



Final Report

Indigenous lifeworlds, conditionality and housing outcomes

authored by

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ACRONYMS

AERC	Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited
AMOSAC	Aboriginal Movement for Outback Survival Aboriginal Corporation
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BAS	Building Asset Services, QDHPW (also known as Q-Build)
BRADAAG	Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group
CHO	Community Housing Officer (visiting or resident employee of a community-based housing organisation, including an ICHO or other Indigenous organisation that is managing the tenancy)
CERP	Council of Elders and Respected Persons
CLA	Community Living Area (former town camps)
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
DATSIMA	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, Queensland (now DATSIP)
DBMP	Disruptive Behaviour Management Policy (WADoH policy for ASB)
DHO	Departmental Housing Officer (visiting or resident employee of a SHA within a state/territory government)
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
DBMP	Disruptive Behaviour Management Policy
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
FRC	Families Responsibility Commission
FV	Family Violence
Ganyjuu	Ganyjuu Family Support Services
GIHO	Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation
HMA	Housing Management Agreement, WADoH
ICHO	Indigenous Community Housing Organisations
IEO	Indigenous Engagement Officer, housing officer employed in a liaison or engagement capacity, distinct from a DHO or CHO.
IMYRP	Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project
Jimaylya	Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre (QDHPW)
Julalikari	Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation
KENC	Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre (community organisation in Logan)

LCCH	Logan City Community Housing (community organisation proposed in Logan)
MEEDAC	Training and RJCP provider in WA Goldfields
Mununjali	Mununjali Aboriginal Housing and Development Company (Indigenous organisation in Logan)
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
NPARIH	National Partnership Agreement Remote Indigenous Housing
NTDoH	Northern Territory Department of Housing
PIASC	Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council
PICC	Palm Island Community Company
PHSO	Public Housing Safety Officer
QDATSIP	Queensland Department of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
QDHPW	Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works
QDoC	Queensland Department of Communities
RJCP	Remote Jobs and Communities Program
R&M	Repairs and Maintenance
RTA	Residential Tenancy Act
SHA	State Housing Authority
SOMIH	State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing
SRA	Shared Responsibility Agreement
TTAP	Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project
WADoH	Western Australia Department of Housing
WHSC	Woodridge Housing Service Centre (Logan Office of QDHPW)
YFS	Youth and Family Services (community organisation in Logan)

GLOSSARY

Aboriginal lifeworlds	How Aboriginal people see the world, the socially acquired shared cultural systems of meaning and everyday understanding including values and lifestyle.
Case management	An intensive response to the social problems faced by an individual tenant, typically requiring interagency coordination (e.g. disability, mental health, aged care, child wellbeing).
Community housing	Social housing that is managed by community-based organisations that have received a government subsidy. Their housing stock may be owned by others including government.
Conditionality	A form of contractualism in which state benefits are tied to demands that recipients conform to a range of behavioural requirements.
Head tenant	The signatory to the housing tenancy agreement.
Enablers	The social, cultural and economic capitals that might enable positive social change, and programs and strategies working to build Indigenous capabilities.
Enabling programs	Programs and strategies designed to build Indigenous individual and community capacity.
Policy outcome	Intended policy outcome, as stated in policy documentation.
Program logic	How behavioural changes are expected to happen in relation to a particular intervention and context.
Public housing	Social housing that a SHA owns, manages or leases.
Recognition space	A set of relationships and organisational arrangements which aim to support the development of positive policy outcomes by balancing the competing demands of individual tenants, the state, and intermediary organisations.
Residents	Community residents in a particular community, town or suburb.
Social housing	Rental housing that government or NGOs provide to assist people who are unable to access alternative suitable housing options.
Tenant	Long term resident of a particular household, living under the tenancy agreement signed by the head tenant, and contributing to the household costs.
Visitor	Short-term resident of a particular household.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indigenous housing occupies a complex policy environment in which policies and programs are in intermittent states of flux. As a result, the existing frameworks struggle to deliver sustainable outcomes. This study considers how conditionality in housing policy and management contributes to housing outcomes, and what modes of conditionality are most effective and in what contexts for Indigenous clients. It considers the most effective co-related household and governance arrangements to enable forms of reciprocity to occur. A key hypothesis tested is the critical necessity for a 'recognition space' involving mutual recognition of the moral relationships of duty and care between SHAs, intermediary organisations and tenants (see Figure 1 for a diagrammatic representation of the recognition space).

Completed over three years (2012–15), this project began with a literature review of housing policy in different jurisdictions spanning several decades to the present (Habibis et al. 2013). The research team then undertook five separate qualitative case studies across remote, regional and metropolitan locations: namely, Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory; the Goldfields region of Western Australia; and Mount Isa, Palm Island and Logan in Queensland.

The imposition of conditionalities into social housing policy mirrors earlier and broader ongoing reforms to welfare conditionality. Although these conditionalities continue to escalate, there is nothing novel in either applying conditions to funding, nor in using citizen entitlements as a mechanism to affect behavioural change. Thus, this study pragmatically accepts the presence of housing conditionality, and focusses on the types of conditionality applied to Indigenous housing and their relative effectiveness in achieving policy goals.

An early finding across all studies was the reduced role of ICHOs (Indigenous community housing organisations) over recent years and the continuing struggle for government funding by those remaining. ICHO capability development for self-governance of Indigenous housing has not been supported by government since the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) era. A range of other organisations are now involved in tenancy management, including community organisations and not-for-profit corporations. The bottom left apex of the recognition space framework (see above) was therefore changed from 'Indigenous governance' to 'intermediary organisations'.

Structure and methods

This Final Report is structured around seven chapters. Chapter 1 opens with the background to the study, including the methodology. Chapter 2 follows with a literature review that examines the housing policy environment and the contested fields of Indigenous disadvantage and social housing in the domain of Indigenous affairs. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the report brings together the findings from all of the case studies on the respective perspectives of tenants, governments and intermediary/community organisations. Chapters 6 and 7 offer a view through the lens of the recognition space towards the enablers as well as strategies that might bring about a more progressive agenda involving good practice principles and positive Indigenous housing outcomes.

The research team selected the case study sites after careful consideration of the defining social and cultural contexts of current Indigenous housing policy. The city of Logan was chosen as a metropolitan location with a significant Indigenous population living in public housing. Mt Isa and Tennant Creek were selected as regional centres, but with markedly different demographics and policy contexts. Palm Island offered a

large remote Indigenous community, with a recent take-up of home ownership. The WA Goldfields region was selected as a remote region with a hybrid field of social housing policy where a State Housing Authority (SHA) and an ICHO shared the tenancy management.

The research team had considerable pre-existing knowledge of and experience working in these locations with established relationships with the Aboriginal communities as well as government agencies and community organisations. Given the deep qualitative nature of the enquiry and the politics of Indigenous affairs, these prior personal relationships and track record were key to gaining access and for completing the task. The researchers conducted many informal stakeholder consultations and about 30 formal semi-structured interviews in each study location. The majority of interviews were held with Indigenous tenants.

The declining role of ICHOs, and of Indigenous organisations more broadly, was strongly evident during the study. Those ICHOs that remained were embattled, and most were reluctant to engage with the project for their various reasons pertaining to political survival.

Findings

The analysis of the tenant, government and Indigenous organisational perceptions showed that the three groups were often seeking different outcomes, leading to considerable misunderstanding and diversity of views. Although the project hypothesised the necessity of a recognition space, that did not mean it could always be found. There are entropies in Aboriginal lifeworlds, policy conditionalities and intermediary governance that powerfully hold the different groups back from engaging in discussion. There was, however, evidence of the recognition space occurring at times, with both corroding and sustaining influences.

Tenants and Departmental Housing Officers (DHOs) typically had divergent opinions on eligibility for social housing and tenant responsibilities, especially with the management of visitors. Similarly, tenants and DHOs viewed the systems of repairs and maintenance (R&M) differently, with tenants prioritising their own comfort and health and SHAs more focussed on cost efficiencies. Tenants had little understanding of their rights and responsibilities under their tenancy agreements or the formal notices sent to them. Furthermore, high rates of policy change and staff turnover in SHAs and intermediary organisations impeded opportunities for recognition spaces to form by limiting the development of trusting relationships.

In general, tenants emphasised the importance of family and kin relationships as well as cultural and historical connections to land. These relationships were highly significant forms of sociocultural capital, which were called on for support during times of need. The roles and responsibilities that tenants assumed under their tenancy agreements were occasionally at odds with these sociocultural responsibilities, especially when it came to accommodating visitors. By accommodating visitors, they themselves were entitled to visit others when needed, at times of financial or emotional stress, or during conflicts. Accommodating visitors did, at times result in anti-social behaviour (ASB), excessive alcohol consumption and damage to property. More commonly, however, visitations led to depleted finances, rental debts and household stress.

Many tenants were critical of the SHA and intermediary organisations for their tenancy management. Most tenants were renting old and poorly maintained housing. Recent investments for new construction in Indigenous housing (e.g. National Partnership Agreement Remote Indigenous Housing or NPARIH) have favoured certain remote

locations, which included only one of the five case study locations (Palm Island). While government programs have refurbished some stock particularly in remote areas (including the Community Living Areas (CLAs) in Tennant Creek), new housing has lagged behind. Many tenants were dissatisfied and stressed about the style of communication from housing officers, which they felt contravened their rights as citizens. The defunding of Indigenous housing organisations has had significant impacts on Indigenous tenants, leaving gaps in Indigenous governance in those communities, in understanding their rights, and their ability to organise any communal voice of protest.

DHOs were generally more positive about the appropriateness and successful operation of tightening tenancy rules. It was clear that DHOs have experienced an increased workload resulting from policy changes, particularly because of the reporting requirements under new ASB policies. While this had affected the amount of time they had available to communicate with tenants, most still found the time to take a personalised and individualised approach. It seemed that most DHOs approached their role believing that the tenants should follow the rules, and thus change their behaviour to fit the rules. They remained steadfast that rules did not need to change, but that the bad behaviour does. Without compromising the rules, the most effective DHOs found ways to be flexible and to support tenants in following them, including at times organising interagency case-management approaches.

Just as governments were critical of ASB and housing damage, these problems impacted on tenants too and some tenants responded pro-actively. They developed their own rules to alleviate the stress, including examples of strictly maintaining and exercising their authority as tenants. At times, they also called on trusted housing officers to help them enforce the rules. Their problem, then, was not with there being rules, but rather how the rules were developed and followed. The example of the staff housing program in Tennant Creek was illustrative, as the Indigenous organisation had developed a strict coercive conditionality in a collaborative way that was highly popular with tenants. Overall, it was clear that different tenants had different needs. Some of the more disadvantaged tenants were assisted in their tenancies through government support programs in some states and also a range of case-management approaches, particularly by intermediary agencies.

Among the case study sites, the study identified a diversity in responsibilities assumed by the different state housing authorities, Indigenous tenants and intermediary organisations. The findings of the study confirmed the hypothesis that the intersections in the recognition space between the three parties were critical to achieving positive housing outcomes for Indigenous people. The conclusions of the research are as follows:

- In all of the case studies, tenants have assumed a high level of responsibility, which appears to be higher than what has occurred historically. Variability laid with the relative responsibility assumed between intermediary organisations and SHAs.
- The most balanced recognition space occurs when there is the presence of effective intermediary organisations, especially functional Indigenous organisations.
- By contrast, the most unbalanced situations appear when one group or responsibility dominates, with little responsibility assumed by the other two. For a recognition space to form, there must obviously be at least two parties actively participating.
- It is possible to create an effective recognition space, with little involvement from an intermediary organisation, by investing the considerable costs of establishing a

local housing office of the SHA within the community. The report acknowledges the reluctance of government to carry this cost post-NPARIH, and their renewed interest in shifting responsibility to intermediary organisations, especially not-for-profit corporations.

- In their efforts to increase responsibility of individual tenants, governments have shifted responsibility from ICHOs to SHAs. An alternative strategy would have been to increase funding to ICHOs using incentive-based modalities that they then passed onto tenants.

The study looked specifically at good practice and principles for broader policy uptake. It identified the need for local implementation plans, based broadly on the existing consensus of achieving safe and secure housing for the tenants with the highest need. These plans could be developed using the principle of participatory planning and evaluation. This is where tenants, leaders and housing officers could come together to develop local policies for operationalising and implementing the conditionalities of housing policy, including local measures for assessing their effectiveness. The study identified a number of ideas that tenants generated themselves for how to improve tenancy management. Even the most disadvantaged tenants held views on how to manage other troubled tenants.

The potential for supporting good practice was also identified in the study in relation to strong women who were in leadership roles in their communities. The majority of head tenants were female and programs to support them and build their capacity were viewed as a constructive way to maintain tenancies and help stabilise families and their communities. The study also identified the following four main enablers of the recognition space.

- effective face-to-face communication
- stability and flexibility in frontline relationships
- at least some Indigenous staff in housing offices
- strong community governance structures.

From the observation and discussion of tenancy management styles across the study sites, the study has characterised two different types of conditionalities (negotiated and targeted) that are most likely to achieve positive housing outcomes. *Negotiated* conditionalities and *targeted* conditionalities are in contrast to the dominant coercive mode of conditionality in welfare and housing policy.

Negotiated conditionalities rely more on persuasion, assertive engagement and influence than on punitive coercion, as evidenced by the frontline workers in tenancy management. The realities faced by frontline workers were that many of punitive conditionalities were just not implementable. Evictions in the absence of alternatives can result in homelessness and goes contrary to their typical local ethos of helping the most disadvantaged tenants. It also carried the potential of political repercussion and, occasionally, threats of violence. Thus, in practice, frontline workers operate more in the realm of face-to-face persuasion, assertive engagement and influence than stand-off punitive coercion. The threat of eviction nonetheless appeared to be necessary to allow this negotiation to occur, and frontline housing officers would actively draw in the police and their more-senior departmental staff to reinforce it.

Targeted conditionalities, on the other hand, recognise the diversity in the tenant population and respond in a holistic way to the set of circumstances that define the tenant's housing needs. Since people respond differently to different theories of change based on their particular circumstances, it may well be that a different kind of conditionality might be better suited to bring about the desired changes for this group.

Three types of tenant households can be hypothetically considered to exist—*welfare dependent*, *stable* but lacking financial security, and the *successfully established* tenant who is unwilling to move on from social housing. As the study demonstrated, coercive conditionalities are at times required and do at times work, but having a choice between a range of other more negotiated, participatory and incentivised approaches is also important. A comprehensive approach that combines sanctions with preventative, supportive and rehabilitative strategies is most likely to be successful. To be effective in practice, housing officers need a repertoire of different conditionalities that they can flexibly apply to different tenants in different situations.

Policy implications

The Indigenous tenants in social and public housing live in highly variable physical, socioeconomic and cultural environments with typically few economic development opportunities. In general, these tenants and the housing officers working with them are overwhelmed by the demands placed upon them through their tenancy and governance obligations. The constraints of distance, coupled with vast differences in cultural outlooks, mean that these tenants and housing officers are hindered in how they are understood and support each other in meeting housing conditionalities.

The current study has confirmed the strength of cultural imperatives, but it has argued that this should not be interpreted as an abandonment of rules. The disruptions and damage of excessive visitation is obviously also problematic for tenants. They too look to the rules and to housing officers for support in managing visitation, especially where housing officers show some understanding of their lifeworlds. They clearly do not respond to a 'hands off' approach of opening breach notices in the post—in fact, it is questionable whether many even read such notices. Setting 'hard and fast' rules and administering them from a distance will more likely lead to misunderstanding and barriers to behavioural change. The recognition space requires some negotiation, in between polarised institutional positions.

The policy intent of social housing has traditionally focused on providing safe, secure and affordable housing for the most disadvantaged Indigenous tenants. There are also policies in place to assist and encourage Indigenous people to leave social housing, moving to either home ownership or private rental, including incentives for saving, sanctions and via an income cap. Further research is required to better understand the development pathways that Indigenous tenants take over their social housing career. Little attention is taken to those in the middle, as the stable and successful tenants are often left alone to occupy the same social houses, even passing the house between generations. Understanding how the most disadvantaged tenants transition to stable tenancies, and then how the most stable tenants transition out of social housing, can be understood in terms of development pathways. Tenants respond to a mixture of sanctions, rewards and support available to them at different times as their needs and fortunes shift.

Positive impacts can be achieved when tenants and housing officers enter a recognition space where conditionalities can be negotiated. Successful negotiations require not only clear rules and conditionalities, but also the flexibility to contextualise and adapt to them. Different types of conditionalities need to be applied to different types of tenants. Generally, the conditionalities operating through housing policies are mostly coercive, with a clear absence of rewards or incentives. There are incentives operating in the system, however these were largely occurring informally in practice, under the radar of government reporting. There is clear opportunity for the housing conditionalities to incorporate more incentives to reward people for their efforts.

There has been widespread defunding of ICHOs. Whatever their capability gaps, ICHOs were effective brokers in representing the rights of tenants and resisting the rise in housing conditionalities. SHAs have replaced many ICHOs by themselves taking on tenancy management, expanding their regional offices and their numbers of DHOs, including running expensive local housing offices in remote communities. Many frontline DHOs have established relationships with tenants and become effective tenancy managers. Some have begun to work in ways similar to the community housing officers that worked with ICHOs. As the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership agreements wind down, SHAs are once again looking to divest this responsibility to intermediary organisations. Unfortunately, this is happening due to the absence of a viable Indigenous housing sector. With tenders dominated by price, large not-for-profit community housing corporations look set to dominate.

The findings suggest that an efficiency-driven mainstream approach to tenancy management will not work for disadvantaged Indigenous clients. As documented through good practice in our case studies, the tenancy management that SHAs have come to operate during their tenure is a personalised and, at times, case management approach by DHOs; one whose merits can be maintained and further developed through better understandings of the dynamics of and multiple perspectives within the 'recognition space'. A different governance model might draw on the frontline experience of these DHOs, towards one where intermediary housing organisations are funded sufficiently and differently, including the flexibility to apply a range of different conditionalities.

As documented in the study, innovations in this recognition space are occurring across Australia. As this tends to occur under the radar of current policy framings, there is little learning or sharing between areas of responsibility. If policy and practice were better aligned, more improved and widespread outcomes would likely follow. Many of the conclusions in this report support the need for more devolution to intermediary organisations and frontline workers, in order to develop local implementation plans and mutually agreed measures. Treating Indigenous social housing only through the lens of deficit, governance failure and punitive conditionality will undermine the possibility for recognition spaces to form, and will thus ultimately prevent positive housing outcomes for Indigenous households.

1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project examines the interaction between the conditionalities of housing assistance (e.g. tenancy rules and duties) and Aboriginal lifeworlds (including kinship and social capital), and the effects of this dynamic on achieving sustainable housing outcomes.

This study is a timely contribution to national policy debate to reduce Indigenous disadvantage. From the 1970s through to the late 1990s, self-determination policies heralded land rights, migration to remote outstations, and decentralised governance. This led to a marked increase in the number of community-based Indigenous organisations, but often with insufficient government support and resources to build their capability. Government (both federal and state) tended to structurally disengage from Indigenous development (Dillon & Westbury 2007). During the 2000s decade, the decentralisation pendulum swung in the opposite direction with the Australian Government adopting instead a centralised interventionist approach, culminating in the Northern Territory Emergency Response from 2007. State control over remote Indigenous housing led to the decline in the number of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs), and an increase in direct tenancy management by State Housing Authorities (SHAs).

More recently, state and federal governments have begun to explore more developmental approaches between individuals, community organisations and external stakeholders (Empowered Communities 2015). A key consideration is the way housing assistance is used to foster certain social norms and associated behaviours. This 'conditionality' mirrors the general use of reciprocity arrangements or obligations in social policy and social housing provision. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also bring a range of understandings and expectations to their engagement with housing providers, which do not always align with external notions of their expected 'reciprocity'. Of critical importance is the role of Indigenous cultural and social structures, including kinship and cultural obligations. Whether these are in harmony or in conflict with conditions informing housing assistance can powerfully determine housing outcomes.

This study considers how conditionality in housing policy and management contributes to housing outcomes, and what modes of conditionality are most effective and in which contexts. It considers which corresponding household and governance arrangements work to enable forms of reciprocity to materialise. A key hypothesis to be tested is the critical necessity for a 'recognition space' involving mutual recognition of the moral relationships of duty and care between housing administrators, community leaders and tenants.

The study draws on five case studies (for which there are separate AHURI reports), staged over three years, covering remote, regional city and metropolitan settings, and involving data collection and analysis of four project variables (conditionalities, sociocultural capital, recognition spaces, and housing outcomes). The study identifies good practice and policy principles for forms of conditionality that promote positive housing outcomes.

1.2 Recognition space

1.2.1 Recognition space framework

There is increasing interest in the idea that post-colonial development in countries such as Australia is best understood through an relational field of practice, 'away from an emphasis on an "interface" between separately conceived domains, towards an approach that considers Indigenous and non-Indigenous social forms to be necessarily relational, and to occupy a single social-cultural field' (Hinkson & Smith 2005, p.158). Mono-cultural notions of development, where culture is idealised as static and isolated from outside influences, are not sufficient when in reality people are intertwined in a complex and dialectic relationship with the wider society (Smith 2008, p.157). This is a study of the agency of actors receiving and practising housing assistance in such a complex social and cultural space.

In Honneth's theory of recognition, cultural recognition and respect are fundamental human needs without which individuals are unable to become functioning members of society (1996, p.131). He argues that recognition occurs across three spheres, within the family sphere, where it concerns love; within the legal sphere, where it concerns respect; and in co-operative relationships, where it concerns esteem. Those who are not accorded these forms of recognition are unable to develop self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, which are pre-conditions for individual autonomy and self-actualisation. Honneth argues the achievement of social order and the legitimisation of a nation's institutions necessitates some fulfilment of a community's normative expectations because it is fundamental to their existence. The denial of these expectations can be psychologically and socially damaging because if it violates intuitive feelings of natural justice. This may be personally wounding, generating feelings of shame and anger and this, in turn, may lead to feelings of alienation and a rejection of the legitimacy of the social order.

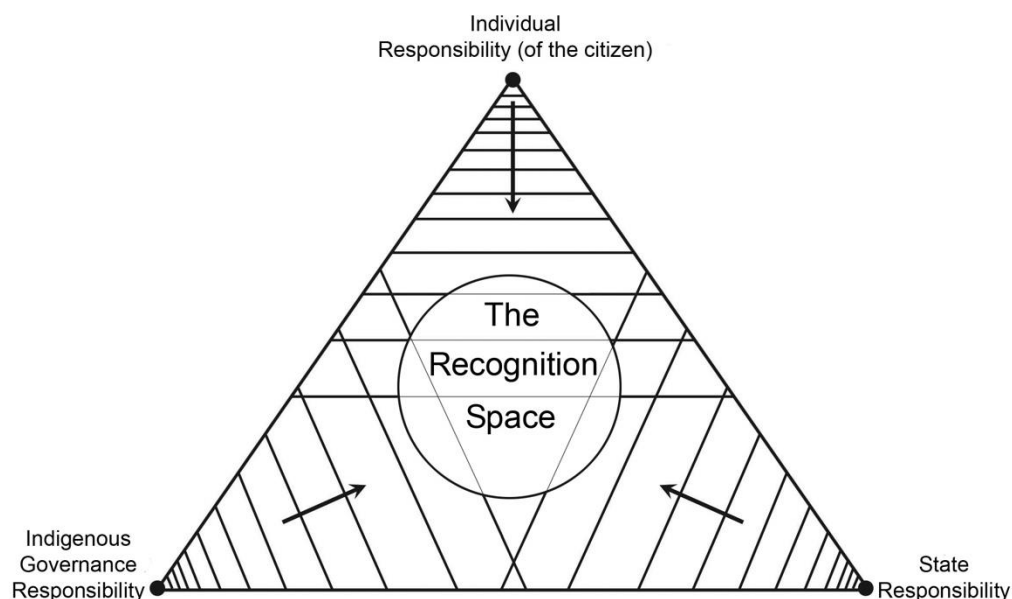
As developed in the Positioning Paper (Habibis et al. 2013, p.25), the project has hypothesised the existence of a 'recognition space' operating via the framework given below in Figure 1. The idea of a 'recognition space' reflects the potential for relations between actors to take place through consensual, negotiated relations of mutual cultural understanding and respect (Habibis et al. 2013, p.21). In the Australian Indigenous context, the notion of a recognition space was first proposed by Noel Pearson (1997) in the context of native title, then elaborated by Mantziaris and Martin (1999). Later Martin (2003, p.3) clarified his position that the recognition space was a useful way of describing a legal process that translates people's connections to country into rights under Australian law, rather than an 'articulation of life worlds'. We acknowledge the opposing views and shifts in debate amongst anthropologists around the appropriate application of the term 'recognition space' (Mantziaris & Martin 1999; Martin 2003; Weiner 2006) and also around the meaning of 'Intercultural' (Hinkson & Smith 2005; Sullivan 2005).¹ Similar to Martin, we have limited the notion of 'recognition space' to a particular context, in this case social housing. We have defined the 'recognition space' as a set of relationships and organisational arrangements between the competing demands of individual tenants, the state, and intermediary organisations. While Indigenous lifeworlds are highly relevant to these processes, it should be emphasised that the study does not seek to develop a universal model of intercultural relations, or to homogenise Indigenous peoples culture.

¹ We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the theoretical turns in the Australian anthropological literature.

The framework divides actors by their institutional position, rather than by their Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity. Indigenous people live and work across a range of institutional positions, as tenants, community leaders, employees of Indigenous organisations, and employees of NGOs and governments. Non-Indigenous people may also live as tenants in predominantly Indigenous households (when an Indigenous person is the head tenant), and work as employees for Indigenous organisations, NGOs and governments. The framework thus positions people into three different institutional loci, individual citizen, Indigenous governance and the state.

Indigenous affairs can be conceptualised as involving a tension between these three competing loci of responsibility and agency. Each tends to assert its demands politically, with often little consideration of the context and constraints faced by others. The notion of a recognition space existing between these three polarised political extremes refers to the hopeful creation of a productive framework for practice where Indigenous citizens, leaders, organisational employees, government officials, service providers and development workers can form the necessary understanding and trust to engage in a knowledge exchange that will allow them to identify and achieve shared policy goals. Through the recognition space, it should be possible to seek shared understandings between individual, community and stakeholder interests, and to negotiate processes, timelines and sustainable outcomes satisfactory to these competing interests. The recognition space is depicted as the circle in the centre of the triangle.

Figure 1: The recognition space—three intersecting continuums of responsibility



Source: AERC, University of Queensland

At each vertex of the triangle is one of the three loci of *responsibility*, Indigenous citizen, Indigenous governance, and the state. All of these institutional loci are involved with governance and regulation and are therefore strongly political. Individuals are located in lifeworlds, and compete for limited resources. Indigenous governances are located in the politics of Indigenous affairs, in competition with other organisations and in state relations. State responsibilities are located in the mainstream economy and globalisation, and in the rationing of public resources.

The notion of *responsibility* can be understood as the capability for individual choice and action ('acting responsibly') (Mulgan 2002, p.3). Responsibility is exercised at individual, group and/or institutional levels. The bottom right apex of *state responsibility* is exercised and transmitted across a large number of departments and differing levels of governments, and secondary agents implementing service delivery contracts including NGOs and private companies. Despite the prescriptions of hierarchy and contracts, the employees of these government departments and service providers still display considerable individual agency at intermediate and frontline levels. At the top vertex, *individual responsibility* is exercised at the level of the individual or citizen, but the capability for individual choice and action is heavily influenced by economic and socio-cultural factors operating at broader household, extended family, kin, language, land-holding and community groupings, what we describe in terms of their lifeworlds, as discussed further in Section 1.2.3 below.

In the recognition space framework (Figure 1), the three different vertices relate to each other via a system of *accountability* relationships. Accountability differs from responsibility in that responsibility and capability for choice and action can be exercised without reference to others. 'Accountability is always other directed, whereas responsibility is not'. Accountability, by definition occurs 'when one party, the holder of accountability, has the right to seek information about, to investigate and to scrutinise the actions of another party, the giver of accountability' (Mulgan 2002, p.3). Being the holder of accountability also 'implies the right to impose remedies and sanctions' (ibid.). For Indigenous people and organisations, this can translate as their non-participation or withdrawal. For the state, it typically involves the withdrawal of funds or services. Accountability is a situational concept in that 'who is accountable to whom and for what' needs to be specified in particular contexts.

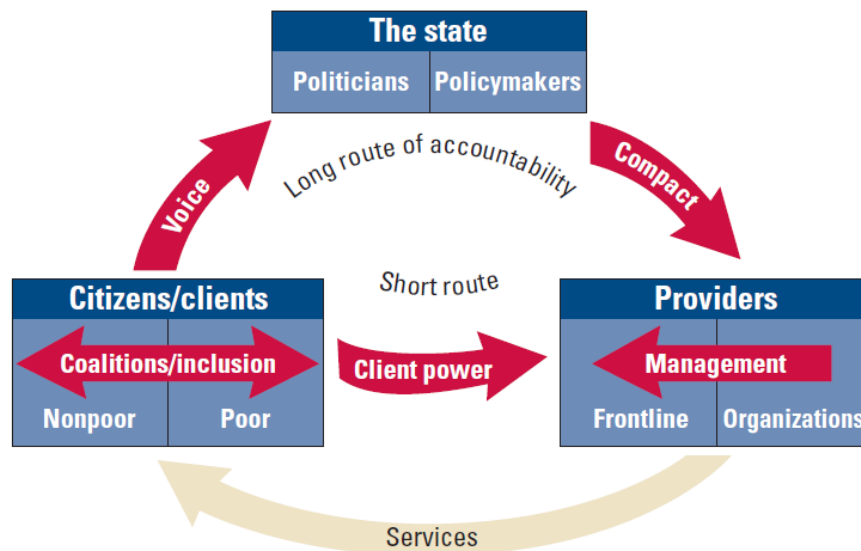
While commonly associated with top-down frameworks imposed by governments, accountability operates in multiple directions across a complex system of governance, in keeping with power relationships. Indigenous organisations, for example, deal with a range of upward accountability requirements to their government funding agencies, whilst also maintaining downward political accountability to their constituents. Accountability also operates horizontally, between agents operating at the same hierarchical level, which for Indigenous organisations typically involve their networks to other Indigenous organisations and NGOs. Indigenous organisations can also be effective in holding governments to account, through exercising rights frameworks to hold duty bearers to account, or through use of the media to shift mainstream public sentiment (Moran & Elvin 2009). Mapping accountabilities across the fluid system of Indigenous affairs is a complex undertaking, variable by place and fluid with time, and so best negotiated in practice.

Within the recognition space framework (Figure 1), the three internal arrowed axes are simplistic representations of how the different parties approach the recognition space. The parallel lines in the framework represent the compromise, learning and adaptation that occurs as different parties progressively enter the recognition space. Effective negotiations require a partial relaxing and releasing of positions that are more tightly held from the original starting points. It also involves learning about others entering the recognition space. So while policy can be tightly prescribed, frontline workers will find ways to adapt it to suit local circumstances. In addition, while obligations to culture and kin can be pervasive at home, Indigenous leaders can find new ways to broker across lifeworlds. Finally, Indigenous organisations can be persuaded from entrenched political positions, when they can see coalitions forming and genuine and productive collaborations beginning to emerge.

1.2.2 Indigenous governance

In highlighting the role of Indigenous governance, it is useful to consider the 2004 World Development Report (World Bank 2003) which also conceptualised power relationships in service delivery according to three different apices (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: World Bank framework for service provision and power relationships



The authors of the World Bank framework (Figure 2) derived it for low- and middle-income countries, which are very different contexts to Indigenous communities in the high-income country of Australia. Nonetheless, there are some similarities to the Recognition Space framework (Figure 1), with common apices for *the state* and *Individual/Citizen*. The major difference is the classification of *providers* rather than *Indigenous governance*. Under the Recognition Space framework, service providers under government agreements and contracts (including NGOs and private corporations) are considered as agents of *the state*. The reason for giving Indigenous Governance prominence in the Australian context is a function of its Indigenous history of colonisation, assimilation and other policies as well as ongoing claims among Indigenous groups for sovereignty.

Similar to Canada and the USA, Indigenous leaders in Australia have sought an Indigenous order of government, with separate representative structures and processes for Indigenous citizens. Indigenous leaders have at times expressed this through calls for a Treaty. As noted by Sanders, the strength of Indigenous peoples' political claims lies in 'being those of 'peoples' or 'nations' who pre-existed the encompassing society and who still, to some extent, form separate communities and political entities within that society' (2002, p.vii). The understanding of Indigenous governance is distinguishable in comparison to other service providers active in Indigenous affairs, namely government departments, local governments, NGOs and private companies, none of which fulfil a representative political function.

In the absence of untied inter-governmental fiscal transfers enjoyed by state and local governments, the funding of Indigenous organisations remains subject to the political wills of successive governments, leading to rising and falling fortunes and outcomes. Under self-determination policies introduced from the 1970s, responsibilities for governance and service delivery were decentralised to Indigenous organisations. This led to a marked increase in statutory authorities, local government councils, health services, native title corporations, housing associations and other community-based

organisations—what Rowse (2005, p.214) has described as the 'Indigenous Sector'. Since the 1990s, reforms to Indigenous affairs reflected broader upheavals in public sector management under the banner of new public management; a sprawling set of reforms that are today associated with a rise in executive power, centralisation of political and administrative authority, the outsourcing of service delivery to the market, and a systematic fragmentation of the governance system (Walker et al. 2012). Throughout this period, the Indigenous sector was subjected to a series of rolling punitive reforms, including the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), a loss of jurisdictional authority, a mainstreaming of Indigenous services, a rise in competitive contractualism of service delivery contracts and an increase in the number of private Indigenous businesses.

While these reforms have led to a marked decline in funding of Indigenous organisations and reduced recognition of their claims to representation, Indigenous organisations retain a potent political presence in Indigenous affairs (Moran et al. 2014b, pp.6, 10–11). Indigenous organisations have a number of distinct attributes compared to NGO or private sector alternatives because:

- They are one of the few structures of Indigenous self-governance in Australia to which powers, functions and resources can be devolved and thus offer an avenue for political accountability to Indigenous constituents (Sullivan 2010, p.2).
- They typically offer culturally appropriate services and employ Indigenous people (Hunt et al. 2008).
- The services that they provide are more likely to be accessed by Indigenous people (Ivers et al. 1997).
- There is considerable evidence to demonstrate that Indigenous organisations are at times more effective in achieving development outcomes (Moran 2006; Limerick 2009; Vos et al. 2010, p.7; Tsey et al. 2012; Kelaher et al. 2014).

Indigenous organisations typically fulfil a fundamentally intermediary role, between the state and Indigenous citizens and their lifeworlds. They direct their activities toward two distinct domains, the first being to the Indigenous domain and efforts towards self-determination; and the second being to the non-Indigenous domain and its mechanisms of administrative control.

Since the 1970s, Indigenous community organisations have operated as a form of community governance that parallels the activities of the state in their control and direction over Indigenous communities, including the allocation of community resources and influence on community relationships. Their strength lies as much in their connection with their communities as in their control over economic resources. Most have formed on the basis of shared history, kinship and tribal ties and a shared cultural universe. Their location within particular social and geographical locations enables them to enact their own local policies over the communities they serve. This has given rise to local arrangements for managing local Indigenous affairs established through Indigenous processes of governance.

ICHOs in particular have represented one of the most significant forms of Indigenous governance, acting as mediators and negotiators between the state and Indigenous peoples and influencing the direction of Indigenous social and economic development, especially in remote and rural locations. Whilst ostensibly designed to deliver housing, these organisations often came to fulfil a major role within a wide range of community services, especially in rural towns where they were often the only Indigenous organisation (Eringa et al. 2008, p.52).

Without pre-empting the findings, the study in fact observed a widespread decline of ICHOs, and a corresponding rise in other tenancy management organisations, including community (not specifically Indigenous) organisations and not-for-profit corporations. As the analysis unfolded, we decided to change this apex of the recognition space framework from 'Indigenous governance' to 'intermediary organisations'. We describe this conceptual shift fully in Chapter 5.

1.2.3 Indigenous lifeworlds

Managing Indigenous cultural difference is integral to social housing services in Australia, influencing many areas of the housing system, including housing design and location (Go-Sam 1997), homelessness programs (Birdsall-Jones et al. 2010) and tenancy management (Milligan et al. 2011). The question of culture is especially acute in the case of Indigenous households, where differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous norms and behaviours are significant, and cultural attachments are often critical to Indigenous identity (Memmott & Meltzer 2004). These differences influence Indigenous housing access and tenancy sustainment, making them important policy concerns in both urban and remote contexts.

The term Indigenous lifeworlds is used here to capture these differences. It refers to the socially acquired shared cultural systems of meaning and everyday understanding including values and lifestyles (Habermas 1984). The term captures how Indigenous peoples' responses to the demands of government is formed by their social and cultural knowledge and experience. To accept the existence of the lifeworld is to accept that individual behaviour arises from socio-cultural and economic determinants that shape and constrain their understandings of what is possible, socially desirable or correct.

The concept of the lifeworlds helps to explain why Indigenous people may resist efforts to enforce behavioural change when policies do not align with their own norms and values. These are not simply adapted and adjusted at will, but are rather engrained in lifestyles, habits and social connections. Culture underpins and transcends individual agency; it is as much as what people are (identity), as what they do (social action). While cultural values and beliefs are always changing and adjusting, they are partly embedded within the private Aboriginal domain where they are resistant to manipulation by outsiders.

