Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Project

Final Report

September 2023

LIAM GREALY, JIUNN-YIH SU, DAVID THOMAS

MENZIES SCHOOL OF HEALTH RESEARCH

Acknowledgment of Country

The authors would like to acknowledge the Larrakia people, on whose Country this report was drafted. We extend our respect to Larrakia elders past and present, and our gratitude to all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the Northern Territory who participated in this research project. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Contents

List of Figures

Acronyms and Abbreviations used in this Report

ABE	Aboriginal Business Enterprise
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing Organisation
AHNT	Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory
APRO	Agency Purchase Requisitions Online
ARIA	Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation program
APY	Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAT	Condition Assessment Tool
CBIS	Corporate Business Intelligence System
CHIP	Community Housing and Infrastructure Program
CHO	Community Housing Officer
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DIPL	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, NT
EAG	Expert Advisory Group
FHBH	Fixing Houses for Better Health
HFH	Housing For Health
HLP	Healthy Living Practices
HMO	Housing Maintenance Officer
ICHO	Indigenous Community Housing Organisation
IHANT	Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory
Menzies	Menzies School of Health Research
MHBH	Maintaining Houses for Better Health
NatHERS	Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme
NPARIH	*National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing*
NPRHNT	*National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory*
NTNER	Northern Territory National Emergency Response
OCOFOH	Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes.
R&M	Repairs and Maintenance
RTA	*Residential Tenancies Act 1999* (Northern Territory)
SIHIP	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program
TCAC	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation
TTCCHMC	Tangentyere Town Camp Community Housing Model Consortium
TFHC	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, NT
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

This report summarises the Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Project undertaken by Menzies School of Health Research from July 2021 until June 2023. Menzies was contracted by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) to monitor and evaluate 'Healthy Homes', the Department's remote housing repairs and maintenance program.

Repairs and maintenance is central to householder wellbeing and housing dysfunction in remote communities in the Northern Territory. In recent years, this has been most evident in litigation brought by householders at the communities of Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) and Laramba against the NT Government for its failure to provide necessary housing repairs. Submissions by applicants identified a significant backlog of fix work required for houses to meet the habitability standard specified by the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* (Northern Territory).

In government housing programs, repairs and maintenance are often deprioritised relative to new construction and major capital works. Repairs and maintenance work is less visible and less able to be celebrated through forms of public announcement or ceremony. However, housing's materiality is dynamic and entropic, breakdown is inevitable, and *ongoing* repairs and maintenance is necessary to hold things together. In remote Indigenous communities in Australia, reactive approaches to property maintenance dominate over preventive attention, leaving housing in various states of disrepair.

Adequate housing sustained by regular repairs and maintenance is not only necessary to ensure householder health: it is also a right. When governments fail to provide adequate housing they fail to meet their obligations under local laws and international legal frameworks, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.* Such failure is especially significant in remote communities in Australia, where First Nations people never ceded sovereignty and settler colonialism is an ongoing process. For remote community residents, the right to housing has not been met by successive Commonwealth and NT Governments and the housing crisis is endemic rather than episodic.

The Healthy Homes program has sought to arrest the poor standard of remote community housing by initiating a preventive and cyclical maintenance approach to complement existing responsive repairs. This policy effort responded to consistent identification in reports, reviews, and evaluations of preventive maintenance as a strategy for improving householder wellbeing and satisfaction, house function, and asset value over time. The intent of Healthy Homes to prioritise preventive maintenance in remote community housing is appropriate and should remain central to subsequent program iterations. This report examines the implementation of this program against these aims.

The Northern Territory Government's remote housing program 'Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes' has four main components: Homebuild, or new construction; Room to Breathe, housing refurbishment and extensions; Government Employee Housing; and repairs and maintenance. The NT Government is responsible for about 5,498 houses across 73 remote communities, Alice Springs town camps, and Tennant Creek community living areas. At December 2022, the proportion of those houses that was overcrowded was 52.9 per cent, a minor reduction from 55 per cent at December 2017. This should be compared with the aspiration of Closing the Gap target 9a which aims to 'increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent' by 2031. In the month of March 2023, there were 3,329 active applicants on the wait list for remote community housing, with 34 households assisted into new housing (and 17 households transferred from an existing tenancy into alternate remote public housing). The average wait time for those 34 households allocated new housing in March 2023 was 40 months.

The NT Government has committed $1.1bn over ten years from 2018 to its remote housing program. Under the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory*, the Australian Government committed an additional $550m over 5 years in 2018, to construct 1,950 bedrooms – or the equivalent of 650 three-bedroom houses — according to a milestone schedule. Of this, $35m is budgeted per annum for property and tenancy management, including remote repairs and maintenance.

Published in 2020, the Healthy Homes program guidelines (NT Government 2020) describe four main program components:

- The rollout of Housing for Health projects at remote communities, delivered by not-for-profit company Healthabitat;
- The integration of 'Healthy Living Practices' into new remote housing maintenance services and tenancy management support services contracts;
- Capacity building and education, especially focused on community-based behavior-change programs around housing and hygiene; and
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Housing for Health is Healthabitat's licensed methodology for fixing houses according to its nine 'Healthy Living Practices' (HLPs) and an ethic of 'no survey without service'. Under the Healthy Homes program, Healthabitat is subcontracted to deliver about three Housing for Health projects a

year at various remote communities and the Maintaining Housing for Better Health project with Tangentyere Council at Alice Springs Town Camps. Since 2021, this has involved NTG-funded projects at Imangara, Wutunugurra, Owairtilla, Ikuntji, and Alice Springs Town Camps, with consultations underway elsewhere. The NTG had already funded a pilot Housing for Health project at Jilkminggan in 2019 and 2020, and Healthabitat completed a HFH project at Aputula (Finke) in 2022 with philanthropic funding.

Housing for Health is a reputable and proven methodology. The repetition of survey-fix events to determine, and following, capital-works upgrades provides an audit of the maintenance required in project houses. Housing for Health has demonstrated significant improvements in the function of housing where projects have been delivered and it provides an indicative audit of wider stock in NT remote communities. However, this report emphasises that while HFH projects make significant improvements in contexts where they operate, this is a small proportion of total NT remote communities. The success or otherwise of HFH projects should not be the focal point of evaluating Healthy Homes overall.

This monitoring and evaluation project also examined the Healthy Homes tenancy management support services contracts. Specifically, this included the 'Living Strong' program, which service providers were contracted to deliver to remote community housing tenants. Living Strong has sought to integrate an understanding of Healthy Living Practices – the ability to wash oneself and one's children, the ability to wash clothes and bedding, the ability to store and prepare food, etc. – into tenancy support, in the form of a six-module program, to be delivered as various service providers determine appropriate.

Unlike remote housing maintenance services contracts, where any work order undertaken is evident through the submission of an invoice, tenancy management support services contracts fund Community Housing Officer (CHO) positions. There has been very limited use by service providers of TFHC's TMS tasking system to record the delivery of Living Strong, and there is thus scant quantitative data on the program. Interviews with service providers found significant variability in terms of whether Living Strong was being delivered and what this entailed. The program was appropriately flexible but this has meant it has been applied inconsistently. Participation is not mandatory for householders, as this would be discriminatory. Some reports are positive about the support it has provided to householders, while others emphasise the household-level impediments to achieving program goals. Service providers have identified the potential for an alternative approach that prioritises community-level tenancy programs focused on sustaining tenancies, separate to ensuring the compliance of tenants with their obligations under tenancy agreements.

This monitoring and evaluation project determined that the most important component of Healthy Homes is the remote housing maintenance services contracts. The current regime for remote community housing maintenance sought to replace a prior arrangement under which housing received maintenance services via both a 'trade panel' and a 'housing maintenance coordinator' contract. Under the trade panel model established in 2013, large tenders for clusters of communities

would result in multiple contracts for different trades companies. By contrast, the new approach under Healthy Homes sought to establish contracts specific to a small number of communities (one to four), awarded to local Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs). ABEs, which may or may not be Aboriginal community controlled organisations, can subcontract works as required.

Under Healthy Homes, service providers awarded housing maintenance services contracts have had different experiences of the tender process and of these contracts once awarded. One common limitation is the relatively short length of the contracts. Following significant program delays, in part related to machinery of governance changes and departmental restructures, and in line with the end date of the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory*, contracts were awarded for between 22 and 15 months. This is a short period to establish reliable provision of housing maintenance services for any company, but especially for inexperienced providers. It is also a short period in which to deliver a profitable program following set-up costs.

Similarly, some providers reported issues with the total value of contracts, which required costing individual items on a schedule of rates to cover preliminaries, overheads, and on-costs, including travel expenses. Incomplete schedules of rates, where unscheduled works could not claim originally agreed-upon cost indexing meant companies could not always recoup the cost of maintenance work. Contracts did not include a guaranteed minimum of work, accounting for inflation was not adequate during a period of significantly rising input costs, and contracts did not include a presumption that the awarded supplier would have preference for contract renewal. Unless organisations negotiated otherwise (and most didn't), a default contractual requirement to gain approval from a Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) contract superintendent for non-urgent works over $500 created additional administration and delay to deliver repairs and maintenance works.

Such contracting issues are rarely identified in media or academic commentaries on state housing neglect. But getting such details right – recognising the true cost of remote housing maintenance and the administrative conditions facilitating or impeding service delivery – is centrally important to expanding and sustaining the role played by Aboriginal community controlled organisations in remote housing management. Further consultation related to the housing maintenance services contracts should be undertaken by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics with contracted service providers, to revise future contacts in ways that enable those providers to deliver an effective service in a timely fashion and with due remuneration.

Importantly, this project investigated the framing of Healthy Homes as a preventive maintenance program. In this vein, the chief feature that differentiated the new remote housing maintenance services contracts from the prior 'trade panel' remote maintenance model was the requirement that contracted service providers undertake annual inspections of all their properties using an NT Government 'Condition Assessment Tool'. This is a cyclical inspection mechanism designed to generate preventive maintenance work.

Contracted service providers reported issues with the form and design of the Condition Assessment Tool, the inspection process, and the relationship between inspections and the generation of work orders. Most pertinently, a small number of Condition Assessment Tool (CAT) inspections were actually undertaken. Reporting data provided to Menzies suggested a total of 143 CAT inspections undertaken from the commencement of Healthy Homes in July 2021 to the end of February 2023. Further investigation of contract expenditure data across the same period indicated a total 1315 CAT inspections have been undertaken, which equates to a CAT inspection completed at only 23.9 per cent of remote community houses. The extent of this inaction significantly undermines any claim that Healthy Homes is, in effect, a preventive maintenance program.

The key achievement of Healthy Homes has been the award of contracts to Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs). Thirty-one contracts for housing maintenance services were awarded to 22 companies, including 25 contracts to 17 ABEs. These contracts cover 49 remote communities, Alice Springs Town Camps[1], and Tennant Creek Community Living Areas.[2] Similarly, 25 contracts for tenancy management support services have been awarded to 18 companies, including 19 contracts to 15 ABEs. These contracts cover 47 remote communities, Alice Springs Town Camps, and Tennant Creek Community Living Areas.

Given the number of communities where Healthy Homes contracts have not been awarded, alongside the lack of CAT inspections undertaken, this report questions the extent to which the remote housing maintenance model established under Healthy Homes is distinct from the old model. Where tenancy management support services contracts have not been awarded – in 26 communities – TFHC has remained responsible for all tenancy services. Where remote housing maintenance services contracts have not been awarded – in 24 communities – the old trade panel model has continued to function, albeit without the continuation of the prior housing maintenance coordinator contracts in most contexts.

In communities where Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts have been established, maintenance expenditure is similar under the prior and Healthy Homes programs. However, it is not possible within NT Government datasets to distinguish between responsive repairs and preventive maintenance works generated by undertaking cyclical CAT inspections. Where CAT inspections have been undertaken, it is not clear that this information, as with the survey results of Housing for Health projects, has been incorporated into any dataset about the condition or function of

[1] There are 17 Alice Springs town camps subject to Healthy Homes, with a total 298 houses at the end of 2022. These are: Akngwertnarre (Morris Soak), Anthelk-Ewlpaye (Charles Creek) Anthepe (Drive In), Aper-Alwerrknge (Palmer's), Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley), Ilparpa, Ilperle Tyathe (Warlpiri), Ilyperenye (Old Timers), Inarlenge (Little Sisters), Irrkerlantye (White Gate), Itwiyethwenge (Basso's), Karnte, Lhenpe Artnwe (Hoppy's), Mount Nancy, Mpwetyerre (Abbott's), Nyewente (Trucking Yards), and Yarrenyty Arltere (Larapinta Valley).
[2] There are seven Tennant Creek community living areas subject to Healthy Homes, with a total 116 houses at the end of 2022. These are: Karguru, Tingkarli, Wuppa, Marla Marla, Village Camp, Munji-Marla, and Ngalpa Ngalpa (Mulga).

remote community housing. The non-completion of CAT inspections compounds the lack of data available to the NT Government and individual housing providers related to house condition and function. This lack of data undermines the effectiveness of any future asset management strategy by either government or an individual housing provider. It is also an impediment to any transition of housing to Aboriginal community control according to terms where the maintenance liability has been properly costed.

At the outset of this monitoring and evaluation project it was a shared intention of Menzies and TFHC that this would be a two-stage project. Stage 1 was to focus on program implementation while Stage 2 would proceed to measure the health impacts of the program. Given the delays and inconsistency associated with program implementation, it was mutually agreed by Menzies and TFHC not to undertake Stage 2. We determined that it would not be possible to meaningfully evaluate the health impacts of the program at this stage.

There remains significant potential for further evaluation of the delivery of remote housing maintenance services that might resemble this ('Stage 1') monitoring and evaluation project, whether undertaken independently or internally by either TFHC or DIPL. As in this project, further program evaluation should consult with Aboriginal community controlled organisations, land councils, and Aboriginal Housing NT, and any findings should be published in a timely manner. We support the policy aims of Healthy Homes to prioritise both preventive maintenance and the delivery of works by Aboriginal Business Enterprises (and in particular Aboriginal community controlled organisations). Significant further work is required to align program delivery – from contracts, to schedules of rates, to inspections processes, to data collection and management, to inter-departmental collaboration, and business development – with program aims.

This further work is outlined in the form of 32 Recommendations listed in full following the Conclusion to this Report. Each of these recommendations should be addressed in turn, rigorously, and as soon as possible. An adequate response will require the engagement and collaboration of senior staff from within both Territory Families, Housing and Communities and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, including the participation of Deputy CEOs. This response should take the form of a steering committee or working group that develops and oversees a plan and timeline for implementing responses to each recommendation. This implementation plan and any progress against proposed reforms should be published and regularly updated so that stakeholders in the sector are made aware of ongoing program reforms.

1 Introduction

- The Healthy Homes program was designed to address repairs and maintenance in public housing in 73 remote communities and the Alice Springs town camps. It includes Housing for Health projects delivered by not-for-profit company Healthabitat and new arrangements for remote housing maintenance and tenancy management support services.

- Menzies School of Health Research was contracted by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities to monitor and evaluate the Healthy Homes program. The timeline of this evaluation corresponds to the final two scheduled years of the funding agreement between the NT and Commonwealth Governments, the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory*.

- Healthy Homes aims to increase the planned and cyclical maintenance undertaken by housing maintenance services providers and to integrate an understanding of health hardware and Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) into approaches to housing maintenance and tenancy support.

- Healthy Homes aims to train NT Government staff and local service providers in relation to new service models and to improve the collection and management of data on housing condition.

- Healthy Homes aims to expand the role of Aboriginal community housing providers and to increase Aboriginal employment in property and tenancy management of remote community housing, alongside the wider growth of the community housing sector in the NT.

1.1 The Northern Territory Government's 'Healthy Homes' Program

The Northern Territory (NT) Government's Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) published the Healthy Homes Program Guidelines in September 2020. The Guidelines describe that:

> The Healthy Homes program will deliver an enhanced approach to repairs and maintenance by implementing the following four elements:

- Housing for Health – The department will engage Healthabitat to deliver the Housing for Health repairs and maintenance program across selected remote communities and town camps until 2027.
- Remote property and tenancy management (PTM) – The department will integrate HLPs into the delivery of $35 million per annum (until 2023) worth of PTM services across all leased remote communities and Alice Springs town camps.
- Capacity building and community education – The department will work with Aboriginal community controlled organisations to build their capacity to deliver HLP interventions and roll out community-based behaviour change programs around housing and hygiene.
- Monitoring and evaluation – The department will monitor and evaluate elements delivered under the Healthy Homes program to measure health and social impacts, service provider performance and to inform changes to service delivery models. (TFHC 2020, 2)

1.2   Menzies School of Health Research Evaluation

The 'Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation' research project sought to monitor and evaluate the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the NTG's Healthy Homes program. It has examined the program's increased prioritisation of preventive and cyclical repairs and maintenance, including the emphasis on the potential of planned maintenance to support Healthy Living Practices (HLPs). The APRO number is NS21-0020.

From the perspective of the NT Government, the research project supports the following core outcomes:

- Programs aimed at developing the skills, capability, and capacity of the Northern Territory
- Opportunities to progress research and development to meet the economic, social, and environmental agenda of the Northern Territory
- Programs aimed at delivering improved economic, social, and environmental policy
- Programs to drive economic development throughout urban, regional, and remote areas of the Northern Territory. (Healthy Homes Evaluation Schedules A-C, Clause 2)

Original plans established between Menzies and TFHC envisioned a research project divided into two phases. Phase 1 was planned to run from June 2021 to June 2023, with phase 2 following from July 2023 to June 2025, subject to the negotiation of a contract in 2023. Across both phases, the research project would monitor and evaluate the Healthy Homes program, aiming to provide useful information to guide more effective approaches to managing housing in remote Aboriginal communities in ways that would maximise resident health outcomes. In phase 1 this has included examining:

- The delivery of Housing for Health projects in remote community housing

- The delivery of the Maintaining Houses for Better Health project at Alice Springs town camps
- The administration and delivery of new housing maintenance services and tenancy management support services contracts in remote Aboriginal communities
- Data related to maintenance delivered under new remote housing maintenance services contracts
- The training of NT Government and service provider staff in relation to the Housing for Health methodology and the new maintenance and tenancy services contracts.[3]

In late 2022, Menzies and TFHC agreed not to proceed with the originally proposed phase 2 of the monitoring and evaluation project. The chief aim of phase 2 research was to measure the health impacts of the housing maintenance program. Due to delays associated with program implementation and its inconsistent delivery across NT remote communities, Menzies considered that it would not be possible to undertake meaningful assessments of the potential health impacts of housing program works within the phase 2 timeframe.

1.2.1   Features of the Healthy Homes Program and Menzies' Evaluation

The Healthy Homes program was designed to operate in 73 remote communities and 17 Alice Springs town camps. Tennant Creek community living areas were subsequently included in the program. Chapter 6 describes the extension of aspects of the program to additional town camps in the Top End and Big Rivers regions. With regard to the delivery of housing maintenance services, Healthy Homes includes four key components, as described in the Schedule of Services agreed upon by Menzies and TFHC.

1. Housing for Health
   The NT Government Healthy Homes program has contracted Healthabitat to deliver Housing for Health (HFH) projects in 2-3 selected communities each year, until 30 June 2027. The first stage of the program will occur from 2020-21 to 2022-23.

2. Maintaining Houses for Better Health

---

[3] Menzies notes that among the NT Government stakeholders engaged for this monitoring and evaluation project there are differing perspectives on the content of the Healthy Homes program. To some extent, this is attributable to the machinery of government changes described in Chapter 2, and the associated redistribution of program management and operational responsibilities. Some stakeholders have suggested Healthy Homes relates only to the delivery of Housing for Health (HFH) and Maintaining Houses for Better Health (MHBH) projects. Menzies has followed the description of Healthy Homes provided by the Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, and the associated description of works outlined in Menzies' project contract, to monitor and evaluate all of the delivery of HFH and MHBH projects, new approaches to remote property and tenancy management, and capacity building initiatives.

Tangentyere Constructions and Community Housing Central Australia (formerly Central Australian Affordable Housing Company) will co-design a preventive repairs and maintenance program (either replicating or with strong alignment to Healthabitat's Maintaining Houses for Better Health [MHBH] program). This will involve support from Healthabitat in 2020-2021 and be delivered under license thereafter. This program will be delivered at 17 Alice Springs town camps.

3. Remote Property and Tenancy Management
In the remaining, and majority of, NT remote communities the Healthy Homes program will focus more broadly on improving property and tenancy management. The Healthy Homes program will revise service models and contracts to develop planned cyclical maintenance programs to support the nine Healthy Living Practices. The goal of both the NT and Australian Governments is to transfer these property and tenancy management services to local Aboriginal control.

The Healthy Homes program also aims to reform tenancy management services, including the management of housing applications, allocations, tenancy agreements, rent collection, debt management, and the delivery of tenancy support under the Living Strong program, which supports healthy living skills.

4. Capacity Building
The Healthy Homes program will involve training of local service provider and NT Government staff to build capacity and expertise in relation to the new service models, including in the collection of data and information to inform compliance, service planning, and evaluation.

As part of the Monitoring and Evaluation project, Menzies agreed to attend at least one HFH project in a remote community and the MHBH project at Alice Springs town camps. Menzies also consulted with contracted service providers involved in the delivery of housing maintenance services at remote communities not subject to a HFH project. Tenancy management is outside the scope of Menzies' research, aside from the Living Strong program, which this report considers in Chapter 8. Otherwise, this project has monitored and evaluated the delivery of various aspects of the Healthy Homes program where possible.

1.2.2 Interim Report

An Interim Report was completed in October 2022. The Interim Report was circulated for consultation to the Department of Territory Families, Housing, and Communities and the project's Expert Advisory Group members. The Interim Report forms the basis of this Final Report for general publication. This Final Report has undertaken a process of fact checking by TFHC and feedback from each EAG

member organisation, with related amendments. Updated program data was sourced at the beginning of March 2023, as close as was practicable to incorporate into the Final Report.

This Final Report summarises findings regarding the implementation of the Healthy Homes program and the central aim to increase cyclical and preventive repair and maintenance of health hardware in housing at remote Aboriginal communities and at Alice Springs town camps. Specifically, it describes various aspects of the Healthy Homes program, including the delivery of Housing for Health projects in remote communities, the Maintaining Houses for Better Health program at Alice Springs town camps, new property and tenancy management contracts and arrangements, the Living Strong program, and training relevant to delivering the Healthy Homes program objectives. It has aimed to inform NT Government negotiations with the Australian Government prior to the completion of the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory* (NPRHNT) in June 2023, which has been followed by a one-year federation funding agreement to June 2024, and to inform negotiations for a future funding agreement.

The Final Report considers the involvement of Aboriginal community controlled organisations in the program, and the impacts of the program on property management arrangements, housing quality, and other measures of housing program success. As a developmental or process evaluation conducted with the aim of improving the standard of the Northern Territory's remote housing stock, this Report also considers the enablers and barriers to successfully implementing the Healthy Homes program according to its objectives. It does so on behalf of improving social housing stock and approaches to maintenance while transitioning housing in remote Aboriginal communities and town camps to Aboriginal community control. The authors believe that Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing Organisations (ACCHOs) should play an expanded role in the direct provision of housing maintenance and tenancy services, where desired by them, and in accordance with the strategic goals of peak bodies such as Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT) to expand the Aboriginal community housing sector. However, it is important that Aboriginal community housing providers do not inherit the liability of low quality assets that have not been adequately maintained by governments, and that effective approaches for managing housing have been tested and costed for any future funding agreements and services contracts.

Under the NT Government's Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, the objectives of monitoring and evaluation activities are to:
- Measure the effectiveness of Housing for Health, the revised PTM model and community education programs in improving health and social outcomes
- Assess whether the new PTM model is being delivered as per new program requirements and any barriers associated with implementation
- Assess department staff understanding of new PTM arrangements and whether departmental systems are supporting implementation

- Ensure compliance against performance measures outlined under the NPRH NT's Remote Property and Tenancy Management Framework and Housing for Health contract
- Provide practical recommendations relating to changes in service arrangements and service delivery models. (TFHC 2020, 5)

These objectives provide the basis for the evaluation framework that has directed Menzies' research, described in Chapter 4.

2 Background to the Healthy Homes Program

- The relationship between poor quality housing and reduced health outcomes is well documented. Improved housing maintenance practices have the potential to improve householder health.

- Healthabitat's Housing for Health methodology is an established and effective approach for increasing house function, collecting detailed data on house condition and involving community members in project fix work.

- Healthy Homes is jointly-funded through the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory* and the NT Government's Remote Housing Investment Package. Its delivery is overseen by a Joint Steering Committee including government and land council representatives.

- Machinery of Government changes significantly revised the roles played by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics in relation to Healthy Homes, undermining the relationship between program administration and delivery.

- Numerous reports and reviews over the past two decades have recommended programmatic, consistent, and sustained approaches to housing maintenance. There are also myriad current NT Government policies committed to improving housing through maintenance works. Across this period, there has been limited accountability to ensuring policy commitments are delivered.

- The condition of remote housing does not appear to be well-documented by government. There is limited and inconsistent data about the functionality of health hardware and maintenance works undertaken at house level. The Healthy Homes program aims to improve this using the Condition Assessment Tool, but its form and implementation by service providers should be subject to ongoing scrutiny.

- Given various historical configurations of housing management, it is neither natural nor inevitable that the NT Government operate as landlord of housing in remote Aboriginal communities and town camps.

