

Northern Territory Community Housing Growth Strategy

2022-32



Minister's foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Northern Territory Community Housing Growth Strategy 2022-32.

This Strategy has been developed to transform the way social and affordable housing is delivered to Territorians through supporting a diverse and sustainable community housing sector in the Northern Territory (NT).

Developed in partnership with our local community housing and homelessness sectors, the Strategy sets out the key directions and actions we will take together to continue to develop a housing system that delivers improved outcomes for Territorians living in social and affordable housing and the wider community.

Our Community Housing Providers (CHPs) have demonstrated they can deliver place based services that make a difference not only in the lives of people in social and affordable housing, but also have positive impacts on communities through place making and neighbourhood connection. The release of this strategy acts on the valuable opportunity to capitalise on the work of our highly capable sector and invest in this proven approach to social housing.

Importantly, this Strategy is supported by significant capital and financial investment through specific growth opportunities and

sector development initiatives. The three strategic objectives and 25 tangible actions, along with a clearly defined pipeline of investment, means that this Strategy is not just aspirational, but connected to directed and targeted Government funding.

For urban centres we have committed to over time transfer 40 percent of urban public housing to CHPs. This is recognition that a community housing-led social and affordable housing system in the NT will be more sustainable, more cost effective and more person centred.

In remote communities, we will establish and grow the Aboriginal-owned community housing sector and design programs; and transfer and grow housing options in partnership with local community, and Aboriginal-led organisations. Aboriginal Housing NT and land councils will lead this work in partnership with Government.

As the sector grows, I look forward to CHPs delivering new social and affordable housing through their ability to leverage their portfolios and access revenue and finance not available to the Northern Territory Government. We will support these developments through the

release of sites for redevelopment that allow us to re-imagine neighbourhoods.

As we grow community housing-led social and affordable housing, liveability in the Territory will continue to improve. In turn, we will enable the attraction and retention of people who contribute to our economy and want to call the Territory home.

I look forward to continuing to work side-by-side with the sector and Territorians as we jointly deliver a robust community housing system across the next ten years and into the future.

Kate Worden

Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing



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Acknowledgement of country

Territory Families, Housing and Communities acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging. Our agency is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

1

Introduction

The Northern Territory Government is partnering with the community housing sector to transform the way social and affordable housing is delivered in the NT and improve housing outcomes for Territorians.

Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) is pleased to present the NT Community Housing Growth Strategy 2022–2032 (the Strategy). The Strategy was developed in close consultation with key stakeholders and demonstrates the NT Government's longstanding commitment to invest in the transition of delivery and management of social and affordable housing to Community Housing Providers (CHPs).

The Strategy positions the community housing sector as a central part of the broader social

and affordable housing system in the NT. In 2021, the number of CHPs registered under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) in the NT grew from five, collectively managing more than 900 dwellings, to eight providers managing over 1,000 dwellings. Sector growth will be fast tracked under this Strategy to increase the size and scope of community housing across the next ten years.

This Strategy outlines clear, funded and tangible actions to grow the sector and attract non-government investment in housing to more

effectively meet the growing demand for social and affordable housing across the NT.

It is underpinned by a commitment of \$22.3 million in 2021-22 and 2022-23, to seed fund sector growth and provide a foundational investment in community housing. The NT Government looks forward to working closely with the community housing sector to transform social and affordable housing in the NT, and bring innovation to the housing system across urban and regional centres and remote communities.



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The community housing sector and the Northern Territory

The importance of community housing

Community housing goes beyond being just an alternative to public housing. It can be a fundamental part of the housing continuum that grows community, connects people, and shapes places. It also forms a foundational part of the broader support system for people on low to moderate incomes and contributes to the social and economic fabric of the communities CHPs operate within.

Across Australia, governments have recognised the many benefits of community housing and acknowledge it as the most effective model for delivering social and affordable housing. Community housing delivers services and builds infrastructure that is of higher

quality and is more cost effective than traditional public housing models.

CHPs registered and regulated under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) operate with lower cost structures and have access to a range of revenue streams and taxation benefits not available to government housing providers. CHPs can access Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) as a revenue source and low-cost debt finance through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC). Through these benefits and their commercial operating models, CHPs are increasingly the key vehicle for delivering social and affordable housing asset renewal and new housing supply.

CHPs connect people, communities and services, and provide housing that is integrated, responsive and aligned to the diverse needs of their tenants. CHPs are robustly regulated and constantly identify and leverage opportunities to operate more effectively and efficiently. CHPs are central to delivering a more contemporary, fit-for-purpose and sustainable housing system for Territorians.

A strong, capable and professional local sector

The community housing sector in the NT operates in a highly complex and unique environment, that is unlike other Australian jurisdictions. As a result, CHPs and the organisations that support the sector have been required to grow, change and adapt quickly, all while building service and commercial operating models focussed on sustainability and flexibility.

For this growth to continue, investment from the NT Government is essential. This Strategy commits the NT Government to capitalising on sector-led growth and progress. It outlines how opportunities to support growth will be released and leverages CHP capability and expertise in delivering services to Territorians across different target client groups and locations.

This Strategy acknowledges the experience, knowledge and capability of a professional sector that has dedicated providers for which community housing is their core business. It also recognises the importance of place-based and Aboriginal-led organisations who understand the communities

CHPs connect people, communities and services, and provide housing that is integrated, responsive and aligned to the diverse needs of their tenants.



in which they work. Key sector partners, including homelessness and social support services that work in partnership with CHPs to support individuals and families with complex needs, are also crucial to the growth of the sector and building a connected and collaborative service system.

CHPs and sector partners are therefore seen as foundational organisations to transform social and affordable housing in the NT. Transformation will deliver improved tenant housing outcomes, wellbeing and economic participation, and strengthen neighbourhood amenity.

Underpinning this reform is ongoing partnership and collaboration with the community housing sector in shaping the delivery of the Strategy, including the pipeline of investment, approaches to commissioning, service design and the investment required to ensure sector growth is sustainable and viable.

Fostering collaboration, partnership and engagement is a priority of this Strategy, as it is focussed on growing NT CHPs, particularly local Tier 1 CHPs.

