

Reference: DG 17636

Rachel Simpson  
Committee Director  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Simpson

I refer to your letter dated 20 February, requesting Housing NSW's response to Questions on Notice from the Standing Committee on Social Issues - *Inquiry into Closing the Gap - Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* and; review/correction of the transcript of evidence from my appearance before the Committee on 12 February 2008.

Please find enclosed Housing NSW's response to the Questions on Notice and note that I do not have any corrections to the transcript of evidence.

If you have any queries please contact Deborah Brill on 8753 8340 or [Deborah.Brill@housing.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Deborah.Brill@housing.nsw.gov.au)

Yours sincerely

Mike Allen  
**Director-General**

## Part A - Questions taken on notice during the hearing

1. **One of the Committee's term of reference is looking at the implementation of the recommendations of previous inquiries conducted by the Standing Committee on Social Issues. How is each department going about that?**<sup>1</sup>

The **Committee's 1992 report on *Juvenile Justice in NSW*** recommended that the Department of Community Services and the Department of Housing increase the provision of services that can provide safe and suitable crisis accommodation, medium-term supported accommodation and long-term accommodation for young people who are homeless and cannot return home or cannot remain at home, including accommodation suitable for girls and young Aboriginal people.

Housing NSW implemented the following initiatives in response to the Committee's recommendations:

- In 2004, Housing NSW's After Hours Temporary Accommodation service was expanded and the eligibility criteria was widened to include young people 16 years and over.
- Housing NSW is an active partner in the Kings Cross Youth at Risk Project led by South East and Illawarra Area Health Service. The Project was initially funded through Community Solutions and has funding secured until June 2008. The Project has been successful in improving co-ordination amongst youth services to support at-risk young people and in diverting them from homelessness. Over 300 young people have been assisted through brokerage and support services.

The Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) provides capital funding to purchase, construct or lease accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness from crisis to longer term more stable accommodation options. The program is administered by Housing NSW and funded by the Commonwealth Government. CAP assists a wide range of homeless target groups including young people, women and children escaping domestic violence, homeless men, women and families. The number of CAP properties has increased from 1,439 in 2005/06 to 1,484 in 2006/07.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), provides support to people in the community who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. SAAP aims to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services to help people who are homeless achieve the maximum degree of self reliance and independence. SAAP is administered in New South Wales by the Department of Community Services.

In addition, Housing has developed a number of initiatives to respond to juvenile justice issues, under the NSW Housing and Human Services Accord (the Accord). The Accord was endorsed by 10 NSW Government agencies and released in April 2006. It is a cross agency agreement that aims to improve the planning, coordination and delivery of services to assist social housing tenants to sustain their tenancies, and establishes the overarching framework for cross-agency housing and support

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service agreements between signatory agencies for the benefit of mutual clients with complex needs.

Accord projects that respond to issues affecting young people include:

- ***Young People Leaving Out-of-Home Care in the Hunter Region***

The trial is a partnership between Housing NSW and the Department of Community Services and aims to assist young people 16 – 18 years of age to access stable housing. It was initiated in response to concerns that young people leaving Out of Home Care were not easily accessing stable housing and were at risk of becoming homeless.

The trial commenced in July 2006. The agreed target for the project is to house and support up to 12 young people over a two year period. The original quota of 12 clients has now been reached, additional nominations are being accepted on a case-by-case basis and it is now anticipated that the maximum number may go up to 25, dependent on the existing resources of partner agencies. To date, all clients involved in the Trial have successfully sustained their tenancies.

- ***Juniperina***

The trial is a partnership between Housing NSW, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Community Services and Justice Health. The trial provides housing and support to young female offenders aged 16 – 21 years who are currently, formerly, or are at risk of becoming a client of Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre. In the first year of the trial, the geographical location will be restricted to the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Clients who meet the eligibility criteria for participation in the Trial may be referred by Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre, or DJJ (Community Service Offices) or the Youth Drug & Alcohol Courts), or DoCS Metro Intensive Support Service, Parramatta or Justice Health.

The trial commenced in November 2007 and is currently considering referrals.

The **Committee's 2004 report on the *Inebriates Act 1912*** recommended that the Government urgently expand the number of intoxicated persons services. The Government's response noted that while Housing NSW is not the government agency responsible for managing or funding intoxicated persons services, the Partnership Against Homelessness, a network of 12 government agencies responsible for homelessness service provision and led by Housing NSW, continues to roll out a range of services, support and housing initiatives for homeless intoxicated persons.

