

CAPACITY BUILDING
INQUIRY
Submission No.S3.....



**Queensland
Government**
Department of Housing

*Submission to the House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities*

August 2002

Inquiry's Terms of Reference

The committee requires reporting on strategies that assist Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to better manage the delivery of services within their community by building the capacities of:

- (a) community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;
- (b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and
- (c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

Queensland Department of Housing

Queensland Department of Housing makes this submission to the inquiry with the intention of advising the committee on the range of policy development and program implementation that has contributed to improving the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to better manage the delivery of services on their communities.

The Queensland Department of Housing plays an important role in providing both direct housing assistance and influencing the overall housing system within Queensland. The Department is committed to improving people's lives through housing by increasing access to secure, affordable and appropriate housing across Queensland.

This commitment is underpinned by a responsive, integrated and flexible service approach in developing solutions for unmet housing needs. Effective partnerships aim to create wider government and community ownership of solutions to housing problems, maximise the value of resources, and reflect the interconnection between housing, health, education and employment outcomes for individuals and families.

The Department delivers the following six outputs:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing
- Community Housing
- Public Rental Housing
- Community Renewal
- Home Purchase Assistance
- Private Housing Assistance.

In doing so, the Department of Housing contributes to the Queensland Government priorities, with housing assistance playing a significant role in achieving many of the broader social and economic objectives of Government.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing's commitment to improving access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to secure, affordable and appropriate housing forms part of the Department of Housing's overall vision of *Improving people's lives through housing*. The Queensland Government, through the

Department of Housing, is committed to ensuring that all Queenslanders have access to safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing, in diverse, cohesive and sustainable communities across the state.

To achieve this goal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing is committed to building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver services on their communities by working in partnership with them.

1 Introduction.

Vision

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing's vision is that *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to housing choices that maximise quality of life and sustain communities.*

Principles

The principles outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing 2002-2010 Strategic Plan underpin the 2002-2003 Annual Plan, and state that the service area will:

- Provide equitable access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to housing.
- Maximise opportunities for empowerment, self-determination, self-management and economic independence by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Take account of the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with respect to:
 - cultural, social and environmental factors ;
 - the mix of housing type, tenure and location;
 - the desire for home ownership;
 - people's life stages and specific needs; and
 - infrastructure requirements.
- Co-ordinate the planning, management and provision of Indigenous housing and infrastructure services to avoid duplication and allow for effective and efficient application of available funds.
- Strengthen partnerships to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are fully involved in the planning, decision making and provision of housing services.
- Demonstrate high standards of public accountability and transparency of costs in the provision of housing assistance.
- Use resources efficiently whilst seeking to optimise the satisfaction of clients in meeting their housing needs.
- Be innovative, flexible and client focused in delivering outcomes.

2 Strategies.

The committee notes that 'service delivery is most effective if communities themselves control or strongly influence local and regional funding priorities and service delivery. That is why governments are increasingly using Indigenous organisations to deliver government funded services'. But to do so effectively and efficiently, requires engagement in capacity development / capacity building.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) advises that Capacity Development is “a process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to:

1. perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives and,
2. understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner”.

(UNDP 1997)

A further definition on capacity building defines it as “an approach to development not something separate from it. It is a response to the multi-dimensional process of change, not a set of discrete or pre-packaged technical interventions intended to bring about a predefined outcome. In supporting organisations working for social justice, it is also necessary to support the various capacities they require to do this: intellectual, organisational, social, political, cultural, material, practical or financial” (Eade, D 1997).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing policy and practice is guided by the recognition of the multi-dimensional and multi-layered nature of the issues that confront Indigenous communities in their efforts to attain a sustainable and viable environment.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing is focused on building genuine partnerships with Indigenous people and organisations to improve their communities. It is committed to doing so by working within a whole of government framework, which in terms of housing is, led by the Australian Housing Ministers’ Ten year statement of New Directions for Indigenous Housing, *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*.

