WORKING TOGETHER for a better HOUSING FUTURE



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **Housing Action Plan** | 2019 – 2023





Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work.

We acknowledge those of the past, the ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and who have passed on their wisdom. We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing effort to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. We acknowledge those of the future, the Elders not yet born, who will inherit the legacy of our efforts.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments, to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.



The front cover illustration represents new beginnings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, with a sun rising over a red earth, into a blue sky. The symbols inside the sun's rays represent the three focus areas of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023*: respond to individual needs, take a local approach and build a stronger sector.



Working together for a better housing future



The Honourable lackie Trad MP

Deputy Premier Treasurer Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of housing to our First Nations Queenslanders and the connection they have to their home. Their land and seas play a vital role in shaping their identity and forming the base from which to create stability for their family and community.

Having access to safe, appropriate and sustainable housing is a critical step to improving life outcomes. It is foundational to advancing health, safety, education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – no matter where they live.

Queensland is making progress in closing the gap by constructing new housing to reduce overcrowding, improving living standards in remote areas, and undertaking activities to reduce or remove barriers to home ownership across the state.

The Queensland Government has committed \$271.8 million to improve housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in 2019-20, including \$228.3 million for housing services in remote communities. This funding contributes to our pledge to provide up to \$1.08 billion, over the 10 years to 2028, for better housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders living in remote communities.

However, funding is only part of the story. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have told us what is important to them when it comes to housing. By working in genuine partnership, we can achieve sustainable change.

The Queensland Government is embarking on substantial reforms and engagement to reframe the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Through the Local Thriving Communities reform, we will change the way we work together through co-designing housing policies, programs and services to improve housing outcomes and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to thrive.



The Honourable Mick de Brenni MP

Minister for Housing and Public Works Minister for Digital Technology Minister for Sport

Housing provides a stable platform for wellbeing in every aspect of life.

The *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027* (the Housing Strategy) recognises the importance of giving every Queenslander a pathway to a safe, secure and sustainable place to call home.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 (the Action Plan) is a commitment under the Housing Strategy. It gives life to our decision to respond to the unique housing experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in urban, regional, remote and discrete communities.

It will transform our services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in recognition of the cultural requirements that impact on housing, and the importance of housing in closing the gap.

How we do this matters. The Queensland Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, to support their aspirations, enable informed local decision-making and deliver culturally-appropriate, person-centred responses.

In 2018, I announced the appointment of human rights advocate Mick Gooda to the role of First Nations Advisor. Mr Gooda has worked tirelessly with the Queensland Government to lead conversations with local communities and identify ways to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

These conversations have supported the development of this Action Plan and its key commitments – including creating a new housing body, delivering a \$40 million capital housing program and developing place-based local housing plans.

We aim to deliver transformational change for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, with the benefits to flow to those who need it most.











A word from Mick Gooda

First Nations Advisor



When I first spoke to Minister de Brenni about coming on board as First Nations Advisor, my main consideration was that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders be given a voice in matters that affect them, and that we aim for joint decision-making in those matters.

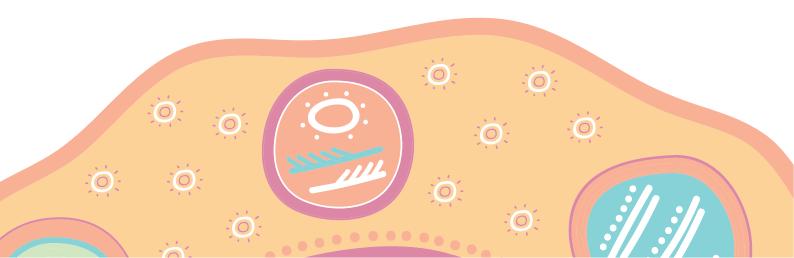
When we spoke about engaging with our communities, we agreed on the need to act with good faith, treat people with respect and dignity, and be clear and transparent about the issues confronting the provision of good housing across our state. Involving communities in joint decision-making, across the legislative, policy and implementation spectrum, became the basis of our consultation approach for the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023* (the Action Plan).

I want to thank everyone who joined us in the yarning circles across Queensland to share their ideas and stories. The message from the community was clear: you want greater housing security, better connection to services, education, training and jobs, and more opportunities to buy your own home. People also told us they want community involvement and shared solutions, confirming the need for local and individual approaches to improve housing outcomes.

This Action Plan is our opportunity to create the stable environment that is needed to close the gap. We know that secure housing is the springboard for achieving wellbeing in all areas of life. It helps us achieve better health, education and employment outcomes and can reduce contact with the child protection and justice systems.

We know that a stable home is different, depending on where you live. That's why we asked you 'what does a stable home mean to you?'. The Queensland Government's commitment is to provide a range of housing options, reduce the barriers to home ownership and connect people to the specific support they need.