2.1 Housing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Outcomes

Epidemiologist Sir Michael Marmot notes that 'bad housing conditions – including homelessness, temporary accommodation, overcrowding, insecurity, and housing in poor physical condition – constitute a risk to health' (2010, 79). Of the categories specified in the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), this project is concerned with 'insecure' and 'inadequate' accommodation rather than 'roofless' and 'houseless' accommodation (Busch-Geertsema 2010), or how traditional housing forms can be made more habitable and secure. The recently published World Health Organization *WHO Housing and Health Guidelines* (WHO 2018) cite a now extensive literature on health risks and disease burden related to housing, alongside recommendations related to housing features such as insulation, indoor temperature, injury hazards, and accessibility.

The relationship between poor housing and negative health impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander householders is well established. Brackertz and Wilkinson describe that in the year 2014-15, 28 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 15 years of age lived in housing with major structural problems, rising to 36 per cent in remote areas (2017, 17). Bailie and Wayte (2006) characterise the shortcomings of remote community housing in relation to conceptions of 'adequacy' that include 'quality of basic services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; habitability; affordability; accessibility; legal security of tenure; and location and cultural adequacy' (178). For a review of literature on the relationship between health and housing see Phibbs and Thompson (2011) and the US National Center for Healthy Housing, and on this relationship in remote communities in Australia see Ware (2013), Torzillo et al. (2008), Bailie and Wayte (2006), and McDonald et al. (2010).

Crowding, or 'overcrowding' as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics,[4] is a major contributing factor in housing related health outcomes, including by increasing the transmission of common infectious diseases and parasites (Foster and Hall 2021; Melody et al 2016).[5] In their analysis of common childhood illness in remote NT communities in 2004-05, Bailie et al. (2011) found that ongoing crowding undermined the potential for improved health outcomes in communities where new houses had been built. Shahmir at el. (2018) performed a narrative literature review to find that a lack of maintenance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing was associated with gastrointestinal infections, crowding was associated with skin-related diseases and viral conditions, and inadequate food preparation and storage areas was associated with diarrhoea (see Table 2, 6). Such infections can 'ultimately result in chronic sequelae, such as stunting, blindness, hearing loss, rheumatic heart disease and renal failure' (Ali et al. 2018, 1). Foster and Hall (2021) provide an

---

[4] The Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) is a common measure employed to determine crowding levels (also see ABS 2012b).
[5] The WHO (2018b) defines infectious diseases as 'diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi . . . (that can) spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another'.

analysis of 14 datasets comprising information on Northern Territory crowding, dwelling condition, health hardware, and maintenance services to examine the impact of housing on rates of shigellosis, acute rheumatic fever, helminths, and trachoma (see Table 1, 329). Research on hospital admissions and clinical presentations show a disproportionate impact of these health outcomes on Aboriginal children (Kearns et al. 2013; Buntsma et al. 2017).

The recent (2008-2018) *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (NPARIH) directed over $5.4 billion to housing in remote and regional Australia. Crowding in housing in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia was reduced across the NPARIH period, from 52.1 per cent to 41.3 per cent of properties (Commonwealth 2017). However, a significant undersupply of adequate remote housing remains (ANAO 2011; Commonwealth 2017), including in the NT where approximately $2bn was directed. As a measure of the number of bedrooms required in a dwelling based on the demographic characteristics and relationships of its inhabitants, household crowding places additional stress on domestic health hardware, increasing repair and maintenance requirements and reducing the lifespan of hardware designed to service fewer inhabitants (Memmott et al. 2006). The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* sets the target of increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent by 2031. Across the period of the current *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory* agreement crowding in NT remote communities has only reduced by about two per cent. The Central Land Council (2023) has estimated that an additional 2000 houses are needed in the NT to meet the Closing the Gap target for overcrowding.

Climate change exacerbates the negative health impacts of inadequate housing, and across the globe Indigenous peoples are relatively more vulnerable to adverse changes in the social determinants of health (Bowles 2015; Sweet 2019; Ford 2012). This relates to both the impact of changed climate conditions on existing stressors, including economic and political marginalisation, health inequities, remoteness, and substandard infrastructural provision, and the potential for changed conditions to displace people from their ancestral country, undermining fundamental connections to culture (United Nations 2008; Ford 2012). Green et al. (2009) identify a number of areas where climate change impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes, including psycho-social health, physical injury from extreme weather, emergency risk management, vector-borne diseases, respiratory illness, gastrointestinal illness, health related illness, nutrition, and access to health centres and hospitals. Haines et al. (2006) suggest that more frequent and extended heatwaves (as extended periods of high maximum and minimum temperatures), and increases in humidity (Oppermann et al. 2017), may contribute in Indigenous communities to increases in mortality, gastrointestinal illness, kidney failure, and heart attacks (Bambrick et al. 2008; Koppe et al. 2004; Bailie 2007).

Ware (2013) distinguishes various approaches to positively intervene in housing on behalf of better Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes, as recommended by Bailie et al. (2010a) in their evaluation of an environmental health survey commissioned by the former Indigenous Housing

Association of the NT (IHANT). These approaches include infrastructural improvements, addressing behavioural factors, and adjustments to policy environments. The Healthy Homes program aims to address each of these approaches through its various components.

2.2   Healthabitat and Housing for Health

Both the Australian Government's NPARIH review (Commonwealth 2018) and wider research have emphasised the importance of sustained and preventive repair and maintenance (R&M) programs (Standen 2020; Habibis et al. 2016; Grealy 2021). In acknowledging the link between housing and health (Bailie 2006; WHO 2018), the NT Government has established the Healthy Homes program to integrate the concept of Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) into the delivery of housing services across remote communities and selected town camps.

The Healthy Homes program appropriates the language of the not-for-profit company Healthabitat, in terms of its 'Healthy Living Practices', and contracts Healthabitat to deliver projects according to its 'Housing for Health' methodology for improving housing and living conditions (Torzillo et al. 2008; McConnell et al. 2020). Housing for Health focuses on housing repairs that will lead to maximum health gains, especially for children aged 0-5 years, by improving housing 'health hardware' (Pholeros et al. 1993). This concept was coined by Healthabitat, and covers those items – safe electrical wiring, taps, tubs, toilets, cupboards, and so on – which enable householders to exercise healthy living practices. Functional health hardware supports residents to enact the nine Healthy Living Practices (following Safety, and in order of priority):

1. Washing people
2. Washing clothes and bedding
3. Removing waste water safely
4. Improving nutrition, the ability to store, prepare and cook food
5. Reduce the negative impacts of overcrowding
6. Reducing the negative impacts of animals, vermin or insects
7. Reducing the health impacts of dust
8. Controlling the temperature of the environment
9. Reducing hazards that cause trauma.

The Housing for Health methodology is an approach to housing repairs and maintenance that improves health hardware to enable residents to perform these healthy living practices. The stages of the Housing for Health methodology are described in Chapter 5.

Since 1986, Healthabitat's Housing for Health methodology has generated disrepair data on approximately 10,000 houses across Australia. In 1999, an agreement between Commonwealth, state, and territory housing ministers produced the *National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Indigenous Housing* (Commonwealth 1999). Along with establishing key principles for designing, building, upgrading, and maintaining housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander peoples, endorsing remote area building standards, and regular review, the framework endorsed *The National Indigenous Housing Guide* (Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2006), which itself complements state and territory remote building standards and the Building Code of Australia. Developed by Healthabitat and eventually published as a website as *Housing for Health – The Guide*, *The National Indigenous Housing Guide* provides detailed design specifications, methods for quality control, maintenance recommendations, survey data, and relevant standards and references, in relation to the various components of each healthy living practice (for example, Washing People is divided into wet area design, hot water, taps, washing young children – baths and tubs, showers, wet area drainage, and turning off water for plumbing maintenance). Healthabitat was then commissioned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the Commonwealth Department of Housing to deliver the Housing for Health program in 1000 houses across Australia (McPeake and Pholeros 2006). This became the Fixing Houses for Better Health (FHBH) program, delivered in four phases until it was discontinued in 2011 (McConnell et al. 2020). Evaluations of FHBH established that the program improved health hardware, reduced childhood infections, created local employment, and was economical relative to other state-run housing and population health programs (SGS 2006; ANAO 2011).

Healthabitat's (2021) Housing for Health dataset shows that the key reasons for disrepair in housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are poor original construction (19 per cent) and a lack of routine maintenance (74 per cent), rather than householder damage, vandalism, misuse or overuse (7 per cent). In their narrative literature review of publications addressing the relationship between infectious diseases and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, Ali et al. (2018) found that 'Gastrointestinal, skin, ear, eye, and respiratory illnesses, were all related in various ways to functional health hardware, removal and treatment of sewage, crowding, presence of pests and vermin, and the growth of mould and mildew' (8; Andersen et al. 2018; Bailie et al. 2010b). In NSW, the Aboriginal and Environmental Health section of NSW Health has delivered Housing for Health projects for over 20 years, demonstrating improvements in the capacity of housing to support Healthy Living Practices. An evaluation of those projects using longitudinal comparative data over a ten year period demonstrated a 40 per cent reduction in hospital separations for environmental health related illnesses (acute respiratory, gut, skin, and ear infections) in participating houses compared to controls (NSW Health 2010). An evaluation following 20 years of the program delivered by NSW Health across 3670 houses demonstrated 'statistically significant improvements in the ability of the houses to support safe and healthy living for all critical healthy living priorities post-interventions' (Standen et al. 2020).

2.3   The Funding and Governance Context

This section provides a short overview of recent historical arrangements for the funding and governance of repairs and maintenance in housing in remote Aboriginal communities in the NT. It does so to indicate two things. First, it is neither natural nor inevitable that remote housing is the

responsibility of the NT Government, given prior arrangements between the Australian Government and Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs). Second, since the NT Government has been responsible for housing in remote communities, numerous agreements and standards have been set for improving repairs and maintenance. In other words, the aspiration for improving repair and maintenance services is not new, even as the agreements governing those services change. Through the Healthy Homes Program, the NT Government sought to distinguish the new approach to repairs and maintenance from past endeavours.

2.3.1   Prior Funding Arrangements for Remote Community Housing in the NT

From 1990 to 2007, housing in remote Aboriginal communities was predominantly funded under the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP) and the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, delivered first by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and, following its restructure as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) and eventual dissolution, by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSCIA) and predecessor departments (2005-2007). The *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (NPARIH) period of 2008-2018 followed the dissolution of CHIP and the introduction of the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation (ARIA) program, as well as the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP). FaHCSIA represented the Federal Government in relation to remote housing until 2013 when the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet assumed this role.

The end of CHIP followed a report by consultancy firm Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) critical of the program. *Living in a Sunburnt Country* (2007) identified a lack of regulation of housing standards in remote communities, inconsistent and inadequate maintenance services due to ad hoc funding, and inconsistent financial and operational oversight by some Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs). It recommended that an audit of housing and infrastructure should be conducted to determine the presence and condition of assets in remote communities and that the government should take responsibility for remote housing. When the Australian Government launched the Northern Territory National Emergency Response (NTNER, 'The Intervention') in August 2007, this report provided support for the dissolution of the Aboriginal Community Housing sector in the Northern Territory. Under the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, the Australian Government compulsorily acquired five-year township leases for NT town camps and Aboriginal communities (*Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, Schedule 1). In almost all instances, funding for new houses and infrastructure became contingent on communities agreeing to 40 or 99-year leases. Hence the NT moved from an Aboriginal community housing model, in which repairs and maintenance were largely funded by ad hoc grants, to a public housing model.

Following the NTNER, the *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government Indigenous Housing, Accommodation and Related Services September 2007* was established. At the time, prior to the establishment of the *National Partnership*

Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) and the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), this *Memorandum* related to funding under the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP) and the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation (ARIA) Program. The *Memorandum* outlined $414.2 million in new Australian Government funding for construction, repairs, and upgrades of housing, among other things. The offer of $793 million in new and existing funding was 'made on the basis that the Northern Territory Government will:

- take over responsibility for the delivery of services to outstations; and
- take on responsibility for the provision of services to town camps' (5).

In addition, the Australian Government was explicit in withdrawing direct responsibility for remote housing: 'The Australian Government will have no further responsibility for the delivery of Indigenous housing, municipal, essential and infrastructure services in the Northern Territory from 1 July 2008' (6).

The *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (NPARIH) was established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 'as a ten year funding strategy to reform responsibilities between the Commonwealth, the States and the Northern Territory in the provision of housing for Indigenous people in remote communities and to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities (3). Dated as beginning in 2008 and to run until 30 June 2018, the NPARIH sought to establish 'normalised service arrangements' across Australia, meaning that 'a remote Indigenous community is serviced by municipal and essential services delivery arrangements that are accountable through an agreed framework and reflect a standard of service delivered to non Indigenous people in communities of similar size and location' (10e). Among its outputs, the NPARIH aimed for 'a program of ongoing maintenance and repairs that progressively increases the life cycle of remote Indigenous housing from seven years to a public housing-like lifecycle of up to 30 years' and 'construction of new houses and ongoing repair and maintenance of houses in remote Indigenous communities' (13c and 13d). The NPARIH identified a number of performance indicators with associated baseline measures and benchmarks. This included aiming for the reduction of average occupancy per remote housing dwelling from the average occupancy rate of 8.8 people per remote dwelling. Regarding repairs and maintenance, the relevant measures are drawn from section 20 and reproduced here (Figure 1), with columns representing performance indicators, baseline measures, and benchmarks, from left to right (NPARIH 2010, 8).

| Repairs and Maintenance
Number of dwellings inspected through a standard property inspection regime
Number of dwelling Repairs and maintenance works completed as programmed using property condition data
Average time taken to complete identified repairs and maintenance | 69 per cent of houses require minor or no repairs in remote and very remote areas (CHINS 2006)
Existing habitable remote and very remote permanent dwellings; Plus permanent dwellings to have major repairs and replacement
(CHINS 2006)
Plus 4,200 new houses to be constructed
76 per cent of ICHOs have housing management plans in place (AIHW 2005-06). | Comprehensive rolling program of repairs and maintenance in place for all houses in remote Indigenous communities by 2010 as per jurisdictional Implementation Plans
- current dwelling property condition data to inform rolling program
- repaired and replaced houses and new houses to be incorporated into the rolling program as they come 'on line' |

Figure 1. NPARIH R&M performance measures. Image. NPARIH 2010.

In the NPARIH Northern Territory Implementation Plan (2013-14 to 2017-18) the emphasis of measures related to Property and Tenancy Management was on tenancy. Nonetheless, the Implementation Plan specified the 'Implementation of a program of ongoing repairs and maintenance that seeks to optimise the lifecycle of remote Indigenous housing' and noted that 'A framework on Property and Tenancy Management will be agreed by the [Joint Steering Committee] and reviewed annually thereafter' (Implementation Plan 10). The NT Implementation Plan set a number of reform objectives specific to that jurisdiction, including:

- 100 per cent of houses under Department of Housing management are covered by responsive and preventative repairs and maintenance arrangements
- 100 per cent of houses that receive NPARIH capital works and where there is secure tenure have a Tenancy Agreement in place within eight weeks of completion
- 100 per cent of prospective tenants moving into new houses that have received NPARIH investment to be offered Living Skills support training in line with the Remote Public Housing Management Framework. (18)

Similar goals and measures appear in the Healthy Homes program.

In 2016, late in the NPARIH period, the NPARIH was replaced by the *National Partnership for Remote Housing* (NPRH). Victoria, Tasmania, and New South Wales had exited the NPARIH arrangement, and new NPRH agreements were established between the Australian Government and the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia Governments. Beginning on 1 July 2016 and expiring on 30 June 2018, the NPRH agreements continued to provide funding for new assets and maintenance services, with increased attention paid to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and business targets. The *Review* noted that 'In 2016, the Commonwealth introduced outcomes payments to jurisdictions for more regular property inspections, improved maintenance plans and the completion of repairs within agreed timeframes' (2017, 45).

In 2017 the Commonwealth of Australia published the *Remote Housing Review: A Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018).* It summarised that good progress was made against the NPARIH objectives, by 2018 delivering over 11,500 more liveable houses (4000 new houses and 7500 refurbishments) and decreasing the proportion of overcrowded households in remote and very remote areas from 51.2 per cent in 2008 to 41.3 per cent in 2014-15 (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, 1). It outlined that 'an additional 5,500 homes are required by 2028 to reduce levels of overcrowding in remote areas to acceptable levels' and that 'half of the additional need is in the Northern Territory alone' (2). The authors identified that

> The first priority for governments has to be to protect their investments and increase the longevity of houses by maintaining the housing already delivered. The key is an increased emphasis on planned cyclic maintenance, with a focus on health hardware and houses functioning. (2)

The report assessed jurisdictions' performance against key objectives of the Strategy, summarising that the Northern Territory had performed well in relation to housing quality, but poorly in terms of cyclical maintenance ('Needs further effort. Starting to bundle works but little evidence of proactive maintenance', 5) and that 'More work [is] needed' in relation to Community Engagement, Employment and Business Initiatives.

The *Review* provided the following summary of repairs and maintenance in the Northern Territory.

> In September 2013, the Northern Territory Government altered procurement to bundle repairs and maintenance and trade works for remote public housing and remote government employee housing.
>
> The Northern Territory uses its inspections to report items for repair and to put onto a register. It batches jobs for completion timed around urgent works or where there is critical mass. The Northern Territory has put in place a local handymen panel by region which allows for a localised, proactive response to fix minor items and report other issues. Under the Strategy [NPARIH and the NPRH] the Northern Territory Government is putting in place a planned maintenance program trial for five per cent of its remote housing stock and will start rolling out maintenance visits from a local maintenance worker.
>
> Currently the property management contract is separate to tenancy management contract and this can result in two different providers involved in one community to delivery [sic] housing services. (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, 47).

A full list of the recommendations listed in the *Review* is included as Appendix A – Recommendations of the NPARIH Review. It is clear that the NT Government's Healthy Homes program has been influenced by at least the *Review's* recommendations related to the need for recurrent maintenance programs (Recommendation 1), new construction (2), the use of Housing for Health surveys (8), Aboriginal workforce development (10), and tenancy education programs (12) (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, 4)

2.3.2   The *National Partnership Agreement for Remote Housing Northern Territory*

On 30 March 2019 the NT and Federal Governments established the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory (*NPRHNT). The preamble begins: 'This Agreement aims to improve remote housing by reducing overcrowding for Aboriginal people in 73 remote Northern Territory communities and the 17 Alice Springs town camps' (set out in Schedule C). Backdated to run from 2018 to 2023, the agreement provides federal funding of 550 million dollars to the NT Government to construct 1950 bedrooms, equivalent to 650 three-bedroom houses. Compared with other Australian jurisdictions, this funding is now unusual (Grealy 2022). In 2018-19 the Australian Government 'provided one-off funding contributions for remote [I]ndigenous housing to Western Australia ($121 million) and South Australia ($37.5 million), with matched funding from states to assist the transition of responsibility for funding remote housing to the states' (NIAA 2021). The NPRHNT does not provide funding for the 7 community living areas in Tennant Creek, however these are included in the NT Government's maintenance and tenancy programs.[6]

The NPRHNT agreement highlights the responsibility to improve resident health outcomes by increasing the supply and standard of housing, to 'be achieved by:
  (a) reducing overcrowding;
  (b) ensuring a role for the Land Councils in this Agreement's governance;
  (c) providing transparency about how money is spent; and
  (d) ensuring, to the maximum extent possible, works are delivered by local Indigenous Territorians and businesses.' (C-2, S.16)

To 'avoid duplication of effort', Australian Government funding is expended through the NT Government's 'Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes.' program (below). The table of estimated financial contributions specifies $35 million to be provided annually for property and tenancy management to a total of $175 million over five years.

The NPRHNT agreement formalised a governance role for land councils by establishing a Joint Steering Committee (JSC) including representatives of the Australian Government, in particular from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the NT Government, Aboriginal Housing NT, and the four land councils: the Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council, and Tiwi Land Council. The JSC approves annual capital works plans including information on the scope of capital works; the schedule of delivery; the anticipated impact on overcrowding; accompanying infrastructure works; estimated cost of individual projects; Aboriginal employment and business participation; and local decision making (A21). The NPRHNT also outlines that the JSC will approve a new Property and Tenancy Management Framework and related Property and Tenancy

---

[6] Since the commencement of Healthy Homes, and following delays in the award of remote property maintenance services contracts, grant funding was procured by TFHC to undertake some repair and maintenance works at town camps in Darwin, Katherine, and Adelaide River (see Chapter 6).

Management Measures. The latter are intended to be agreed to by the JSC each year, including information on: services to be provided; coverage of services; estimated cost of services; Aboriginal employment and business participation outcomes; and engagement of local decision making (C3m).

The NPRHNT agreement outlines that 'A key function of the JSC is to ensure accountability and transparency over housing outcomes and investment, including the progress of capital works. The JSC will monitor the achievement of milestones and benchmarks under the Agreement' (Terms of Reference, 9). The NPRHNT agreement specifies that payments will be made by the Australian Government to the NT Government based on meeting milestones outlined in Table A4. After approving the framework and measures, the first notable milestone is '4 year Property and Tenancy Management Contracts in place in accordance with the relevant frameworks and measures', with an associated due date of 30 September 2019. The proposed length of these contracts reflects a lesson learned through the implementation of the NPARIH, which the *Review* described as 'The introduction of a two year competitive bids process led to undesirable, and unintended, consequences' (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, 36). Although this lesson is explained in relation to capital works contracts, and the potential to withhold payments where builds were not delivered, the length of contract impacts equally on a service provider's capacity to implement high quality maintenance services. The first payment of 17.5 million dollars is associated with the 'Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period of 1 July 2019 to 31 October 2019, due 1 November 2019.[7] Under Healthy Homes, contracts for remote housing maintenance services were not awarded until 2021 and ranged in length from approximately two years to 15 months.

In relation to the transparency of the JSC, the Terms of Reference also outline that 'The Agreement will have a publicly available website where JSC documents, including frameworks and capital works plans will be published within two weeks of their endorsement' (Terms of Reference, 37). As at June 2023, and despite this being identified in the Interim Report, this has not occurred. Only JSC Meeting Communiques, Terms of Reference, and a membership list and meeting schedule are available on the NT Government website. There is little information about the JSC available on the National Indigenous Australians Agency website.

The NPRHNT agreement states that an independent review is scheduled to be completed and published 12 months prior to the expiry of the agreement (S.44). In February 2022, the Australian National Audit Office published a report assessing the role of the National Indigenous Australians Agency's role in administering Australian Government funding under the NPRHNT agreement. Reviews for leasing, housing, and land servicing are long past due but not published, as at May 2023.

---

[7] The *Property and Tenancy Management Framework* notes that 'Due to delays in finalising the NPRHNT, it was necessary to extend existing contract arrangements to ensure continuity of services. Procurement for future contract arrangements will be undertaken over the next 12 months focussing [sic] on longer term contracts and maximising Aboriginal business and employment outcomes wherever possible' (2020, 10).

2.3.3   Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes.

Housing in remote Aboriginal communities in the NT is predominantly funded under the NT Government's 'Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes' (OCOFOH) program. Established prior to the conclusion of the NPARIH, OCOFOH is scheduled to run for the period 2017-18 to 2026-27 and is based on $1.1 billion budgeted by the NT Government. The program focuses on:

- reducing overcrowding and improving living conditions
- local decision making and engagement with communities
- developing Aboriginal Business Enterprises
- sustainable local employment
- economic development.

The OCOFOH program is comprised of four sub-programs with associated funding allocations. This includes $500 million for HomeBuild NT, to build new housing; $200 million for Room to Breathe, to increase the living area of existing houses; $200 million for government employee housing; and $200 million for preventive repairs and maintenance (https://ourfuture.nt.gov.au/about-the-program). In addition to the $550 million allocated by the Australian Government under the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory*, the NT Government has allocated $432.8 million for land servicing, in recognition of the shortage of serviced lots in many remote communities and its implications for the potential expansion of housing stock.

The NT Government website provides information about contracts awarded and total expenditure by both the NT Government and Australian Government in relation to HomeBuild, Room to Breathe, and Government Employee Housing. This includes data on overcrowding by community (based on total occupied properties), and on program progress, including the total homes approved, homes to be tendered, homes under construction, homes completed, bedrooms completed, proportional Aboriginal employment, and the number of contracts awarded to Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs).

On the NT Government's OCOFOH website, as at May 2023, no data related to repairs and maintenance is published. It is therefore difficult for the public to discern an overall picture of OCOFOH's progress in terms of repair and maintenance services.

2.3.4   Machinery of Government Changes

Following the Labor Party's victory in the NT election in August 2020, Machinery of Government (MoG) changes were announced across the public sector. Prior to the election, the *Administrative Arrangements Order (No. 2) 2020* (commencing 9/6/2020) specified that the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Community Development was responsible for Aboriginal Housing and Remote Communities and Homelands, among other portfolios. Thereafter, the Department of Local

Government, Housing and Community Development was reconfigured as the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities. The *Administrative Arrangements Order (No. 3) 2020* (commencing 8/9/2020) specified the creation of a new Ministry for Remote Housing and Town Camps, responsible for Aboriginal housing, remote communities and homelands, and town camps.[8]

So far as the Healthy Homes program is concerned, the MoG changes split the management of remote housing between the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL). Effectively, employees with roles related to asset management moved to DIPL, while TFHC remains responsible for tenancy management and operations. These changes were enacted in two tranches in 2021. In January, TFHC and Housing Remote were amalgamated under the Housing Operations Division at TFHC, while THFC infrastructure employees moved to DIPL and the newly formed Housing Program Office (HPO). The Remote Program Delivery Office, involving land tenure and urban and remote capital works was transferred to DIPL, while Indigenous Essential Services employees remained in TFHC, though managed by DIPL's General Manager, Housing Program Office. The second and final tranche of changes occurred in July 2021, during which the remaining TFHC employees and functions related to asset management were transferred to DIPL, such as those related to housing maintenance. From this point, TFHC remains directly responsible for tenancy management services, while DIPL is responsible for managing housing maintenance services contracts. This division of labour was intended to be governed by a Signed Partnering Agreement between the departments, as well as a Transition Steering Committee (TSC) and Transition Steering Group (TSG).

