



ABORIGINAL HOUSING OFFICE

My family is proud that I've had a job for a year and a half. Since I started the job I now have a licence, feel happier and have goals. I'd love to do my builder's licence, own my own business and employ guys one day!!

CRAIG, ABORIGINAL CARPENTER\*

\*NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED

# Aboriginal Housing Office

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

This year the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) moved full-swing into implementing the Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy.

The initial round of community housing registrations was completed under a new system that registers Aboriginal housing providers to improve standards. The first set of leasing agreements was signed with Aboriginal community housing providers who are now eligible for funding to improve the condition, safety and health of their homes.

We are supporting registered providers to manage these homes by developing their business capacity and introducing a new Build and Grow rent policy. The policy sets rents to provide sufficient revenue for providers to operate efficiently and assist tenants to pay rent.

We are making good progress in buying, building and repairing houses in remote areas under the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth and NSW Governments. At the same time, the AHO property portfolio has grown with extra homes for Aboriginal families in housing need that have been

built under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

This is an exciting era for the AHO and for the Aboriginal housing sector. We look forward to continuing these reforms in 2011–12 to provide more housing for Aboriginal people and their communities.



**Mike Allen**

Acting Chief Executive  
Aboriginal Housing Office

*"We are supporting registered providers to manage these homes by developing their business capacity and introducing a new Build and Grow rent policy. The policy sets rents to provide sufficient revenue for providers to operate efficiently and assist tenants to pay rent!"*

# Overview

## WHO WE ARE

The AHO is a statutory authority established under the *Aboriginal Housing Act 1998* to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to affordable, quality housing. The AHO is assisted by an Aboriginal Housing Board as required under the Act.

## WHAT WE DO

The AHO has statewide responsibility to develop a sustainable NSW Aboriginal housing sector by planning and developing, delivering and evaluating programs and services to assist Aboriginal people in housing need.

The AHO owns more than 4,900 properties tenanted by Aboriginal people in housing need. The majority are managed by Housing NSW on behalf of the AHO under a service level agreement.

We work with the Aboriginal community housing sector to ensure it can operate efficiently and is well-equipped to meet the increasing housing need of Aboriginal communities. The sector owns around 4,400 homes that are managed by Aboriginal community housing providers.

We also allocate resources, implement sectorwide policy and monitor outcomes and performance in the Aboriginal housing sector. In order to achieve this, the AHO receives funding from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

We work in partnership with Aboriginal community housing providers and the Aboriginal community to deliver housing programs and develop housing policy and standards to an acceptable level.

The AHO manages and coordinates a substantial annual capital works program. We also have an important role in facilitating and improving employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people within the Aboriginal housing sector.

We serve Aboriginal people by:

- increasing the number of homes available to address housing needs
- improving the condition of homes
- increasing the capacity of Aboriginal community housing providers
- researching demographic and other trends to understand future needs
- providing training for Aboriginal housing providers to improve their technical, governance and management skills
- working with Aboriginal people to improve our policies, procedures and programs
- ensuring that Aboriginal people are engaged in our work through consultation.

## OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Our stakeholders include:

- Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness or in need of assistance to rent or buy their home
- tenants of AHO-owned homes
- Aboriginal housing providers including local Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal Corporations
- Housing NSW and mainstream community housing providers that manage AHO-owned properties and tenancies on our behalf
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council – the peak body for land councils
- NSW Registrar of Community Housing
- government agencies.

