces us to ask the question:

> *'If Māori are homeless in urban settings, is a lack of cultural constructed housing policy and product making Māori homeless in a rural setting?'*

Recently, I worked with *Te Puni Kōkiri*, The Ministry of Māori Development and its Māori Housing Team, The Māori Housing Network, who have facilitated a multitude of housing interventions around New Zealand such as: essential housing repair, increasing social housing new supply, new infrastructure and capability and capacity forums for land trusts with capital grant within 15 months of operation since July 1 2015.

The Māori Housing Network has administered approximately 22 million dollars of capital assistance.

The most telling observation was the amount of serious deprivation families live in exacerbating health and safety conditions. Since there is no specific housing repair product for this type of multi-land ownership arrangement other than the 'good relationship' with the bank, Māori find it extremely difficult to arrange finance for home repair.

As an example, Northland of New Zealand within Māori communities suffer from some of the most serious housing deprivation[3] conditions in the country. Due to the state of some homes, in particular two communities consisting of 12 families, local councils had already condemned homes in one instance and condemned infrastructure in another. I firmly believe that without the intervention of the Māori Housing Network influencing councils and providing capital assistance for families in the most need, I would be writing about 12
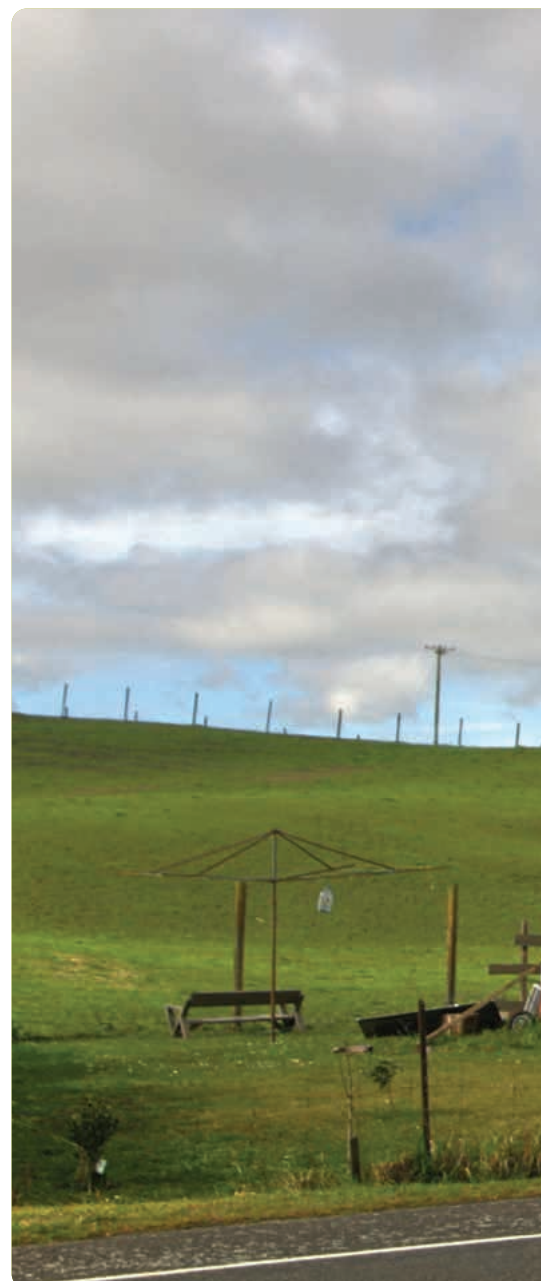
Rural Māori housing, Rotorua

homeless families of house *and* land, not 12 housed families.

Again, we are drawn back to a Māori Housing product in need of a cultural 'refit', or alternate products to add to the tool box, policy settings that enable Māori housing in some volume considering Māori bring the land equation to the table.

Around New Zealand, The Māori Housing Network has saved Māori families from being evicted from their lands and homes in rural settings and has provided products to facilitate housing Māori with capital grant, with a fear though of its sustainability. This would have us once again back to the policy and product discussion, the opportunity is though that Māori housing has an operational model which reaches into rural communities of high need around the country and understands the cultural connections between Māori housing and land. However the fear continues to be, after the appropriations are all but extinguished, we hold off the inevitable; Māori, disconnected from housing and land in rural settings.

Māori will continue to challenge the Crown to 'do more' as a part of their crown-*iwi* treaty obligations, more resource into what is currently operational for the next two years is a start. In Northland, the Māori Housing Network secured up to 10 million in less than a year for housing, more than has been secured by any other government intervention prior to its establishment to the most in need, culturally constructed Māori Housing policy, in my view will go at least some way to securing better housing outcomes in rural Māori settings.