The Government's response also noted that, since the 2003 Summit on Alcohol Abuse, the Government had introduced a number of reforms to support vulnerable people who are chronically intoxicated and have related health, social and other problems including homelessness. These include the establishment of the Inner City Homelessness Outreach and Support Service (I-CHOSS) and the Port Jackson Housing Company. Details of these are as follows:

- The **Inner City Homelessness Outreach and Support Service (I-CHOSS)** is jointly funded by Housing NSW, the City of Sydney and the Department of Community Services. The service includes assistance for homeless people with

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dependence on alcohol and other drugs. From June 2006 to July 2007, I-CHOSS had an estimated 10,892 encounters with homeless persons, it is estimated that 4,686 of the total encounters were made with rough sleepers (an encounter is every engagement made with an individual regardless of their client status). The remaining encounter figures of 6,206 were individuals who have experienced homelessness within the used definition of homelessness including individuals cycling through SAAP accommodation, boarding houses and recently accommodated persons in either community housing or department of housing tenure; and serviced by the support and specialist staff.

- The **Port Jackson Supported Housing Program** is a service delivery response from Housing NSW to working with people with complex housing and support needs who have difficulties in sustaining their tenancies. Established in 2003, the program operates in the inner Sydney Local Government Areas of Ashfield, Botany, City of Sydney, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Randwick and Waverley. St George Community Housing is contracted for a three year period as the housing provider to deliver the program.
- The innovation in the program comes through the formal relationships established with 21 competitively selected registered support partners. In return for guaranteeing support for their clients, registered support partners have nomination rights over housing vacancies. Support partners are also responsible for assessing client support needs and for arranging for support services. The program operates on a relative needs basis rather than wait-turn, with assessment of nominated clients by an independent panel of support partners.
- Housing NSW has committed 211 units of accommodation to the program, comprising 45 leasehold subsidies and 166 capital properties (being a mix of new and existing housing supply). The program has increased its capacity to work with Aboriginal people through a pilot partnership project with Aboriginal services. An evaluation of the program is currently being finalised.
- The **Partnership Against Homelessness** has a number of further initiatives in place for homeless people who may also have an alcohol disorder.
  - The **Signpost Hunter Homelessness Assessment and Referral Service** assesses clients' housing and support needs and assists clients to access appropriate services.
  - The **Inner City Homelessness Action Plan** Phase 2 outlines strategies to increase accommodation options for rough sleepers and streamline access to services. The plan includes a number of initiatives to support homeless intoxicated persons.
  - The **Allawah Housing and Support Pilot** provides housing and support to single Aboriginal people in the inner city of Sydney with co-existing mental health and substance use disorders. Two other dual diagnosis projects are currently being developed in Liverpool and Illawarra.

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- The **Housing First** project enables chronically homeless people to move directly into stable accommodation with structured multi-agency support to promote the capacity to live independently.

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- 2. Stable and affordable accommodation for people generally, but specifically for Aboriginal people, improves a number of other non-housing outcomes – better educational and health outcomes, reductions in family violence and so on.**

**Do you have some material before you that you could use to elaborate on that point? I am interested to find out a bit more about that linkage and what the emerging evidence is.<sup>2</sup>**

Good quality affordable and appropriate housing can reduce health risks and other problems arising from living in unaffordable, overcrowded or temporary accommodation. Adequate housing can enable people to develop supportive relationships with others, including service providers, which can result in improved access to education, health outcomes and community relationships, and can be a precursor to participation in education or employment. Studies have also shown that public housing contributes to significant improvements in non-housing outcomes including greater feelings of safety and security, extra disposable income, improvements to schooling and health-related improvements.<sup>3</sup>

The life expectancy of Aboriginal people is 17 years lower than for non-Aboriginal Australians. Life expectancy is a key measure of health<sup>4</sup> and is highly correlated with a range of other factors. The *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report notes that different aspects of disadvantage often occur together and that Aboriginal people are markedly disadvantaged compared to non-Aboriginal people against the measured headline dimensions of education, labour force participation and income. The report finds that poor housing conditions are associated with most headline dimensions of disadvantage. The report highlights the importance of housing as a determinant of Aboriginal health and well-being, that the quality and condition of housing influences health outcomes, and that overcrowding increases the chances of contracting diseases and is a 'personal stressor' contributing to long-term health conditions.<sup>5</sup>

The NSW Chief Health Officer's report similarly recognises that the physical and social environments that people live in are a determinant of health. Aboriginal people are at a greater risk of exposure to behavioural and environmental health risk factors, and poor housing conditions, overcrowding and inadequate basic facilities have all been associated with higher rates of infectious and parasitic diseases.<sup>6</sup>

The link between poor health outcomes and housing is also recognised by the World Health Organisation's *Commission on Social Determinants of Health*, which identifies

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<sup>2</sup> Pg 40

<sup>3</sup> Peter Phibbs with the assistance of Peter Young, Housing Assistance and non-shelter outcomes – AHURI Final Report No. 74, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Sydney Research Centre, February 2005

<sup>4</sup> Aboriginal people in NSW have higher hospital admissions than non-Aboriginal people and higher incidence of cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, injuries, diabetes and alcohol-related conditions.