Finally, the NT Government is committed to seeking feedback and testing our thinking with CHPs and the sector as industry experts. CHPs are best placed to know whether this Strategy and its associated program of growth and reform is working and where we collectively need to recalibrate.

Partnering to deliver Aboriginal-led services

The NT Government is committed to enabling the growth of Aboriginal community housing organisations across urban, regional and remote communities in the NT and funding and supporting Aboriginal-led services to Aboriginal people and communities. Across the NT, there are strong Aboriginal-led CHPs with the capacity and skillset to deliver high-quality community housing services.

A foundational element of this Strategy is to actively support the growth of these organisations and the establishment of new and emerging Aboriginal-led CHPs. Direct funding opportunities for Aboriginal-led organisations through Local Decision Making (LDM) will be explored and partnership between organisations encouraged and fostered. The past few years have seen an increasing number of successful partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations in the NT and opportunities to replicate this across the community housing sector will be explored.



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How the Strategy was developed

This Strategy was developed across a period of twelve months in consultation with key stakeholders across the NT housing and homelessness sector. It was also informed by independent economic modelling to assess the viability of different approaches to growing the community housing sector in the NT.

It aligns to and delivers on key social and economic policy directions for the NT, including the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission's (TERC) recommendation to establish a sustainable community housing industry in the Territory. The TERC Final Report recognised the potential of the community housing sector as a growth industry in the NT and stated that: 'diversifying supply of affordable housing through the community housing industry can deliver economic growth outcomes, while also delivering additional social housing'¹.

With a strong focus on developing a robust Aboriginal community housing sector, this Strategy was also developed in alignment with National Agreement on Closing the Gap commitments to strengthen Aboriginal community controlled services across a range of sectors and also the transfer of government service delivery to Aboriginal organisations through Local Decision Making Agreements

with the NT Government. This commitment extends to specialist support services in the homelessness, family support and other sectors that are critical to improving the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal Territorians.

Consultations commenced in March 2021 with the release of the NT Community Housing Growth Strategy Discussion Paper². More than 70 individuals representing Government and non-government organisations from urban, regional and remote locations provided feedback through consultation workshops or written submissions.

Economic modelling was undertaken in consultation with the NT community housing sector to understand the different operating models of local CHPs and their vision for growth. Drawing on this information and through further consultation with the sector, a series of delivery options were modelled to assess financial viability for both CHPs and the NT Government.

This Strategy is also informed by best practice and experience from other jurisdictions and tailored to fit the NT context. It considers and addresses diversity of client need, size, scale and viability of the NT social housing sector and articulates approaches that support community control and decision making.

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The vision

"A diverse and sustainable community housing sector and service system that delivers the social and affordable housing Territorians need to thrive"

To achieve this vision, NT Government investment in the community housing sector is essential.

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Principles

This Strategy is guided by the following principles

PEOPLE

Person, family and community centred	Prioritise and centre the needs of individuals, families and communities
Culturally responsive and informed	Deliver culturally safe and responsive services that align with the needs, aspirations, governance and decision making mechanisms of local communities
Community renewal	Strengthen asset and tenancy management to improve neighbourhood amenity

PARTNERSHIPS

Leveraging partnerships	Partner across non-government organisations, corporate sector, industry and government to maximise success
Aboriginal controlled	Grow Aboriginal community controlled registered CHPs
Focus on local CHPs	Genuine engagement and collaboration with local CHPs in system reform and sector growth
Capability development	Build the capacity of local CHPs and government partners to achieve reform
Working with Aboriginal organisations and communities	The Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT) Partnership Principles are central to services
Future focused	Evidence and innovation at the centre of a contemporary social and affordable housing system