The following demonstrates how capacity building outcomes are progressed by the service area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing, in the Queensland Department of Housing as outlined by the terms of reference identified by this inquiry.

(a) Assisting Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to better manage the delivery of services within their communities by capacity building:

Community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Apprenticeship Program.

This is a core business activity aimed at improving employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by equipping them with a trade qualification in the construction industry. Apprentices take up to four years to complete their indenture and are employed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing for a further six months. This enables them to undertake TAFE training towards attaining their Builder’s Licence accreditation and gives them experience within the private sector, through a 3-month placement with a private contractor. In

addition, assistance is provided for Indigenous sub contactors to tender for construction jobs funded by the Capital Works program.

The school-based apprenticeship scheme, also part of the program, allows school students to have their school curriculum tailored to suit their future career intentions. The Program further seeks to provide employment equity for Indigenous women in trade related fields and develop their skills base in non-traditional occupations.

The Five Year Capital Works Plan for Deed of Grant in Trust communities has provided a range of employment and training opportunities on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in trade and related disciplines. In 2001-02, Indigenous employment in building related trades through the 34 discrete Indigenous communities included a total of 98 tradespersons, 186 apprentices and 99 trainees.

As well as contributing to the increase of Indigenous people within the construction industry, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing directly employs Indigenous trainee draft persons in the design area and administration trainees across the sections.

The increase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees with a wide range of skills and proficiency within this industry provides the opportunity for Indigenous people to enhance their capacity to improve the delivery of services within the housing sector.

Tenant support activities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing supports individuals to influence policy direction through increasing the involvement and participation of tenants in the management and improvement of the Rental Program products and services. It encourages information sharing between clients, the Department and external agencies so that tenants are well informed about their rights and responsibilities. Examples of tenant support activities include; the distribution of the tenancy newsletter, the distribution of the Statement of Client Service to all tenants, client satisfaction surveys and post occupancy evaluations. These tenant activities also provide a mechanism for Indigenous people to provide feedback on service delivery with respect to the planning, management and delivery of housing assistance, including policies and procedures relating to service delivery.

Housing Officer Networks (Community Based).

Council housing officers are often at the frontline of implementing housing management programs in communities. This involves facing situations that are stressful due to the lack professional support as well as being in receipt of limited access to information and resources, and access to professional development and education opportunities.

The Housing Officer Network Program therefore seeks to redress this situation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing funds two networks of community housing officers, one for Torres Strait Islander Community Councils and one for Queensland Aboriginal Community and Shire Councils. These networks assist and support individual community housing officers in areas of professional and personal development and sector awareness.

Professional development issues address Commonwealth and State Housing structures and relationships, Housing Management Best Practice, Standards and Accreditation, and National Indigenous Housing Data Agreements. Activities addressing the improvement of personal development concentrate on time and stress management and interpersonal skills as well as report writing and running workshops and meetings. Finally, developing sector awareness, builds on housing officers knowledge of the range of agencies and organisation that contribute to development in the housing sector. These would include agencies and representations from cross-sectoral, inter and intra departmental and the Indigenous organisation sectors.

It is expected that providing occasions for housing officers to network across this wide range of issues will support them to implement best practice models of housing management within their individual communities.

National Skills Development Strategy for Indigenous Community Housing Management (Community Based).

The National Skills Development Strategy provides a framework for addressing the training needs of Indigenous community housing providers that ensures portability and consistency in training and training delivery. In doing so, it has established the skills needs required of boards of management, housing workers (paid and unpaid) and tenants/residents.

To date the project, that has been implemented since 1998 in Queensland, has focused on the vocational training of housing workers. The Department facilitated training in industry awareness for the Indigenous Housing Reference Group members which acted as an introduction to the Training Industry structure, processes and terminology. The project developed curriculum to fit with the Community Services and Health Industry Training Plan, which incorporates the Community Housing Training Plan. It planned strategies for Indigenous specific community housing management training needs to fit with the Community Housing Training Plan. It also identified the range of funding sources available for training across a diverse sector and made recommendations on the most applicable, relevant, and appropriate training delivery strategies for a diverse sector. Committed and effective participation in this training will improve the asset and tenancy management skills of Indigenous housing organisations.