<sup>5</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) 2007, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*, Productivity Commission, Canberra

<sup>6</sup> Report of the NSW Chief Health Officer, 2006

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housing and living conditions among the key determinants of health and considers housing policy as vital to health equity.<sup>7</sup>

In areas where NSW Health's *Housing for Health* program has been delivered, the rate of admission for conditions linked to poor environmental health has decreased significantly. Studies have shown that public housing contributes to significant improvements specifically relating to health. Tenants have reported eating better foods as a result of increased financial resources and a functioning kitchen, improved dwelling conditions, increased self esteem often associated with independent living, extra income enabling participation in illness prevention programs, more support from neighbours, reduced stress and improved access to medical resources.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> World Health Organisation, Interim Statement of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health 2007

<sup>8</sup> Phibbs 2005 op. cit.

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### 3. Are you able to go away and provide us with statistics on a longer-term basis, say, over the last decade, as to what has been the change in the makeup of accommodation to the Aboriginal community... through government assisted housing.<sup>9</sup>

Housing NSW, has interpreted 'the makeup of accommodation to the Aboriginal community' as referring to the tenure of Aboriginal households, ie home ownership, private rental or social housing.

As outlined in Table 1 below, between 1996 and 2006 approximately one third of Aboriginal households totally owned or were purchasing their own home; one third of Aboriginal households were renting privately; and a further one third were living in social housing.

This data is based on the 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses. However, the Census undercounts the number of households living in social housing, as some respondents do not answer the relevant housing tenure questions in the Census, or do not complete the Census at all.

Accurate figures on the number of households living in social housing is available from Housing NSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office client information systems. This data shows that the number of Aboriginal households living in social housing in 2001 was 17,000 households rather than the Census figure of 13,500, and that this represented 35% of all Aboriginal households, rather than 28%. In 2006 Housing NSW and AHO data shows that 19,000 households rather than 14,900 lived in social housing, and that this represented 33% of all Aboriginal households rather than 26%.

**Table 1: Housing Tenure of Indigenous Households in NSW 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses**

TENURE	1996		2001		2006	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Owned outright	5,942	15%	7,534	16%	7,562	13%
Owned with a mortgage	6,810	17%	9,245	19%	13,157	23%
<b>Total owned or purchasing</b>	<b>12,752</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>16,779</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>20,719</b>	<b>36%</b>
Rented						
Private	11,971	30%	14,135	29%	16,856	29%
State/Territory housing authority	9,255	23%	10,425	22%	12,050	21%
Community or cooperative housing gro	2,123	5%	3,068	6%	2,810	5%
<b>TOTAL Social Housing (* See Notes)</b>	<b>11,378</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>13,493</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>14,860</b>	<b>26%</b>
Other rental	1,431	4%	1,461	3%	2,069	4%
Other tenure	354	1%	618	1%	355	1%
Not stated	1,047	3%	1,195	2%	2,385	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,483</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48,311</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>57,244</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### NOTES

(a) Based on place of enumeration. Excludes visitor only households.

(b) An Indigenous household is any household that had at least one person of any age as a resident at the time of Census who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

(c) Includes dwellings where landlord type was not stated.

#### Sources:

ABS Cat 4713.0 Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006 (Table 9.2)

ABS Cat 4713.0 Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 (Table 8.2)

Housing NSW and Aboriginal Housing Office client profiles

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### 4. Are you aware of whether there is any difference in the housing makeup (tenure type) in the various sectors between the Sydney metropolitan area, rural and regional areas, and remote areas?<sup>10</sup>

The **number** of Aboriginal households living in social housing is higher in major cities and inner regional locations than in outer regional and remote areas. As outlined in Table 2 below, 8,200 Aboriginal households live in social housing in major cities; 6,100 live in inner regional areas; 3,400 live in outer regional areas; and only 1,300 Aboriginal households live in social housing in remote and very remote areas.

However, proportionally Aboriginal households are more likely to live in social housing in outer regional and remote areas (36% and 57% respectively) than they are in major cities or inner regional areas (30% and 33% respectively) as per Table 2.

**Table 2: Indigenous Households living in Social Housing in NSW in 2006 by Remoteness Areas**

Remoteness area	Aboriginal households living in social housing	Total Aboriginal households	Social housing as a % of all Aboriginal households
Major cities	8,200	27,131	30%
Inner regional	6,100	18,396	33%
Outer regional	3,400	9,442	36%
Remote and very remote	1,300	2,278	57%
Total	19,000	57,247	33%

**Sources:**

Total households: ABS Cat 4713.0 Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006 (NSW Tables, Table 2)

Housing NSW and Aboriginal Housing Office tenant and property databases

### 5. Are you able to identify in terms of the number of people who are occupying that housing (government funded housing) how that change has gone? Are the house sizes (households) larger, smaller or are they the same?<sup>11</sup>

Over the last six years the average household size of Aboriginal households living in social housing has reduced, reflecting a similar trend shown across all housing sectors and for the non-Aboriginal population as well. In 2001 the average household size for households living in Aboriginal Housing Office dwellings was 3.4, dropping to 2.8 persons per household by 2007.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Pg 41

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<sup>12</sup> Housing NSW and Aboriginal Housing Office client profiles data

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**6. The Department of Housing is the lead agency for the partnership against homelessness. There are a number of Aboriginal specific programs directed at reducing homelessness and the Department can provide that information to the Committee.**<sup>13</sup>

As noted in Part A, Question 1 – Housing NSW manages the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) which provides capital funding to purchase, construct or lease accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. CAP assists a wide range of homeless target groups including young people, women and children escaping domestic violence, homeless men, women and families.