Endnotes

1. Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust was established in 2011 to advocate for Māori housing interests at a National level. We operate as an independent voice for the Māori housing sector, assisting in Māori housing policy development at both central and local government levels, supporting the growth of the sector through existing and emerging regional forums, and providing a platform for sharing high quality resources and information

2. *Kāinga Whenua* — Home Ownership on Māori land

3. *Social-economic deprivations indexes:* http://www.otago.ac.nz/wellington/otago069936.pdf

Brian Robinson

Opinion 3

Peter Sandeman

Chief Executive Officer, AnglicareSA

Creating a Safe Place for Adelaide's Homeless

Homelessness and rough sleeping in the Adelaide central business district, particularly the Adelaide parklands, has been an ongoing issue over the last ten years. Adelaide City Council (ACC) has worked with South Australian Government agencies and community services, particularly the inner city homelessness services, in attempts to address issues of excessive alcohol consumption, anti-social behaviour and camping in the parklands.

These discussions have resulted in the introduction of a number of strategies intended to achieve three objectives:
- a safer and peaceful environment for residents
- access to social services for vulnerable people
- promoting safe and responsible use of the Park Lands for everyone, without unduly restricting use of the parklands.

In July 2014 ACC applied to State Government for an extension to an existing dry area in the parklands. This was proposed as a trial designed to help alleviate ongoing issues of excessive alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour in the parklands.

As a result, a three-month timed dry zone trial was approved and introduced on 22 December 2014 on advice from the Parklands Strategy Senior Officers Group (SOG). Membership of SOG includes representatives from Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, Adelaide City Council, Health SA, SA Police SAPOL and the Commissioner for Business and Consumer Affairs.

The primary focus for the dry zone proposal is a group of particularly vulnerable people who experience a higher incidence of chronic health and welfare issues and who, if not homeless, are more likely to be sleeping rough and/or camping out in the parklands with resultant major implications for their already poor health and well-being. Most members of this group are clients in common of a number of inner city based health and welfare agencies, including Specialist Homelessness Services.

In conjunction with the timed dry zone trial, the SOG implemented a range of complementary strategies and actions in a Parklands Management Plan. The role of implementing these strategies has been assigned to the Parklands Operational Group. The operational group consists of representatives from the South Australian Government, local government and non-government services that have direct contact with vulnerable people who frequent the park lands. SAPOL is also represented on this committee.

The Park Lands Operational Group has developed an Operations Manual to assist services in providing a coordinated and collaborative service response to vulnerable people visiting the park lands.

Whilst this process has resulted in an improved level of strategic collaboration between service providers delivering a crisis response, there is still a significant gap in the provision of a long term sustainable response for people who are homeless and or at risk of homelessness sleeping rough in Adelaide. To date the major focus of the response has been the residents' need for a safe and peaceful environment and promotion of responsible use of the Parklands.

There is however limited evidence of any positive change to the circumstances of people who are long term rough sleepers for whom the parklands have become their home. The current strategies are providing a short term crisis response with little (or no) focus on achieving sustainable solutions for people who now live in the parklands. Many of the rough sleepers are Aboriginal.

The strategies to date have not come from the starting point of seeking out the root cause of the complex issues from all stakeholder perspectives. Rather, the approach has focussed an unbalanced pressure to meet the needs of one group of stakeholders. The timed dry zone does nothing to address the underlying issues, merely provides short term respite for the parklands residents, short term relocation of the people rough sleeping or camping in the parklands and creates a cyclic pattern which escalates for all parties on a regular basis.

AnglicareSA is an active member of the Parklands Operations Group. It is regularly highlighted in these meetings that there are a number of unmet needs for this group, particularly that their ongoing

displacement makes them more difficult to find and support. The lack of appropriate accommodation, including short-term and long-term sustainable accommodation based on individual need is a persistent topic at each meeting.

Through these regular meetings it has also become evident that appropriate accommodation includes options that recognise the need for accommodation where abstinence is not a prerequisite condition; rather a harm minimisation approach is required.

AnglicareSA's Plan
The Policy Context for the Concept

This concept has been developed on the principles of the South Australian Government target to halve the number of rough sleepers in South Australia by 2010, a target that is yet to be achieved. Progress toward the target was underpinned by three key principles:

- a housing first approach to homelessness
- assertive outreach
- mainstream specialist service integration.