Under the recognition space framework (Figure 1), Indigenous citizens are understood as subject to more than the interventions and policies of the state and those of Indigenous community organisations. They are also subject to Aboriginal social and cultural responsibilities within their lifeworlds. For many Indigenous people, their lived reality includes social and cultural rules and traditions based on kin- and clan-based networks and relations of authority. Examples include avoidance relationships where some individuals are required to avoid others in their family or clan, or expectations of mutual reciprocity in which caring and supporting kin is a critical social obligation. In Yolngu culture, for example, the term *Raypirri* refers to informal traditional institutions for handing down of ancestral knowledge through the elders. These institutions are 'the backbone' of some communities with culturally sanctioned authority over young people so that they know how they are expected to behave (Christie 2013, pp.3–8). Memmott and Meltzer (2004, pp.114–115) describe the social capital networks at Wadeye in the north-west of the Northern Territory, where the combination of Indigenous kinship, the system of social classes or divisions (subsections, sections, and so on or 'skins') and the land tenure system generate multiple informal and formal networks. Beyond the values of trust, unity and reciprocity that are commonly found across many societies, they also found an emphasis on respect, kindness and concern, motherly love, tough love, personal and community sharing, and belief in

self-capacity. The values emphasised in networks included taking ownership of problems, and homogeneity or levelling of constituent members.

There is an ongoing policy debate on the relative importance of preserving cultural traditions in the face of modernity and cultural change in Aboriginal societies. Depending on the ideological positions of different proponents in this debate, culture can be understood as a liability that has to change, or as a unique asset to be protected and preserved (Austin-Broos 2011). Some commentators have questioned the role of culture, arguing how welfare has distorted traditional Aboriginal notions of responsibility, creating a dependence on the state that limits the growth of positive social capital and the possibilities for sound governance (Pearson 1999; Sutton 2009). Some Indigenous leaders have also strongly expressed their concern about a decline in cultural values of personal responsibility, lending their support for policy attempts to address these distortions (Cape York Institute 2007). Another perspective is that Indigenous cultural norms are a valuable form of social capital (Altman 2001; Memmott et al. 2015) which can be activated as a vehicle for recovery, and for responsible and engaged citizenry (Hunter 2004). The assumption underpinning this research is that cultural differences are about more than 'lifestyle choices'. They cannot be changed easily nor without cost. Governments, communities and citizens need to understand the imperatives underpinning their respective demands, and work towards negotiated solutions.

1.3 Conditionality

1.3.1 Welfare conditionality and behavioural change

The term 'conditionality' has become commonplace both internationally and nationally, in the framing of government policies around welfare provisions. With its core meaning being 'a situation where the occurrence of one factor depends on some other factor', conditionality has developed specific meanings in housing policy and practice. In this study, conditionality is defined as a 'form of contractualism in which state benefits are tied to demands that recipients conform to a range of behavioural requirements'. From the beginning of our research, however, we expected that conditionality was a concept that would not be familiar to people in frontline practice or to Indigenous social housing tenants. To counter this potential problem, we adopted a working definition for discussion with different stakeholders in the case study locations. It seemed appropriate to talk about social housing conditionality in terms of 'the rules', a notion which everyone could readily understand. As our studies demonstrated, all tenancy managers were actively involved in applying 'the rules' and each tenant was aware that they were subject to rules as result of them being able to live in a house that they did not own. With this as a clear starting point in our interviews, discussions about the nuances of power relationships between rule-makers and social housing tenants were able to flow more effectively. The following discussion of the literature on different types of conditionality in different contexts provides a deeper conceptual basis for the findings of this report.

Under welfare reforms operating in developed countries, the provision of welfare assistance is increasingly conditional on claimants or applicants fulfilling certain behavioural obligations. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in the United Kingdom (UK) has funded a major collaboration across six universities to investigate the sanctions, support and behavioural change associated with welfare conditionality. In 2013 they defined welfare conditionality in terms of linking welfare rights to 'responsible' behaviour.

A principle of conditionality holds that access to certain basic, publicly provided, welfare benefits and services should be dependent on an individual

first agreeing to meet particular obligations or patterns of behaviour. Those in favour of welfare conditionality believe that individuals who refuse to behave in a responsible manner (e.g. engage in job search activities, ensure their children attend school), or who continue to behave irresponsibly (e.g. engage in anti-social behaviour, refuse to accept help in tackling the problems they may face) should have their rights to support reduced or removed.²

Although welfare had long been conditional on unemployment being involuntary and on people working when offered a job, welfare conditionality targeted at achieving behavioural change is a relative new phenomenon, with its origins in the UK (JRF 2014, p.3). Welfare payments had been previously considered as citizen entitlements, and thus beyond the conditions typically attached to public finance instruments such as grants, contracts and loans. It is therefore useful to consider welfare conditionality relative to the conditions that are usually attached to public finance modalities for the purpose of achieving behavioural and broader social change. According to the ESRC collaboration, interventions that seek to shift people's behaviour can be considered through four main theories of change.³

1. *Coercion*, through a system of sanctions and punishments which can be established to discourage particular kinds of behaviour (e.g. the criminal justice and penal system).
2. *Persuasion*, imposing influence and assertive engagement to encourage people to make particular choices.
3. *Deliberative enablement*, decision-making and reflection processes to permit more reasoned, organic, culturally appropriate and participatory choices and behaviours.
4. *Incentives*, (financial or non-financial) to encourage people to act in certain ways (e.g. to volunteer in their local community or to desist from particular kinds of anti-social behaviour).

Other methods used less frequently include,

- applying '*nudge*' techniques to alter the 'choice architecture' within which people make decisions, to steer them towards better ones (e.g. putting fruit at eye level in cafeterias rather than unhealthy snacks) or
- *benchmarking* people's own choices against those of their peers that can help encourage people to behave in line with certain social norms (e.g. lowering their energy consumption or paying their taxes).

The theory of change behind welfare conditionality typically involves a particular type of *coercive* conditionality, involving the threat of restricting or removing a citizen's welfare entitlement.

The manipulation of welfare entitlements into conditional funding modalities is not a new concept in Indigenous affairs. There are two clear precedents. The first of these functioned through legislated citizen entitlements to social security, through the now defunct Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, which notionally converted unemployment benefits to grants for Indigenous organisations in order to employ local residents to work on community development projects. The second of these still functions through citizen entitlement to health care through Medicare rebates, affording Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

² <http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/about-our-research/what-is-welfare-conditionality>

³ <http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/2014/05/understanding-behaviour-change-and-the-role-of-conditionality>

untied core governance funding (Moran et al. 2014b). The funding modalities deployed in both of these examples involved *deliberative* and *persuasive* conditionalities, with a range of conditions around community benefit and democratic governance. Although these early conditionalities were not initially *coercive*, they did still apply a type of conditionality onto welfare entitlements.

1.3.2 Conditionality in Indigenous affairs

The principle of mutual responsibility travelled to Australia in the late 1990s from the 'third way' platform of the Blair government in Britain. Its translation to Indigenous affairs followed Noel Pearson's seminal treatise 'Our Right to Take Responsibility' and policy shifts away from the corrosive effects of passive welfare (Pearson 1999). Mutual responsibility resonated with the Australian public's increasing conviction of 'Aboriginal irresponsibility with well-intentioned public funds' (Sullivan 2011, p.39).

The rise of welfare conditionalities can be traced to closure of ATSIC in 2004, which was followed by a radical shift in Indigenous policy from self-determination to normalisation (Sanders 2014, p.6). This shift in policy entailed expectations of adherence to mainstream behavioural norms by welfare recipients, especially in areas such as child protection, school attendance, employment activity, substance use and meeting tenancy obligations. A series of policy initiatives were introduced that provided 'carrot and stick' approaches to engendering behavioural change. The extent to which Indigenous individuals, communities and stakeholder groups have had opportunities to shape or influence the design of these interventions was very limited.

One of the first policy instruments to emerge under this new policy framework was Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs). SRAs were a written agreement facilitated by the Australian Government, between an Indigenous community and a number of government departments and other stakeholders. The policy intent was to cut through the 'red tape' associated with government funding, thus enabling the success of community programs and projects. They set out the responsibilities of the parties involved, the outcomes to be achieved and milestones for measuring progress. Funding was provided for initiatives addressing matters such as nutrition, community safety, business support and skills development. In some cases, housing funding was part of the negotiations. In return, community residents were required to commit to a 'quid pro quo'. These mostly involved behaviour change including issues such as sending their children to school, caring for their homes, improving personal hygiene, controlling substance misuse and volunteering in governance. By mid-2006, 153 SRAs had been signed with 123 communities (Sullivan 2011, p.39).

SRAs shared some clear similarities with the recognition space framework of the current study, with responsibilities divided into three different categories, (1) government; (2) families and individuals; and (3) the community. The last of these three categories was the most ambiguous. SRAs emphasised a direct relationship with individuals, tending to bypass representative Indigenous organisations. Nonetheless, when someone was required to commit to the SRA responsibilities for the community, the chairperson of the local Indigenous council or other representative organisation typically signed the agreement (Wright & Elvin 2011). SRAs slowly petered out with the change in Australian Government from 2007.

Following Noel Pearson's calls for reforms to encourage positive behavioural change and counter the negative effects of 'passive welfare', the Cape York Institute laid out its 'Welfare Reform Project' in four Indigenous communities in Cape York in 2007. It adopted 'capabilities' approach from the development economics of Amartya Sen, with 'rational incentives', as well as laws, so that individuals and families would be encouraged to ascend a 'staircase of opportunity' through their own 'choice' (Cape

York Institute 2007, p.35). Low-cost ('or even no cost') 'welfare housing' was also seen as part of 'passive welfare', which would have to be reformed through 'home ownership' or at least through 'normalised' tenancies (ibid, p.108).

Under the Cape York Welfare Reform Project, the Family Responsibility Commission (FRC) was established as a statutory authority with funding from Queensland and Australian governments, presided over by a Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. Local commissioners are appointed from the participating communities. The FRC has the authority to intervene in situations where welfare recipients fail to meet obligations in the areas of school attendance, child safety, tenancy and substance abuse. Cases can be referred by other agencies or clients can self-refer. The FRC will, in the first instance, provide support to assist clients to change behaviour, and if this is unsuccessful, the commissioners can impose orders that include case management and income management (Sanders 2014, pp.8–9). The FRC aims to impose conditionality using culturally sensitive and community based approaches that change community norms as well as individual behaviours.⁴

The Australian Government's push for conditionalities in welfare reform hardened further with 'income management' imposed across 73 communities in the Northern Territory as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, otherwise known as the Intervention (for background see Habibis et al. 2013, p.31). All welfare recipients, including aged pensioners, had half their income quarantined for food, rent, clothing and other household needs. The purchase of tobacco, pornography, alcohol and participating in gambling was prohibited. Although only one of 37 measures that made up the Intervention, income management was the measure with the most immediate impact on individuals and the most widely known (Yu et al. 2008). In 2010, it was extended to non-Indigenous welfare recipients in the Northern Territory.

A 2010–14 review found widely varying perceptions on the success of income management, with some families describing the benefits to household food supply and reduced harassment (especially women), while others lamented its restrictions and shared their frustrations. Benefits were higher for those who had voluntarily opted in. Whatever the benefits, sections of those interviewed begrudged their 'strong sense of having been treated unfairly and being disempowered'. Significantly, the review could not prove that income management was 'resulting in widespread behaviour change, either with respect to building an ability to effectively manage money or in building 'socially responsible behaviour', beyond the direct impact of limiting the amount that can be spent on some items'. It went on to conclude that 'early indications are that income management operates more as a control or protective mechanism than as an intervention that increases capabilities' (Bray et al. 2014, pp.307–308). Despite these mixed results, the Australian Government continued its expansion beyond Indigenous communities, rolling out trials to a number of depressed regional centres across Australia, including both major urban and regional centres. In Bankston, Shepparton, Logan, Playford and Rockhampton, more than 80 per cent of participants were non-Indigenous.

The Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) was an ambitious reform introduced in 2012 to replace the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) and to deliver an integrated employment service in remote Indigenous communities. Since its launch, the RJCP experienced ongoing reform, culminating in its rebranding in mid-2015 as the Community Development Program. Under its 'work for the dole' scheme, social security recipients in remote Indigenous communities are subject to more stringent conditionality than operates in the rest of the country. This

⁴ <http://www.frcq.org.au/index.php?q=content/family-responsibilities-commission>

includes requirements to undertake 25 hours of work-like activity over five days per week or lose their income.

Since 2009, the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) has been applied to welfare recipients in the Northern Territory (NT), which suspends payments to parents or carers for a child's non-enrolment in school or for poor attendance. In 2013, SEAM was extended to all remote communities across Australia. Funding was sourced from the RJCP to employ 'work for the dole' school attendance officers. In the NT, 400 truancy officers were employed to case-manage problematic families whose children did not attend school. The NT Government has also introduced fines for parents whose children did not attend school.

In 2013, the Australian Government commissioned mining magnate Andrew (Twiggy) Forrest to explore 'seismic, not incremental, change' to socioeconomic development opportunities in remote communities. Forrest took conditionality of social housing assistance to a new high. He concluded that social housing brings a perverse incentive for people to remain in remote communities, rather than travel for employment. Forrest looked to how social housing might instead become an incentive, including allocation of social housing as relocation support to places of employment, with an entry point into home ownership after one year. Controversially, he also questioned current allocation policies for social housing to those deemed to have the highest need, recommending instead that allocations be prioritised to families in employment and to those meeting their social obligations, such as sending their kids to school (Forrest 2014, pp.6, 44). The Review recommended for welfare payments to be paid via a cashless smartcard that would be mandatory for all unemployed people, carers, single parents and people with disability, excluding veterans and aged pensioners.⁵

Although placing conditions on welfare payments has increased over time, there is nothing novel in either applying conditions to public finance modalities, nor in using citizen entitlements as a mechanism to affect behavioural change. This study does not problematise either the imposition of conditionality or the manipulation of citizen entitlements. Rather, it is concerned with the types of conditionality applied to citizen entitlements and their relative effectiveness in terms of achieving policy goals.

1.3.3 Research questions

This AHURI Multi-Year Research Project examines the three-way interaction between, (1) conditionalities of housing assistance provided by the state (e.g. tenancy rules and duties); (2) Indigenous governance through local forms of decision-making and representative housing organisations; and (3) individual citizens and their lifeworlds (including kinship and social capital). It asks how policy and practice can change towards improved housing outcomes, by examining the agency of housing tenants, local organisational employees and government frontline workers.

This study considers how conditionality in housing policy and management contributes to housing outcomes, and what modes of conditionality are most effective and in which contexts. It considers what corresponding household and governance arrangements work to enable forms of reciprocity to materialise. A key hypothesis to be tested is the critical necessity for a 'recognition space' involving mutual recognition of the moral relationships of duty and care between SHAs, intermediary organisations and tenants.

⁵ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/trial-communities-back-no-grog-cashless-welfare-cards/story-fn9hm1pm-1227395552860>

The project addressed the following four research questions generated at the start of the research. The first question problematised the effectiveness of housing conditionalities as a policy,

1. What are the characteristics of different types of housing conditionality and how effective are they in achieving positive housing outcomes for Indigenous people?

The second hypothesised the notion of a recognition space, as a necessary precondition for housing conditionalities to operate effectively.

2. How does the intersection between these types of housing conditionalities, and between Indigenous lifeworlds and Indigenous governance arrangements, influence housing outcomes for Indigenous people?

The third question looked to how to enable this recognition space.

3. Are there identifiable types of conditionality which enable formation of a recognition space that promotes shared understanding of the different values and constraints of government workers, Indigenous tenants, housing managers and community leaders? What are the conditions of its emergence, and to what extent does it support improvements in Aboriginal housing?

The fourth question looked specifically at generalisation and policy uptake.

4. What identifiable good practice and policy principles can be elicited from this analysis that have specific use in particular contexts or are useful across all contexts?

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Overview

This AHURI Indigenous Multi-Year Research Project (IMYRP) was completed over a 3.5-year period from September 2012 to March 2016. A Positioning Paper and literature review was completed in the first year, documented in AHURI Final Report No. 212, *Housing Conditionality, Indigenous Lifeworlds, and Policy Outcomes* (Habibis et al. 2013). The second year of the project focussed on fieldwork, as documented in AHURI report *Case Study Rationale and Location Scoping Study* (Moran et al. 2014a) and two unpublished internal progress reports. The third year was devoted to reporting, with five separate case study reports (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016; Memmott & Nash 2016; Nash & Memmott 2016; Nash 2016; Fantin 2016) and then this Final Report. The final six months were directed to dissemination.

The literature review in the Positioning Paper (Habibis et al. 2013) situated the study and developed key concepts by constructing institutional histories through five housing policy initiatives:

1. The Aboriginal self-help building projects that took place in the Darling River Basin, New South Wales, especially Wilcannia and Bourke, in the 1970s.
2. The arrangements for housing management in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities administered as Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) lands in the 1990s.
3. The QDHPW's tenancy management program at Mt Isa in the mid-2000s.
4. Attempts to improve Aboriginal housing stock in Katherine, in the Northern Territory, in the 1990s.
5. The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program in the Northern Territory from 2007 to 2012.

The IMYRP consists of five case studies, staged over three years, covering remote, regional city and metropolitan settings. The rationale for case study selection was based on achieving a reasonable span across different types of settlements and housing policy fields (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Case study selection

Principal location	Logan	Mt Isa	Tennant Creek	Palm Island	Goldfields region
Social housing type	Public, Community	Public, Community	Public, Community	Community, Homeowner	Public, Community
Settlement type	Metropolitan	Regional	Regional	Remote	Regional Remote
Case study leader	Daphne Nash	Paul Memmott	Daphne Nash	Shaneen Fantin	Christina Birdsall-Jones

In addition to the case study leaders, Mark Moran played a role in the Palm Island research and assumed responsibility as project manager and lead for the Final Report. The team also included Rhonda Phillips and Daphne Habibis as advisors.

The city of Logan was the one metropolitan location chosen for study. The region has a significant Indigenous Australian population who were living in social housing. As one of the trial sites for Place-based Income Management (PBIM), Logan offered the possibility of examining how the most disadvantaged tenants were coping with a heightened level of income-related conditionality. Mt Isa and Tennant Creek were selected as regional centres with contrasting characteristics including total population, relative size of Indigenous population and state/territory jurisdictions. Palm Island offered a particularly good opportunity to study the up-take and operation of home ownership by Indigenous people. The WA Goldfields region was selected on the basis of its research potential as a remote region with a hybrid field of housing policy where a SHA and an ICHO shared the social housing tenancy management.

In addition, the research team had considerable knowledge and experience of working in these locations, and had established relationships with the Aboriginal community as well as government agencies and community organisations involved in social housing. Given the deep qualitative nature of the enquiry and the politics of Indigenous affairs, the prior personal relationships and track record of the researchers were key to gaining access.

Field research involved several trips to each of the relevant regions and were completed over the period from May 2013 to February 2015. Typically, field trips were carried out in blocks of a few days' duration because of the need to travel long distances to the regional and remote locations. For Logan, however, the work was done in multiple day trips as the city was in close proximity to the researcher's home base in Brisbane. Field investigations generally were of two kinds, initial or scoping discussions and, where appropriate, in-depth interviews.

Table 2: Formal in-depth interviews with tenants and housing officers

	Tenants	DHOs/SHA managers	CHOs/ frontline workers in community orgs	Total
WA Goldfields	14 ⁶	14		28
Tennant Creek	26	4	3	33
Mt Isa	24	6		30
Palm Island	18	4		22
Logan	18	3	6	27

All in-depth interviews (Table 2) were guided by a survey instrument comprising of 21 questions (Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire and as such the interview time varied; the in-depth interviews usually took between 40 and 60 minutes to complete. The objective was to interview approximately 30 people in each case location, including Indigenous social housing tenants, government departmental housing officers (DHOs) and housing officers, and frontline workers from Indigenous and community organisations (CHOs).

Since the research was primarily qualitative, it was important for the researchers to engage carefully and intensively over an extended period. In all of the case study locations, the team personally undertook the majority of interviews with tenants, which reflected their relatively large numbers compared to housing officers. Tenants' perspectives varied greatly within and between sites, and those interviewed were not a representative sample of all Indigenous social housing tenants in a particular community. We employed a key informant approach, seeking out informants who were in a position to understand their situation and with some knowledge of others. We made contact with interviewees through members of the Indigenous community known to us, or through introductions by local agencies. We also used the 'snowballing' method, where an interviewee would suggest other possible interviewees. Most tenants were interviewed in their homes and each tenant received a payment of \$30.00. In the case of government and intermediary organisations, we generally made formal approaches. Interviews mostly took place in the interviewee's workplace and the interviewees were not paid. All formal tenant and stakeholder interviewees signed a consent form which was also witnessed. In accordance with UQ ethical approval of the IMYRP study, the interviewees gave their consent but are not identified in this report.

In all of the case study regions, we consulted continually with stakeholders from the beginning to the end of the research (Table 3). In each of the case study regions the researchers at times convened and participated in forums with government and community where the project was outlined and preliminary findings were shared and feedback obtained. Locations of forums included, Brisbane, Canberra, Kalgoorlie, Logan, Palm Island, Leonora and Mt Isa. Individual consultations were made by phone, email and face-to-face informal interviews. Stakeholders were key and often senior representatives of government agencies and Indigenous and community organisations, and as such were extremely valuable sources of advice and information that supplemented the interviews. Non-tenant residents were consulted on Palm Island mainly to discuss the progress of home ownership on the Island that was a focus of the study. In the other case study locations there were no residents consulted who were involved in buying their own home at the time of the research.

⁶ Plus 12 informal interviews with tenants.

Local, state and federal government agencies were contacted as well as Indigenous and community organisations involved in housing and tenancy management issues.

Table 3: Informal discussions with stakeholders

	Non-tenant resident	Government (all levels)	Community organisation
WA Goldfields	n.a.	4	3
Tennant Creek	n.a.	9	10
Mt Isa	n.a.	8	2
Palm Island	5	18	2
Logan	n.a.	3	12

1.4.2 Site specific characteristics

There are some site-specific characteristics that impacted in significant ways on the research process. In the early phases of the research there were certain expectations that could not be fully realised, just as the sites offered particular and sometimes unexpected opportunities that were further examined in the research.

The team encountered some difficulties finding the ideal number of participants in the three categories of responsibilities in some locations. In Logan, contact with tenants was relatively difficult, partly due to the spread of social housing tenants across large number of properties in a vast urban region. The reduced role of ICHOs in Logan over recent years made contact with the remaining organisations difficult. A similar situation existed in the WA Goldfields where the Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation (GIHO) was struggling to maintain its funding from the Western Australia Department of Housing (WADoH) for housing-related contracts in certain communities. Similarly, in Tennant Creek, the ICHO with long-term housing involvement was playing a less dominant role. Furthermore, it seemed that there was considerable reluctance by ICHOs to be involved in the research, due to a range of historical factors (see Section 6.2.3).

In Logan, the researcher was able to work with only one of the three ICHOs operating in Logan. Initial discussions were held with the other two ICHOs but both declined to be involved further. Other difficulties were encountered in identifying tenants on income management, which was initially used as a recruitment strategy for the Logan case study. After some time, when only a couple of tenants with managed incomes were able to be contacted, the recruitment strategy in Logan changed to social housing tenants more broadly.

The researchers in the WA case study had some difficulties in achieving interviews with housing officers. WADoH and GIHO, who were involved in tenancy management, were based in Kalgoorlie and not in the smaller towns in the WA Goldfields. As there were no resident housing officers in the WA study area, there were comparatively fewer opportunities to interview housing officers compared to tenants. On the other hand, the research took advantage of multiple communities of Aboriginal social housing tenants and tested the results across a range of Aboriginal communities in the field locations. By employing this approach, a stronger picture of social housing conditionalities in remote Aboriginal WA was achieved.

In Mt Isa and Tennant Creek, many of the Indigenous tenant participants had limited English language literacy and little familiarity with some of the issues raised in the questionnaires. Many were inexperienced as head tenants in mainstream social housing mainly because they have been living previously in remote communities

where mainstream housing conditionalities were not strongly enforced. A particular opportunity, however, existed in both locations to interview transitional housing tenants, including post- and pre-release prisoners in Tennant Creek and clients of homeless centres in Mt Isa. By contrast, on Palm Island, most of the tenants interviewed were English literate with a history of prior employment. Access at Palm Island, however, was at times limited due to a historical legacy of prior dealings with outsiders, including researchers.

Given their level of disadvantage, we anticipated that Indigenous tenants might be subject to special conditions to help them keep their tenancies, through formal provisions or informal tenancy management practices. The researchers explored the differences in tenancy agreements used by SHAs and those of ICHOs and non-government organisations to identify any special rules for Indigenous clients. Furthermore, by interviewing housing officers about their approach to tenancy rules, the researchers were able to explore any particular disparities in the way frontline workers dealt with Indigenous tenants compared to non-Indigenous tenants.

In all of the case study locations, the researchers relied on their observations beyond the interview process. It was important to be aware of the tenants' disadvantage, particularly as many of the participants were unemployed and living with disabilities or caring for a disabled family member, as well as having multiple and complex mental and physical health needs. It was also important for the researchers to be sensitive at all times to these issues and act appropriately when dealing in a research context with some of the most disadvantaged Indigenous Australians.

2 HOUSING POLICY CONTEXT

Conditionality is integral to social housing, and to any tenancy relationship. The codification of lessee and lessor rights and responsibilities, including those of social housing tenants, is formalised in residential tenancies legislation across Australia. Social housing tenancies however, are subject to additional and increasing conditionality. Over the past decade, Indigenous social housing tenants especially have experienced increased conditionality and changes in the nature of conditionality due to radical reforms in Indigenous housing policy and service delivery.

This study is concerned with the implications of this situation for Indigenous tenant and community outcomes and tenant relationships with social housing providers, primarily the state and its agents. This chapter sets the housing policy context for the study. It begins by establishing the relative housing disadvantage experienced by Indigenous households and the housing assistance they receive. An overview of relevant national and state housing policy is then provided, followed by a brief analysis of other Indigenous affairs policy interventions that impose conditionality with a housing component. Finally, an introduction to the case study sites is provided.

Social housing is rental housing that government or NGOs provide to assist people who are unable to access alternative suitable housing options. There are four different types of social housing.

1. *Public housing*, dwellings that SHAs own (or lease) or manage.
2. *State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)*, dwellings that SHAs own and manage that are allocated only to Indigenous households.
3. *Community housing*, dwellings managed by community-based organisations that have received a subsidy from government. Their housing stock may be owned by others including government.
4. *Indigenous community housing*, dwellings owned or leased and managed by ICHOs and community councils in major cities, regional and remote areas. (AIHW 2015, p.27).

2.1 Indigenous housing policy framework

2.1.1 Housing disadvantage and assistance

Improving housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians is a critical public policy concern due to the huge discrepancy in their housing experience compared to the general population. Indigenous Australians are ten times more likely to be homeless (AIHW 2014a, p.7) and approximately half as likely to be home owners and twice as likely to be renters (AIHW 2014b, p.5). Poor housing conditions and crowding are also prevalent (SCRGSP 2015b, pp.12–13; SCRGSP 2015a).

Importantly for this study, over a third of the Indigenous population is reliant on social housing and the success of that housing is therefore a prime determinant of their health, wellbeing and opportunities for social and economic inclusion. The private rental market houses another quarter of Indigenous people, meaning that in total, 60 per cent of Indigenous households are renters and subject to tenancy conditionality. In remote discrete communities, residents are almost wholly dependent on social housing because home ownership and private rental markets are largely non-existent (AIHW 2014b, p.5).

Due to their socio-economic disadvantage, Indigenous households are highly reliant on publicly funded housing assistance, and therefore subject to the conditionality attached to government programs. In June 2013, Indigenous households were more than twice as likely as other households to have received support from at least one of

the major housing assistance programs. Between 43 per cent and 46 per cent of Indigenous households were estimated to have received such support, compared with 18 per cent of other households (SCRGSP 2015b; SCRGSP 2015a).

A vast majority of housing assistance to Indigenous households, especially in urban areas, is now provided through mainstream housing assistance programs. Targeted Indigenous-specific housing programs are now rare in urban areas, and only play a prominent role in remote communities where they are predominantly delivered by State Housing Authorities (SHAs). *Public housing* (managed by SHAs) is the largest *social housing* provider and this is growing while the role of *community housing* (managed by community organisations) is diminishing.⁷

Other assistance programs are also important for Indigenous people. A significant proportion of Indigenous households live in private rental and due, to their low-incomes, attract a high proportion of rent assistance from the Australian Government. In 2012–13, 664 new home loans were approved through the Indigenous Home Ownership Program, with the average value of the new loan being around \$260 000 (AIHW 2014, p.vi).

The high level of recourse to housing assistance reflects the extreme housing disadvantage within the Indigenous population. It also reflects the success of national housing policies aimed at improving access to mainstream housing programs. Despite the high usage of housing assistance programs, however, the available evidence suggests that this assistance ameliorates but fails to adequately address Indigenous housing disadvantage. Areas of continuing concern include:

- Indigenous social housing tenants report lower levels of satisfaction than non-Indigenous social housing tenants (AIHW 2013, pp.8,16).
- Homelessness remains far more prevalent within the Indigenous community and comprised 22 per cent of clients of specialist homelessness services in 2011 (AIHW 2014a, p.vi).
- Indigenous social housing tenants experience extremely high levels of tenancy breaches (Jones et al. 2014, p.63).
- Housing condition is poorer for Indigenous households in social housing (AIHW 2013, p.15).
- Higher prevalence of household crowding (AIHW 2014b, p.vi).
- Continuing low rates of Indigenous home ownership (ibid).
- Indigenous private renters more likely to face affordability problems (SCRGSP 2015b; SCRGSP 2015a).

The situation varies considerably between jurisdictions and between urban, regional and remote locations. In part this is due to differences in demographic, historical, cultural and economic factors. However, it also reflects the differences in housing policy and practice across states and territories.

⁷ In 2013, Indigenous households were six times as likely as other Australian households to live in social housing (rates of 31% and 5%, respectively). Public housing was the largest provider of social housing to Indigenous households (30 800 or 14% of Indigenous households). Indigenous community housing was the second largest provider (8% of Indigenous households). Available data suggest that almost one in five (18%) of new allocations to social housing in 2012–13 were to Indigenous households (AIHW 2014b, p.vi).

2.1.2 National Indigenous housing policy

This section will briefly review Indigenous housing policy through the lens of conditionality, and will then explore the connections between this and other areas of Indigenous policy. Improving Indigenous housing outcomes has been an increasingly prominent goal of national housing policy since the 1970s. This goal has been especially at the policy forefront since the demise of the ATSIC in 2004 and the subsequent re-structuring of national housing agreements in 2008–09. Intended housing outcomes are reflected in the national policy framework formed by the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).

The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) is the overarching, comprehensive national housing and homelessness policy device. It was introduced in 2009 and absorbed the previous Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), and provides for additional funding to states under national partnership programs in order to meet specific needs. A key feature of the NAHA was that it provides for increased flexibility for states and territories to determine the allocation of housing resources by doing away with specific purpose allocations, including the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP). This was consistent with the broader national policy agenda to move away from targeted Indigenous housing responses and increase access by Indigenous people to mainstream programs. It also operates in the context of no net growth in social housing, as NAHA funding is expended primarily on covering SHA operating losses due to reducing income and increasing costs associated with more aggressive targeting to high need, low-income tenants and the ageing of social housing stock.

The NAHA emphasises the responsibility of all programs and services to contribute to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. It includes specific objectives and performance indicators aimed at achieving equal housing opportunities as well as improved amenity and reduced crowding. The NAHA also includes the agreement to reforms that can be seen as increasing conditionality in areas such as compulsory rent deductions and addressing disincentives for tenants to increase their economic participation (COAG 2009a).

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) has been in place since 2009 and, although it refers to Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage, it does not explicitly address Indigenous homelessness. Nevertheless, a number of the reforms and services funded under the agreement, including those targeted at addressing rough sleeping and service integration, have established new and enhanced services in areas of high Indigenous homelessness. Many of these initiatives are directed to improving linkages between homeless and housing services in order to achieve sustainable housing outcomes and prevent recurring homelessness (COAG 2008).

The 10-year National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) has been in place since 2008. Over a 10-year period, it will provide \$5.5 billion for the construction of 4200 new houses in remote communities, and upgrades and repairs for 4800 existing dwellings. It has also introduced new 'public housing like' tenancy management arrangements that have substantially increased the housing conditionalities on remote Indigenous tenants (Habibis et al. 2013).

A core component of NPARIH was the transfer of service delivery from the ICHO sector to the states and the Northern Territory. The Australian Government's

investment was conditional on their provision of ‘standardised tenancy management and support consistent with public housing tenancy management’ (COAG 2009b). Investment in new and upgraded housing was dependent on Indigenous communities providing required ‘security of tenure’ to the states in order ‘to protect assets and establish with absolute clarity who is responsible for tenancy management and ongoing repairs and maintenance.’ The policy looked to state and territory housing authorities to take on tenancy management, either directly or by contracting some or all functions to community housing organisations and private service providers. Behavioural change was a basic tenet of the reform which required Indigenous tenants to be subject to ‘normal tenancy agreements’ in the ‘drive to rebuild positive community values and behaviour’ (Macklin 2009). This important policy shift reflected broader policies of ‘normalisation’ in Indigenous affairs in which the funding of Indigenous specific services that had begun during the ATSIC era was withdrawn in favour of service delivery by the states’ and territories’ mainstream programs (Sullivan 2011) (see Section 1.3.3).

A review of the NPARIH research literature and a preliminary empirical study concluded that the significant investment in new and refurbished housing has benefited some communities (Habibis et al. 2014, pp.58, 67). However, levels of crowding remain high and housing ‘is not always appropriate to the climate or for the number and lifestyles of residents’. In regard to the tenancy management reforms, Habibis and her co-authors conclude that the ‘evidence points to a mixed scorecard.’ They point to some success in formalising tenancies and improving rent collection, but slow progress in many areas that would be considered ‘normal’ tenancy management practice in social housing. In particular, maintenance and repair services are insufficient to adequately maintain and extend the life of housing assets (Habibis et al. 2014, p.4). This research supports the conclusions of Sanders:

Normalising Indigenous housing is proving a more complex, long-term intergovernmental process than some other aspects of welfare reform, such as income support and employment services, where the Commonwealth dominates more clearly and can act unilaterally. (2014, p.9)

2.1.3 State housing policy

While the above national policy and funding agreements set the overarching policy framework, it is at the level of states and territories that operational policy and service delivery models and practices occur.

The past decade has seen a significant increase in Indigenous tenancies in mainstream social (public and community) housing (SCRGSP 2015b; SCRGSP 2015a). At the same time, social housing operational policies have become more punitive and imposed additional behavioural requirements (Jones et al. 2014). These policy trends are a product of a system under increasing financial pressure and marginalisation and include (Milligan et al. 2010; Milligan et al. 2011):

- Increased rationing and identification of social housing as a ‘welfare’ tenure.
- A shift to social housing as a transitional tenure—linked to ‘welfare to work’ policies (at least in policy, but not necessarily practice).
- New measures to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB) or ‘three strikes’ policies.
- The mainstreaming of Indigenous housing administrative units and programs in most jurisdictions.

All of the above developments have occurred in tandem with radical reform of the Indigenous community housing sector since the mid-2000s as responsibility for this

sector transferred from the Australian Government to the states and territories (see Section 2.2.1). In terms of the two states (Queensland and Western Australia) and the territory (Northern Territory) where our case studies occur, the following points can be added on their respective housing policies.

Queensland has been at the forefront in mainstreaming and applying undifferentiated housing policies across all social housing sectors. State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) housing is now fully integrated with public housing, and Indigenous housing organisations must comply with mainstream regulatory and funding requirements. Housing in remote communities is almost exclusively managed directly by the SHA QDHPW. There is some differentiation in a small number of policies for remote communities but these communities are increasingly subject to mainstream policies and practices.

Until recently, the Northern Territory distinguished between urban and remote housing and had separate policy and administrative streams. Recent restructuring has seen greater rationalisation of organisational structures and policies are being reviewed for remote housing to bring it more in line with mainstream public housing. Housing in remote and discrete communities is managed by the SHA NTDoH with some functions outsourced to private providers, one shire and the very small number of remaining Indigenous housing organisations. The decline of ICHOs was exacerbated in the Northern Territory, as the NT Government implemented a major local government reform, abolishing Aboriginal community councils and replacing them with large regional 'super' shires.

Western Australia is becoming increasingly mainstreamed. SOMIH was absorbed into public housing in 2010–11 and compliance for Indigenous community housing organisations has been increasingly stringent. The SHA WADoH manages remote housing through a separate organisational unit, but contracts some tenancy management and tenancy support functions in a small number of communities to ICHOs and mainstream community housing providers. Recent changes have seen maintenance for remote communities centralised through a head contractor arrangement that has impacted in some areas on Indigenous organisations and local employment. WA was unique in negotiating individual Housing Management Agreements (HMA) with communities during the transition to public housing by WADoH.

2.2 Housing Conditionality and Mainstreaming Reforms

2.2.1 Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs)

With establishment of ATSIC in 1990, ICHOs became firmly established in Indigenous housing delivery. ATSIC administered the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), under which funds were allocated to ICHOs including remote Indigenous councils. In the early 1990s, the Australian Government released its National Housing Strategy (NHS), which affirmed the need for strong involvement of ICHOs in housing delivery and management. In 2001, Housing Ministers endorsed a 10-year 'Building a Better Future' statement that emphasised both self-determination and inclusion. This was to be achieved through dual strategies of improved access to mainstream housing assistance programs, as well as promoting a 'vigorous and sustainable' Indigenous community housing sector. The vision statement included a participatory aspiration that, 'Indigenous housing policies and programs will be developed and administered in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous communities and with respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures' (Housing Ministers Conference 2001). From the later 1990s, conditionality on ICHOs was tightened and ICHOs were increasingly required to comply with tenancy

legislation and accountability requirements in areas of financial management, governance, procurement and allocation (Habibis et al. 2013, p.30).

Economic pressure was placed on communities to ensure that rental payments were sufficient to maintain social housing, despite evidence that this was not economically feasible (Thompson 2004, p.279). The rise in conditionality and administrative requirements did not prevent governments from withdrawing recurrent funding to ICHOs from 2007 onwards. This, together with the withdrawal of other programs, especially the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), saw their viability effectively squeezed. Many ICHOs went into liquidation or transferred their assets to SHAs.

