

## AHL CEO OPENING STATEMENT

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I wish to acknowledge the Palawa and Ngunnawal people and pay my respect to their Elder's past, present and emerging. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear at today's hearing.

I would like to briefly update the Committee on the work that Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) has progressed since our previous appearance in October 2020.

Firstly, I am pleased to confirm that AHL has been able to provide service continuity (with some necessary adjustments) to support our residents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to maintain services and to support the safety of residents and staff during this time has been a collective effort. It has involved sustained effort from all parts of the Company, and the ability to work in effective partnership with our residents and our valued stakeholders.

Since I assumed the CEO role in March 2020, governance frameworks, human resources and procurement policies have been reviewed and strengthened, where relevant. The Board and senior executive remain committed to rigorous and robust corporate governance. This lens of *reviewing* and *strengthening* has also been applied to matters of broader strategic direction. The Board has worked hard on setting a sustainability agenda, and has agreed a number of areas for focus over the short to medium term. These include working on maximising our partnerships and engagement, and improving our product and service offering.

We will also be focusing on rebuilding our cultural identity and connections. Our identity is fundamental to AHL – we are an accommodation provider of choice for Indigenous Australians because of the unique service we offer. We will continue to consolidate our identity and to reach out to potential clients, to maximise occupancy numbers. On that note, I am pleased to report that in 2020-21, we were able to achieve a 70 per cent occupancy rate across the hostel network. Throughout 2020-21 we were able to accommodate 17,827 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, provide 53,000 meals, and operate 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year.

Lastly, our important work on attracting and retaining talented Indigenous staff continues. While we are well above the APS average, we have set ambitious targets for our organisation and we continue to work towards these. We have engaged in some innovative approaches, including attending regional Recruitment Open Days, where we provide tailored information on our organisation to prospective employees.

The executive and I look forward to assisting the Committee with its inquiries today.