In addition, the project engaged with developing networks to increase the capacity of individuals within the Indigenous housing sector. This was achieved by establishing a formal Social Housing Training Network and an Indigenous Housing Reference group. The Queensland Community Services and Health Industries Training Council provided a map of the Registered Training Organisations within each region to Reference Group members so that preferred registered training organisations could be identified and contacted. It facilitated meetings with Registered Training Organisations, reference group members and the state Department of Employment and Training to negotiate Indigenous sector input to training promotion, recruitment, delivery and evaluation.

The Department developed a resource document entitled "Guide To Implementing the National Skills Development Strategy" for use by the National Skills Development Strategy Implementation Working Group. This "Guide" was developed to assist those

wishing to progress the National Skills Development Strategy for Indigenous Community Housing Management within their own jurisdictions. The information presented is based on the model that was used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing, Queensland Department of Housing. The model relies on bringing the Indigenous community housing sector and the training industry into partnership so that the Indigenous community housing sector develops greater capacity to influence the training system and gain the training it needs and wants. Additionally, the training industry gains greater capacity to deliver training that is relevant, appropriate and applicable to the Indigenous community housing sector.

(b) Assisting Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to better manage the delivery of services within their communities by capacity building:

Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective efficient and accountable way.

Five Year Capital Works Plan for the 34 Discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Queensland.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing provides capital grant funding to 32 discrete Indigenous communities and two Aboriginal Shires. Funding is allocated according to the housing need identified in 1997 and the five year plan aims to address 80% of the total outstanding need across all communities (as measured in 1997). The process utilised in developing the plan engaged both the Aboriginal Coordinating Council (ACC) and the Islander Coordinating Council (ICC) in undertaking a needs analysis and setting the targets. The targets of the five year Plan (1999-2004) addressed the total need of most needy communities which represented more than 50% of the total outstanding need across all 34 communities; total need of the communities in the Northern Peninsula Area; and the immediate housing priorities of the remaining communities.

Funding is administered within the framework of the Five-Year Capital Works Plan for Deed of Grant in Trust Communities (1999-2004) and agreements were signed between Councils and the Department in 2001-02. Councils determine the size and number of houses to be built and/or upgraded and are responsible for housing management and responsive maintenance.

A component of the Five-Year Capital Works Plan is the Community Housing Management Strategy (CHMS). The goals and objectives of the strategy are to support the building of capacity of individuals, organisations and councils to better manage their housing.

Three-year funding agreements

In 2001-02, three-year funding agreements were approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils for capital grant funding. This funding agreement improved the ability of individual councils to plan for the provision of housing, infrastructure and employment needs on communities. It enables councils to defer and/or redirect funds if particular communities are unable to utilise the proposed allocation because of insufficient infrastructure, or because of Native Title and other issues that currently

exist. It also provides for continuity of employment for trade staff and the recruitment of new apprentices, as those currently employed complete their training. Finally, it improves the sustainability of communities as a whole through the development of effective housing systems and continued input into the rolling plan.

Sector Development Activities (Organisationally Based)

There are a number of different departments, organisations and agencies who are able to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and Shire Councils in their housing programs. These departments, organisations and agencies are in many instances, located in regional centres and are thus best placed to provide immediate responsive support and assistance to Councils. The effective coordination of services provided by these groups ensures a high quality of service to Councils, which is complementary and does not duplicate or work against efforts of other groups. The Community Housing Management Strategy facilitates this multilateral agency approach. Agencies involved include the Commonwealth, State and regional government sectors.