This was a major reform of the delivery of remote housing maintenance services. The reforms sought to clarify the functions of departments and their employees in terms of their focus on asset management and human-centric service delivery respectively. Among a number of purposes specified to justify the MoG changes, the reforms sought to:

- Improve service quality and responsiveness to the frontline functions of TFHC;
- Provide clearer line of sight to the priorities and workflow within TFHC, so that priorities and workloads can be managed;
- [Establish] Better coordination of projects from concept through to delivery, including regional employees integration;
- Enhance planned management and delivery of the NT Government's infrastructure program particularly as it relates to Government's commitment to deliver remote housing; and
- Increase whole-of-government efficiency through a more strategic alignment of project delivery across the Territory.

These aims should be considered in relation to the outcomes of the Healthy Homes program. It is not clear that these goals have been achieved through the MoG changes at this time.

---

[8] Under *Administrative Arrangement Order 2021* (commenced 29/1/2021) the Minister for Remote Housing and Town Camps also became responsible for Government Employee Housing.

Menzies was advised that a Transition Steering Committee (TSC) and a Transition Working Group (TWG) were to be established for Healthy Homes, alongside the MoG changes. Terms of Reference for a Healthy Homes Preventative Maintenance Program Working Group were drafted in April 2021. The group was to meet monthly, chaired by the Director Town Camps Futures Unit with the following members: Program Manager Town Camps Futures Unit; Program Manager Town Camps; Program Manager, Healthabitat; Project Manager, Healthabitat; Project Manager, Department of Health; Project Manager, Menzies School of Health Research; and Project Manager, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. The purpose of the working group was to 'Manage [the] relationship between Program Delivery and Service Providers of the Healthy Homes Program to ensure outcomes of the program are realised. The group will manage delivery of the agreed scope, budget and timeline of the project.' The ToR outlined that the proposed group would have decision-making powers, but financial delegations would rest with the Program Sponsor, being TFHC.

It is Menzies understanding that this working group was not assembled. Menzies was advised in September 2022 that since June 2022 two meetings had been held between TFHC and DIPL related to the Healthy Homes program. The non-establishment of inter-departmental governance mechanisms at the commencement of Healthy Homes and alongside its implementation, especially given the MoG changes, is a missed opportunity with implications for effective program coordination and delivery. If Healthy Homes is to achieve its goals of increasing preventive maintenance to improve householder health outcomes, this sort of inter-departmental governance must occur.

To take one operational example, the lack of effective and ongoing interaction between TFHC and DIPL is evident in the process of a housing vacate swap and the impacts on contracted service providers. When a tenant vacates a property, it is the responsibility of TFHC to instruct DIPL to scope vacate works prior to the establishment of a new tenancy. DIPL should then notify TFHC at the completion of such works so that a new tenancy has commence. Service providers noted that they are sometimes subject to the effects of a lack of communication between TFHC and DIPL representatives in this process, which can result in properties sitting vacant for extended periods of time, despite local Housing Reference Groups having already selected the next tenants for that property. One property manager noted that they would cc respective TFHC and DIPL representatives in emails to make them aware of both sides of this process, while citing instances where 'There was [no vacancy works done] in six months. It's created a lot of community angst'. It is clear that the Healthy Homes program would benefit from further communication between all the relevant parties listed above, at the strategic and operational levels, on behalf of developing a consistent understanding of the aims and processes.

2.4   The Policy Context

A number of policies are relevant to the delivery of remote housing repair and maintenance services in the NT, in addition to the NPRHNT and the OCOFOH program. Remote housing provision is a complex field with the regular release of new strategies, frameworks, discussion papers, and policies. This section considers those policies as an ecology of governing documentary infrastructure that underpins the Healthy Homes program.

Published in July 2020, the revised *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* is the highest level policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Australia. Established between the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and all Australian governments, Closing the Gap specifies housing as one of five policy priority areas (2020, 7-8). Outcome 9 (of 16) aims that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need' (2020, 25). It includes target 9a which aims to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent by 2031.

The *A Home for All Territorians: Northern Territory Housing Strategy 2020-2025* (NT Government 2019) represents a process initiated by the then Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development to develop a housing strategy as a commitment under the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*. The Strategy aims to guide work 'on improving the way in which the social and affordable housing system functions to make it easier for vulnerable Territorians to access and sustain housing' (4). It provides a useful overview of the NT housing sector, which includes approximately 75,700 houses in total, of which about 50 per cent are rental properties (6). Within the NT Government's social housing portfolio, there are 4854 houses in remote areas and 385 houses in town camp or community living areas (9). As at June 2019, 54 per cent of houses in remote Aboriginal communities were overcrowded. The Strategy describes NTG modelling that, in order to contend with crowding pressures in Aboriginal housing and meet population growth, 'around 8000 to 12000 additional dwellings are required across the NT by 2025', of which 75 per cent is required in the social housing system (11). Appendix B – The NT Housing System reproduces the figure from the Strategy which provides a useful illustration of the relationships that exists between different housing types in the jurisdiction.

Under 'Strategic Objective 1: Create a housing and homelessness system that is contemporary, flexible and accessible' Action 1.6 is to 'Establish an appropriate property and tenancy management framework for remote communities, town camps and community living areas in collaboration with key partners' (NT Government 2019, 16). Action 3.2.2 is to 'Implement a planned maintenance strategy for public housing in remote communities', which is scheduled in Appendix B – Action Plan to take place from Year 1(2020) to Year 5 of the Strategy (28). This action also highlights that the 'long term vision of the department under the framework of Local Decision Making is to transfer control back to Aboriginal communities' (20). This is indicative of the NT Government's wider 'Local Decision Making' policy, under which government agencies 'will partner with Aboriginal communities to assist the transition of government services and programs to community control', including service delivery for

'housing; local government; education, training and jobs; health; children and families; and law and justice' (Local Decision Making website). This is guided by the *Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy* and the *APONT (Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT) Partnership Principles*.

The *Building Our Communities, Together: Town Camps Reform Framework 2019-2024* (NT Government 2019b), outlines that while funding for the NT's 43 town camps was provided by the federal government until 2012, this responsibility transferred to the NTG as part of the Stronger Futures negotiations. This framework distinguishes between the arrangements at Alice Springs town camps and Tennant Creek community living areas, where the NT CEO (Housing) 'has full administrative responsibility' and 'funds a complete housing management service as it holds a sub-lease over these camps', and the remaining town camps, where the NT Government 'does not have any sub-leasing arrangements in place and has no responsibility for housing services' (3). In those contexts, such as at the Borroloola town camps, 'the Northern Territory Government provides grant funding to contribute to repairs and maintenance of the houses' (3). Outcome 2 of the Framework – Housing choices and support services are people centred, flexible and suitable to town camps – specifies that 'Houses are maintained through preventative repairs and maintenance programs' (14).

The *NT Community Housing Growth Strategy 2021-2030 Discussion Paper* (NT Government 2021), published prior to finalising the *Northern Territory Community Housing Growth Strategy 2022-2032* (NT Government 2022), expands on key statements in the Strategy and the Framework regarding the increase of community control in housing through the expansion of the community housing sector, including for housing in remote Aboriginal communities. It aspires to increase the number of NT providers registered under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) as Tier 2 and Tier 3 providers. As of June 2019, there were five registered community housing providers: Anindilyakwa Housing Aboriginal Corporation; Community Housing Central Australia; Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation; Anglicare NT Ltd; and Venture Housing Company, collectively managing 955 community housing assets (houses and units). By March 2022, there were 11 community housing providers in the NT registered under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH), four of these Aboriginal community housing providers. The expansion of the community housing sector is promoted for the tax benefits and access to financial subsidies received by community housing providers – (as public benevolent institutions, most community housing providers can access tax concessions related to salary packaging, are endorsed as Deductible Gift recipients, and can access Commonwealth Rent Assistance as a non-taxable income supplement to eligible residents in community housing) – as well as access to low-cost finance through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC). In the Discussion Paper, the NT Government argues that 'CHPs bring commercial disciplines to the provision of social and affordable housing. They are innovative, entrepreneurial and, unlike private landlords, they are strongly regulated to protect tenants, to safeguard public funds and to ensure they remain solvent' (10). This is contrasted in the Discussion Paper with public housing providers, with community housing providers 'regulated, so their contracts, leasing arrangements and performance outcomes are closely monitored to ensure compliance' (10). Appendix C – The Continuum of NT Housing

Management reproduces Figure 3 from the Discussion Paper. The continuum stretches from a single housing contract held by an unregistered NGO/ABE to a Tier 1 community housing provider with full responsibility for housing and housing development.

Under the *Aboriginal Employment and Business Enterprise Development Framework* (NT Government 2019c), endorsed by the NPRHNT JSC, an Aboriginal Business Enterprise (ABE) is defined as 'an organisation that is 50 per cent or more Aboriginal owned or controlled that is operating as a business, including companies, incorporated associations, trusts and social enterprises or registered charities if they are operating as a business, or another form of Aboriginal organisation as agreed by the JSC' (3). The framework aims to increase the proportion of Aboriginal employment under the Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes program, from 40 per cent in 2019-2020 by two per cent each year following. A chief means of meeting this aim is to build the capacity of ABEs to independently deliver housing works. These goals are pursued by the Aboriginal Business Enterprise Development Unit (ABEDU), which 'will work with each community to identify where there may be opportunities for ABEs to train or employ Aboriginal people, who are preferentially local, through the program' (8). This includes supporting ABEs and non-ABEs with Aboriginal employees in skills identification and training. The aim to increase the proportion of Aboriginal employment is ultimately bolstered by NT government tenders and the requirement for an annual minimum of 40 per cent Aboriginal employment, increasing to 46 per cent, with an expectation of local employment, and the use of a select tender process where local, and then regional, ABEs are prioritised.

The *Property and Tenancy Management Framework* (NT Government 2020) is key to the Healthy Homes program. It states that 'The long term goal for both NT and Commonwealth Governments is through local decision making, [the] transition [of] PTM services to local control', while acknowledging that this 'is likely to take some time depending on the presence and capability of local providers' (5). The objectives of the *Property and Tenancy Management Framework* are quoted here in full, including to:

- Maximise the number of suitable houses available to remote tenants in remote Aboriginal communities and selected town camps covered by the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory;
- Improve and maintain the standard of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities funded under NPRHNT;
- Maintain the amenity of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities as per the RTA [*Residential Tenancies Act*] and NT public housing standards;
- Provide housing services to tenants in remote Aboriginal communities to a level equivalent to that received by public housing tenants elsewhere in the NT;
- Increase the number of householders in remote Aboriginal communities able to maintain sustainable tenancies;
- Engage and empower locally based Aboriginal Business Enterprises in delivering services in remote Aboriginal communities where available;

- Maximise opportunities for local Aboriginal employment and training so that service providers have or acquire the capacity to deliver quality services to housing tenants;
- Select service providers consistent with traditional Aboriginal owner and community aspirations, where identified under Local Decision Making agreements and/or Housing Reference Groups;
- Meet reporting and performance indicator requirements under the NPRHNT implementation plan; and
- Work towards transitioning property and tenancy management services to local community control through establishment of a community housing model. (5-6)

The framework outlines both the responsive and cyclical or planned maintenance to be delivered under the program (see page 7 for examples of each), with cyclical maintenance explicitly informed by the Housing for Health methodology. This framework, which precedes the new housing maintenance services contracts under the Healthy Homes program, describes the former model of maintenance service contracts that include 'a two tier maintenance approach', under which Housing Maintenance Officers (HMOs) can provide 'simple repairs that do not require a licensed tradesperson', complemented by Trade Panel Contracts for specialised trade works.

The framework notes that 'Current PTM contracts have generally been in place since 2013-14. These contracts are based on a clustering arrangement where multiple communities are grouped together based on geographical location and cultural alignments' (NT Government 2020, 10). The following table is reproduced to illustrate the distribution of contracts as clusters. Non-trade related maintenance services were undertaken by either department housing maintenance officers or housing maintenance officers (HMOs) employed by Aboriginal community controlled organisations and regional councils. Tenancy management was undertaken by department tenancy officers or Community Housing Officers (CHOs) employed by Aboriginal organisations or regional councils. Trade works were undertaken via trade panel contractors involving 92 separate contractors. The distribution of contracts under this arrangement which preceded Healthy Homes is reproduced below (NT Government 2020, 10; Figure 2).

Clusters/Contracts		Aboriginal Organisation		Regional Council	
HMO	CHO[9]	HMO	CHO	HMO	CHO
28*	28*	19	9	2	4

*Including Alice Springs town camps

Figure 2. Distribution of R&M contracts under the former program

---

[9] CHO is Community Housing Officer. A Housing Maintenance Officer (HMO) will undertake non-trade related maintenance services. A CHO is typically associated with tenancy management.

Under the section 'Reporting', the Framework specifies performance measures that are used to assess the delivery of property and tenancy management services, which have been incorporated into the evaluation framework in Chapter 4.

The *Property and Tenancy Management Framework* is supported by the Property Management Policy (NT Government 2020b). The policy aims to ensure that properties owned or leased by the NT government meet the standards for safety, security, cleanliness, and habitability outlined in the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* (NT). The policy includes a Repairs and Maintenance Obligations Policy Guideline that outlines obligations to maintain houses according to legislated standards and relevant case law, such as timelines for emergency repairs and interpretation of safety, habitability, cleanliness, and security standards. Section 8 'Vulnerability of Tenants and the Intersection with Habitable, Safe, Clean and Secure' outlines the implications of the decision *Various Applicants from Santa Teresa v Chief Executive Officer (Housing) 2019* (see Chapter 9), including that the test for habitability 'not only includes looking at the asset and the threat to tenant safety, but also extends to the threat to tenant health' (16), requiring a 'situational approach' from the Department with regard to the specific vulnerabilities of individual tenants.

The *Reporting Framework* (NT Government 2020c) outlines measures for reporting on activities delivered under the OCOFOH program and for the NT Government to report to the JSC and the Australian Government on progress made under the *NPRHNT.* This includes, but is not limited to, measures related to property and tenancy management related to the Healthy Homes program. The Framework's 'Appendix A: Performance Reporting Framework' includes a table related to Property and Tenancy Management that specifies various measurements against which program progress is assessed. The Framework's 'Appendix B: Monitoring and Evaluation' specifies property and tenancy management measures used to assess the achievement of the various strategic objectives of the OFOHOC program. For example, the strategic objective of 'Reducing overcrowding and improving accommodation options', by upgrading and maintaining existing houses to an appropriate standard, will be assessed in relation to the following measures:

- No. of existing dwellings surveyed against the 9 Healthy Living Practices
- Percentage of existing dwellings functioning after Survey Fix 1
- Percentage of existing dwellings functioning after Survey Fix 2
- Percentage of properties receiving annual property inspections
- Percentage of properties, as a proportion of all properties covered by this agreement, and other relevant agreements, that receive works as part of a planned maintenance program trial
- Percentage of properties which have received a maintenance visit from a local maintenance worker. (NT Government 2020c, 26-27)[10]

---

[10] The *Reporting Framework* was revised in November 2021. Property and Tenancy Management measures in Appendix A and Appendix B remained unchanged.

These measures have been incorporated into the Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation project Evaluation framework outlined in Chapter 4. Menzies is unable to determine whether or not the program has met certain of these measures, based on the data available.

2.5   Recent Reviews

From 1998-2002 Menzies School of Health researchers were contracted by the former Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory (IHANT) to undertake an environmental health survey and evaluation (Stevens and Bailie 2002; Stevens et al. 2002). This research used Healthabitat's terminology of health hardware and healthy living practices to assess the function of housing in remote Aboriginal communities, converted into a 'housing functionality index'. A functionality index of 100 indicated that 100 per cent of properties were deemed functional in relation to five designated healthy living practices: wash people/remove waste water; wash clothes; functioning toilet/remove waste; remove waste rubbish; prepare and store food. The purpose of developing a functionality index was to allow for assessment of house functionality over time and to identify communities as prioritised for new housing. At the time of the third survey undertaken by the researchers, only 30 per cent of dwellings were subject to IHANT maintenance grants (Stevens et al. 2002, 4).

While there are similarities regarding the objectives of that environmental health survey work and the Healthy Homes program, there are important differences that limit comparison. Specifically, the Housing for Health methodology employed by Healthabitat does not correspond to the survey approach undertaken in the prior Menzies environmental health survey work. The Condition Assessment Tool developed by the NT Government and employed in the Healthy Homes program is also distinct from the survey instrument used to determine house functionality in the ATSIC era.

Four recent reviews are relevant to this monitoring and evaluation project's consideration of the Healthy Homes program.

2.5.1   EY, Contract model (2016)

In 2016 the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development contracted consultancy EY to recommend changes to the contract model for the repairs and maintenance of urban public housing in the NT. Drawing on consultation with ten service providers and contract models in NSW, SA, WA, and Qld, the review found that:

- An overarching asset management strategy is required to manage investment in maintenance
- A greater focus on preventative maintenance and revised pricing structure can reduce costs
- Data and information systems can help plan and manage assets

- Bundled contracted and supported outcomes based performance frameworks can deliver benefits (DLGHCD 2020, 22)

2.5.2   Deloitte, *Asset Management Framework* (2018)

The Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development contracted consultancy firm Deloitte in 2018 to develop an Asset Management Framework, recognising the absence of a coordinated or planned approach to assessing the condition of assets and managing necessary repairs over time. The framework identifies the key stages of management across the asset lifecycle: planning, acquisition, management, and divestment. One outcome of the recent MoG changes is that an attempt to implement an asset management framework resembling that developed by Deloitte would require collaboration between TFHC and DIPL, with a majority of the administrative work likely falling to DIPL, given that department's role in new house construction, refurbishments, and most recently housing maintenance services.

2.5.3   NTG, *Review of Remote Property and Tenancy Management Services* (2020)

Most significantly, the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development conducted its *Review of Remote Property and Tenancy Management Services* (NT Government 2020d). This was published internally in September 2020, contemporaneously with the publication of the Healthy Homes Program Guidelines. The DLGHCD Review explains that the remote property and tenancy management program is valued at $77.5m in 2020-21, comprised of $35m from the *NPRHNT*, $15m from the NTG Government's Remote Housing Investment Package, and $27.5m in rental revenue. It states that the purpose of the review 'is to identify common challenges and issues in the delivery of these services and to provide practical recommendations to inform a reset of PTM arrangements for implementation by 1 July 2021, as well as highlighting medium and long-term policy challenges' (NT Government 2020d, 5).

The Review describes the property and tenancy management model used by the Department since 2013-14 and prior to the current round of tenders for housing maintenance services and tenancy management support services. Under that model property related services were divided into tenders for Trade Panel Services and Housing Maintenance Coordination Services. The latter are intended to be delivered by Housing Maintenance Officers (HMOs), employed on a monthly fee for service arrangement as 'skilled handypersons who live in a community or visits on a regular basis to carry out simple repairs that do not require a licensed tradesperson. They also provide a timely response and an initial assessment of maintenance issues, advising the department about works that need a skilled or licensed trade panel contractor' (NT Government 2020d, 12). Trade Panel Service contracts were awarded to multiple trade companies within a region of clustered communities to deliver housing maintenance services requiring trade qualifications, such as electrical, carpentry, plumbing, refrigeration, septic tank pumping, and other works. The Review (NT Government 2020d, 13)

summarises the award of tenancy, housing maintenance coordination, and trade panel services contracts by service provider type in the following table (Figure 3). Notably, a significant majority of the total contracts awarded (60 of 108) were trade panel contracts awarded to commercial organisations that are not Aboriginal Business Enterprises.

Contracts by Provider Type			
Provider	Tenancy	Maintenance	Panel
Aboriginal Business Enterprise	7	16	9
Regional/Shire Council	2	1	0
Other Commercial Organisation	7	6	60
Total	16	23	69

Figure 3. Contracts by provider type under the former R&M model. Image. NT Government

The Review (NT Government 2020d, 14) describes that in the year 2019-2020 the average expenditure on housing maintenance coordination and trade panel work per house was $5,508. This varied among communities, with the highest average expenditure at the Tennant Creek Community Living Areas, where works were delivered by a single trade services provider (Figure 4).

Region	HMO ($m)	Panel ($m)	Total ($m)	% Spend	% Dwellings	Spend by dwelling ($)
Arafura	2.39	5.28	7.67	24%	22%	6,031
Arnhem	1.69	3.83	5.52	17%	19%	4,931
Big Rivers	2.49	4.44	6.94	22%	28%	4,263
Barkly	0.48	2.49	2.98	9%	6%	8,757
Central	2.75	6.19	8.94	28%	25%	6,127
Total	9.81	22.24	32.04	100%	100%	
					Average:	5,508

Figure 4. Average R&M spend per house 2019-2020. Image. NT Government

The Department conducted its Review based on consultation with NT Government staff, an anonymous survey with six service providers, and analysis of approaches to remote property and tenancy management services in other Australian jurisdictions. It identified a number of common challenges experienced in the delivery of remote property and tenancy services, including: that funding has decreased while costs have increased; the condition of ageing assets; the lack of an asset management strategy; the reactive nature of repairs and maintenance; the remote application of a mainstream (urban) approach to PTM; the limited capacity of some communities to act as service providers; high rates of staff turnover; inconsistent use of information and data systems; and the high cost of remote service delivery (NT Government 2020d, 16).

The Review's recommendations are listed as follows:

- A greater focus on tenancy management will deliver more sustainable outcomes
- Repairs and maintenance services needs to be considered as part of a broader asset management strategy
- Shifting to a preventive repairs and maintenance approach and greater community control
- Improving program and contract management
- Better integrated data and information will reduce duplication and improve asset management and planning
- Capacity building to support greater Aboriginal community control. (NT Government 2020d, 25-29)

It is clear that TFHC has sought to implement these recommendations through the Healthy Homes Program. This is evident within the following work, listed with respect to the above recommendations:

- The development of the Living Strong program
- The development of the Condition Assessment Tool and the obligation to survey assets within 90 days of new housing maintenance services contracts
- Contracting Healthabitat to deliver Housing for Health projects
- Revised tenders for housing maintenance and tenancy management support services
- Obligations in tenders related to information management, and
- The prioritising of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal Business Enterprises through select tender processes.

2.5.4   Australia National Audit Office, *Remote Housing in the Northern Territory*

In February 2022 the Australian National Audit Office published the Auditor-General report *Remote Housing in the Northern Territory* (ANAO 2022). Rather than directly assessing the outputs of the NT Government's Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. program, this report reviews the role of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) in administering Australian Government funding under the *National Partnership Remote Housing Northern Territory* (NPRHNT). Nonetheless, this report provided relevant data regarding the delivery of remote property and tenancy management services under the NPRHNT agreement. It found that NIAA's administration of remote housing funding in the NT has been 'partly effective', and made five recommendations to NIAA, all of which were accepted. As at 30 September 2021, 54.1 per cent of houses in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were overcrowded (52), and 19 per cent of the bedrooms agreed under the agreement's capital works target had been delivered (17). NIAA has thus far failed to gain assurance that the NT Government will expend the $550 million it committed to remote housing under the NPRHNT agreement, despite the potential for the NT Government to prioritise the expenditure of Commonwealth funding to meet performance measures under the national agreement.

The ANAO report was based on examining NIAA's records, minutes and papers from the Joint Steering Committee, and other documents that have not been made available to Menzies researchers. The ANAO report (2022) found that

> NIAA's assessment of the delivery of PTM services has been partly effective. NIAA does not gain assurance over the performance results reported to it by the NT Government, and has not always used the correct reporting period to assess the NT Government's results and to recommend payments. (9)

This is a generous assessment. As at 30 September 2021, $87.5 million of the $175 million budgeted for property and tenancy services had been paid by the Commonwealth to the NT Government. The ANAO identify that the PTM milestone and payments table in the NPRHNT Implementation Plan includes 'several [over 30] typographic and period errors, including irregular and overlapping milestone periods' (30; see 48-49). It found that advice provided to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs did not provide a rationale for funding for property and tenancy services to be set at $35 million per annum. The report states that the ANAO examined financial modelling cited by a ministerial brief 'and found that the cost of PTM services was estimated at between $53.3 and $76.6 million annually' and that, further, 'Australian Government funding to the NT Government for PTM services under NPARIH and NPRH averaged $42 million annually between 2013-14 and 2017-18' (34). Payments of $17.5 million are made to the NT Government bi-annually for property and tenancy services in relation to six performance measures outlined in the Property and Tenancy Management Framework. Figure 5 is reproduced from the ANAO report to show the NT Government's reported property and tenancy management performance from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021. The ANAO found that 'NIAA does not verify the accuracy of the information provided by the NT Government in support of its achievement against the National Partnership targets, nor the reliability of the systems used by the NT Government to generate its reporting' (46).