# Our highlights

In 2010–11 we:

- began implementing the Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy and continued delivering the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership Agreement (RIHNP)
- grew our property portfolio from 4,551 to 4,949 homes mainly through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP)
- delivered a program of safe houses in isolated communities in western NSW to improve access to crisis accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing for Aboriginal women and children affected by domestic and family violence
- enhanced Aboriginal housing in remote communities by building or buying 39 new homes and refurbishing 241 existing homes owned by the local community
- acquired 18 homes in urban or regional areas to house Aboriginal people moving from remote communities to other locations to pursue education or training opportunities through the Employment Related Accommodation Program
- introduced a new rent policy to assist Aboriginal community housing providers to become efficient property and tenancy managers
- completed the first round of assessments under the new Provider Assessment Registration System (PARS), with all participating Aboriginal community housing providers achieving registration
- developed the Happy Homes booklet as a tenant support pack to provide useful information on home safety for Aboriginal families and children in remote areas
- developed a new tenant satisfaction survey, the first of its kind for the Aboriginal community housing sector that will help the AHO and housing providers better understand their tenants' perspective on the quality of housing services in their community
- ensured that housing responses for Aboriginal people were culturally appropriate and built on greater self-determination including more employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in housing programs in the maintenance and construction industries
- increased our corporate effectiveness by developing better risk management practices and streamlining business systems.

# Our performance

## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
<b>Resources</b>				
Total number of employees	69	65	68	78
<b>Customers*</b>				
Number of tenancies (as at 30 June 2011)	4,122	4,100	4,145	4,267
Number of new tenancies*	400	303	348	453
<b>Assets*</b>				
AHO homes	4,248	4,256	4,296	4,525
<b>Social housing*</b>				
Number of people assisted	13,300	13,000	13,200	13,800

\* Managed by Housing NSW on behalf of the AHO.

## REMOTE INDIGENOUS HOUSING NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Improving housing conditions is closely linked to improvements in Aboriginal health, education and employment, which will close the gap in disadvantage for Aboriginal people.

In 2010–11, we implemented the RIHNP. This partnership aims to improve housing and address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages for Aboriginal people living in remote areas.

In 2010–11, under the partnership, we delivered:

- 39 new homes in remote areas
- refurbishments for 241 remote Aboriginal community housing provider homes
- an additional 18 homes in regional areas to be used by Aboriginal people from remote communities who are relocating to pursue employment related and training opportunities
- the Happy Homes booklet as a tenant support pack to provide useful information on home safety for Aboriginal families and children in remote areas.

## BUILD AND GROW

The Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy, launched in February 2010, is a framework to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW. It supports Aboriginal community housing providers to become a vibrant and effective sector that services the needs of some of our most vulnerable Australians.

Build and Grow reforms represent one of the biggest recent investments by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments in the Aboriginal community housing sector. The strategy is an important part of the NSW Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and overcoming housing disadvantage for Aboriginal people.

Developed in consultation with Aboriginal organisations and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, key aspects of the strategy include addressing the backlog of maintenance on homes owned by participating Aboriginal community housing providers, developing a new registration system and rent policy, and providing time-limited capacity subsidies, business development and capacity-building training and advice for eligible providers.

The Build and Grow implementation plan was released in 2010–11. The plan sets out timeframes and goals to assist the AHO and the Aboriginal community housing sector to deliver the Build and Grow Strategy. The strategy will help Aboriginal community housing providers become financially independent and improve living standards for Aboriginal people in their communities.

Our regional offices actively engaged with local providers to implement various programs under Build and Grow, organising forums in Penrith, Tamworth, Dubbo, Coonabarabran, Lismore, Newcastle and Batemans Bay to update providers on progress with implementing the strategy and to consider their suggestions for improvements.

In 2010–11, under Build and Grow, we delivered:

- repairs and maintenance to 114 homes in regional and urban areas
- the first round of assessments under the new registration system, with all nine Aboriginal community housing providers that participated successfully achieving registration
- a new rent policy and an extensive round of briefings with providers to explain how it works
- a system of headleases in consultation with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council – 28 providers began negotiations with the AHO to headlease a total of 710 homes
- the Safe House program in isolated communities in western NSW to improve access to crisis accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing for Aboriginal women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

**13,800**  
*people assisted  
 in AHO homes  
 managed by  
 Housing NSW*

# Our performance

CONTINUED

## PROVIDER ASSESSMENT AND REGISTRATION SYSTEM

We are dedicated to improving housing services for Aboriginal people and building the capacity of Aboriginal community housing providers. A new assessment system, called the Provider Assessment and Registration System (PARS), is being implemented under the guidance of the Aboriginal Housing Board.