The concept also aligns with the *NAHA Case Management Framework*. This framework builds upon common high quality case management practices that existed in the sector (pre-reform) and sets out best practice and standardised case management processes that all specialist services are required to operate under, including: intake, assessment, referral, planning, review and exit processes. The Framework promotes:

- a housing first approach
- prioritising the support of clients to obtain safe, secure and long-term housing
- a focus on assisting people to review and address life circumstances that have led to homelessness and risk of homelessness
- stronger links and better integration amongst specialist services and with mainstream services. Note that improved service integration was identified as critical to enhance the work that individual agencies provide to homeless or at risk clients and better support positive outcomes
- The use of a standard tool set and practices through a common case management system to support

service integration. This includes clear referral processes and strong well-functioning links across regional service providers.

The common case management framework, *The NAHA Case Management Framework*, follows the best practice in ensuring the services focus on individuals and family groups, and takes into consideration the need for culturally appropriate and relevant service responses. Unfortunately the housing first approach for this customer group is yet to be achieved.

Healing Centre Proposal

AnglicareSA's research on the underlying reasons for the enduring issues of homelessness for a group of highly vulnerable people with multiple, complex and severe issues, points to the lack of safe, suitable accommodation options as the missing link.

This group includes a high percentage of Aboriginal people, which introduces the additional factor of cultural suitability when finding appropriate accommodation. We have identified services interstate that have been successful in bridging this gap through the provision of a housing first approach.

These successful services offer a range of suitable accommodation options, respect for the range of lifestyle choices (including not requiring a commitment to abstinence from alcohol) and the provision of place based supports.

The key objectives of the Healing Centre proposal:
1. To provide a safe space for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
   The definition of safe in this context includes:
   - a culturally safe space for the primarily Aboriginal client group
   - space that includes diversion from custody and anti-social behaviour management programs and support
   - implementation of a harm minimisation program
   - place based access to a range of support services in a coordinated and holistic way
   - embedded program to achieve transition to sustainable lifestyle outcomes

- place based case management support that is client directed.
2. Addressing the ongoing and long term churn of the target group through the cycle of homelessness to emergency housing to homelessness.
3. Providing a sustainable solution to the perennial problems arising from use of the Adelaide parklands by homeless and at risk of homelessness people.
4. Responds to accommodation needs for Aboriginal people, who are mobile from regional and remote communities for a variety of reasons including medical appointments reunification of family, family responsibilities and mobility.

As a result of the multiple complex and often severe/acute issues the client group face, they lack the capacity or resilience to negotiate and access support through multiple service providers. This group currently cycle through homelessness services, are significant users of a range of crisis services and have a high level of unpaid fines and involvement with the justice system.

The Healing Centre will provide a holistic service response to clients including:
- programs that support the client to address intergenerational criminogenic patterns of behaviour i.e. anger management, drug and alcohol misuse, gambling and domestic violence
- an alcohol management plan and accommodation option to rough sleeping/couch surfing
- tailored programs to support better choices in health, wellbeing and lifestyle programs
- positive role modelling, particularly in support of the Aboriginal community — improved connection with culture
- improved access to health and mental health services.

AnglicareSA has invested $1.6 million into the Healing Centre to purchase a building and it is now calling for support from the private sector and community to help raise at least $500,000 to refurbish and furnish the building.

For more information about the Healing Centre and to donate visit: *https://www.chuffed.org/project/the-healing-centre-adelaide*

Opinion 4
Chantal Roberts
Chief Executive Officer, Shelter WA

In the lead up to the recent Federal election a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations published an 'urgent call for a more just approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs; it is called *The Redfern Statement*.

Framed in terms of *A call for urgent Government action* the Statement stressed *'It is critical that Australia's First Peoples are properly represented at the national level to ensure meaningful engagement with government, industry and the non-government sectors to advance the priorities of our people'*. It called on the next Federal Government to commit to:

1. Restoration of funding to the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
2. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body for Education
3. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body for Employment
4. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body for Housing

Under the call for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body for Housing it noted that:

Federal and State Government policies concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing is currently disjointed, wasteful and failing. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban and regional markets face many barriers in accessing and securing safe and affordable housing, including discrimination and poverty.

The next Federal Parliament should support the development of a national representative body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who can focus on housing security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and:
- *advocate for the ongoing support for remote communities to prevent community closures*
- *work with communities to develop a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing strategy, with the aim of improving the housing outcomes for our people across all forms of housing tenure*
- *provide culturally appropriate rental, mortgage and financial literacy advice.*

When preparing for our workshop on remote housing and the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing I was surprised that there is a real lack of a coordinated approach to Aboriginal housing policy in the community sector, both locally and nationally.