PTM Performance Measures	Target 2019–20	Target 2020–21	Report 1 1/07/19 to 31/10/19	Report 2a 1/07/19 to 31/03/20	Report 2b 1/07/19 to 30/06/20	Report 3 1/07/20 to 31/12/20	Report 4 1/01/21 to 30/06/21
Gap between total rent collected and rent charged, as a proportion (%)	30	≤30	◆ 19	◆ 26.5	◆ 26.6	◆ 27.8	◆ 27.6
Tenancies with an agreement to pay in place as a proportion of total tenants in rental arrears[a] (%)	15	≥15	◆ 17	■ 14.5[b]	■ 13.8[b]	■ 13.2[b]	■ 12.3
Properties that have tenancy agreements in place with the tenants within eight weeks of handover of capital works (%)	100	100	N/A[c]	■ 87.2[b]	■ 78.8[b]	■ 88.1[b]	■ 73.0
Properties receiving annual property inspections (%)[d]	70	≥72	◆ 73	◆ 75.6	■ 65.6[b]	■ 63.4[b]	■ 66.0
Aboriginal people employed to deliver PTM services (full-time equivalent average)	40	≥42	◆ 59.25	◆ 60.3	◆ 60.3	◆ 51	◆ 51.5
PTM contracts awarded to Aboriginal Business Enterprises (%)	50	≥50	◆ 60	◆ 60	◆ 68.8	◆ 69	■ 32.7[e]
NIAA payment ($m)			17.5	12.6	4.9	17.5	Not paid as at Nov 2021

Legend: ◆ Met; ■ Not met; N/A Not reported against.

Note a: An agreement to pay is an arrangement with tenant/s to recuperate outstanding debt (that is, rental arrears) as part of NT Government tenancy management services.

Note b: The NT Government's explanation for the shortfall was accepted by NIAA.

Note c: The NT Government did not report against this measure as no Australian Government funded capital works were completed at the time.

Note d: Properties inspected in the previous 12 months from the date the report was generated.

Note e: NIAA advised the ANAO that the NT Government changed the way it calculated this performance measure from 1 January 2021 to include trade contractors. As a result of this change, the percentage of contracts awarded to Aboriginal Business Enterprises declined. Using the previous methodology, the result for Report 4 would have been 65.6 per cent.

Source: ANAO analysis of entity documentation.

Figure 5. Table 3.2: NT Government reported PTM performance, 1 July 2019–30 June 2021. Image. ANAO 2022

2.5.5   Housing Review

The ANAO report outlined that none of the reviews agreed to under the NPRHNT agreement concerning leasing, housing, and land servicing had been completed by the beginning of 2022. Section 44 of that agreement states that

> To assess the degree to which the agreed objectives and outcomes and/or outputs have been achieved, and inform decisions regarding the appropriate treatment following its expiry, an independent review of the Agreement will be scheduled to be completed and published approximately 12 months prior to its expiry.

As at May 2023, no such reviews had been published. The communique for the Joint Steering Committee meeting for May 2022 describes that PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC) presented its findings 'on the second phase of the Joint Review of Remote Housing and Leasing Committee', 'including outcomes from research, stakeholder consultations, options for optimum remote housing model, and implementation actions for a transition to an Aboriginal-controlled community housing sector' (Joint Steering Committee 2022). That communique states that 'Members noted the Joint Review of Remote Housing and Leasing Subcommittee will provide [a] final report to the JSC out of session in June 2022. As at May 2023, Menzies understands that the joint review undertaken by PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC) into remote housing and leasing has not been published, although Joint Steering Committee members approved publication of this report in the March meeting (Joint Steering Committee 2023)

3 Evaluation Methodology

- Menzies' Monitoring and Evaluation project is a process evaluation of Healthy Homes, aiming to provide description of the program as it is being implemented. This has involved producing an Interim report for consideration by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities and the Expert Advisory Group, as well as this Final Report for wider publication.
- An Expert Advisory Group comprised of Aboriginal Housing NT, land councils, and Aboriginal community housing organisations has supported the research design and informed the focus of this program evaluation.
- The description and analysis of subsequent chapters draws on a number of research methods, including document and policy review, interviews, participant observation, and statistical analysis of routine datasets.
- Menzies experienced significant delays accessing NT Government data related to remote housing condition and property maintenance. The delay and the available data has limited this evaluation's capacity to make meaningful determinations about the impact of Healthy Homes on house function.
- Limitations concerning the data that has been collected by the NT Government have led to not pursuing a second project phase, which had been proposed to explore any association between Healthy Homes and improved health outcomes for householders.

3.1 Overview

The methodology used in this monitoring and evaluation project is informed by process, outcome, and developmental approaches to evaluation. This approach is adopted to involve multiple stakeholders in the research, the interpretation of findings, and the translation of findings into improved policy and practice in a complex and perennially changing policy environment.

3.1.1 Evaluation Types

The approach taken by this evaluation has been negotiated by Menzies and the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC), in line with the skillsets of Menzies researchers. There are many approaches to evaluation, distinguished for analytic purposes according to various typologies, though not always consistently by different authors (e.g., impact and outcome evaluations). Evaluation approaches are typically distinguished by the project stage at which the evaluation is conducted (such as during project conceptualisation, implementation, or closure), the content under analysis (processes or outcomes), and the clarity of program purpose and methods and thus the object of evaluation (process or developmental). Practically speaking, real-life program evaluations are rarely as distinctive as academic categorisations in evaluation typologies.

One generic typology divides evaluation into process, outcome, impact, and summative evaluation. Process evaluation (or program monitoring) is used from the beginning of implementation (Linnan and Steckler 2002) to 'measure the activities of the program, program quality and who it is reaching' (Hawe et al. 1990). It examines how well the program is working in relation to its intentions and the experience of key stakeholders. In doing so, process evaluation allows for monitoring of how well a program is working and the early identification of any problems. Process evaluation is sometimes distinguished from developmental evaluation, where the latter characterisation emphasises the assessment of an emergent program while it is being designed or modified, and where inputs, activities, and aims are under development, rather than established and agreed upon at the outset of implementation (Gamble 2008; Better Evaluation n.d.). Developmental evaluation involves repeated cycles of data collection, feedback, reflection, and adaptation (Laycock et al. 2019) and 'The primary focus of [developmental evaluation] is to provide program developers with timely feedback that can be used to adapt and improve their project or program' (AIFS 2022). Also distinguished from process evaluation, outcome evaluation measures the immediate effects of a program, assessed against program objectives, such as the extent to which the program has effected a target population's behaviours. It provides a picture of program benefit and efficacy to help administrators determine whether the program is meeting its objectives. Impact evaluation is similarly concerned with the effects of the program, prioritising assessment of long term effects and the extent to which the program met its overall program goal. It is typically conducted at pre-selected intervals throughout a program's life or at its conclusion, as summative evaluation. Summative evaluation is conducted at program completion and assesses the entire program cycle to determine whether it should be continued and/or implemented elsewhere. It is useful for summarising impact, justifying resources expended, and continued implementation.

The Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Project is most closely aligned with the typical characterisation of process evaluation. Given the dynamic rollout of the Healthy Homes program, including but not limited to the impacts of the Machinery of Government changes and the COVID-19 pandemic, aspects of the approach conform with developmental evaluation, including regular engagement with and feedback to the funder and key industry stakeholders, and a flexible methodology that responds to restricted access to field sites and datasets. However, Menzies researchers are not embedded in the NT Government program team, as a developmental evaluation

would encourage, and feedback is less typically real-time than periodic, via monthly meetings with TFHC and the interim report. The process evaluation approach adopted asks who, what, when, and where questions regarding the implementation of Healthy Homes, in order to understand how the various components of the program are being delivered. In their description of process evaluation, Saunders et al. (2005) write that

> A program's lack of success could be attributed to any number of program-related reasons, including poor program design, poor or incomplete program implementation, and/or failure to reach sufficient numbers of the target audience. Process evaluation looks inside the so-called black box to see what happened in the program and how that could affect program impacts or outcomes (134).

Saunders et al. outline six steps for developing a process-evaluation plan, including: describe the program; describe complete and acceptable delivery of the program; develop a list of potential process-evaluation questions; determine methods for process evaluation; consider program resources and program characteristics and context; and, finalise the process-evaluation plan (Saunders et al. 2005). These steps inform the program description above, the methods selected and outlined in this chapter, and the evaluation itself. Following Hulscher et al., 'attention is paid to features of the target group, the implementers or change agents, the frequency of intervention activities, and features of the information imparted' (2003, 40). This process approach also provides grounding for outcome evaluation, in accordance with outcomes and metrics described in Chapter 4. This Final Report considers Healthy Homes program outputs and outcomes, given there has been sufficient time to integrate Healthy Homes into the NT Government's remote property management, including in relation to feedback provided by the Interim Report and monthly meetings.

3.1.2   Assessment of Methodology

The Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Project was given full approval by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies Human Research Ethics Committee on 14 September 2021 and by the Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee on 20 September 2021. The former process includes assessment by the Aboriginal Ethics Sub-Committee (AESC). It was necessary to seek approval from both committees because the Healthy Homes program is delivered across the Top End and Central Australian regions, respectively the jurisdictions of each committee.

Documentation submitted to the human research ethics committees included a study protocol, participant information sheets for both interviews and participant observation, consent forms, a recruitment letter, a project flyer, and sample questions for both housing and policy professionals and householders. Additional information was submitted to the committees in response to questions relating to a safety protocol for researchers, a COVID-19 safety plan, clarification of methods and contexts of participant observation, and recruitment of householders for interviews. Annual progress reports have been submitted to both committees as required.

Beyond the formal requirements of university ethics, this monitoring and evaluation project has sought to follow other protocols for ethical research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (see BetterEvaluation 2018). In particular, it has been guided by Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT 2013) *Partnership Principles for Working with Aboriginal Organisations and Communities in the Northern Territory.* These principles direct non-Aboriginal organisations in their work with Aboriginal community-controlled peak organisations (including APO NT and Expert Advisory Group member Aboriginal Housing NT) 'towards the essential goal of strengthening and rebuilding an Aboriginal controlled development and service sector in the NT' (APO NT 2013). The APO NT principles encourage non-Aboriginal organisations to: consider their own capacity; recognise existing capacity; research existing options; seek partnerships; [follow an] approach to partnership [guided by priorities of Aboriginal organisations]; recognise, support and promote existing development practice; work together with Aboriginal people to create strong and viable Aboriginal organisations; ensure Aboriginal control, not just consultation; develop a clear exit strategy; ensure robust evaluation and accountability; and, [ensure] cultural competency and appropriate development practice (APO NT 2013).

There is also an expanding literature concerned with evaluation practices for health program research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that informs this study (Harfield et al. 2020; Redman-MacLaren et al. 2021; Lin et al. 2020). For example, Harfield et al. (2020) identify that the lack of consideration paid to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies in primary research is reproduced in critical appraisal tools for guiding evidence-based practice, which 'fail to reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and principles for ethical research, such as reciprocity, responsibility, survival and protection, equality, and respect for the communities involved in the research' (2). This is a concern, given that 'Indigenous peoples are … among the most researched communities in the world, with the bulk of this research conducted by non-Indigenous researchers' (Harfield et al. 2020, 2). As such, Harfield et al. have developed a quality appraisal tool for assessing the quality of health research, 'The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Quality Appraisal Tool (QAT)'. This tool includes 14 questions that assess research in terms of appropriate research questions, community engagement and consultation, research leadership, and so on (see Harfield et al. 2020, Figure 2). This tool has provided a useful guide to this monitoring and evaluation project, even if the primary focus of evaluation is the NT Government's administration of a housing maintenance program, rather than measuring any health impacts of this program for Aboriginal householders. This tool has been useful in terms of reflecting on our approach taken to setting objectives, research design, governance, methods, research dissemination, and knowledge translation.

3.2   Methods

This monitoring and evaluation project has employed a range of methods. Our approach to document review, interviews, participant observation, and data analysis is outlined below.

3.2.1 Document Review

The study is informed by a literature review of major reports related to remote housing in the Northern Territory and Australia. Remote community housing in the NT has not lacked attention in the form of reports and evaluations. This project focused on reports leading up to and following the Northern Territory National Emergency Response ('The Intervention') in 2007. In addition to those described in the previous chapter this includes:

- *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010* (Commonwealth of Australia 2001)

- *Living in the Sunburnt Country. Indigenous Housing: Findings of the Review of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Programme* (Price Waterhouse Coopers for the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2007)

- *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action* (NT Government 2007)

- *From Community Housing to Public Housing in Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Communities: The Policy Context* (Porter 2009)

- *Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program. June 2010 Report to the Legislative Assembly* (Auditor-General for the Northern Territory 2010)

- *Implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in the Northern Territory* (Australian National Audit Office 2012)

- *Post Occupancy Evaluation of Alice Springs Town Camp Housing 2008-2011* (Centre for Appropriate Technology 2012)

- *Remote Housing Reforms in the Northern Territory.* (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2012)

- *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) Review of Progress (2008-2013)* (2013)

- *Report on Repairs and Maintenance of Housing on Town Camps* (NT Public Accounts Committee 2016)

- *Northern Territory Housing Issues Paper and Response to the Housing Strategy Consultation Draft* (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency 2016)

- *Living on the Edge: Northern Territory Town Camps Review* (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu for the NT Department of Housing and Community Development 2017)

- *Remote Housing Review. A Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018)* (Commonwealth of Australia 2017)

In reviewing these reports, specific attention has been paid to the issues of property management, repairs and maintenance, and the participation of Aboriginal community controlled organisations in that work. This review of relevant reports is augmented by a review of relevant literature on the relationship between poor housing and Indigenous health outcomes, and repair and maintenance programs.

The project also considers the key agreements governing the delivery of property management services in the NT, specifically the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory* agreement (2018-2023), as well as agreements that were previously significant, such as the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (2008-2018) and the *National Partnership Remote Housing* (2016-2018).

Close attention is similarly given to the documents directly governing property management in remote housing under the Healthy Homes program. This includes the tender documents for housing maintenance services and tenancy management support services in remote community housing. The project also considers the documents governing current contracts between the NT Government, Healthabitat, and other property management service providers, in relation to the arrangements that previously governed remote housing. Relevant changes between those arrangements are noted.

The document review of relevant reports is largely represented in Chapter 2. Analysis of government tenders and related documents is represented in Chapter 7.

3.2.2   Interviews

The monitoring and evaluation project has conducted interviews with key staff from the NT Government, Healthabitat, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs) contracted to provide housing maintenance and tenancy management support services in remote Aboriginal housing, and other relevant stakeholders. Interviews and informal conversations have also been held with contractors and householders while undertaking fieldwork in town camp and remote community contexts. These interviews have been guided and supplemented by the discussions at the Expert Advisory Group meetings and interviews with EAG members.

Project researchers have purposively sampled to ensure participants come from a range of backgrounds and settings. We have undertaken approximately 25 interviews. Interviews have followed a consent process outlined in the applications to, and approved by, the Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee and the Menzies and NT Department of Health Human Ethics Research Committee. In most cases, interviews have been recorded and transcribed, with transcriptions shared with interviewees to provide the opportunity for any corrections or redactions. In accordance with a grounded theory approach, interview transcripts, notes, and relevant documents have been coded and analysed to identify emergent themes. These thematic categories have directed the project's analysis of Healthy Homes and structure the chapters which follow in this Final Report.

3.2.3   Participant Observation and Field Sites

Interviews have taken place during field trips to different locations receiving repair and maintenance services under the Healthy Homes program, as well as via Zoom in preparation for and following those trips. Taking an ethnographic approach, this project adds lived detail of housing maintenance

work to housing program evaluation literature. It does so by including the perspectives of policy makers, program implementers, and residents of communities in which Housing for Health and other property management approaches have been delivered. The study thus adds ethnographic detail to the successes and failures of major government programs that are otherwise described in general terms in reports or abstracted through performance metrics or statistics on various housing measures, such as crowding. Such successes and failures are not equally distributed across communities and this study considers reasons for specific outcomes in particular contexts.

The project has drawn on ethnographic observations drawn from a range of field sites. At sites where Housing for Health or Maintaining Houses for Better Health projects took place, the Researchers accompanied survey-fix teams as they completed their work in the community, participating as team members wherever their non-technical skills permitted non-disruptive involvement. The location of these field sites was determined in 2021 and 2022 in consultation with the Expert Advisory Group, the NT Government, and Healthabitat.

Working with Healthabitat, Tangentyere Council and Tangentyere Constructions delivered the 'Maintaining Houses for Better Health' project at Alice Springs town camps. Based on the Estimated Project Timeline at the outset of Menzies monitoring and evaluation project, this work was scheduled for the week beginning 6 September 2021. This was subject to delay, due to negotiations related to the housing maintenance services contract, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted the travel of Healthabitat project managers from NSW and WA to the NT. A scaled-down version of this work at Alice Springs town camps took place in the week commencing 22 November 2021, with further Survey-fix 1 work taking place at Alice Springs town camps in April and June 2022. The permission of Menzies researchers to attend this project in November 2021 was withdrawn by Menzies management on health grounds, due to concerns over the cluster of COVID-19 cases that had emerged at Katherine, Robinson River, and Binjari. A Menzies researcher attended Survey-fix 1 works at Alice Springs town camps in April 2022. The same researcher attended a Housing for Health project at Imangara in May 2022.

The delays in awarding housing maintenance and tenancy management support services contracts impacted site selection for fieldwork at communities not receiving Housing for Health projects. However, TFHC obtained additional grant funding to contract housing service providers to undertake CAT inspections and subsequent repairs in town camps at Katherine, Adelaide River, Darwin, and Palmerston. A Menzies researcher attended this process with NT Government and Yilli Rreung Aboriginal Housing Corporation staff at Bagot Community in Darwin in June 2022.

3.2.4   Data Access and Analysis

The initial Menzies project plan anticipated that routine statistical data collected by or reported to the NT Government would be provided to the researchers to describe:

- Housing survey data describing health hardware
- Cyclical and responsive maintenance performed
- Training
- Local Aboriginal employment
- Water stress and water consumption.

The Healthy Homes Program Guidelines specify that communities were selected for Housing for Health projects based on the following factors:

- Rates of infectious disease – such as rheumatic heart disease and fever, which are commonly associated with poor housing conditions and overcrowding.
- Water stress level – on the basis that Housing for Health is effective at reducing water consumption.
- Current repairs and maintenance costs – with priority given to those communities with prolonged high costs.
- Newly leased communities – where the department has recently resumed responsibility for repairs and maintenance.
- Rates of overcrowding.

The selection of remote communities for Housing for Health projects employed the Remote Housing Needs Assessment Model (RHNAM). The RHNAM combines data from the Tenancy Management System (TMS), the Asset Systems Nexus (ASNEX), the NTG Integrated Land Management System (ILIS), and population statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and TMS to target housing investment in remote communities, under the HomeBuild NT and Room to Breathe programs.

Menzies researchers' sought access to data sets related to housing condition and property maintenance from the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities at the commencement of the qualitative researcher's employment in July 2021. Given the explanation of how communities were selected for Housing for Health projects, early requests related to accessing those datasets. Requests made by Menzies researchers are outlined in the Request for Information Excel Spreadsheet used to manage information requests between Menzies and TFHC, and within minutes of monthly meetings where these have been taken. The first formal request for datasets made using the RFI spreadsheet was made on 30 August 2021, subject to the approval of the ethics application then under assessment.

Early delays in accessing data apparently concerned researcher confidentiality requirements related to accessing the NT Government's ASNEX portal. Researchers were able to log in to this portal by December 2021, with greater access granted in February 2022. However, it was quickly evident that reports summarising routine data related to housing maintenance (for example, maintenance expenditure or completed work orders by house, community or contract) could not be generated at the researchers' access level. Discussions took place in monthly meetings regarding the organisation of training for Menzies researchers to use the NT Government's Assets Systems Nexus (ASNEX),

Asset Information System (AIS), and Tenancy Management Systems (TMS). However, this training did not take place and instead TFHC advised that reports would be generated for Menzies researchers through CBIS. On 14 June 2022 Menzies provided a full overview of the types of data that the evaluation would like to access, in order to understand historical housing maintenance work and the work undertaken under the Healthy Homes program. This request sought to determine what data the NT Government does and does not collect related to town camp and remote housing maintenance.

On 24 August 2022, Menzies received a number of CBIS data sets from TFHC, drawn from TFHC's Tenancy Management System (TMS), with updated datasets received 27 September 2022. This data included rates of overcrowding by community, basic features of housing stock (e.g. dwelling size) and dwelling standard, previous five-year expenditure per dwelling, and inspections data. In-process data was also supplied relating to recent Condition Assessment Tool (CAT) inspections undertaken and subsequent fix work at Miali Brumby and Walpiri town camps in Katherine. Analysis of this data was represented in the Interim Report.

By September 2022, Menzies had not received access to data requested for the following topic areas:

- Expenditure under Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts, annual and monthly since award
- Expenditure under specific remote housing maintenance services contracts, annual and monthly since award
- Value and summary of work undertaken as first fix works following CAT inspections, total and by community/contract
- Proportion of repairs work identified during CAT inspections identified as tenant responsibility
- Breakdown of work undertaken following CAT inspections classified as immediate, urgent, routine, total and by community/contract
- Breakdown of housing maintenance works under Healthy Homes housing maintenance services contracts by trade type (i.e. plumbing, electrical, carpentry, pest control, HVAC, building, arboreal, etc.), proportion and cost, total and by community/contract
- Proportion of total housing maintenance and repairs works completed by non-trade-qualified handypersons, total and by community/contract
- Proportion of work specified as 'unscheduled works' under the schedule or rates, total and by community/contract
- Number of replacements of selected hardware items (e.g., stoves, security screen, shower rose, etc.), total and by community/contract
- Total employment hours under Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts, total and by community/contract
- Local Aboriginal employment under remote housing maintenance services contracts, hours and FTE equivalent average, total and by community/contract

In November and December of 2022, Menzies was supplied with a variety of reports from relevant datasets that were sufficient to enlist a quantitative researcher to undertake statistical analysis. This included expenditure reports generated from ASNEX related to the Healthy Homes remote property maintenance services contracts and maintenance works at remote communities under the old model contracts. These reports provided the basis for additional data analysis included in this Final Report in Chapter 7.

3.3   Expert Advisory Group

The Expert Advisory Group was established with representatives of the following organisations:
- Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory
- Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation
- The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation
- Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Central Land Council
- Northern Land Council

Member organisations were selected by invitation, according to their experience in the Aboriginal community housing sector in the Northern Territory and their role in the Joint Steering Committee. Menzies researchers sought to include members representing regions across the NT and with experience in managing remote community and urban housing. Because the monitoring and evaluation project began prior to the award of Healthy Homes contracts, Menzies predicted which organisations were likely to tender for housing maintenance and tenancy management support services contracts.

A number of the Expert Advisory Group members are employed by organisations which have a direct role in the delivery of remote community and town camps housing management, including housing maintenance and tenancy management support services. This applied experience has informed the researchers' understanding of what is involved in service delivery under the Healthy Homes program. Similarly, other Expert Advisory Group members participate in the Joint Steering Committee of the *National Partnership Remote Housing Northern Territory*, providing advice on the wider policy context.

The Expert Advisory Group met collectively in September 2021 following project commencement and in December 2022 following the drafting of the Interim Report. Meetings were held with each Expert Advisory Group member in relation to a draft Final Report, prior to its finalisation. In these meetings and through more regular informal contact, the Expert Advisory Group has advised the researchers on various aspects of project design. This includes the selection of field sites, methods, and interview topics. Regarding the Final Report, particular emphasis was given to ensuring the Executive Summary and Recommendations captured the concerns of Expert Advisory Group members.

4 Evaluation Framework

- The range of agreements, frameworks, and policies governing town camp and remote community housing include an abundance of performance metrics.

- The evaluation framework below develops the objectives specified by the Healthy Homes program in terms of evaluation questions, data sources that can be drawn upon to answer those questions, and existing performance measures.

- Given issues with data collection and access, this project has been unable to comprehensively apply the evaluation framework to the Healthy Homes program. Nonetheless, the framework provides a useful rubric for reflecting on the different components of Healthy Homes and maintenance programs more generally, what has been and could be achieved, and how this might be evaluated.

- Performance measures provide varying levels of insight into housing quality and function – for example, the proportion of houses subject to an annual inspection versus the proportion of houses with a toilet that passes a flush test.

- Regarding future funding agreements, consideration should be given to whether metrics employed in reporting, by governments and service providers alike, capture meaningful information about house condition and function.

This chapter describes the framework developed to evaluate the Healthy Homes program. As outlined above, this program includes multiple major components, delivered by different actors employing different forms of labour. While the program goal is clearly to improve the quality of remote community housing and, in doing so, improve health outcomes for remote Aboriginal householders, it has been necessary to develop an evaluation framework that identifies the range of program objectives. Consideration of discrete program components allows for an evaluation that identifies specific process and outcomes successes and failures, on behalf of ongoing revisions to program design and implementation.

4.1 The Healthy Homes Program Objectives and Implementation Strategy

The Healthy Homes Program Guidelines outline the following objectives and implementation plans for the four components of the Healthy Homes Program: Housing for Health; Remote Property and Tenancy Management; Capacity Building and Community Education; and, Monitoring and Evaluation. These Program Guidelines objectives and implementation plans are reproduced here as the remainder of section 4.1. They provide the basis for the evaluation framework developed by Menzies' monitoring and evaluation project, which follows.