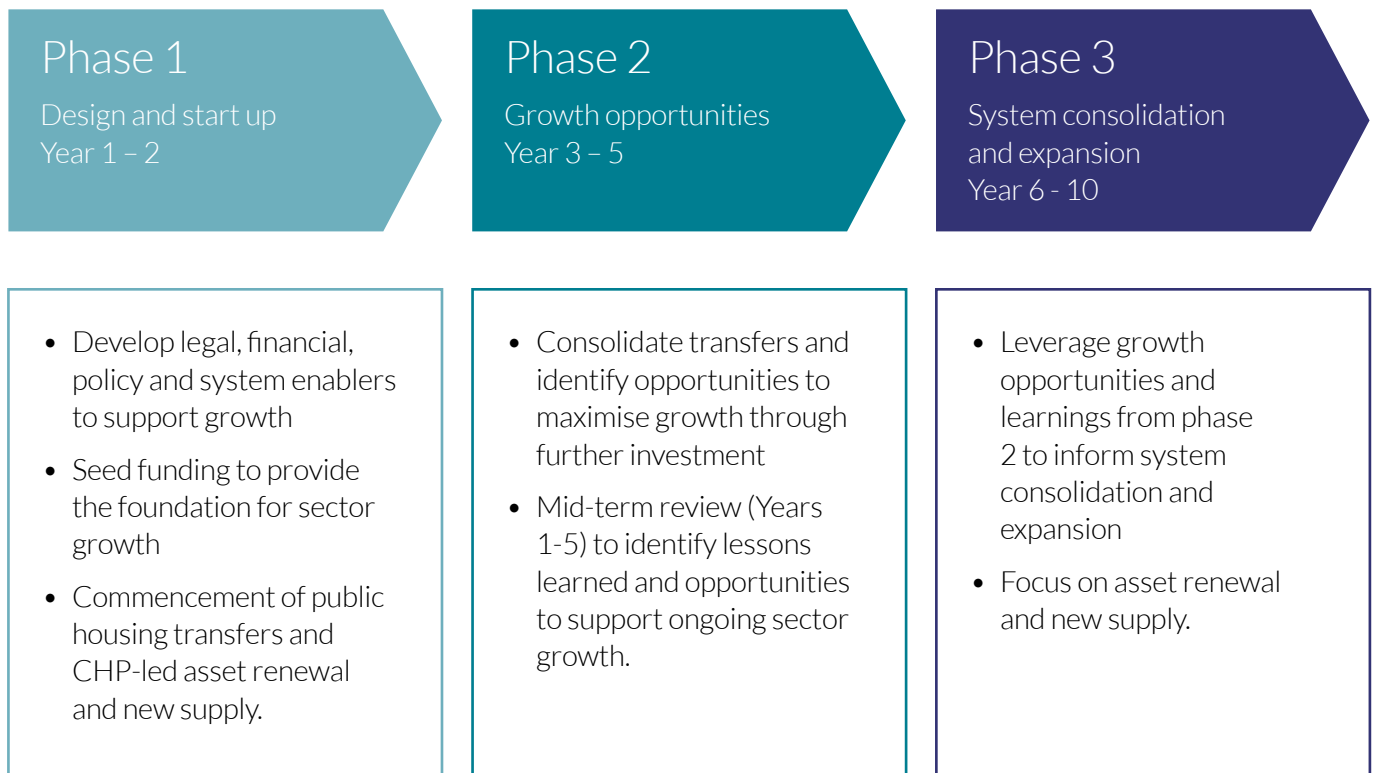
ASSETS

Improved housing	Partner with CHPs to upgrade ageing assets and increase supply
Leveraging opportunity	Cost effective utilisation of all available assets and programs to enable sustained, and (where possible) rapid growth
Responsive housing design	Housing that is responsive to cultural and geographic context, climatic conditions and accessible.

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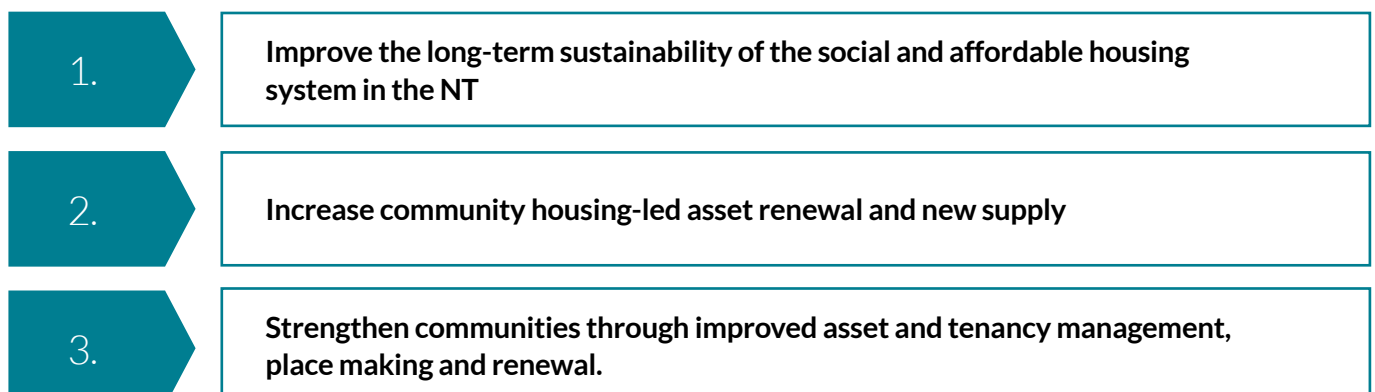
Phased approach

This 10 year Strategy will be delivered across three phases



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Objectives



Objective 1

Improve the long-term sustainability of the social and affordable housing system in the NT

The NT social and affordable housing system is becoming increasingly unsustainable, driven by high demand with limited availability, and rising cost pressures from an ageing public housing portfolio. With 86 per cent of public housing dwellings more than 30 years old, the cost to repair and maintain housing is high and increasing.

Growing the delivery of social and affordable housing through the community housing sector creates the opportunity to unlock access to additional resources and investment not available to government. This includes:

- Tax exemptions and concessions targeted to Public Benevolent Institutions
- Expanding tenant access to Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)
- Creating new opportunities to invest and co-invest in new social and affordable housing supply through debt finance and other non-government funding mechanisms.

Through this Strategy the NT Government will invest in sector growth as a way to improve the long-term sustainability of the social and affordable housing system.

Community Housing Growth Streams

This Strategy has been developed to enable sector growth across both urban and remote settings and acknowledges the diversity of the Territory. This growth will be driven through a portfolio planning approach to housing management across both urban and remote areas to improve quality, optimise the use of existing housing, and deliver new housing supply.



Urban/Regional Growth Stream

The Urban/Regional Growth Stream includes a range of sector growth initiatives that increase capacity and are supported by investment. A significant focus of the Urban/Regional Growth Stream will include the staged transfer of urban public housing assets to CHPs across Greater Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek where TFHC owns or leases approximately 5,500 dwellings.

Up to 40 per cent of all urban/regional public housing dwellings will be transferred to CHP management under long-term leases. Growth of urban community housing will also include the transition of social and affordable housing head leases to CHP management and the transfer of land and housing assets to CHPs for development and renewal.

Urban/Regional Investment Pipeline

Community housing growth opportunities will be released using a staged approach that provides certainty for CHPs and demonstrates Government's commitment to invest in the sector's growth and development. This Investment Pipeline has been developed to leverage and build on the capacity and capability of local CHPs and has been carefully designed to optimise the sustainability of transfers. The Pipeline includes timeframes for the release of public housing transfers, opportunities for asset redevelopment, and contract management of head leasing programs.

These diverse transfer opportunities are intended to provide the foundation to promote sector innovation and growth and deliver improved asset renewal and new supply. This investment recognises CHPs as social outcome driven businesses with commercial acumen and the ability to capitalise on NT Government funding to deliver improved outcomes across social and affordable housing.

To pilot the process for large scale transfers in the NT, the NT Government will release two packages of around 250 public housing dwellings under a long-term lease arrangement to a CHP in Year 1 of the Investment Pipeline. This transfer will enable key systems and policies, commissioning processes and transition approaches to be tested and refined ahead of further releases.

Economic modelling undertaken to inform the Investment Pipeline recognises that condition of dwellings is the main cost driver that impacts on the viability and eventual success of transfers. Modelling recommends that to ensure transfers are viable and sustainable, transfers will take into consideration and address dwelling condition and repair and maintenance costs.