Following the demise of ATSIC, the CHIP was discontinued and responsibility for funding and regulating ICHOs was transferred to the states and territories. The NPARIH reforms then resulted in most remote Indigenous housing transferring to SHAs. These policies were associated with a halving in the number of ICHOs across Australia (616 in 2001 to 328 in 2011). The number of dwellings managed by ICHOs fell from 21 717 in 2004 to 17 543 in 2011 (Habibis et al. 2013, p.34). The vast majority of the remaining ICHOs are in NSW, where explicit policies to grow and strengthen the ICHO sector remain in place (Milligan et al. 2010). Reliable data on the situation since 2011 is not available but there are indications that the decline in the number of ICHOs has continued in the intervening years to the present.

Those ICHOs that remain face several challenges. They are subject to the same requirements for compliance as mainstream community housing organisations despite usually being significantly smaller and under-resourced. They also compete for the limited available funding against large, well-established mainstream community housing corporations.

2.2.2 Normalising tenancy rules

Historically, Indigenous tenants lived in Indigenous specific housing (either SOMIH or managed by ICHOs), where policies, practices, organisational values and staff were informed by and adapted to align with Indigenous values and cultural norms and were generally more flexible and personal. The mainstreaming of urban Indigenous social housing and the tenancy management reforms in remote communities, along with the shrinking of the ICHO sector, has meant that increasing numbers of Indigenous households now live in mainstream public housing. There are a number of mainstream housing policy areas that are problematic for, and impact disproportionately on, Indigenous tenants because of cultural and lifestyle practices and norms in areas such as kinship obligations and mobility. Policies that may negatively affect Indigenous tenancies can be considered under:

1. acceptable behaviour
2. absences and visitors
3. caps on income eligibility
4. rent setting.

Acceptable Behaviour

There is an evident trend towards increasing control of tenants' behaviour through tenancy management (Hunter et al. 2005). Specific Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) social housing policies began to be introduced by SHAs in NSW and NT from early 2000s (NSW 2004, NT 2002) and these have been strengthened progressively with three strikes policies introduced from about 2011 (WA 2011, NT 2012, Vic 2012, Qld 2013, Tas 2015). The ACT and SA have not introduced three strikes policies. In most

jurisdictions, three strikes policies have only applied to urban public housing. The policy has generally not been applied to community housing or most remote public housing, although there has been discussion in some states of extending the policy to these areas.

Reports in both WA and Queensland have long identified that ASB policies impact disproportionately on Indigenous households and lead to household instability due to forced exits from social housing (EOC 2004). A more recent Queensland study on the impact of ASB policies (Jones et al. 2014, p.63) found that Indigenous households were 'extremely over-represented with 176 of these households issued with multiple or serious breaches out of the 369 households in total (47.7%). It suggested that this reflected 'inappropriate application of the policy to Indigenous households' and potential 'discrimination against Indigenous households by either neighbours or housing workers'.

Absences and visitors

Policies about being absent and allowing visitors have always been in place in public and community housing, although the length of acceptable absences and visitor stays, acceptable reasons for absences and how stringently the policies are applied varies enormously. These are issues of importance for Indigenous tenants who are more likely to experience extended absences from home and family visitors due to cultural and kinship obligations. There are moves in some jurisdictions to introduce or apply these policies more stringently to remote housing, but capacity for enforcement by SHAs in these areas is more constrained. This is especially true for fly-in-fly-out housing workers who are less likely to know when houses are vacant or if visitors are staying.

Caps on income eligibility

Household income eligibility caps for social housing vary by household type and across jurisdictions, and are one mechanism for rationing social housing to those on low-incomes. Income eligibility tends to mainly operate to exclude higher income applicants from access to public housing. Over the past decade there have been increasing moves to attempt to move tenants on when their income increases above the cap. This is especially evident in Queensland, where a threshold of \$80 000 was imposed after which tenants can be given a four-month notice to leave social housing. Enforcement has been uneven; tenants have resisted by using appeal processes and income reduction strategies, and the policy has generally not applied in remote areas because there is a lack of housing alternatives.

There has been some evident flexibility and even exemption in how SHAs have applied income caps to Indigenous housing. This is in recognition that Indigenous households struggle to access private rental housing and that they have larger households, greater resident mobility and less secure employment. Under mainstreaming policies, however, more Indigenous households are applying for and living in mainstream public and community housing and therefore subject to the income eligibility thresholds.

Rent setting and collection

The predominant mainstream social housing rent setting approach is to charge rent based on a percentage of assessable income (usually approximately 25%) up to a cap equivalent to the market rent for the property. Historically Indigenous housing has used more diverse approaches, with the most notable being sub-market rents set by property size and amenity (common in the past for urban ICHOs) and housing levies applied to residents in receipt of regular income (applied in the past in some remote

Indigenous communities). As responsibility for tenancy management in remote communities and regulation and funding of ICHOs has been taken over by SHAs, rent setting has almost universally moved to being income-based and capped at market rates. In remote communities where private rental markets are non-existent, the rent cap is generally an arbitrary quasi 'market rent'. In Western Australia, the rent is related to amortisation of construction costs (Habibis et al. 2014).

Rent setting and collection in Indigenous housing have been widely identified by commentators as problematic, especially in remote communities (Larkins 2012; CAT 2013; Hawgood 2013). According to Habibis (2014, p.61), income-based rents 'present considerable implementation challenges for tenants and housing providers in remote Indigenous contexts due to the complexity and high rates of residential mobility and changes in household income.' These problematic aspects of rent setting and collection include, high workload and administrative costs, compliance risk for tenants, under-reporting of residents, and income and high arrears. Adaptation in remote communities, such as the collection of rent from multiple residents, creates additional challenges, especially for head tenants who bear ultimate responsibility for non-payment of rent by other residents (Habibis et al. 2014).

The breadth and extent of Indigenous housing reforms introduced over the past decade (since 2005) and intensified over the last five years (2010–15) represent a heightened mode of conditionality that has impacted significantly on Indigenous households. In remote areas, the changes have imposed new and unfamiliar conditions on tenants.

They have also dramatically restructured governance and institutional arrangements and disrupted service delivery relationships. The changes in urban areas are less extreme, but represent a significant increase in reliance on mainstream programs where punitive forms of housing conditionality such as ASB are increasing in prevalence. These changes have also entailed the loss of culturally adapted policies, service delivery models and community controlled services.

Research suggests the pace of change, and the often questionable change management processes, have engendered confusion and feelings of disempowerment within the Indigenous community (Milligan et al. 2010). For Indigenous tenants, questions remain about the capacity of the mainstream public and community housing sector to provide services that are sufficiently responsive to the needs of Indigenous clients to ensure they sustain their tenancies and have positive outcomes. For ICHOs, there is serious doubt about what opportunities they will have to survive and prosper under these mainstream policy regimes (Habibis et al. 2014). Some commentators have noted the inconsistency between national policies that have seen an expansion of the role of community housing, including some transfer of social housing assets, and Indigenous housing policy in which SHAs have taken control of social housing from the Indigenous community sector (Scott 2009).

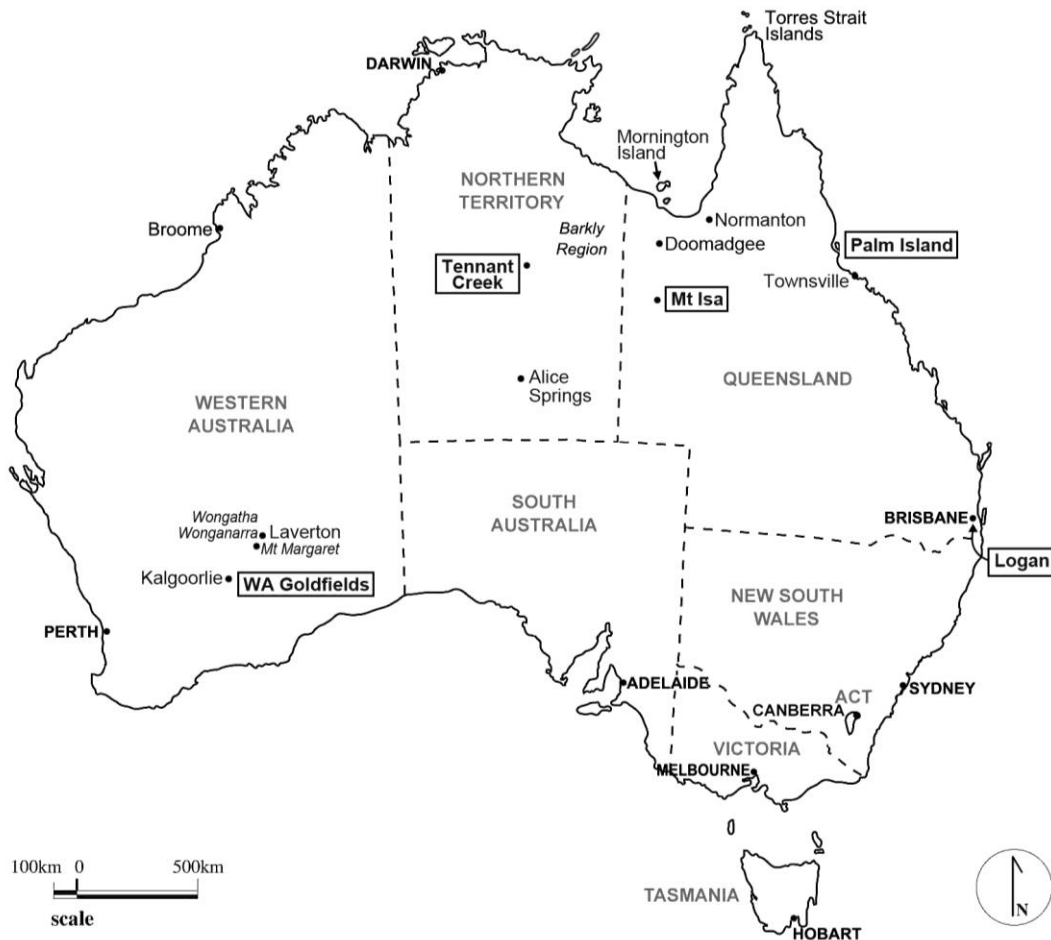
The tightening of conditionality in Indigenous housing that has been associated with mainstreaming highlights the messy and complex nature of the policy landscape. The research suggests that there is a gap between policy rhetoric about improvements in Indigenous housing outcomes and what has actually been achieved in practice. The study also highlights the inconsistency and instability of approaches to Indigenous housing and the largely top-down nature of the policy and implementation processes. Nevertheless, the underlying policy direction remains firmly towards an escalation of conditionality, as has been seen during the three years of this research. It appears that conditionality as a major plank of welfare reform and a driver for engendering individual responsibilities that is likely to continue to be central for Indigenous affairs

and housing policy into the future. It is therefore critical to assess its effectiveness and to establish in what conditions it can improve Indigenous housing outcomes.

2.3 The five case studies

Field research for the IMYRP study centred on five locations, WA Goldfields, Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory and Mt Isa, Palm Island and Logan in Queensland (see Figure 3 below). A brief introduction to each location is provided and includes relevant demographic and governance features. The descriptions are drawn mostly from the case study reports.

Figure 3: Map showing the five case study locations



2.3.1 Western Australian Goldfields

The Western Australian case study was carried out in Goldfields region, which is the vast and sparsely populated south-eastern part of the state. The traditional owners of the region are the Wongatha, Ngaanyatjarra, and Ngalia peoples. Research focussed on the town of Laverton and the small Aboriginal community of Wongatha Wanganarra, which is located just outside of the town, and the larger community of Mt. Margaret (30 kilometres from Laverton). The research team also visited the Aboriginal communities of Mulga Queen (150 kilometres north of Laverton) and Katampul (on the northern edge of Leonora to the south of Laverton).

In 2011, the town of Laverton had a population of about 440 and the major industries of employment in the town were mining, public administration and safety (ABS 2012). Since the economic downturn in 2013 the mines based in Laverton have closed and

the fly-in-fly-out workers are gone. According to some, the population has been approximately halved as a result.

The regional office of the housing provider is the Western Australian Department of Housing (WADoH), which is located in Kalgoorlie. Kalgoorlie is almost 600 kilometres north-east of Perth and is the regional centre for the Shire of Kalgoorlie-Boulder with a population of 31 100 (ibid). The WADoH is also the housing provider in the town of Laverton (359 kilometres to the north of Kalgoorlie) and provided the setting of social housing services provided by WADoH. In 2011, there were 143 dwellings in Laverton of which 47 were privately owned and 86 were rental accommodation. Of the 86 rental dwellings, 18 were public housing owned by the WADoH.

At the beginning of the study, WADoH had contracted GIHO to service the Aboriginal communities of Mount Margaret, Wongatha Wonganarra and Mulga Queen, as well as the town-based communities of Katumpul (also called Nambi Village) at Leonora, together with other communities within an area of 770 000 square kilometres. Towards the end of the field research period WADoH did not renew its contract with GIHO.

2.3.2 Tennant Creek

Tennant Creek is a small town in the Northern Territory, located just south of the intersection of two interstate highways. Within a population of 3100 people, 1600 are Indigenous which comprises 52 per cent of the population (ABS 2012). The traditional owners in the region are the Warumungu-speaking people. Many residents today identify as Warumungu, although people from other Aboriginal groups, including Warlpiri and Alyawarr also reside there. The town is the service centre for the vast Barkly Region with a total population of 5700 who live in small towns, cattle stations and Aboriginal settlements. Mining and pastoral industries account for the main economic activities in the Shire, but public administration and the service sector provide most employment.

Although Tennant Creek is not highly disadvantaged generally, factors of disadvantage impact disproportionately on the Indigenous population. Employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is less than 37 per cent but over 90 per cent for non-Indigenous population, and approximately 80 per cent of Indigenous people in Tennant Creek live in social housing (ibid).

The main managers of social housing tenancies in Tennant Creek are the Northern Territory Department of Housing (NTDoH) and Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation (Julalikari). Social housing stock, however, is old and the NTDoH does not seem to have sufficient funds to carry out the repairs and maintenance that are needed. Also the waiting lists for housing are increasingly long compared to elsewhere in the Northern Territory.

Managers of transitional accommodation included the Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group (BRADAAG), the Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation (Anyinginyi) and the Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project (TTAP). There are other specialised service providers for the Barkly region, including the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge (TCWR). A site of a different kind was the Barkly Work Camp (BWC), which is a low-security correctional work camp located near the town. The BWC was of particular interest for this study as it offered various programs for offenders, including work placement and transitional/supported housing.

2.3.3 *Mount Isa*

The city of Mt Isa is the regional centre for all of North-west Queensland, and is 1829 kilometres from Brisbane and 883 kilometres from Townsville, the nearest major city.⁸ The region is vast and is the second largest local government area in Australia with a total population of approximately 35 700 (ABS 2012). Mt Isa began as a mining town in the 1920s when large deposits of copper, silver and zinc were discovered. Mining and the pastoral industry (beef cattle) are the main areas of economic development, with more a quarter of the workforce employed in mining.

The city of Mt Isa has a population of 20 600, including 3100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (ibid). The Kalkadoon people are the traditional owners of the land around Mt Isa and many Kalkadoon continue to live there. Indigenous people belonging to other groups also live in the city and the small towns in the region, including Boulia, Camooweal, Cloncurry, Dajarra, Richmond, Julia Creek, Normanton, Burketown, Doomadgee and Gunana (Mornington Island).

Aboriginal people have been subject to a string of 'Aboriginal Acts' that gave the state control over Aboriginal labour and movement, particularly in the pastoral industry. The Aboriginal history of the area continues to be relevant to the main issues for Indigenous social housing tenants in the city and the regional towns. As the regional centre, Mt Isa has attracted many Indigenous people both permanently and temporarily since it was established. As visitors to Mt Isa, Aboriginal people stay with others from their home communities, or in 'fringe camps' in various parts of the town. Patterns of binge drinking remain a problem for some Indigenous households, especially those with frequent visitors.

The regional office of QDHPW (Mt Isa Housing Services Centre) manages most of the social housing tenancies for the region including Mt Isa and the surrounding regional towns and Indigenous communities. The QDPHW also runs the successful Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre for homeless people. Since the 1970s, a special stock of rental housing for Aboriginal people was established in Mt Isa, which has since been integrated with the mainstream public housing stock. Supply of housing has not been able to meet demand and waitlists are lengthy. Many Aboriginal families who are welfare dependent cannot compete with highly-paid mining personnel for private rental housing. There are no Indigenous organisations undertaking tenancy management in Mt Isa. In some of the regional towns and surrounding Indigenous communities, local Aboriginal organisations have a continuing role.

The suburb of Pioneer in Mt Isa has the highest density of Aboriginal people living in public housing. Both household and neighbourhood crowding are common, but nevertheless there is high under-occupation due to damaged housing under repair or pending sale. There is also a problem of intoxicated youth gangs de-stabilising tenancies through a range of ASB including noise, fighting, substance abuse and crime. These and other factors have exacerbated the problem of insufficient public housing for low-income families in Mt Isa, especially for Aboriginal people.

2.3.4 *Palm Island*

Palm Island is 65 kilometres off the coast of Townsville with a total population of 2300, a large majority of which is Indigenous (ABS 2012). The population includes an extensive mix of Indigenous people from all over Queensland and some from the Northern Territory. The Manbarra people are the recognised traditional owners of the Island. Palm Island people are known as 'Bwngcolman', a name that applies to a large number of language groups on the island.

⁸ <http://www.mountisa.qld.gov.au/mount-isa>.

Palm Island has a complex history that features a long period of state control over Indigenous people's lives including gender segregation in dormitories until 1970s. It is only since that time that health and housing conditions on Palm Island have become a priority of the Queensland Government.

The majority of people living on Palm Island live in approximately 400 social housing dwellings that are managed by the QDHPW. Crowded houses with an average household size of nine people were documented in our research. Apart from crowding there was a lack of housing for some families who resided in family camps with either self-constructed or makeshift dwellings. They were not part of the social housing system and were without services. Most of the social housing stock on Palm Island has been built since the 1980s. Between 2012 and 2014, however, 45 new houses have been completed and another 60 are due to commence construction in 2015. All of the new housing currently being constructed on Palm Island is funded through the NPARIH between the state and federal governments.

Palm Island is at the forefront of the Indigenous home ownership in remote communities in Queensland, through 99-year residential leasing arrangements. Home ownership policies have been implemented by the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) and Palm Island Aboriginal Land Trust (PIALT) with assistance from the Queensland Government. PIASC is the local government authority and council, which is elected every three years and PIALT is the trustee of the land on Palm Island. PIASC employs a local Land Liaison Officer who facilitates home ownership lease applications and family camp permits with the Land Trust. In general, these Indigenous organisations are not involved in tenancy management.

2.3.5 Logan

Logan is the only metropolitan site in the IMYRP study. As an urban location between Brisbane and the Gold Coast in south-east Queensland, Logan is one of the largest and fastest growing regions in Australia. The city is an ethnically diverse community with 215 nationalities within an official population of 300 700 including an Indigenous population of 8000 (ABS 2011). Indigenous people from across Australia live in the region today, but the local traditional owners are the Yugambah-speaking people in the south-eastern areas south of the Logan River and Jagera-speaking people in the north and west. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Logan City are likely to be overrepresented in the high needs group, since it is well documented that higher proportions of Indigenous Australians, compared to non-Indigenous Australians, experience multiple disadvantage. Of all Indigenous households in Logan City, 18.4 per cent are renting social housing (ABS 2011).

Logan has 64 suburbs with higher concentrations of social housing and associated disadvantage in the more densely populated suburbs including Woodridge, Beenleigh, Slacks Creek, Kingston and Logan Central (Zappia & Cheshire 2014). Many Indigenous social housing tenants live in these areas and most government and community service providers are located there.

The regional office of QDHPW (Woodridge Housing Services Centre) managed the majority of social housing tenancies in Logan. A transfer of these functions was underway in 2015 to the Logan City Community Housing (LCCH). Youth and Family Services (YFS) and the Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre (KENC) are community organisations that offer housing and related services in Logan, often to clients who struggled to achieve tenancies. YFS managed approximately 100 properties for people with high and very high needs, including Indigenous tenants. KENC also provided housing for challenged tenants, supporting them with a similar set of wrap-

around services. During the time of the study, both were reducing the number of social housing properties that they manage due reductions in government funding.

3 TENANT PERSPECTIVES

This chapter explores the main themes that have emerged from the perspectives of Indigenous tenants as documented in the five case study reports based on Logan, Mt Isa, Palm Island, Tennant Creek and the WA Goldfields. The analysis describes the perspectives of tenants on conditionality, in order to provide a clearer understanding of the kinds of rules that tenants can meet in order to achieve secure housing.

State Housing Authorities (SHA) managed the majority of social housing tenancies documented in our case studies, and the remainder were managed by NGOs and community and Indigenous organisations. The specific features of these relationships and the forces in play varied within and between case studies, where local historical, political, economic and demographic characteristics of the Indigenous communities have all impacted significantly. For example, in the more remote towns of Palm Island, Tennant Creek and the WA Goldfields, the populations are predominantly Indigenous and social housing was purpose built to house Indigenous people. Indigenous tenants currently rent almost all of this housing. In Mt Isa—despite being only 15 per cent of the population—Indigenous tenants similarly rent most of the social housing. In Logan, Indigenous people are around 3 per cent of the population and occupy 18 per cent of social housing. All of the case studies thus demonstrate the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in social housing.

In each location, the tenants interviewed represented a diverse group of men and women, young, middle-aged and elderly. Some were employed, although the majority of eligible tenants were unemployed and reliant on welfare payments. The size and remoteness of the communities in which they lived also varied, from the very small community of Wongatha Wonganarra in the WA Goldfields region to the metropolitan city of Logan in southeast Queensland. Different housing contexts brought different challenges and many tenants struggled to achieve and sustain their tenancies in all locations. Key issues from the tenants' section in each case study are listed in a separate table under the above headings (see Appendix 2).

The analysis proceeds in two parts. To begin with, we focus on Aboriginal lifeworlds to explore further how culturally based values and practices impact on a tenant's ability to achieve and/or sustain tenancy. Central to our argument is the notion of multiple conditionalities that characterise the lives of Indigenous social housing tenants, who are a typically disadvantaged group. Our discussion addresses the commonalities and differences between tenants' perspectives across the five case study locations and highlights the ways in which Aboriginal lifeworlds impact on (resist or reinforce) conditionalities for tenants in different communities, agencies and jurisdictions. The second part focusses on tenant agency and how Aboriginal tenants adapt to or react against the conditionalities imposed by housing officers in government and Indigenous and community organisations. How and to what extent are tenants moving towards or against a recognition space?

3.1 Aboriginal lifeworlds

3.1.1 Maintaining sociocultural capital

All of the case studies demonstrated that family and kin relationships, as well as cultural and historical connections to land, were highly significant forms of sociocultural capital for the Indigenous tenants. These findings are consistent with the social capital literature which has established the basis for such connections in their systems of religious and cultural beliefs (Woolcock & Narayan 2000; Memmott 2002). Aboriginal identity is intrinsically bound to social and cultural networks that link individuals, groups and institutions. Typically described in terms of bonding and

bridging capital, these networks can help build an individual's relationships and strengthen identity within and outside a group or community (Memmott & Meltzer 2004). As a significant determinant of holistic health and well-being (Wilkinson & Marmot 2003), access to secure and sustainable housing can lead to good health and individual and family well-being that can build significant bonding capital for Aboriginal people (Browne-Yung et al. 2013).

Although the forces of colonisation and development have brought many changes to peoples' ways of living, fundamental beliefs in the importance of caring for kin and country have survived throughout Aboriginal Australia. Different groups interpret the related responsibilities differently today, yet in each case study location, people showed enduring commitment to such beliefs, values and practices. While central to wellbeing, these kinds of responsibilities to family can present significant challenges and constraints for tenants and they may encounter difficulties in abiding by the tenancy rules.

There are a range of factors that work against people meeting imposed conditionalities, including family and cultural responsibilities, as well as other social, economic and legal commitments and obligations (e.g. parole reporting, debts). A significant component then of how Aboriginal tenants meet imposed conditionalities are features of their lifeworlds.

In the regional and remote centres of Mt Isa, Tennant Creek and the WA Goldfields, many Aboriginal tenants remain on their land to follow their preferred ways of life, including carrying out their responsibilities to kin and country. These locations have limited housing options. Social housing is generally the only affordable housing, and in all study locations, its supply did not meet demand. On Palm Island and in Logan, most Indigenous tenants hold traditional ties elsewhere, due to their history of imposed dispossession or relocation. They also hold strong historical and social links to the communities in which they now call home, often developed over several generations. Evidence from all of the case studies, including remote, regional and urban locations, suggested that these different kinds of connections are highly relevant to their housing, particularly in terms of facilitating family support.

High levels of circular mobility have been documented for Indigenous people in various regions of Australia, including Mt Isa, Tennant Creek and the WA Goldfields. As a result, many Indigenous tenants in these regions often need to accommodate family who may be visiting from other communities in the region for health, legal, recreational or other social and cultural reasons, such as funerals. Many tenants accommodated their 'grannies' (grandchildren) for extended periods, in keeping with Aboriginal child-rearing practices. This practice adds to the number of 'visitors' residing in the house and may contribute to crowding, but it is also source of strength for important intergenerational family relationships.

As the WA Goldfields case study showed, tenants gave many reasons for requesting and offering temporary housing to family members, if they are homeless; 'to protect kinfolk from humbugging'⁹ for funerals; when exchanging children between sisters; and when exchanging visits among kinfolk (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.22). These and other relevant practices were also documented for Tennant Creek and Mt Isa. Tenants living with disabilities, carers and most of the aged pensioners believed that the most significant support in their tenancies came from their family. At the same time, they were acutely aware of the pressures from family visitors who were typically

⁹ The Aboriginal English term 'humbugging' refers to unreasonable expectations through repeated requests based on kin connections—behaviour that is consistent with the recognised cultural practice of 'demand sharing', including reciprocity and the pressure for generosity (Peterson 1993).

involved in ASB and who were likely to stay for long periods. Tenants typically followed these social obligations, despite the risks they posed for their tenancy.

For Palm Island, the particular history of Indigenous people has contributed to the kinds of connections between people and place. Although geographically close to the city of Townsville, Palm Island has a strong history of kin-based land and housing allocation that resonates with other remote Aboriginal communities. This land allocation system has broken down in recent years, but kinship networks on Palm Island have continued to be a significant incentive for people to live there instead of nearby Townsville (Fantin 2016, p.17). Some families had a history of living in both places (e.g. a house on Palm Island and another in Townsville with the tenancy in another family member's name). In this way, people were demonstrating their close connections to members of their community living off the island and to places other than Palm Island specifically.

Family group support was equally important for Indigenous tenants in Logan. Visits from family members were given high priority for maintaining well-being, including visits locally and also visits to/from regional and remote Queensland where people had traditional and historical connections (e.g. Cherbourg). Support between Aboriginal social group members apart from family was also evident. For example, a formerly homeless man in Logan was proud to have achieved his social housing tenancy so that he could then be a role model and supporter for other Murri men who were in difficult housing circumstances, including homelessness (Nash 2016, p.19).

There are numerous examples from the case studies that highlight the tensions for tenants as they strive to take control of their lives within the framework of the tenancy rules. Most tenants were able to remain in control, but they often experienced difficulties. This caused a tension between bonding and bridging capitals—between maintaining relationships to kin and maintaining relationships with housing officers. It was evident that most tenants gave primacy to their sociocultural responsibilities even when they were aware of the tenancy rules and the risk to their tenancies. Many chose to live with the threat of breaching and potential eviction rather than having to deny hospitality to their kin, leading to prolonged states of heightened stress levels as well as house damage debts.

3.1.2 Imposed and self-made rules concerning visitors

Along with the strengths from sociocultural capital outlined above, tenants from all five case studies encountered challenges in their varying relationships with visiting kin and other members of the Indigenous community with respect to housing. Family composition, visiting patterns and crowding mitigated against sustainable tenancies. At times tenants accepted visitors but were not always able to control their behaviour.

The composition of Indigenous families in terms of size, gender and age structure does not always fit the stereotypical nuclear family model of households in Australia. It is statistically shown that Indigenous Australians are more likely than others to live in extended-family based households (ABS 2012). Such households are commonly large and multi-generational, as experienced by many tenants in the case study regions. Household composition can change in response to family needs, such as caring for the elderly, the sick or those living with a disability; shared childrearing practices; or for less formal family visitation. In addition to receiving visitors, individuals must also travel away from their houses to care for kin, where their residence then exacerbates already crowded houses.

Across all five case studies, tenants spoke about the many challenges posed by visitors. In many cases, the tenants were able to manage their visitors in ways that

were satisfactory for them as tenants and for the needs of their visitors (and in keeping with the tenancy rules).

Most tenants however recognised that visitors could be potentially problematic, resulting in a breach of tenancy for one or more of the following reasons:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) such as alcohol and other substance abuse, fighting and noise leading to neighbour complaint.
- Crowding together with ASB, occasionally leading to family violence.
- Physical deterioration to house/yard through wilful damage and excessive use.
- Psychological stress on tenant, including humbugging leading to loss of tenancy and worry over potential damage and expense (debt).
- Undeclared visitors (e.g. in Queensland, after four weeks visiting in a social housing property, people must pay rent).

As the case studies showed, most of the potential effects were linked to ASB and to disadvantaged circumstances that influenced a tenant's ability to pay the rent. In Logan, some tenants had experienced eviction and homelessness because of financial stress, compounded by the expense of visiting family members and lack of budgeting skills. In Tennant Creek, one grandmother who had been housing her grandson was not able to prevent him and his friends from repeated abuse of her hospitality—they showed complete disregard for her responsibility as a tenant. Through drunkenness and other reckless behaviour that led to excessive damage to house, this elderly woman had lost her tenancy on more than one occasion. Other older women in Tennant Creek had similar experiences and they tended to explain them away with the view that 'you want to be easy on family' (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.16). Similarly, extreme humbugging reported in Laverton (WA Goldfields) had forced a grandmother, mother and children out of their house (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, pp.22–23). Fear of violence was significant for these tenants.

Even when familial relations are good, positive outcomes from visiting kin can be constrained by a tenant's inability to maintain a functional home. For example, if a house becomes crowded it is less likely that there will be sufficient money for power, food and cleaning products, or to attend to basic cleaning and yard maintenance. Degraded housing conditions can result in an unhealthy house with risk to the residents. Furthermore, the general disruption to daily life can lead to unpaid rent. In the town of Laverton in the WA Goldfields, 'the people who host large numbers of visitors in their homes knew crowding was against the rules of their tenancy and also led to insufficient resources to manage appropriate house and yard hygiene standards, ultimately a threat to tenancy' (ibid, p.28).

Tenants in each case study used different tactics to reduce or prevent visitors from staying in their homes. On Palm Island, tenants discouraged visitors from outside the island as in the past this had led to problems. Many of the tenants interviewed had adopted an informal 'no visitors' policy (Fantin 2016, p.18). In WA Goldfields communities, some tenants were able to prevent any problems from visitors by only admitting those who were sober. Other responses included leaving the community at peak visiting periods such as Christmas, securing the house with chain-link fence or simply telling unwanted visitors to 'just go' (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, pp.24,26). These represented ways of coping with situations as they presented, rather than strategies for lasting changes to people's behaviour. The threat of unwanted visitors remained a stressor—even if the tenant felt in control.

In Mt Isa, crowding is a frequent scenario when visitors come from other communities in the region to stay with family. With so many people in the house, the group typically

socialised outside, sitting around a fire often drinking and gambling. These practices have led to reports of noise or other neighbourhood disturbances. At times excessive amounts of alcohol were consumed and fighting broke out, often with negative consequences in terms of family violence and damage to property. The suburb of Pioneer was well-known for this kind of harmful behaviour. In these situations, tenants were often unable to influence the behaviour of visitors, and sometimes the tenants themselves were the perpetrators of ASB. The high density of Aboriginal households resulted in wandering drunks in parks and streets, often forcing their way into people's yards unwanted. However, their ASB was at times attributed to the head tenant if damage or complaint occurred.

Similarly in Tennant Creek, tenants reported ASB complaints and often incurred debts from damages because of their own actions or as a result of out-of-control visitors. Their stress was based on their difficulty in repaying the debts and fear of eviction over repeated breaches as well as potential shame in denying their family's wishes. Some tenants who were not drinkers were able to keep drinkers out. Others had their own rules and wanted family to be able to drink together in their house, 'my family here ... they can take grog in anytime' (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.19).

In all of the case studies, it seemed that in the absence of a strong tenant—usually the household head or and/a strong matriarch—to enforce the imposed or self-made rules, situations could easily change with detrimental effects. The problem then was not so much that tenants were averse to rules, but rather how appropriately the rules were developed and managed.

Under the staff housing rules of Anyinginyi Health in Tennant Creek, tenants adapted to rules made in collaboration with staff and the Board. The conditionality over definition of visitors, their lengths of stay and the restriction on the consumption of alcohol was acute, but seemed highly acceptable to the tenants. The rule for visitors, for example, sets out a maximum stay of 48 hours, where a 'visitor' was defined as a member of the tenant's immediate or direct family. As the program has proceeded there has been only one failed tenancy involving a young and inexperienced tenant. Critical to program success was how the rules had been resolved collaboratively between the management and the board of Anyinginyi and their employee tenants. Prior to Anyinginyi initiating a staff housing program, its employees struggled with their social housing tenancies in Tennant Creek, so they were motivated to find a better solution. Interestingly, the solution they negotiated involved greater, not reduced conditionality. This indicates that engagement and participation are as central to successful tenancies as conditionalities. Also of note is that these tenants had a history of employment, and so were likely to have been more stable social housing tenants.

3.1.3 Cumulative effects

Aboriginal lifeworlds are intrinsically associated with disproportionately high levels of disadvantage. As for the Indigenous population in Australia generally, the daily lives of many Aboriginal tenants in the case studies were characterised by multiple and complex needs relating to unemployment, incarceration, substance abuse, living with disabilities and other health problems including mental health.

Apart from the constraints of extended-family size, visiting patterns and crowding discussed above, tenants experiencing high levels of vulnerability were likely to have many other pressures on their daily lives, such as commitments to the justice system including court orders for rehabilitation and parole conditions, or to one or more health and social service providers. Moreover, it seemed from the tenants' perspectives that

the authorities, including their housing officers, were often unaware of their multiple and competing stressors and coping mechanisms.

For some tenants under difficult circumstances there was a disconnect between different aspects of tenancy conditionality and other areas of living. Young families in Logan encountered difficulties when social welfare payment dates did not synchronise with rent payment due dates. Furthermore, rules limiting transfers between social housing units inhibited their ability to find employment that might see them potentially able to exit social housing (Nash 2016, p.18). Tenants found it difficult to adapt their behaviour in order to meet the rules and did not always succeed.

The pressures and confusion were not confined to the young and inexperienced. Also in Logan, a middle-aged mother had lost tenancies due to the cumulative pressures of tenancy and family commitments, 'the gas, electricity and the rent—I couldn't keep up with the payments. ... it just confused me' (Nash 2016, pp.16–17). The case studies indicated a cumulative or cascading effect on these tenants with the potential to precipitate negative housing outcomes. The precise sequence of events might vary, but the end result could be rental arrears and eviction. Tenants in each of the case study locations gave the impression that it was not always easy for them to retain their tenancies, largely due to visitor behaviour. As a consequence for many households, the threat of eviction was always present given that visitors were a common occurrence.

The same process was seen in Mt Isa, where some of the senior women were constantly meeting demands from their relatives for crisis needs ranging from childcare to domestic violence, all with consequences for their tenancies. Other people from bush communities where tenancies were not strictly regulated struggled to adapt. Nevertheless, tenants made efforts to cooperate with the rules even if in limited ways (e.g. by tidying the house when required, often after an inspection). Those who had moved through transitional housing at the Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre to mainstream social housing had to endure pressure from their former drinking groups. Most remained committed to a more sober lifestyle in order to keep their tenancies. There were cases of such tenants being given temporary residential respite at Jimaylya while their new flat was locked up until visitors dispersed; and of others who visited Jimaylya to drink so as to avoid having alcohol consumption in their flat (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.69).

On Palm Island, the pressures of everyday living weighed heavily on families. The need to get 'money for food and negotiating transport and child care' was exacerbated by other conditions including severe crowding, living with occasional family violence, caring for elderly parents or many young children. For some tenants interviewed, 'each day was about survival' (Fantin 2016, p.38). Their ability to focus on anything other than the basic rules was compromised by their disadvantaged circumstances.

There were several people in Tennant Creek who were repeatedly at risk of losing their tenancies through a combination of ASB, damage and rental arrears. They progressed through a cycle of gaining and losing tenancy as the consequences of their (and their visitors') behaviour were enforced by NTDoH or other service providers. For those tenants, the imposed housing conditionality led to adverse consequences but did not disrupt the cycle of disadvantage. As emphasised by the WA Goldfields report, tensions between tenants and the WADoH often led to resentment (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.30). So although tenants perceived their disadvantage, they were not necessarily motivated to change in ways deemed appropriate by the housing providers.

The social and cultural responsibilities of tenants for kin as well as their preferences for particular living practices often meant that tenants struggled to abide by the rules. Despite these pressures, tenants were able to act in many ways that supported their tenancies, as discussed below.

3.2 Tenant agency

3.2.1 Assuming responsibility as the head tenant

From the points of view of tenants, the rules about visitors have differential effects depending not only on specific visitor behaviour (e.g. crowding and ASB) but also the responses by housing officers. While some tenants showed that they were in control of visitors and that their tenancies were not threatened, others did not appear to be empowered sufficiently to exert their responsibilities as tenants. It can be difficult for many Indigenous people to take on the role of head tenant and act on that authority. It may seem to an outsider that the tenant is disregarding the rules and acting primarily in the interests of the offending visitors. This is especially the case if the visitor is a kinsperson to whom respect is prescribed in strong terms (e.g. upper generation elder).

For example, several tenants in Logan had one or more family members staying with them who otherwise would have been homeless. While some visitors were in the process of becoming tenants, others could not envisage formalising their tenancy. As they made regular contributions to the household finances, such payments increased the amount that could be spent on other daily household needs. Despite a potential threat of eviction, the tenants were reluctant to report the visitors out of respect for them as valued family members, and they needed their assistance with the costs of running the household. This was similar on Palm Island, where people often had informal 'boarders' who were not registered as formal tenants.