4.1.1 Housing for Health

The objective of Housing for Health is to assess, repair or replace health hardware so that houses are safe and the occupants have the ability to carry out HLPs. The benefits of the Housing for Health model include:

- a reduction in infectious disease rates
- a reduction in long term chronic disease
- opportunities for health promotion and community education around HLPs
- increased community control of housing services and local employment.

The department will work with Healthabitat to deliver Housing for Health in selected communities until 30 June 2027. Communities (approximately three per year) will be selected based on factors including rates of infectious disease, water stress level, current repairs and maintenance costs, new leases, and rates of overcrowding. (Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, 3-4)

4.1.2 Property and Tenancy Management

The objectives of PTM services under the NPRH NT are to:

- maximise the number of suitable houses available to tenants in remote Aboriginal communities and selected town camps
- improve and maintain the standard of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities
- maintain the amenity of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities as per the *Residential Tenancies Act*
- provide housing services to tenants in remote Aboriginal communities to a level equivalent to that received by public housing tenants elsewhere in the Northern Territory
- increase the number of households in remote Aboriginal communities able to maintain sustainable tenancies
- engage and empower locally based Aboriginal business enterprises in delivering services in remote Aboriginal communities where available.

The department is currently reviewing PTM contracting arrangements, service standards and service models, with a view to introduce new arrangements by July 2021. As part of this process, the department will seek to improve environmental health and public health outcomes for tenants by integrating the HLPs across all PTM services, including the following key services:

- tenancy management services
- housing maintenance coordination services
- panel contracts, for the provision of trade qualified repairs and maintenance.

Changes will include:

- the revision of service models to prioritise HLPs
- the development of materials to support service providers and departmental staff, including housing inspection checklists
- the revision of contracts to include HLPs performance measures
- the delivery of training for service providers and departmental staff to implement new PTM approaches
- the collection of data and information to inform compliance, service planning and evaluation activities. (Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, 4)

4.1.3   Capacity Building and Community Education

The objectives of capacity building and community education activities are to:

- increase the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled organisations to deliver HLP informed interventions
- increase community and residents' knowledge of HLPs and the connection between housing, hygiene and health outcomes
- increase regional departmental staff knowledge of HLPs and associated new service models and contracts.

Implementation of training and other capacity building activities may include:

- training by Healthabitat to establish community champions for the Housing for Health model
- community education and behaviour change programs about housing and hygiene developed in partnership with Aboriginal health services and supported by tenancy management services
- regional workshops for departmental staff to assist in the delivery and monitoring of new PTM arrangements
- the development of communication materials and online resources outlining approaches to supporting HLPs for service providers, staff and residents.

Training will be targeted to those communities where Housing for Health has been delivered and where new, or smaller, Aboriginal community controlled organisations have been engaged to deliver PTM services. (Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, 5)

4.1.4   Monitoring and Evaluation

The objectives of monitoring and evaluation activities are to:

- measure the effectiveness of Housing for Health, the revised PTM model and community education programs in improving health and social outcomes
- assess whether the new PTM model is being delivered as per new program requirements and any barriers associated with implementation
- assess department staff understanding of new PTM arrangements and whether departmental systems are supporting implementation
- ensure compliance against performance measures outlined under the NPRH NT's Remote Property and Tenancy Management Framework and Housing for Health contract
- provide practical recommendations relating to changes in service arrangements and service delivery models.

The department will monitor PTM service provider performance against measures agreed under the NPRH NT's Remote Property and Tenancy Management Framework. Performance measures relevant to the Healthy Homes program include:

- percentage of properties receiving annual property inspections
- percentage of properties in communities receiving planned maintenance
- percentage of reported issues that were resolved by PTM service providers.

The department will also oversee the delivery of the Housing for Health program, including key deliverables and the collection of housing and community data for the purposes of service planning and asset management. (Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, 5)

4.2   Evaluation Framework

The contract established in early 2021 between the NT Government and Menzies School of Health Research for the monitoring and evaluation project included a number of process and outcome research 'questions', included as Appendix D – Draft Program Logic for the Healthy Homes Program. These list the objects that Menzies researchers should describe and the outcomes they should assess. These questions along with the Healthy Homes Program Guidelines, provided the basis for the evaluation framework developed by Menzies researchers.

The evaluation framework for this project is included in full below. It is divided into evaluation objectives, evaluation questions, data sources, and performance measures. The five evaluation objectives are taken directly from the objectives specified under Monitoring and Evaluation in the NTG's Healthy Homes Program Guidelines (reproduced above). Evaluation questions fragment those objectives to focus on identified program components, using specified data sources and in relation to performance measures drawn from the *National Partnership Remote Housing Northern Territory,* the

Property and Tenancy Management Framework (2020), the *Reporting Framework* (2020), the *Procurement Framework* (2019), the *Remote Housing Maintenance Service Handbook*, and the tenders for remote housing maintenance services.

This evaluation framework is designed to be used as a guide for analysis rather than a set of questions that will be answered discretely or comprehensively. This is necessary in part because Menzies researchers experienced prolonged issues with clarifying what housing program data exists and then obtaining access to relevant data sets, undermining our capacity to respond comprehensively to each question. Nonetheless, it has provided an important point of reference in communications with TFHC regarding what data is available to demonstrate achievement against specific performance measures. Where possible, specific performance indicators are listed and referenced in the evaluation framework table. However, the table also depends on long extracts from the NPRHNT agreement and NT Government documents listed above, which include extensive lists of relevant standards that function as performance measures. These are cited in the Evaluation Framework table and included as Appendix E – Evaluation Framework Performance Measures from NTG Policy.

Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation – Evaluation Framework Phase 1			
Evaluation Objectives	**Evaluation Questions**	**Data Sources**	**Performance Measures**
1. To measure the effectiveness of Housing for Health, the revised PTM model, and community education programs in improving health and social outcomes	1.1 What was the condition of housing at remote Aboriginal communities and town camps prior to a Housing for Health or Maintaining Houses for Better Health project?	- Housing for Health survey data - NTG data sets related to R&M, crowding	- *PTM Framework*, Objectives (pp.5-6, see Appendix E) - R&M data (including any of total expenditure; expenditure per house; total expenditure by jobs completed; total work order requests; proportion of work orders completed; proportion of jobs responsive vs. planned; proportion of jobs defined immediate, urgent, routine and change over time; proportion of total spending on travel) - Rates of overcrowding - HLP statistics
	1.2 What is the condition of housing at remote Aboriginal communities and town camps following a Housing for Health or Maintaining Houses for Better Health project?	- Housing for Health survey data - NTG data sets related to R&M, crowding - Interviews (Healthabitat, NTG, householders) - Ethnographic observation (HFH/MHBH)	- R&M data in year following HFH - HLP statistics - Rates of overcrowding
	1.3 What was the condition of housing at remote Aboriginal communities and town camps prior to the introduction of	- Document analysis (historical contracts) - NTG data sets related to R&M, crowding	- R&M data historical - Rates of overcrowding

	the Healthy Homes property management model?	- Interviews (service providers, NTG, householders)	
	1.4 What is the condition of housing at remote Aboriginal communities and town camps following the introduction of a revised housing maintenance model and community education (Living Strong) program?	- Document analysis (tenders) - NTG data sets related to R&M, crowding - Interviews (service providers, NTG, householders) - Ethnographic observation (housing maintenance)	- R&M data in year following Healthy Homes housing maintenance and tenancy management support services contracts - Rates of overcrowding
	1.5 Have the HFH projects and/or the new PTM model increased the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled organisations and ABEs to deliver HLP informed interventions?	- Document analysis (tenders, service provider documents) - Interviews (Aboriginal community controlled service providers and ABEs) - Ethnographic observation (service provider training)	- Funding and budget data
	1.6 Have the HFH projects and/or the new PTM model increased Aboriginal community control of housing services?	- Historical award of tenders - Award of Healthy Homes housing maintenance and tenancy support services contracts - Interviews (service providers, EAG)	- Experience of Aboriginal community controlled housing organisations - Historical data comparison of PTM service providers by community vs. Healthy Homes - 'Percentage of PTM contracts awarded to ABEs, target 50%' (*PTM Framework*, p.12; *Reporting Framework*, 'Appendix A', see Appendix E)
	1.7 Have the HFH projects and new PTM model increased local	- Healthabitat data - NTG data sets related to employment	- Aboriginal employment in HFH projects, during and after HFH projects

	employment in housing related services?		- *NPRH NT* A37. Annual minimum Aboriginal full-time equivalent annual rate of Aboriginal employment of 40 per cent of the workforce involved in capital works and property and tenancy management in 2019-2020, followed by increases of 2 per cent per annum for the remainder of the agreement. - 'Percentage of Aboriginal people employed to deliver PTM services, target 40%' (*PTM Framework*, p.12; *Reporting Framework*, 'Appendix A', see Appendix E)
2. To assess whether the new PTM model is being delivered as per new program requirements and any barriers associated with implementation	2.1 What are the program requirements of the new property management model?	- Document analysis (tenders; *Remote Housing Maintenance Service Handbook* [*RHMSH*], 4.8 Reporting and Performance, p.22)	- *Reporting Framework*, Appendix A, property specific measures (below) - Performance reports must be produced by Superintendent for Contractor at conclusion of each 12 calendar month period (*RHMSH*)
	2.2 Has the new PTM model been delivered according to program requirements?	- Document analysis (tenders) - Maintenance schedules - Job completion data sets (service providers) - Expenditure reports - Employment reports - Interviews (NTG, service providers) - Ethnographic observation	- *PTM Framework*, Monitoring and Evaluation, focus areas (p.11, see Appendix E): - *RHMSH* Scope of Work and Specifications (p.10, see Appendix E) - Request for Tender, Description of Works (see Appendix E) - Contractor to provide monthly works statement to the Superintendent (*RMHSH*, p.22)

			- Contractor to provide superintendent a Monthly Employment Statement (*RMHSH*, p.22) - *RHMSH*, Key Performance Indicators (pp.22-23, see Appendix E) - *Residential Tenancies Act* (Division 47-49 – habitable, safe, clean, secure) - *Procurement Framework* (p.11, see Appendix E)
	2.3 What are the barriers and enablers to the effective implementation of the new property management model?	- Interviews (NTG, service providers) - Ethnographic observation (NTG, service provider housing maintenance)	
	2.4 Has the new PTM model increased the number of suitable houses available to tenants in remote Aboriginal communities and selected town camps?	- NTG data sets on available housing - Home Build and Room to Breathe data	- Housing available at beginning and through program, by community - Percentage of properties receiving annual property inspections (*Reporting Framework*, Appendix A) - Vacancy rates and average vacancy period
	2.5 Has data been collected and stored to effectively inform compliance, service planning and evaluation activities?	- Interviews (NTG) - Ethnographic observation (NTG) - Document analysis (expenditure and employment reports by service providers) - Document analysis (condition assessment tool [CAT]) - JSC Communique	

3. To assess department staff understanding of new PTM arrangements and whether departmental systems are supporting implementation	3.1 Do department staff have adequate understanding of the new PTM arrangements?	- Document analysis (contracts) - Document analysis (*PTM Framework*; *Reporting Framework*; CAT) - Interviews (NTG, service providers)	
	3.2 Are departmental systems supporting the implementation of new PTM arrangements?	- Interviews (NTG, service providers) - Ethnographic observation (ASNEX/TMS)	- Experiences of NTG staff - Experience of ABE and ACCHO staff
	3.3 What training has been undertaken for department staff to implement new PTM approaches?	- Document analysis (training materials) - Interviews (NTG, Healthabitat)	- Number of people trained - Experiences of NTG staff involved in training - Clarity of training objectives and efficacy of implementation
	3.4 What training has been undertaken for service providers to implement new PTM approaches?	- Document analysis (training materials) - Interviews (NTG, service providers) - Ethnographic observation (NTG, service provider training)	- Number of people trained - Experiences of service provider staff - Clarity of training objectives and efficacy of implementation
4. To ensure compliance against performance measures outlined under the NPRH NT's Remote Property and Tenancy Management Framework and Housing for Health contract	4.1 Has the NT Government met its obligations as outlined in the National Partnership Remote Housing Northern Territory?	- Document analysis (*NPRH NT* reporting) - Interviews (NTG)	- *NPRH NT* Clause 26, NTG will report the minimum required throughout the operation of the Agreement (p.7, see Appendix E) - *NPRH NT* Table A4. Property and Tenancy Management Measures (pp.18-20, see Appendix E) - *NPRH NT* Joint Steering Committee Terms of Reference 15 (see Appendix E)
	4.2 Has the NT Government met its obligations as outlined under the NT's	- Document analysis (*PTM Framework*; *Reporting Framework*) - JSC Communique	- *Reporting Framework*, 'Appendix A', Property and Tenancy Management (pp.18-19, see Appendix X)

	Property and Tenancy Management Framework and *Reporting Framework*?		- *Reporting Framework*, 'Appendix B' (pp.26-28, see Appendix E) - '% of properties receiving annual property inspections, target 70%' (*PTM Framework*, p.12) - '% of Aboriginal people employed to deliver PTM services, target 40%' (*PTM Framework*, p.12) - '% of PTM contracts awarded to ABEs, target 50%' (*PTM Framework*, p.12) - Overcrowding # of total homes, occupied, tenants, overcrowded, proportion overcrowded, occupants per bedroom, change in number of bedrooms) (*Reporting Framework* (p.10)
	4.2 Have service providers met their obligations under the *Property and Tenancy Management Framework*?	- Document analysis (tenders) - Expenditure and employment reports - Interviews (NTG, service providers)	- *PTM Framework*, Monitoring and Evaluation, focus areas (p.11, see Appendix E): - *RHMSH*, Scope of Work and Specifications (p.10, see Appendix E)
	4.2 Have the NT Government and Healthabitat met their respective obligations under the contract to deliver Housing for Health projects?	- Document analysis (contract) - Interviews (Healthabitat)	
5. To provide practical recommendations relating to changes in service arrangements and service delivery models	5.1 How many HFH and MHBH projects have been scheduled for delivery by 30 June 2023 and how many have been delivered? What has been the	- Healthabitat and NTG data sets - Budget data	

	estimated and actual cost and outputs of those projects?		
	5.2 How and to what extent have Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) been incorporated into the new property maintenance model?	- Document analysis (tenders; CAT) - Interviews (service providers, Expert Advisory Group) - Ethnographic observation (housing maintenance)	
	5.3 What materials have been developed to support service providers and departmental staff implement the new property maintenance model?	- Document analysis (community education materials) - Interviews (NTG, service providers)	
	5.4 What is not captured by existing performance measures or processes for data collection and management?	- Document analysis (NPRH NT, PTM Framework [objectives and outcomes, below], Reporting Framework [Appendices A and B] - Ethnographic observation (ASNEX/TMS)	

5 Housing for Health

- Healthabitat's Housing for Health (HFH) methodology provides a health and safety audit of housing in communities where HFH projects take place.
- The HFH survey identifies work that should be completed to improve health hardware so that houses are safe and householders' can undertake Healthy Living Practices.
- Participation in HFH projects develops householders' understanding of health hardware function; of reasonable standards for house safety, habitability, and security; and of the repair and maintenance obligations of landlords.
- COVID-19 and related border closures impacted the availability of project managers and delayed the delivery of HFH projects under Healthy Homes in 2021.
- Three HFH and one Maintaining Houses for Better Health (MHBH) projects have been completed as part of Healthy Homes. Three HFH projects are underway.
- There is potential for further consolidation of the HFH principles and approach into core housing business, including through the participation of TFHC, DIPL, and Department of Health staff in HFH survey-fix work.

5.1   The NT Government and Healthabitat Contract

Healthabitat has undertaken Housing for Health projects in the NT across the past three decades, most notably under the Commonwealth Government's former Fixing Houses for Better Health program. The inclusion of Housing for Health projects within the Healthy Homes program followed an approach by William Tilmouth, former Chair of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation, to Healthabitat directors Dr Paul Torzillo and Stephan Rainow. Tilmouth proposed that further HFH projects be undertaken in the NT and Torzillo and fellow director David Donald in turn approached relevant government staff, where the proposal was well received. This led to funding the pilot HFH project at Jilkminggan, outlined below.

Healthabitat has been contracted by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities to deliver Housing for Health (HFH) projects through a select tender process – N20-0036 'All Centres – Supply of the Healthy Homes Preventative Maintenance Program for a Period of 24 Months'. While delivering Housing for Health projects, the Request for Tender states that 'The successful contractor will train the Department's clients to enhance approaches to housing repairs and maintenance in selected communities, integrating Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) across remote property and tenancy management and the implementation of capacity building and community education activities, support[ed] by monitoring and evaluation' (2020, 8). It is not definitive whether this involves a role for Healthabitat in training either of NT Government staff or contracted housing maintenance services provider staff, and funding has not been allocated for this purpose. Healthabitat was originally contracted by the NTG to deliver HFH projects to the value of approximately $2m per annum until 9 March 2023. Plans to continue this arrangement until 30 June 2027 were evident in a departmental memorandum and within a schedule of projects lasting until that date.

The proposed sites for HFH projects were listed in the Request for Tender as follows (Figure 6):

Proposed Financial Year	Proposed Priority List	Location	Region	Number of Premises	Estimated Project Delivery Time
2020/2021	1A	Milingimbi	East Arnhem	58	12 months
2020/2021	1B	Alice Springs Town Camps	Central	270	12 months
2020/2021	2	Canteen Creek	Barkly	27	9 months
2020/2021	3	Wutunugurra (Epenarra)	Barkly	17	9 months
2020/2021	4	Imangara (Murray Downs)	Barkly	15	9 months
2020/2021	5	Haasts Bluff	Central	16	9 months
2021/2022	6	Daguragu	Big Rivers	42	12 months
2021/2022	7	Ampilatwatja	Barkly	44	12 months
2021/2022	8	Kalkarindji	Big Rivers	51	12 months

Figure 6. Proposed HFH projects under Healthy Homes. NT Government

The remote model flow chart (Figure 7) provides an overview of the contract relationship between TFHC and Healthabitat. The 'Milestones and Hold Points' table included as Appendix F – Healthabitat and TFHC Housing for Health Milestones and Hold Points provides a detailed overview of Healthabitat's reporting requirements to TFHC, which includes the timeframe for delivery of certain project documents to TFHC, and also provides a sense of the delivery stages of a HFH project. Healthabitat typically hold monthly meetings with TFHC to report on the progress of specific projects. At various times, Healthabitat has also held regular meetings with other NT Government staff, such as regional TFHC and DIPL staff, in relation to projects happening in the Big Rivers, Barkly, and Central Australian regions. Regional TFHC staff have supported Healthabitat in contacting members of

remote community Housing Reference Groups (HRGs) on behalf of preliminary proposals for HFH projects in particular communities.

Although Healthabitat is contracted by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) to deliver HFH projects, it is often engaging with companies contracted by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) to deliver remote property maintenance services. Where those companies become involved in a HFH project, they are likely to be engaging with all of Healthabitat, DIPL, and TFHC regarding housing maintenance works. In particular, where head contractors subcontract particular trade works, there is potential for a lack of clarity over specific contract terms, for example, whether DIPL's schedule of rates should apply to HFH trade works. The machinery of government changes outlined in Chapter 2 have undermined communication between DIPL and TFHC staff involved in housing management. The Healthy Homes working group (including TFHC, DIPL, the Department of Health, Healthabitat, and Menzies) was not established as planned, but this or some other group involving the two agencies may have improved inter-departmental communication and feedback from relevant parties to reduce issues for contractors.
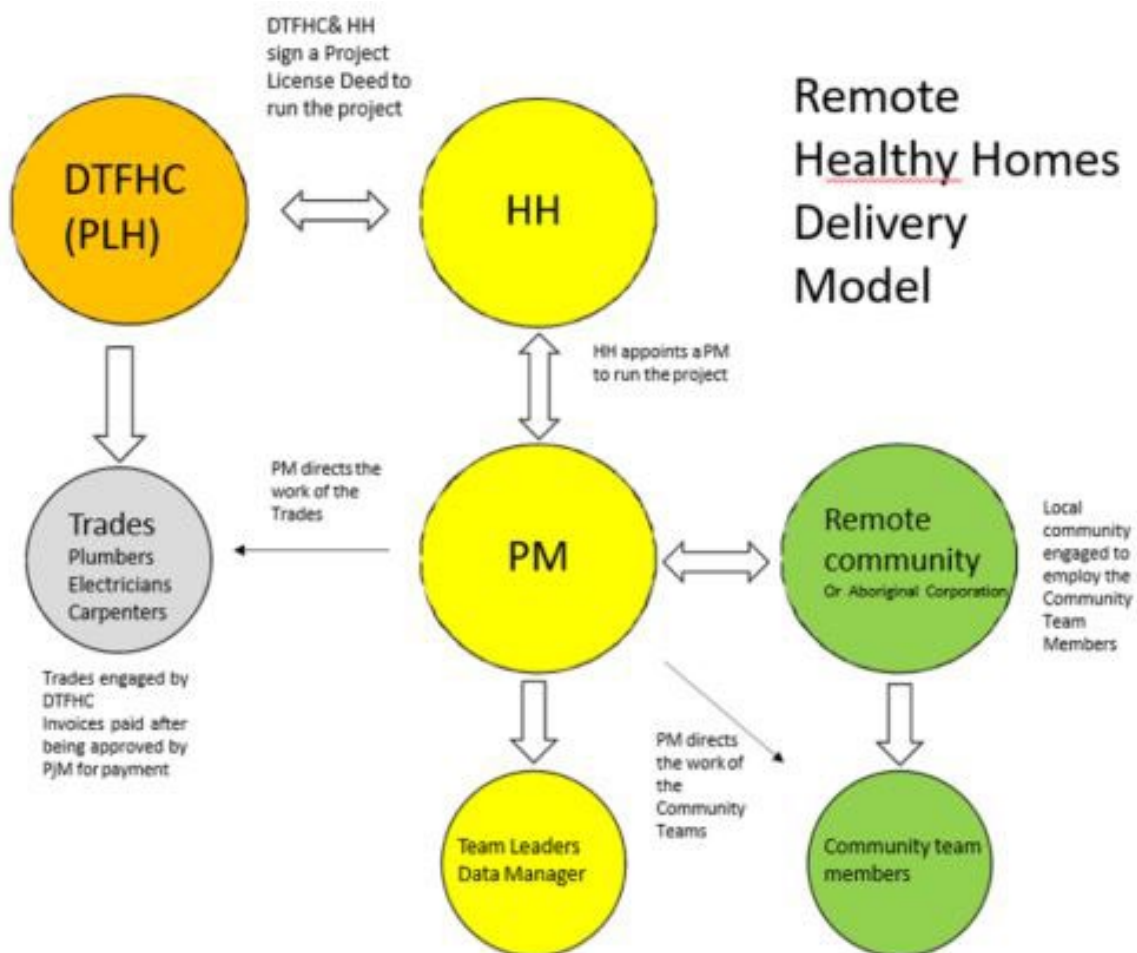
Figure 7. Healthy Homes delivery model flow chart. Image. NT Government

Under TFHC and Healthabitat's contract, the project manager of individual Housing for Health projects is responsible for facilitating community engagement start-up meetings, developing a stakeholder communication register, reviewing trade panel contractor details, ensuring that panel contractors deliver services as required, providing contract performance reports for nominated panel contractors, providing a tax invoice register, managing defects liabilities, and various forms of monthly reporting (WH&S and risk management; non-conformance register; stakeholder communications register; tax invoice certification register; budget and forward planning; work opportunities; progress report of project milestones and fix work updates). TFHC is supposed to assess the performance of Healthabitat project managers according to the following key performance indicators:

- Facilitation of required meetings, stakeholder communications, and monthly meeting management
- Milestones and deliverables [have] been met
- Number of panel tax invoices approved for payment on register survey fix 1 and 2 as per trade flow chart
- Number of Non-Conformances during survey fix 1 and 2
- Successful delivery of the community project. (Request for Tender 2020, 15)

5.2 Healthy Living Practices and the Housing for Health Methodology

Functional health hardware ensures householder safety and supports residents to enact the Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) outlined in Chapter 2. The licenced Housing for Health methodology involves a 'survey-fix' of all houses in a community subject to a Housing for Health project. Historically, and in addition to the major Commonwealth Government-funded Fixing Houses for Better Health program, Healthabitat has typically been commissioned following an invitation from a community organisation, such as an Aboriginal community housing provider or Aboriginal council. Under Healthy Homes, the Remote Housing Needs Assessment Model was used to prioritise remote NT communities for Housing for Health projects. Healthabitat is contracted to set-up projects in consultation with those communities. The seven stages of a Housing for Health project are as follows:

Stage 1 – Setting up the project: project planning

Stage 2 – Community selection, feasibility and budget preparation

Stage 3 – Preparing to implement survey-fix 1

Stage 4 – Survey-fix 1: Starting assessment and fix work on day one of any project

Stage 5 – All fix work: fixing the housing continues until all the money runs out

Stage 6 – Survey-fix 2: Checking fix work was done correctly and re-testing the function of each house

Stage 7 – Reporting back: giving the results back to all those involved in the process. (Healthabitat 2022)

Following an invitation from the community, a project begins with a feasibility study, budget preparation and further community consultation. A project licence agreement (PLA) is established for

the community project and the project manager will develop a masterlist including street identification of properties included in the project. At 'survey-fix 1', Housing for Health team leaders assess houses with survey teams comprised predominantly of local community members employed on the project following preliminary safety, testing, and fix training. These teams make minor repairs as they go according to the principle of 'no survey without service'. One HFH project manager describes the unique features of the methodology as

> (1) you have community involvement; (2) you have a trade availability; and (3) you have access to the properties through those. So it's all happening at the one time… the survey-fix methodology is the strength of the project. It, without a doubt, builds a bridge of goodwill to the community very quickly like nothing else I've seen.