PARS introduced performance-based registration with assessment against seven areas:

- fairness and resident satisfaction
- sustainable tenancies and communities
- asset management
- sound governance
- standards of probity
- protection of government investment
- efficient and competitive delivery of Aboriginal community housing.

Approval under PARS demonstrates that Aboriginal community housing providers are providing high-quality housing services to the Aboriginal community.

To ensure the integrity of the new system, a specialist unit operates within the Registrar of Community Housing. This unit assesses Aboriginal community housing providers and makes recommendations to the Acting Chief Executive on whether a provider should be approved. PARS takes into account the unique context of the Aboriginal community housing sector.

To support the successful transition to PARS and ensure that the system is culturally appropriate, robust and easy to use, a pilot with nine Aboriginal community housing providers was successfully completed in 2010–11. A formal evaluation was completed and areas for improving subsequent provider assessments were identified.

## DATA COLLECTION AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Data collection provides the AHO and other agencies with valuable information on the condition of Aboriginal housing in NSW and the long-term viability of the sector. It also enables us to develop policies, and plan and fulfill our reporting obligations to the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

In 2010, a new data collection process was introduced. This included collection of organisational and unit record data from Aboriginal community housing providers using a system designed to incorporate changes in their reporting requirements. We also continued to participate in data and performance indicator development work for RIHNP.

## NATION BUILDING ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN

The construction of social housing under the NBESP is being undertaken by Housing NSW. A target of 325 NBESP properties are being built and handed over to the AHO from 2009–10 to 2011–12. The first 37 homes were received in 2009–10, with 241 homes provided in 2010–11.

Housing NSW will also match this target of 325 NBESP properties with a further 325 existing Housing NSW properties that are already tenanted by Aboriginal families. These will be transferred to the AHO over a two-year period. This began in 2010–11, when 15 were transferred.

These two initiatives will increase the Aboriginal housing sector by a total of 650 homes.

## ASSET MANAGEMENT

Managed by Housing NSW, in 2010–11 the AHO Portfolio Maintenance program expenditure was \$ 24.4 million. This comprised \$9.7 million for planned maintenance on AHO homes managed by Housing NSW, \$1.1 million for planned maintenance on AHO homes managed by registered community housing organisations and \$13.6 million for responsive maintenance on AHO homes managed by Housing NSW.

Asset Management Program funding is necessary as we self-insure our homes. The funding is partly used to demolish buildings damaged and to dispose of surplus land. Funds are also used for construction projects and converting homes; for example, converting a garage into bedrooms.

We sold 15 homes, including three to tenants. Of the sales to tenants, two were assisted through the AHO/Indigenous Business Australian Home Purchase Scheme and the other through commercial financial arrangements. The sales program remains primarily responsive and is based on requests from tenants to buy their home.

In 2010–11, a total of \$13 million was available under the AHO Capital Works Program, and 27 new homes were acquired. Four homes were transferred from Housing NSW to the AHO under various programs. This compensates for AHO homes sold or allocated for other purposes.

By June 2011, the AHO maintained a portfolio of 4,949 homes. In 2010–11, our Asset Management Program operated under a 10-year asset management plan, which is guiding the development of our housing portfolio to meet the needs of current and future Aboriginal clients. We continued to improve housing supply and the value of homes in the Aboriginal housing sector. The AHO asset program assists in building viable local communities, through promoting employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal builders, tradespeople and apprentices. Aboriginal builders upgraded 18 homes to bring the homes up to AHO standards.