Committing to a coordinated multilateral agency approach allows for a reduction in the duplication in work, an opportunity to develop the delivery of joint resources to Councils and a chance to combine strategies to maximise support to Councils in their activities to improve their delivery of housing on their communities.

Indigenous Housing Reference Group

The Indigenous Housing Reference Group is a key consultative group to the Social Housing Training Network of the National Skills Development Strategy. It has a membership of 17 people. Membership consists of representatives from across Queensland's Indigenous Community Housing sectors, to include the peak representative Indigenous bodies, Community Housing Corporations, and related Commonwealth and State government departments.

It aims to advance community housing training within their regions and organisations, to allow Indigenous community housing providers to be better positioned to negotiate their community housing management training requirements at local levels. This therefore provides the best possible environment to advance the Queensland State Training Plan with Indigenous community housing input and focus.

As part of developing processes and tools to advance the capacity of Indigenous people, organisations and their communities, the Indigenous Housing Reference Group achieved a number of outcomes. They developed a number of facts sheets as a guide to the training industry to promote training, which had input to an issues document that outlined the barriers and gaps in training infrastructures within each region. The latter was subsequently used by Queensland Community Services and the Health Industries Training Council to negotiate with individual Registered Training Organisations in each region. The Reference Group further developed templates to identify training needs in their region, submitting them for input to the annual Industries Training Analysis that forms the basis for allocating training funds. It also developed a document that outlined minimum standards for Registered Training Organisations delivering community housing training in Indigenous communities. This document was accepted by the Department of Employment and Training and was

used in the tender negotiations for Registered Training Organisations tendering for delivery of community housing work training in Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Housing Reference Group Members advised Registered Training Organisations on processes for incorporating Indigenous issues and perspectives on; appropriate promotional strategies, preferred training delivery method, and resources; feedback mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation; and access to the Indigenous community housing sector in their region.

Housing Office Set-Up Project.

This Project supports Councils in the development and acquisition of physical assets, which enable the effective implementation of Councils' housing programs. These assets include items such as office furniture, computers and software and take account of the refurbishment of office space where appropriate.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and Shire Councils are the main providers of a wide variety of services within their communities. Housing provision is one of these services. The specialised nature of housing provision service requires Councils to be able to manage and report on housing separately from other Council functions. The acquisition and development of assets is vital for Councils to be able to physically and administratively separate the provision of housing services from other Council activities.

Supporting Councils in the development and acquisition of physical assets will enable the effective implementation of Councils' housing programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Indigenous Housing Resource Worker Program.

The Indigenous Housing Resource Worker Program is designed to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and Shire Councils with additional resources and assistance through their peak agencies to develop housing management capacity to ensure the long-term viability of community housing programs. It aims to provide more flexibility in service delivery options to accommodate the differing requirements of Councils. This is achieved by creating an established pool of housing management resource workers with a range of skills and expertise to work with Councils on specific areas of housing management. The program also provides the means for improved linkages to training and skills development opportunities as there would be greater opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing and the peak agencies to jointly develop training and skills development resources. Finally, it provides additional resources to two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Agencies, and supports the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing sector development and regional interagency and cross-departmental co-ordination strategy so that Councils are better able to respond to their communities needs and issues as well as maintain the services delivered.

Rent Strategy for Deed of Grant in Trust communities and Aboriginal Shires.

The Rent Strategy for Deed Of Grant In Trust Communities and Aboriginal Shires was developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council, the Island Co-ordinating Council and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. It builds on housing management policy development and training and

concentrates on implementing procedures for rent setting, rent collection, repairs and maintenance and arrears management. Its objectives are to promote the importance of rent collection and provide education and training to councils; to provide support to councils to address their rent arrears, initiate monitoring and reporting procedures, and explore a range of alternative proposals for addressing arrears management with Councils. Finally the strategy provides data and documentation that monitors and reports to Councils about their progress. As an outcome of the Rental Strategy, Councils are gaining more knowledge and insight into rent collection arrears, and related asset management issues.