As pointed out in the WA Goldfields report, the role of head tenant required by a tenancy agreement is not necessarily an adequate reflection of a family group structure, particularly in relation to who ultimately takes responsibility. A characteristic of traditional Indigenous identity is that people have a strong group sociality or relatedness (Myers 1986). In Wongatha Wonganarra, the head tenants were generally senior women who accommodate their visiting kin, at times to the extent of crowding. A responsible tenant would abide by the rules and not invite extra people to stay for extended periods but in communities like Wongatha Wonganarra, lack of this kind of assistance would erode family trust and social cohesion. While the senior women may not appear to be responsible tenants, the community may support their action which reinforces their capacity to intervene to prevent other ASB which may be more threatening.

By contrast, there are Indigenous tenants who can and do choose to exercise their authority as the head tenant, in line with the conditionality of their tenancy agreement. In Mt Isa, some senior Aboriginal female tenants have been able to sustain their tenancies for several years despite many difficulties because of their authority, personality and strength of character (Memmott et al. 2012). Their active intervention in the behaviour of their family visitors has resulted in their sustained tenancy, although not without periods of considerable psychological stress.

3.2.2 Managing alcohol

The nexus between visitors and alcohol (and other substance abuse) is critical to the discussion of social housing as alcohol-related ASB was reported in all of the case studies. How tenants dealt with drinking behaviour depended not only on their

personal attributes and life experiences, but also the external mechanisms available to them.

As reported for Palm Island, alcohol and substance abuse was one of many kinds of problems that tenants were dealing with, either as perpetrators or as victims. Some strong tenants allowed visitors and drinking but were able to control their visitor behaviour, while others took a strong stand against visitors in order to avoid potential ASB problems. Several tenants were recovering alcoholics and, with the support of service providers, they were working to resist the pressure to drink so as not place their tenancy at risk.

In the mainstream social housing tenancies of Tennant Creek and WA Goldfields there were opportunities for tenants themselves to take corrective action against the problems of alcohol. The practice of posting approved 'restricted premises' for alcohol signs to the front of your house/yard were supported by the NTDoH in Tennant Creek and by WADoH in the Goldfields. Police also encouraged tenants who were frequently having trouble with ASB and alcohol to apply for restricted alcohol status and subsequently post the relevant sign. In the small community of Wongatha Wonganarra, a few tenants applied for restricted alcohol premises on the suggestion of police, but have had great difficulty in achieving lasting positive change. Following a different approach, the Mt Margaret community took greater responsibility for the maintenance of tenancies through its relatively strong and established community governing structures, as opposed to individual tenant responsibility.

In Tennant Creek, most tenants were not in favour of a sign on their house and were ambivalent about signs on other tenants' houses. Some tenants without alcohol-related problems had posted signs to reinforce their message to visitors and passers-by. Other tenants said that the police or NTDoH put the sign on their house and they took the imposition of a sign as an advertisement that they were not in control of their place. Some took offence at that suggestion and, in those cases, the sign further undermined the trust between the tenant and the DHOs. The situation is complicated by two sets of rules in Tennant Creek. Alcohol is allowed in the town but it is prohibited for all tenants in the Community Living Areas (CLA) thus transferring drinking problems into the households in the town. This extra pressure on town tenants inhibited their agency in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal domains. Some in the town resisted having the sign—wanting their family to be able to drink safely together.

Tenants in transitional accommodation in Mt Isa and Tennant Creek were subject to different kinds of conditionality depending on the institution that managed the tenancy arrangements. The tenants were aware of the high level of coercive conditionality imposed on them, and had accepted it as part of their situation. This was the same, whether as clients of a homeless centre or rehabilitation program (Mt Isa, Tennant Creek) or prisoners in a pre- or post-release program (Tennant Creek). The findings indicate that this 'coercive conditionality' was successful in not only increasing their awareness of tenancy responsibilities, but also created opportunities for them to experience success within a supported environment. For example, imposed conditions required tenants to refrain from drinking alcohol or to drink responsibly, including with respect to visitors. In this controlled environment where their choices were limited in daily life, an element of coercive education and behaviour change can build capacity and also may be an enabling influence. The rehabilitation (and transitional accommodation) centre at BRADAAG operated programs based on that premise and gave examples of ex-clients who had successfully translated learned institutional behaviour into their lives and into successful tenancies beyond the programs.

Even with the support of the rules, there was a lot of pressure on tenants when visitors wanted to consume alcohol. In mainstream tenancies, drinking appeared to be managed best where the community had strong individual tenants who could command authority, or where there was effective community leadership who could intervene. Support agencies were helpful for those with health related issues. In transitional accommodation, strict rules limited individual agency but assisted the tenants to channel appropriate behaviour.

3.2.3 Maintenance and inspections

From the tenants' points of view, the nexus between house inspections and maintenance needed was a particular concern. Regular property inspections were mandatory under the tenancy agreements in all locations and were designed to reduce the need for spending on repairs. Most tenants understood the basic requirements and expectations of care for the house and yard, although many struggled to comply.

Tenants expressed their dissatisfaction over how housing officers criticised the standard of house and yard tidiness, refused to negotiate around inspections, and imposed strict timelines on meeting their demands. It was difficult for many tenants to look after the property, and to keep the house and yard tidy as required. In Logan and Mt Isa, several women who were single-parent householders found it difficult to meet the requirements, either because of a lack of funds, access to equipment (e.g. lawn mowers) or physical incapacity. These women often struggled with heavy outside yard work; they saw this as the responsibility of men (as opposed to their indoor domain), and subsequently struggled to find men prepared to do the work. Further to this, tenants complained that even when they were taking steps to comply, they were not given adequate time to do so.

Tenants in all locations had mixed experiences about the response time and efficacy of repairs by the organisation or authority managing their social housing. Many tenants complained that, with the exception perhaps for urgent repairs, M&R was typically slow or just not undertaken (e.g. in some Logan houses, air-conditioners had not been repaired since the start of the tenancy).

All of the case studies reported misunderstandings around how to report repairs, what repairs needed to be reported, and what were the tenants' responsibilities to fix themselves. This confusion diminished their control over their tenancies. On Palm Island, for example, communication with housing officers had led to confusion over the different ways to report problems and the different categories of priority and non-priority issues. Tenants also had to come to terms with government changes, particularly funding cuts to the Palm Island Shire Council and the transfer of housing stock, management and repairs to QDHPW.

In Mt Isa, there was also confusion over new rules around the tenants' role in arranging maintenance and repairs for which they and their visitors were responsible. Some of the delays in repairs related to the tenants' lack of knowledge and alleged poor communication from some DHOs.

For Tennant Creek, continuing lack of adequate maintenance by NTDoH is a longstanding issue for tenants. The NTDoH had recently changed the rule about payment for wilful damage and, since then, the cost of repairs had become a growing issue for tenants. This particularly highlights a shift in responsibility from provider (government) to tenant. Many tenants reported on incidents in which family members had caused damage but where the head tenant had incurred the debt with NTDoH. The implications of the change were only beginning to be fully realised by tenants.

Despite the significant issues of responsibility and debt described above, some of the tenants who were dissatisfied with the lack of repairs by the relevant authorities or the slow response time took independent action. In a proactive way, some tenants had taken on maintenance themselves without approval from the housing provider. Responses varied between places and also according to the work that had been done and the reasons provided. In Logan, for instance, modifications ranged from changes to the light fittings to painting of the internal walls, from replacement of floor coverings to the building of fence structures. All were done with the view or intention of improving the property. When the DHOs warned or chastised the tenants for doing so without permission, they invariably felt despondent, as they were expecting to be rewarded for being a good tenant. Similarly, in Mt Isa (and to a lesser extent Tennant Creek), some tenants had constructed barriers (for privacy) and shade structures knowing that the QDHPW did not approve. The severity of the climate made shade highly desirable and so tenants had taken the risk of non-compliance to achieve greater privacy and thermal comfort.

Other strategies involved relying on community networks to maintain care for housing. On Palm Island, for example, tenants spoke of how families supported each other when one household was absent from the island while visiting the mainland. In particular, they agreed to look after their house for them while they were away, reducing the risk of damage from break-ins. A similar need was recognised in Mt Isa where many tenants were highly mobile. In fact, the Mt Isa report recommends that the design and implementation of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme be scoped with tenants (Memmott & Nash 2016, pp.3, 78).

Other strategies associated with repairs and maintenance, however, appeared less than transparent. On Palm Island, it was alleged that certain tenants who were dissatisfied with the condition of their homes had purposefully neglected (and even caused further) damage in order to expedite a housing upgrade. People were generally aware that a major injection of capital funds was to occur for new houses under NPARIH, so they may have been motivated to prioritise their house by highlighting its poor state. The four other case studies did not include any evidence of this strategy, most probably because no precedent existed for achieving an upgrade in this way in those locations.

3.2.4 Waiting lists and transfers

Progress has been slow from policy formulation and implementation to effective change in some areas of Indigenous disadvantage, including appropriate and affordable housing (SCRGSP 2014). It was evident from the case studies that tenants were highly concerned about waiting lists for social housing in most locations. Official statistics on waiting lists in some places were damning. In Tennant Creek in 2015, the waiting time for a three-bedroom house was eight years, and longer for a larger house. With no new houses being planned or built (only refurbishments), the waiting list continues to grow. Many tenants were dissatisfied with their current housing for a range of reasons (e.g. age and condition) and their comments suggested that large houses and one-bedroom units, in particular, were in short supply. Having been unable to achieve appropriate housing, many tenants felt that their voices were either not valued or heard by the department.

Long waiting lists in the case study locations were indicative of high demand for social housing, but in places where there was a short waiting list, it did not necessarily follow that there was an adequate supply of housing; crowding often remained an issue. There was a common perception by tenants in all locations that there was vacant social housing in their community and a lack of clarity around why such premises were not being allocated. Families on the waiting list had not been able to access

these houses and they were typically unconvinced about the reasons put forward, including maintenance required and reserving stock kept for crisis housing. In Mt Isa, tenants were aware that some QDHPW houses were empty prior to being offered for sale. They were suspicious that private home owners were replacing Aboriginal people. In the WA Goldfields, people see such houses as dedicated for Aboriginal housing, and that their sale was of direct disadvantage to Aboriginal people. In Tennant Creek, there were vacant houses pending repairs/demolition (fire damaged) or reserved for priority housing allocation. Tenants seemed unaware of NTDoH's processes and were frustrated because the waiting lists were long and there had been no new government housing since 1987, although the federally funded Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) refurbished properties in the Community Living Areas (CLAs). In Logan, tenants were highly suspicious of government motivations for selling houses on the open market, and linked this to perceived preferential treatment of other non-Indigenous groups by government.

Palm Island tenants acknowledged that there had been problems in the past with waiting lists (e.g. one Aboriginal woman had waited 16 years for a house), but generally it was held that the situation had improved significantly since new housing had been built in recent years. Reports of crowded houses in the community, however, continued. Laverton also presented a contradictory situation. On the one hand, WADoH claimed that there was no waiting list in Laverton and that there were empty houses in the town. Yet on the other hand, tenants complained of crowding. The case study reveals how the residents of the overcrowded houses did not apply for larger houses even though they were aware of them because they would be admitting that they were accommodating kin who were not paying rent.¹⁰ The tenants thus employed coping strategies and endured crowded houses in order to avoid the housing conditionality that limits the number of residents. As the case study revealed, their motives were not wilful deception to avoid paying rent, but rather in maintaining their security of housing, because admission to WADoH of crowding brought the threat of eviction. WADoH was then not fully aware of the extent of crowding and was, in some cases, considering selling what it saw as surplus housing stock. There was a similar finding in Tennant Creek at the commencement of the study, where ABS statistics guided the senior management, seemingly unaware of under-reporting.

In other places too, tenants thought that the rules around the number of people in the house often worked against them and similarly they tried to work around the rules, sometimes resulting in considerable stress. The Logan case study presents the example of a single, older Aboriginal woman who struggled to remain compliant. This woman was living alone in a three-bedroom house following the death of her partner and the departure of her adult son. Feeling emotionally attached to the house, she was reluctant to move and so had since taken in other tenants (strangers) in response to the QDHPW warning that she would have to move to a smaller house. It had been an unhappy experience mainly because the tenants were unreliable with rental payments. The QDHPW had also warned the tenant that she may have to pay for the unapproved changes she made to the house, such as the renovated floor covering. At the same time, a neighbour had complained about her dog, adding to the negative feedback and criticisms she was fielding from the QDHPW.

¹⁰ Another reason may have been that household heads were capable of managing a large household and saw some kinship-based value in it. This is an issue explored in Memmott et al. 2012 and highlights the complexity of defining Aboriginal household crowding.

3.2.5 *Limiting housing income*

It is the policy intent of successive Australian governments to move those Aboriginal tenants who can afford it from social housing into home ownership. Many tenants, however, remain uninterested in home ownership and tend to be sceptical of the suggestion, thus creating a significant barrier to policy implementation. The exception to this was Palm Island, where there was some interest in home ownership although progress was slow. Only one family made the transition to home ownership during the study period. This occurred outside of the town area, and involved a land only sale, as the house was self-built. Across the case study locations, most tenants expressed their desire to remain in their communities and in social housing, at least in the short-term. Many were struggling with their tenancies and so, apart from a few exceptions, the idea of owning their own home was considered beyond their capacity and therefore out of their vision.

Some tenants had demonstrated consistent rental history, however, while confident in their tenancies, remained concerned about retaining eligibility for social housing. Although not fully informed of the policy changes, there was a general awareness of the risk to their social housing tenancy should their household income rise above a certain threshold.¹¹ A related issue was the calculation of the rent payable, when based on the household income of all of the tenants registered on the tenancy agreement. Given the lack of alternative or affordable housing options, there was a perverse incentive to manage household income to fall under this threshold, or at least to limit the reporting of it. Several employed tenants in Mt Isa, Logan and Palm Island indicated their awareness of this issue and were monitoring their income accordingly.

Each location offered particular challenges leading tenants to work around the rule in different ways. Tenants' perspectives are linked to other features of the housing market in each location. On Palm Island, there is no opportunity for private rental, except on the mainland in nearby Townsville. Aboriginal people who were earning more than \$80 000 per annum usually ensured that they were not registered as a tenant, living temporarily with family and paying board or buying food. This may be financially rewarding for the host tenant, but can lead to crowding.

The QDHPW income threshold was a major disincentive to work for some tenants in Mt Isa, preferring to retain their social housing tenancy. Some tenants were keen to remain in their house, even when highly critical of the neighbourhood, rather than having a higher income and risk losing the house. Employed tenants in Logan had taken another path but with the same incentive to stay in their house. By reducing the number of hours worked they could keep their income under the \$80 000 threshold. They felt that the QDHPW were not concerned about letting them stay in a house but they intended to be in their home for many years. Some had made changes to the house, but mostly they maintained sentimental and/or symbolic attachments to the house and neighbourhood, where they had lived for many years with their families.¹²

At the other end of the opportunity scale, some tenants struggled to meet their needs—at times having no money to pay rent, falling into arrears and incurring breaches that ended in loss of tenancy and sometimes homelessness. A minority had been forced to do this at one time in Mt Isa, Tennant Creek and Logan, and had been camping in the bush outside towns and living in their cars and public parks in the city.

¹¹ Across the Queensland sites, this was understood to be \$80 000, but it varied according to household size and other factors (see Section 2.2.2).

¹² This is also a recurring finding on rental house attachment in the case of Aboriginal tenants in the Brisbane suburb of Inala (Greenop 2012).

Some tenants in regional locations said that they would go and live 'in the bush' in the old way, if living in a house became too expensive or too difficult to manage. On Palm Island, however, these were mainly informal family camps in beach areas not far from town. Families chose this option because the costs were less, there was less humbugging from family, and it was a relatively comfortable lifestyle for them.

In all of the case studies, tenants were required to notify their SHA if they were absent from the property. In Queensland, this applied if they intended to be away more than one week. If absent for more than four weeks (regardless if due to hospitalisation or imprisonment) then they must apply to do so in writing. The rent stays the same during their absence unless they negotiate a reduction on justifiable grounds. But because they were unaware of this possibility, some tenants thereby fell into rental arrears and incurred a large debt to the SHA. In Logan, the QDHPW manager reported that, more recently, tenants were more likely to report their absence as they understood that if they lose their tenancy it may not be as easy as it used to be to gain another. In the other case study locations, however, being absent without notification appears to have continued, suggesting that the motivations for mobility, particularly to visit kin, remain strong. Others commented that this rule acted as a disincentive for people to leave their home communities to seek new or improved employment.

3.2.6 Communication and trust

Across the five case studies, there were many complaints about the level of service delivery, and the dissatisfaction was linked to feelings of powerlessness and also disengagement from those processes. Some of the tenants' dissatisfaction was related to their unfamiliarity with their rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) in their state. Most had not read or fully understood the tenancy agreement that they signed as social housing tenants. In Logan, some people had distant memories of renting their house from an Aboriginal housing organisation without a tenancy agreement in place. More recent tenants could not remember much about the signing, and most said that they were not told many details. Tenants on Palm Island remember seeing but not reading it. They remembered being handed it by the DHO, but had not been taken through it. No one in any of the case studies locations indicated that they had kept a copy of the agreement although a few (e.g. in Logan) did have copies of recent correspondence from their SHA.

In Mt Isa and Tennant Creek, tenants raised the issue of appropriate levels of language used in the letters, notices and sometimes by the DHOs in person. For many tenants in Tennant Creek, English was their second language, and some tenants found it difficult to understand what was explained to them. This applied, in particular, to the formal English written into their tenancy agreement. Simple, non-standard tenancy forms were the exception not the rule across the five case study locations, with the exceptions occurring in the community organisations in Logan and Tennant Creek. In Logan, the KENC had developed their own tenancy agreement form for the first three months of accommodation for a client. Although the language was simplified and there were fewer pages than the RTA, there was no graphic content to assist a challenged reader. Similarly, the Anyinginyi staff tenancy agreement and the Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Project (TTAP) used customised agreements that were shorter and based on relatively simple English, but with no graphics.

Apart from the tenancy agreements, the SHAs have produced other material to help inform social housing tenants. The relevant websites in each state included a large range of information pages on all aspects of tenancies as well as downloadable fact sheets that are usually written in plain English. Nevertheless, this style of language is

still not easily understood by many Aboriginal people particularly those with low levels of literacy. Furthermore, it was not clear that many tenants had accessed the website or the printed versions of the documents that were readily available in the regional offices. In the WA Goldfields, tenants indicated that they were not accessing the website. Possibly to counter this problem, the QDHPW has also produced a large and colourful calendar for remote Indigenous social housing tenants with suggestions each month about how to be a responsible tenant. The material is pan-Indigenous in content and style so not necessarily appealing or appropriate for specific local contexts such as at Palm Island or Mt Isa.

Tenants in the WA Goldfields voiced some uneasiness about non-Indigenous DHOs, particularly those who lived elsewhere, that is, not resident locally and unknown to tenants. It was evident that tenants resented the short amount of time that visiting officers from regional centres spent in the community and their apparent lack of concern and engagement. On Palm Island, the government and community council housing staff were local residents, and were well known to the tenants. Some were members of the local Aboriginal community that generally added another positive dimension to the relationships. In such a relatively small community, the housing officers not only knew the tenants but also where they lived, and vice versa. Nevertheless, this lack of anonymity was occasionally a cause for concern, particularly when jealousies arose from perceived preferential treatment, with allocations and the extent to which various conditionalities were enforced. Familiarity between DHO and tenant is therefore generally advantageous but can cause problems when it is variable in its application to different tenants.

Thus there were tenants in each case study who gave the impression that housing officers had not treated them equally, fairly or with respect, both within their own communities and outside them. Their perceptions were based on their own experiences and the experiences of others in their community who seemed to enjoy privilege because of family affiliations to housing management. The tenants' interpretations of non-Indigenous people's circumstances were also relevant. In Logan, Tennant Creek, Palm Island and Mt Isa, tenants made the comparison between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people's housing in their communities. Most non-Indigenous residents were employed and well housed.

Within this context, a small minority of interviewees in each case study expressed deeply held views that Aboriginal people's lives were subject to ongoing racism. Issues of trust and powerlessness were discernible for the tenants themselves as relationships between landlords and tenants were seen as unequal (despite the reciprocal responsibilities of both as set down in the RTAs). One of the main points made in the WA Goldfields case study was how Indigenous structural inequality enhances the sense of inequality in the landlord tenant relationships.

WADoH is perceived to hold the power in the tenant landlord relationship and in this inherently unequal relationship the tenant feels the force of this strongly ... Where the tenant is as powerless as Aboriginal people, not only in the tenant landlord relationship but as a matter of social and economic structures, the potential for conflict and associated feelings of resentment are greater than in other Australian tenant landlord relationships. (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.30)

The Palm Island case study indicated that lack of trust between tenants and housing providers was structural, long-term and subject to 'a cycle of ups and downs dependent on a range of community and individual factors affecting the population on a regular basis' (Fantin 2016, p.37). The most stressed tenants did not speak of trust because they were in 'survival mode' (ibid, p.36) trying to cope with attributes of

poverty and disadvantage, including crowding, living with disabilities, and drug and alcohol problems (ibid, pp.17–20).

Similarly in Mt Isa, tenants were uneasy or fearful based largely on the impact of historical events in the region in which Aboriginal people have been the victims of the colonial process that has left them disadvantaged. As rent-paying tenants they were looking for reciprocity in the relationship with their housing providers but too often received criticisms and punishments instead of rewards. In Logan, many tenants spoke of the disadvantaged status of Indigenous people generally and about the stigma of living in social housing. Some younger tenants were keen to move away from the area if they ever encountered criticism from neighbours or housing officers. Their resilience seemed tempered by their sense of being a marginalised group.

3.3 Tenant attitudes to housing officers

Tenants showed both co-operation and opposition towards their tenancy management. Most tenants seemed to have accepted the rules and understood the need to adjust to them but did not always feel in control and were often lacking sufficient and effective support from their housing provider. Without support there were grounds for mistrust and resentment, which were not conducive to shared understandings and potentially could lead to low levels of engagement.

3.3.1 Tenants' attitudes towards government

Across the five case studies, tenants' attitudes towards government were marked by complaints about ineffective and inadequate levels of communication, slow and insufficient R&M as well as mistrust and misunderstanding about aspects of the rules, including around visitors and crowding, as well as particular cultural practices.

Many tenants wanted more face-to-face and personal communication with DHOs, as well as more respect. In Logan, the majority of tenants accepted that the rules were there to be followed, but many indicated that they were in need of more support. Furthermore, they felt that if the government showed they cared about Aboriginal people and gave more support then tenancies would work better, particularly if perceptions of mistrust and inferiority could be overcome. The power differential between tenants and government was real and pervasive. This was observable in the behaviour of several tenants who refused to open or ignored mail from QDHPW, fearful of its contents. They preferred face-to-face communication and when confronted by letters in the post they often adopted a resistance mode whether by design or default and simply left the mail in the letterbox or elsewhere unopened.

Some tenants on Palm Island were dissatisfied with the information they received from QDHPW. They remembered a time when they were more engaged in housing management, through a justice and elders group. This group worked with QDHPW and played a role in the resolution of disputes between tenants and the modelling of effective communication. In Logan and Mt Isa, misunderstandings about allowable lengths of stay for visitors typified a gap in the communication between housing officers and tenants. Under the QDHPW social housing rules, visitors staying longer than four weeks must sign on as tenants with a corresponding increase in rent. Because the tenants were aware that visitors needed to become tenants and pay rent, the DHOs concluded that the tenants were deliberately disregarding and contravening the rules. Their individual responses demonstrated, however, that they simply did not know the required time limit. This misunderstanding sometimes led to the head tenant incurring a debt with the QDHPW.

Many tenants were especially frustrated and unhappy about the rate and level of maintenance. With this understanding, tenants in most locations of the study were

reluctant to make extra efforts to follow the rules in keeping with tenancy demands. However, tenants in the WA case study demonstrated a different attitude. In Laverton, tenants were mindful that their visitor numbers were against the tenancy rules, so some suggested a solution, via a short-stay visitor facility. Their constructive approach was also indicative of some acknowledgement of WADoH's concern over crowding and the effect on houses and tenancies.

In Tennant Creek, some tenants were pragmatic about not following the cultural practice of vacating houses after death of an occupant, recognising that it was expedient for them to simply maintain their presence and keep the tenancy. Whereas previously tenants would swap houses with other relatives from another house following a death in their family, nowadays families feel pressured to remain in the house, despite the stress involved (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.26). Even culturally traditional tenants, therefore, were able to adapt to and follow the rule, although somewhat reluctantly given the stress involved. By contrast, there were tenants in Tennant Creek who perceived pressure from NTDoH to change traditional Aboriginal practices and rituals and so felt vulnerable, unsupported and somewhat recalcitrant as a result. This tended to lead to an unfortunate circularity. These tenants were inclined to disregard the rules and instead prioritise their own preferred behaviour, which then sometimes placed their tenancies at risk, particularly through ASB. As some of the more successful tenants advocated, the most challenging tenants were the ones who needed the most support to be proactive.

As documented for all of the case study locations, visitors resulted in more people in the house (often crowding) and invariably they preferred to socialise outdoors. This practice was openly discouraged in Tennant Creek and Mt Isa where DHOs encouraged tenants to refrain from sitting outside in groups that were visible from the street. It seemed that openly congregating in groups was conducive to ASB, which could trigger a complaint from neighbours. The tenancy officers were trying to pre-empt the problem by proposing a compromise and encouraging tenants to sit either inside the house or in their backyard so that they were not visible to passers-by. This interpretation of the rules around ASB impinged on the tenants' culturally preferred living patterns, where people continue to demonstrate a 'high degree of external orientation in domiciliary spaces', e.g. seeking to maintain maximum visibility of the coming and going of others (Memmott 2007, p.48). From our observations, most tenants appeared to be disregarding the suggestions and continued to sit where they enjoyed both social interaction and thermal comfort.

Tenants gave both positive and negative comments about individual DHOs. Most tenant-staff interaction seemed to be with non-Indigenous DHOs. Where tenants reported positive and constructive engagement with DHOs they were being supported in ways they needed; e.g. the pensioners in Tennant Creek were happy with the status quo with almost daily visits from their DHO. In Mt Isa and Palm Island, tenants similarly received assistance over timing of rental payments. Criticism of DHOs was based on a perceived lack of understanding and support, such as denying requests for transfers to move to a bigger house or better location.

Tenants' attitudes to government were negatively influenced by the issues around transfer of information about the rules in a cross-cultural environment. However, the relationships with individual DHOs were recognised positively by some tenants in all locations. It appeared therefore that more effective communication strategies would improve understanding between Indigenous tenants and DHOs, potentially improve tenant attitudes to government and assist in maintaining tenancies.

3.3.2 *Tenants' attitudes towards Indigenous organisations*

In the case study locations, tenants had expectations that local Indigenous and community organisations would be supportive and treat them fairly in their tenancies and related issues. Local organisations often collaborated in the case management of Indigenous people with high and very high needs. Compared to tenancy management, case management involved a much more intensive response to the social problems faced by an individual, and typically involved a degree of interagency coordination (e.g. disability, mental health, aged care, child wellbeing). Nevertheless, individual tenant's experiences varied and sometimes the organisation's services were not adequate for the most disadvantaged tenants.

The decline of ICHOs in the case study locations has had significant impacts on Indigenous tenants (see Section 5.2.3). First, they have had to adapt to the changed tenancy management process and personnel on the frontline. Another significant change has involved the removal of Indigenous governance structures in the communities and the disempowering consequences for individual Indigenous leaders, especially men.

In Mt Isa, Aboriginal tenants have limited access to formal or informal governance. A long period of instability around local Indigenous organisations has left a vacuum regarding Indigenous advocacy in the region and epitomises the lack of community support for Indigenous people. Tenants indicated that there were few if any leaders in the community who helped them, which reflects the general absence of any formal advocacy or representative roles. In this environment, the role of the surviving Indigenous and community agencies is significant. In Mt Isa, the Queensland Government-run Jimaylya Centre is an exemplary case.¹³ Although the centre was not a community or Indigenous organisation in terms of its formal structures, its clients recognised it as an Aboriginal place and organisation—where staff were mostly Indigenous and the ways of operating acknowledged Aboriginal values and ways of living. Those who had moved into mainstream tenancies have tended to sustain the new living skills learnt during their time with Jimaylya; for example, reduced alcohol consumption, conformity to tenancy rules and also gardening, which was acknowledged by DHOs (Memmott & Nash 2012).

It was common across the five case study regions for tenants of certain families to have affiliations with individual Aboriginal organisations. In Tennant Creek, some tenants were confident of receiving effective and timely support due to the employment of a family member in an Indigenous service organisation. Others without links to an organisation, and particularly those tenants with NTDoH, were without that advantage. At times, however, tenants appreciated the role of the individual Indigenous housing officers who were able to communicate more effectively, using more familiar ways of relating.

In WA Goldfields, the minority of tenants thought that the CHOs from the Indigenous housing organisation GIHO were helpful, most probably because the tenants were able to be in closer contact with them compared to WADoH DHOs. The role which local governance played was significant in some communities as relations could be successfully managed locally.

On Palm Island, the monthly meeting (Delegation Day) was a successful strategy by the Shire Council where tenants could communicate with both the Shire Council (PIASC) and the QDHPW. The Council was able to act as an advocate for tenants to QDHPW through that meeting, where community could raise any issue for discussion,

¹³ The full name of the Jimaylya Centre for the homeless is the Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre (JTHC).

including housing. Tenants were ambivalent but saw potential for the improvement of services through this channel. Nevertheless, it was evident that problems arose when individual tenants were aligned with organisations through family connections, and perceptions of favouritism were involved. Tenants saw a need for greater collaboration between QDHPW and PIASC, which could result in clearer roles and more effective services from the Indigenous organisations and the QDHPW.

Tenants in Logan who were clients of ICHOs and other community housing organisations reported positive experiences in their tenancies. Youth and Family Services (YFS) and the Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre (KENC) delivered crisis, transitional and long-term accommodation in Logan and regularly supported Indigenous clients. The clients of YFS and KENC were generally people with very high needs who needed a range of support services and were unable to cope effectively with demands from family or others. Many had struggled to achieve and maintain their social housing, some having survived successive failed tenancies. Invariably these tenants had built a certain amount of trust with the YFS and KENC frontline case managers. Those tenants seemed to acknowledge the benefits of the case management that they were receiving from the organisations and understood that their cooperation was critical for their tenancy.

3.4 Overview of tenant perspectives

Tenants' perspectives differed between the five case studies but there were also many issues in common. Indigenous tenants had entered social housing via a range of different pathways although all through some kind of disadvantage. Their success in achieving social housing and their ability to sustain tenancies were related to several socio-economic factors, including income, education and health, as well as sociocultural capital, particularly family networks.

Despite the diversity, all tenants interviewed understood the basic tenancy rule of paying rent in order to live in a dwelling owned by another party. Experienced tenants and those in employment (and/or who had achieved a certain level of education) demonstrated some knowledge of other rules as well as the obligations and responsibilities of both tenants and housing officers. Other more vulnerable or less experienced tenants (who may have had a history of welfare dependency or a 'poor' rental history) were less able to articulate an understanding of the rules or the reasons behind them. This lack of basic understanding clearly questions the potential efficacy of housing conditionalities. Their comments nevertheless provided powerful and useful insights into Aboriginal lifeworlds and the impacts of conditionalities in their lives.

Family relationships were paramount for most Indigenous tenants. In all of the case studies, Aboriginal cultural networks based on kin and country, as well as historical connections motivated, certain behaviours that often conflicted with tenancy rules. Many tenants had risked their tenancies because of visitors staying for extended periods (causing crowding), which at times could lead to excessive alcohol consumption and associated criminal and anti-social behaviour, including family violence, public nuisance and damage to housing. Yet they affirmed they were bound to care for their kin.

With respect to the rules, most tenants prioritised their tenancy and managed to abide by the rules even when there was considerable social pressure to disregard them. Some tenants had chosen to prioritise their tenancy and even looked for tighter rules around ASB.

In all locations, tenants were dissatisfied about maintenance and repairs and felt some resentment for this inadequacy from the government and other housing providers. When the housing provider failed to reciprocate payment of rent with maintenance and repairs, tenants perceived a continuing inequality. Other tenants felt resentment over the lack of incentives afforded to good tenants.

Housing is just one of many inter-related needs. Tenants who were in need of other services were at risk of losing their tenancy when 'things went wrong' and their day-to-day lives were disrupted (e.g. financial stress resulting in missed rental payment). Tenants who were highly vulnerable included post-release prisoners, alcohol rehabilitation clients, and women and families who were victims of family violence. In Mt Isa and Tennant Creek, tenants in such situations could obtain support through transitional accommodation programs. These critical programs worked with tenants to help them manage their multiple and complex health needs in ways that maximised their transition to a successful housing outcome.

In all of the case study locations, housing choices were limited by a lack of available housing. This was often compounded by households' low-income and lack of good rental history, which prevented private rental alternatives. Tenants were not highly motivated to seek employment and opportunities were limited for different reasons in remote and regional areas as well as in the city. Many were also reluctant to declare high income as it may threaten their ability to remain in their home. Home ownership was not attractive to most tenants because of a lack of suitable and affordable dwellings for sale and the uncertainty of financial commitment and responsibility involved.

Most tenants understood that they were not in an equal relationship with their housing provider, particularly when this was a state government agency—tenants were especially fearful of eviction. For various reasons associated with their disadvantaged circumstances, tenants may have had a poor rental history with their SHA or from private rental housing. If the tenant had been evicted from private rental within the previous three years, it is highly probable that they would be registered on TICA, the rental history database which is accessible (through paid subscription) to all sectors of the rental market across Australia. Depending on the severity of the reason for eviction, they may have struggled to achieve a tenancy.

SHAs have their own tenancy records and an eviction has consequences for re-tenancing. Following an eviction by QDHPW in Logan, a tenant must demonstrate 6–12 months of good rental history in either social or private housing before the QDHPW will rent to them again. The mandatory waiting period can place the tenant and their family at high risk of homelessness and other related problems.

Effective Indigenous community governance or other representative structures strongly impacted on sustainable tenancies, although in some cases, tenants raised problems over preferential treatment of certain families by particular community organisations. Individual housing officers, particularly resident Indigenous staff, were able to make a positive impact on tenancies by responding to local housing constraints and community priorities, albeit within the limits of their roles.

4 GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES

This chapter presents government perspectives on conditionality in social housing that relate primarily to the views of the government Departmental Housing Officers (DHOs). Discussions with other government employees, including managers in regional offices of housing bureaucracies, also informed our analysis.

As set out in Chapter 2, recent changes to government policies have brought about changes to the ways in which social housing tenancies are managed. Individual jurisdictions have rolled out programs in slightly different ways but federal government policies have provided the overarching framework of conditionality for linking welfare rights to responsible citizen behaviour. The new policy settings involved some specific changes for Indigenous people.

An intended purpose of the heightened conditionality in social housing was to modify people's behaviour using the threat of consequences. The theory of change is that tenants will view the tenancy relationship differently, and take better care of the properties and avoid adverse consequences, including eviction.

From government DHO perspectives, the changed rules and procedures have had some positive impacts on compliance by tenants, highlighting other issues which have played out in different ways in Logan, Mt Isa, Palm Island, Tennant Creek and the WA Goldfields. Although there were common issues between the housing officers or frontline workers in the five case study locations, the circumstances relating to particular places and jurisdictions were significantly different. Key issues from the government section of each case study are listed in a separate table in Appendix 2.

4.1 Constraints in implementing policy

4.1.1 *Increasing Departmental Housing Officer workloads*

In each of the five case studies, government staff, including DHOs, indicated that there were too few staff to meet the workload of tenancy management. Many commented on the additional administrative processes arising from the new rules within the antisocial behaviour management (ASB) policies.

In Mt Isa, all of the DHOs commented and some complained about the added administrative load from the ASB or 'three strikes' policy. QDHPW has increased the level of monitoring and supporting documentation required, in case the DHOs' decisions on the offending tenants were ever challenged. The thickness of one tenant's file subject to a number of breaches and strikes was indicative of the many actions and reports required and the time needed to complete them.

Housing officers in Tennant Creek also suggested that the changed policy had created more work for them with no increase in the level of staffing. They advocated greater contact with tenants, 'We need more inspections but there's not enough staff.' Others described the constraints and opportunities that come from working in such small satellite housing offices.

Tennant Creek is a small office and each staff member does everything. That's positive because you can deal across different duties but it can result in an increase in individual's workload. (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.29)

A related issue was that the department had deemed it unnecessary to employ Public Housing Safety Officers (PHSOs) in the Tennant Creek office.¹⁴ The department apparently could not justify a PHSO because of the lack of ASB reported. Frontline DHOs argued that this was due to under-reporting, but nevertheless felt a substantial impact from ASB and related damages. Also relevant to staff workload, the position of the Indigenous Client Liaison Officer (otherwise referred to in this report as Indigenous Engagement Officer or IEO) was renamed as a generic Departmental Housing Officer (DHO) during the time of the project.

Since July 2013, DHOs in Mt Isa reported an increased administrative workload from managing the ASB. Some were frustrated by the changing policy landscape and its implications for their dealings with tenants and also their workloads. Their concern suggested that DHOs were experiencing increased levels of stress from the policy change that occurred around ASB.

Staff in the Logan Office of QDHPW (locally known as the Woodridge Housing Service Centre or WHSC) also spoke about increased workload but also an expanded role for DHOs in Logan, which led to an extra person from the central office being seconded to their office. More specifically an Indigenous Liaison Officer was appointed that suggested the QDHPW was aware that the needs of Indigenous tenants were not being met.

On Palm Island, QDHPW staff were not as concerned over the changed rules around ASB because they were not implementing the policy as forcibly as in Mt Isa and Logan. DHOs on Palm Island instead felt pressured from under-resourcing and the administrative load of new housing programs due to 45 new houses being built in 2013–14. In addition to their normal duties (including housing allocations, managing rental arrears, processing new housing applications, updating existing applications and taking maintenance requests from residents who did not want to use the 'blue phone' or 1800 number), DHOs worked with Queensland Health and the Department of Communities on up-grades and renovations for tenants living with disabilities, and organised transitional housing for tenants while the upgrades were undertaken (Fantin 2016, p.26).