## SAFE HOUSES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN LEAVING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Under Build and Grow, we assist remote Aboriginal communities which experience severe housing deficiencies. Secure, high-quality and well-managed housing is crucial to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people in these communities. In Wilcannia, Bourke and Brewarrina, we are implementing a Safe House Program as a result of the demand from Aboriginal women for housing where family members experiencing violence in the home could safely stay and be supported.

In Wilcannia, a Safe House complex is being established consisting of office accommodation, counselling facilities, two crisis accommodation units, two transition units and two exit houses. The Bourke Safe House Project includes provision of a Safe House complex consisting of office accommodation, counselling facilities, two crisis

accommodation units, two transition units and an exit house. In Brewarrina, there will be a new Safe House, two transition units or villas and one exit house. Clients of the Safe House Program are able to access FACS services appropriate to their needs, such as the Specialist Homelessness Service.

## CONFIRMATION OF ABORIGINALITY

We are committed to providing housing for Aboriginal people and have a policy and process for confirming Aboriginality which ensures that AHO housing is only allocated to Aboriginal people.

Housing NSW also requires people seeking access to Aboriginal-specific entitlements in public housing homes to provide confirmation of their Aboriginality. This common approach to confirming Aboriginality of all applicants applies regardless of whether they are applying for AHO, community or public housing homes.

*"We work with different agencies to provide better services that support health, education and employment through housing so that the younger generation can live in safe and adequate homes which will provide them with security in their daily lives. In the long-term, it's all about giving them the tools to make a better future for their families and generations to come!"*

– Alex, Aboriginal Housing Office Senior Project Officer

# Our performance

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## FUNDING FOR ABORIGINAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

The following tables show funding from the NSW Government, the Commonwealth Government and other sources in 2010–11.

### Funding sources

SOURCE OF FUNDS	\$'000
<b>1. NSW Government</b>	
State Social Housing	1,900
Aboriginal Communities Development Program	3,000
Energy saving rebate	6
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4,906</b>
<b>2. Commonwealth Government</b>	
National Affordable Housing Agreement	25,760
Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership	30,735
Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan	-
Indigenous Cadetship Support	-
Other	165
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>56,660</b>
<b>3. Other sources of funds</b>	
Net rental income	12,555
Interest income	876
Proceeds from asset sales	2,717
Other	555
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>16,703</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>78,269</b>
APPLICATION OF FUNDS	\$'000
AHO planned maintenance	10,828
Aboriginal Communities Development Program	3,000
Housing Aboriginal Communities Program	499
Repairs and Maintenance Community Assets Program	568
Other programs	26,607
Acquisition and construction	47,601
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>89,103</b>
AHO operating costs	10,573
<b>Total</b>	<b>99,676</b>

# New home opens many doors



Opening the door to a new house has opened up a world of opportunities to Zona.

Zona applied to the Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) Program for a home in the Newcastle area while she studies for her degree at Newcastle University.

Without finding suitable accommodation for her family, Zona wouldn't have been able to enrol in university.

"I want to be a primary school teacher one day so I'm learning to teach others. I could never afford to move and set up a new life for my family.

"The ERA Program means not only have my family been given a home, but I have been given an opportunity to follow my dream," Zona said.

"It's not easy growing up in a remote community because opportunities are limited. I wanted to do something for myself and also set a good example for my children.

"This program means I no longer have to choose between providing a home or studying to achieve my goals. Now I can do both," Zona said.

The ERA Program is an initiative designed specifically for Aboriginal people from remote areas to enable them to engage in study or employment in large towns or regional centres.

*"This program means I no longer have to choose between providing a home or studying to achieve my goals. Now I can do both!"*

# Our performance

CONTINUED

## NSW ABORIGINAL HOUSING SECTOR

The NSW Aboriginal housing sector contains 4,949 homes owned by us and approximately 4,460 homes owned by 207 Aboriginal community housing providers. The spread of the Aboriginal housing sector and the AHO Capital Works Program across AHO regions during the reporting period are presented in the following table.

