

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community service providers

Date of consultation:	24 August 2017
Group consulted with:	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community service providers
Number of attendees:	4
Name of organisations:	Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, ACT Council of Social Services, Indigenous Business Australia, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services

Key themes arising from the consultation

- Need for an overarching housing policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Broad support for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisation, but needs to:
 - be supported by strong governance arrangements,
 - have independent and qualified board members with no conflicts of interest, and
 - be delivered in partnership with an existing community housing provider to develop skills and capacity.
- Developing and building community connections is really important. The closure of Boomanulla Oval has denied the local community of an important venue for building connections. The oval needs to be reopened and/or redeveloped as a matter of priority
- Provide tools to help people help themselves
- Service responses need to empower people and be responsive to their individual needs – there needs to be trust and mutual respect.

Key quotes

- For some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Tent Embassy is sometimes the only option when waiting for public housing.”
- “Racism is very real. Private rental is hard for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community seeking housing because of racism.”
- “OneLink has no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. This can be improved. Currently OneLink does not assist our community through the homelessness maze.”

What is working well?

- Tent embassy works well for some people

What could be improved?

- Improve capacity of crisis accommodation to accommodate pets.
- Employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in OneLink.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers to do inspections in public housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenancies.
- Housing ACT allocation processes need to be more responsive: when assessing people, be aware that every family situation is different, family circumstances (e.g. neighbours) can influence housing choices.
- Better education on expectations.
- Regular review of people's housing requirements and situations in social housing - support for greater flexibility around tenure but with a case by case review.
- More support in cases of tenancy breakdown – wrap-around services are very important.
- Caring and kinship responsibilities are real issues.
- Affordable rent should include how much it costs for water, electricity, gas
- Responsibility to provide appropriate energy efficient heating and cooling.
- Review the maintenance support program run by Winnunga.
- Provide tools to help people help themselves.
- Indigenous Business Australia home loans eligibility criteria - 12 months continual employment, \$100k threshold, 32 year average loan period, stamp duty waived for 1st home buyers – changes required

New ideas

For an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing provider:

- Strong governance essential.
- No family group running the corporation
- Board members cannot assess housing applications.
- Policies and Procedure manuals to support good governance and the strategic direction of an organisation.
- Involve ORIC and ASIC to do workshops about roles and responsibilities of board and committee members.

For Boomanulla Oval:

- Possibly a partnership with Winnunga/Indigenous Land Corporation/Indigenous Business Australia consortium around redevelopment of the Oval.

More ideas:

- Affordable housing can be used as a stepping stone to home ownership / shared equity.
- Domestic Violence accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men – there are men sitting in AMC because they have no appropriate housing.
- Overarching housing policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Need more programs for our Elders and ageing people in our community.
- Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) can offer to visit community organisations to discuss options for home ownership within the community.
- IBA could invest in property/boarding house for students/apprentices – young people who are seeking empowerment /self-determination – encourage future home ownership.