I am confident that, over the next four years, the Queensland Government can and will work more closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve better housing outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders.



Introduction

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 (the Action Plan) is about more than just housing – it's about government, communities and the housing sector working together to create housing outcomes to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to prosper.

The Action Plan outlines the specific tasks to achieve this, driven by a new way of working together, that places local communities at the forefront of decision-making for housing services. The Queensland Government recognises the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities identifying, deciding and implementing the solutions, to respond to the unique housing challenges they face.

The actions were developed in response to the consultation feedback we received. They focus on providing individual support, in the places it's needed, through a strong housing sector. They also recognise the importance of local communities benefiting from the economic activity that housing provides.

In remote and discrete communities, the Action Plan will be delivered through the Local Thriving Communities reform, which provides a clear, long-term commitment to work with remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to co-design and deliver structural, service and economic reforms.

We are changing our approach to work more closely with our First Nations Queenslanders to create meaningful outcomes. There are challenges to overcome, but together, we can work towards our goal of ensuring every Queenslander has access to a safe and secure home.















Closing the Gap on housing

A home is more than just a house.

It is the hub that connects us to family, community and culture.

A safe and secure home is at the heart of our wellbeing and provides the foundation that allows individuals and families to thrive through independence, growth and success.

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders still face significant housing challenges.

Inroads are being made, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders now having the highest life expectancy among Australia's First Nations peoples (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

While Queensland has achieved significant improvements in housing standards, and reduced overcrowding, more work is needed to address housing issues and close the gap.

The Queensland Government is committed to working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to ensure they are at the forefront of the decisions that affect them. Nobody is better placed to understand and respond to the unique challenges of their communities.

"Although other influences are also important in each of these areas, there is sufficient evidence for education, health and justice departments to be concerned about housing issues."

(Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016)

Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local government areas saw overcrowding decrease from 46.6 per cent in 2007 to 25 per cent in 2016.

(Remote Housing Review: A review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018), 2017)

We believe that having access to safe, secure and culturally-appropriate housing is the first step to closing the gap in all areas of life.





Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are:



6 times more likely to experience homelessness than other Queenslanders (rate per 10,000)



2 times as likely to be living in severely overcrowded dwellings compared with non-Indigenous Queenslanders



Over-represented in social housing



Approximately half as likely to achieve home ownership

31,800

(17%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in remote and very remote areas of Queensland.

63,033

(34%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in South East Queensland.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)



Mick Gooda, First Nations Advisor, led a state-wide consultation over six weeks throughout November and December 2018.

Discussions focused on creating a shared vision, principles and approach to improving housing.

Consultation snapshot

- 8 yarning circles
- 200+ participants
- 80 organisations
- 46 survey responses
- 6 written submissions
- 11 customer interviews
- Local Government Association of Queensland's Indigenous Leaders Forums 2018 and 2019
- Torres and Cape Indigenous Councils Alliance



Cairns
• Yarrabah

Palm Island
• Townsville

• Mount Isa

Yarning Circles

Cherbourg •

The yarning circles built on the *Queensland Housing Strategy* 2017-2027 consultation in 2016, which included 806 responses, from 1,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, about housing matters.

Brisbane Ipswich

The draft Action Plan was presented at the Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) Forum in March 2019. We also received feedback on the Action Plan from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mayors and peak organisations.

The Charger and Savo family, Napranum, Far North Queensland

What we heard

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders shared views on housing, what was important, and how housing services could be improved.

THE KEY THEMES WERE:



Increase housing supply and more affordable housing

- Overcrowding contributes to social issues and family breakdown
- Affordability is still a challenge for many people
- More housing and housing diversity is needed to meet demand, including resolution of land tenure issues where required



Develop local solutions with shared leadership

Community members need to be involved in decision-making and implementing outcomes



Deliver appropriate housing

- Build homes to suit local climates and meet security, sustainability and cultural needs
- Use better quality materials
- Reduce repairs and maintenance costs to reinvest into community priorities



Provide greater housing choices

- Promote positive social interaction and outline tenants' rights and responsibilities
- Develop housing choices based on local need
- Educate and support people to access home ownership pathways



Culture is key to opening doors for all

- Increase the cultural awareness of support providers
- Provide culturally-responsive housing options and services



Utilise housing delivery to provide jobs, training and opportunities to grow local communities

- Engage with communities on local construction and works programs
- Support businesses to develop local employment and traineeship opportunities



Provide support services for vulnerable cohorts

- Support and educate people to sustain their tenancies
- Identify person-centred solutions to respond to individual needs
- Implement case coordination and wraparound services

Creating a better housing future

A shared vision

Our vision is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to have access to safe, appropriate and sustainable housing, that provides the foundation to close the gap, and improve health, safety, wellbeing, education and economic outcomes.