In addition, Housing supports Aboriginal specific programs under the Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH) include:

- Inner City Homelessness Action Plan (ICHAP) – Phase Two

In 2002 the PAH developed a comprehensive plan to address rough sleeping in the inner city, the Inner City Homelessness Action Plan (ICHAP) Phase One. In 2005, ICHAP Phase One was independently evaluated and it was recommended that:

- Support for people with high and complex needs be prioritised
- Effective housing and support models be developed; and
- An early intervention approach to rough sleeping be adopted

ICHAP Phase Two 2007 – 2011 focuses on interagency or collaborative responses to inner city homelessness and is underpinned by a commitment to ending chronic homelessness in the inner city utilising existing resources. ICHAP Phase Two includes the following Aboriginal specific actions:

- Develop and provide training in culturally appropriate engagement and service delivery, with an emphasis on work with Aboriginal people.
- Develop and monitor targets for Aboriginal inclusion across all ICHAP actions and projects.
- Re-establish an Aboriginal Homelessness Reference Group (ARG), as part of the Inner Sydney Homelessness Action Committee (ISHAC), consisting of both Aboriginal and mainstream providers, to plan services for Aboriginal people and build better linkages with Aboriginal services to the ICHAP and between Aboriginal and mainstream providers.

- Allawah Housing and Support Pilot which is a two year pilot that provides support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with Co-Existing Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders (Dual Diagnosis) in the Inner City.

The project is a partnership with the Sydney South West Area Health Service (SSWAHS) including the Aboriginal Mental Health Unit and Drug Health Services, the Inner City Homelessness Outreach and Support Service (I-CHOSS), St George Community Housing (SGCH) and the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)

The project aims to:

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<sup>13</sup> Pg 44

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- Provide culturally appropriate housing and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with a dual diagnosis;
- Enable clients of the pilot to address their mental health and substance use issues;
- Assist clients of the pilot to appropriately access wider support services; and
- Assist clients to access long term stable accommodation.

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### **7. Department of Housing can certainly provide information on the level of overcrowding that we experience in the housing that we own or manage.<sup>14</sup>**

For each household housed in Housing NSW managed dwellings, the Department knows:

- 1) the number of bedrooms in the dwelling being occupied and
- 2) the number of people residing in the dwelling and the relationship between those people (family type).

These details allow the Department to calculate the appropriate number of bedrooms for the household, and then compare that to the actual number of bedrooms. This calculation can be done according to national standards of occupancy, in particular the Canadian Occupancy Standard (used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in *Indigenous housing needs 2005 – A multi-measure needs model*).

Based on this model, overcrowding is where two or more additional rooms are needed to house the household. The Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness assesses the bedroom requirements of a household according to its size and composition and specifies that:

1. There should be no more than two persons per bedroom
2. Children under 5 years of different sexes may reasonably share a bedroom
3. Children aged 5 years or older of opposite sex should have separate bedrooms
4. Children aged under 18 years and of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom
5. Single household members aged 18 years or over should have a separate bedroom

However, there are some limitations to the data on overcrowding due to under-reporting of the number of people living in a Housing NSW property; and under-reporting of the number of Aboriginal households living in public housing. It is currently estimated that around half the Aboriginal households living in public housing are not identified as Aboriginal within Housing NSW's datasets. Due to this under-reporting it is not possible at this stage to calculate the level of overcrowding of Aboriginal households in public housing.

The number of people living in a Housing NSW property may also be under-reported. Under Housing NSW's Additional/Unauthorised Occupants Policy tenants are required to notify Housing NSW if a visitor stays longer than 28 days and apply for the visitor to be approved as an additional occupant. If the visitor is approved, this is likely to result in an increase in weekly rent because rent is calculated as a percentage the income of all household members. If tenants are found to have unauthorised occupants living with them, this may be considered Rental Subsidy Fraud and the tenants rental subsidy may be cancelled.

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<sup>14</sup> Pg 45

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However it is possible to estimate the level of overcrowding in Aboriginal Housing Office dwellings for the last 8 years (since the current IT system has been in place).