In WA Goldfields, the DHOs were constrained by their limited time in communities as they had to travel long distances from Kalgoorlie. Tenants lamented the lack of access to DHOs and the way that this compromised their efforts at communication. More WADoH staff would have allowed increased access. It seemed that the DHOs believed that 'personal communication counts' (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.34) with tenants, but when time and workload did not permit travel, they would contact them by phone regarding tenancy issues.

4.1.2 Lack of funding for repairs and refurbishments

In all case study locations, levels of funding were critical for the capacity of regional offices of SHAs to meet demands for repairs and maintenance. In Tennant Creek, a large number of houses (up to 15) required expenditure on major repairs and refurbishment, before being available for rent, but insufficient funds were available. The DHOs were concerned that the empty houses could be vandalised, increasing the time and expense involved in repairs. There were already excessively long waiting times, and associated problems of housing stress and homelessness. In Mt Isa, the houses were old and poorly maintained and in some cases, damage from tenants and their visitors had exacerbated their condition. Health and safety were a priority but at

¹⁴ Public Housing Safety Officers work with tenants, neighbours and visitors to resolve and reduce ASB in and around social housing. They can direct individuals to stop ASB, direct non-residents to leave, ban people for up to 12 months, tip out alcohol, and seize dangerous items. www.housing.nt.gov.au.

times cyclical R&M was not done periodically or effectively. Lack of QDHPW funds and a backlog of repairs had been paralleled by a shift in responsibility to tenants for damages that were not deemed normal 'wear and tear'. DHOs thought that they had managed to make this change clear to tenants although some still struggled with the new process.

The National Partner Agreement for Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) in 2009 brought a shift in funding from ICHOs to SHAs, which was a major influence around housing refurbishments and renewals in all of the remote case study communities. As part of the new arrangements, funding for new housing in discrete Aboriginal communities was conditional on government securing 40-year leases for the land, and then for SHAs to manage the housing. Comparing the two discrete communities in the WA Goldfields, Mt Margaret and Wongatha Wonganarra, only Mt Margaret entered into a Housing Management Agreement (HMA) with WADoH. Mt Margaret gained access to housing refurbishment and renewal projects, but Wongatha Wonganarra did not.

NPARIH funds were not able to be used for mainstream public housing on freehold land in towns. So despite their remoteness, the public housing in Laverton and Tennant Creek was not eligible. In Tennant Creek, the houses in the Community Living Areas were refurbished but not the houses in the town. On the outskirts of Laverton, Wongatha Wonganarra would have been eligible for NPARIH funds, had they signed a HMA with the SHA.

Lack of government funding for new housing was an issue in all of the case study locations. The situation was being addressed to an extent in Logan and in the WA Goldfields with some new houses being built. In Tennant Creek, however, no new houses had been built for many years. Similarly in Mt Isa, the housing stock was old and many units were in poor condition. Tenants were seeking more flats and more five-bedroom houses. The DHOs were aware that, in many cases, they were asking tenants to look after properties that were difficult to maintain even for those tenants with the best intentions to do so.

4.1.3 Understanding and communicating with Aboriginal tenants

DHOs commented on a range of issues that were significant for them in managing tenancies for Aboriginal people. These included Aboriginal social and cultural practices as well as attitudes to official departmental communication and the tenants' interpretation of rules around absences, transfers and succession in tenancies.

Discussion with the DHOs in all case study locations touched on the notion of what constituted cultural practices and their relevance for living within the tenancy rules. For example, DHOs seemed to accept that large family get-togethers were culturally important for Indigenous people. At the same time, they were concerned to point out that there should be a clear distinction made between some of the behaviours (e.g. excessive drinking) that often occur at family gatherings, and the reasons why people meet socially in large groups, including for funerals. In some locations, DHOs expressed disbelief that many Indigenous people were practising their culture in any way nowadays (e.g. in Logan where Aboriginal people appear to live Western-style lives), while others held the view that large family gatherings were significant expressions of Indigenous cultural values and beliefs.

Across all of the case studies locations, however, it was apparent that DHOs understand how, to some extent, drinking and family violence have become associated with Indigenous people collectively, even though the majority of the Indigenous population in those areas may not behave in that way. Such associations can negatively affect social housing tenants, especially in communities where the

majority of social housing tenants are Aboriginal, such as in small, remote communities. DHOs who visit infrequently may be more susceptible to negative impressions.

In Logan, ASB has been associated with Aboriginal people, including in the media, which has contributed to negative racial stereotyping within the community. Some of the Indigenous tenants interviewed in Logan argued that ASB is caused by different groups, not just Indigenous. They experienced a flow-on effect, which added to the stigma they already felt was associated with social housing. DHOs in Logan recognised these negative associations and tried to counter community perceptions in a positive way. For example, they tried to highlight how Indigenous community networks provide support for families facing difficulties (e.g. the outpouring of community support for families grieving a young Aboriginal boy who had died in violent circumstances).

In Mt Isa, neighbourhood crowding and ASB by street gangs, particularly in the suburb of Pioneer, were challenging issues for DHOs. Indigenous families frequently hosted visiting relatives, and tenants also travelled regularly in a pattern of circular mobility resulting in constantly changing household size and composition, as well as crowded houses. On the other hand, the QDHPW was trying to change the perception in the broader community that large Indigenous families were necessarily problematic. DHOs understood that large family groups can offer valuable support; for instance, support from family groups can help change behaviour resulting from drugs and alcohol abuse. The DHOs understood that '[f]amily support from the top generation to the children is important' (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.16).

The Palm Island case study revealed that DHOs held some concerns about Indigenous cultural practices, but were not overly concerned with day-to-day domiciliary activities. DHOs 'often struggled to understand the world view of the residents and tenants' (Fantin 2016, p.29-30), particularly when it came to the changing composition of families in houses. Changes in family composition had a direct impact on their administrative tasks, whereas outdoor fires and family gatherings were less of a concern. The DHOs had trouble in communicating certain messages to tenants and were not sure why the tenants did not understand the detail of some rental conditions. Unfortunately, the IEOs working in the Palm Island housing office were compromised by their particular relationships in the community and could not always assist (see Section 3.2.6).

Some of the case studies (Mt Isa and Tennant Creek) reported how tenants had difficulties with the rules regarding daily practices of living. DHOs were aware of certain cultural practices within small bush communities that presented challenges for tenants and their neighbours in an urban environment. For example, in the regional communities of the Mt Isa region, tenants regularly butchered animals and cooked them in their back yards. Such activities can result in extra refuse in the yard as well as smoke and smells from the use of a fire-pit for cooking. Often this kind of activity is highly social and often accompanied by drinking and partying behaviours; at times, it can lead to arguing, fighting and occasional family violence. Apart from the ongoing physical and mental health issues involved, this scenario presented a challenge for DHOs each time a situation escalated and complaints were made about ASB.

The DHOs take into consideration that there are many facets of good housing outcomes and that simple and direct implementation of rules may be unproductive. One DHO in Tennant Creek explained how most tenants have never had a mainstream tenancy and have come to Tennant Creek from bush communities:

Tenants who are first generation in houses constitute 30 per cent, as a rough guess. Most have never had tenancy in mainstream society. Most come from communities. They don't fully understand tenancy rules and regulations. (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.28)

Although tenants in Logan were not the first generation living in any kind of housing (unlike some tenants in remote locations), Indigenous ways of living continued to be relevant to how they lived. DHOs and management staff in Logan were divided about whether the Indigenous ways of living were in opposition to the intended outcomes of policy. They generally preferred to consider Indigenous people in the same way that they viewed other social housing tenants who behaved in ways that were a potential barrier for the implementation of the relevant policy. In other words, for some Logan DHOs, the focus was on the behaviour rather than the person's ethnicity.

Research on frontline workers in Indigenous housing settings is limited but there have been suggestions that the cultural awareness of DHOs needs to be improved based on a survey in several locations in Queensland (Proudfoot and Habibis 2014). If the DHOs do not have sensitive and well-informed cultural awareness training or prior understanding, they may be more prone to equate ASB with culturally derived behaviours, and such generalisation may limit their ability to communicate and build trust with Indigenous tenants. A basic level of such training for DHOs is generally standard. For example, a Logan-based DHO pointed out that QDATSIP 'assist us with cultural awareness and other things in Indigenous service delivery' (Nash 2016, p.25).

There are many underlying causes for the behaviour of Aboriginal tenants with multiple and complex needs, stemming from their disadvantaged circumstances, including low levels of education. All of the case studies reported DHO concerns over some aspects of tenants' inadequate understanding about their tenancy agreement. The reasons for tenants' gap in knowledge may be an inability to read the RTA due to the bureaucratic language combined with their relatively poor English language proficiency, or because of the lack of assistance to understand meanings. As revealed in all of the case studies, the lack of understanding can set up a barrier for communication between DHOs and tenants that potentially impedes the tenancy management process.

In Tennant Creek, tenants experiencing high levels of vulnerability had relatively low levels of education and did not find it easy to read or understand standard (non-Aboriginal) English and the kind of formal language evident in a typical tenancy agreement. The difficulty with English also extended to reading mail from NTDoH. Part of the tenants' reluctance to open mail from the department was their lack of language skills as well as their fear of adverse communication (discussed in previous Section 3.3.1). DHOs were generally aware that face-to-face communication was more effective than sending information by letter, but opportunities for this type of communication were often limited. In Mt Isa, however, DHOs were keen to increase communication with tenants through various media, including mail-outs, seemingly unaware that some tenants characterised mail from SHAs as a kind of harassment. Nevertheless they all agreed that face-to-face communication on conditionality issues was preferable (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.79).

DHOs on Palm Island reported difficulty in getting tenants to understand the rules and knew that many were not reading letters that had been sent to advise them of their responsibilities and changes taking place. The DHOs may or may not have been aware of the strong view of some tenants about appropriate communication on Palm Island. For example, one woman talked about the need to:

Go door to door and have a conversation with community people—break it down (the rules). Skills of people giving the message not well developed. (Fantin 2016, p.42)

People may have not been reading the letters for a variety of reasons—because they could not read, because the letter was lost (as observed in the Goldfields) or because there was a general fear of the news that might be contained in the letter (as reported in Logan). Whatever the reason, if tenants did not understand their responsibilities as set out in the tenancy agreement then they were much more likely to break the rules. Although the evidence indicates that letters are the most ineffective way to communicate with Indigenous tenants, it was not clear that the DHOs or management were considering any change to that procedure.

4.1.4 Lack of engagement with other services

DHOs in all case studies were interested in how community organisations and other agencies could facilitate policy implementation for social housing tenants. In cases where this kind of collaboration was lacking, the potential for negative housing outcomes was evident.

In Tennant Creek, DHOs believed that problems facing tenants such as drunkenness, fighting and violence that in turn made difficulties for DHOs, could be effectively dealt with through education in the broadest sense. They were also concerned about what they did not understand about individual tenant's situations. As one DHO stated,

By getting more involved, other agencies can bring up issues that we don't know about ... It's not just housing issues that people have to deal with, so it's important to involve other agencies ... issues by issue, as something arises. (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.27)

Lack of integrated services was criticised by DHOs in Logan for Indigenous tenants, especially for those facing issues with health, foster care and domestic violence. The most vulnerable tenants could benefit from improved service integration, but the DHOs were aware of the funding issues involved, noting that 'cost, training and time available' were typical government constraints (Nash 2016, p.25).

On Palm Island, several government agencies were collaborating around home ownership, but DHOs largely dealt with tenancy matters on their own. Other services for tenants required coordination with other agencies (e.g. disability support required liaison with Department of Communities and Queensland Health), and while this work added to the workload and time pressures for DHOs, they initiated interagency coordinated responses for stressed families who were in 'survival mode' (Fantin 2016, p.36).

A greater challenge for DHOs on Palm Island around tenancy management was the lack of communication with Building Asset Services (BAS, otherwise known as 'Q-Build')—despite this entity also being within QDHPW—that often meant DHOs were not aware of the schedule of housing maintenance. BAS officers were based off-island in regional centres and did not have consistent and regular contact with DHOs about housing schedules. Tenants vented their frustration at the DHOs, when BAS was responsible for the delay or lack of communication. Relationships between the DHOs and tenants suffered as a result, which weakened cooperation in other tenancy matters.

Mt Isa, on the other hand, revealed a more positive, but not ideal, scenario. Regular meetings between QDHPW and other agencies in Mt Isa were integral to their

involvement in case management.¹⁵ The DHOs were positive about this process, but advised that it was not consistently active or productive, and it was dependent on stakeholders having the necessary knowledge and expertise. It also required long-term commitment by a range of stakeholders with competing agendas. Nevertheless, a number of disadvantaged tenants had been assisted in achieving improved housing outcomes through this process, and ICM was a positive feature of the recognition space in Mt Isa.

Compared to SHAs in other jurisdictions, the WADoH had no formalised mechanism or governance arrangements to engage with tenants, and often did not have personal contacts in the communities like Laverton (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.33). The DHOs nonetheless valued personal communication with tenants and actively looked for an intermediary organisation to facilitate contact. In the WA Goldfields, GIHO had formal mechanisms in place for developing relationships with individual tenants. The future pattern of housing management will change for many Goldfields communities because, in 2015, the WADoH reduced the number of communities that GIHO was contracted to serve, instead awarding the contract to a non-Indigenous housing organisation, including the three sites that were the focus in the study.

4.1.5 Departmental Housing Officers' views on home ownership for tenants

As discussed in Chapter 2 regarding the Forrest Review, the Australian Government is considering policies that will increase the level of home ownership for Indigenous Australians and may encourage people to move to places where they can gain employment. In all of the five case studies, DHOs reported that take-up of this idea has been limited. They cited the tenants' perceptions of their poverty and disadvantage as the main reason for the low rate of home purchase, although other factors were recognised in different locations (e.g. lack of suitable properties in Logan, Tennant Creek and WA Goldfields). Generally, there was a range of complex land administration issues which impeded alienation of land into private leasehold.

When people expressed interest in home ownership, their motives were more in the realms of security and heritage, rather than in terms of wealth creation, as the literature suggests (Memmott et al. 2009; Moran et al. 2010). In all of the case study regions, DHOs were similarly aware that certain Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) tenants claimed rights to house succession, whereby tenancies were passed down between generations of the one family.

Palm Island had experienced the most activity on home ownership of all the case study sites. Arrangements for land sales had been negotiated with the Council (PIASC) but only one family became a home owner during the time of the project, although other applications were in process. The case study described intricate steps required for the QDHPW and the Home Ownership Team (QDATSIP) staff to facilitate home ownership indicating that it was a complex process for all involved.

4.2 Agency of Departmental Housing Officers

The discussion above has highlighted the constraints imposed on DHOs by staff shortages, insufficient funding resources and other constraints in dealing with the rules and Indigenous tenants. Two interrelated and critical factors were the DHOs' knowledge and assumptions about Aboriginal people and their lifeworlds, and their flexibility around applying the tenancy rules.

¹⁵ Integrated Case Management (ICM) was used by the ICM Group in Mt Isa to co-ordinate services where there are multiple issues and the client's situation is complex, particularly clients experiencing homelessness (QCOS n.d.).

4.2.1 *Experience and knowledge of Aboriginal lifeworlds*

The knowledge of Aboriginal lifeworlds varied between the DHOs in the case study locations. Although no formal assessments of cross-cultural experience and knowledge were undertaken, each DHO revealed aspects of their relevant understandings and attitudes in discussion with the researchers.

The QDHPW provided an Indigenous Liaison Officer (IEO) to work in its Logan office (WHSC) for the two-year period (late-2012 to late-2014) that spanned the time of the changing ASB policy. The appointment was linked to the overarching changes regarding the transfer of social housing from QDHPW to Logan City Community Housing (LCCH) and signalled the QDHPW's understanding of the need for a DHO with strong cultural understanding. Apart from DHO duties, the officer was tasked with assisting Indigenous applicants on tenancy issues as well as facilitating Indigenous community engagement with the WHSC, (e.g. an Elders' housing group which provided two men or two women volunteers for a few hours each week to provide support for tenants in the office environment).

In Tennant Creek, views ranged widely, including the belief that 'family connection is Aboriginal culture—the behaviour is not' (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.26), as voiced by one DHO in defence of Aboriginal people's values. Others held a deficit view of culture where the absence of traditional cultural values and practices were seen as indications that people were culturally impoverished.

None of the DHOs interviewed were openly hostile or overtly racist in their comments about Indigenous tenants. DHOs were aware of the past legacy whereby government officers had been insensitive to the lifeworlds of Indigenous tenants, but some commented how that had changed. As one frontline worker in Logan commented,

... if the rent is due while you're away [on sorry business] then there's a problem—there's been quite a number of cases in social housing. People turn up weeks later. Housing would throw out belongings etc. Rules haven't actually changed, but it wouldn't happen now. We have learnings about the culture. (Nash 2016, p.35)

In WA Goldfields, the DHOs were aware of the advantages of making personal contact with tenants as much as possible. Their ability to learn about a particular tenant group was limited, however, by staff instability and longevity, and whether they could find the time to invest to get to know tenants personally.

By contrast in Mt Isa, the DHOs had been living locally for several years and were knowledgeable of the families and those who were likely to be having difficulties. They had observed the role of strong matriarchs ('natural helpers') who were able to keep their tenancies amidst much cultural pressure. Despite the known strengths of some tenancies, the DHOs were focussed on changing the behaviour that was causing problems in other tenancies.

Indigenous housing officers were employed in an engagement or liaison capacity for at least some of the study period in most study locations (except for WA Goldfields), referred to throughout this report as Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs). In Logan, the QDHPW realised that an Indigenous staff member was able to facilitate improved engagement with the local Indigenous community. In that sense, they introduced some flexibility into the application process whereby the IEO attended all first interviews for Indigenous applicants and at any other time when the IEO, DHOs and tenants might request.

The Palm Island QDHPW office employed more Indigenous staff into IEO roles than the SHA housing offices in the other case studies. As insiders in the community, they

had a high level of awareness of local sensitivities and issues but their kin relationships with tenants could put them in difficult positions with respect to their duties around enforcing tenancy rules. In Tennant Creek, the role of the IEO was important for tenants particularly as the officer at the time was a long-term employee and a respected traditional landowner. Many tenants would ask to speak to the officer when contacting the local SHA office.

In the Mt Isa region, there was one Aboriginal DHO at Doomadgee and another had started work in the Mt Isa regional office during the time of the project. Management were cautious about how the pressure from kin relations might work. QDHPW had learnt from experience on Mornington Island that a non-resident, non-Indigenous DHO could potentially be more effective in the role, in order to avoid accusations of nepotism around employment. However, senior management thought that the most significant issue for Aboriginal staff was around compliance, 'instructing people to comply to their tenancy agreement—new [Aboriginal IEOs] ones can't cope with this and don't last' (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.65). So while IEOs played an important role in tenancy management relations, it was the general view of DHOs that the formal role of the DHO required straightforward bureaucratic procedures where flexibility was limited.

4.2.2 Flexibility and good practice of Departmental Housing Officers

Within the constraints of their positions, it is possible for frontline workers to modify their approaches according to their perception of the applicants' needs. Some chose to follow an individual approach and others aimed to treat all clients (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the same way depending on the issues. The issues they typically faced included visitor numbers and lengths of stay, absent tenants, requests for transfers and expectations of tenancy succession.

All DHOs believed in the rules to the extent that they did not think the main rules (i.e. pay the rent, look after house/yard, no ASB) should be changed. All of the case studies reported that DHOs were able to influence tenancy outcomes to some extent, mostly through effective communication about the rules. Many felt limited by staff numbers and administration load (as discussed above). Their perception of potential influence related directly to their flexibility regarding the rules as well as their confidence about achieving changes in behaviour from the tenants who were having difficulties. If they could achieve behavioural change and stable tenancies, then any flexibility they introduced was defensible.

Some of the DHOs in Logan saw their role in terms of strategies that help ensure that tenants keep to the rules by relying strongly on the cooperation of the tenants. From this point of view, the tenants were seen as largely responsible for their actions and the success of their tenancy. It was also known that the tenants' inability to pay the rent was indicative of a troubled tenancy, because rental arrears were the most common reason for breach and eviction. When tenants cannot pay for repairs and are forced into debt over damages and are struggling to meet other costs of living, the situation may lead to rent arrears and then to eviction. The DHOs knew that this was the unenviable cycle of the most vulnerable tenants and so inflexible application of the rules could severely discriminate against the most disadvantaged tenants.

The ASB policy was working well in some ways in Logan. According to one DHO, 'previously arrears weren't tolerated but 30 to 40 contacts later we would get them to act and link them up with other agencies ... now it takes about 10 contacts' (Nash 2016, p.25). Similarly in the WA Goldfields, the DHOs saw the Disruptive Behaviour Management Policy (DBMP)—a new strengthened version of previous ASB policy—as useful as it very clearly interpreted the consequences of breaking rules. One DHO

in the Kalgoorlie office summed up the changes under the DMBP, 'In the past we'd send out a breach notice and rarely get a response. Now [we're] taking phone calls on the first strike notice' (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.32).

With a positive attitude to tenant success, DHOs have been able to facilitate better outcomes. At the same time, they were relying on the threat of a faster route to eviction if the tenant was not proactive.

DHOs in Mt Isa took a relatively flexible approach based on assessment of each individual case. For example, they were aware that some tenants were able to manage visitors and the potential effects of crowding in ways that minimised or avoided bad behaviour. As one DHO commented,

[there] has to be compromise—'give and take'. Not all rules fit all circumstances—there will always be exceptions. We try to fit our policies to circumstances as much as possible [and] take families into consideration. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.47)

DHOs recognised tenant mobility as problematic for tenancy, when tenants were away from their houses for extended periods without informing the department. If the tenants stopped paying rent in that case then they would incur a debt for rental arrears, as often happened. It was difficult for DHOs to be flexible in these situations when clearly they were working towards education and behaviour change.

Ongoing community and family feuding and violence have become commonplace in the suburb of Pioneer and many tenants expressed a desire to transfer to another area in Mt Isa. DHOs had implemented various interventions to improve the appearance of properties with the intention of increasing house pride. The clean-up day in Pioneer had changed the street view of the house and yards and was being followed-up by house painting. The DHOs were confident that these projects, which had required a considerable amount of community engagement, were impacting positively and so similar interventions may be considered in the future.

The remote Aboriginal community of Doomadgee, however, presented a contrasting situation for Mt Isa DHOs. Due to a different leasing arrangement, the Council had veto power over the DHOs' decisions concerning tenants, including eviction proposals requested by the QDHPW. The Council often allowed a tenant to stay in their house, recognising their territorial 'rights'; this was a sharp contrast to QDHPW's policies.

In Tennant Creek, one DHO in particular took the extra initiative to make frequent trips and conduct regular face-to-face communication activities as a way of keeping tenants focussed on their responsibilities. At the same time, the DHO was demonstrating that the government wanted to stay in communication with the tenants and help to keep their maintenance needs up-to-date. The DHOs recognised that some tenants found this difficult. They wanted to assist tenants with practical living skills, including house-cleaning, particularly those people who had moved into houses for the first time, having previously lived in self-constructed housing in bush communities. Most DHOs were aware that they needed to take a tenant's background life experience into consideration in managing their tenancy. DHOs were also aware of the need for a sensitive balance; as frontline workers they should not become desensitised to the non-mainstream behavioural norms of some tenants thereby accepting practices that could compromise a tenancy.

At times, these DHOs felt constrained when there were difficult ASB issues to resolve, particularly alcohol abuse, that was having direct consequences on both property and people. DHOs realised the constraints involved and that compromise was the most appropriate approach for changing tenant behaviour in the long term,

... you can't change culture like that. You need to work over a period of time but also NTDoH can change the way they do things (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.26)

DHOs on Palm Island were seen to have the interests of the tenants at heart and were concerned about developing positive relationships. The DHOs at Palm Island had been there for more than three years and over that time had developed an understanding of social forces in the community. However, community politics and interpersonal relationships were matters of concern at times. There was a high turnover among Indigenous IEOs, and others were reluctant to take on this work, cautious about challenging tenants because of threat of repercussion. As one tenant was reported to say, 'we know where you live!' (Fantin 2016, p.27).

The DHOs on Palm Island had a pro-active approach and adapted their role to the work on hand. For example, they took on the job of organising transitional housing for tenants whose houses were being upgraded under NPARIH, 'otherwise it would never get done' (ibid, p.29). Housing staff were observed using negotiation skills, housing allocation opportunities, saving incentive schemes (through rental credits with Centrelink) and to work with tenants on a range of issues. An informal saving scheme operated around social housing, where people were encouraged to pay a small amount in excess of their rent, which could then be drawn down, for Christmas or other unforeseen events (known as 'The Christmas Club'). In the absence of banking facilities at Palm Island, frontline staff were successfully using this saving scheme as an incentive for people to pay their rent. A very similar scheme operated in Mt Isa, where DHOs encouraged tenants to build up credit prior to the periods when visitors were most likely to arrive (with a potential for subsequent home damage).

In the WA Goldfields, DHOs were experienced housing officers and apparently well-versed in the details of the tenancy agreement, but they seemed to be inflexible and not motivated to better understand the lifeworlds of their Aboriginal tenants. While WADoH has a Cultural Diversity and Language Services Policy which alludes to Aboriginal social practices and their relevance for tenancy, the case study reported that the DHOs did not always take this approach in practice. DHOs, however, were convinced that the rules were getting tighter and that they were 'obligated to invoke the Residential Tenancy Act in a strict and timely manner' (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.33).

DHOs in Mt Isa and Tennant Creek argued that Indigenous tenants were reluctant to report ASB enacted by neighbours, either because they themselves would potentially be subject to complaint on another night, or because of an ethic of tolerance for the behaviour of others which was not seen as seriously threatening. The WA Goldfields reported that the success of the ASB DBMP in WA depended on individuals reporting on neighbours, but the Kalgoorlie Officer of WADoH confirmed that they had never received a complaint from within a discrete Aboriginal community. The community of Mt Margaret was an exception. Residents knew that there would be action if they brought a complaint about a tenant to the local governing body, the Aboriginal Movement for Outback Survival Aboriginal Corporation (AMOSAC), which was formed out of the residents of the community. The DHOs had not been able to influence this situation in those communities where tenants were reluctant to report on ASB although they were keen to develop better and stronger community links. Kalgoorlie staff valued personal communication with tenants and had increasingly adopted this kind of approach in their frontline practice.

In all of the case studies it seemed that the DHOs were focussed on the implementation of the rules, however, governance within Indigenous communities and

the strengths of individual tenants influenced their willingness and ability to be flexible around the tenancy rules.

4.3 DHO attitudes towards others

4.3.1 Towards tenants

Most DHOs in all of case study locations were experiencing some level of stress as a result of their role in facilitating the competing priorities of tenants and the department's tenancy rules. Staffing reductions and changes were a problem for frontline staff, due to an unstable policy environment of rapidly changing funding priorities and discontinuity of programs. Changing staff and service providers had a disrupting effect on the continuity in tenancy management, which benefited from ongoing interpersonal relationships. DHOs suggested that the majority of tenants were good tenants and that only a minority 'fall through the cracks' and lose their tenancies. The DHOs remained steadfast that rules do not need to change, but that the bad behaviour does. Without compromising this position, it was still possible to be flexible with individual tenants. Many DHOs had concerns for the tenants generally as a disadvantaged group in society who needed better access to services of all kinds.

In Logan, government housing managers and DHOs wanted 'to ensure secure, safe, affordable housing for all tenants' and 'to make engagement between tenants and QDHPW a lot easier' (Nash 2016, p.37). However, as one DHO commented, 'whether rent is paid or not depends on the individual and their attitude and ability to pay' (ibid, p.26) and that is what determines any further potential success from a tenancy. DHOs gave a range of views on the possible role of cultural difference and disadvantage in this relationship.

At the commencement of the IMYRP Project, Housing Officers in Mt Isa were expecting a challenge in administrating the incoming ASB policy, noting that there were existing tenants of two or three years with the equivalent of what would amount to six 'strikes' already. DHOs were aware that tenants varied in their abilities to abide by the rules for whatever reason, whether socio-economic or cultural differences, and that tenants appreciated an individualised approach to their problems.

On Palm Island, the non-Indigenous DHOs demonstrated patience and politeness with tenants but appeared at times to struggle to understand the worldview of the residents and tenants. For example, tenants' frustrations over rules preventing sub-letting and tenancy changes, and when facing questioning over constantly changing household composition. The IEOs on the other hand, were conflicted at times because of pressure from relatives (e.g. over the slow response time or inadequate repairs and maintenance).

Each DHO in Tennant Creek had their own individual approach to fostering individual relationships with tenants, but all were focussed on their core duties, including the tenancy application process, waiting lists and R&M. Overall, their priority was to enforce the rules, and although conflicted at times, they saw the need to 'educate tenants about their responsibilities ... about visitors, paying the rent, paying for damage they cause ... we need to keep enforcing the rules' (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.30). Clearly the DHOs approach was based on the view that tenants needed to change their behaviour.

In the WA Goldfields, the DHOs' contact with tenants was mostly limited to property inspections and they understood that it was crucial to make tenants aware of the rules from the start. As part of this strategy DHOs were keen to develop relationships with key community leaders, especially concerning absent tenants and the likely consequences for rental arrears and debt. Together with the ASB policy DBMP, DHOs

thought that they were getting better responses from tenants with a 'strike notice' compared to a 'notice of breach', as was reported in other case studies.

4.3.2 *Towards intermediary organisations*

As frontline workers, the DHOs saw how the most vulnerable tenants were having difficulties across many life areas and that housing was a highly significant component to ensure that basic needs were met. In all of the case studies, DHOs indicated that Indigenous social housing tenants could be achieving better housing experiences if there was better support for tenants, particularly through collaboration and integration between the many service providers.

DHOs in Logan did not appear to know much about ICHOs in the area except that there were comparatively few properties managed by the sector and that there was 'very little movement' as they were stable tenants (Nash 2016, p.27). However, DHOs were aware of the work that some other community and Indigenous organisations, such as YFS and Ganyjuu, did to assist Indigenous tenants who were experiencing vulnerability. One DHO emphasised the value of communicating with other service providers, particularly Indigenous organisations who have been working in the sector for a long time and have knowledge of and close association with Indigenous families.

The NTDoH managed the vast majority of Indigenous social housing properties in Tennant Creek town and has contracts with local organisations and agencies, including Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation for maintenance, and the Barkly Work Camp (low security correctional facility) for house-yard work. While Julalikari continued to manage the housing (79 dwellings) in the CLAs, the ICHO relinquished its management role of town stock to NTDoH in 2014. The changing roles in tenancy management over recent years have been marred by conflict between families that brought some instability around tenancies.

At the time of this study, the DHOs were hoping that NTDoH would take responsibility for the Tenant Sustainability Program. Julalikari ran the Tenant Sustainability Program, which was mandated by government for tenants having difficulties. The program incorporated a number of life skills programs, including cooking, cleaning and budgeting. NTDoH staff were either unsure about the current arrangements and/or were unconvinced of their general effectiveness,

Contracted to Julalikari but doubtful how ... or if they're running OK. They make efforts. But there's a lot of staff turnover and conflict between families.
(Nash & Memmott 2016, p.30)

NTDoH cooperated effectively with transitional housing organisations in Tennant Creek such as BRADAAG. Tenants moved to NTDoH housing from BRADAAG following the successful completion of rehabilitation when BRADAAG could recommend that a client was ready for mainstream tenancy.

In Tennant Creek, DHOs had been keen to strengthen existing links with other agencies, including police and child protection, to assist families towards sustainable tenancies. They were frustrated by the prior weak attempts at collaboration, which were limited to only some of the services in the town. Without robust case management practices, some people were falling through the cracks.

Government workers on Palm Island were proactive in maintaining relationships with local organisations PIASC and PICC in their work on tenants' housing needs. The interactions were at a practical rather than strategic level, apparently determined by the seniority of staff. In their current role, the DHOs cooperated to ensure that new house allocations and home ownership processes took effect with PIASC and that special needs and health support services were in place with PICC.

The recent changes in allocation of tenancy management and maintenance contracts from WADoH suggested that it did not value longevity and trusted relationships. WADoH chose Community Housing Ltd over GIHO, despite the latter's close involvement in the region for over a decade and its recognition as a leading provider of tenancy management services.¹⁶ While WADoH has not disclosed the reason for this decision, GIHO was firmly of the view that it was on the basis of price. These changes will significantly reduce the capacity of GIHO to be an effective advocate for Indigenous tenants in the region.

Working relationships between the Kalgoorlie office of the WADoH and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal non-government organisations were developing around the implementation of the ASB DBMP. Some intermediary organisations were observed to be supporting tenants who were in receipt of strike notices to sustain their tenancies. The case study included one report of a notice of eviction on the third strike that had been successfully defended by an intermediary organisation (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.33).

¹⁶ <http://chl.org.au/CHL%20EXPANDS%20MANAGEMENT%20OF%20HOUSING%20INTO%20THE%20GOLDFIELDS%20AND%20KALGOORLIE%20REGION/>.

5 INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVES

5.1 Organisational constraints

5.1.1 Institutional diversity

There was a high degree of institutional diversity across the case study locations in the different intermediary organisations involved with housing (see Table 4). Although ICHOs had previously operated in all of the case study regions, many had closed down due to lack of funding and associated solvency problems. ICHOs continued in Logan, Tennant Creek and the WA Goldfields, although in a reduced and declining capacity. A number of other organisations (including Indigenous organisations not focussed on housing) now played a role in housing, although not always with tenancy management.

In Logan, there were four main organisations involved with housing, Mununjali Aboriginal Housing and Development Company (Mununjali), Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre (KENC), Youth and Family Services (YFS) and Ganyjuu Family Support Services (Ganyjuu). Mununjali was an ICHO based in Beaudesert in a neighbouring region of southeast Queensland. Mununjali held only 30 properties in Logan, having taken them over from the former ICHO called Logan Housing when it folded. The other ICHOs, Beenleigh Housing and Black Community Housing (known as Black Housing) did not properly engage with the project (see Section 1.4).¹⁷ Ganyjuu was not a housing provider and focussed mainly on Indigenous family support programs, providing assistance and referrals to other services for social housing tenants. KENC provides affordable housing and related services for disadvantaged people, including Indigenous clients in Logan. YFS is also a mainstream service agency managed about 100 tenancies at the start of the project, but by late 2015 the number had been reduced to only 60 as a result of funding cuts. It also provided support services for tenants with high needs, including counselling, financial management, support with family violence and other requested assistance.

Mt Isa was notable in the study by its lack of Indigenous organisations. The winding down of the Kalkadoon Tribal Council in 2014 indicated a significant gap in Indigenous governance in the town and the wider region. There were, however, other service organisations focussed on Indigenous welfare, including the Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre (Jimaylya), Ngurri Ngurri Women's Shelter, and the Mt Isa Neighbourhood Centre. Towards the end of the project, a local Indigenous organisation, Myuma Pty Ltd, was contracted by QDHPW to do the maintenance for the public housing stock in Mt Isa and more recently in the discrete Aboriginal community of Doomadgee. The Mt Isa office also serviced the discrete Indigenous communities of Doomadgee and Mt Isa, both of which had strong local government structures.

In Tennant Creek, there were a number of service providers for Indigenous people, including local Indigenous organisations. Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation had a long history in housing and service provision in Tennant Creek and the broader region. Over recent years its role in housing has reduced, along with the funding of ICHOs. When NTDoH leased the 79 houses in the town camps (CLAs), it engaged Julalikari to manage the tenancies and maintenance. NTDoH purchased the remaining 23 houses in town in 2014, and it was planning a tender for their major renovation in 2015. It was also planning to go out to tender for tenancy management of both the CLA and town housing. It remains to be seen whether Julalikari will win this tender.

¹⁷ Beenleigh's stock was reportedly about 50 houses and Black Housing based in Brisbane inner city suburb of West End rented only five properties to Indigenous social housing tenants in the Logan area.

Table 4: Organisations involved in housing management in the five case studies

Case study	SHAs / government	Indigenous orgs	Other Community orgs
<i>Logan</i>	QDHPW, Woodridge Housing Service Centre (WHSC)	Mununjali Aboriginal Housing and Development Company Ganyjuu Family Support Services Beenleigh Housing Black Community Housing	YFS (Youth and Family Services Ltd) KENC (Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre) LCCH (proposed Logan City Community Housing)
<i>Mt Isa</i>	QDHPW—Mt Isa Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre (QDHPW)	Ngurri-Ngurri ATSI Corp. (women's shelter) Myuma Pty Ltd	Mt Isa Family Support Service & Neighbourhood Centre
<i>Palm Island</i>	QDHPW—Townsville and Cairns (BAS) QDATSIP (home ownership) QDoC (disabilities) DSS	PIASC (Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council) PICC (Palm Island Community Company) Manbarra Nanggarra Wanggarra Aboriginal Corporation (cultural heritage management)	
<i>Tennant Creek</i>	NTDoH, Tennant Creek	Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation Anyinginyi Health	BRADAAG (Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group) TTAP (TC Transitional Accommodation Project)
<i>WA Goldfields</i>			
Laverton	WADoH, Kalgoorlie	-	Laverton Shire Goldfields Case Management Network
Wongatha Wonganarra	Has no HMA with WADoH	GIHO (now replaced by Community Housing Ltd) Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation (in liquidation)	Laverton Shire Local WA Police MEEDAC Goldfields Case Management Network
Mt Margaret	WADoH, Kalgoorlie	GIHO (now replaced by Community Housing Ltd)	AMOSAC (Aboriginal Movement for Outback Survival Aboriginal Corporation)

Other organisations involved with Indigenous people's housing in Tennant Creek were Anyinginyi Health, BRADAAG and TTAP. Anyinginyi Health operated a staff-housing program, developed in collaboration between their Indigenous Board and Indigenous staff. BRADAAG was a non-profit community organisation with long-term involvement with Indigenous clients around alcohol rehabilitation and transitional accommodation services. Although it was not an Indigenous organisation, it was committed to the local community and employed Indigenous people. The Tennant Creek Transitional Accommodation Program (TTAP) was a for-profit community partnership that did not receive government funding. Although it was in the process of closing at the end of 2014 after only two years, TTAP demonstrated the strengths and challenges in

collaborative cross-sector approaches, through accommodating the town's most vulnerable people in an adapted former wing of the Eldorado Motel.