Shared principles

The delivery of the Action Plan will be guided by these principles:



HOUSING IS A RIGHT

Every Queenslander should have access to safe, appropriate and sustainable housing.



EMPOWERING LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Local communities will be at the centre of decision-making about local housing services.



HELPING THOSE IN NEED

Housing assistance will target those most in need.



CULTURE IS THE KEY TO OPENING DOORS FOR ALL

Culturally-responsive housing services will be developed, in partnership with communities, using the best available evidence.



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Maintenance of housing is the shared responsibility of housing providers, families and individuals.



COMMUNITIES SHOULD BENEFIT

The delivery of housing assistance programs will increase local job, training and business opportunities.

A new way of working

The Queensland Government is committed to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We know that developing policies and programs together is the key to delivering responsive housing services that provide communities with the greatest outcomes.

We want to create productive working relationships, based on an appreciation of the strengths and knowledge all parties bring.

In remote and discrete communities, the Action Plan will be delivered through the Local Thriving Communities reform where government and communities will work together to co-design and deliver structural, service and economic reforms. In urban and regional communities, we will also work with local residents, stakeholders and funding bodies, to support community leadership and self-determination.

The Department of Housing and Public Works has started working towards creating this new relationship by:

- establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing unit to partner with communities
- delivering cultural capability training to staff to improve engagement skills
- reviewing our legislation, policies, procedures, decision-making frameworks and complaint processes to reflect and uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' distinct cultural rights, in light of Queensland's proposed human rights legislation
- building a strong network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to assist with local knowledge, cultural awareness and relationship building.



Improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders will require the state government, local communities and housing sector to work together. We can identify, develop and deliver improved housing services through place-based and person-centred solutions, supported by a strengthened housing sector.





PLACE-BASED

Empower communities to develop local solutions



PERSON-CENTRED

Services and support to meet people's needs



STRONGER SECTOR

Create a strong and diverse housing sector

"We need to be a part of the conversation.
Our communities,
our families,
depend on it."

Working together



Place-based

Supporting healthy and empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through shared leadership and local solutions.

:	#	ACTION	LOCATION
	1	Develop place-based, community-led, local housing plans with communities to identify and respond to local housing challenges and priorities. In remote and discrete communities, local housing plans will be delivered as part of the Local Thriving Communities reform, where government and communities will work together to co-design and deliver structural, service and economic reforms.	Urban, regional, remote and discrete
	2	Deliver new housing , as jointly agreed with communities, under local housing plans.	Urban, regional, remote and discrete
	3	Work with remote and discrete communities, to reinvest repairs and maintenance savings, into locally identified housing priorities. Using an incentive-based approach, we will shift attitudes and behaviours to encourage better care for homes.	Remote and discrete
	4	Help home owners and tenants to undertake their own repairs and maintenance, by establishing community toolboxes for people to borrow tools and equipment and access instructions.	Remote and discrete
	5	Work in partnership with Queensland Health to develop housing solutions to support improved health outcomes, including responding to chronic illness with an initial focus in discrete communities. This action recognises the importance of housing as a key determinant of health.	Urban, regional, remote and discrete















The Queensland Government is providing \$75 million, over five years, to assist residents of discrete communities to achieve home ownership as part of the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027.

We are working with councils, trustees and local stakeholders to resolve outstanding entitlements to home ownership and provide new opportunities. As at 30 May 2019, 75 social housing properties had been transferred or sold into private home ownership in the Aboriginal communities of Yarrabah, Lockhart River, Napranum, Kowanyama and Doomadgee, and in the Torres Strait communities of Poruma, Badu, St Pauls and Hammond Island.

This program is delivering on the Queensland Government's commitment to resolve all outstanding entitlements to home ownership by 30 June 2022, as outlined in the Queensland Stolen Wages Reparations Taskforce Report, Reconciling Past Injustice.

Geographic areas of focus

Discrete communities

Discrete communities are geographical areas, with specific boundaries, with a predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The housing or infrastructure is owned or managed on a community basis. Queensland has 34 discrete communities, located within 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Government Areas, most of which are classified as remote.

Remote communities

Remote communities are areas defined as 'remote' or 'very remote' as per the Australian Statistical Geography Standard-Remoteness Area (ASGS-RA). This includes the Local Government Area of the Torres Shire and other locations such as Coen and Mossman.

The communities of Yarrabah and Cherbourg are both discrete communities, in that they are self-governing and have direct responsibility for infrastructure and governance. As they are both close to major population centres, they are not considered 'remote'.

Regional and urban communities

Regional and urban communities are classified by the ASGS-RA where regional communities have populations less than 100,000 people and urban communities have populations over 100,000.

These communities tend to have more established infrastructure, better public transport and improved access to community services and organisations.