**Table 3: Overcrowding of Aboriginal households in Aboriginal Housing Office Stock<sup>15</sup>**

Measure	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Proportion of households with overcrowding in Aboriginal Housing Office dwellings (%)	5.9%	5.5%	4.6%	3.8%	3.5%	3.6%	3.5%	3.8%

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<sup>15</sup> NSW Department of Housing client strip files

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#### **8. Are you able to give us any indication as to the use by the Department of Housing of local Indigenous companies for maintenance, over recent years?<sup>16</sup>**

The engagement of local Indigenous companies by Housing NSW for construction and upgrade purposes is outlined in Part B, Question 1.

Housing NSW has an approximate annual budget of \$300m for maintenance contracts. The maintenance contracts of Housing NSW include a requirement that multi-trade contractors comply with the NSW Government's "Aboriginal Participation in Construction Implementation Guidelines" (APCIG). This document provides guidelines for contractors who perform works for Government to develop and implement a Project Aboriginal Participation Plan (PAPP). Each multi-trade contractor engaged by Housing NSW is obliged as part of their contractual obligations to submit a PAPP to Housing NSW.

In 2006/07 approximately 250 Aboriginal participants were engaged by Housing NSW multi-trade contractors.

Outcomes from current Housing NSW maintenance contracts, include:

- *Transfield Services* winning a Budyari Ngalaya Award for private sector support to an Aboriginal business whilst undertaking a Housing NSW contract in the 2007 NSW Aboriginal Employment and Business Awards.
- *Spotless* developing a corporate Indigenous Plan which is being implemented across all NSW Government contracts with *Spotless*. They have a dedicated Indigenous Manager to develop strategies to meet their PAPP requirements in consultation with DEWR and DAA.
- *Willowdene* winning an award for Aboriginal Participation in Construction in the 2007 NSW Aboriginal Employment and Business Awards. One of their Aboriginal subcontractors, *Ability Plus* also won a 2007 Aboriginal Employment and Business Award.
- *Rapid Construction* implementing a traineeship program through Matraville Sports High School to source young Aboriginal people to undertake maintenance work on Housing NSW properties.
- *Alliance Network International* was awarded the 'Employers/Service providers who made a significant contribution to Indigenous employment Award' as part of the 2007 DEWR NAIDOC Week Awards. This recognised the organisation's excellent work and commitment to Aboriginal employment through the implementation of Aboriginal employment under Housing NSW maintenance contracts. This is an unusual award for a European company to receive as it normally is awarded to Indigenous companies.

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- 9. A four-bedroom home in Tamworth at the present time, dispersed out of Coledale, will cost you in the order of \$200,000 to \$250,000. Would that be about right in a town like Tamworth?<sup>17</sup>**

Yes.

- 10. Would you be able to identify that the public housing stock in the Tamworth area has remained the same or increased over the last 10 years?<sup>18</sup> Could you also determine the same issue for Gunnedah?<sup>19</sup>**

There has been a slight decline in public housing in Tamworth and Gunnedah between 2001 and 2007. However, overall social housing numbers in Tamworth have increased in this period as a result of increased numbers of Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) properties and community housing stock.

The number of social housing properties in Gunnedah has decreased due to a decline in public housing properties in Gunnedah from 2001 to 2007. Reduced public housing in the area has been in response to a steady decline in demand.

- 11. Can Housing NSW provide evidence to satisfy the Committee that the process of deconcentration has not led to a reduction in the total number of public housing units available to Aboriginal people?<sup>20</sup>**

While the number of households living in public housing has fallen from 124,100 to 121,900 over the five years between 2001 and 2006, the number of Aboriginal households living in public housing has increased from 8,700 to 9,800. As a percentage of all public housing, the proportion who are Aboriginal has increased from 7% to 8% over the five year period.

The proportion of new allocations of public housing going to Aboriginal households has also increased from 963 (10.6% of all allocations) in 2004/05 to 1,091 (12.6% of all allocations) in 2006/07.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Pg 49

<sup>18</sup> Pg 49

<sup>19</sup> Pg 50

<sup>20</sup> Pg 51

<sup>21</sup> Housing NSW and Aboriginal Housing Office client profile data

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## Housing NSW – Questions on Notice

### **Part B - Further questions on notice lodged by members of the Committee**

#### **Questions for each Government Department**

- 1. How many aboriginal non-government organisations have applied for government contracts/licences/programmes in the past 3 years? How many of these have been successful in obtaining government contracts. How many have applied for 'mainstream' funding and how many of these have been successful?**

In responding to this question, 'aboriginal non-government organisations' has been expanded to include Aboriginal Building Enterprises, Aboriginal consultants and Aboriginal group training providers.

#### **Aboriginal Building Enterprises**

Aboriginal Building Enterprises have been engaged by Residential Technologies Australia (Resitech), the program manager for capital works and maintenance programs for Housing NSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO).

Aboriginal Building Enterprises are Proprietary Limited companies established as:

- Separate commercial building arms of community based Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) providers
- Companies set up by Aboriginal individuals with targeted Aboriginal employment and apprenticeships
- Companies established with ATSIC business or Indigenous Business Australia business loans with targeted Aboriginal employment and apprenticeships.