On Palm Island, the two main Indigenous organisations involved in housing were Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) and the Palm Island Aboriginal Land Trust, both of which had strong governance in place. Local Indigenous people also operated the Palm Island Community Company (PICC) and Manbarra Nanggarra Wanggarra Aboriginal Corporation in related areas of services and land management. PICC provided many social services that linked into and affected housing circumstances, but were not related to housing management or delivery directly.

WA Goldfields has a history of many Indigenous organisations involved in service provision for the Aboriginal community. The Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation (GIHO) was established in 2002 as an ICHO to play a major regional role in housing, at a time when government was pushing for regionalisation of service delivery. GIHO has an Indigenous Board and staff who operated a repairs and maintenance service as well as tenant support services. In the latter stages of the research, GIHO lost the tender to the WA Goldfields, and as a result its regional capability had been significantly reduced. The only other Indigenous organisation was the Aboriginal Movement for Outback Survival Aboriginal Corporation (AMOSAC), the community governing body for Mt Margaret that played a significant governance role in housing, including ASB.

A table summarising the key perspectives of Indigenous and community organisations that were documented in the five case studies is presented in Appendix 2.

5.1.2 Lack of resources and developing capability

Managers and staff involved in Indigenous social housing tenancies in Indigenous and community organisations identified good governance as a critical component of effective service for Indigenous social housing tenants. One Aboriginal woman who had been a social housing tenant and was working for an urban Aboriginal service organisation strongly declared,

Indigenous organisations need good governance and also cultural awareness. They need to be involved and engaged with other Indigenous organisations. (Nash 2016, p.28)

While this statement specifies an ideal, organisations were not always sufficiently resourced, governed or networked to be so effective in achieving the improved housing outcomes for Indigenous tenants.

The demise of the prior major ICHO, Logan Housing, as well as the limited role of those remaining, had undermined the standing of ICHOs in the community. The future role of ICHOs in social housing in the region was tenuous. Mununjali, although continuing with a relatively small number of tenancies in Logan, had outsourced its tenancy management to a private real estate agent, and only engaged more deeply when serious tenancy issues arose.

Both KENC and YFS reported cuts to their funding in 2014 that would significantly reduce their service reach in Logan, impacting most on their tenants with high needs. As a housing provider that dealt with high-needs clients, KENC was focussed on improving its governance, identifying funding, and staff constraints,

Money—it requires money. It requires reflecting on practice—looking at solutions and focussed outcomes. Staff need training ... a team is important and you need professional collaboration. (Nash 2016, p.28)

In Mt Isa, there were no ICHOs effectively operating at the time of the project, but there was a limited number of Indigenous-managed support services. Ngurri Ngurri Women's Shelter¹⁸, provided crisis accommodation for young Aboriginal women and their children, as well as advice on tenancy and housing. Ngurri Ngurri is a relatively small facility with ongoing funding constraints in a region where many young women's housing needs are not being met by mainstream tenancies. The Mt Isa Neighbourhood Centre serviced the local community and has recognised Indigenous disadvantage in the town. An Aboriginal frontline worker had been employed to ensure that the Centre was viewed as an open and accessible service by Indigenous people. As a small organisation its capacity was limited but included crisis support, such as food vouchers and referral to other services.

Although the Jimaylya Centre was not an ICHO, it presented a special case due to its Indigenous management and staff. Funded and administered by the QDHPW, the Centre has developed its programs with a focus on the crisis needs of Indigenous people in the Mt Isa region. The Centre was implementing policy around housing and homelessness by supporting a good practice model for a homeless centre with a managed drinking program, and for Indigenous transitional housing services provision. One of the main constraints on the Centre's success was the lack of available and affordable rental properties. Without the mainstream housing options, the clients were subject to 'cycling' through the crisis centres and through homelessness (Memcott & Nash 2012).

As a newcomer to housing in Mt Isa, Myuma represents a significant change in QDHPW engagement with an Indigenous organisation. Myuma has a strong governance structure with local Indigenous management and staff who had been developing and expanding their fields of operation including youth training, cultural heritage activities and service provision. Constraints for Myuma relate mostly to government funding for training of Indigenous workforce but also to the costs and risks of operating a business in a remote region (Memcott 2012). On its current trajectory with QDHPW support, Myuma's role in social housing service delivery appears to be growing.

Constraints for implementing housing policy on Palm Island were reduced by the solid and proven governance structures in its Indigenous organisations. Some members of the Council (PIASC) had roles that involved them directly with other organisations. The local Land Liaison Officer for PIASC, for example, facilitated home ownership lease applications and family camp permits with the Land Trust. However, reduced government funding from state government and the transfer of tenancy management to QDHPW had constrained the local organisations in the social housing sector.

In Tennant Creek, Julalikari's decisions around the funding arrangements for ICHOs had demonstrated the kinds of difficulties that have arisen for intermediary groups in this period of change to mainstreaming of social housing. During the time of the project in Tennant Creek, Julalikari's role in social housing had been changing so that it managed tenancies (79) in the CLAs but not in the town (although this may change following the planned refurbishment of the properties). It had been a time of interagency tension and public conflict in Tennant Creek as Julalikari had tried to maintain local authority in housing management. After an initial meeting with the researchers, Julalikari did not engage further with the project. It has been difficult, therefore, to examine all of the relevant issues effecting the dynamics around this intermediary organisation and form a view about its continuing capacity.

¹⁸ An Aboriginal Corporation registered with the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations (ORIC).

As the only ICHO in the WA Goldfields, GIHO was in a strong position to deliver appropriate housing services; however, its capacity has been negatively affected by reduced funding and changing policies. GIHO continued to manage tenancies in communities that refused to sign HMAs with WADoH, which included Wongatha Wonganarra. The WA Government, however, passed legislation removing these communities from the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). As a result, GIHO did not have the same level of influence over tenants engaging in ASB. If not subject to the RTA, tenants could not be evicted for breaches of the tenancy agreement nor for strikes under the DBMP (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.37). Since it lost the tender to the Goldfields region in mid-2015, GIHO is now only servicing Kalgoorlie and Leonora.

5.2 Agency of Community Housing Officers

In the context of the constraints mentioned above, the Community Housing Officers (CHOs) assumed a key role in collaborating with other agencies, and in enforcing the rules of tenancy.

5.2.1 Collaborating with other agencies

Organisations in Logan understood that many clients struggle with the rules as a result of problems that they are unable to solve alone. Ganyjuu, YFS and KENC advocated the use of wrap-around services as the best way to support the most disadvantaged Indigenous tenants. To work well, the services needed to be co-ordinated and, in the cases where many different organisations were involved, coordination was often lacking. Mununjali, YFS and KENC all commented on the need for better coordination with QDHPW, the main provider of social housing for Indigenous people. With transfer of tenancies to Logan City Community Housing (LCCH), they were concerned to ensure that this coordination improved.

In Logan, CHOs expressed their concern for tenants who had been evicted from the private rental market. These tenants were generally registered on the national Tenancy Information Centre Australia (TICA) database, which was monitored by all real estate agents when considering applicants. If registered, there was a standard period of time (up to 12 months) before a tenant could reapply. Similarly, if a tenant had been evicted from social housing managed by QDHPW, there was also a six to 12-month gap before they could re-enter the system. As the CHOs had seen, such circumstances could lead to homelessness and other associated difficulties, including decline in mental and physical health and well-being. While SHAs did not register information about tenants on TICA, they did not seem to have responded to the difficulty that TICA creates for some of the most disadvantaged tenants.

The practice of case management in Mt Isa provided opportunities for CHOs across many sectors to pro-actively share information about clients who were experiencing vulnerabilities and whose needs were not adequately being met. Without such opportunities these clients were at risk of homelessness and related problems, including physical and mental health issues (QCOSS n.d.). Similarly, in the WA case study, the Goldfields Case Management Network involved regular monthly meetings of GIHO housing officers, Aboriginal Legal Service fieldworkers, refuge workers, and child protection officers.

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) employees used their community networks to assist their working relationships with tenants and others. Engagement (or Delegation) Day was an opportunity for PIASC employees to associate with their government contacts and make themselves available to the community to help communication between groups and to facilitate positive housing outcomes. Their

agency with housing was somewhat limited, other than home ownership. If someone came to the Council asking maintenance questions, they were sent across to the QDHPW housing office.

We are trying. Council doesn't have much to do with housing. Not much say in allocation. Someone local should be in charge [of housing], not fly-in fly-out people. (Fantin 2016, p.32)

During a discussion around housing allocation, particularly the QDHPW waiting list versus perceived family needs on the Island, one PIASC staff member commented,

A lot of people blame the council [for the lack of housing and maintenance]. Maybe if council once every three months met with housing and others and had a working group and got referrals from other businesses to meet their needs, it might help. Needs to be accurate, open and transparent. The same story for all parties. (ibid, p.32)

To cater for the needs of people living with disabilities or ill health, PICC needed to liaise with other organisations around the housing requirements to meet their special needs. At times, PICC staff were frustrated by the fact that they were not involved at certain levels of discussions with the QDHPW about how best to proceed in these matters. Clearly there was some dissatisfaction from the intermediary organisations on Palm Island around the QDHPW housing processes.

With transitional accommodation in Tennant Creek, BRADAAG emphasised the need for good communication and interagency collaboration for clients who were progressing through alcohol rehabilitation programs. The Indigenous CHOs held the view that the tenants needed support from everyone involved and they tried to facilitate this,

They need support from their Aboriginal family and from other organisations and other white people can help. (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.34)

5.2.2 Balancing the rules

A fundamental tenet of Indigenous and community organisations voiced in Logan by an Indigenous frontline worker was that 'we need to understand whole social disadvantage, housing is one issue that is linked to all' (Nash 2016, p.29). As part of this understanding, Indigenous organisations such as Mununjali take a holistic approach to Indigenous housing. Rather than fixating on the rules, they look at the individual tenant in the context, and seek to understand an Indigenous tenant's lifeworld. Mununjali employs a majority Indigenous staff who are culturally aware in this way. But the organisation still needed rules to support them in their efforts to modify certain behaviour that put tenancies at risk.

As an Indigenous organisation, Mununjali CHOs recognise that Indigenous people will approach them before they look for support elsewhere, even though it is no longer the case that Indigenous organisations can operate outside the rules.

When in trouble Aboriginal people will approach known orgs for help—often because of rent arrears or being evicted. They don't go to Housing—probably haven't read their mail; they've made some poor decisions about gambling and alcohol and so they feel shame. (Nash 2016, p.30)

All of the CHOs in Logan commented on the need for good communication. While opinions varied, most CHOs supported a culturally empathetic, flexible approach, acknowledging that individual workers can make a significant difference to tenancy outcomes. One worker at KENC summed it up,

We're not going to be heartless ... we listen and try to work with clients to create strategies for success. (Nash 2016, p.32)

A number of successful outcomes in Logan could be attributed to an individual case-management approach focussed on individual families. YFS advocated for close working relationships with clients and were able to assert considerable influence and support. Its staff accompanied one young tenant, for example, to his first interview with QDHPW. At KENC, the CHOs routinely gave practical support to Indigenous tenants, e.g. filling out application forms that was often critical for achieving a tenancy or other service.

In Tennant Creek, Anyinginyi's approach to housing was very different from government, not only in relation to funding models but particularly around expectations of tenants. As part of the agreement with Anyinginyi, the tenant's responsibility was to abide by rules that were much stricter than for social housing tenancies administered by NTDoH (examples discussed in Section 3.1.2). It would appear that after only one failed tenancy in two years, the balancing of the rules has been largely achieved. As the case study reported, the respectful relationships that developed between staff and management were clear indicators of success from this innovative tenancy approach.

The dedicated CHO at Anyinginyi held the view that tenants needed to be able to take an independent stand that might go against their families' wishes. They operated with a comparatively strict, mandated set of rules for tenants, offering only limited opportunity for interpretation. There were some 'strong' rules in the tenancy agreement that were negotiated by staff and ratified by the Anyinginyi Board. The frontline worker might choose to be flexible on some rules but not on others, such as repeated complaints over ASB.

CHOs were very aware that their decisions could be significant for struggling tenants. The knowledge that an evicted tenant might be forced into homelessness was a reality in Tennant Creek because of the severe lack of affordable housing.

In WA Goldfields, GIHO was challenged by the role of Aboriginal culture in the conduct of Aboriginal tenancies and how to respond most effectively to sustain tenancies (e.g. for 'sorry business'),

You can't expect that the upkeep of the house and the payment of the rent are always going to go as normal during those times, and you just have to help people cope as best you can, knowing that the situation is just temporary, just for the moment. ... if you try to apply a big stick approach it only leads to a bigger stick and that only leads to more and more problems. (Birdsall-Jones & Farley 2016, p.47)

In the WA Goldfields, GIHO ran a Tenants Support Program funded by WADoH, and with dedicated officers Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) who provided assistance to tenants addressing the issues of debt control and budgeting skills, appropriate use of health hardware and kitchen white goods, and issues of household hygiene and efficient use of power and fuel. The TSOs also took on other tenancy issues during house visits, such as informing the tenant that there were too many people in the house and that some must move out. When there was excessive alcohol and drunkenness, the TSO worked to curb behaviour, achieving safer tenancies. GIHO developed a targeted approach in the interests of the tenants who may have been taken advantage of by visiting relatives. The TSOs were able to increase their agency by participating in meetings set up to facilitate communication among the various agencies operating in the Goldfields region at the policy level and at the level of

individual tenants (the Case Management Network). This served to increase TSOs' capacity to be proactive in carrying out the work of supporting Aboriginal tenancies.

As an agency within the QDHPW, Jimaylya is a part of government and subject to certain policy-driven rules, however its approach to tenants is markedly different from the QDHPW in Mt Isa. The manager of Jimaylya is a local Indigenous (Waanyi) man and most of the staff are Indigenous. As a result, they have a close understanding of the tenants' lifeworlds and the constraints on their tenancies, but they also followed a strong set of rules. In the daily operations of the Centre, staff came up against behaviour that was unacceptable and sometimes people were sent away as a result. However, the manager made it clear that the person was welcome to return to the Centre at any time, providing they were not intoxicated. The managed alcohol program has assisted many hardened drinkers to moderate their consumption within a supportive environment. Without this flexibility and the capacity shown by the staff in their responses to at times quite challenging behaviours, many clients would not have had social housing tenancy as an achievable goal and outcome.

Tenancy support for Jimaylya clients continued during their stay at the Centre and afterwards when they were in mainstream tenancies. The CHO (counsellor) provided support services for an extended period that was often critical to the tenant's successful transition. The trust and rapport between the clients and the worker allowed closer monitoring of the tenancy and its potential risks, offering opportunity for early intervention if needed.

In Mt Isa, one DHO echoed the widely held view that one of the main reasons ICHOs failed was their leniency towards Indigenous clients and not enforcing the rules. In fact, there were a large number of factors, including insufficient resourcing. Whatever the past, what appeared to be emerging in practice in the case studies was more nuanced balancing between setting clear rules, but with an understanding of Indigenous lifeworlds and a capacity for a degree of flexibility to suit the complex circumstances of particular clients.

5.2.3 Intermediary organisations

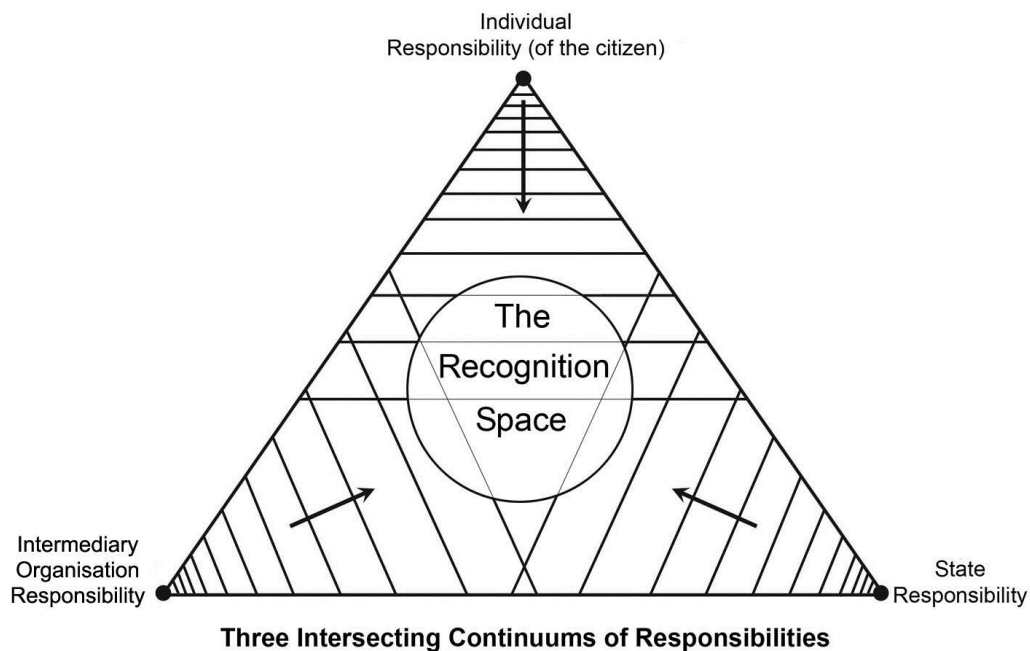
The recognition space framework (Figure 1) hypothesised the importance of Indigenous governance, in terms of political representation, forming one of the three apices of the Recognition Space Triangle. The widespread decline of ICHOs across Indigenous affairs was clearly evident across all five case study sites, including over the three-year duration of the project. Only two dedicated ICHOs participated in the study, GIHO in the WA Goldfields and Mununjali in Logan. GIHO operated in two of the three locations investigated in the Goldfields, but by mid-2015, it had lost the WADoH contract to a non-Indigenous housing company. Julalikari fulfilled an ICHO role in Tenant Creek, but it too was facing up to a competitive tender round mid-2015. Mununjali has continued as a housing services provider but has outsourced the day-to-day tenancy management of their properties in Logan (around 30 dwellings) to a real estate agent. Other Indigenous organisations were involved in the different sites, although more in a brokering or partnering roles with SHAs (e.g. Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) and Palm Island Community Company).

Despite the decline of ICHOs, a number of Indigenous organisations still play a significant role with housing, although not usually in a tenancy management capacity. Examples included community controlled health services (e.g. Anyinginyi Health in Tennant Creek who operated a limited staff tenancy program), local government (e.g. PIASC, and in the Goldfields, GIHO cooperated with the Shire, the local police and MEEDAC to support improved housing outcomes), family support organisations (e.g. Ganyjuu in Logan), and women's shelters (e.g. Ngurri-Ngurri in Mt Isa).

There were also examples of intermediary community-based organisations which were not Indigenous organisations. They did, however, have Indigenous representatives on their boards albeit the minority of members (e.g. BRADAAG, YFS). Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre was effectively a government entity of the QDHPW. Nonetheless, its Indigenous staff and working culture were such that its clients recognised it as an Indigenous organisation. Tenants described how these other organisations also performed an effective intermediary role.

So despite the decline of ICHOs, there was still a significant role being played by intermediary organisations in understanding the governance environment of social housing in the case studies. Tenants clearly described the functions of intermediary organisations as being different to that of a SHA. The structural forms of these intermediary organisations are complex and extremely diverse. They can be differently classified as Indigenous organisations (including the remaining ICHOs), NGOs (which tends to be associated with urban-based non-Indigenous organisations), local community-based organisations, and not-for-profit corporations (starting to emerge in the community housing sector). For want of an all-encompassing term, we settled on the notion of intermediary organisations. Thus, the apex of the recognition space triangle was changed from *Indigenous Governance Responsibility* to *Intermediary Organisation Responsibility*, reflecting the diversity of organisations.

Figure 4: The recognition space (with revised apex label 'Intermediary Organisation Responsibility')



6 RECOGNITION SPACE

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Competing outcomes

The preceding sections on tenant, government and Indigenous organisational perceptions have provided the basis for analysis of the recognition space. From the responses to the interview questions, it was clear that the three groups were often seeking different outcomes, and there was considerable diversity of views. The views of individual tenants reflected the strain of typically large households, with perhaps an average of ten people (and sometimes up to 20 or more). At times, this included the stress of substance abuse and family violence. Within the legal constraint of their tenancy agreement, most were seeking to reduce their household living stress, to maintain a stable and secure tenancy. Many also sought the option of passing the tenancy onto their children, similar in this respect to mainstream home ownership.

From the perspective of DHOs, their priorities were to manage rental housing in line with current policies, to minimise arrears, reduce R&M costs and to maximise effectiveness for their most disadvantaged tenants. Conditionalities aimed at behavioural change had emerged as a key policy directive, in terms of ASB, paying the rent and not being an absentee tenant. Rather than being occupied for life, DHOs increasingly saw social housing as being transitional into private rental, home ownership and economic participation.

Indigenous and community organisations, in comparison, were more focussed on community versus individual benefit. They were inclined to take a more holistic view of the needs of tenants, especially the most disadvantaged, and so provided a range of services, including transitional housing and case management approaches. They were also consistently alert to their fragile survival in a complex and changing political field.

As set out in Table 5 below, these different and often conflicting perspectives framed the recognition space, which sometimes appeared to be corroding and at other times demonstrated more positive sustainable features.

6.2 Entropy

The project has hypothesised the formation of a recognition space, as a necessary precondition for successful housing outcomes. It is thus a positivist construct. We looked for and found evidence of it occurring at times in practice, and then described its conditions as the basis for enabling its more frequent and longer lasting occurrence. But there is nothing natural to its formation. Its counterfactual is strong entropy to maintain the status quo whereby the three dominant institutional positions remain divided, motionless within their respective domains, locked into what can be described as a drama of misunderstanding and misconception. There are pervasive forces operating within each of these domains that dissuade people from progressing into the recognition space, and thus effectively minimising their agency. We explore the reasons for this entropy, before considering the positive forces that can enable its formation.

Table 5: Competing outcomes for social housing

State perspectives on desired outcomes	Tenant perspectives on desired outcomes	Intermediary organisations perspectives on desired outcomes
<p>Logan</p> <p>The social housing goal of DHPW is to provide affordable and safe housing for people in need, supported by pathways that build and sustain independence (http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au).</p> <p>DHPW encourages movement out of social housing to the private market and home ownership for those who are able.</p> <p>DHPW aims to reduce the R&M costs of social housing through implementation of revised ASB policy.</p> <p>DHPW is transitioning to LCCH for social housing tenancy management in Logan by end 2015 and leaving other organisations with a much reduced role.</p>	<p>Family responsibilities are high priority including pressure to accommodate non-tenant family visitors.</p> <p>All tenants desire to rent affordable and secure housing because they can't afford to buy or private rental options.</p> <p>Long-term/older tenants want to remain in the same house they have rented for many years.</p> <p>Younger tenants want to leave social housing and escape the stigma of negative stereotyping.</p> <p>Tenants identified a range of services needed to support them towards their housing goals.</p>	<p>Focus on advocacy and support.</p> <p>Establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with tenants.</p> <p>Whole of family needs take priority over that of individual tenants.</p> <p>Dismantling pathways into homelessness.</p> <p>Support of very high need tenants despite reduced role of organisations in tenancy management.</p>
<p>Tenant Creek</p> <p>NTDoH has insufficient housing stock for the number of residents and no capacity to quickly obtain more.</p> <p>Use of ASB policy to reduce R&M costs.</p> <p>Aims to prioritise support to disadvantaged tenants, but unrealistic due to excessively long waiting lists for housing.</p>	<p>Reducing household living stress.</p> <p>Support for individual tenants who are typically accommodating on average 10 people, often under stress from substance abuse and family violence.</p> <p>Special support services for tenants who are under-educated and under-employed.</p> <p>Family-based health care to combat a range of complex health needs including mental health.</p> <p>Disability services to cater for special needs of families living with disabilities.</p>	<p>Political survival among a number of organisations competing for reduced resources.</p> <p>Interagency engagement including with transitional housing, e.g. BRADAAG and TTAP.</p> <p>More secure funding to avoid unnecessary changes to staffing and programs.</p> <p>Equitable housing outcomes for all families regardless of their relationships with local service providers.</p>

State perspectives on desired outcomes	Tenant perspectives on desired outcomes	Intermediary organisations perspectives on desired outcomes
Home ownership, Palm Island		
<p>To 'close the gap' in Indigenous socio-economic development disparity.</p> <p>Supporting tenant capability, and developing others' capabilities, to reduce welfare dependency.</p> <p>Reduced recurrent costs of the management and maintenance of social housing.</p> <p>A policy legacy that is positive and transformational of the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous communities.</p> <p>Supporting entrepreneurship and job creation.</p>	<p>The legacy of a home for family to inherit.</p> <p>Ability to secure finances to buy or build a home on their cultural homeland.</p> <p>Privacy and autonomy by reducing community and Government involvement in their home.</p> <p>Opportunity to buy a home in their community irrespective of their traditional or political status.</p> <p>Greater control over their house design and housing maintenance and improvements.</p> <p>That buying and maintaining a home is affordable.</p> <p>The security to travel away from their home community, be sure they have a house on their return and to rent it out while they are away.</p>	<p>Ensuring it is community members who benefit from privatisation of community land (as opposed to 'outsiders').</p> <p>Broad inclusion in wealth creation opportunities across the community.</p> <p>Increase in, and diversification of, housing supply to meet different needs (numbers of people on Palm Island living in self-built sheds and shacks).</p> <p>Functional land administration governance which expedites leasing decisions.</p> <p>Safety net in case of loan default.</p>
Social housing, Palm Island		
<p>To provide affordable and safe housing for people in need, supported by pathways that build and sustain independence.</p> <p>To reduce crowding and housing stress through the provision of more housing through the NPARIH program.</p> <p>QDHPW encourages movement out of social housing to home ownership for those who are able.</p> <p>QDHWP aims to reduce the R&M costs of social housing through implementation of revised ASB policy and through the sale of houses to private home owners.</p>	<p>Continuous and secure access to safe housing for their immediate family and future generations.</p> <p>Improved communication around tenancy responsibilities and R&M to housing.</p> <p>Continued access to new and upgraded housing for young couples and young families to reduce crowding and housing stress.</p> <p>Better coordinated support for those tenants with family members with disabilities, mental health issues and general health problems.</p> <p>ASB to be followed through and reduced in a more coordinated way across all sections of the community.</p>	<p>Secure and constant government policy and funding to avoid unnecessary changes to staffing and programs.</p> <p>Improved interagency communication on housing management and coordination.</p> <p>Increase in, and diversification of, housing supply to meet different needs (numbers of people on Palm Island living in self-built sheds and shacks).</p> <p>Equitable housing outcomes for all families.</p> <p>Opportunities for repairs and maintenance and new builds to be undertaken by local Island businesses to support wealth creation.</p>

State perspectives on desired outcomes	Tenant perspectives on desired outcomes	Intermediary organisations perspectives on desired outcomes
<p>Mount Isa</p> <p>A diverse set of stated outcomes included attributes of tenant pride, happiness, sustainability and overcoming need.</p> <p>Also a composite set of outcomes to generate a holistic sense of well-being or quality of life, including (a) the broader aspect of establishing and promoting social norms and values, especially pride of ownership of a house, and (b) respecting one's neighbours where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were co-residing in the Mt Isa suburbs.</p> <p>Comply with social norms around the image and behaviour of households and houses in particular neighbourhoods. Safety and security as tenants' goals.</p> <p>Maintain morale and motivation of QDHPW staff.</p> <p>Keep rental arrears down to target levels.</p>	<p>For some, especially those who came through the Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre, the first need of their self-agency was to reform their own lifestyles to achieve their well-being goals.</p> <p>A substantial number of tenants perceived housing to be essential to achieve their lifeworld goals around the well-being of their children.</p> <p>A number also emphasised the role of housing in conjunction with their ability to achieve a sense of independence, stability and/or peace for their households.</p> <p>The Aboriginal custom of taking in visitors was viewed as a necessary and unavoidable event, inherent to their culture.</p>	<p>NB, no dedicated ICHO was operating in Mt Isa.</p> <p>Jimaylya provides homeless people with safe shelter, a managed drinking program, training in positive tenancy behaviour, knowledge on housing conditionality and then accommodation leading to housing, as well as the building of social capital and resilience.</p> <p>The Myuma Group aims to connect stable tenancy and good quality homes to Aboriginal training, employment and tenancy (currently via R&M contracts). An ultimate outcome of employed Aboriginal adults as home owners (option to buy rental housing).</p>
<p>Social housing, WA Goldfields</p> <p>To 'close the gap' in Aboriginal housing disparities.</p> <p>To reduce recurrent costs of the management and maintenance of public/social housing.</p> <p>Increasing acceptance by Aboriginal people of mainstream housing related behaviour standards.</p> <p>For tenants to live in harmony with their neighbours and pay the rent on time.</p> <p>Encourage DHOs to engage with the community in ways that lead to sustainable tenancies.</p> <p>Strategies for dealing with troubled tenancies that find a 'happy medium' for tenants and WADoH.</p>	<p>The attainment of a stable tenancy, leading to the ability to create a home over the long term.</p> <p>Lower rent permits greater economic flexibility and disposable income.</p> <p>For most, 'just to have a roof over my head'.</p>	<p>Improved condition and life of community housing.</p> <p>Improved appearance of the community which encourages the community to keep it that way.</p> <p>Maintain the condition of housing so that it lasts for the long term.</p> <p>Long-term relationships between frontline staff and community leaders in order to tap into Aboriginal social structures for the purpose of administering housing services.</p>

6.2.1 *The entropy of Aboriginal lifeworlds*

Many of the conditionalities in current housing policy tend to conceptualise tenants as discrete individuals with an autonomous freedom of choice, without any special cultural attributes. It is, however, disingenuous to separate Indigenous tenants from the broader pervasive milieu of their lifeworlds. The constraints that limit, and at times overwhelm, people's capacity to meet the demands of housing officers can be considered three ways:

1. cultural practices especially kinship obligations and population mobility
2. contextual and structural factors of poverty and lack of affordable housing
3. distrust of government due to a historical legacy of past punitive policies.

Almost all of the tenants involved in the case studies, whether urban or remote, maintained a range of cultural practices and norms, especially kinship obligations and population mobility. Further constraints and clashes resulted from culturally distinct lifestyles and tenancy conditionality stemmed from a preference for externally oriented living, the informal practice of perceived family ownership, an expectation of succession of particular houses and a strong propensity for keeping dogs. Tenants' residential mobility and mourning practices also provided discontinuities in tenancy.

Tenant capabilities were also limited by their poverty and lack of access to affordable housing. A tenant's level of socio-economic disadvantage largely determines their eligibility for social housing and is subject to regular review. In each state jurisdiction, housing officers must first assess applicants as 'high need' for them to be eligible for social housing, and the comparatively low rent is designed to reduce housing stress. It was evident from the case studies, however, that many tenants still experienced financial difficulties despite these special measures. The most troubled tenants had very high needs due to their low socio-economic status, alcohol problems, physical and mental health issues, living with disabilities, or readjusting from recent imprisonment or homelessness. For them, struggle was their everyday normality. Disadvantaged tenants did not readily accept the notion of social housing as short-term transition into other housing tenures, as encouraged by government.

Communities such as Palm Island have punitive histories that carry strong barriers to engagement. When people were taken to Palm Island, they were separated into work camps and dormitories based on gender and age, and families were prevented from congregating together. Many were transported to the island in irons for their misconduct in other communities. It had a history of punitive superintendents, including Robert Curry, who in 1930 lost his mind and went on a deadly rampage, killing his children and two others. There has been a history of preventable deaths due to poor nutrition and inadequate health services, and most recently, deaths in custody (Hooper 2009; Watson 2010). Many people on Palm Island remain suspicious of government services and non-Indigenous people in general. Daily life for many was consumed with survival and minimising the effects of poverty, especially those living in crowded housing, with fear of violence, mental illness or drug and alcohol problems. Many lived with disabilities, or cared for others living with a disability. Mt Isa tenants similarly expressed continuing feelings of hurt and mistrust due to the history of conflict and racism in the region. Their perceptions of how officers of the QDHPW related to them is marked by this history, often resulting in considerable uncertainty and stress over tenancies. The forces of colonialism have impacted on Indigenous peoples in the other case study sites in similar ways.

Overwhelmingly, obtaining and maintaining appropriate and affordable housing—what is referred to in Australian housing literature as 'housing security' (Hulse & Saugeres

2008)—was a strong driver of tenant agency. Tenants were strongly motivated to retain their existing rental properties, due to the lack of any other viable (in remote communities) or affordable (in urban centres) housing alternatives, but also due to fierce local competition for an undersupply of social housing stock. Tenants gave a range of positive expressions of obtaining secure and stable housing, ‘quiet place, when I can stay for a long time and where family can visit me’. Having achieved a tenancy, most Indigenous tenants were aiming to keep it. This meant that tenants themselves were the instigators of behavioural change on others, such as limiting visitation, ASB and external living practices. The response from their kin was often negative and sustained pressure and stress, which they were often unable to resist. Thus, they too looked to rules operating within a stable governance environment that they could lean on, towards more stable and stress-free tenancies.

6.2.2 The entropy of policy conditionalities

Frontline DHOs have many drivers that require them to remain process orientated and bureaucratic. Their roles are heavily prescribed and controlled by policy, hierarchy, risk management, and reporting performance indicators. Policy-makers at higher levels often dictate that the role of frontline DHOs should be limited to implementation, with limited discretion. While they do display agency in their processes, as described in Chapter 4, DHOs are tethered by reporting, workload and constant internal policy and staffing changes. At times, they can find comfort within these prescribed processes, even if they know they are not working well. It can be much easier to tell their superiors on the aspects that they want to hear, than providing negative feedback on how policies are failing in particular ways.

Frontline workers describe a range of stressors that prevent them from engaging with tenants. Palm Island has a history of strong activism, which at times has culminated in protests. The most prominent in recent history surrounds the well-publicised death-in-custody in 2004 (Hooper 2009). The recognition of this activism, and the strength and endurance of Palm Island people needs to be respected for effective working relationships to be developed. But they can also be strongly critical, demanding and intimidating to frontline service providers, including at times making threats of violence. Due to the lack of other housing alternatives for tenants, DHOs described the impossibility of enforcing evictions on Palm Island. As they lived on the island, they were worried about their safety. Similarly, DHOs from the Mt Isa office working in Doomadgee and Burketown had received violent threats, including threats of sorcery.

Interpersonal communication at Palm Island was strident. People will speak up and engage across a range of topics, permitting a depth of engagement not possible in more traditional communities. But it was strongly emotional at times, especially on topics pertaining to land. In 2013, one of the researchers attended a public meeting held in the community hall, where a senior Aboriginal representative opened the meeting by clearly setting rules for the attendees. After everyone was settled, he sternly commenced the proceedings with, ‘There will be no yelling in here—if you want to yell at one another, you go outside.’ Working productively in a context where emotive responses arise can be very confronting, especially to non-Indigenous housing officers who were not from the community.

DHOs complained about their increased administrative burden that had arisen from the ASB or ‘three strikes’ policy. SHAs had increased the level of reporting in response to the risk that DHO decisions on offending tenants could be subject to media or legal scrutiny. The more punitive the conditionality, the more legalistic requirements had become. In Queensland, there was significant increase in the number of complaints lodged by neighbours and a backlog of unprocessed claims (Jones et al. 2014). There was widespread struggle, with a lack of staff to manage the

increasing workload. There were also policy tensions between the property management and welfare orientations of housing management. Going 'above and beyond' to help problem tenants, or to tackle the deviant ones, only increased their workload further.

6.2.3 The entropy of intermediary governance

Intermediary organisations are typically in the difficult and conflicting position of enforcing policy conditionality while protecting their clients' rights. They are also often the point at which Indigenous people and community leaders organise politically to resist imposed conditionalities, and to campaign against structural inequality and for rights in the locations where they are situated. Some intermediary organisations become entrenched in advocacy positions for structural and policy change, which can divert them from the difficult work of negotiating change and compromise within the recognition space.

Most Indigenous tenants have maintained their tenancies by conforming to the rules. For some, their life circumstances have presented difficulties, sometimes resulting in loss of tenancy. If evicted from social housing, a tenant may have to show six to 12 months of good rental behaviour before becoming eligible again. If tenants have been evicted from social housing and also appear on TICA, then they most likely have struggled to be housed. During that time, they would have become more vulnerable, including being at risk of homelessness. As social housing managers, intermediate organisations face a fundamental tension between their responsibility to be 'good' housing managers by enforcing housing rules and their responsibility to their community, which often includes a tenant advocacy role.

An interesting reflection on this is that all of the organisations that demonstrated some reluctance to participate in the project were Indigenous organisations. They included GIHO in the WA Goldfields, Julalikari in Tennant Creek, and Beenleigh Housing and Black Community Housing in Logan. Since the demise of ATSIC, ICHOs have suffered from adverse publicity and funding cuts from government. These organisations were wary of unknown outsiders, including researchers. They also stringently maintained the confidentiality of their dealings with tenants. Given this history, they tended to limit their involvement in the project.

Indigenous organisations and other intermediary organisations are also politically intertwined with each other and must compete for a limited pool of resources. Tenants held mixed views on the effectiveness of Indigenous organisations in a number of the case study sites. At times, their relationships with Indigenous organisations were characterised by their positive networking and collaboration. At other times, they related their past history of political competition and infighting as the norm. Some (but by no means all) Indigenous organisations have tended to disproportionately represent different family or clan groups. While a degree of political pluralism is desirable (Sanders 2004), social housing is a public good, and its allocation and management requires equitable treatment across the whole community. Consequently, the normal rules of good governance apply for effective service delivery, including the transparent and fair enforcement of rules fundamental to effective institutions (North 1990; Cornell 2002).