But why was I surprised?
Australia prides itself on its all-inclusive ideals and multiculturalism; however, none of those ideals apply to the Aboriginal people of Australia. The Australian nation was established in 1901, when the various colonies joined to form a national government. Under the Australian Constitution Aboriginal people were not seen as citizens with equal rights; this immediately created two classes of people, the included and the excluded.

Since the conquest of Australia, policies have been ratified, police dispatched, men neck chained, leaders imprisoned, children rounded up and institutionalised. All with the purpose of removing people from their land. It did not matter whether those people were armed, unarmed, the elderly, women or children. Getting the land, the driver of the economy was the priority. Aboriginal people who were able to survive the slaughters, diseases, internment, starvation and institutions were rounded up and pushed into reserves and 'missions'.

I wish I could say Australia has recognised its responsibility for these practices. I wish I could say that compensation has been made to ensure that Aboriginal people have the best education, medical care, housing and work opportunities in the country. I wish I could say that as a whole Australia's first people are thriving. None of that rings true generations after the Union Jack was first raised on this island. Australia has changed since early days, but not nearly enough.

The 1967 Referendum was a landmark achievement for Indigenous Australians. Following decades of Indigenous and non-Indigenous activism, over 90 per cent of all Australians voted in favour of amending two sections of the Australian Constitution.

Constitutional recognition is now on the table again. Australian people can choose to listen to that roar of Aboriginal people's voices, to recognise that they are people, they belong here and their cause is valid.

Treaty and sovereignty are important domains in the lead up to the constitutional referendum. The reality is that this form of engagement is already occurring. The Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boordahwan) (Past, Present, Future) *Recognition Act (2016)* is an important component of the Noongar Native Title settlement package that has been negotiated between the Western Australia (WA) State Government and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC). This settlement arises from the 2006 Federal Court Decision of Justice Willcox who found that Noongar people had maintained their culture and, hence found in favour of Noongar Native Title. The agreed settlement document, could and should rightly be called a 'treaty' between the State of Western Australia and the Noongar Nation. It should also be argued that this is an acknowledgement of Noongar 'sovereignty'.

Mainstream media has largely chosen silence in reference to treaty and sovereignty. It seems the half-truths and non-truths of political leaders from the past make better news than any proper leadership. Much has been done to try and silence the voices for change. Of the mainstream coverage that has emerged sparingly, most has portrayed them as radicals and extremists. Non-engagement does not work, turning a blind eye perpetuates the notion that Aboriginal people aren't human, don't belong here and should cease to exist altogether.

The current racial ignorance and institutional deafness has created an environment where it is acceptable to speak of 'reverse racism', and the notion that anything that is named specifically of, for and by Aboriginal people is somehow racist. It is bizarre to even consider Aboriginal people have the power and ability to become racist in a society where whiteness is the dominant paradigm. The fact is that in a country where white privilege is the norm, any attempt to overcome this, any modest effort to level the playing field by validating the place of Aboriginal people is

branded as unfair and exclusionary to non-Aboriginal people.

There is a difference between 'whiteness' as opposed to 'white.' Whiteness refers to the construction of the white race, white culture, and the system of privileges and advantages afforded to white people in Australia (and across the globe) through government policies, media portrayal, decision-making power within our corporations, schools and judicial systems. In other words, the idea is to look at whiteness as a social construct and challenge it. De-construct it.

At a time when many people feel aggrieved and discriminated against — and place their faith and hopes in ideologues such as Bolt and Hanson — they hope to restore Australia to its original, white greatness, presumably when Aboriginal people were invisible and unheard. Aboriginal people demand to have their humanity reflected and their history told, these are the conversations that we must have. Australia must own up to its inherent racism and find ways to address and eradicate it.

Street art — Redfern, NSW

Opinion 5
Peeni Henare
Member of Parliament for Tāmaki Makaurau

Māori and the Tāmaki Housing Crisis: Homelessness in Tāmaki Makaurau

Homelessness is one of the most pervasive issues affecting Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. As the MP for Tāmaki Makaurau, an electorate representing Māori in Auckland or Tāmaki, homelessness is something that my staff and I encounter on a daily basis. While it is an issue that is impacting on people of all ethnicities and cultures throughout New Zealand, homelessness has had a particularly devastating impact on Māori in the South Auckland suburbs of Manurewa, Māngere, and Otara.

The housing crisis in Tāmaki has resulted in a significant under supply of homes, causing unprecedented numbers of homeless in the city. This housing crisis has meant that we as not only a community but a country have had to redefine what it means to be homeless. Traditionally the term 'homeless' generated images of single, unemployed people sleeping rough on the street. However, this image has needed to be renegotiated. Many of those who are homeless in Tāmaki have fulltime jobs and families. Rather than sleeping on the street, many are sleeping in cars, garages, camping grounds, or in overcrowded houses. In fact, if you drive around many of the streets of Manurewa or Otara you will see cars containing families lining the streets.