To ensure transfers are financially supported and viable, and a strong foundation of dwellings are released to enable CHPs to grow their portfolios, the NT Government is attaching a capital grant to each transfer package released during the design and start-up phase. This funding will enable CHPs to plan for and undertake works on ageing dwellings to minimise future repairs and maintenance liability.

Transfers will also be designed to position CHPs for future growth and to invest in social and affordable housing. Therefore transfers will include growth targets and leveraging requirements. The NT Government will also work with key stakeholders responsible for financing new supply under this Strategy to address barriers to accessing debt finance to support investment and sector growth.

Future growth opportunities and system consolidation under this Strategy will be informed by a mid-term review. This mid-term review will include an impact analysis of whether Strategy objectives are being achieved.

Investment Pipeline

Description	Year 1: 2022	Year 2: 2022-23	Year 3: 2023-24 Consolidation	Year 4: 2024-25	Year 5: 2025-26	Number of dwellings
Public housing transfers	250 dwellings – Darwin	250 dwellings – Greater Darwin		250 dwellings – Alice Springs		1,500
Released through long-term leases in geographic clusters to promote integrated service delivery, place making and neighbourhood renewal	250 dwellings – Palmerston	250 dwellings – Alice Springs		250 dwellings – Katherine/Tennant Creek		
John Stokes Square transfer	78 dwellings – Darwin					78
Affordable housing contract management	57 dwellings – Alice Springs 18 dwellings – Tennant Creek	320 dwellings – Darwin				395
CHP-led small scale development	Alice Springs		Development opportunity -location to be confirmed		Development opportunity -location to be confirmed	
NT Government land released through long-term leasing, sale, or title transfer and public private partnerships to support construction of housing	Darwin					
Major redevelopments in partnership with a CHP	Major redevelopment #1 Market sounding and procurement planning for Shiers Street	Shiers Street Expressions of Interest (EOI)/ Request for Proposal (RFP) Agreements negotiated and signed	Shiers Street Construction underway (subject to RFP outcome)	Major redevelopment #2 EOI/RFP Site to be confirmed	EOI/RFP concluded and construction commences	
Assignment of social housing head leases (tentative)	RFP commences for initial 133 head leases	RFP concluded Agreements negotiated and signed	Option to include additional leases			133+
Small scale public housing transfers (<100 dwellings)	TFHC is moving away from small-scale transfers except in the case where they are linked to provision of specialist support services through a niche provider					
Transfer total (social)	578	633		500		1,711
Transfer total (affordable)	75	320				395
Transfer total (all dwellings)	653	953		500		2,106

Remote Growth Stream

Across the Territory, there are 5,058 public housing dwellings in remote areas and 393 dwellings in town camp or community living areas. In recognition of the continued connection to traditional land and decision making structures within remote Aboriginal culture and communities, the Remote Growth Stream will be aligned to and deliver on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the NT Government's Local Decision Making agenda by growing and supporting a robust Aboriginal community housing sector.

Delivery of the Remote Growth Stream will also be informed by:

- *The National Partnership for Remote Housing NT Joint Steering Committee review of remote housing management and leasing in the NT*
- *Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes.* \$1.1 billion Remote Housing Program - working in partnership with Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs) and Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

The Remote Growth Stream will prioritise the delivery of community housing services by Aboriginal-led organisations in remote communities. Where there is strong community interest and organisational readiness to register as an Aboriginal CHP, the NT Government will actively support organisational growth. Aboriginal controlled CHPs and service providers will be the priority deliverer of services to communities, homelands and town camps.

The Remote Growth Stream will consider the unique land tenure arrangements needed to underpin future community housing management arrangements in remote Aboriginal communities and take a place-based approach to meeting the housing needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people by:

- Capitalising on opportunities to transfer social and industry housing leases to registered Aboriginal CHPs on a whole of community/region transfer model
- Clarifying the impact of underlying leasing arrangements across 73 remote communities on social housing transfers and future tenure arrangements
- Considering geographical challenges associated with providing services in remote communities linked to higher infrastructure and service delivery costs
- The design of fit-for-purpose and context-responsive contracting and service delivery models.

To support the growth of Aboriginal CHPs, the NT Government is investing more than \$4 million across 5 years to strengthen the capacity of the NT's first Aboriginal housing peak body - Aboriginal Housing NT (AHNT). AHNT will play a central role in providing capacity building for Aboriginal housing organisations in areas such as governance and board membership.

The NT Government will support the establishment of a remote community housing trial model, with governance and service delivery arrangements consistent with the NRSCH and incorporating healthy living principles. This trial will inform remote community housing management transfers across the NT.



System enablers

Sector growth across the NT relies on a number of key system enablers. These enablers will be developed in partnership with the sector and will be informed by best practice and evidence from other jurisdictions, tailored to the NT context.

NRSCH registration

NRSCH registration is a crucial threshold for CHPs to achieve in order to support sustainable services and effective services. Sector growth will be structured around the NRSCH and transfer opportunities under the Urban Growth Stream will be limited to CHPs registered under the NRSCH. Non-registered organisations may participate in housing and asset service delivery as part of contracted services managed by NT Government and delivered by CHPs.

Community Housing Asset and Tenancy Management Policy and Legal Agreements

The NT Government will partner with the sector to establish a legal agreement framework that provides clear and consistent expectations of roles and responsibilities for the sector. The NT Government will also develop a Community Housing Asset and Tenancy Management Policy to guide the operational management of community housing.

Industry Development Plan

CHPs will be supported to build their capacity and capability through an Industry Development Plan (IDP), which will have a focus on growing the role of Aboriginal CHPs to provide housing management and service delivery. The IDP will include a focus on building the capacity and capability of Aboriginal community housing organisations and be aligned to capability development areas prioritised under the National Regulatory Code. Peak organisations, NT Shelter and Aboriginal Housing NT, will play a core role in developing and delivering the IDP.

Integrated housing and homelessness system

The NT Government will continue work in partnership with the housing and homelessness services sector to establish an integrated housing and homelessness system with shared pathways into housing including a single application process and a shared wait list and allocations process for all social housing.