The support of the community and the involvement of community members in survey-fix work is fundamental to project success. One team leader considers that

> the value of working with communities and engaging people on the ground, is the strongest part of the process – having that local knowledge, engaging the people that know best about their place. They're the experts about their houses and their community.

During the survey-fix work, the functionality of approximately 250 household items is assessed, with the results entered into an 'in-field' database. One project manager states that

> The fundamental role of the survey is to fix things. It's a tool for identifying and fixing things. We fix taps. That's what the project does. It doesn't make policy or design or big picture stuff… But if you get the data right, then it can be utilised in so many ways. But first and foremost, we're there to find things and fix them… Don't wait for the tenant to call, just go and get the community involved.

This process generates work orders for licensed tradespeople, differentiated in terms of urgency, who trail the survey-fix teams through those same houses in the days and weeks following. This stage is followed by capital upgrades, including significant plumbing or electrical work and the installation of appliances, which can take between six and 12 months depending on the project size. Data collected during survey-fix 1 is automatically combined to classify individual house function as low, medium or high functioning, with implications for project budgets. That is, while a project budget projection is based on an estimate of average house function, the classification of housing following the survey-fix work determines available funds, with higher functioning housing garnering less project funding.
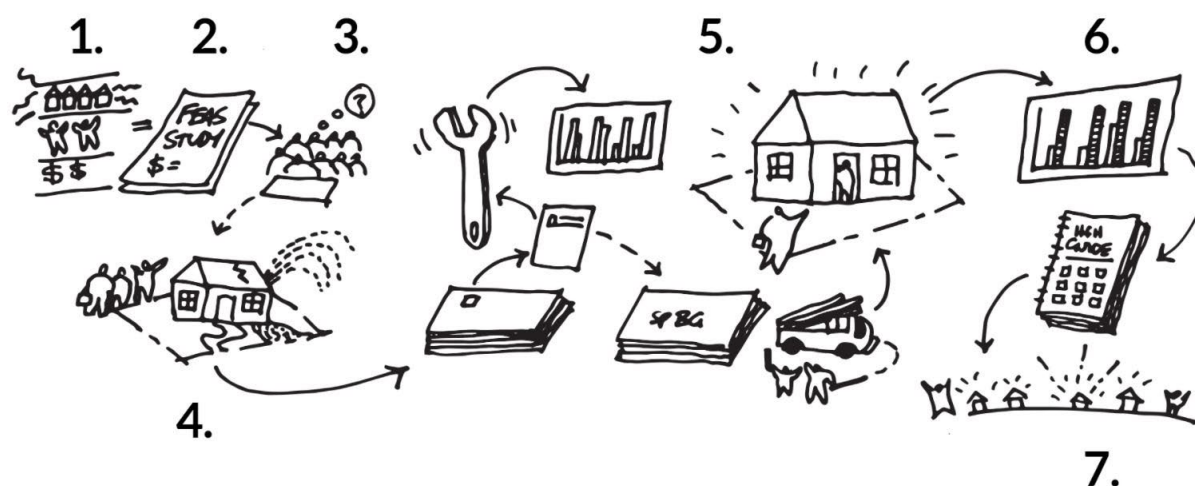
Figure 8. Healthabitat's Housing for Health seven stage methodology. Image. Paul Pholeros

A second survey-fix occurs between six and 12 months after survey-fix 1, and following capital upgrades, to retest the function of the house and to determine its relative function at the conclusion of the Housing for Health project. This is followed by reporting to the community the results of the project and the development of a detailed report outlining the works completed and their costs, the reasons fix work was required, and house function results. This Housing for Health methodology is represented in Figure 8. The application of the HFH survey, and its use at approximately 10,000 houses across Australia over a long period, provides a reliable assessment of house function. As one team leader notes, 'There's this robustness to the data. And a consistency across every community where these surveys are collected. And that data can be compared to this real baseline knowledge of how stuff is performing elsewhere.'

5.3   Project Schedule Revisions

As outlined above, Housing for Health project communities are recommended by the NT Government in consultation with Healthabitat according to rates of infectious disease (rheumatic heart disease and acute rheumatic fever); water stress level; current repairs and maintenance costs; rates of overcrowding; whether they are subject to new leases; and whether Homebuild and Room to Breathe works have been supplied or are planned for that location. These projects are outlined in the Housing for Health Estimated Project Timeline. The schedule for HFH projects has been significantly revised due to the COVID-19 pandemic, border closures, and the associated difficulty throughout 2021 of Healthabitat project managers entering the Northern Territory from other Australian states and territories. As one HFH project manager notes, providing a justification for TFHC to fund Healthabitat to train NT-based project managers and team leaders, 'You really need local capacity, I think, to run these projects in a kind of long-term, more sustainable way.' Other individual community circumstances have required the relocation of HFH projects, for example from Daguragu and Kalkarindji to Bulla and Amanbidji, and Binjari. By December 2021, the timeline had already been revised to version 9.

5.4 Pilot Housing for Health Project

The award to Healthabitat of the tender for the Housing for Health projects followed a pilot project undertaken at Jilkminggan, a remote community in the Big Rivers region, to assess the condition of 33 premises. Survey-fix 1 commenced in September 2019 and survey-fix 2 commenced in November 2020. Based on the survey data, 11 houses were characterised as 'low function', 14 as 'medium function', and 8 as 'high function'. Thirteen Aboriginal staff and five non-Indigenous staff were employed on the project. The survey team fixed 126 items and the total expenditure of the project was $254,846, equivalent to $7,723 per house.

As it does for all Housing for Health projects, Healthabitat produced a final report detailing the condition of housing subject to the project. The graph reproduced below (Figure 9) represents the improvement in the capacity of housing to facilitate healthy living practices prior to survey-fix 1 and following survey-fix 2. It determined the reasons for required repairs as faulty construction or fix work (21 per cent), inadequate routine maintenance (66 per cent), and tenant damage (13 per cent).
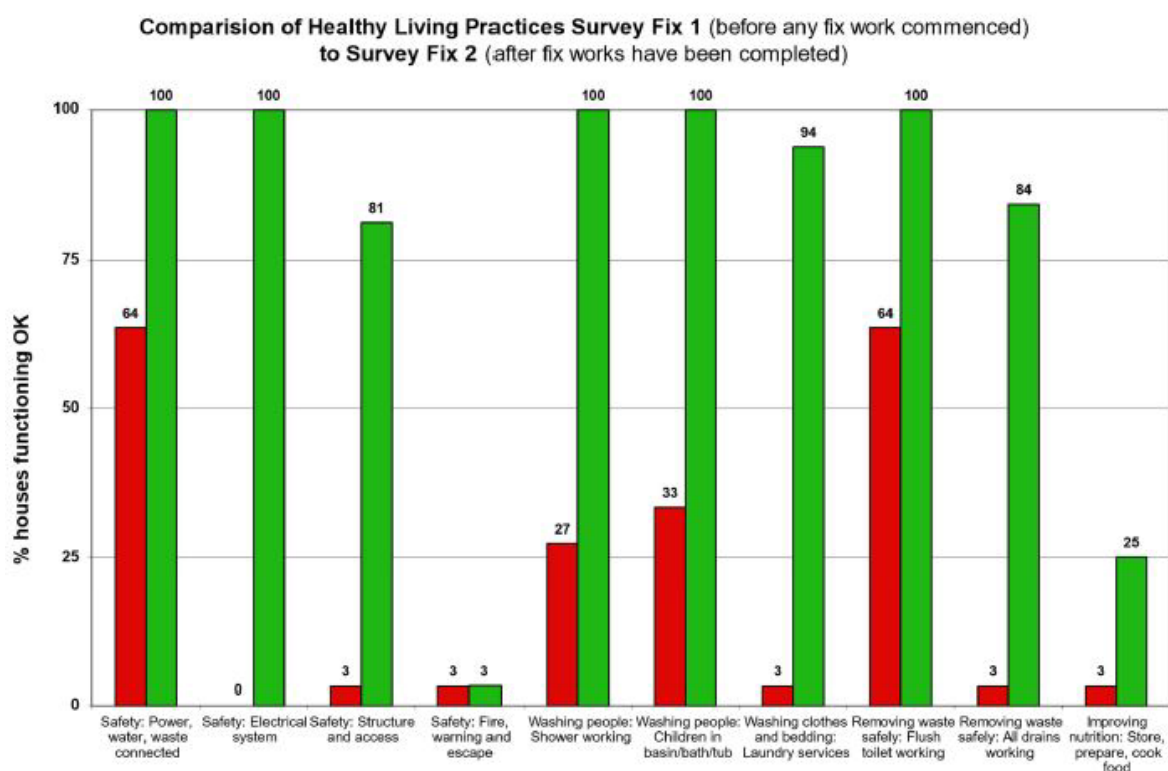
Figure 9. Improvements in HLPs following a Housing for Health project at Jilkminggan. Image. Healthabitat

5.5   Project Delivery

Under the existing Healthy Homes contract, Healthabitat has commenced Housing for Health projects at the following locations in the Northern Territory.[11]

- Alice Springs Town Camps (Maintaining Houses for Better Health)
- Owairtilla (Canteen Creek)
- Wutunugurra (Epenarra)
- Imangara (Murray Downs)
- Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff)
- Ampilatwatja
- Bulla and Amanbidji
- Binjari

At most of these communities, survey-fix 1 was completed in the period March-July 2022, with survey-fix 2 scheduled for late 2022 and early 2023. Trades works generated by survey-Fix 1 have followed. In July 2022, Healthabitat were advised by TFHC that projects commenced and in community consultation and planning stages prior to survey-fix 1 at Binjari, Bulla and Amanbidji, and Ampilatwatja should be deferred at least until late in the 2022-2023 financial year. TFHC has $1.98m per annum allocated to fund HFH projects and there was a concern that, given delays in project commencement related to COVID-19 and border closures, this would be exhausted by the cost of trade works and survey-fix 2 work to be completed related to projects already underway (i.e., at Alice Springs town camps, Owairtilla, Wutunugurra, Imangara, and Ikuntji). SF1 work may proceed for the remaining projects late in the 2022-2023 financial year, with the intention that trade works generated in those projects will be mostly invoiced in the 2023-2024 financial year.

A Menzies researcher attended projects undertaken by Healthabitat at Alice Springs Town Camps and Imangara, for one week in April and May 2022 respectively. This attendance involved participation as a team member in the survey-fix 1 work of both projects, in addition to formal and informal interviews with Healthabitat staff, local team members, and subcontracted service providers.

These sites were chosen to contrast project delivery at small and large communities, in very remote and peri-urban locations. The Housing for Health project at Imangara can also be contrasted with the 'Maintaining Houses for Better Health' (MHBH) project at Alice Springs Town Camps. The latter MHBH project employs the same approach to community consultation and the same Housing for Health survey-fix methodology. It is distinguished by the lower budget provided for fix work per house, justified by the proximity to a regional urban setting and on the grounds that MHBH (in the form of the

---

[11] Healthabitat has also undertaken a HFH project at Aputula (Finke) however that project was funded by The Fred Hollows Foundation rather than the NT Government.

HFH survey-fix) is integrated into the business as usual of the housing maintenance services provider, Tangentyere Constructions, with such work intended to be undertaken on an annual basis.

5.5.1   Housing for Health at Imangara

Imangara is in the Barkly region on a pastoral lease held by Murray Downs Station. It is located about 200 kilometres south of Tennant Creek, about 54 kilometres drive east of the Stuart Highway via Ali Curung Rd. According to 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data the total population at imangara is 60 people, with a median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons of 18 years (compared to the NT median age of 33 years), and a median total personal weekly income of $407 (compared to the NT median personal weekly income of $936) (ABS 2022a). TFHC recognises 15 remote public housing dwellings in the community, with all occupied at July 2022. This includes 14 three-bedroom houses and one four-bedroom house, with the median rent paid by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons $73 weekly (ABS 2022a). At July 2022, 46.7 per cent of dwellings were overcrowded, with 64 registered tenants living in 46 bedrooms at a bedroom occupancy rate of 1.39 persons. Imangara has received no refurbishment works under Room to Breathe and there are two houses under procurement under the HomeBuild program, but none have been completed. All properties are categorised as either refurbished (n=8) or new (n=7) by the NT Government, with a previous 5 year expenditure of $29,948 per house.

Figure 10. Imangara survey-fix 1 training. Image. Liam Grealy

Consultation for the HFH project at Imangara began in late March 2022 and an initial community meeting with the Housing Reference Group took place on 5 April 2022, followed by a community meeting on 20 April 2022. A subsequent third visit to community by the project manager, one week prior to survey-fix 1, involved door-to-door communication with householders about the upcoming

survey while attaching project reference stickers to house meter boxes for identification purposes. A HFH team leader describes how such repeat visits establish accountability for the project:

> The project manager will be into each house in a community at least four or five times. A team will be in there at least two times. And I think that that's really important because it's that in-built accountability. It's like, what have we missed? How is the work being done and checked? Is it being done well or not? And getting someone back and checking it again. And I think that is often what is missing from a lot of processes – that in-built accountability and checking of work.

A feasibility report was completed on 5 April 2022 which identified that there were no existing reports on environmental health conditions and no current housing assessments available for Imangara. The Housing Reference Group and community meeting identified faulty power points, faulty switches, poor water pressure, and problems with septic tanks as common housing issues. Other stakeholders involved in project preparations included TFHC regional staff, Barkly Regional Council, and Murray Downs Station. Posters advertising the project and aiming to recruit community members were evident at the shop at Murray Downs Station, which is used by Imangara householders (Figure 11).
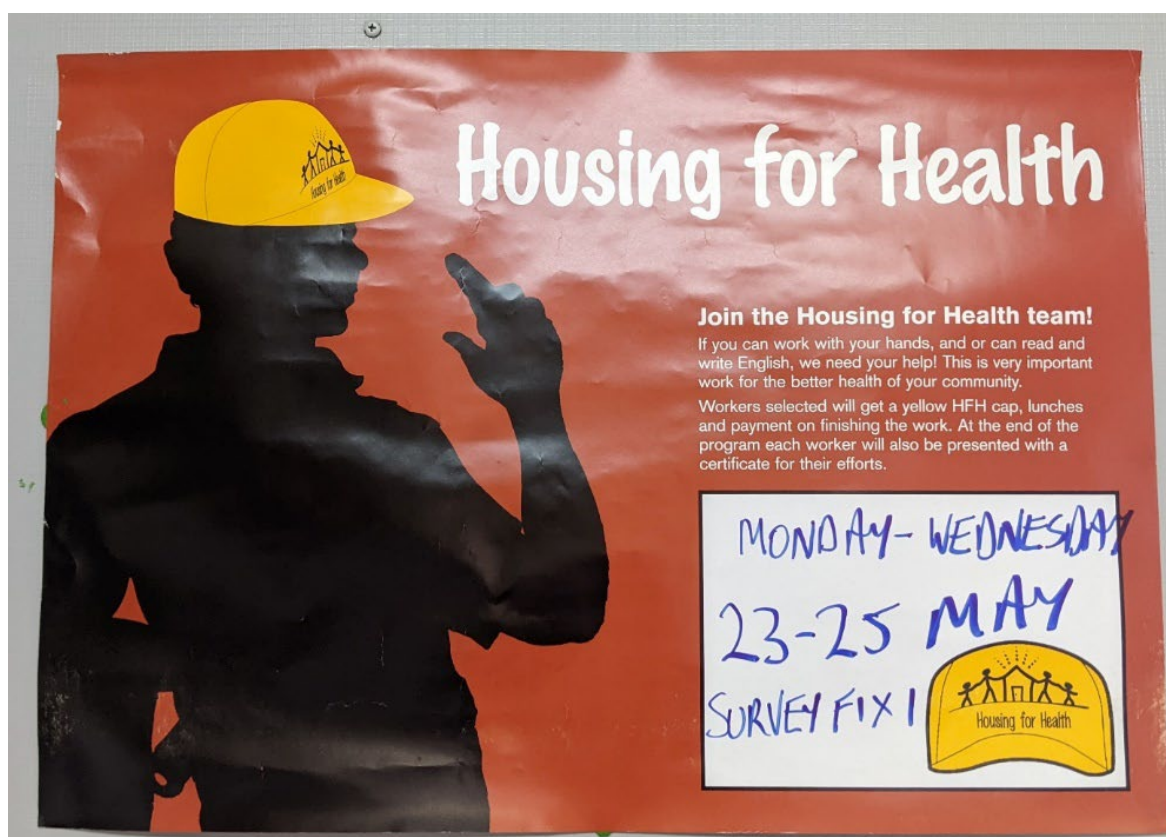
Figure 11. HFH project recruitment poster. Image. Liam Grealy

Survey-fix 1 work at Imangara took place on Monday-Wednesday 23-26 May 2022. With few public amenities available, training occurred at the basketball court in the centre of the community (Figure 10). Given the small population of the community and prior participation of survey-fix team members in the community meeting, training was delivered efficiently on the first morning. This involved a

review of the HFH project stages, a discussion of the aims of survey-fix 1 and what housing works community members could expect in the following weeks, and demonstrations using the electrical and plumbing training kits. Working through the paper survey sheets was made difficult by strong winds. Access to the community night patrol office was obtained that afternoon, so that data entry following house surveys could take place in that office rather than in the vehicle. Following morning tea, training continued as a full team inside the first house.

The key focus of this in-house training was to carefully work through each sheet, familiarising team members with the data that it directs participants to collect and the means for doing this. One team leader describes that

> The main focus is to equip team members with the knowledge of how to fill out the survey and the basic skills of testing and fixing and about the project focus – the priorities of the HLPs and the health of people in the houses. And also being really transparent about the [project] dollars and where the money is going to be spent and how far the budget for each house can stretch.

In some instances, understanding how to complete the survey sheets is a matter of determining the presence or absence of discrete health hardware items, for example, whether there is natural ventilation in a bathroom. However, many items require hands-on testing, which must be conducted in a certain way to determine health hardware functionality and to ensure the integrity of Healthabitat's data. For example, in determining whether a bathroom floor waste is draining effectively, team members are required to run a hose from a hand basin or other nearby tap into the floor waste for three minutes, confirming that water is not pooling on a bathroom floor. Such testing aims to resemble actual household usage rather than guessing what works and what doesn't through a visual examination alone.

Six Imangara community members were involved in the survey-fix 1 work, which proceeded as one large survey team, completing assessments of 15 houses in three days. All team members participated for the length of the survey-fix work. This is an atypically large team for a HFH project, but was deemed appropriate given the small size of Imangara and the preferences of local team members. The result was that the team moved through houses relatively quickly, even where these included two bathrooms and additional wet areas. In the first house, the project manager solicited requests from team members about which areas of the house they would like to survey and divided up the sheets accordingly, with team members working in pairs. Some shuffling of survey sheets followed, as team members determined the level of English reading proficiency required to complete certain sheets and revised their preferences.

The survey-fix process provides team members with the opportunity to learn basic fix skills and develop confidence to undertake minor repairs themselves. Calcification caused by the hard water of the Barkly region meant that many shower roses required replacing.

> 'Have you done this before?' I asked two women I was working with in the wet areas.

'Nah. But I seen my old partner do it', one replied.

'So maybe you can learn how to do it?'

'Yeah, he's my ex now.'

'Perfect. So you have to do it.'

'I don't need a man to do it.'

Throughout survey-fix 1, the team changed many shower roses and toilet roll holders, repaired door hinges and pins, and left sink plugs and toilet paper where required (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Changing a shower rose and survey-fix team members. Images. Liam Grealy

Figure 13. Hole in wall and broken laundry sink. Images. Liam Grealy

During survey-fix 1, numerous houses had no credit on prepaid power meters, meaning the project manager was required to purchase power cards and input credit at specific houses so that works could be undertaken. This issue of regular disconnections from prepaid household electricity is

widespread in the Northern Territory (Longden et al. 2022), and it threatens to undermine the potential health gains related to repairing health hardware. On the afternoon of the first day the subcontracted plumbing and electrical trades companies appeared in the community and were able to commence work orders generated through the initial house surveys. One team member had a number of broken lights fixed at her house before she returned home at the conclusion of the day's surveys.

Broken and dysfunctional health hardware was variable across the houses. One meter box sparked at the initial power test, suggesting a serious electrical safety issue. At another house, the toilet in the bathroom was blocked and the drainage tests for the hand basin and bath resulted in water coming up through the floor drain. Another house had been recently painted, but was according to team members the oldest house in the community. It had several large holes in the external walls where air conditioning units had been removed (Figure 13). This house lacked a hand basin in either of the toilet and adjacent shower rooms, with the householder required to use the kitchen sink for handwashing, as the nearby laundry sink was missing an s-bend and water would flow directly onto the hallway and kitchen floor. Another house had clearly been designed for single men, but was now home to a family. A double bathroom (including adjacent shower rooms and toilets rooms, where the latter lacked floor drains) came off a large empty living space that lacked powerpoints, which meant multiple extension cords ran across the floor through the house.
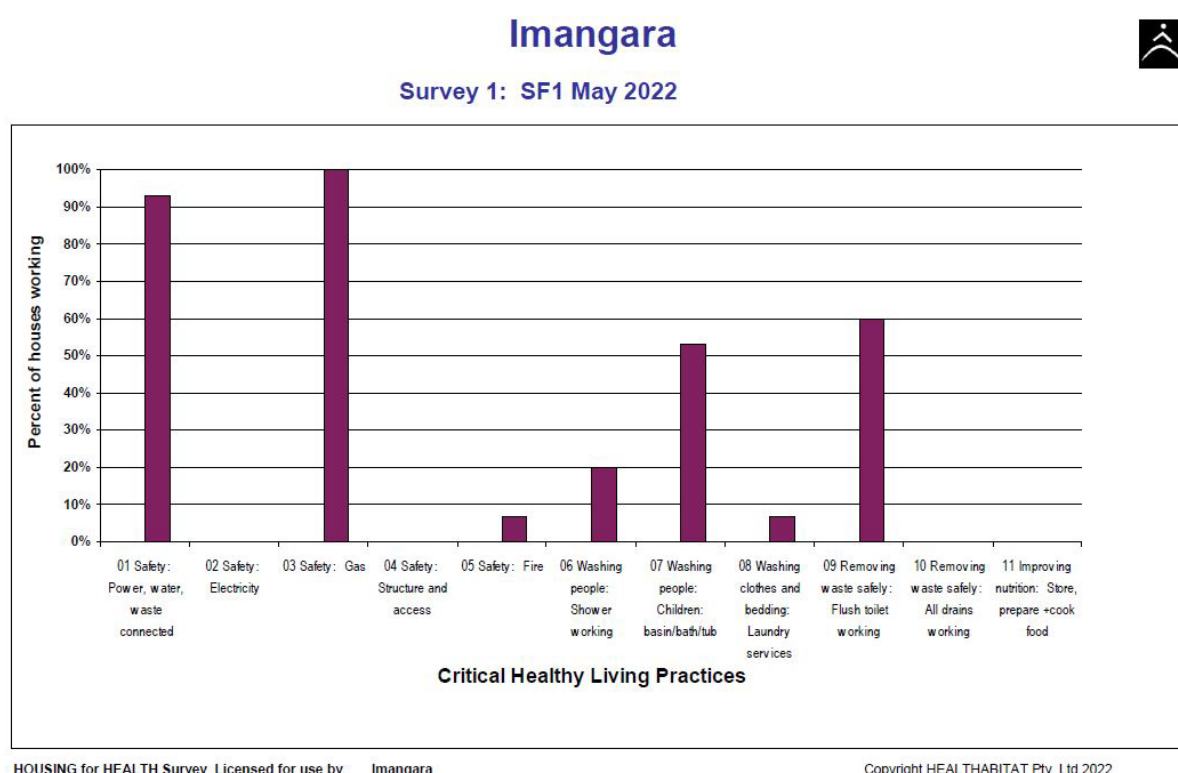
Figure 14. SF1 results at Imangara. Image. Healthabitat

A total of $170,472 was budgeted for the HFH project at Imangara including $161,000 for all fix works, at an average total spend of up to $10,733 per house (excl. GST). As at 31 July 2022, $74,837.85

(excl. GST) has been spent on fix work, including plumbing ($43,770.27), electrical ($27,557.70), and sewerage systems ($3509.88). 238 items have been fixed in relation to Survey-fix 1, or 44 per cent of the major fix work (stage five) to be undertaken, as at 31 July 2022.

The completion of works following survey-fix 1 was delayed at the HFH projects in the Barkly region (Imangara, Owairtilla, Wutunugurra) due to the withdrawal of the head contractor. While the Healthy Homes contract for ongoing remote housing maintenance services managed by DIPL does not oblige the contracted service provider to also undertake works generated by a HFH project in that region, the position of TFHC appears to be that this company should be offered this opportunity. In this instance, the company holding the remote housing maintenance services contract was contracted as a head contractor for trade works generated by survey-fix 1. The head contractor in turn sub-contracted plumbing and electrical works to other companies based in Tennant Creek. Menzies was advised that a disagreement between the head contractor and Healthabitat over the relevance of DIPL's schedule of rates to pricing work caused the dissolution of this contractual arrangement. In the meantime, a majority of works emerging from survey-fix 1 at Imangara (and, similarly, at Owairtilla and Wutunugurra) were completed. TFHC intervened with regard to the remaining works, and allocated the remaining jobs to DIPL, for that department to complete through the existing remote housing maintenance services contract. Healthabitat was removed from overseeing the completion of these remaining works and the three HFH projects at Imangara, Wutunugurra, and Owairtilla were placed on hold until outstanding survey-fix 1 jobs were completed.

