



## **Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Support Branch**

### **Review of Federalism – White Paper**

Did you know that the Commonwealth Government is planning a review of Federalism? That means that they are considering their role in relation to how they work with State, Territory and Local Governments. The Commonwealth claims there is wastage and inefficiency in the current system.

The Commonwealth Government “Federalism Discussion Paper” contains a statement that “There is significant policy and funding overlap between levels of government in providing housing assistance and homelessness services for Indigenous Australians. This has created a lack of clarity around funding flows and differences in services between remote and urban Indigenous communities (e.g. the approach to delivering municipal services).”

Come along to the Shelter SA Aboriginal Branch meeting to look at the pros and cons related to the roles and responsibilities of different levels of Government AND how changing them will have a positive or negative effect on housing assistance and homelessness services for Indigenous Australians. We aim to assist the Branch to develop some strong messages about the mainstreaming of public housing and homelessness services, issues in both urban and remote areas, culturally appropriate design, social housing, private rental and home ownership.

**The following is a summary from the Federalism Discussion Paper of the points that refer to Indigenous Australians. The full paper is available [here](#).**

- Indigenous housing programs were streamlined. The Aboriginal Rental Housing Program was rolled in the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and a new National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) was developed. This continued the practice in place since the 1990s and early 2000s, of addressing Indigenous housing through mainstream services as far as possible, with additional Indigenous-specific funding for remote communities in recognition of the particular housing challenges these communities face.
- Many remote Indigenous communities do not have diverse housing markets. Communal Indigenous land regimes generally allow for long-term leases, but land cannot be sold or individually owned. There are also other barriers to development on Indigenous land, including a lack of appropriate zoning, town planning and infrastructure investment. Many remote communities are dependent on public housing and the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 was amended in 2010 to include a streamlined process for the leasing of public housing. The 2011 Census showed that nationally about 26% of Indigenous households were renting from public or community housing providers, compared with 5% on non-Indigenous households.
- Some groups including Indigenous Australians, older people, young people and people with mental illness or disability are more likely than others to experience difficulty securing stable

and affordable housing. This is complicated when individuals face multiple disadvantages and interact with multiple service systems.

- Social housing is provided by State and Territory governments and non-government organisations to assist people who are unable to secure and sustain accommodation in the private rental market. It includes:
  - Dwellings owned and managed by State and Territory housing authorities that are allocated to Indigenous householders and
  - Dwellings owned or leased and managed by Indigenous community housing organisations and councils in major cities and regional and remote areas. Housing models also vary across jurisdictions and can include dwellings funded or registered by government.
- The States and Territories oversee policies for public and community housing (both mainstream and Indigenous-specific) as well as homelessness services and regulation.
- In 2012-13 States and Territories spent \$113.3million on State owned and managed Indigenous housing. Some NPARIH money is also directed towards work on State owned and managed Indigenous housing. Indigenous community housing is funded through both the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment (NAH SPP) and NPARIH, under which the Commonwealth is investing \$5.5billion over 10 years to June 2018. The Commonwealth also provides targeted home purchase assistance for Indigenous Australians through its Indigenous Home Ownership program.
- In addition, in many remote Indigenous communities the Commonwealth has historically funded municipal and essential services linked to housing – power, water, sewerage and waste collection etc. that in other communities is funded by State, Territory and local governments. Reforms in 2014 have resulted in most States and Territories accepting responsibility for providing municipal services to Indigenous communities as they do for other communities.
- There are particular issues with the effectiveness and efficiency of housing assistance and homelessness services for Indigenous Australians. Despite significant government investment over the past 40 years in both mainstream and Indigenous-specific housing and homelessness programs, many Indigenous Australians continue to experience difficulty securing appropriate and affordable housing. Indigenous people are less likely than non-Indigenous people to own their own homes and particularly in remote areas, are more likely to live in social housing.
- Indigenous Australians face discrimination, overcrowding and a shortage of suitable housing, especially in regional and remote areas. Relationships with public housing authorities can be conflicted and tenants are sometimes absent for extended periods due to family and cultural commitments. Some Indigenous households act as community hubs, exceeding household maximum occupancy rules and meaning Indigenous Australians are more than 5 times as likely to live in overcrowded accommodation as non-Indigenous Australians and are also over-represented in the homeless population.