Actions

The following actions will be delivered to implement objective 1.

Actions	Phase 1 Year 1 -2	Phase 2 Year 3 - 5	Phase 3 Years 6 -10
1. Develop and release long-term management transfer of 500 dwellings to pilot large-scale transfers	✓		
2. Undertake continuous process of commissioning and negotiation transfer of assets aligned to Investment Pipeline	✓	✓	✓
3. Release funding to support the growth of the Aboriginal housing sector and Aboriginal Housing NT as the peak organisation	✓	✓	✓
4. Implement a pilot project to establish a remote Aboriginal CHP	✓	✓	
5. Negotiate establishment and transfer arrangement for remote CHPs		✓	✓
6. Develop and deliver a legal and policy framework to support the transfer of assets to CHPs	✓	✓	✓
7. Deliver immediate policy, operational and IT system improvements to support transfers and sector growth	✓		
8. Develop scope and business case for an integrated housing and homelessness system	✓		
9. Establish and strengthen the Office of the Registrar NT as a statutory officer	✓	✓	✓
10. Negotiate a new service level agreement with the NSW Office of the Registrar	✓		
11. Release funding to the sector to develop an NT Industry Development Plan and support delivery of the IDP	✓	✓	✓
12. Partner to deliver a mid-term review of the Strategy to determine key focus areas for years 5-10		✓	

■ Urban/Regional
 ■ Remote
 ■ Sector-wide

Objective 2

Increase community housing sector-led asset renewal and new housing supply

Unmet demand for housing across the NT is significant. Homelessness in the NT is 12 times the national average, with severe overcrowding accounting for 81 per cent of the homelessness rate. Nationally, the rate of severe overcrowding is 21.8 per 10,000 people, yet the rate for the NT is 483.5 per 10,000.

The need for additional housing is driven by the pressure to relieve existing overcrowding among Aboriginal households, and to meet the demand for population growth expected across the next decade. Modelling indicates that around 8,000 to 12,000 additional dwellings will be required across the NT.

In response to the critical levels of overcrowding in remote communities, the NT Government has committed \$1.1 billion across 10 years to remote housing under the remote housing investment package, *Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes*. In addition, the Australian Government has agreed to provide matched funding of \$110 million per annum across five years through the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory 2018-2023.

Supply challenges also exist in urban and regional communities with wait times for public housing between two to eight years or more. Dwelling bedroom

configuration is no longer aligned to waitlist needs.

Alongside constrained supply, the NT public housing system also faces high cost pressures due to an ageing asset portfolio and high repairs and maintenance costs.

Across Australia, community housing is widely recognised as the preferred model for more effectively delivering social and affordable housing renewal and supply projects and is increasingly being used as a vehicle for delivering Government investment into the social and affordable housing system.

CHPs operate with lower cost



structures and have access to a range of revenue streams and taxation benefits not available to government housing providers. CHPs also have access to a wider range of funding and financing options and are positioned to deliver high-quality housing developments at lower cost than government.

Acknowledging the range of financial benefits of a sector-led social and affordable housing system, this Strategy seeks to position CHPs alongside the NT Government as a major provider of social and affordable housing in the Territory through the transfer of housing assets, land and targeted funding to CHPs in urban and remote parts of the NT.

Urban/regional asset renewal and new supply

This Strategy will deliver a range of small and large scale urban redevelopment opportunities. These opportunities include a mix of existing housing assets with the potential to deliver increased value through redevelopment and increasing yield or replacing stock that has reached the end of its useful life. Opportunities to construct new social and

affordable housing on vacant land will also be offered to the sector, supported by a range of co-funding and investment partnership arrangements to ensure project viability.

Redevelopment opportunities will be designed to complement the transfer of existing assets for management and are included in the Urban/Regional Investment Pipeline. These sector growth opportunities will be designed to respond to local community contexts and have a strong focus on place making.

Aligned to the TERC Final Report and recommendations, the NT Government has committed to exploring the redevelopment of high-value public housing sites in Darwin and regional areas. The TERC recognised that diversifying the supply of affordable housing through the community housing industry can deliver economic growth outcomes, social and affordable housing and improved neighbourhood amenity.

Under this Strategy, large-scale redevelopment of public housing sites will be targeted to the community housing sector. These opportunities will be designed to align with TERC recommendations

and broader NT government reform directions in land use planning which aim to enable greater flexibility and innovation within the NT Planning System for mixed use developments, where they deliver demonstrable economic and social benefits to the broader community.

Large-scale community housing redevelopment projects may include a mix of housing and tenure types, comprising social and affordable housing and affordable homes for purchase. The first site identified for large scale redevelopment under this Strategy is at Shiers Street, The Narrows in Darwin. Future large-scale redevelopment opportunities will be identified based on housing demand, sector and community engagement, asset and land potential and NT Government economic and investment priorities.