6.3 Barriers to recognition

6.3.1 Misunderstandings

A tenant's understanding of their responsibilities and rights under the tenancy agreement and their ability and/or willingness to comply with the rules is critical to the agency they exercise. This understanding strongly determines how they deal with

extended family pressures from the Indigenous domain. Yet, the case studies revealed that few tenants understood their rights and responsibilities under their tenancy agreement. None of the tenants interviewed had on hand their signed copy of the Agreement, nor knew whether they did, in fact, have a copy.

There is a disincentive for people to nominate all of the residents within their tenancy, as this sets the rent level that they are required to pay. In Laverton, people did not declare all occupants for fear of WADoH becoming aware of the extent of overcrowding, which carried the risk either of eviction or increased rent. The result in Laverton was that there was no waiting list for public housing and the extent of overcrowding was unknown to WADoH. Remarkably, there were empty houses, which WADoH was considering selling as surplus stock. The residents did not apply for these houses, even though they were aware of them, because they would have to admit that they had kin staying with them whom they had not declared as tenants.

Tenants looked to maintain long-term tenancies of their social housing. For SHAs, however, social housing was seen as being transitional into private rental and home ownership, rather than being a permanent option. In the words of one DHO in Mt Isa,

Nothing's free in this world. It's setting up the tenant for transition to private rental or home ownership, they're aware of the process. ... If you pay for it, you appreciate it. Need to pay your way in society—rental housing is a hand up. Our waiting lists are getting bigger—there are more people in high need. Once people thought of getting a house and staying forever. In the past, people were there for life, 20 to 30 years. Now, 'Not a hand out, but a hand up', and leads to private rental or home ownership. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.61)

There are also income thresholds applied to both initial and ongoing eligibility for social housing. The threshold levels vary by number of residents and location, with a complicated list of what types of income are exempt.¹⁹ While income eligibility is not generally applied to remote Indigenous communities (see Section 1.4), people had become aware of it as a potential threat. In Queensland, the threshold household income level was widely understood by DHOs, CHOs and tenants interviewed to be \$80 000. Thus, tenants were careful to ensure that employed visitors were not registered as residents, but rather temporarily living with them and paying them board and food.

There were also reports of how this rule was acting as a disincentive for some tenants to enter or seek better employment, especially in Mt Isa, 'They want you to look for a job, but if you look for a job and get money then you lose your house.' Another tenant described how one of her family 'might have to move out of her QDHPW house because her partner was earning too much now [in the mines]'.

In Logan, there were examples of tenant numbers being too low, with QDHPW threatening transfer to smaller properties. One Aboriginal woman felt compelled to rent rooms in her house to strangers so that she would be able to remain there.

Again in Logan, there were perceptions of racism among Indigenous tenants, relative to their treatment compared to immigrant groups. ASB had been associated with Aboriginal people in the media, contributing to negative racial stereotyping (Zappia & Cheshire 2014, p.13). Tenants pointed out how ASB occurs within different groups, not just Indigenous. Even good tenants felt the flow-on effects from this prejudice, which added to their stigma of living in social housing. DHOs and CHOs knew of

¹⁹ <http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/CHRentAssessmentToolAssessableAndNonAssessableIncome.pdf>

tenants' experiences of racism, and acknowledged the fear and stigma that such perceptions brought. In some cases, they tried to counter negative public perceptions, by pointing out the strengths of Indigenous social cohesion, especially at times of crisis. However, the staff felt that their tenancy policies and processes did not contribute to these negative perceptions.

There was widespread confusion over how to report repairs, especially what needed to be reported and what was the tenant's responsibility to fix themselves. There was also confusion over the different categories used by the SHA to prioritise repairs. There was also considerable confusion over the implications to tenants of effecting repairs themselves, especially when they were rebuked instead of being rewarded.

Under the NPARIH arrangements, WADoH required communities to sign over 40-year leases for their land and to enter into a Housing Management Agreement (HMA). Those who chose to sign received injections of funding for new housing, and those who stayed with their current tenancy management arrangements did not. Tenants at a household level had no idea as to the reasons behind these developments and could not understand why some communities were clearly faring better than others.

DHOs expressed their frustration at the lack of engagement and entitlement attitude by many Indigenous tenants (and some other groups). Many of the housing conditionalities they were enforcing were aimed at behavioural change, but these did not necessarily correlate with tenants' views on how they should change. There was a clear disconnect and ineffective communication between both groups. It was easy for people to be talking past each other.

6.3.2 Policy change and staff turnover

All of the case study sites experienced a high rate of policy change over the period 2010–15. Changes in government policy, funding and programs cyclically corrode and impede opportunities for recognition spaces to form. Over the life of the project in Mt Isa, there were several changes in government at local, state and national levels. Such changes inevitably led to policy changes rippling down into local programs, budget shifts and, at times, overall communication challenges and discontinuity of rules. The extent of decentralisation is also in a constant state of flux, as described by one DHO,

When every change of government happens, the policies and services change. We decentralise or centralise depending on which government is in power. [But] decentralisation is the way to go. Can't build rapport, no empathy, if you haven't lived in the area and know the [local] issues. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.66)

Staff turnover varied between the different sites. Over the three years of the project, there was considerable stability in Mt Isa and Palm Island, but all other sites experienced a high turnover. DHOs recognised the time taken to bring about behavioural change, especially when this involved a degree of cultural change, and how this required a continuity of engagement of several years. Policy changes and the high turnover of housing staff limits development of the trusted relationships that are important to the formation of the recognition space. Policy reform also has a negative effect on tenants' abilities to access and respond to information. Local leaders were frustrated with seemingly endless rounds of policy changes seeking improvements. For them, there was a need for more stability. Stability in working relationships in the recognition space positively influences the ability of tenants and local leaders to understand, engage with and influence the housing management system.

One of the biggest changes to occur in the policy environment has been the decline and closure of ICHOs and other Indigenous organisations. For example, in Tennant Creek, the Council of Elders and Respected Persons (CERP) fulfilled a critical role in housing for almost ten years, earning respect from government and non-government agencies, until it was defunded in 2014. The community leaders have remained in the town but they have become less accessible, feeling disempowered and so less able to be effective. One senior NTDoH officer recognised this under-utilised resource, 'There are some really good community leaders but they are not tapped into enough' (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.28).

6.3.3 *Ineffective repairs and maintenance and housing service delivery*

Conditionality is essentially a responsibility contract where the different parties fulfil their different roles as defined by a tenancy agreement. Most of the case studies reported problems with systems established for repairs and maintenance, which was adversely affecting the credibility of DHOs and CHOs to enforce conditionality. Tenants often held the DHOs responsible for the lack of R&M, but typically it was out of their control. R&M was either actioned from a different section of the SHA, or contracted out to a third party. DHOs often did not understand the schedule for maintenance, and were as surprised by the tenants at the speed of some repairs and the lengthy wait for others.

In Mt Isa, attention to R&M was notoriously slow. When tenants were asked to give positive examples of housing management, they emotionally reverted to their frustrations of difficulty getting R&M done. In the words of one tenant,

A woman [Housing Officer] said maintenance needed on our yard, [but] I said 'f___ the yard'—you gotta do maintenance on the house. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.64)

From the perspective of DHOs in Mt Isa, they must prioritise maintenance for health and safety reasons over cyclic maintenance. Urgent health and safety maintenance generally arose from wilful damage associated with alcohol and fighting. DHOs reported that QDPHW spent \$2.5 million on this priority maintenance in the suburb of Pioneer in one year, which severely depleted funds for other routine maintenance. Tenants often blamed DHOs for these failures, corroding relationships further.

WADoH organises R&M centrally from the state office in Perth. There is a web-based interface, but none of the tenants interviewed in the WA Goldfields site had the skills or internet technology required to access it. Tenants instead made requests by phone, but indicated that waiting times could be longer than one hour. DHOs from the local Kalgoorlie Office of WADoH had no control over R&M, but often bore the brunt of criticisms over delays and ineffectiveness.

Some sites received major injections of funding for new housing and refurbishment under NPARIH. This was particularly the case for Palm Island that secured funding for 45 new houses, which should hopefully alleviate the immediate housing shortage there. Tennant Creek also received funding under NPARIH, but funding was limited to refurbishments on the town camps, and major problems remained in town. Neither Mt Isa nor Logan (nor the public housing in Laverton or Tennant Creek townships) was eligible for this remote area program, and both faced major problems due to a shortage of suitable housing stock. In these locations, DHOs were frustrated as they were required to ask tenants to look after properties that were at a relatively low standard and difficult to maintain, even though those tenants had the best intentions to do so.

6.4 The potential for recognition

When asked how to enable improved tenancy management, many participants struggled to comment positively. Tenants, in particular, gave few examples of what was working or where they were reaching mutual understandings with a DHO, but instead explained unsatisfactory aspects of their current situation. Similarly, CHOs and other respondents from Indigenous and community organisations were equivocal about how well the system operated. DHOs, in comparison, tended to be more positive about how well the tenancy management system was working.

6.4.1 *Social capital*

Family and kin relationships, as well as traditional and historical connections to land were significant forms of social capital for Indigenous tenants in all of the case studies. Although the forces of colonisation and development had brought many changes, people showed their enduring commitment to cultural beliefs, values and practices. While, at times, visitors were associated with problems, most tenants actively encouraged and enjoyed their visitors, who would reciprocate when visited themselves. Escaping conflict, domestic violence or other problems by staying with a relative was an effective and regular coping strategy. Family support was also important for security and childcare, as well as in times of economic hardship, ill health or fighting. Those households that included residents living with disabilities, as well as most of the aged pensioners, indicated that the most significant support in their tenancies came from their family.

Tenants, government and intermediary organisations all recognised the importance of support from family in terms of tenants achieving their housing goals, especially at difficult times. Family and kin can help people make rental payments, attend housing jobs and maintain upkeep. At times of crisis, people turn to these social networks for support, as this government officer in Logan explained,

Indigenous people are a close-knit community and they give support to each other in ways that their culture allows them to. There was the incident where the young Indigenous boy died—the community rallied around together to support the family and also here in Housing—the family were our tenants. (Nash 2016, p.38)

There are numerous examples from the case studies that highlight tensions for tenants as they strive to take control of their lives within the framework of the tenancy rules. Tenants were aware of the pressures from family visitors who were typically involved in ASB and who were likely to stay for long periods. Tenants typically accommodated these social obligations, weighing the benefits against the risks they posed for their tenancy. Many chose to live with the threat of breaching the agreement and potential eviction rather than having to deny hospitality to their kin. The obvious tension could result in a prolonged state of risk and heightened stress levels for Indigenous tenants. Most tenants were able to remain in control, but they often experienced difficulties.

6.4.2 *Following the rules*

The case studies revealed how some tenants were willing and able to develop their own rules when they perceived that the SHA tenancy conditions were unworkable in particular ways, especially for limiting visitation. Despite the social and cultural benefits, visitation often becomes problematic when excessive alcohol consumption, humbugging and fighting ensue. Sometimes visitors simply stay too long, placing an unsustainable burden on marginal household finances. While governments have cause to associate unruly visitation with ASB and housing damage, these are also

obviously major problems for tenants themselves. Not surprisingly then, tenants have devised a range of rules themselves, which seek a balance between prohibiting and managing visitors.

The staff housing program run by Anyinginyi Health in Tennant Creek is an interesting case. Prior to Anyinginyi initiating the staff housing program, these tenants struggled with social housing in Tennant Creek. As employees, they were motivated and well placed to negotiate a tenancy arrangement with the management and board of Anyinginyi. What emerged was an even more acute version of conditionality, with strict limits on who could visit, and limited the duration to less than 48 hours. Tenants were very satisfied with the arrangement, and there had only been one eviction in the history of the program. In the words of one tenant, 'What Anyinginyi have given me is a safe home—I can lock the doors and everything—an opportunity to grow as a person, to learn responsibility' (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.39). Clearly, conditionality was not the issue; rather, it was critical that the tenant had some input into the process of setting the rules which were then consistently applied in a stable and supportive governance environment. Significantly, these tenants were proven employees, as Anyinginyi only offered them tenancy after a period of 12 months of employment.

At the other end of the scale were tenants with a history of intergenerational unemployment whose disadvantage heightened the risks for their tenancies. Intermediary organisations including BRADAAG in Tennant Creek, Jimaylya in Mt Isa and YFS and KENC in Logan offered crisis and transitional accommodation, and targeted their programs to the clients with the most need. Each of these organisations adopted an intensive case management approach within a controlled and supportive environment, which included quite a strict coercive conditionality. Nonetheless, their clients seemed to acknowledge the benefits of this approach and they accepted that their cooperation was critical to them achieving successful outcomes.

Some tenants in the study were being challenged by their first experience of mainstream tenancies. For example, people struggled to adapt after moving to Mt Isa from remote communities where tenancies were not so strictly regulated. Nonetheless, they made efforts to cooperate by tidying up for inspections when required. Those who had moved through transitional housing at the Jimaylya Centre remained committed to stable tenancies including a more sober lifestyle. The evidence was that a wide spectrum of tenants were adapting to and following the rules.

Similar adaptations were observed with mourning practices. When a woman is widowed in the WA Goldfields region, she will generally observe the traditional mourning practice of deserting the connubial home on the death of her husband. Such a woman will want to return eventually, but this may take several months. She will not concern herself with the house during this period, and so run the risk of losing the house due to non-payment of rent and, sometimes, vandalism. To avoid this situation, a family member will step in, paying the rent and looking after the property, and explaining to the DHOs the reasons behind the absence. In Tennant Creek, some tenants modified their traditional cultural practice of vacating a house after the death of an occupant, rather than running the risk of losing their tenancy due to vacancy. Others vacated and sealed off a room, but occupied the remainder of the house. These workarounds when supported by tenancy managers potentially enabled the recognition space.

Most tenants understood that they must meet rental payments, report repairs and maintenance, and keep the house and yard tidy. They also understood the problems and risks of problematic visitation and ASB. One middle-aged man in Mt Isa took a

strong stance around visitors and tenancy. He preferred not to place long-term visitors on the tenancy 'list' because that would challenge his authority over his house. Instead, he kept them off the list but requested that they pay for food. This arrangement was preferable from his point of view as he remained in control of his tenancy and could readily evict them if he deemed it necessary. One female elder in Logan gave this pragmatic declaration,

There are rules for everything in life. We have to obey rules to live peacefully and in housing. Everyone's in charge of themselves; there's choices. Take responsibility! (Nash 2016, p.38)

DHOs also saw how the rules were working. In the words of a long term DHO,

I have seen change happening ... Tenants are saying to their visitors, 'You got no respect for me when you come in'. More education is happening now from within here [NTDoH]. Schools and police are working in with us. Change is due to both stronger personnel and policy. (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.38)

The problem, then, is not with there being rules, but rather how the rules are developed and managed, and how much the rules actually benefit the tenants. Governments clearly have an important role to afford authority to these rules, as well as provide a stable governance environment to ensure that the rules are consistently but equitably managed. At times, their blanket application across a diverse range of different contexts can be counter-productive and prevent the development of a recognition space.

The case studies revealed how intermediary organisations were particularly effective in establishing a stable and enabling governance environment. This was evident across most of the case study sites, including Anyinginyi, BRADAAG, GIHO, Jimaylya, YFS, KENC and Mununjali. However, there was little evidence of this on Palm Island. There were examples of DHOs on Palm Island and Mt Isa also making the effort on the strength of individual the leadership and policies of local offices, but less evident in Logan or Tennant Creek, and especially not in WA Goldfields.

In the WA Goldfields, WADoH tenants strongly expressed their preference for GIHO over WADoH, because GIHO was seen as being 'less strict' in that they did not 'just kick people out of the house'. Tenants were asked to draw comparisons with Mt Margaret, which had strong community governance in place, and Wongatha Wonganarra, which did not. People strongly stated their preference for the Mt Margaret housing management system. This was evident in GIHO's records which indicated reduced damage and fewer instances of rental arrears than Wongatha Wonganarra. Tenants wanted a situation in which housing officers engaged with them and took into consideration their circumstances, but they also wanted this to occur with a stable governance environment where the rules were fairly enforced.

Was then GIHO being more lenient in applying the rules than WADoH? When questioned whether the rules should respect Aboriginal culture or should Aboriginal culture change to meet the rules, GIHO staff brushed aside the idea that there might be a choice, with statements along the lines of 'the rules are the rules.' That is, the rules of tenancy could not be changed by anyone. For GIHO, what mattered was the way in which the rules were administered.

One problem with rules is how they can be used to give DHOs the comfort to shut down discussion with tenants. It can be easy for DHOs to just stick to the rules, and thereby limit their interpersonal contact and responsiveness. Constraints on staff numbers and resources sometimes prevented this contact, but there was a degree of personal choice involved. Such disengagement sits at odds with the general finding of

the study that a recognition space is a necessary precondition for housing conditionalities to be effective, and that dialogue is therefore necessary for operating in this space. Having rules is a necessity but not a sufficient condition for effective tenancy management. Also necessary is an enabling and stable governance environment in which the rules are affected.

6.4.3 Integrating tenancy with case management

An evident blurring was observed in the duties of frontline DHOs and CHOs between tenancy management and case management. Compared to tenancy management, case management involved an intensive one-on-one approach to the social problems faced by troubled individuals and families. As their problems were typically multi-dimensional, a degree of interagency coordination was required across different agencies, especially those responsible for disabilities, aged care, mental and physical health and family wellbeing.

Some intermediary organisations specialised in case management, but the duties of their frontline workers included a tenancy management component. Both BRADAAG and Jimaylya assisted their clients to make the transition into stable tenancies, within a controlled living environment, as one part of an integrated case management of their needs. A similar approach was taken by YFS and KENC in Logan. Many of their clients had struggled to achieve and maintain social housing, some having survived a string of failed tenancies.

In some locations, the DHOs themselves took on case management of their clients, including responsibility for leading interagency coordination forums (Palm Island and Mt Isa only) and participating in interagency meetings (particularly the IEO in Logan). While this added to their already considerable workload, they knew that a coordinated effort was the best response for high-need tenants. The DHOs remained positive about these efforts, but were also frustrated by the effort involved in sustaining this coordination. It was dependent on the stakeholders having the necessary expertise and remaining committed over a long period. Nonetheless, they could identify several disadvantaged tenants who had achieved improved housing outcomes as a result. SHA could build on these precedents and established relationships to take on a more intensive case-management approach to problematic tenancy management.

Importantly, it was clear that the distinctions between tenancy and case management were blurred, and the examples of successful practice observed during the study involved a degree of integration and cross-over between the two. Different tenants have different needs, and the two approaches permitted some individual targeting. WADoH operate two distinct programs in remote housing: (1) tenancy management run by the housing officers; and (2) tenancy support program, which provides case management services. NTDoH similarly runs its Tenancy Sustainability Program in the Northern Territory, where the services are operated by intermediary organisations.

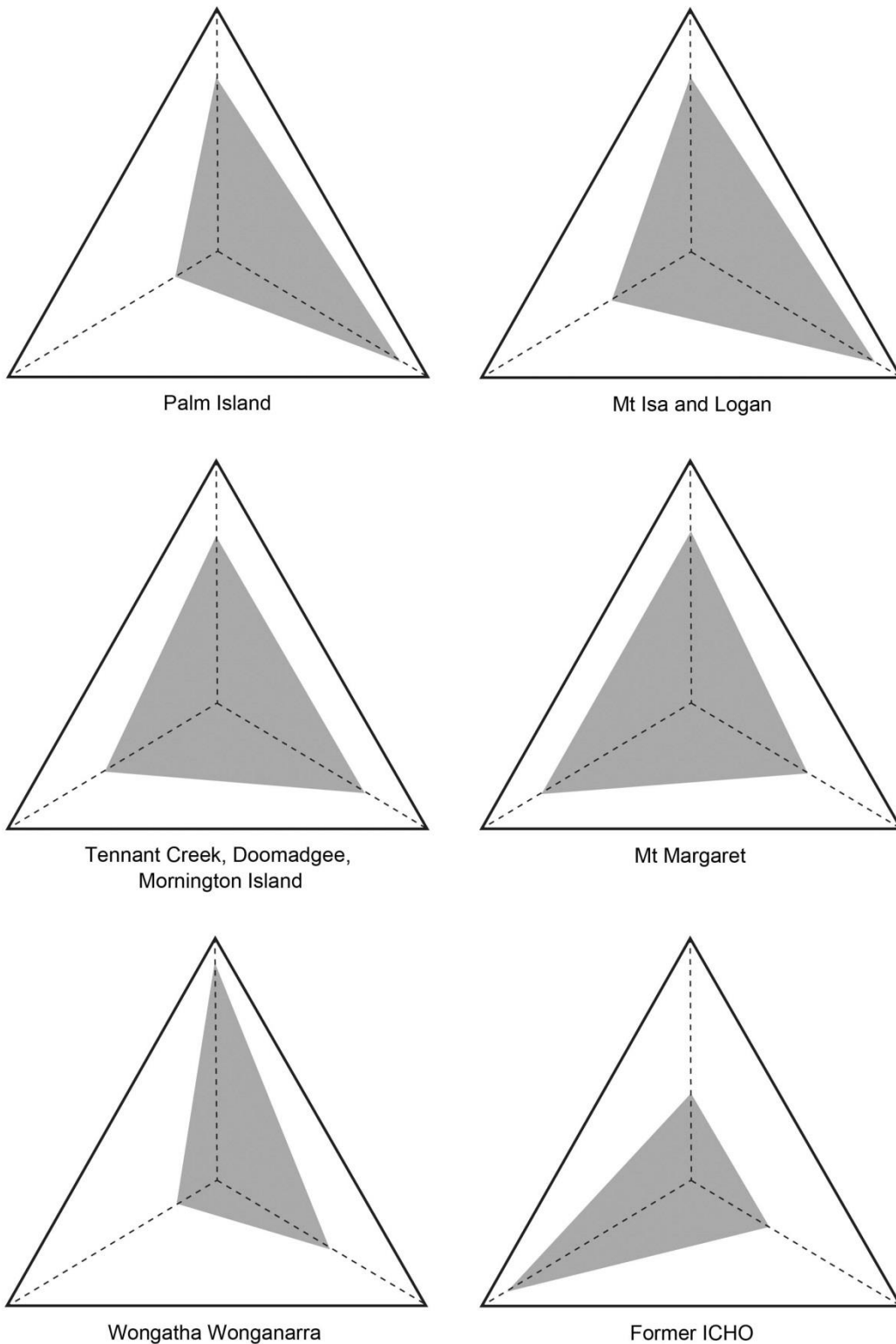
7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The recognition space

The project hypothesised the notion of a recognition space, as a necessary precondition for housing conditionalities to deliver improved housing outcomes (research question 2). Due to the widespread decline of ICHOs, the local governance landscape for tenancy management has become much more complex. A number of NGOs, community organisations, and occasionally government entities now fulfil roles akin to those previously performed by ICHOs. We therefore broadened the scope of that apex from *Indigenous* (in Figure 1) to *intermediary* organisations (in Figure 4). In all other aspects, the recognition space triangle as originally hypothesised remained unchanged. The results from this study confirmed that the intersections between state actors, Indigenous lifeworlds and intermediary organisations are critical to achieving housing outcomes for Indigenous people.

Differently shaped triangles can be drawn internally to depict the level of responsibility assumed. The closer to the centre of the triangle, the weaker is the assumed responsibility. The closer to the apex, the stronger is the assumed responsibility. The delineation is entirely subjective. There is no means to numerate the relative strengths of different levels of assumed responsibility. The following figures (see Figure 5 below) represent such depictions for the different cases studies involved in the study. The triangles include Doomadgee and Mornington Island, which were peripherally involved through the fly-in-fly-out visits of DHOs from Mt Isa office. It also includes a hypothetical representation of how former ICHOs managed remote community housing. By way of example, Palm Island has a very strong local SHA office, a relatively high level of responsibility assumed by tenants, and a comparative lack of intermediary organisations, leading to a recognition triangle skewed to the right.

Figure 5: Representations of assumed responsibility



The following conclusions can be drawn.

- The most balanced pictures appear in Mt Margaret, Tennant Creek, Doomadgee and Mornington Island, due to the presence of effective intermediary organisations.

- The most unbalanced pictures appear for Wongatha and the hypothetical of the 'former ICHO', both of which were ineffective in terms of tenancy management. Both depict similar shapes that skew in different directions. They are dominated by one responsibility apex, with little responsibility assumed by the other two. In Wongatha Wonganarra, tenants were forced to assume a heightened responsibility, quite problematically due to the ineffectiveness of both the state and local government support. For a recognition space to form, there must obviously be at least two parties actively participating.
- The Palm Island findings would suggest that it is possible to create an effective recognition space with little involvement from an intermediary organisation by investing the considerable costs of establishing a local housing office of the SHA within the community. It is interesting to compare Palm Island to Doomadgee and Mornington Island, where the recognition space is much more balanced by the respective role played by the two Shire Councils there. It is questionable whether QDHPW will sustain this expenditure on Palm Island after the NPARIH funds conclude, given broader policy reforms to decentralise and privatise tenancy management to not-for-profit corporates.
- In all of the case studies, tenants are assuming a high level of responsibility. Variability lies with the relative responsibility assumed between intermediary organisations and SHAs. Thus, the critical variable in the recognition space appears to be the relative responsibility share between SHAs and intermediary organisations.
- In their efforts to increase responsibility of individual tenants, government have shifted responsibility from ICHOs to SHAs. An alternative strategy would have been to increase funding to ICHOs using modalities that required them to enforce conditionality on tenants. The operations of GIHO in Mt Margaret are indicative of an ICHO operating effectively within a more engaged SHA and housing conditionality.

Housing officers could subjectively draw these triangles as a means to understand the context and to reflexively proceed towards enabling recognition spaces in different places. In addition to their analytical use, they could also be used as a participatory tool in improving the recognition space. Tenants and housing officers might draw these triangles in collaboration, perhaps with attention to historical changes, and then start the conversation on how to expand the space.

7.2 Enabling recognition

The IMYRP study explored how to enable this recognition space (research question 3). Enablers are the social, cultural and economic capitals that enable positive social change, and programs and strategies working to build Indigenous capabilities. There is an Australian and international literature on how to effectively engage with Indigenous communities (Hunt 2013b, 2013a). With comparatively little research done on effective engagement in the housing sector and on social housing in particular, the IMYRP study significantly addressed this gap and highlighted the importance of face-to-face communication, stable and flexible frontline relationships, Indigenous staff and community control.

7.2.1 Effective face-to-face communication

Housing officers (both DHOs and CHOs) need to be reflective about the style of verbal communication that they use with tenants. They need to use appropriate plain English, adopt a caring and respectful approach, be a practised listener, and refrain from a condescending style. A number of tenants in Mt Isa emphasised the traditional Aboriginal value of mutual 'respect' as a necessary feature of the recognition space,

Staff being approachable is important and prepared to sit down, listen and help to resolve [problems], listening to their stories—we're human. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.78)

Tenants were particularly sensitive to DHOs being condescending,

They talk down, like they're the boss, instead of meeting the need and listening to the need. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.64)

Tenants strongly stressed their preference for housing officers sitting down and talking through tenancy issues. A number requested more frequent visits by staff.

The key to bridging the chasm is getting each party to glimpse a view of the other's perspective. All too often in non-Indigenous and Indigenous interactions there is little recognition of Aboriginal worldviews, kinship systems or customary laws, and understanding of local context and history. Equivalently, there can be a dismissing of corporate, western working styles as being imposing and 'rough' from an Aboriginal perspective. Effective communication requires an investment in time, respect for other perspectives, and an openness to not knowing the answers in advance. It also requires the participants to be physically and emotionally well, not overly stressed, with some feeling of control over their personal life circumstances. If housing officers understand the values and worldview of tenants, and if tenants understand the values and worldview of housing officers, there is the potential for mutual understanding to be reached.

QDHPW went to considerable efforts to create plain English and culturally appropriate pamphlets, including a plain English calendar which sets out month-by-month reminders of their obligations as a tenant. This material can still be very difficult for people of limited literacy to understand. One tenant in Mt Isa expressed irony concerning how the delivery of a QDHPW calendar was combined with a tenancy warning,

They brought cops with them to give me a calendar and told me I can't bring my relative here at rodeo time; two police cars came here, and the housing lady was growling me. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.65)

For those with sufficient literacy, generalised pamphlets and fact sheets can fail to give sufficient detail around the rules and local contingencies in how they should be interpreted. Even when QDHPW wrote targeted letters to individuals, as observed in Logan, tenants may choose to not read them, as a means of avoiding bad news. In the WA Goldfields, DHOs were constrained by their limited fly-in-fly-out visits, and when some tenants were out of town, they then struggled to contact them over the phone. In short, there is no substitute for face-to-face communication when it comes to entering the recognition space. In terms of finding effective solutions in the recognition space, an interpersonal approach is certainly more effective than simply handing out written educational materials (which could nevertheless be used during such discussions). According to a DHO in Mt Isa,

... Our factsheets are not like mainstream—they're easier to read; [but] most of our work, 90 per cent, is face-to-face to overcome communication problems. It's all new [the tenancy rules] in the last three years that they've had to come to terms with. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.79)

While there was widespread agreement that face-to-face contact is preferable, this approach is resource intensive. Rather than being disseminated, educational materials can help to facilitate such discussions as communication tools. While its use was not observed during the course of the study, WADoH have developed a Tenant Matrix Management Support Package to support housing officers to take a story-

telling approach to inform tenants of their rights and obligations. It has been translated into three Aboriginal languages, and designed as a place mat to be left with the tenants afterwards (Habibis et al. 2014, p.45).

Housing officers' understandings of Indigenous lifeworlds varied enormously, but there was at least widespread recognition of how this impacted their tenancies. Most recognised the need to understand the cultural and historical context, including the inability of some people to engage due to their particular lifeworld, including personal trauma. Housing officers also shared widespread concerns over tenants' lack of understanding with their tenancy agreement, and other formal notices sent to them. They generally understood how these factors impeded the tenancy management process. They generally knew that misunderstandings were most significant for the most vulnerable tenants who generally had the lowest levels of English literacy. More pragmatically, they recognised the need to understand the individual situation of different tenants, and to explain to them the rules around their tenancy. However, the housing officers often had limited time and resources to spend the face-to-face time necessary. Critical, then, was the extent of decentralisation of resources and decision-making to either local SHA offices or intermediary organisations.

7.2.2 Stability and flexibility in frontline relationships

The relationships that Indigenous tenants establish with their housing officers can be highly significant for the tenant's ability to adapt to their circumstances. Relationships with the staff at Jimaylya began during their entry into the Centre and continued well after they left (when they were in mainstream tenancies). The trust and rapport developed allowed close monitoring and early intervention if needed.

Similarly on Palm Island, the QDHPW DHOs have lived and worked on the Island for more than three years, rather than engage in a fly-in fly-out roster, as housing workers do in many other remote Indigenous communities in Queensland. Their proximity was well acknowledged as a key success factor to the progress of the local housing office. While often critical of the DHOs, Palm Island people were accepting of them. They wanted improved communication and more home visits.

On Palm Island, Indigenous tenants claimed rights of succession, whereby tenancies are passed down between generations of the one family. Accordingly, different sections of town had long-standing associations to different family and clan groupings. This included allowing tenants time to sort out succession of a rental house if someone passes away. DHOs actively worked with older tenants to identify who in their family should share the tenancy with them to keep houses within families. They also organised transitional housing during major renovations, and interagency coordination for tenants with special needs.

The DHOs on Palm Island operated an informal saving scheme around social housing, where people were encouraged to pay an amount (typically \$20) in excess of their rent, which could then be drawn down for Christmas and other unforeseen events. In the absence of banking facilities in many remote communities, frontline staff were successfully using the saving scheme as an incentive for people to pay their rent. A similar saving scheme was managed by DHOs in Mt Isa, with a focus on periods of financial stress, to cover damages due to period of high visitation, or just to pay unforeseen bills. The scheme was popular, as described by one tenant,

By paying in advance; I'll leave money for a rainy day—I put \$10 a week for R&M. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.70)

The DHOs in Mt Isa had been living locally for several years and were knowledgeable of the different families and those who were vulnerable to difficulties. They led a local

process of Integrated Case Management, to coordinate a multi-agency response for difficult tenants. They also made pre-rodeo, pre-Show and pre-Christmas visits to see known vulnerable tenants to help them plan for visitors. They encouraged tenants to use them to pressure visitors to leave when they had outworn their welcome, if they were finding it difficult out of respect for their kin,

We will ask visitors to go, on behalf of the tenant, if the tenant asks us to do that, because it's too hard for them. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.75)

Tenants sometimes called on this service, but were also guarded about doing so,

If family come and stay for two weeks that's ok; but if they stay for longer then you could ask Housing to speak to visitors. Housing say that more than one month and you need to get police to move them. Made me feel no good—I can't do that to family. Visitors have their set of rules when they come from bush communities—sometimes there's a clash of rules with my rules [e.g.] family [from NT] let children stay up till later than my kids—bed times are hard. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.70)

DHOs instigated an innovative 'Pride in our Community' day to clean up Pioneer, as a means of brightening up neighbourhood and instilling a sense of house pride. Tenants and housing officers worked alongside one another. A range of different agencies helped out, including Centrecare, DATSIMA, Queensland Corrective Services and Mt Isa Council. The skip bins, gloves, dump vouchers, sausage sizzle and prizes were all donated. A local housing manager described the process.

We sent out a few letters beforehand—but mostly tenants were told by door knocking and word of mouth. A good turn-out happened. Then, tenants were helping tenants—the community spirit was evident. We tapped into a social capital. A powerful vibe of community action. Residents got a positive perception of Housing staff. And bonding within the Housing agency occurred. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.75)

A number of state and territory governments have gone to considerable lengths to facilitate Indigenous home ownership in remote communities, but in most places the transaction has remained hamstrung by land administration issues. On Palm Island, one home owner was able to successfully make the transition. The level of intergovernmental coordination was extensive, which occurred due to the efforts of visiting fly-in-fly-out staff from the Home Ownership Team (QDATSIP).

In the WA Goldfields, GIHO CHOs worked in with community efforts towards self-improvement. When they discovered an interest in gardening, they provided fruit trees. Where they saw an interest in homemaking, they provided cleaning equipment. In their experience, this approach over time fostered less damage, better hygiene and improved appearance of the house and yard. This also occurred in Mt Isa, as related by DHOs there,

Yes definitely [helping tenants], for example helping with cleaning property. [x] was to get fined by the Council. But we kept working with him, teaching him about cleaning products. We bought all the stuff and he did it.

[We] fought with Council to get dump tokens for tenants. Other rate payers get them, so why not us? We got them now and give them out to ones [tenants] who need them, those doing dump runs themselves. About two people per week come in to ask for dump vouchers (costs \$5 to \$10 for a load otherwise). If they get the rubbish out of their yard, they can grow some grass. (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.77)

None of these local innovations were specified in the DHO job description or policy documents. They are the product of a flexible and proactive approach by frontline housing officers. This local agency is a considerable strength from which to build the formation of local policies.

7.2.3 Indigenous staff in housing offices

Various tenants in Mt Isa spoke of the lack of 'black faces' and the lack of respect that they felt from the non-Indigenous housing officers at times.

At Queensland Housing Office, no Aboriginal staff or young Aboriginal people are in training to be staff. We need some young Aboriginal face on the counter. Need more employment for our people. People feel relaxed when talking to their own people. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.65)

We need good brainy Aboriginal people in Housing—it's mainly white people at present, [but] white people don't know you (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.80)

If more local Indigenous people were employed as DHOs, CHOs or in some supportive liaison role, there would be better understanding of the rules associated with tenancy. However, being associated with housing rules can also create tensions for local Indigenous staff, due to kinship obligations. As one DHO in Mt Isa explained,

The compliance role has been found to be too stressful for many Aboriginal staff generally. Equity of salary and role cannot occur if they can't fulfil the role. Compliance is the dominant role of housing staff—instructing people to comply to their tenancy agreement. New [Aboriginal] ones can't cope with this and don't last. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.65)

With the support of management and other staff, these tensions could possibly be managed. In most of the case study locations, there were strong precedents of an Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) working alongside DHOs and CHOs to facilitate improved engagement with tenants and sharing critical local knowledge. The arrangements were unstable, however, with a high staff turnover of IEOs and changes to their duty descriptions, albeit to promote equity with non-Indigenous DHOs.

Indigenous staff in Logan displayed considerable capabilities in fostering interagency and cross-community collaboration. They were sometimes leaders in their own right and maintained active networks with other community leaders and organisations. In Mt Isa, interagency case management meetings brought together a range of government departments and NGOs. Some of these agencies had Indigenous staff who attended and provided a voice and some advocacy for tenants. It seemed that Indigenous staff gravitated towards interagency coordination.

7.2.4 Community control counts

Although the function and structure of intermediary organisations was diverse, they tended to display more empathy and flexibility when dealing with their tenants. While they generally remained committed to enforcing the rules, a defining feature was their interpersonal and responsive style of interaction with Indigenous tenants. Individual workers maintained an organisational ethos of helping their clients. They were also more inclined to offer locally managed solutions that engaged other supportive stakeholders.

Intermediary organisations also tended to view the community and family above that of individual tenants. They were, therefore, better at tuning into the broader needs of tenants, and then at coordinating interagency responses. In all of the case studies

sites, intermediary organisations fulfilled a case management role for the most troubled tenants, which was separate to tenancy management.

Intermediary organisations were also important forums for community leadership, both as directors on governing boards (for Indigenous organisations and some community-based organisations) and as employees. Given the decrease in community controlled governance in some of the study locations in the WA Goldfields (especially Wongatha Wonganarra), the fly-in-fly-out DHOs struggled to find Indigenous leaders who might assist them with tenancy management. Compared to the other jurisdictions, these DHOs were most disengaged, with tenant contacts largely limited to inspections and posting written 'strike' and 'breach' notices. The system of social housing in the WA Goldfields seemed to be more dependent on functional intermediary organisations.

Intermediary organisations are effective in acting as a conduit between service providers and Indigenous leaders, especially in gaining local knowledge of particular tenancies. This is particularly important in remote Indigenous communities, where large numbers of the resident population remain disengaged from service delivery and governance more broadly.²⁰ Staff from the QDHPW in Mt Isa also serviced Mornington Island, where they worked in very effectively with the local Aboriginal Shire Council.