Asset Management Systems Tools

Housing Asset management System (HAMS)

HAMS is a system developed by Northern Construction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing. It is used to collect and store data on the stock of Council assets located in the 34 Indigenous communities in Queensland. The system details the existing status of each asset eg: refurbishment dates, needs and costs. It also assists with determining capital works programs and the housing maintenance needs of the communities.

At present information in the HAMS system is updated every two years. The data update process requires staff to visit each of the communities and inspect housing using an electronic palmtop device. This allows for staff to plan in consultation with councils, for upgrades from a more informed position.

Housing Management System (HMS)

The Aboriginal Coordinating Council's (ACC) Housing Management System is a purpose built computer program with applications in asset and tenancy management. It consists of two main modules, the 'Property Manager' and the 'Tenancy Manager'.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing has funded the installation of the software to communities and a series of training workshops of the system in thirteen (13) Aboriginal communities and two (2) Torres Strait Islander communities. While there is no licence fee for Aboriginal Coordinating Council affiliate organisations to use this program, there is a charge to non-affiliated organisations.

Both these asset management systems tools provide data on housing conditions and status that ranges from upgrade and refurbishment to responsive maintenance needs. Whilst there are a number of issues that still need addressing, such as rolling out the information directly to communities, these tools have the potential to increase the capacity of councils to engage in setting the targets by undertaking a needs analysis to determine the size and number of houses to be built and/or upgraded. This in turn allows councils to gain increased capacity to develop and implement housing plans that address housing management and responsive maintenance requirements.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing's Indigenous Community Housing Sector Resourcing Initiative.

The purpose of this initiative is to establish a regional infrastructure for the Indigenous community housing sector to network information and access sector development activities such as; National Community Housing Standards and the state

accreditation system, National Asset Management Best Practice bench marks, and National Skills Development and Training Initiatives. Building these networks to access the sector's activities, the Indigenous housing community can develop sectoral infrastructure. This is being achieved by conducting a scoping study to investigate and map the existing community housing infrastructure available to Indigenous organisations, enhancing the knowledge and skills of key representatives to participate within the social housing sector at the local, state, and national level; and using these structures to define the types of housing sector development activities and resources that Indigenous community housing organisations require to better manage the delivery of services.

(c) Assisting Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to better manage the delivery of services within their communities by capacity building:

Government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcome for Indigenous people

Policy Development and Planning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing represents and promotes the housing interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at national, state and whole of government forums.

Significant activities include:

- Participating in the development and overseeing the implementation of the Housing Ministers' 10 year Statement of Directions through involvement in the Housing Ministers Advisory Committee, Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing and its working groups;
- Participating in the ongoing development of Cape York Partnerships to secure improved housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in these communities;
- Ongoing participation in the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy "Towards a Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ten Year Partnership". Involvement in the Ten-Year Partnership includes membership on the Ten-Year Partnership Steering Committee, Community Governance Working Group, Family Violence Working Group and the Reconciliation Working Group;
- Supporting the Department of Housing's commitment to reconciliation;
- Ongoing coordination and collaboration with ATSIC, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and other government agencies;
- Conducting research and developing new initiatives;
- Co-ordinating and collaborating within the Department and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak agencies and communities, on the new state housing legislation. Relevant activities include:
 - Advising of possible issues for the Indigenous community housing sector in relation to the new housing legislation;
 - Developing a plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing to implement the new state housing legislation;

- Conducting workshops and consultations with the Indigenous community housing sector on the introduction of the new housing legislation, in collaboration with Housing Policy and Research and Community Housing;
 - Providing regular and timely input to discussion papers on the implementation of the new housing legislation.
- Advising, supporting and assisting other departmental programs and other agencies in their efforts to provide appropriate responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities

Bilateral Agreements

Under the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing and Infrastructure Bilateral Agreement and the Torres Strait Housing and Infrastructure Bilateral Agreement, the Joint Planning Group and the Joint Torres Strait Housing and Infrastructure Committee have been established respectively. These groups are recognised by the parties to the respective agreements, as the principal sources of advice on appropriate policies and strategies to improve housing and related infrastructure outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland and the Torres Strait regions.