For the last 3 years, Resitech had contracted nine (9) Aboriginal Building Enterprises to undertake 16 new residential construction projects on mainstream public housing properties. Total construction value was \$10.4 million (period from 1/1/05 – 29/2/08).

Resitech has engaged twelve (12) Aboriginal Building Enterprises on behalf of the AHO to undertake upgrading works on 391 occupied properties with an estimated upgrading value of \$13.7 million (based on the projected upgrade cost of \$35,000 per property). This is approximately 50% of the overall AHO Upgrading Program (period from 1/7/04 – 29/2/08).

Statistics on the number of Aboriginal Building Enterprises that applied for contracts/licences/programmes in the past 3 years and were not successful are not retained.

#### **Aboriginal consultants and Group Training Providers**

The Organisation Improvement Branch of Housing NSW, has engaged eight non-government Aboriginal organisations for a range of employment and training activities over the last 3 years. Housing also engages appropriate Aboriginal Land Councils to provide a Welcome to Country for significant public events



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Two non-government Aboriginal organisations quoted for work in the last two years as part of a tender process but were unsuccessful.

The programmes delivered by non-government Aboriginal agencies have all been specific to delivering Indigenous employment related programs, and include:

- Facilitation of training for new Aboriginal Reference Group members
- Facilitation of training of staff acting as buddies to new staff
- Facilitation of the Aboriginal Annual Staff Gathering
- Training staff who participated in the Aboriginal Mentoring program
- On going cultural awareness training in staff inductions
- A cultural respect mentoring program pilot for senior managers
- An Aboriginal Schools Based Traineeship program
- Leadership training

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- 2. How does each government department ensure their minimum data collection sets and definitions are consistent with all other government departments? Do they have concerns that other government departments may be measuring, collecting and analysing data utilising different definitions and data collection processes? For example, what is the disability definitions utilised by each government department and how do they collect information regarding aboriginal people with a disability?**

Housing NSW collects data about the Aboriginality of its clients for the purposes of administering the housing assistance programs it delivers, and to assist in business planning and policy development. The Aboriginality of clients is collected according to national data definitions, as detailed in the National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary Version 3, published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The key counting unit for the Department is the household, as the most common form of housing assistance provided is a dwelling, which is occupied by a “household” rather than just a “person”. This is unlike most other government departments where the key counting unit is the “person”. However, acknowledging the need to be able to report characteristics of Aboriginal clients in different ways for different purposes, the Department collects details of the Aboriginality of each member of the household. This means that the Department is more flexible in how it can report characteristics of Aboriginal clients.

Housing NSW collects information about disability for each member of an applicant household, whether they are Aboriginal or not. Disability information is collected in terms of whether applicants have a disability which affects their need for housing. For asset and service planning purposes, Housing NSW sometimes uses information about whether clients are in receipt of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) as a proxy indicator of disability. However, this data does not take into account clients with a disability who are not on the DSP but who may be on Newstart, other pensions or in the workforce.

Housing NSW is currently developing a Disability Framework and Action Plan which will formalise agreement on a consistent disability definition. This definition will be based on a person’s functional limitations/needs and well as income. This definition will more fully recognise the nature and degree of a client’s needs and the implications for our asset and tenancy management responses.

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### To NSW Housing

- **How many recommendations made by previous inquiries, including previous social issues inquiries, have been implemented within your department? What were those recommendations and how did you implement them?**

Refer to Part A, Question 1)

- **Since 1997, identify (by name and date of commencement) the Programmes that have been implemented or continued by the Department to advance the health, housing needs and/or wellbeing of aboriginal people in NSW. In respect for each such programme, identify the costs of each programme for each financial year in which the programme operated.**

Significant changes have occurred in the administration and delivery of Aboriginal housing in NSW since 1997. An outline of these organisational changes is included below to provide context to the response. The core of this response (at Attachment A) relates to initiatives that Housing NSW has implemented for Aboriginal clients in mainstream public and community housing.

- *Organisational changes*

The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) was established in 1998 with a separate *Aboriginal Housing Act* following extensive consultation with the sector.

Immediately prior to the establishment of the AHO, strategic policy and resource allocation for Aboriginal housing was undertaken by the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning<sup>22</sup>. Service delivery was provided through the Department of Housing owned and managed Aboriginal housing funded by the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement's (CSHA) *Housing for Aborigines Program*. In 1996/97 there were approximately 3,800 *Housing for Aborigines* properties. The CSHA funding was also used to acquire properties for management by Local Aboriginal Land Councils or incorporated Aboriginal housing organisations under the Housing Aboriginal Communities Program (HACP).

Ownership of *Housing for Aborigines* properties transferred to the AHO with the Department of Housing continuing to provide tenancy and property management responsibility under a fee for service arrangement. Aboriginal specific funding under the CSHA is now directed to the AHO to be pooled with other funds to support the delivery of Aboriginal specific housing services.