At Mornington Island, yes, for example around absences from residences. We get the [Council's advice on how to handle such issues. We draft a 'Fact Sheet' and present it to the Council for feedback. In the case of rental arrears KPIs, comparisons are made to other parts of the state. Pride then results from reducing the rent arrears percentage [below the levels recorded in other Queensland towns]. The Council says if they [the tenants] don't pay rent, they have to get out of the house. Originally we did have barriers; but we had to work hard to turn things around. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.69)

The same DHOs reported having successful fortnightly meetings at Doomadgee, which demonstrates their capacity to enter a recognition space given a stable Indigenous agency with which to partner. This appeared to be in stark contrast to their work in Mt Isa, where Indigenous governance and leadership structures were weak. An Elders' group had not operated in Mt Isa for many years, leading to lack of communication channels for DHOs to draw on. There was also a lack of independent Aboriginal advocates for tenants in Mt Isa, which limited tenants' collective negotiations with QDHPW. DHOs instead dealt with tenants individually.

Similarly, GIHO's success in Mt Margaret, compared to Wongatha Wonganarra, reflected the community's broad capabilities in governance, which aligned with GIHO's mode of housing delivery. Mt Margaret had a history of stable governance, including a functional community organisation. In the absence of the equivalent at Wongatha Wonganarra, GIHO could only engage with individual tenants. It was not GIHO's role to build community governance structures, only to deliver housing services. In the absence of formal or informal governance structures, the agency of CHOs and DHOs narrowed to the individual tenant level.

²⁰ Doctoral research revealed that over half of the adult population in one remote Queensland community did not appear in any meeting record over a 10-year period. This 'silent majority' was not engaged with contemporary forums of community governance. Much of daily workload of community governance was carried by a small cohort of community leaders, who were generally overloaded and on occasion belligerent. They gave a range of explanations for their fellow residents' disengagement, which ranged from apathy, to lack of English communication skills, no history of employment and problems with alcohol (Moran 2010).

Governance networks to other organisations and service providers outside of the housing sector can be important. On Palm Island, there are number of successful community working groups, mostly operated by the Palm Island Community Company (PICC). A number of respondents suggested the need for a special housing working group, or to expand the terms of reference for one of the existing working groups to include housing. Similarly in Logan, a community network of elders played a leading and successful role in housing management issues. Working alongside an IEO, these elders also volunteered their time to provide tenant support within the local housing office, either informally or as part of the application interview process. The IEO also regularly participated in interagency meetings together with Indigenous elders and a large number of Indigenous people from local agencies. Although these working groups fell short of being representative, in a democratically elected sense, they still provided a key injection of local knowledge, and provided support to difficult tenancy matters as well as a range of other often related issues. These existing governance networks were a strong form of governance from which to build future governance arrangements. In Mt Isa, there were especially strong calls for nominated Aboriginal leaders to represent tenants in an advocacy role:

Get a group together who could speak up for you; for example a housing issues Group, or a suburb group, [who] has someone to represent them.
(Memmott & Nash 2016, p.76)

The widespread decline of ICHOs was largely driven by perceived problems with their effectiveness, with questions raised not only by governments, but also by the Indigenous constituents of ICHOs. As previously noted, ICHOs were also under-resourced for the work that they were expected to do (Hall & Berry 2006; Eringa et al. 2008). Rent levels have not and will not cover the costs of social housing in remote Indigenous communities, which is potently evident in the costs that SHAs have assumed in growing their local and regional offices under NPARIH (Hawgood 2013; Habibis et al. 2014). The lack of ICHOs and evident decline of ICHOs in the case study locations is not indicative in other parts of country, such as NSW and parts of Western Australia, where ICHOs have enjoyed continuing success (Milligan et al. 2011).

Like other Indigenous organisations operating in a representative capacity, ICHOs perform a fundamental intermediary brokering role. ICHOs tend to reinterpret and adapt government housing conditionality to fit local circumstances. Given their connections to their constituents, they can find it difficult to mount a credible threat of eviction, especially in the absence of other housing alternatives that people might be evicted into. To exacerbate the disadvantage of tenants, including their potential homelessness, goes beyond the mandate and legitimacy of a representative organisation. Given the political role that most Indigenous organisations fulfil, ICHOs are also places where, at times, Indigenous people can organise to resist imposed government conditionalities. A governmental logic can thus appear whereby the imposition of housing conditionalities becomes more effective without ICHOs acting as intermediaries, irrespective of the governance capability.

Travelling DHOs from the QDHPW Mt Isa office were frustrated by some of the interventions of the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, preventing them from issuing rental arrear breaches for some tenants due to their individual circumstances. But the DHOs otherwise expressed their satisfaction with the comparative capability of the Council in terms of productive working relationships. In this way, effective Indigenous organisations both aided and constrained the work of DHOs. A degree of tension is probably indicative of Indigenous organisation fulfilling an effective

intermediary role, which suggests that DHOs should manage these tensions, rather than subvert them.

Certainly, SHAs now enjoy a much more direct relationship with tenants than they did previously, and are much more effective in providing a credible threat of eviction. Government participants gave a strong impression of their belief in current tenancy processes that were worth sustaining and developing further. One manager at WHSC in Logan commented as follows,

Over five years ago Indigenous households ... many just moved out without a thought for the repercussions. Now [since three strikes] people want to stay longer and so they are willing to work with the QDHPW on any issues they have for saving their tenancies. (Nash 2016, p.37)

It was widely held by DHOs and some tenants that ICHOs failed due to their leniency towards Indigenous clients and not enforcing the rules. Tenants also expressed their concerns with the ways that ICHOs became excessively politicised, favouring some families over others. Given the sharply reduced role of ICHOs, the study was unable to substantiate or refute these claims. What was clear from the study was that the range of intermediary organisations now active in tenancy management are much more complex in terms of their form and function than in former decades when ICHOs dominated. The array of intermediary organisations observed in the study appeared to be finding innovative ways of keeping to the rules, while negotiating outcomes that were at least understanding of Indigenous lifeworlds.

The decline of GIHO is particularly illustrative. As confirmed in the study, it was effective in tenancy management, however GIHO lost the contract to Community Housing Ltd in mid-2015. If the consideration is price alone, ICHOs will struggle to compete with national housing corporations due to economies of scale. Given the importance of stability and interpersonal relationships to the recognition space, governments should also be looking to measures other than the lowest market price in considering the effectiveness of intermediary organisations.

7.3 Strategies and policy uptake

The study looked specifically to identifiable good practice and principles for broader policy uptake (research question 4).

7.3.1 Local implementation plans

It seemed that tenants, DHOs and CHOs did all agree on one thing, giving the highest priority to achieving and sustaining safe and secure housing for the Indigenous tenants with the highest need. Despite the considerable disarray between different approaches and institutional arrangements, there was at least widespread agreement at a high level on the goal of social housing.

This coherence is a strong predicator for the recognition space to form. It was through the highlighting of this goal that a degree of interagency coordination became possible, as some DHOs were able to achieve through signalling an integrated case management approach to assist highly disadvantaged tenants. It would be possible to use this goal as a means to undertake participatory planning and evaluation, whereby tenants, leaders and housing officers came together to develop local policies for operationalising and implementing the conditionalities of housing policy, including local shared measures for assessing their effectiveness.

Interestingly, tenants themselves also had strong opinions about strategies for how to manage the most disadvantaged tenants. As described in Section 7.4.2 below, tenants are not a homogeneous group, with some tenants more stable than others,

and some even at the point of considering options for leaving social housing. Even highly disadvantaged tenants had strong opinions on how to manage other highly disadvantaged tenants. For example, one tenant in Mt Isa had the idea of a neighbourhood watch program for looking after empty houses,

There are funerals every week in this town. Sometimes a funeral can go over a month [as in the territory]. People then leave their houses here. Housing [Department] should be bringing out a new rule about when you go away; somebody needs to check your house. That way there'd be no damage. Police, neighbours could be saving Housing money by watching. So you gotta love your neighbours and get on with them. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.78)

This was paralleled in the Palm Island context by arranging for kin to look after the houses of tenants who went to the mainland.

DHOs in Mt Isa also held many ideas, including culturally appropriate yard landscaping, home-making programs, recognising the significance of matriarch householders, respecting preferred sleeping protocols in Aboriginal households, understanding vulnerability of junior householders, and facilitating social network support. They also proffered sophisticated understanding of the dynamics around hub households and effective tenant placement strategies.

This local knowledge and innovation on tenancy management could be workshopped. In addition to housing officers and other stakeholders, workshops should include key Indigenous tenants and leaders. Thus, local strategies suited to local conditions might be derived and articulated through local implementation plans. There was a strong example of this with Anyinginyi Health in Tennant Creek; Anyinginyi Health successfully operated a staff housing program with a range of housing conditionalities operating under a policy developed collaboratively between staff and the Board.

Once an implementation plan is developed, there should ongoing stakeholder, community and tenant meetings to discuss tenancy issues. Most DHOs and stakeholders knew from experience of the strong need to 'learn from doing', and then to apply this learning to local implementation and procedures.

7.3.2 Gendered and strengths-based approach

Housing officers identified the role of strong matriarchs who kept their tenancies amidst much family and cultural pressure. These women and other successful tenants provided examples of a natural strength which might be drawn upon to help struggling tenants. They were especially well placed to mentor other tenants with coping strategies for dealing with visitation and managing the rules. In the words of one tenant in Mt Isa,

Auntie [name omitted] helps keep the peace around the place; she talks to people, both sides, and tries to work things out; she's a smooth talker and they listen to her, but she can turn around and become a dragon [when she has to, although] not like that all the time. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.74)

Similarly, at Wongatha Wonganarra, the remaining authority structures are largely dominated by local matriarchs, who exert strong influence both over their households and the nearby households of their adult children. The majority of the head tenants across the five case study sites were female, which suggested a gendered alignment between managing households and assuming responsibility for tenancy.

SHAs could then better target tenancy management strategies to meet the needs of women and their families. At times, women were disproportionately affected. As explained by local manager of the women's refuge in Tennant Creek,

Tenants who have lots of house damage due to domestic violence often do not report it and they end up with a big debt. If the damage is reported and it's not their fault then Housing fixes it straight away, at no cost to the client. Tenants don't understand that. (Nash & Memmott 2016, p.36)

The idea of identifying successful tenants as role models to help build tenant leadership capacity was mentioned by one Housing Officer,

In Pioneer a male tenant was put in a house as a role model—he had an apprenticeship. (Memmott & Nash 2016, p.78)

Such model tenants would be ideal choices for tenants' meetings and working groups to discuss tenants' issues. Mentoring arrangements might also be proposed, where model tenants support those that are struggling.

7.4 Towards improved conditionalities

The study explored the effectiveness of different types of housing conditionality in achieving positive housing outcomes for Indigenous people (research question #1). From the observation and discussion of tenancy management styles across the study locations, the study has characterised two different types of conditionalities that are most likely to achieve positive housing outcomes. *Negotiated* conditionalities and targeted conditionalities are in contrast to the dominant coercive mode of conditionality in welfare and housing policy.

7.4.1 Negotiated conditionalities

The dominant form of conditionality embedded in welfare conditionality and contemporary Indigenous housing policy is coercive. Tenants are threatened with eviction if they break rules pertaining to ASB (e.g. the three strikes policy), too many (or too few) residents, household income being above poverty threshold, periods of absence, and rental arrears. But there is also evidence of a range of other conditionalities emerging in practice.

While not explicitly stated in the policies, the reality at the coalface is that many of these conditionalities are just not always readily implementable. Evictions in the absence of other housing alternatives may not be practical and possibly (even probably) equate to homelessness. The agency of frontline housing officers can be powerfully influenced by local organisational ethos of altruism, or fear of political pressures including threats of violence. Thus, in practice, frontline workers operate more in the realm of persuasion, assertive engagement and influence than in punitive coercion. This largely occurs face-to-face, when housing officers visit individual homes, or by tenants visiting local housing offices. While the threat of eviction was necessary to allow the assertive persuasion to occur, and frontline staff would actively draw in the police, senior departmental officials, and administrative tribunals to reinforce this threat, it often remained as a threat that was not ultimately enforced.

Generally, there were few examples of enablement and deliberation occurring in a community sense of decentralised governance in any of the case study sites. Empowering ICHOs or other Indigenous organisations to self-manage housing was largely seen as a product of the failed self-determination period now past. At a more individual level, some of the CHOs, especially those working for ICHOs, were in practice taking an enabling approach to their dealings with tenants. Some DHOs also worked effectively with tenants to build their capabilities, especially in areas such as cleaning and managing visitation. There were also examples of case management approaches being applied to transitional accommodation centres, as in clients of homeless programs, or pre- or post-release prisoner programs. These individuals

were empowered over a period of time to make the transition to social welfare housing, to live responsibly and to cope with family pressures.

Within the constraints of policy and their positions, it is possible for frontline housing officers to modify their approach according to their perception of the applicants' needs. Most DHOs tried to take into account the contexts of the tenant's background and lifeworld in managing their tenancy, but they remained guarded to not become too desensitised to deviant behaviour that could compromise a tenancy. Some chose to follow an individualised approach, while others aimed to treat all clients (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) equally at some distance. The former were more effective in terms of facilitating the recognition space. The latter were more effective in terms of not becoming too embroiled with tenants' problems, captured by particular families, or fielding complaints of favouritism. The most effective DHOs found balance between the two, taking a relational approach but ensuring their objectivity. Without compromising the rules or diluting the threat of eviction, the effects of conditionalities were most effective when they were negotiated in practice. Unfortunately, this adaptability was seldom encouraged or rewarded. It occurred largely under the radar of policy-makers who may well have construed such adaptations as a lack of fidelity to their models.

An issue here is countering perceptions that local enablement and innovation constitute a watering down of the rules. All housing officers, however, believed in the rules. They remained steadfast that the rules do not need to change, but that the bad behaviour does. The tenants, for their part, also largely accepted the rules. So without compromising the rules, there was still much effort required by tenants and housing officers to work out how to follow the rules. This required understandings to emerge of context and constraints to permit a recognition space to occur. The DHO's perception of potential influence and their freedom to be flexible was contingent on still achieving behavioural change; if they were able to achieve a stable tenancy for their most disadvantaged tenants, some innovation was justifiable.

Most DHOs were experiencing a level of stress in facilitating the competing priorities of tenants and their departments. The DHOs remained steadfast that the rules should not change while the bad behaviour should, but at times they pragmatically accepted the need to be flexible with individual tenants. Similar to development practice in complex settings, their innovations in practice sat starkly in comparison to the rigidity of policy frameworks (Andrews et al. 2012). Our impressions from the perspectives of DHOs were that head-office policy-makers seemed relatively uninterested in these local innovations, and that housing officers were at times reluctant to actively report these innovations upwards, lest they misconstrued the innovations as too radical or aberrant practice in need of disciplinary action.

7.4.2 Targeted conditionalities

An apparent shortcoming of conditionalities of current housing policies is that they assume that tenants in all places are relatively homogeneous, when in fact they are positioned very differently in terms of developmental pathways. This was evident in the rule for capping income. Designed to encourage the transition of employed tenants into private rental and home ownership, it has the unintended effect of discouraging employment and inciting dishonesty in the reporting of residents for rent calculations.

Whilst a very crude approximation, Indigenous households in social housing might be considered in three ways:

1. *Welfare dependent*, with a history of trauma, inter-generational unemployment, household crowding and damage, and intermittent family vulnerability and fighting.

2. *Stable*, lacking financial security, but long term social housing tenants as evident in the reliability of rental payments, well-maintained housing, progress in managing debt, current or past history of employment, volunteer community leaders in governance, and education of their children; or
3. *Successfully established*, with a past history of employment and financial security, willing and able to transition to private rental or home ownership.

We collected no data to divide people into such groupings. It would have been unethical to do so and tenants would sensibly resist any such attempt. We propose the distinction for purely conceptual purposes, to make a point of how different conditionalities might work differently for different tenants, in terms of development pathways.

As described in Section 1.3.2, welfare conditionalities have different embedded theories for achieving change, which can be considered in four main ways:

1. *coercive*, through sanctions and punishments
2. *persuasive*, through assertive engagement and influence
3. *empowering*, including deliberative discourse
4. *incentivised*, through rewards.

A major objective of current social housing policy involves tenants taking developmental pathways into economic participation, including private rental or home ownership. In terms of development pathways, this is most readily achievable for those in the bottom category, that is *successfully established*. The successful examples of private rental and home ownership correlated with a consistent history of employment. For those tenants in this hypothetical category, if they were continuing to occupy social housing, when others more needing were crowding out relatives, a coercive conditionality based on household income threshold might be needed. This group would not be in need of *empowering*, as they have already independently embarked on developmental pathways of their own fruition. They might respond well, though, to incentives. If they are absent for long periods of time from the community for employment, then maybe they need a form of housing assistance in the places of their employment, and a pathway to purchase a place in their home community. The Forrest Review has proposed similar pathways from social housing and home ownership, including priority allocation for those who are prepared to relocate for employment (Forrest 2014).

For those in the top category, that is *dependent on welfare*, they often lack the enablers and do not have the freedom of choice that a coercive conditionality assumes. For those struggling with mental illness while living in crowded housing and with fighting on a daily basis are more likely to respond to a more intensive and *empowering* case management approach, where they reach some baseline of security. The objective then might be to get them into the stable category of being long-term social housing tenants.

One point of convergence among stakeholders—across tenant, government and community organisation participants—was to give the highest priority to the Indigenous tenants with the highest need. Achieving that goal requires pathways for tenants into safe and secure tenancies. Attention is also required to reaching an in-between category, of being stable social housing tenants, before the next step again, to the bottom category of *successfully established*. This middle group is pivotal to people taking development pathways, but they seem poorly conceptualised or serviced by current housing policies. DHOs often remarked how they spent little time with their most stable tenants. The unfortunate by-product of their priority focus on the

most disadvantaged, however, is that the best tenants are often left to their own devices and miss out on opportunities for support or positive reinforcement. As a DHO in Mt Isa noted, 'There is a tendency to only visit bad tenants' (Memcott & Nash 2016, p.75).

The group of stable tenants may have a prior history of, or currently be in, intermittent employment. They may also have a history of filling roles as community leaders, sitting on the boards and committee of Indigenous and other organisations. People in this middle group described the perverse incentives they perceived with social housing. They particularly treated the allocation of social housing with cynicism. After damaging a number of houses, problem tenants nevertheless rose to the top of the list and were assigned new homes. Meanwhile, people like them who had cared for their homes, and their children, were penalised by missing out on new housing allocations, and remained in the one home for many years, which became increasingly crowded as children married and remained at home. Some DHOs also commented on this conundrum, especially in more urban settings. Others described their tactics of getting their family to the top of the social housing waiting list, in some cases by promoting their disadvantage through letters and petitions. Tenants in this group will often negatively relate a history of failed policies, programs and broken promises.

The first thing to consider about this group is that they may want to change. As described in Section 6.2.1, they may see their social housing tenancy as theirs to pass onto their children. They are likely to see through coercive conditionality as yet another impost, and then look to ways to game the system. Alternatively, they might welcome input into the design of the rules of conditionality as a means to control visitation, as the employees of Anyinginyi health did with their staff housing program. They might equally treat efforts at empowerment with cynicism. They may respond better however to incentives that are rewarding of their efforts towards self-improvement. For example, the best tenants might be given priority allocation of the newest social houses, and priority assistance with maintenance and repairs. In terms of maximising the life cycle of social housing, there are good reasons against giving the newest houses to the worst tenants. This is not to suggest that the most vulnerable tenants should be excluded from safe appropriate housing, but they might perhaps be better suited to robust or renovated houses, rather than those newly built. As another option, they might be rewarded for undertaking routine maintenance for 'wear and tear' with rental reductions. There may also be shared equity arrangements, where a portion of their rent might accumulate towards ownership of the asset.

Generally, there was an absence of incentives operating in social housing policies. Although not common, there are also examples of frontline workers bringing informal incentives to their tenancy management, as DHOs did on Palm Island with the Christmas Club. There are also proven incentives operating with home ownership. If an applicant demonstrates 12 months of 'good renter history' (measured by paying their rent on time), they were then eligible for an Indigenous Business Australia grant called the Good Renter's Discount, capped at \$50 000. These and other incentives could be further explored. A common incentive offered by many local government authorities across Australia is a reduction in a rate payment if paid by a certain date. A similar system might also be applied to rental payments. Or rent for a particular month might be waived or sharply discounted, if the rent for the preceding 11 months had been paid on time. This would sensibly coincide with a particular month when expenditure is up and income is low, say for December in the lead up to the Christmas period, which is also when casual work in many remote communities often dries up.

Importantly, people respond differently to different theories of change, based on their particular circumstances and preferred development pathways. While coercive

conditionalities are at times required and do at times work, a range of other more persuasive, *empowering and incentivised* approaches are also important.

Further research is required to better understand the development pathways that Indigenous tenants take over their social housing career. Little attention is taken to those in the middle, as the stable and successful tenants are often left alone, to occupy the same social houses, even passing the house between generations. Understanding how the most disadvantaged tenants transition to stable tenancies, and then how the most stable tenants transition out of social housing, can be understood in terms of development pathways. In terms of applying the conditionalities of housing assistance, they are likely to respond to a mixture of sanctions, rewards, enablement at support, provided to them at different times as their needs and fortunes shift.

7.4.3 *New governance arrangements*

The Indigenous tenants in social housing live in highly variable physical, socio-economic and cultural environments with typically few economic development opportunities. In general, these tenants and the housing officers working with them are overwhelmed by the demands placed on them through their tenancy and governance obligations. The constraints of distance, coupled with vast differences in cultural outlooks, mean that these tenants and housing officers are hindered in how they are understood and supported in meeting housing conditionalities. Tenancy management of Indigenous housing presents unique challenges.

The current study confirmed the strength of cultural imperatives, but it has argued that this should not be interpreted as an abandonment of rules. The disruptions and damage of excessive visitation is obviously also problematic for tenants. They, too, look to the rules and to housing officers for support in managing visitation, especially where housing officers show some understanding of their lifeworlds. They clearly do not respond to a 'hands off' approach of opening breach notices in the post—in fact it is questionable whether they even read such notices. Setting 'hard and fast' rules and administering them from a distance will more likely lead to misunderstanding and barriers to behavioural change. The recognition space requires some negotiation, in between polarised institutional positions.

Positive impacts can be achieved when tenants and housing officers enter a recognition space, wherein conditionalities can be negotiated. The majority of tenants involved in the study accepted that the rules were there to be followed, but also many indicated that they were in need of support. Successful negotiations require not only clear rules and conditionalities, but also the flexibility to contextualise and adapt these rules. Different types of conditionalities need to be applied to different types of tenants. Generally, the conditionalities operating through housing policies are mostly coercive, with a clear absence of rewards or incentives. The incentives observed were largely occurring informally in practice, under the radar of government reporting.

There has been widespread defunding of ICHOs. Whatever their capability gaps, ICHOs were effective brokers in representing the rights of tenants and resisting the rise in housing conditionalities. SHAs have replaced many ICHOs by themselves taking on tenancy management, expanding their regional offices and their numbers of DHOs, including running expensive local housing offices in remote communities. In hindsight, it is emerging that ICHOs were underfunded compared to the SHA costs of running tenancy management. Many frontline DHOs have established relationships with tenants and become effective tenancy managers, and some have begun to work in ways similar to housing officers that worked with ICHOs. As the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership agreements wind down, SHAs

are looking again to divest this responsibility to intermediary organisations, but now in the absence of a viable Indigenous housing sector. With tenders dominated mainly by price, large not-for-profit (and often impersonal) community housing corporations look set to dominate. The findings suggest that an efficiency-driven mainstream approach to tenancy management will not work for disadvantaged Indigenous clients. As documented through good practice in our case studies, the tenancy management that SHAs have come to operate during their tenure is a personalised and, at times, case management approach by DHOs; one whose merits can be maintained and further developed through better understandings of the dynamics of and multiple perspectives within the 'recognition space'. A different governance model might draw on the frontline experience of these DHOs, towards one where intermediary housing organisations are funded sufficiently and differently, including the flexibility to apply a range of different conditionalities targeted at different tenants.

As documented in the study, innovations in this recognition space are occurring across Australia. As this tends to occur under the radar of current policy framings, there is little learning or sharing between areas of responsibility. If policy and practice were better aligned, more improved and widespread outcomes would likely follow. Many of the conclusions in this report support the need for more devolution to intermediary organisations and frontline workers in order to develop local implementation plans and mutually agreed measures. Devolution is no panacea, but treating Indigenous social housing only through the lens of deficit, governance failure and punitive conditionality will undermine the possibility for recognition spaces to form, and will ultimately prevent positive housing outcomes for Indigenous households.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview prompts

Current rules

1. What are the rules that you/tenants have to follow for your/their house? (Code)
(Paying rent; number of people who can live in the house; visitors and how long they can stay; rules about making noise; damage to the house; keeping the yard clean)
2. What is the intended purpose/objective of each of these rules? (Code)
(This is a difficult question and not easily answered by either housing officers or tenants,
3. Is each of the rules working? [elicit each one] (Stop/Continue/Change)

Difficulty of rules

4. Are these rules getting tighter or slacking off (weaker)? (Tighter/same/weaker)
5. What rules are the most difficult for you/tenants to meet? (Elicit)
6. Do your/tenants ways of living / practices run up against these housing rules? (Yes/No, then Which?)
7. Which of these practices are allowed in Aboriginal culture? (Elicit and tick)
OR What Aboriginal people think is OK, but government people do not.
8. Should the rules respect Aboriginal ways of living, or should Aboriginal ways of living change to meet the rules? (Respect / Change / Compromise)

Helping with rules

9. Are family members helping with meeting the housing rules? (Yes/No, then How?)
10. Are community leaders helping with meeting the housing rules? [and elicit identity of community leaders] (Yes/No, then How?)
11. Are frontline workers within housing organisations helping with meeting the housing rules? (Yes/No, then How?)
12. Are frontline workers with government housing departments (or their agents) helping with the meeting housing rules? (Yes/No, then How?)
13. What could community leaders/family/housing frontline workers do to make it easier to follow the rules? [select which agency is relevant to interviewees] (Code)
14. What is the housing department/agent trying to get to happen/achieve? (Record)
15. What is the Indigenous housing organisation trying to get to happen/achieve? (Record)
16. What is the housing tenant trying to get to happen/achieve? (Record)

Good practice

17. Can you describe situations where tenants, leaders, housing orgs and governments reached a shared understanding / working well together in running the rules? (Elicit and tick)
18. If you can get that, how can it be maintained (given the likely changes in policies and politics)? (Code)

19. What community strengths could help people to follow the rules? (Code)
20. What current / proposed programs could help tenants to follow the rules? (Elicit and tick)
21. Do you have any advice as to how can good practices be identified? [for agency/dept. Ask for examples] (Code) N.B. This question is too difficult for most Housing officers.
OR, Do you have any good ideas to tell Housing—how they can do their job better and make your house life better? [for tenant]

Appendix 2: Summary of case study perspectives

Table A1: Summary of tenant perspectives

Logan

- Sociocultural capital/constraints → Social and cultural networks are strong for most Indigenous social housing tenants who live in urban metropolitan Logan.
- Tenant agency → Tenants with a poor rental history found it difficult to achieve tenancies, particularly if TICA listed.
→ Some younger tenants feel trapped in social housing because of the rules.
→ Older Indigenous tenants on welfare support want to remain in social housing.
- Economic development → Home-ownership seen as unrealistic option.
- Towards others → Indigenous tenants often felt lack of trust and respect from housing officers.
→ Tenants did not feel informed or consulted about the changes in tenancy management, opportunities for home ownership or other aspects of the Logan Renewal Initiative.
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Mt Isa

- Sociocultural capital/constraints → High mobility to/from family in many places outside Mt Isa maintains family connections.
- Tenant agency → Lifestyle clashes between rural/remote and city living; problem of ASB.
→ Under stress from tenancy rules, e.g. difficult to achieve tenancy transfer.
→ Old, degraded housing is difficult to maintain.
→ \$80k threshold keeps them on low-income but in social housing.
- Economic development → Concern around sale of social housing.
→ Low-incomes and limited opportunities for training/employment and home ownership.
→ Need for more and better housing, including transitional housing.
- Towards others → Lack of trust over QDHPW changes, including sale of houses.
→ Tenants resented inspections (& negative comments) from HOs.
→ Strong support from other agencies which were working to capacity, e.g. JTHC, Ngurri Ngurri.
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Palm Island

- Sociocultural capital/constraints → Kinship and family relationships provide significant support.
→ Mobility (particularly to Townsville) important for maintaining family connections; second houses, visiting children at boarding school, and attending to health issues (dialysis in Townsville,
→ History of island and people's families includes intergenerational stress and grief. People are still learning how to cope with it.
- Tenant agency → ASB e.g. 'party house' noise is difficult issue; strategy needed.
→ Day-to-day life is consumed with survival, and minimising the effects of poverty for some people.
→ Tenants take in boarders for extra income, which contributes to crowding and other negative consequences including child safety.
→ Tenants use influence with other service providers such as Council to assist in improving housing conditions (ie securing new housing and bringing housing issues to a head,
- Economic development → Interested in HO as a way of leaving something for their families but cautious over potential expenses.
- Towards others → More coordination needed between service providers, e.g. for tenants living with disabilities.
→ Tenants are both critical and accepting of resident Indigenous HOs and non-Indigenous HOs.
→ Need for more communication about tenancy rules—mutual frustration.
→ Dissatisfaction/mistrust over maintenance and upgrades for QDHPW housing.
→ QDHPW officers give support for tenancy succession.
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Tenant Creek

- Sociocultural capital/constraints → Aboriginal cultural networks based on kin and country as well as historical connections motivate behaviour that often conflicts with tenancy rules.
- Tenant agency → Alcohol and associated ASB have been destructive forces against housing/tenancies.
→ Dimensions of Indigenous disadvantage, including low levels of education and employment have had a significant negative impact on achieving and sustaining tenancies.
- Economic development → Private rental not preferred.
→ Home-ownership considered out-of-reach for most.
- Towards others → Tenants' experiences of social housing depended on the type of conditionality and level of coercion used by the
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tenancy managers.

- Transitional housing together with behaviour change offered significant opportunities.
- Diminishing support from local Aboriginal organisations for housing e.g. CERP defunded.

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| Sociocultural capital/constraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Aboriginal cultural networks based on kin and country as well as historical connections motivate behaviour that often conflicts with tenancy rules, e.g. dogs, lack of fences and gates; demands for food /shelter from kin.→ Tenants (particularly senior women) with social/ cultural authority can have positive influence for maintaining tenancies.→ Community governance has significant impact on daily lives e.g. positively at Mt Margaret compared to the lack of effective governance at Wongatha Wonganarra. |
| Tenant agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Intergenerational poverty is a limiting factor.→ Alcohol and associated ASB persists as a destructive force against tenancies.→ Tenants are not fully aware of contents of tenancy agreement—can lead to breaching. |
| Economic development | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Extremely limited. |
| Towards others | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ WADOH HOs were remote; visited for inspections but no time to talk.→ Preference for GIHO—more contact; less threatening. |
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Table A2: Summary of government perspectives

Logan	
Constraints in implementing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Change in rules (July 2013) required a change in thinking about social housing tenancy around eligibility and acceptable behaviour of tenants. Too much expense from irresponsible behaviours/damage to property. → Indigenous tenants do not engage with WHSC but are getting used to being assessed on the basis of need with no special considerations.
Agency of frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Indigenous staff felt pressure from Indigenous tenants to support them but as DHOs they must support the rules. → Non-Indigenous staff hold range of views around relevance of cultural issues to tenancy rules—there’s always going to be people who fall through the cracks.
Towards others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Government envisages better coordination between tenancy management and other agencies under Logan City Community Housing (coming to effect later in 2015) that will assist those living with high and very high needs.
Mt Isa	
Constraints in implementing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Difficult for tenants to understand the ‘three strikes’ concept—limits to repeated ASB, rent default. → Crisis around degraded housing and lack of government funds for maintenance. → Neighbourhood crowding & ASB street behaviour. → Challenge to work with rural/remote towns (& councils) that have local housing traditions such as succession. → Tenants resist forced transfers relating to size of family/life stage.
Agency of frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → DHOs confident of their approach with tenants over rules to bring about changes in tenant behaviour. → Local initiative to support good tenants who want to pay more in advance to cope better with periods of expected expenses, e.g. Christmas.
Towards others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Tensions with councils in regional towns.
Palm Island	
Constraints in implementing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Few staff for large admin load so restricted time for face to face visits with tenants. → Disconnect/lack of communication between DHOs and Building Asset Services (Q-Build), both were within QDHPW. → Town has history of violence, including recently; HOs have been verbally abused so cautious about punitive approach to implement rules.
Agency of frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → HO frustration with tenant responses to ‘normal’ bureaucratic process—emotional, chaotic—needed to repeat info

	many times
	→ Indigenous officer caught between local politics/jealousies & housing/government priorities.
	→ Housing staff were observed using negotiation skills, housing allocation opportunities, and saving incentive schemes (through rental credits with Centrelink—known locally as Christmas Club) to work with tenants on a range of issues.
Towards others	→ HOs focus on ‘process’ and seem to have little time to take Indigenous tenants’ worldviews into account, even if they have some understanding of them.
	→ Proactive towards PIASC (allocating new housing & home ownership) and PICC (special needs & support) although high-level strategic discussions in Townsville and Brisbane, and local office not informed of strategic decisions.

Tennant Creek

Constraints in implementing policy	→ Lack of funding for maintenance and repair of ageing stock constrained NTDOH’s approach to the administration of social housing tenancies.
	→ Most government employees believed that Aboriginal cultural practices should be separate from the rules of tenancy and that the rules should not change.
	→ Some dissatisfaction over increased workload for some number of staff.
Agency of frontline workers	→ Experienced and long-term local frontline workers were willing to compromise with individual tenants regarding the rules.
Towards others	→ Staff welcomed further more effective inter-agency engagement to support vulnerable tenants.
	→ Critical of certain ineffective local Indigenous governance.

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Constraints in implementing policy	→ Most Aboriginal tenants do not read/understand tenancy agreements which constitute a barrier for Aboriginal tenants to adhere to the terms of the lease.
	→ Reactive model of staff and tenant contact is unavoidable. Until there are problems, staff can take no ameliorative action; and regular contact with tenants is limited to property inspections.
Agency of frontline workers	→ Engagement with key members of Aboriginal community and of relevant NGOs (in order to obtain support for tenants in breach through stronger relationships,
Towards others	→ View Disruptive Behaviour Management Policy (DBMP) as a positive force because Aboriginal tenants respond promptly to a strike notice and staff can communicate with them directly and take action to help to protect their tenancies.

Table A3: Summary of Indigenous and community organisational perspectives

Logan	
Constraints in implementing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lack of good governance and cultural awareness can compromise tenancy management. → Without appropriate advocacy and services Indigenous social housing tenants struggle to follow the rules. → Lack of secure funding destabilises staffing and programs.
Agency of frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Face-to-face communication can achieve greater trust between tenants and managers. → Flexible approach can help sustain tenancies.
Towards others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Wrap-around service with a single entry point works well for Indigenous tenants. → Holistic approach to tenancy management with a focus on families, e.g. children and school attendance, can provide better support.
Mt Isa	
Organisational constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Insufficient affordable housing resulting in transitional housing 'bottlenecks'. → Lack of funding for Jimaylya to expand programs, e.g. small motors.
Agency of frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 'Tough love' approach keeps clients conforming to the rules. → Clients given second chance.
Towards others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Integrated case management involving special services can benefit the most disadvantaged tenants.
Palm Island	
Organisational Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Coordination of staffing and multiple programs is challenging for PIASC. → Adversely effected by Queensland Government funding cuts to shires.
Agency of frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Kin networks were effective for community engagement. → Difficulty in getting tenants to understand roles in different organisations. → Actively support staff in other organisations (mutual,
Towards others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Understand need to build good relationships at high levels of government. → Value consistency in staff and programs.

Tennant Creek

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| Organisational constraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Anyinginyi, the only Indigenous organisation which participated in the study, demonstrated the importance of special tenancy programs for Indigenous people in Tennant Creek;→ The demise of CERP and the reduced role of Julalikari in tenancy management have destabilised the effectiveness of Indigenous governance in Tennant Creek;→ TTAP program which linked accommodation and training struggled to enforce rules for Indigenous clients with high needs because of the negative social pressures on the clients and the lack of staff and other funding; and |
| Agency of frontline workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ BRADAAG focussed on teaching and reinforcing mainstream behavioural norms around living in houses (e.g. for rehabilitation clients and post-release prisoners);→ BRADAAG frontline workers valued strong rules and clear conditionality has strong rules and clear conditionality;→ Anyinginyi has clear set of tenancy rules made by Aboriginal staff and ratified by the Board that are highly proscriptive and enforceable by the Property Manager. If rules are abused then eviction may result |
| Towards others | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ All workers in community organisations were critical of the lack of government funding for social housing in Tennant Creek and the lack of continuity in funding for other supportive programs. |

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| Organisational constraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ GIHO's housing management program relies on a proactive model. It is operationalised through an interactive method which is presented to tenants as supportive. The advantage of an outreach model is that it permits the TSO to see problems developing with a tenancy and to take action accordingly. The advantage to tenants is that they are given an ongoing opportunity to conduct their households in ways that contribute to the security of their tenancies. |
| Agency of frontline workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ GIHO has developed a method of housing management in the absence of the RTA. This involves the work of the TSOs who are the face of GIHO in the communities it serves. This involves supporting tenant behaviour through positive reinforcement, e.g. the supply of basic cleaning supplies and garden plants.→ TSOs increase their agency by participating in locally available fora set up specifically to facilitate communication among the various agencies operating in the Goldfields region at the policy level and at the level of individual tenants. This serves to increase TSOs capacity to be proactive in carrying out the work of supporting Aboriginal tenancies. |
| Towards others | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ GIHO hold the same view of the RTA as the WADoH. That is, it provides a set of rules governing the conduct of tenancies for both the tenant and the housing provider. |
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