Other Service Areas.

Corporate and Executive Services

Corporate and Executive Services for the Department of Housing are provided by Human Resource Management, Business Services, Marketing and Communication, Information Management, Internal Audit and Risk Management, Executive Services, Organisational Performance and Strategy and Legal and Contractual Services under the direction of the Office of the General Manager. The Indigenous Graduate Recruitment Program is a project initiated by Corporate Executive Services, with the aim of building the capacity of individual Indigenous people within the public sector and also to reflect the diversity of the department's client base.

Indigenous Graduate Recruitment

While the Department has a very successful Indigenous employment program in the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing area, it is committed to increasing the representation of Indigenous people across all service areas and classification levels. This led to the development of a project to investigate options to increase employment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees within the department. The project aims to ensure that, wherever possible, the department's employee profiles reflect the diversity of the clients it serves, particularly in regional offices. The project also aims to meet the established departmental target of 1.7% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across all service areas and the Office of the Public Service Equity and Merit (OPSME) target of 2.4% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across all salary levels by the end of the year 2010.

Initially the strategies have centred on recruiting Indigenous graduates (it is planned to recruit 11 in the first year). The graduate recruits will be employed in various areas of the Department during a 12 months placement. This will provide them with sufficient knowledge and experience to allow them to successfully compete on merit for permanent positions.

To assist the achievement of this initiative, a company called StudentWorks was contracted to undertake the necessary recruitment of Indigenous graduates on behalf of the department (StudentWorks specialises in graduate program recruitment). All service areas provided details of the graduate degrees they are seeking plus brief information regarding the duties the graduates will perform during their 12 months placement/s. Skills sought by service areas included degrees in finance/accounting/commerce, occupational therapy, social science/social policy, information technology, and property economics. This information was forwarded to StudentWorks to enable them to commence the targeted marketing campaign in universities and TAFE colleges in New South Wales and Queensland. It is planned that the Indigenous graduates will commence their placements with the department in January 2003.

Community Renewal Program

Community Renewal is a Queensland Government funded program to improve the quality of life, image and confidence of local people. The program team works with people at the grassroots level to ensure planning takes local needs into account. Community Renewal brings together residents, businesses, government departments and councils to encourage innovative and joint responses to tackle local issues and find long-term solutions to develop Community Action Plans which, in some areas, are now referred to as Local Renewal Plans. Each Community Action Plan or Local Renewal Plan identifies what the local community wants to improve in the area and recommends projects to make this happen.

Since it commenced in 1998, Community Renewal has worked with 15 locations across Queensland. Many of these locations have a large number of Indigenous people within their populations. For instance Inala is the suburb that has the highest Indigenous population of any suburb in Brisbane. In Garbutt, Indigenous people represent more than 16 per cent of its population, the highest proportion for any suburb in Townsville. Indigenous people within this suburb have played an active role in planning for the renewal of their area through the local Elders.

Palm Island

Palm Island is the first Aboriginal community to participate in the state government's Community Renewal Program – "paving the way for future partnerships with other Indigenous communities across Queensland". The Department of Housing funds and co-ordinates Community Renewal activities on Palm Island in partnership with local residents, community groups other government agencies and the Palm Island Aboriginal Council. The Queensland Cabinet approved Palm Island as a renewal area in July 2000.

Vision Plan

The Palm Island Vision Plan was developed by the Palm Island community as a vision for the future of the Island and its residents. The Vision Plan identifies a number of priorities for action and provides the foundation for Community Renewal activity on Palm Island.

Projects

A key focus in the Vision Plan is to respond to the needs of young Palm Islanders, and to achieve physical, social and emotional well being for them and their families. Young people under 15 years of age represent 63% of all Palm Islanders.