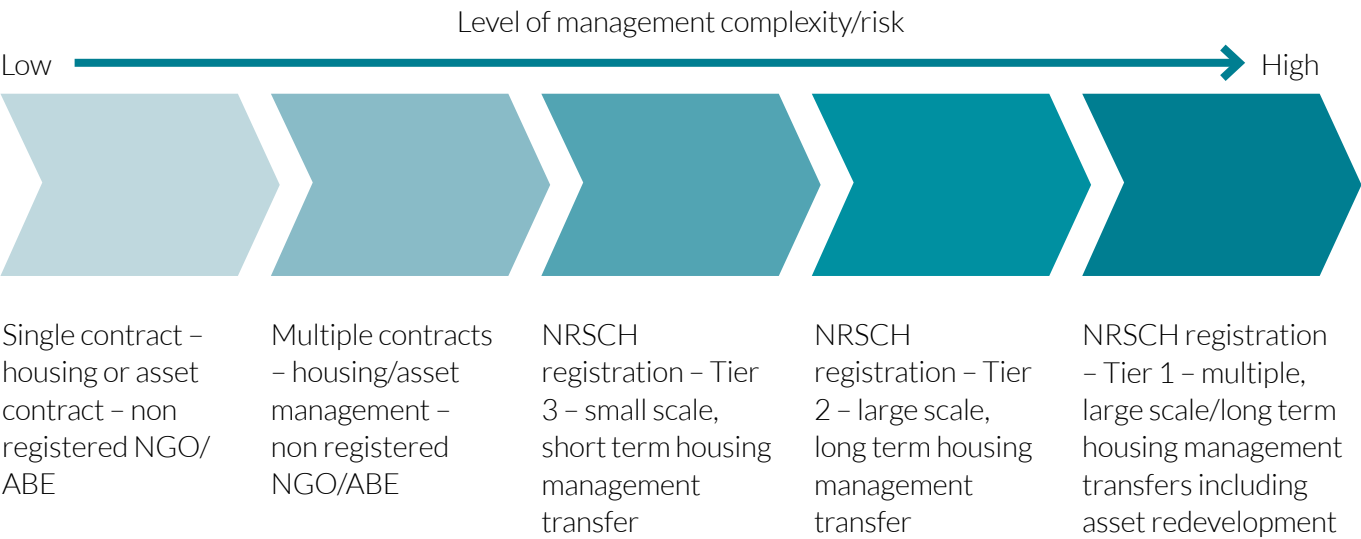
Assets renewal and new supply in remote communities

Aboriginal organisations play a fundamental role in the delivery of tenancy management and maintenance contracts under the NT government’s *Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes.* \$1.1 billion Remote Housing Program. These arrangements include remote housing tenancy management and property maintenance contract opportunities for Aboriginal Business Enterprises and Aboriginal community controlled organisations to deliver services to

tenants on behalf of Government. This Strategy acknowledges that, while the NT and Australian Governments will continue to have an ongoing role in responding to the significant need for additional housing supply in remote Aboriginal communities, there are a broad range of positive benefits achieved through housing management and service delivery that is delivered through a place-based and community-led approach. The NT Government will provide opportunities for Aboriginal organisations to take a greater role

in the delivery of housing services, including the full transition of asset and tenancy management responsibilities as landlord under the *Residential Tenancies Act* (1999). This Strategy acknowledges housing management arrangements are established and delivered along a continuum based on risk, responsibility and management complexity. As housing management responsibilities grow, so too does the requirement for housing providers to have the capability to meet financial, legal and asset standard requirements.

Continuum of housing management



Where there is community support and organisational readiness to transition to community-led and delivered housing management, service delivery and housing management opportunities will be prioritised for Aboriginal organisations and CHPs. Transfer

of housing management, including timeframes, will be community-led and include support to build capacity and capability for Aboriginal CHPs. The NT Government will continue to invest in building the capacity and capability of Aboriginal

organisations to provide housing management services along the continuum and will work with the NT Registrar to ensure the NRSCH requirements take into account the complexities of housing delivery in the remote area context.

Actions

The following actions will be delivered to implement objective 2.

Actions	Phase 1 Year 1 -2	Phase 2 Year 3 - 5	Phase 3 Years 6 -10
13. Partner with the community housing sector to deliver new affordable housing in Katherine and Palmerston and develop agreements and monitor delivery	✓	✓	
14. Release, negotiate and monitor small scale redevelopment sites in Alice Springs and Darwin to community housing sector	✓	✓	
15. Explore options for social and affordable head leasing program to support new supply delivered by CHPs		✓	✓
16. Identify and implement initiatives to improve borrowing opportunities in the NT including with NHFIC, Social Impact Funds and others		✓	✓
17. Release large scale asset redevelopment opportunities to community housing sector and negotiate and monitor delivery	✓	✓	✓
18. Continue delivery of asset and tenancy management contracts by ABEs and Aboriginal community controlled organisations	✓	✓	✓
19. Support the growth and development of NRSCH registered Aboriginal CHPs and the transition of housing delivery to these organisations	✓	✓	✓
20. Develop, agree and implement the first Remote Transfer Plan	✓	✓	✓

■ Urban/Regional
 ■ Remote
 ■ Sector-wide

Objective 3

Strengthen communities through improved asset and tenancy outcomes, place making and renewal.

CHP-led housing management and service delivery can not only result in better outcomes for tenants and the broader social and affordable housing system, but can also contribute significantly to strengthening communities. CHPs embed place making and community renewal practices into their service delivery to transform communities. This is achieved through a holistic and integrated approach incorporating: community development; a focus on tenant health and wellbeing support; training; employment and economic empowerment; and actively connecting with the local community.

This Strategy recognises the importance of place making and community renewal in delivering stronger tenancy outcomes. This focus will be reflected across both Urban/Regional and Remote Growth Streams and will contribute to improving a range of outcomes for Territorians living in social and affordable housing that go beyond housing.

Asset and tenancy management

CHPs operate within the robustly regulated NRSCH, and are required to meet high standards of operational management which in turn enables quality and cost effective asset and tenancy management. The NRSCH requires

CHPs to maintain high dwelling utilisation rates, fast vacancy turnaround times, low rent arrears and tenant debts and high tenant satisfaction through responsive and tailored tenancy and asset management.

Under this Strategy, the transfer of public housing assets to CHP management will not only improve the financial sustainability of the system, but also the quality of services and tenancy outcomes. Where there are notable barriers to meeting NRSCH KPIs in remote settings, transfer of housing management and service delivery to Aboriginal CHPs will take this into consideration.

Place-based, integrated and person-centred service delivery

The NT Government recognises the value of housing and tenancy management that is responsive to the local community context. CHPs engage closely with tenants and households to provide services and supports that meet their specific needs. This in turn contributes to improving neighbourhood and community cohesion.

CHPs have a strong focus on working with complex clients and provide a conduit to enable tenants to access the broader support services system. CHPs partner with key organisations including homelessness and support services

to support tenants with complex needs and assist households to sustain their tenancy and improve health and wellbeing outcomes. This integrated approach to tenancy management highlights the importance of sector partnerships in achieving outcomes for tenants.