Person-centred

Providing culturally-responsive services and housing support to respond to individual needs, wherever people are along the housing continuum.

ACTION LOCATION **Extend our service offer** to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders seeking housing assistance. We will: • improve the cultural competency of our frontline Housing Service Centre and Delivery staff. Urban, regional, remote and • differentiate our service offer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander discrete Queenslanders. • implement culturally-responsive pathway planning and case coordination, to connect people to the support they need to improve their wellbeing and housing outcomes. Build independence and resilience through information, education and support to help people access and sustain housing. We will: • strengthen the **service and support responses** of Housing and Homelessness Hubs in urban and regional areas. provide information and extra support, for new social housing tenants, to Urban, regional,

build capability and sustain tenancies across the state.

• fund a pilot of the 'Yes, I Can!' Aboriginal Adult Literacy Program, through the Literacy for Life Foundation, in one discrete Aboriginal community for three years.

• improve **system responses** for tenants who come into contact with the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT).

remote and discrete

8 Expand opportunities for people to access education, training and employment, including construction apprenticeships, in regional and urban locations.

Urban, regional, remote and discrete



#	ACTION	LOCATION
9	Explore the potential for new home ownership products, services and arrangements including: • a 'Good Renter's Discount' • affordable sale of social housing properties in the Torres Shire • home ownership roadshows • other partnerships and mechanisms to improve access to home ownership pathways.	Urban, regional, remote and discrete
10	Provide housing and support for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men exiting the criminal justice system, including multi-disciplinary support and long-term housing, to prevent homelessness and future reoffending.	Regional
11	Work with the community to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, by redeveloping the Joyce Wilding Hostel.	Brisbane
12	Review and redesign homelessness service delivery responses in Cairns and Mount Isa, drawing on evidence and expertise to improve responses to health, safety and criminal justice issues.	Cairns and Mount Isa

Supporting whole-of-life outcomes

Safe, appropriate and sustainable housing is critical to achieving better health, economic and social wellbeing.

The Action Plan supports key Queensland Government priorities to keep communities safe and healthy, give all children a great start, be a responsive government and create jobs in a strong economy.

We know that stable housing plays a significant role in helping people prosper and preventing other issues from occurring. The Action Plan directly supports whole-of-life outcomes under a range of Queensland Government strategies, including for better health (Actions 5 and 12), community safety (Actions 10 and 12), and education, employment, training and economic advancement (Actions 7, 8, 9 and 15).

Through the *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027*, we are delivering improved support for women and children experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence, families with children in contact with the child safety system, young people exiting care, and other vulnerable groups.

The Action Plan affirms our commitment to prioritising housing assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people (Action 6), particularly those experiencing multiple barriers. By prioritising housing, we can prevent other problems and promote better health, safety and social and economic wellbeing.

Indigenous Community Housing Organisation Sector Working Group representative

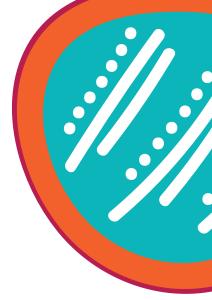


Stronger sector

Building a strong, resilient and culturally-responsive housing sector to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

#	ACTION	LOCATION
13	Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing body that will work with Indigenous Community Housing Organisations, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils, to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.	Statewide
14	Partner with the real estate sector, peak agencies and key groups to facilitate more inclusive housing responses and actions, to support vulnerable tenants, including those living with a disability, older people and people affected by domestic and family violence, to secure and sustain tenancies.	Urban, regional, remote and discrete
15	Expand the Department of Housing and Public Works' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship program to support 64 trainees (32 full-time and 32 part-time, school-based trainees) over four years. Trainees will gain experience in a range of policy, programs and service delivery areas across the department.	Statewide





Improving housing responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability face additional challenges in accessing safe, accessible and sustainable housing solutions. Many Aboriginal peoples living with disability do not self-identify, and there is no equivalent word for 'disability' in Aboriginal languages (Stephens, Cullen, Massey, & Bohanna, 2014).

In remote areas, care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability is often considered a family or kinship responsibility – which can place strain on family and result in underutilisation of services.

Under the Action Plan, the Department of Housing and Public Works will partner with local communities, and the housing sector, to facilitate culturally-responsive, person-centred and inclusive housing solutions to better support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability.

"In remote areas, care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability is often considered a family or kinship responsibility..."



Kai and Matthew, aspiring home owners, Brisbane.



Through these roots we make connections to our land and our community. When we belong, we feel safe and supported.

This relationship is important and needs to be nurtured.

We all have a responsibility to honour our country and culture, and to treat our homes, families and our communities with respect and care.

Together we can build strong communities, not only for today, but also for the future, where our families can grow up happy, safe and connected.

These are the words of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, reflecting on the meaning of home to them.



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