Community Renewal funds over 3 years to 2003-04 have been allocated to Palm Island. Funds have been approved in 2000-01 for the employment of a Community Renewal Coordinator for Palm Island, an administration officer and a total for 7 projects in 2001-02.

- The Palm Island Masterplan project is a blueprint for future physical works and will involve as many local people and stakeholders as possible. The plan focuses on key areas and buildings within the Palm Island community and will detail how areas including the Town Square, the beachfront adjacent to the Council Chambers and the park areas at Butler Bay and The Farm can be upgraded.
- Palm Island Amateur Boxing Club has received funds for equipment (uniforms, footwear, boxing equipment), registration fees and travel to assist young people to participate in tournaments.
- Palm Island Graffiti Busters provided funds for the purchase of equipment and painting supplies to repaint various community buildings and artistic murals.
- Palm Island Ambulance Attendant Initiative provides funds for the salary and operational expenses to employ and train two local Indigenous Ambulance Attendants on Palm Island over a two-year period.
- Technological Enhancement Program provided funds for the purchase of computers and associated equipment to establish 2 computer centres located at the two schools on Palm Island.
- First Aid for the Community offers residents of Palm Island first aid training by Queensland Ambulance Service.
- Funds are provided for the employment of two part-time facilitators for Palm Island to implement projects.

Three other projects have been approved to date in 2002-03. These are:

- Continuation of the Community Renewal Coordinator position and administration officer for 2002-03;
- Funding for the development of Stage 2 of the Palm Island Masterplan;
- Provision of a mobile outdoor cinema.

Implementation and Delivery.

Key features of the implementation and delivery arrangements for Community Renewal on Palm Island include the following:

- A Community Renewal coordinator and an administrative officer have been employed since February 2001 and are based in the Townsville office of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Policy. The coordinator has a primary role to work with other government agencies (particularly regional managers) and the Palm Island Aboriginal Council to coordinate involvement in Community Renewal activity. Whilst this position is employed by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Policy through Community Renewal funding and has a reporting relationship to the Regional Manager of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Policy, the position also reports to the Director of Community Renewal for operational matters relating to program delivery on Palm. In addition, the coordinator supervises and supports a more locally based Community Renewal facilitator who lives on Palm Island and who is based in an office in the town centre. The facilitator's role is primarily to work with the local community and actively engage their involvement in Community Renewal activities.

- In most Community Renewal areas, a community reference group has been established to provide a two-way channel for communicating views on renewal plans and initiatives between the community, Government and council agencies. For Palm Island, a more unstructured approach has been adopted. Rather than conducting formal meetings of a committee of residents, regular public meetings are convened by the Community Renewal facilitator and coordinator, often in conjunction with a social event such as a sausage sizzle. These meetings provide an opportunity to gain input and feedback from the community on priorities and proposed projects for Community Renewal funding. A strong emphasis has been placed on working closely with the Palm Island Aboriginal Council.
- Palm Island funds are essentially 'un-tied' and can be used for any purpose that addresses priorities identified in the Vision Plan. All projects and initiatives for Community Renewal funding are required to be validated by the local community and the Townsville Regional Managers Forum of State Government agencies prior to being submitted for approval by the Minister for Housing.
- The local state Member of Parliament reviews all funding proposals and provides comments prior to recommendations being made to the Minister.

Future Community Renewal activities on Palm Island will focus on the development of a youth and community centre on the Island.

Community Housing

The Community Housing Service Area in the Department of Housing provides funds to 13 Indigenous community organisations. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up a significant proportion of tenants in non-Indigenous community housing services, especially crisis services.

The issues facing Indigenous community housing providers are remarkably similar to those for non-Indigenous community housing providers. Given Queensland's geography and demographics there are considerable advantages in a more co-ordinated approach to resourcing and training for all community housing providers as well as addressing inconsistencies in the policy, funding and accountability frameworks for funding programs.