This situation was not replicated at the HFH project of a similar size at Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff), and at the larger MHBH project at the Alice Springs town camps described below. The inconsistency of this arrangement regarding who Healthabitat is directed to have complete trade works relates to the inconsistent award of remote housing maintenance services contracts under Healthy Homes (Chapter 7). In Central Australia, the remote housing maintenance services contracts tendered under Healthy Homes were not awarded and the former trade panel model has continued to operate in that region. In that context, at Ikuntji, the HFH project manager was able to contract trades companies to undertake works without having to prioritise a specific remote housing maintenance services provider. The result at Ikuntji, a similarly sized community to Imangara, was that electrical and plumbing works generated by survey-fix 1 were completed within four days of the survey. Healthabitat staff have suggested that direct engagement with trades responsible for fix work is the usual arrangement for HFH projects in NSW. Where remote housing maintenance services contracts have been awarded, the contracted service provider is the preferred supplier of maintenance works generated by the HFH survey-fix process.

Survey-fix 2 was undertaken at Imangara in May 2023. Menzies understands that survey-fix 2 is scheduled at Owairtilla in June 2023. Final reports for those projects will be produced shortly thereafter.

5.5.2   Maintaining Houses for Better Health at Alice Springs Town Camps

The first town camp associations in the Alice Springs region were established in 1974.[12] Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation was incorporated in 1979 as an Aboriginal community controlled housing association (ACCHO) and representative organisation for the town camp associations, providing housing, and municipal and essential infrastructure services. TCAC was an ACCHO for the town camps until 2009, managing 199 houses, from which point the NT Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development assumed the role of housing authority. Today TCAC has 16 town camp corporate members (including 11 town camp housing associations and five town camp Aboriginal corporations) and it provides services to about 270 households. TCAC established Tangentyere Constructions (Sonwane Pty Ltd for Tangentyere Charitable Trust Number 2 T/A) in 1999 and, with the Central Land Council, Healthabitat, and MLCS Corporate established the Central Australian Affordable Housing Corporation (CAAHC, now Community Housing Central Australia) in 2009. CAAHC was the first National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) accredited community housing provider in the Northern Territory. A local decision making agreement between Tangentyere Council and the NT Government ('Schedule 3.1 Shelter and Housing') outlines plans for the establishment of a community housing model for the town camps from the conclusion of the existing NT-Commonwealth Government agreement, from 1/7/2023.

At the establishment of Healthy Homes, there were 270 houses across the 17 Alice Springs town camps, with communities ranging in size from two to 47 houses (and a total 298 houses by the end of 2022). Most of the town camps are subleased to the Executive Director of Township Leasing and under-leased to the NT Chief Executive Officer (Housing). Inspections undertaken in 2016-2017 as part of the *Northern Territory Town Camps Review* (Deloitte 2017) found that

> 56% of the housing stock is between 10 and 20 years old. 28% of the stock is older than 20 years. The condition of houses covered a wide range, however 90% were identified as very good or average… There is a variety of construction types however the majority of the houses have been constructed in blockwork on a concrete slab with sheet metal roofing. (156)

That *Review* found that the cost to upgrade existing housing to meet the standards of the *Residential Tenancies Act* was $24,315,284. Crabtree et al. write that 'the conservative service population estimate for [Alice Springs] town camps is between 1,950 and 3,300 people; 70 per cent are permanent residents and 30 per cent are either visitors or homeless' (2018, 2). To consider a randomly selected example, as at July 2021 there are 34 recognised houses at Yarrenyty Arltere (Larapinta Valley) town camp, at which 32 houses are occupied, one is vacant, and one is pending disposal. This includes eight two-bedroom houses, 22 three-bedroom houses, and four four-bedroom houses, nine of which are overcrowded. TFHC categorises these houses as new (n=10), rebuilt

---

[12] Depending on the naming convention, there are 17 or 18 contemporary Alice Springs town camps. Anthelk-Ewlpaye is either described as one town camp, or as Charles Creek and Kunoth.

(n=10), refurbished (n=11), and legacy (n=3). Rents range from $175 to $250 per week. The average previous five-year expenditure on these properties is $39,415 per house.

The project run by Healthabitat at Alice Springs town camps is a Maintaining Houses for Better Health (MHBH) project. This is undertaken in partnership with Tangentyere Council and with its subsidiary business Tangentyere Constructions as the head contractor. Tangentyere Constructions also has the Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contract for Alice Springs town camps. As a MHBH project, as compared to HFH, a lower budget is allocated for works following the survey-fix process. There is no major-fix component of the project because there is an expectation that the survey-fix work is undertaken as part of the business-as-usual of the preventive maintenance program of the housing maintenance services provider. Healthabitat's final project report states that 'The bulk of the costs associated with this work were the actual trade related "emergency fix" work which was budgeted at $2000/house' (2023, 3).

Survey-fix work began at Trucking Yards in November 2021. This commencement of works related to a small tranche of 26 houses, due to recent travel restrictions related to an outbreak of COVID-19 in communities surrounding Katherine. This required developing health and safety protocols for undertaking the HFH survey within homes, and impacted the capacity of out-of-NT project managers to attend. The survey-fix work continued at a larger scale from mid-April 2022, at which point a large team surveyed 114 houses over eight days. Across this period, there were usually four teams with four to six members in each surveying houses. This included a number of experienced team leaders who had acted as project managers elsewhere and local team members, many of whom participated in both the April and June works. This approach was repeated in June 2022, by which point a total 245 houses had been subject to the HFH survey. NT Health, TFHC, and Community Housing Central Australia staff also participated in survey-fix work. Twenty-four local Indigenous staff were employed on the project, assisting with data collection, community liaison, and data entry prior to and during survey-fix 1. Healthabitat's (2023) Final Report stated: 'The community workers were very open to being trained in minor fix work throughout the houses and learned how to use an electric drill to install clothes hooks, tighten door hinges/handles and towel rail screws, install toilet roll holders and change shower roses' (11). A survey-fix 2 is not undertaken in the Maintaining Houses for Better Health model.

Compared to the project at Imangara, this project was significantly larger in scale. Live planning was required to ensure that surveys for all the houses at specific town camps were completed at the conclusion of each period of works (i.e. November, April, and June). This involved a masterlist attached to a whiteboard in the staging area at the Tangentyere Council office, with different coloured highlighters indicating which houses had been surveyed, where further householder consultation was required, where keys were needed or had been obtained, and which surveys had to be done in that week. As with all HFH projects, the participation of local Aboriginal team members was essential to project success, in particular regarding team members gaining access to householders' homes to

undertake the survey-fix work. As compared with a project in a smaller discrete community, this was complicated slightly by the number of town camps involved. While local team members were, as a general rule, relatively comfortable working in their own community, this was not always the case as the project moved to town camps where they had no affiliation. While it is often remarked that the Housing for Health methodology provides an opportunity for local community members to develop basic maintenance skills, along with short-term casual employment, there are other reasons for participating. One team member was highly skilled at household fix work, having had training in carpentry, metal work, and as a mechanic. He saw the HFH project as an opportunity to engage socially with his community beyond his household, required to communicate with other householders the aims and means of the project.

Figure 15. Broken sink and householder work-around. Image. Liam Grealy

Along with the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the MHBH project at Alice Springs faced various challenges shared by the HFH projects undertaken across the central Australian and Barkly regions. The project manager was competing with the demand of central Australia's main tourist season for accommodation, flights, and vehicle hire, but in this case for a larger number of participants. The teams faced consistent issues with power disconnections, with Tangentyere Council required to place a purchase order for electricity at each house that was in arrears, slowing down the progress of the survey teams. It was noted anecdotally that there were fewer fridges and freezers across the town camps than is typical of remote community housing, and certainly of remote housing in other Australian jurisdictions, and it is possible that householders have chosen not to purchase fridges where household energy is so unreliable for food storage. Other notable health hardware issues included broken stoves, issues with ducted heating and evaporative air conditioning systems, and various wet area issues (Figure 15).

Figure 16 shows the comparison of house function according to critical healthy living practices at survey-fix 1 and following emergency fix work. All critical HLPs have increased by more than 20 per cent, with very significant increases in relation to 'Safety: Electrical system', 'Safety: Structure and access', and 'Washing people: Shower working'. There was a higher proportion of electrical work (approximately 47 per cent) than the national rate for all HFH projects (26 per cent). All plumbing and electrical works were carried out by Tangentyere Constructions. Across 17 town camps, total expenditure was $470,032 (excluding GST), comprised of $110,175 for electrical works and $360,857 for plumbing works. The total number of items fixed by the survey team was 316.

Outcomes Summary

Comparision of Healthy Living Practices Survey Fix 1(*before* any fix work commenced) to Survey Fix 1 completed (*after* emergency fix works have been completed)
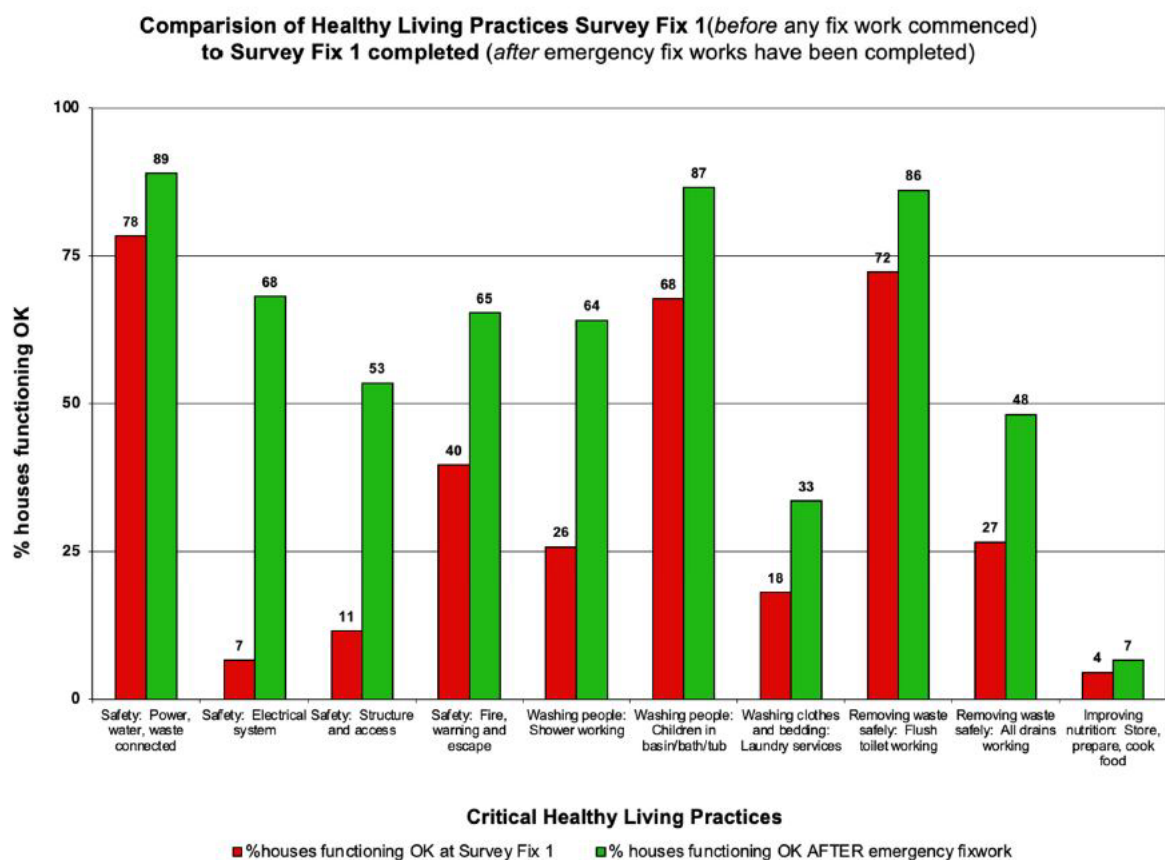
Figure 16. SF1 results at Alice Springs town camps. Image. Healthabitat.

One key challenge for undertaking maintenance works identified by the survey-fix process relates to the availability of tradespeople. Unlike at small projects like those at Imangara and Ikuntji, where tradespeople are able to follow survey teams through houses as the survey continues in the community, the scale of the MHBH project at Alice Springs town camps meant there was a significant amount of trades work generated. Given there is already a shortage of licensed tradespeople in the Northern Territory, the project manager, and the General Manager of Tangentyere Constructions, were required to wait on subcontracted companies to complete plumbing and electrical works. This

issue not only bears on the progress of the project at Alice Springs town camps, but on the pace at which Healthabitat is able to rollout projects across the central Australian and Barkly regions, where any acceleration of survey-fix work risks expanding a backlog of work orders and the timeframe of the HFH projects.

5.5.3   Housing for Health at Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff)

Menzies researchers did not attend the HFH project at Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff). A brief summary is included here as an example of a HFH project under the Healthy Homes program in a context where a new remote housing maintenance services contract has not been awarded and the old trade panel arrangement has been renewed.

Ikuntji is a remote community located in Central Australia on the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust. It is located about 227km west of Alice Springs and 47km by road south of Papunya. According to 2021 ABS Census data, Ikuntji has a population of 82 people, with a median age of 30 years, and a median total personal weekly income of $268 (ABS 2022b). 70 of the total 82 people are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for whom the median total personal weekly income is $246, as compared to $1,625 for Non-Indigenous persons. TFHC recognises 16 remote public housing dwellings in the community, with ten occupied and six vacant houses at July 2022, alongside six government employee properties. The remote housing stock includes five three-bedroom houses and 11 two-bedroom houses, with the median weekly rent paid by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons $103 (ABS 2022b). At July 2022, 70 per cent of dwellings were overcrowded, with 51 registered tenants living in 22 bedrooms at a bedroom occupancy rate of 2.32 persons. Ikuntji has received no refurbishment or new housing works under the Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. Program. All properties are categorised as refurbished (n=16), with a previous 5 year expenditure of $172,450 per house.

Consultation for the HFH project at Ikuntji began in late March 2022 and community-wide and Housing Reference Group meetings were held on 27 April 2022. A feasibility report was completed on 27 April which identified that there were no existing reports on environmental health conditions and no current housing assessments available for Ikuntji. The community meeting identified low water pressure and septic tank blockages as common housing problems in the community. Other stakeholders involved in project preparations included TFHC, DIPL, and DoH Environmental Health staff, MacDonnell Shire Council, CDP Haasts Bluff, the Walk-a-while Foundation, and the community store. Eight staff members undertook survey-fix 1 at 16 houses across two days in early June 2022. 175 items were fixed in relation to survey-fix 1, including 26 items fixed by the survey team and 149 items fixed by the contracted trades, completed within four days from the beginning of the survey. Figure 17 represents the results of survey-fix 1 at Ikuntji, in relation to some key healthy living practices. Survey-fix 2 was scheduled to begin within 47 weeks of the project manager signing the letter of offer in March 2022.
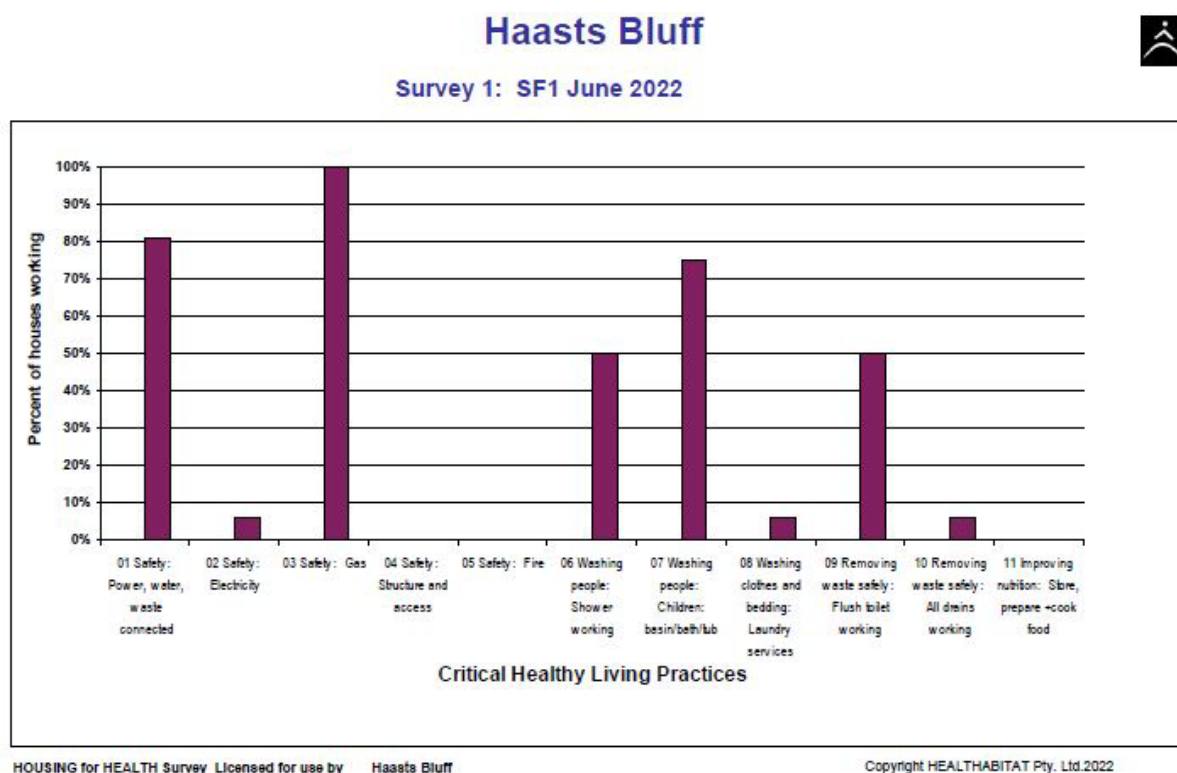
Figure 17. SF1 Results at Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff). Image. Healthabitat

A total of $36,000 (excl. GST) was budgeted for survey-fix 1 works (comprised of $22,000 for plumbing works and $14,000 for electrical works), and $34,810.50 was paid (comprised of $21,352.79 for plumbing works and $13,457.71 for electrical works). A total $52,988.00 was budgeted for all fix works, or capital upgrades, following survey-fix 1 works, including further plumbing and electrical works, servicing hot water systems and evaporative air conditioners, replacing stoves, repairing septic systems, and other works.

Figure 18 shows the comparison of house function according to critical healthy living practices at survey-fix 1 and following survey-fix 2. All critical HLPs have increased with significant improvements achieved in relation to 'Washing people: Shower working' (50 to 100 per cent), 'Washing clothes and bedding: Laundry services (6 to 75 per cent), 'Removing waste safely: Flush toilet working' (50 to 100 per cent), and 'Removing waste safely: All drains working' (6 to 38 per cent). Across the 16 houses, total expenditure was $117,446, comprised of $41,496 for electrical works (35 per cent of total expenditure) and $75,949 for plumbing works (65 per cent of total expenditure). The cost range by house was between $4909 and $10,503, with an average expenditure per house of $7340. The total number of items fixed by the survey team was 43 and the total number of items fixed by licensed trades was 347. The project employed 16 Indigenous staff and 6 non-Indigenous staff.

Outcomes Summary

Comparision of Healthy Living Practices Survey Fix 1(before any fix work commenced) to Survey Fix 2 (after fix works have been completed)
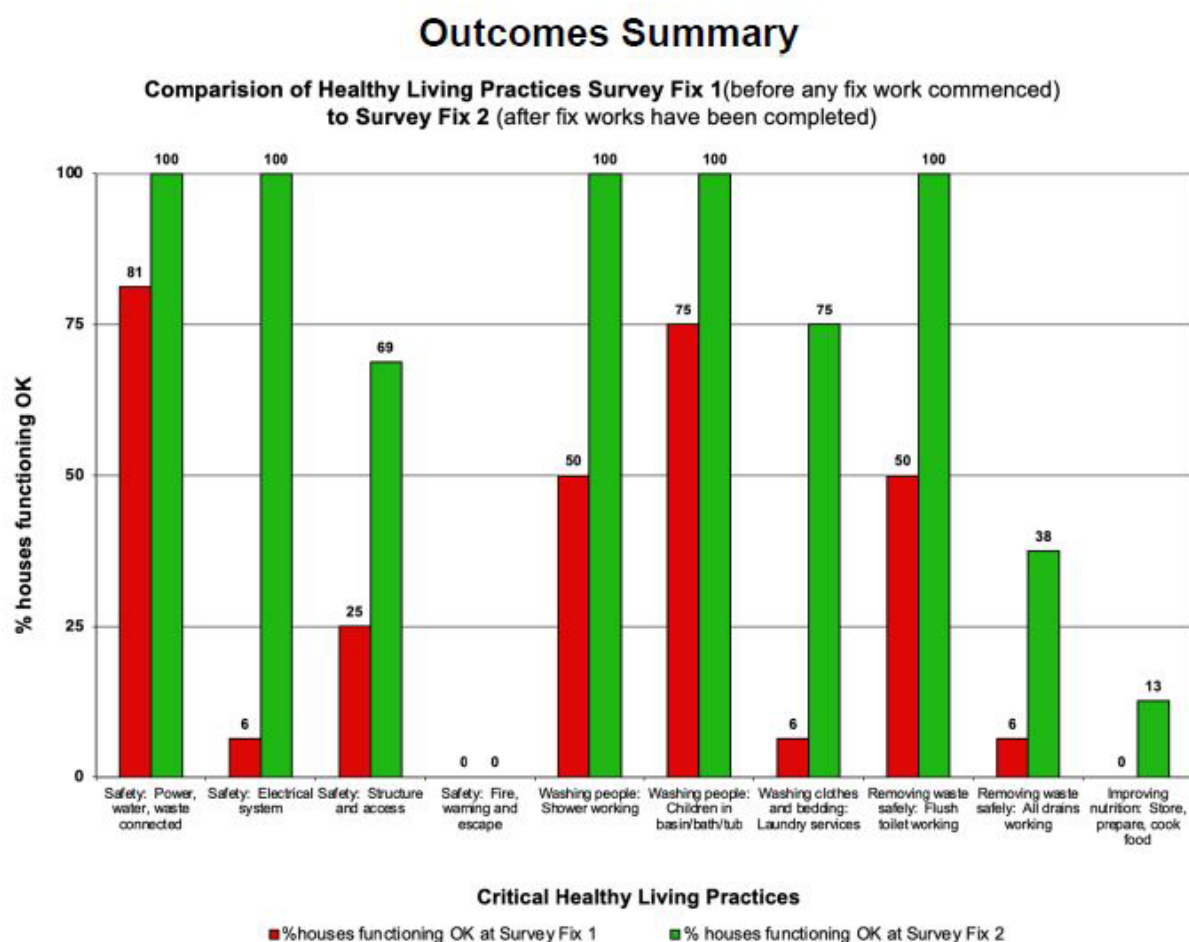
Figure 18. HFH Outcomes Summary at Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff). Image. Healthabitat

5.6   HFH and the Relationship with Remote Housing Maintenance Services

Chapter 7 considers the remote housing maintenance services contracts which constitute the majority of expenditure under Healthy Homes. Housing for Health projects provide clear benefit for relative low cost. However, these are discrete projects that are planned for delivery at a small number of communities each year. This is recognised by Healthabitat, as one project manager states,

> We don't claim that [HFH] is necessarily something that [the NT Government should] want to do everywhere, but it is something that if they're not doing what we're doing, that they should have some other system in place that is doing it. We see what we do as one option of an annual health and safety audit. TFHC has engaged us to do that. If they're not engaging us to do that everywhere, what are they doing? . . . Our aim is that you don't need to be running HFH projects if you've got an effective preventative maintenance program.

The bulk of housing maintenance works will occur under the DIPL-administered remote housing maintenance services contracts. It is incumbent on both THFC and DIPL to demonstrate how these programs of work relate to one another.

One HFH project manager describes the methodology as 'an external health and safety audit' of housing. They express a concern that the data generated from HFH projects is not being integrated into existing NT Government asset management systems. The project manager suggests that, were they in the position of program administrator,

> I would want to say, "Look, we're engaging this third-party auditor [Healthabitat], who are coming and doing a health and safety audit, I want to know how we're going… How are we going in this particular community? … What's working, what's not? We have the data that can drill right into particular items of hardware. For example, we're having a lot of failures in toilet roll holders. What are we using? Should we change our specification?" That sort of level of detail. It's not that complicated to start to have those discussions and that's certainly our interest in doing this work as well, and that's where we hope this will lead.

At the MHBH project, where the budget is lower because there is an expectation that this survey-fix process will be integrated into the annual maintenance program, a significant register of work is identified that can be undertaken by the contracted service provider. As one project manager identifies, 'We've only been assuming the high priority plumbing and electrical jobs. But there's pest control jobs, there's carpentry jobs, there's jobs for air-conditioner people, and all sorts of stuff that sit within the database ready for somebody to pick up and run with.' The extent to which there is preventive housing maintenance works happening in the Northern Territory, however, is unclear (see Chapter 7).