Delivering place-based and integrated tenancy management requires strong partnerships and integration with surrounding support providers across the homelessness and family support service systems. In recognition of the importance of cultural security, identity and connection for Aboriginal people, the NT Government will work in partnership with CHPs, homelessness and family support sectors to foster and grow culturally safe and responsive housing and support services for Aboriginal Territorians. The NT Government will also support the continued growth of Aboriginal-led organisations in the delivery of housing and homelessness support services. As part of the growth of Aboriginal-led organisations, the NT Government will encourage and foster partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal providers.

The NT Government is working with homelessness services to deliver the NT Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023, including homelessness program reforms.

As the CHP sector grows, the importance of strong partnerships with homelessness services increases. Whole of service system responses to homelessness reforms and antisocial behaviour in and around social housing will be co-developed with CHPs as they become an increasingly important stakeholder in the delivery of tenancy management, tenant engagement, place making and innovation. Specialist CHPs play a key role in facilitating the support vulnerable Territorians need including to those at greatest risk of homelessness.

In addition, not-for-profit board structures of CHPs enables community representation at the highest level of organisations resulting in representative community voices informing strategic and organisational decisions. Tenant engagement and community representation on boards results in people having an active role in shaping the decisions that affect them. The establishment of Aboriginal CHPs with responsibility for the delivery of housing creates a significant opportunity for greater community control, involvement in decision making and genuine self-determination.

Place-making and community renewal

Place-making and community renewal are important contributors to building strong and vibrant communities. CHPs use place-making to build social capital and a sense of connection for tenants living in social and affordable housing. CHPs can be place-making leaders and collaborate with tenants and communities to reimagine neighbourhoods and surrounds. Place-making can better integrate social housing and shape inclusive complexes and neighbourhoods, creating communities where people want to live, are safe, and are connected to neighbours and community. Place-making is further enhanced through improved amenities, community-led initiatives and increased participation.

Small-scale transfers to specialist CHPs will provide an opportunity to deliver place-making initiatives that directly improve the wellbeing of vulnerable tenants and improve neighbourhood amenity through intensive tenancy support. The NT Government will work with CHPs and other key place-making partners to enhance social and economic participation of tenants through work-readiness programs,

social enterprises, employment programs and capacity building.

Pathways and program options will also be co-designed to support tenants to transition into other forms of housing as their circumstances improve. This may include affordable housing, private rental and home ownership across the housing continuum.

Place-making initiatives will aim to break cycles of disadvantage and provide pathways to enable tenants and their families to achieve their aspirations. Place-making will play a key role in improving outcomes for Aboriginal communities and is recognised as a key partnership area under the Closing Gap Agreement.

As part of the broader economic reconstruction agenda for the NT and TERC, the NT Government will partner with the community housing sector to deliver large-scale community renewal projects that enhance social and economic outcomes for the Territory. Large-scale redevelopment opportunities will be geared towards leveraging private investment to deliver whole of precinct renewal projects that incorporate a mix of housing types and creating strong and resilient communities.



Actions

The following actions will be delivered to implement objective 3.

Actions	Phase 1 Year 1 -2	Phase 2 Year 3 – 5	Phase 3 Years 6 -10
21. CHPs will be key stakeholders and engaged in the work to strengthen homelessness services	✓		
22. Work with CHPs to develop and implement a seamless response to anti-social behaviour across public housing and community housing managed dwellings	✓	✓	
23. Undertake direct, small-scale transfer of complexes to support improved outcomes for tenants and neighbours	✓	✓	
24. NT Government will work with CHPs to develop program options to support the sustainable transition of social housing tenants into work and long-term stable housing		✓	✓
25. Work with CHPs to strengthen community renewal		✓	

■ Urban/Regional
 ■ Remote
 ■ Sector-wide



8

Monitoring progress and measuring success

To monitor whether this Strategy is delivering on its objectives, TFHC will publicly report against the following outcomes and measures annually.

System outcomes

The following system outcomes describe what success looks like for a thriving community housing sector.