In progressing these issues, it will be necessary to consider the aspirations of the Indigenous community to retain a sense of identity and maximum control over its own development. At the same time there is increasing recognition and numerous examples of the advantages of networking and co-operation between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community housing sectors at the local, regional, state and national levels.

Community Housing is committed to actively assisting the development of infrastructure to support service delivery in the Indigenous community housing sector. It seeks to clarify the roles and responsibilities of various housing programs and agencies in relation to the funding and delivery of Indigenous community housing and co-ordinate Community Housing's planning and resource allocation with those of Indigenous community housing programs (ATSIC, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing).

By increasing the level of co-operation and networking between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community housing sectors it will maximise the opportunities for joint work and co-operation with the Indigenous community housing sector in relation to sector development activities e.g. training, service standards, etc. This will achieve a more significant role for the Department in the development and delivery of Indigenous community housing.

Community Housing Planning Group

Membership on the Community Housing Planning Group includes representatives from the Joint Planning Group and the Joint Torres Strait Islander Housing and Infrastructure Committee established under the Queensland Bilateral Agreements.

Plans such as the Community Housing 5 year plan are developed and reviewed with regard to, and ensure consistency with, the objectives of Indigenous planning processes including:

- Bilateral Agreements for planning and coordination of housing and infrastructure;
- Housing Minister's 10 year statement of direction - Indigenous Housing 2010;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission planning processes; and
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Development planning processes.

Peer Evaluator Training

The Standards and Accreditation Unit that assists with processes for quality improvement and evaluates organisations under the National Community Housing Standards will seek nominations from Indigenous people to become peer evaluators to ensure evaluations of Indigenous community housing provider organisations are conducted with regard to Indigenous cultural issues.

Conclusion.

As noted by the committee, *"Being in partnerships with governments places additional responsibilities on communities. They require:*

- *Effective local leadership and decision making processes that are relevant and deliver improvements for community members;*
- *Stable and viable organisations and councils which have competent staff; and*
- *Adequate Infrastructure which can deliver corporate governance and financial accountability".*

It must be noted that improving the delivery of services on community so as to advance the standards and conditions of Indigenous peoples lives, is part of the process of development. Given that development is an innate and natural process in all living beings, improving the outcomes for those we work with is not about 'bringing' or 'delivering' development but rather, 'intervening' in the development processes which already exists. (Kaplan, A. 1999)

Hence we are committed to a whole of government approach which focuses on ensuring that there are opportunities for local councils, Indigenous organisations and their peak representative bodies, to grow and strengthen their governance structures and arrangements. Providing funds and grants without associated and accompanying

infrastructure manifested in both human and other support undermines community resilience, sustainability and viability.

There are many views and approaches to understanding the concept and practice of development. One approach to understanding development that includes individuals, groups, organisations, communities and societies, observes the presence of three phases. The first phase is characterised by '**dependence**'. This is seen as period of great learning and skills acquisition in which others play a major role in providing the resources necessary for the growth. The second phase is that of '**independence**' which entails a fundamental change in relationship between the benefactor and beneficiary and requires for the latter to act as unique and self-reliant. The third phase involves a further fundamental change in the relationships towards increasing '**inter-dependence**'. It is here where the full realisation of ones own potential is achieved only through effective collaboration with others. All of these phases are developmental and the full and positive experience of each phase is vital to the ability to engage in the next one. (Kaplan, A. 1999 p10)

The programs implemented by the Department of Housing works within all these phases so as to realise the strategies that build the capacities of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to better manage the delivery of services within their communities.

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**Queensland
Government**

Ref: DG67861

Department of
Housing

Mr Barry Wakelin MP
Chairman
House of Representative, Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Wakelin

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

The submission enclosed provides information on the range of the Department's policy development activities and programs that improve the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to better manage the delivery of housing related services on their communities.

We will also be providing the submission electronically to:
atsai.reps@aph.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda A. Apelt".

Linda A Apelt
Director-General
Department of Housing

21 / 10 / 2002