In October 2022, Healthabitat undertook team leader training in Alice Springs involving staff from DIPL and the Department of Health. Two DoH employees participated in teams at a Housing for Health project at Aputula (Finke) in early November 2022, a project supported by philanthropic rather than NT Government funding. This training was funded by Healthabitat outside of the TFHC Healthy Homes contract.

5.7   Recommendations

1. The Housing for Health program methodology generates extensive detailed data related to house function, repairs, and capital upgrades. This data should be integrated into existing NTG data systems on individual house condition and function.
2. In order to increase local (i.e. Northern Territory) capacity to deliver HFH projects under Healthabitat's licence, Healthabitat should be provided an opportunity to contract with the NT Government to train interested DoH Environmental Health, TFHC, and DIPL staff, as well as interested staff from contracted housing maintenance providers, as HFH project managers and/or team leaders.
3. Relevant TFHC and DIPL staff, including executive staff, should participate in HFH projects to increase their understanding of on-the-ground issues with remote community house condition, function, and repair and maintenance requirements.

4. Further consideration should be given to how the HFH methodology, including its principles and approach, can be incorporated into the business-as-usual of TFHC and DIPL housing maintenance services. This includes revision of the Condition Assessment Tool and how its application through inspections generates work orders for repairs and maintenance.

5. HFH projects should continue to be delivered across select Northern Territory communities as an independent approach to auditing and fixing the condition of remote housing, to improve house function, and to generate goodwill for ongoing housing works.

6 Condition Assessment Inspections at Town Camps

- The new remote housing maintenance services contracts include a requirement that service providers conduct annual inspections of all housing using a Condition Assessment Tool (CAT). This is central to the preventive maintenance approach.
- TFHC obtained grant funding to extend the use of the CAT to some town camps not included in the Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts, with the aim to generate preventive maintenance works for those houses.

6.1   Background

Alongside the delivery of Housing for Health projects at select communities, the chief component of the Healthy Homes program is the award of new remote housing maintenance services contracts. These contracts and the works delivered by contracted service providers are described in detail in Chapter 7. One of the key differences between these contracts and the prior remote housing maintenance model is the requirement that contracted service providers undertake an inspection process of all housing in their portfolio using a supplied Condition Assessment Tool (CAT) each year (or cyclically). Due to delays related to the award of remote housing maintenance services contracts, TFHC sought to extend this process to town camp housing not otherwise subject to the Healthy Homes program. It has done so by securing one-off grant funding.

From May 2022, TFHC worked with relevant Aboriginal community housing providers to undertake inspections using the Condition Assessment Tool at town camp housing at Katherine, Adelaide River, Palmerston, and Darwin. The purpose of this tool is to proactively inspect the state of housing health hardware and to generate fix work based on such assessments. This approach is central to the characterisation of the new maintenance model as a preventive maintenance approach. This chapter describes the ongoing progress of this inspection and repair work.

6.2   The Condition Assessment Tool

Figure 19. Condition Assessment Tool page 1. Image. NT Government

The Condition Assessment Tool – Inspection Sheet is included as Attachment C in the tender documents for remote housing maintenance services contracts. This is described in the tender as a 'cyclical maintenance survey', and service providers are required 'to develop a plan to ensure that all dwellings within the community have been surveyed within 3 months of commencement [of the contract], and the report submitted to the Superintendent' (S 9.8.1).

The Condition Assessment Tool – Inspection Sheet is the document used to guide those surveys. The version included in the tender documents is an eight-page document that service providers are required to complete as a hard copy to generate information about the condition of the house. The first page (Figure 19) of the document is associated with basic asset information, related to access, building type and materials, works information, and so on. Certain cells can be completed to designate type within a larger category, such as identifying the property as a 'duplex' under 'dwelling type'. Alternatively, cells can be completed to signal presence or absence, such as including a tick for the presence of 'burial plots'. The following six pages are dedicated to 'Asset Details'. Cells related to individual building components are completed according to separate rating guides, with the appearance rating, function rating, and condition standard described on the final page (Figure 20). The appearance rating is a scale from 1 to 3, corresponding to poor, fair, and good. The function rating is a scale from 0 to 5, corresponding to fail immediate, fail urgent, poor, fair, good, and new. In

a majority of instances, where hardware is in a fair or reasonable condition, the completed assessment is appearance '2' and function '3'. It is not immediately evident where the associated ratings, from 0 to 5, should be included in the cells or elsewhere. The condition standard references criteria specified in the *Residential Tenancies Act* (safe, habitable, clean), although it is not clear how those legislative criteria relate to the appearance and function spectrums.

Condition Assessment Tool

Appearance and Function Rating Guide

Appearance Rating

Rating	Appearance	Description
1	Poor	Poor visual appearance and aesthetics e.g. graffiti, heavily stained, chipped, corrosion and unclean.
2	Fair	Showing acceptable signs of wear and tear, corrosion that has not distorted the object (e.g. lights, taps, stove etc.) fading or oxidising paintwork in sound condition.
3	Good	Items are visibly displaying 'as new' to 'light wear and tear' characteristics.

Function Rating

Rating	Function	Description
0	Fail Immediate	Priority repair, places immediate safety or security threat to a person e.g. wires exposed at electrical point.
1	Fail Urgent	Priority replacement, or repair, not safe, does not work or function e.g. window smashed, cracked, or missing.
2	Poor	Replacement required, major defects affecting function e.g. window does not open.
3	Fair	No repairs, minor deterioration not affecting use e.g. old but window still functions.
4	Good	No repairs, minor deterioration not affecting use e.g. old but window still functions.
5	New	Optimal condition e.g. new window.

Condition Standard

Rating	Condition Standard
1	Unsafe and not habitable
2	Safe and not habitable
3	Unsafe, habitable and cleanable
4	Safe, habitable and not cleanable
5	Safe, habitable and cleanable

Habitable Criteria

Key Components	Bedrooms	Bathroom	Laundry	Kitchen	WC	Living	Hall
Walls/Ceilings protects against elements	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Floor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Windows/Ventilation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Doors	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
Ablution area	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Toilet	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Lightning	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Power points	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Bench tops	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Lockable storage	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Sinks/tub	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Cooking facilities	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Water	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N

(Core Room/Location header spans Bedrooms through Hall)

26 May 2020
Page 8 of 8

Figure 20. CAT, Appearance and Function Rating Guide. Image. NT Government

The CAT has been revised since the release of the remote housing maintenance services tenders. This includes shifting the ratings guides to the front page, additional comments sections on various pages, and the revision of the wet area sections (for example, combining the prior WC and WC [toilet suite] sections into the single 'WC' section).

The use of the Condition Assessment Tool – Inspection Sheet is intended 'to prolong the expected lifespan of dwelling components' (Section 9.5.1). Practically, the process whereby contracted service providers undertake inspections using the CAT is supposed to also generate work orders for those properties. Under the remote housing maintenance services contracts, works that present a risk to the health, safety or security of tenants should be undertaken at the time of the survey, and a plan should be developed for the remaining works.

6.3   Completing a Condition Assessment Tool Inspection

In June 2022, a Menzies researcher attended Bagot town camp in Darwin, during the CAT inspections process of town camp housing undertaken by TFHC and Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation staff. The Menzies researcher was trained in how to complete a CAT inspection alongside a TFHC staff member. During this process the Yilli housing officers acted as liaisons for TFHC, communicating to householders that the CAT inspections process was underway, while also undertaking some CAT inspections themselves.

In broad terms, it is commendable that the proactive approach to the condition assessment of housing has been extended to town camps. This has generated repair works in town camp housing, which should be the central goal of any inspection process. More specifically, there is potential to improve the CAT, how work orders are generated from CAT inspections, and what happens with data produced by this process. At present, CAT inspection sheets completed at Darwin and Katherine town camps are submitted to TFHC where an employee converts those inspections into specific work orders. Menzies understands that the process can be similar for remote housing maintenance services contracts, with completed CAT inspections submitted to contract superintendents. This is work that would be more efficiently undertaken by housing maintenance service providers, and establishes an over-reliance on specific government employees and the double-handling of inspections data. As one property manager noted of this arrangement, it is 'the NTG that is driving the bus' and 'it's very laborious their end as well'. The conversion of assessments of specific household hardware as having failed to a work order could be streamlined through the use of existing property management software, discussed below.

Regarding the format of the CAT, service providers have advised that it can be challenging to complete, resulting in sometimes unclear and confusing input of data. One property manager noted 'we didn't feel [the CAT] was very comprehensive. We've got our own systems in place . . . We customised it so that it captured all the information that they needed.' Some service providers argued that a trade background is required to complete the CAT inspection effectively, and others noted the high English literacy requirement to complete the forms. Asked about how their experience of undertaking CAT inspections had been, one property manager responded 'So laborious. I will say that, and frustrating at the same time. . . It's just so laborious and it's not funny. Scan it and then punch out an email.' Another stated, 'Some of our inspection reports will have hundreds of photos. Who has the time to scan that report, and then label every single one of those photos that support the report, and then send it through?' While some pages include ample spaces for comments (e.g. 'Hall'), others have no space for comments (e.g. 'Laundry'), meaning that writing must be squeezed into the margins (Figure 21). What is currently compressed into eight pages in a landscape layout could be revised into a portrait layout with additional pages more clearly divided by house area or type of domestic infrastructure (e.g. power points), and more space for comments and related job orders.
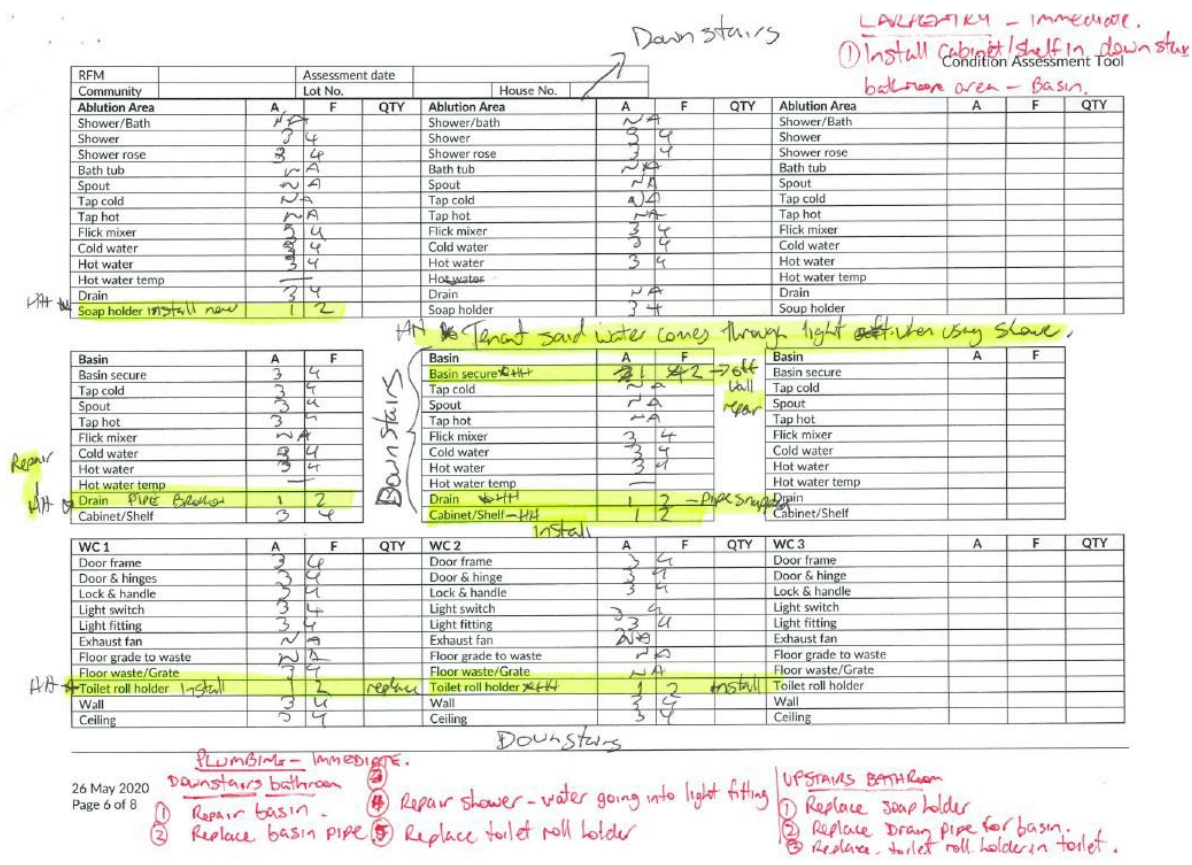
Figure 21. Example of completed CAT page with work orders. Image. NT Government

Such a graphic redesign, however, might be more productively undertaken by digitising the process as a whole. There are numerous sections in the CAT that are crossed out during the inspection because they are not present at a particular house (e.g. water tanks, room heating, outdoor cooking). This acknowledgment of presence/absence could be simplified in a digital interface that includes photographs of all items surveyed. As one property manager stated:

> We're not there to judge the tenant and the condition of the houses. We're there for
> tenants' safety, basically, is the way that we're promoting it. We want to make their home
> safe, habitable, but we need to provide this inspection with all the photos; good, bad and
> ugly. Otherwise, the fix work doesn't happen. We can't do anything.

Menzies has been advised that for a period in recent years this CAT was completed by housing officers using digital tablets, however, it was unpopularly perceived as a means of surveillance of those workers. The return to paper forms makes for an unwieldy process in the field and creates the requirement of scanning hard copies for examination by TFHC and DIPL employees. This is time-consuming and unfeasible for contracted service providers. The use of such paper forms has also contributed to the significant undermining of the comprehensiveness and accuracy of data generated through such inspections that relates to asset condition. This remains uncollated in hard copy form. As one property services manager noted,

> Get these [assessments] on an I-Pad. So we can take photos. And we can show people
> in the sector what we fixed and look at it… Not only does that make it a lot more
> professional but it provides more information for the sector as well.

6.4   Revising the Condition Assessment Tool

Digitising the CAT inspection process would likely require revising the remote housing maintenance services contracts so that TFHC provides the required hardware and software to service providers to standardise this data collection process. Aboriginal housing providers in the Northern Territory already use off-the-shelf software, such as 'Property Inspection Manager', for other types of inspections. Such software could be used for this CAT inspection process to streamline data collection and standardise records. Menzies understands that at least one contracted remote housing maintenance services provider found the CAT difficult to use and subsequently customised a bespoke inspection tool using its existing property management software, which was approved by DIPL for ongoing CAT inspections. Menzies understands that DIPL is currently progressing the development of the CAT via the modification of the existing Konect app so that the CAT inspection process can be digitised, although this approach is yet to be piloted. Similarly, TFHC has developed its own app for tenancy inspections that was scheduled to launch in May 2023. While the inspection types are different, it would make sense for DIPL and TFHC to develop this technology together, given that both CAT and routine property inspections undertaken by tenancy officers identify the condition of houses and repairs and maintenance work that is required.

Given the challenges experienced by contracted service providers in relation to CAT inspections, Menzies considers that the tool itself, and the process in which it is embedded, require some revision. Rather than this work be undertaken exclusively by TFHC and/or DIPL, there is potential for this revision to be undertaken through a co-design process involving non-government stakeholders with a stake in remote community housing provision, including contracted service providers, Aboriginal Housing NT, and land councils. It is important that such a tool is able to achieve its technical aims – determining the condition of housing hardware and identifying repair and maintenance works – but also that the process is informed by the desires for remote community housing of key stakeholders. A forum of this sort would also provide an opportunity for Aboriginal community controlled organisations to engage departmental program managers on the important question of data sovereignty in relation to Healthy Homes. More specifically, it would provide an opportunity to explore the establishment of processes that would more effectively 'close the loop' with householders where houses have been subject to CAT inspections, conveying to those communities the preventive maintenance works that were generated as an outcome of the inspection process.

In terms of the specific tasks outlined by the CAT, one of the advantages of the HFH methodology described in Chapter 5 is the specificity of both what is being assessed and how this is done. In this way, it guards against subjective assessment, inexperience, or a lack of care in completing a survey.

Unlike the HFH methodology, the CAT inspection process does not undertake a comprehensive assessment of power points, floor drainage, or a range of other household items. Further, the CAT inspection process depends on variable interpretations of how assessments of specific health hardware items are made. For example, there are no listed criteria to determine 'cistern refill' (setting aside whether 'appearance' is a relevant factor in this instance), as compared to the HFH methodology which specifies a test: 'After flushing cistern use watch to time refill. 1 = pass (must refill in less than 3 minutes). 2= fail'. Similarly, the CAT lacks a specific requirement to assess bathroom hot water, as compared to the HFH test: 'Run for 1 minute and use thermometer. 1 = temp. greater than 44°C 2 = temp. less than 45°C. Record temperature in box at left.' Using the CAT, it is not clear what it might mean to assess either of cistern refill or shower hot water as 'fair', in terms of any implications for householder health outcomes or legislative criteria in the *Residential Tenancies Act.*

The HFH software program will automatically generate a work order for a plumber if, for example, the toilet cistern fails to refill in less than three minutes or the shower hot water temperature is lower than 45°C. This is also a standard feature of other property lifecycle asset management software, such as SPM, that underpin the generation of a work program following the inspection of multiple properties. As it stands, significant experience and expertise is required to generate appropriate work orders from assessments of health hardware using the CAT, which often lack comments and simply include a numerical assessment of appearance and function. By comparison, one HFH team leader notes,

> So our [HFH] survey work goes down to a task level and the item level of a hot and a cold tap. Whereas often that housing management asset capturing is at the house level, so it's painting, it's the walls, the floor, the kitchen rather than the hot plates in the oven. That focus of really honing in and saying "does it work or does it not work?" rather than "do you rate this from a zero to 10 in terms of kind of what state it's in?", I think it's a really objective way across the board to be capturing that really robust and consistent data.

Specifying particular tests to determine function for important health hardware such as toilets and hot water systems could also reduce the vulnerability of the CAT inspection process to the relative building and maintenance expertise of any individual completing the form.

6.5   Condition Assessment Inspections and Fix Works at Town Camps

In May 2022, TFHC and Kalano Community Association completed CAT inspections at the Walpiri (n=4) and Miali Brumby (n=34, including five HACC units and 29 houses) town camps. As at 31 August 2022 a total $17,175 had been quoted for electrical works at Katherine town camps housing, with a total $5,840 quoted for plumbing works and $33,265 quoted for carpentry works. This equates to work valued at $1,143 per house as a result of the CAT process. By 1 January 2023, the total amount invoiced for works at Katherine town camp houses was $57,109, comprised of $44,825 for electrical works, $902 for plumbing works, and $11,382 for carpentry works. This equates to $1,680 expended per property with significant plumbing and carpentry works quoted and outstanding.

In June and July 2022, TFHC and Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation completed CAT inspections at Bagot, Amangal, Palmerston Indigenous Village, and Knuckey Lagoon town camps. 114 CAT inspections were undertaken for the total 119 properties. As at 20 February 2023, the total amount invoiced for works at town camps serviced by Yilli Rreung following CAT inspections was $129,301, including $59,583 for electrical works, $24,125 for plumbing works, and $45,593 for carpentry works. This equates to $1,134 per inspected property.

6.6   Recommendations

6.   The Condition Assessment Tool inspection process and related fix work in town camps is currently funded by a one-off grant. Despite different underlying tenure situations, town camp housing requires maintenance services similar to remote community housing and should receive equivalent ongoing funding for repairs and maintenance.

7.   The existing paper format of the Condition Assessment Tool is difficult to use. This inspection process should be digitised to more effectively integrate this approach to preventive maintenance into existing housing management practices and data systems.

8.   The format of the Condition Assessment Tool should be redesigned to make it more user friendly for both housing officers required to assess health hardware and individuals responsible for interpreting completed forms to plan works and create work orders. Relevant TFHC and DIPL staff should revise the Condition Assessment Tool by undertaking a co-design process including non-government stakeholders involve in the management of remote community housing, to best incorporate the desires and requirements of key stakeholders into housing condition assessment processes.

9.   A collaborative co-design process to revise the Condition Assessment Tool and the CAT inspection process should consider the potential to incorporate the 'testing' approach of the HFH methodology, to more accurately determine health hardware functionality.

10. House condition data captured by the Condition Assessment Tool inspection process should be integrated into existing NTG data systems characterising house condition and function, so that this data is easily accessible to current and future housing maintenance services providers.

11. A co-design process related to the Condition Assessment Tool or a similar forum should be established by TFHC and DIPL to initiate discussion with Aboriginal Housing NT, land councils, and Aboriginal community controlled organisations about the collection, management, and access to remote community housing data, in accordance with principles of Indigenous data sovereignty.

7 Remote Housing Maintenance Services

- Healthy Homes aims to institute a new approach to remote housing maintenance by prioritising cyclical and preventive maintenance.
- There have been significant delays in the award of remote housing maintenance services contracts, resulting in most contracts awarded for periods under two years.
- Along with combining the former housing maintenance officer and trade panel contracts, the main distinguishing feature of the new remote housing maintenance services contracts is to oblige service providers to undertake annual inspections using the Condition Assessment Tool.
- Very few Condition Assessment Tool inspections have been undertaken since the commencement of Healthy Homes.
- Based on the limitations of program data collection, Menzies is unable to determine the proportion of preventive maintenance work generated by the Healthy Homes program.
- Maintenance expenditure, including expenditure per house, varies significantly across NT regions.
- There is potential to expand the preventive component of this housing maintenance program by establishing inspections of health hardware on a cyclical basis.

7.1   The Former Remote Housing Maintenance Model

The former remote housing maintenance model, established by 'Territory Housing' in 2013-14, is described in Chapter 2. It involved 'a two tier maintenance approach', under which Housing Maintenance Officers (HMOs) could provide 'simple repairs that do not require a licensed tradesperson', complemented by a Trade Panel for specialised trade works. Under that model, property related services were divided into tenders for Trade Panel Services and Housing

Maintenance Coordination Services. Trade Panel Service contracts were awarded to multiple trade companies within a region of clustered communities.

In the Healthy Homes program era, the tenders for remote housing maintenance services have combined this former distinction. A single contracted service provider is responsible for delivering housing maintenance services in a given community, including minor repairs and specialised trade services. This work can be completed by subcontracting other businesses to undertake specific jobs or work types, such as trade works where no relevant staff are employed directly.

Within the planning to replace the former remote housing maintenance model, there had been an intention to combine the tenders for remote housing maintenance services and remote tenancy management support services. However, this was deemed not to be feasible following the machinery of government changes, under which the management of remote housing maintenance services tenders and contracts moved to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL). Various service providers tendered for housing maintenance services but not tenancy management support services, and vice versa. Menzies understands that in one instance these two service areas were combined into a single tender for the community of Papunya, distinguished as Part A and B. Two parties submitted a joint response to this tender, but it was not awarded. This could signal the lack of available service providers in the region as much as an absence of interest in the combination of housing services in general.

7.2   A New Approach to Maintenance?

There have been significant delays in the award of Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance and tenancy management support services contracts. With the expiry of the NPRHNT agreement scheduled for 30 June 2023, many of these contracts were awarded for periods significantly shorter than two years.[13]

At mid-December 2021, based on information on the NT Government's Quotations and Tenders Online (QTOL) website, 37 tenders had been advertised by DIPL for housing maintenance services, of which three had been cancelled. Nineteen tenders had been awarded to 14 companies, initiating new service provider contracts for 33 communities. At May 2023, 31 contracts for remote housing maintenance services had been awarded to 22 companies, including 25 contracts to 17 Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs) (see Figure 22). These contracts cover 49 communities, Alice Springs town camps, and Tennant Creek community living areas. Figure 23 differentiates remote communities by maintenance contract type (Healthy Homes or trade panel). Where tenders for housing

---

[13] For example, on 6 October, 2021, a tender was advertised for 'Central Australian Region – Provision of Remote Housing Maintenance Services to Remote Housing in Laramba, Yuelamu, Nyirripi and Yuendumu for a Period of 19 Months (T21-2108)'.

maintenance services contracts were not awarded the prior trade panel housing maintenance model has remained in place, with new trade panel contracts granted until 30 June 2023. This is the case in most of the Central Australian region, including 24 communities (Figure 23).

Contract type	ABE	Not ABE	Total awarded	Remote communities
Housing maintenance services	25	6	31	49
Tenancy management support services	19	6	25	47

Figure 22. Healthy Homes contracts awarded, as at May 2023

It is notable that at a significant proportion of communities, especially across Central Australia, contracts representing the new approach to housing maintenance under Healthy Homes were not awarded. In fact, for 24 communities represented by advertised tenders, the former trade panel arrangement remains in place. In 21 of those 24 communities, the housing maintenance coordinator contract was not renewed.[14] In these contexts, it is reasonable to question whether there has been a reduction in maintenance services provided in the Healthy Homes era, as compared to the prior regime.

Community	Contract Type
Ali Curung	Healthy Homes
Alice Springs Town Camps	Healthy Homes
Alpurrurulam	Healthy Homes
Amanbidji	Healthy Homes
Amoonguna[15]	Trade Panel
Ampilatwatja	Healthy Homes
Angurugu	Healthy Homes
Areyonga	Trade Panel
Atitjere	Trade Panel
Barunga	Healthy Homes
Belyuen	Healthy Homes
Beswick (Wugularr)	Healthy Homes
Binjari	Healthy Homes

[14] At Mutitjulu, Kaltukatjara, and Imanpa, both the former trade panel and housing maintenance coordinator contracts were renewed. