

REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

OF THE



18-20 APRIL 2023 - LARRAKIA COUNTRY

REMOTE HOUSING AND HOMELANDS

CONFERENCE

This report was published in October 2023 by Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT) Aboriginal Corporation, ICN 9120.

**Aboriginal Housing
Northern Territory** 

We acknowledge the **Larrakia people**, the traditional custodians and rightful owners of the lands and waters where we live and work, and pay our respects to their elders past and present.



We extend that recognition and respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who came to the conference, and we thank all delegates, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, for their participation and commitment to Aboriginal housing.

The beautiful conference artwork was made by Larrakia artist, **Trent Lee**. Here's its story:

"The bowerbird is well known for its nest and how it collects items. It has a special ritual using song and dance whilst making the nest. It also collects shiny, special, and different coloured items along the way.

Much like AHNT, the bowerbird works with its partners in collaboration and supports them, constantly fixing and improving its nest (home) to keep it strong and supported.

The shells at the lower part of the image show the partners and other businesses that AHNT work and collaborate with. The colourful stones in the nest are the core values of AHNT with the sticks representing the staff and the board keeping these values safe.

The pattern in the background weaves over and under to show the connection between everything we do and finding a way to balance all of life's challenges."





Message from the CEO

I would like to personally thank everyone who attended and participated in our inaugural Remote Housing and Homelands conference in April 2023 at DoubleTree Hilton Garramilla (Darwin). We all came together on beautiful Larrakia country to discuss how we can support and empower Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to realise our collective long-term vision of Aboriginal housing in Aboriginal hands.

The conference dedicated one day each to homelessness, housing and homelands. Overall our theme was:

Towards a regulated, resilient and sustainable Aboriginal community-controlled housing continuum in the Northern Territory

We truly valued the contribution from all attendees – but I’m especially grateful for residents of remote homelands and others who travelled a long way to join in; for presenters who spoke in English instead of their mother tongue – and translators who enabled others to speak in their own language; for elders who shared their knowledge and experience; for the senior politicians and government agents who both spoke and listened; and for all our sponsors and other supporters. I look forward to further work with you. Together we will bring about better housing for mob.

Skye Thompson
CEO, Aboriginal Housing NT



Justin Noel



Liz Lawton, Nicole Johnson, Cherelle Wurrawilya



Brian Hume

In brief

The conference involved:

- » **32 sessions** with
- » **47 speakers** including
- » **10 keynote** presentations;
- » **6 plenary addresses** by directors and staff of homelands organisations; and
- » **17 workshop sessions** in
- » **3 concurrent streams.**

In the audience were:

- » **276 delegates** from
- » **50 organisations** around and beyond the Northern Territory

Delegates also enjoyed **2 satellite events.**



Selena Uibo



Keynote speakers

- » Hon **Selena Uibo** MLA (NT), Minister for Housing and Homelands
- » **Peter McMillan**, CEO, NT Shelter
- » Hon **Marion Scrymgour**, (federal) Member for Lingiari
- » **Ivan Simon**, CEO, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association
- » **Julia Chandra**, Branch Manager, Housing and Homelessness Policy, (federal) Department of Social Services
- » Hon **Linda Burney** MP, (federal) Minister for Indigenous Australians
- » Hon **Malarndirri McCarthy**, (federal) Senator for Northern Territory
- » **Djambawa Marawili** AM, Baniyala Homelands
- » **Danyelle Jarvis**, Executive Director, NTG Remote Housing Reforms
- » **Yingiya Guyula** MLA (NT), Member for Mulka

Malarndirri McCarthy



Michael Berto, Djambawa Marawili



Marion Scrymgour



Peter McMillan



Garramilla Dancers



Satellite events

Welcome reception (Monday 17 April)
including:

- » welcome to country by Lynette Fejo
- » dance performance and smoking ceremony by Garramilla Dancers
- » introduction by MC for the conference, Justin Noel
- » welcome to the conference by AHNT CEO, Skye Thompson

Dinner at Pee Wee's on the Point (Wednesday 19 April), with:

- » address by Alan Mole, AHNT chair
- » address by Fred Docking, Salvation Army NT Coordinator
- » entertainment by Constantina Bush

Eileen Hoosan, Angelina Akee



James Durrilla, Kevin Collins, Jozan Collins



Alan Mole addressing delegates at the conference dinner



Memorable moments

Travelling
around my electorate,
the **biggest issue is housing.**

*Hon Marion Scrymgour MP, Member for
Lingiari – the electorate spanning the
whole Northern Territory beyond Darwin*

There
have been **decades
of neglect.**

*Hon Selena Uibo MLA, NT minister for
housing – calling on the Commonwealth
government to fund homelands*

Our connection
to country is an **umbilical cord**

*Yingiya Guyula MLA, independent Member
of the Northern Territory Legislative
Assembly*

We're here
to make friends but we
need to challenge

*Ivan Simon, interim CEO of
National Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Housing
Association*

For
Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
people, homelessness
looks different; **overcrowding
is homelessness**

*Neil Willmetts, CEO of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander
Housing Queensland*

We have **many ideas**
to make our vision for housing and
homelands a reality.

*Two speakers from north-east Arnhem Land said
words to this effect: Djambawa Marawili AM, leader
of Madarrpa clan, and Yananymul Mununggurr,
chair of Laynhapuy Homelands
Aboriginal Corporation*

We service the car
every year; **why not the house?**

*David Donald, architect and director leading
Healthabitat – housing for health*

Of the 51 homelands
we service, most have **no potable
water**, no mobile or internet, and solar
power systems too basic for temperature
control.

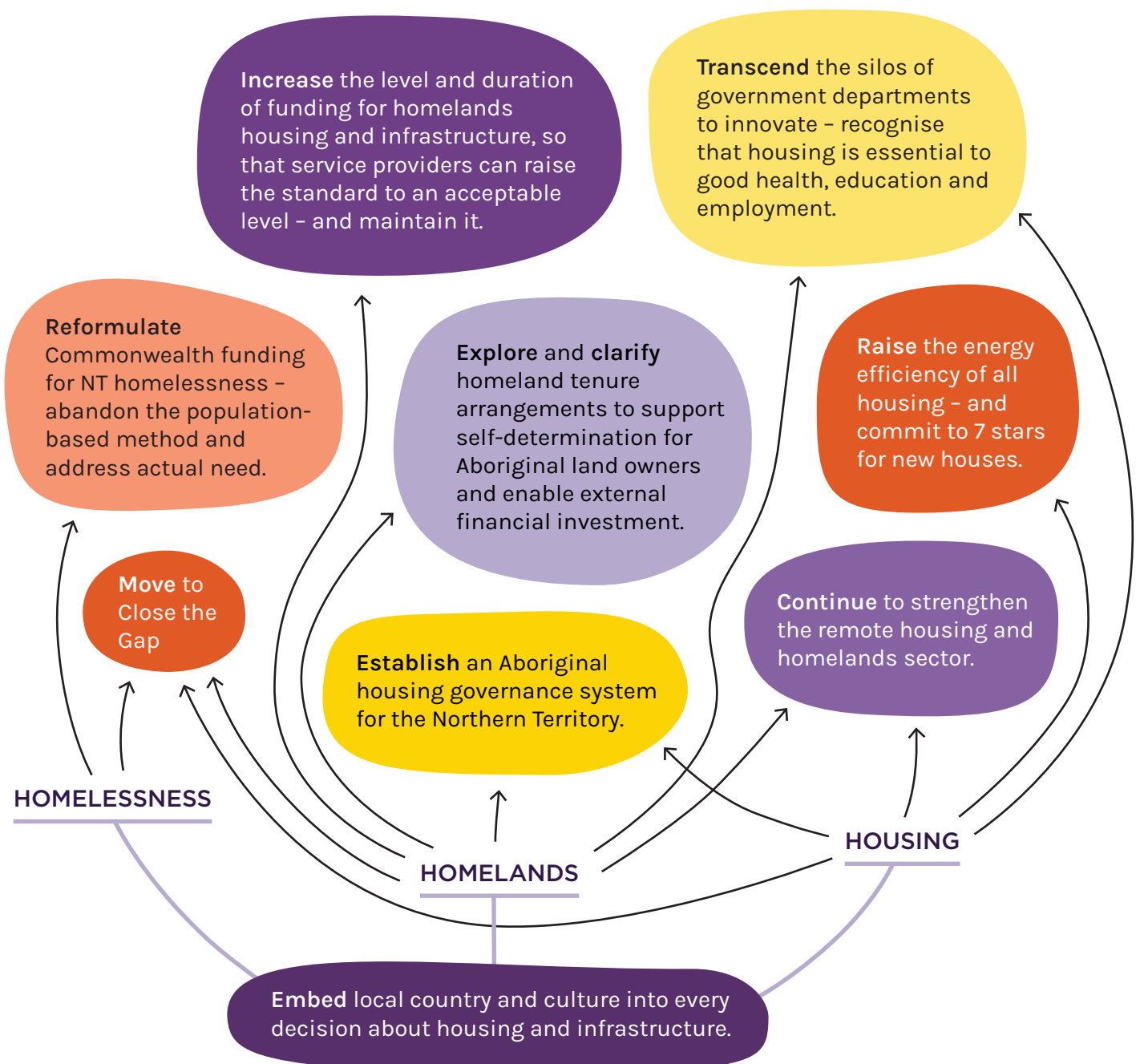
*Jozan Collins, CEO of Ingkerreke Services
Aboriginal Corporation – serving homelands
where the temperature ranges from near-
freezing to high-40s*

Calls to action

Collectively, delegates' key message was that to improve Aboriginal housing in the NT, everyone – all levels of government; land councils; renters; community housing providers; homelands residents; service providers; AHNT – must work together with an agreed clear vision of systemic change.

Change is possible, and when one part of a system changes – an element, or a relationship between two elements – it can trigger a significant, enduring shift in the whole. Ultimately, small-scale reform can be transformative.

Delegates called for the following actions.



Next steps

Increase the level and duration of funding for homelands housing and infrastructure, so that service providers can raise the standard to an acceptable level – and maintain it.

AHNT will work with the land councils and Australian and Northern Territory governments to allocate the \$100 million funding for urgent repairs, maintenance and upgrades of homelands housing and infrastructure.

There is a Joint Steering Committee (federal and Territory governments, land councils and AHNT) responsible for agreeing on future funding for remote housing. It has set up five working groups to do nuts-and-bolts policy work, and one of those is focused on homelands. In that group, AHNT and land councils will work with both governments to make a strong case for much more funding for homelands, over a longer term.

Transcend the silos of government departments to innovate – recognise that housing is essential to good health, education and employment.

Land councils and AHNT will advocate for APO NT's proposal Fair Work Strong Communities, which sets out a workable, costed model for the next iteration of the Australian Government's community development program (CDP), to empower community-controlled organisations to train and employ many local people – in any kind of work, including housing production, management and services.

One Joint Steering Committee working group (see above) is focused on design, standards and cost. In that group, AHNT will draw on published research and work with architects and health professionals to insist that the benefits of good housing to health, education and employment (or conversely, the costs of poor housing) are counted when we evaluate the design, standards and cost of remote housing.

AHNT will urge governments to extend funding for Healthabitat and other intersectional efforts and maintenance programs that are proven to work.

In forums such as the NT Executive Council on Closing the Gap, AHNT will maintain a dynamic focus on the multiple interconnected aspects of Aboriginal lived experience.

Reformulate

Commonwealth funding for NT homelessness – abandon the population-based method and address actual need.

→ AHNT will continue to work with NT Shelter to advocate for appropriate needs-based funding to respond to the extreme disadvantage in the Territory.

→ AHNT will contribute to the forthcoming National Housing and Homelessness Plan – both a written submission of solid ideas for effective spending, and support to engage Aboriginal Territorians in the consultation process.

Explore and clarify

homeland tenure arrangements to support self-determination for Aboriginal land owners and enable external financial investment.

→ In the Joint Standing Committee working group on homelands (see previous page), AHNT is working with land councils and both governments to consider ways Aboriginal people could be empowered to build housing on their ancestral lands without lengthy delays and with no erosion of land rights. Alternative governance models such as community land trusts may indicate a way forward.

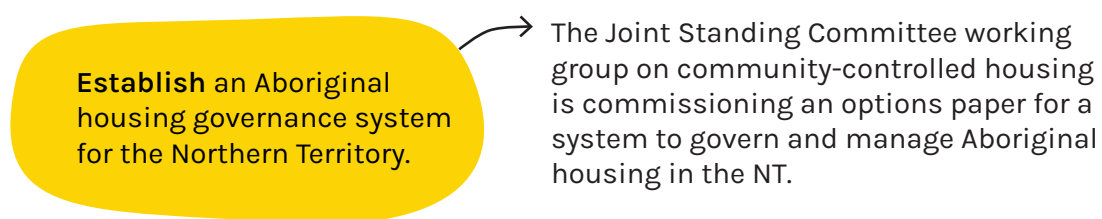
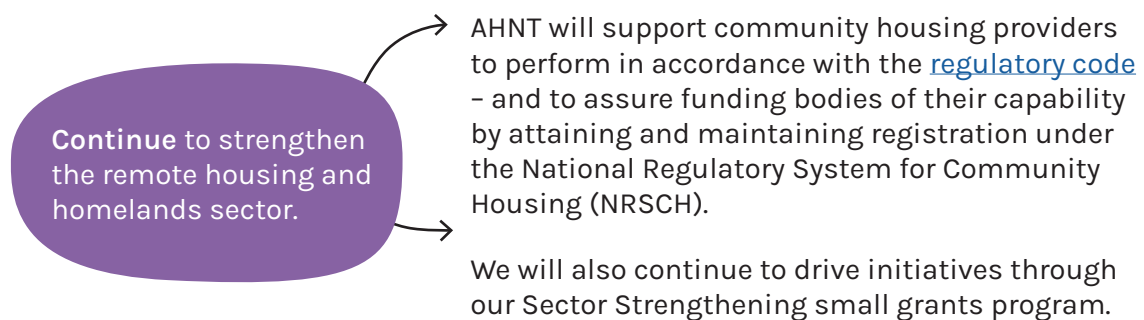
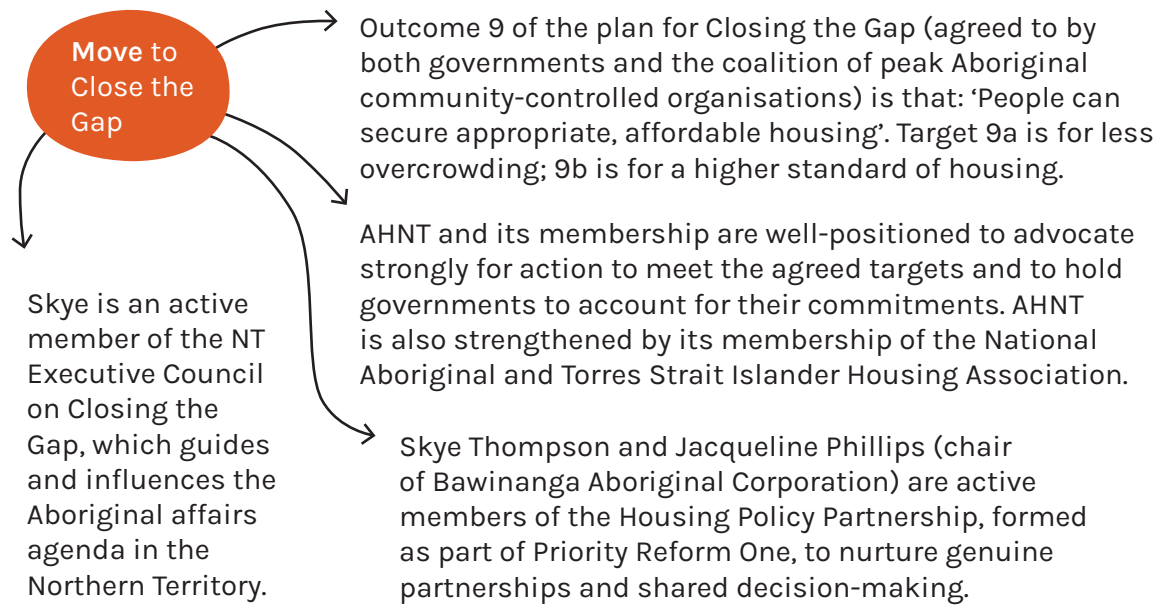
Raise the energy efficiency of all housing – and commit to 7 stars for new houses.

→ AHNT has recruited an architect to the Joint Standing Committee working group on design, standards and cost (see previous page) to ensure that the conversations around standards are well-informed and to encourage the NT Government to commit to a minimum 7-star energy rating for all new housing.

→ Through the same working group, AHNT is auspicing and coordinating a professional on-ground assessment of the livability of housing in five locations around the Territory.

→ AHNT is an active member of the First Nations Clean Energy Network.

→ Aware that many Aboriginal people live in substandard housing with no insulation or other measures to mitigate extreme temperatures, we will persistently advocate to raise the energy rating of existing housing.



ABORIGINAL HOUSING IN ABORIGINAL HANDS

Thank you, friends!



**Aboriginal Peak Organisations
Northern Territory (APO NT)**

Until next time...

We hope to see everyone again at the next Remote Housing and Homelands conference
- in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), 9-12 April 2024 - leading directly into Parrtjima :)