A substantial number of Aboriginal households in NSW live in mainstream public and community housing. At the 2001 Census, it was estimated that 8,700 households in public housing were Aboriginal. This increased to 9,800 in the 2006 Census. Under successive CSHAs, the NSW Government has had a strong focus on improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal people. In mainstream social housing this has been reflected in the following areas:

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<sup>22</sup> through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Division in the Office of Housing Policy

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- Improving the responsiveness of mainstream social housing services and business practices to better reflect the needs of Aboriginal clients - examples include the Aboriginal Enquiry Line, outreach services in some communities, and employment of Aboriginal staff.
- Improving public housing data collection, system entry and storage procedures to enhance accurate data on Aboriginal clients to improve service planning and delivery.
- Working with the AHO to support partnership development under the Housing and Human Service Accord that will improve support service linkages for Aboriginal households in social households.
- Allocating mainstream CSHA funds, pooled with CSHA Aboriginal specific tied funding, to the AHO to improve the quality of existing Aboriginal housing stock; the management capacity of Aboriginal community housing providers; and to increase the supply of housing for Indigenous people.
- Working with the AHO in both national and state Aboriginal housing policy development to improve policy, strategy, service delivery and funding levels.

Along with increasing Aboriginal access to mainstream public and community housing between 2004/05 and 2006/07, Housing NSW also aims to ensure that service delivery responds to the needs of Aboriginal clients. Housing NSW's Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) provides feedback and advice to the Executive on the impact of policies and procedures on Aboriginal tenants and staff. In addition, an Aboriginal Policy Review project was undertaken to assess the appropriateness of Housing NSW operational policies in relation to Aboriginal clients. Outcomes from these initiatives are currently being incorporated into a Housing NSW Aboriginal Service Delivery Strategy that will be completed by June 2008.

Specific details of service initiatives to Aboriginal tenants and associated funding are provided in the table at Attachment A. Some of these initiatives are not Aboriginal specific but are included as they are mainstream programs with significant Aboriginal participation.

- **Since 1997, identify (by name and date of commencement) the programmes that have terminated or completed by the Department to advance the health housing needs and/or wellbeing of aboriginal peoples in NSW. In the case of each such programme terminated or completed, identify the reasons for each such termination or completion, and the date of such termination or completion.**

Refer to Attachment A

- **What programs does your department have to correctly identify overcrowding of indigenous occupied housing stock and how effective have the programs been?**
  - **Provide figures of overcrowding in your housing stock over the last 10 years.**

Refer to Part A, Question 7)

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ATTACHMENT A

NAME	COMMENCED/ COMPLETED	COSTS PER FINANCIAL YR	TERMINATION DATE/REASON
<b>Aboriginal Enquiry Line</b> A specialised service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, applicants and members of the public to register complaints, compliments or make general enquiries.  In 2006/07 3040 calls were answered.	November 2003 - Ongoing	2005/06 - \$296,000 2006/07 - \$316,000 2007/08 - \$328,000	
<b>Inner City Homelessness Outreach and Support Service</b> This is an outreach and support service to homeless people in the inner city, with aim of assisting clients into longer-term housing.  From April 2006 – June 2007 there were 85 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander clients.  This is a pilot project, and its continuation will be informed by an evaluation which will take place in 2008.	January 2006.  Funding ceases in December 2008.	\$855,000 (total funding \$1.45m – City of Sydney also contribute \$600,000 )	
<b>Aboriginal Reference Group</b> Comprising of Housing NSW staff members who are Aboriginal, this Group provides advice on how to improve outcomes for Aboriginal clients and staff.	2005/06 - Ongoing	\$60,000 per annum.	
<b>Building Stronger Communities</b> Housing NSW is regenerating communities with a high concentration of public housing, often in areas with a significant Aboriginal population. The initiative takes a partnership approach, with key priorities addressed through the collaborative development of Regeneration Plans. This will take place in 18 social housing estates in Mt Druitt, Claymore, Macquarie Fields, Dubbo, Killarney Vale, Bateau Bay, Tumby Umbi, Bathurst and Orange.	2007 - 2011	\$66 million has been committed over four years.  (note this is not an Aboriginal specific program, but has a high proportion of Aboriginal clients)	
<b>Tenant Employment Project</b>  A key element of the Building Stronger Communities initiative is the recruitment of six Learning and Employment Coordinators (LECs) and the development of a Learning, Employment and Economic Development (LEED) plan within each priority location. The role of the LEC is to bring together a Working Group to identify needs and develop key priorities for the LEED component of the Regeneration Partnership Plan. Three of the six priority locations are areas with significant Aboriginal populations.	2007	\$5.8 million has been committed across the four years of the initiative.	The LEC pilot project was implemented in 2007. This is part of a two-year pilot which will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of this investment and its efficacy as a future

