



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

9 March 2026

### **RESPONSE TO JUDGEMENT: JACOBS v WA HOUSING AUTHORITY**

The Council of Aboriginal Services WA and Shelter WA have expressed disappointment at the details of this case, which highlighted allegations of housing neglect in the Pilbara, saying issues of substandard public housing in remote Western Australia are widespread and need urgent attention.

Ms Jacobs, an Aboriginal public housing tenant in the remote community of Wakathuni, launched legal action against her government landlord, the WA Housing Authority, in 2024 over alleged ongoing failures to repair her home, leaving her to live in unsafe conditions, and unlawful rent increases. The judgement was handed down today.

CASWA and Shelter WA said details of the case, which was supported by the Australian Lawyers for Remote Aboriginal Rights and Grata Fund, were shocking and highlighted the day-to-day battles faced by public housing tenants in remote WA.

Aboriginal community organisations have raised ongoing concerns about the condition of housing in remote communities, including the lack of repairs and maintenance, directly with successive governments over the last decade.

CASWA and Shelter WA now urgently call for properly resourced, regionally based and community-led housing investment to ensure every person can live in a safe and healthy home.

The WA Housing Authority provides housing in 122 remote Aboriginal communities.

#### **Comments attributed to Chad Stewart, CEO Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA):**

“In 2026, no Western Australian should have to live in substandard public housing that impacts their health and wellbeing, but sadly, this is a reality of many Aboriginal families in remote WA.

“Aboriginal families in remote WA continue to live in homes that fail basic safety and health standards, with issues like malfunctioning toilets, mould, pest infestations, and lack of cooling systems commonplace, posing a significant risk to children and families.

“Tenants across multiple remote communities consistently report dangerous, substandard living conditions, including unsafe drinking water, inadequate cooling, structural damage, and long-delayed repairs, reflecting systemic neglect rather than isolated cases.

“Housing is a health issue. A home in poor condition undermines physical and mental health, disrupts children’s learning, and destabilises families. The lack of housing in remote communities also encourages overcrowding, which can be a major health hazard. These failures directly work



against Closing the Gap priorities to ensure Aboriginal families have safe, healthy and fit-for-purpose homes.

“The significant distance, cost, and time involved in getting tradespeople to remote communities in WA continues to cause major delays. Prioritising the training and employment of local residents for minor repairs would help reduce these long wait times and improve the reliability of essential maintenance.”

#### **Comments attributed to Kath Snell, CEO Shelter WA**

“Shelter WA is proudly committed to working together to Close the Housing Gap and advocating for a housing system that enables everyone to thrive. This includes ensuring that all housing is safe, secure, healthy and comfortable to live in, affordable to rent, and efficient to run.

“We acknowledge the Cook Government has made investments into refurbishments, repairs and maintenance in remote public housing recently, but clearly more needs to be done as a matter of urgency.

“We have also advocated that the best solution is to reverse the centralisation of repairs and maintenance contractors – and invest in the skills, services and employment opportunities in local communities instead.

“Shelter WA has also been strongly advocating for the introduction of minimum standards in all rental homes. Western Australia has some of the weakest standards for rental homes in Australia. Strong standards would prevent what we have seen in this test case – and as WA’s biggest landlord, the Cook Government should lead by example.”

Ends

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Interviews available on request.