

Indigenous Housing

Indigenous households in WA face particular challenges in exercising their rights to appropriate and affordable housing. Poverty, lack of economic opportunities, language, literacy, cultural practices and discrimination all contribute to insufficient housing options for Indigenous people in WA. The current state of Indigenous housing is inadequate, with significant overcrowding and existing housing stock in desperate need of repair and maintenance, especially in remote communities.

Stats and key issues:

- In 2006, there were 70,966 Indigenous people in WA, representing 3.4% of the total population of the state. WA has the third largest Indigenous population among the states and territories with 14% of the Indigenous population of Australia residing in WA.
- In WA, 34.4% of the Indigenous population reside in the Perth metropolitan area, 22.9% live in regional areas, and 45.6% live in remote areas.ⁱ
- 76.6% of Indigenous people rent their homes (32% from the Department of Housing and 23% from a community housing agency); 18.4% are home owners or are purchasing their homes.ⁱⁱ
- Indigenous people experience homelessness at higher rates than the non-Indigenous population (1.9% of the Indigenous population compared to .5% of the non-Indigenous population). At the time of the 2006 Census, over 9,000 Indigenous people experienced homelessness in Australia, which included 1,496 people in WA. The majority of the Indigenous homeless population in WA (57%) were considered to be experiencing 'secondary homelessness', which includes people living in temporary shelters or living with others because they do not have adequate housing of their own.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 2006, over 8,000 Indigenous households in Australia were in housing stress (paying more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs). In WA, 55.6% of Indigenous people not in receipt of Commonwealth Rent Assistance were in housing stress; 20% were paying over 50% of their income on housing costs resulting in extreme housing stress.^{iv}
- In 2006, 20,739 Indigenous households were overcrowded. This includes 2,615 Indigenous households in WA, representing 16% of the total Indigenous population in WA.^v
- The AIHW estimates that 38% of units managed by Indigenous Community Housing Organisations are in need of major repairs or replacement.^{vi}



Promoting Affordable Housing for all Western Australians

Stats and key issues continued:

- The movement of Indigenous households throughout WA affects housing outcomes. Many Indigenous people in remote communities travel to regional and urban centres to access employment, visit friends and family, go shopping, and access health and education services.^{vii} This movement, whether short or long term, may lead to shifting household composition, interruptions in schooling for children, and overcrowding in Indigenous households.
- Indigenous households often face discrimination securing housing in the private rental market. Although racial discrimination is illegal, private landlords are not prohibited from discriminating against people based on income (ie Centrelink recipients) and household composition. Discrimination is not prohibited where rooms of a person's home are sublet.
- In 2009 the Commonwealth government announced \$496 million for the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). The NPARIH aims to deliver 295 new houses and 1025 refurbishments in remote Indigenous communities in WA over the first 5 years of the agreement.^{viii}

Resources and links: Government Services

The **WA Department of Housing** (DoH) operates several programs to assist Aboriginal people access rental housing and home ownership, and support remote Aboriginal communities. Some of the services and programs provided by the DoH include:

- Aboriginal Tenants Support Service (ATSS)
- Private Rental Aboriginal Assistance Loan Scheme (PRAAL)
- Community Housing Construction and Upgrade http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/402_478.asp
- Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP)
- In Home Practical Support Program (IHPSP)
- Keystart Aboriginal Home Ownership Loans <http://www.keystart.com.au/key/aboriginal.htm>

Information on these programs and services can be found at their website:

http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/402_586.asp.

With the **Residential Tenancies Act** legislation coverage into remote Aboriginal Communities from July 1 2010 and DoH assuming authority for the tenancies and property management of Aboriginal community dwellings, the DoH is developing a strategy to support and facilitate remote Aboriginal communities through the transition.

The **WA Department of Indigenous Affairs** (DIA) key functions are to develop strategic policy to guide, coordinate and inform service delivery to Indigenous people.

- **Aboriginal Lands Trust** (ALT)
- **WA Aboriginal Advisory Council** (WAAC) and the **Indigenous Implementation Board**

Information about the DIA can be found at <http://www.dia.wa.gov.au>.

Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC). In 2004 the EOC and the then Department of Housing and Works (DHW) carried out an inquiry about issues facing Aboriginal people in public housing. 165 recommendations were made in the report "*Finding A Place*". These are currently being implemented and monitored by a joint EOC and DoH committee. A copy of the publication and information regarding discrimination is available at eoc.wa.gov.au or equalopportunity.wa.gov.au

Resources and links: Government Services continued:

Office of Native Title (Department of Attorney General WA) <http://www.ont.dotag.wa.gov.au/>

National Native Title Tribunal (Australian Government) <http://www.nntt.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

- Aboriginal Alternative Dispute Resolution Service www.justice.gov.au
- Indigenous Coordination Centre <http://www.icc.gov.au>
- Indigenous Business Australia www.iba.gov.au
- Indigenous Land Corporation www.ilc.gov.au
- Office of Aboriginal Health www.aboriginalhealth.wa.gov.au

Resources and links: Non-government Services

- Aboriginal Legal Services (ALS): <http://www.als.org.au/>
- Tenants Advice Service (TASWA) provides information and support for public and private tenants and community workers <http://www.taswa.org/>
- Perth Aboriginal Services Directory Ruah - <http://content.ruah.com.au/cms/000725.pdf>
- Advocare Aboriginal Access Program www.advocare.org.au/aap
- Aboriginal Hostels www.ahl.gov.au
- Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA) www.ahcwa.org (aka Aboriginal Medical Service)
- Useful link to Indigenous websites - <http://www.bri.net.au/ABSITES.htm>

ⁱ This includes 17.1% in remote areas and 28.5% in very remote areas. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009) *Indigenous housing needs 2009: a multi-measure needs model*. Cat. No. HOU 214. Canberra: AIHW. These figures differ from those of the DIA because of categorising the metro and Wheatbelt together. According to the DIA (based on the 2006 Census), the number and percentage of Indigenous people located in WA regions, from largest to smallest is as follows:

- Metro/Wheatbelt – 29,076 or 41% of WA Indigenous population;
- West Kimberley – 9,475 or 13.4%;
- Pilbara – 7,464 or 11%;
- Gascoyne/Murchison – 6,774 or 10%;
- Southern – 6,280 or 8.9%;
- Goldfields – 6,231 or 8.9%;
- East Kimberley – 5,666 or 8%.
- NB - the total number of Aboriginal people living in rural and/or remote regions is 41,890 and a greater number than is living in Metro. Government of Western Australia, Department of Indigenous Affairs, *Facts at a glance; Indigenous Demographics* <http://www.dia.wa.gov.au/Documents/Information/demographics.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Birdsall-Jones, Christina and Corunna, Venessa (2008), *The housing careers of Indigenous urban households*, AHURI WA Research Centre, Final Report No. 112, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/p80317/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2009. *Indigenous housing needs 2009: a multi-measure needs model*. Cat. no. HOU 214. Canberra: AIHW.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Prout, S. and M. Yap (2010) *Indigenous temporary mobilities and service delivery in regional service centres: A West Kimberly Case Study*, CAEPR Working Paper No. 66/2010 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU: Canberra.

^{viii} Department of Housing, http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/402_2257.asp