### NSW Aboriginal housing portfolio as at 30 June 2011

REGIONS	INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL HOUSING PORTFOLIO		CAPITAL WORKS
		AHO	ACHP*	AHO ACQUISITION
		CURRENT STOCK	CURRENT STOCK	
<b>Northern region</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	44	86	2
	4 bedrooms	423	622	6
	3 bedrooms	1,100	921	7
	2 bedrooms	180	261	-
	1 bedroom	48	41	-
	0 bedrooms (bedsitters etc)	10	-	-
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>1,805</b>	<b>1,931</b>	<b>15</b>
	Vacant land	80	-	-
	Number of Aboriginal community housing providers	-	94	-
	Average number of dwellings	-	21	-
	Number of grants issued*	-	6	-
<b>Sydney/South Eastern region</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	39	31	1
	4 bedrooms	350	209	7
	3 bedrooms	1,186	425	3
	2 bedrooms	224	120	-
	1 bedroom	55	21	-
	0 bedrooms (bedsitters etc)	6	-	-
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>11</b>
	Vacant land	10	-	-
	Number of Aboriginal community housing providers	-	43	-
	Average number of dwellings	-	19	-
	Number of grants issued*	-	3	-
<b>Western region</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	21	58	-
	4 bedrooms	370	419	1
	3 bedrooms	754	953	-
	2 bedrooms	104	260	-
	1 bedroom	34	33	-
	0 bedrooms (bedsitters etc)	1	-	-
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>1,284</b>	<b>1,723</b>	<b>1</b>
	Vacant land	61	-	-
	Number of Aboriginal community housing providers	-	70	-
	Average number of dwellings	-	25	-
	Number of grants issued*	-	16	-

REGIONS	INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL HOUSING PORTFOLIO		CAPITAL WORKS
		AHO	ACHP*	AHO ACQUISITION
		CURRENT STOCK	CURRENT STOCK	
<b>All regions</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	104	175	3
	4 bedrooms	1,143	1,250	14
	3 bedrooms	3,040	2,299	10
	2 bedrooms	508	641	-
	1 bedroom	137	95	-
	0 bedrooms (bedsitters etc)	17	-	-
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>4,949</b>	<b>4,460</b>	<b>27</b>
	Vacant land	151	-	-
	Number of Aboriginal community housing providers	-	207	-
	Average number of dwellings	-	22	-
	Number of grants issued*	-	25	-

\* Aboriginal community housing providers.

Notes:

1 The data for AHO stock are as at 30 June 2011 and the Aboriginal community housing provider (ACHP) stock are current as at 30 June 2010. The process of updating ACHP data will be completed in October 2011 and published in the 2011/12 FACS Annual Report.

2 The data for AHO capital works are current as at 30 June 2011. The data does not include projects under construction.

### Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership and Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan homes acquired 2010–11

REGIONS	INDICATORS	REMOTE INDIGENOUS HOUSING NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ACQUISITIONS		NATION BUILDING ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN
		CAPITAL WORKS	EMPLOYMENT RELATED ACCOMMODATION	HANDOVERS
<b>Northern region</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	-	-	-
	4 bedrooms	-	3	-
	3 bedrooms	-	4	12
	2 bedrooms	-	-	48
	1 bedroom	-	-	43
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Sydney/South Eastern region</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	-	-	1
	4 bedrooms	-	-	-
	3 bedrooms	-	2	-
	2 bedrooms	-	-	47
	1 bedroom	-	-	43
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Western region</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	1	-	-
	4 bedrooms	10	4	-
	3 bedrooms	16	5	-
	2 bedrooms	12	-	19
	1 bedroom	-	-	28
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>All regions</b>	<b>Dwelling size</b>			
	5+ bedrooms	1	-	1
	4 bedrooms	10	7	-
	3 bedrooms	16	11	12
	2 bedrooms	12	-	114
	1 bedroom	-	-	114
	<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>241</b>