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			approach by Housing NSW.
<b>Youth Scholarships program</b> The program is delivered in partnership with the Department of Education and Training and local schools to help young people living in social housing and studying in years 11 and 12 to complete their HSC by providing a one off grant of \$2,000 to be spent on educational related items. In the first round in 2007, 21 of the 100 scholarships went to Aboriginal students. In 2008, 49 of the 168 scholarships were awarded to Aboriginal students.	Program established in 2006 with the first scholarship funds disbursed in 2007.	In 2007, 100 scholarship grants were awarded totalling \$200,000. A further \$200,000 was allocated for 100 scholarship grants in 2008.	Funding has been notionally allocated for 100 grants in 2009 and 2010 pending the outcomes of the evaluation of the program which is currently underway.
<b>Tenant Participation Program</b> Supports activities that improve tenant participation and help tenants establish positive community connections. Examples include:			
1) Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP) – delivered across 10 project locations statewide to promote social inclusion. The Mt Druitt and Dubbo project locations have high proportions of Aboriginal clients, with the Dubbo project employing a dedicated Aboriginal project worker.	2005 – June 2008 funding round.  New round to commence July 2008 – June 2011	Approx \$700,000 per annum across 10 projects	
2) Social Housing Tenants Council (SHTC) – statewide 12 member tenant consultative structure, which includes 3 dedicated Aboriginal positions	Jan 2008 – Dec 2008	Approx \$80,000	Evaluation to occur at the end of Year 1 to determine future directions
<b>Aboriginal Advisory Boards</b> There are three Aboriginal Advisory Boards representing tenants and including representatives from agencies and NGOs across the Greater Western Sydney Division, in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outer Western Sydney</li> <li>- Mid-west Sydney</li> <li>- South-west Sydney</li> </ul>	Outer Western Sydney – 1994 - ongoing Mid-west Sydney Area – 2006 - ongoing South-west Sydney Area – 2005 - ongoing	Housing provides support for venue and catering	
<b>Allawah Housing and Support Pilot</b> An Aboriginal-specific supported housing partnership project for people with dual diagnosis between Housing NSW, NSW Health, the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, St George Community Housing and the Inner City Homelessness Outreach and Support Service (I-CHOSS). The Allawah pilot provides long term accommodation and support to single homeless	August 2008	\$128,787 (2 year pilot)	

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Aboriginal people in the inner city of Sydney with co-existing mental health and substance use disorders.			
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Mentoring Program</b> An annual program where staff are matched to a mentor, sourced internally, to identify and progress career opportunities	2005 – ongoing	\$30,000 annual	
<b>Buddy program</b> Launched in October 2007 for new client service officer trainees. This program aims to provide guidance and support to new staff.  Framework developed corporately with local application	2007 - ongoing	\$6,000 per annum	
<b>Cultural Education Training</b> Housing NSW plans to run an Aboriginal Cultural Education program through TAFE in its Northern Division in April 2008 (as a pilot), and then in each of its four divisions in the 2008/09 financial year. Each course will train 15 staff. The program will be promoted to staff following completion of the pilot, subject to endorsement of the course as a basic cultural awareness program for Housing NSW managers and staff. This program will be ongoing subject to an evaluation of its effectiveness	2007/08 – 2008/09	\$6,500 - 2007/08 \$26,000 - 2008/09 Total: \$32,500	
<b>Cultural Respect Mentoring Program (Northern pilot)</b>  This program provides a member of senior management staff with a mentor who facilitates a number of activities and offers advice and support. The aim of the program is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding traditional Aboriginal cultures</li> <li>- Establishment of protocols and processes of collaboration and partnership development</li> <li>- Improved engagement with local communities</li> <li>- Improved outcomes for staff and clients</li> </ul>	Nov 2007	2007/08 - 2009 - \$30, 000	
<b>Aboriginal Targeted Traineeship</b> 16 Aboriginal staff were employed in September 2007 as part of a targeted recruitment to client service positions across the Department.	Sept 2007	2007/08-2008/09 - \$200,000 for the Cert IV qualification component. \$265, 000 per year for salaries and recruitment costs.	
<b>External funding sources for recruitment - Elsa Dixon</b> The Elsa Dixon Program is a NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) initiative that provides funding to support a range of programs to support culturally appropriate	2007/08	2007/08 - \$283,178 (65%) of salary funded by Elsa Dixon. Remaining 35% or \$155,781	

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education and training pathways to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal people, with an emphasis on vocational training, job placement and enterprise development.		funded by Housing NSW for various positions across the state include: 2 x Coordinators Aboriginal Client Service 2 x client Service Officers 1 x Project Officer 1 x Senior Policy Officer	
<b>Aboriginal recruitment communication and marketing</b> – material such as recruitment brochures have been developed to be used at Indigenous and other career expos. These brochures will be also be available on the intranet and internet.	2007/08	\$1000 initial print costs	