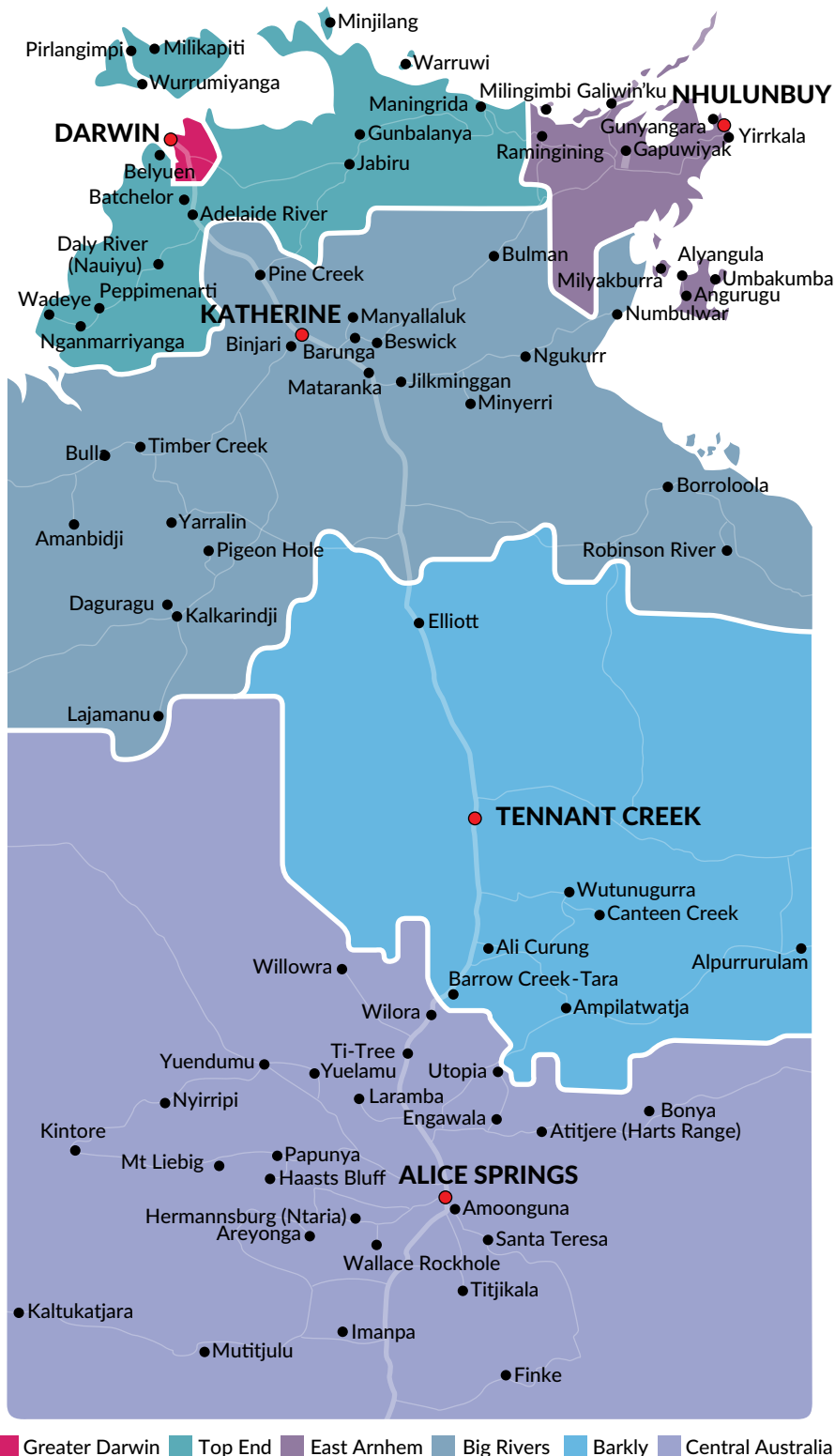
System outcomes		Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
People	Community housing tenancies are stable and sustained with high levels of tenant and neighbour satisfaction			✓
	Improved amenity and community cohesion across community housing and broader neighbourhoods			✓
	Territorians have access to high-quality, culturally appropriate social and affordable housing they need			✓
Partnerships	The CHP sector continues to grow their capability and capacity	✓		
	The NT social and affordable housing system is financially stable and delivering asset growth	✓		
	Aboriginal organisations are critical and valued service delivery partners of community housing in the NT	✓		
Assets	Social and affordable housing assets are high quality and maintained in good condition		✓	
	CHP delivered housing management across urban and remote communities meets or exceeds NRSCH requirements.	✓		
	Asset renewal and new supply is sustained and meets housing needs across the NT.		✓	

Progress measures

To know if we are achieving these system outcomes, the following measures will be tracked. They will be measured annually and help to identify areas where greater investment or focus is needed:

- Number of public housing dwellings transferred to the community housing sector
- Number of new social and affordable housing dwellings
- Amount of CRA paid to eligible households
- Total number of CHPs registered in the NT, by Tier and asset portfolio
- Number of newly registered place-based remote Aboriginal CHPs
- Number of dwellings transferred to Aboriginal CHPs across remote communities and town camps
- Number of new supply opportunities released per annum
- Number of social and affordable dwellings constructed by registered CHPs
- Total investor funding provided to support housing outcomes in the NT.

Appendix A - NT Context



The NT population comprises 246,000 people, making up just one per cent of the national population. In contrast, the NT is the third largest jurisdiction in terms of land mass. Almost 50 per cent of Territorians live outside the Darwin area, across four urban towns, 73 remote communities and more than 500 homelands and outstations.

As a result of this population and geographic profile, distance and scale create significant practical, cost-based and scale challenges for delivering programs and services across the NT. This needs to be carefully considered and addressed in the establishment of a community housing sector in the NT.

In remote communities, the majority of available housing stock is social housing. This dwelling profile significantly differentiates remote communities from mainstream housing markets in urban and regional centres with a broader range of housing options that support diversified income streams and opportunities to leverage capital growth. The population of remote communities in the NT is predominantly Aboriginal with many individuals and families in remote communities, living on or close to country.

Under the Remote Property and Tenancy Management program, TFHC contracts Aboriginal community controlled organisations, Aboriginal Business Enterprises, private business and regional councils, to provide tenancy management services and repairs and maintenance services. In some regions TFHC delivers these services directly.

Town camps are a key form of housing for Aboriginal people living in urban and regional centres and remote regions. Town camps are historic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in or adjacent to urban centres. There are 43 town camps across the NT, which are home to over 3,500 residents.

In 2019, the former Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development released *the Building our communities, together – Town Camps Reform Framework 2019-2024* which includes a strong focus on growing the Aboriginal community housing sector to support asset or management transfer of town camp dwellings. This will form a key consideration in the delivery of the Strategy.

The unique and diverse features of the NT housing system form a key foundation of this Strategy

to ensure that the growth of the community housing sector is responsive to, and aligned with the NT context.

CHPs

Community housing is social and affordable rental housing provided to people on very low to moderate incomes. Community housing is provided by CHPs, which are mostly not-for-profit community organisations. Community housing is an increasingly important part of the social and affordable housing sector in Australia, and CHPs have a critical role in assisting Australian households in the lowest two income quintiles.

CHPs operate within a robust framework of policy and regulation to ensure a well governed, well managed and viable sector that meets the needs of clients. CHPs are regulated under the NRSCH. The NRSCH provides a regulatory environment that encourages the development, viability and quality of community housing and promotes confidence in the good governance of registered CHPs for investors through accountability and transparency.

CHPs also have capacity to be more closely linked and engaged with the communities in which they work. The smaller size of CHPs compared

to the state/territory wide public housing systems enable CHPs to engage closely with tenants and provide services targeted and responsive to the specific needs of local communities. In addition, the not-for-profit board structure of CHPs enables community representation at the highest level of the organisation, informing strategic organisational decisions. This structure aligns with NT Government priorities to increase Aboriginal community control over a wide range of services including housing.

Footnotes

¹ ntrebound.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/952301/terc-final-report.pdf

² tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1037510/nt-community-housing-growth-strategy-2021-2030-discussion-paper.pdf





Local Gulumerrdjín (Larrakia) artist Jason Lee