Tāmaki Makaurau as an electorate is very unique as it is the only Māori Electorate that consists purely of an urban population. Urban Māori are those Māori who live in urban centres and do not necessarily affiliate with an Iwi. Some of my constituents in Tāmaki Makaurau for example may be second or third generation Urban Māori. While homelessness is an issue that is affecting all of Aotearoa New Zealand, it is Urban Māori who are really bearing the brunt.

Like with many negative statistics, Māori, and in this instance particularly Urban Māori, are over represented in regards to homelessness. It is a plight which makes our people feel like they have lost their mana or self-worth, and holds us back from achieving what we are capable of. Recent findings from an analysis of census data by the Health Research Council suggest that 2 per cent of all Māori are homeless; five times the rate of pākehā. However, as a people our response to this crisis is something to be immensely proud of.

In May 2016, Te Puea Memorial Marae in Māngere opened its doors to homeless families in South Auckland. The Marae's Manaaki Tangata program provided *whānau* with food, shelter, and showers. The marae saw 56 *whānau* come through its doors, providing them a home when no one else would. Perhaps most importantly, the marae also helped *whānau* to find permanent housing. Working with government agencies, Te Puea Marae found 16 *whānau* permanent housing and 13 whanau temporary housing in the space of just two months.

Te Puea Marae's response to the homelessness crisis in Tāmaki represents a Māori kaupapa working to the benefit of all people. The Manaaki Tangata program is premised on the work done by the ancestor Te Puea who took a lead role nationally in caring for *Te Pouaru* (widows), *Te Pani* (bereaved), and *Te Rawakore* (impoverished). Like Te Puea, the marae started this initiative with nothing and were soon inundated with donations and charity from businesses and the general public who were not only motivated by the work of the marae but deeply concerned with growing homelessness.

The success of Te Puea Marae also calls into question why the New Government continues to fail our people in regards to homelessness. As incredible as Huri Dennis and his team have been, a group of volunteers should not be more effective than the New Zealand Government in housing our vulnerable people. Quite simply we need more houses in Tāmaki. This will bring the cost of housing down and will allow people back into the market, be this to buy or rent. As an Opposition Member of Parliament this can be deeply frustrating. You want to help and advocate for your community in every way possible, but ultimately have very little influence over the New Zealand Government's broader policy.

As a Māori MP my office and I supported Te Puea marae and their efforts from the time they opened their doors to the time they decided to close them. We were successful in publicising and promoting the issue locally and nationally. The Labour Party continue to challenge the government on the issue while creating a sound and comprehensive housing plan to look after the homeless and provide opportunity to rent or buy a home.

Māori 's experience of homelessness seems to be very similar to that of Aboriginal communities in Australia. Overcrowding, poor housing conditions, and a housing shortage affect Aboriginal communities in much the same way as Māori. In this way, homelessness is an Indigenous issue. The remnants of colonialism have produced an environment where Indigenous communities are being further removed from their whenua or land. The Crown, and in the case of Aotearoa New Zealand, a Treaty partner, must do more to assist Indigenous communities to get out of cars, garages, and overcrowded homes and into where they deserve to be: warm, dry, and safe homes.

Closing ceremony of the Manaaki Tangata programme, Te Puea Marae   Claire Eastham-Farrelly / RNZ

Subscription/Order Form

Parity costs $100 for a 12 month ten edition subscription.

☐ I wish to subscribe to Parity

Name ....

Address ....

Organisation (if applicable) ....

Telephone ....   Fax ....

Email ....

☐ Organisations, institutions, employed: $100 for 12 months

☐ Students, unemployed, pensioners: $50 for 12 months

Multiple copies of parity can be provided for an additional $35 per copy if they are to be delivered to the same address. (for example, two copies for 12 months: $135, three copies for 12 months: $170 etc).

☐ I would like .... additional copies to be sent $ ....

PAYMENT OPTIONS

☐ Enclosed is a cheque/money order

☐ Please charge my credit card (PLEASE PRINT):

☐ Visa   ☐ Mastercard   ☐ Bankcard

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Name on card ....

Expiry ....

Signature ....

☐ Please invoice me

Send completed form and payment to: Council to Homeless Persons
2 Stanley Street Collingwood Victoria 3066 T 03) 8415 6200 F 03) 9416 0200
Email: *parity@chp.org.au* *www.chp.org.au/services/parity-magazine*

Cost of subscription: $ ....

Additional copies: $ ....

TOTAL: $ ....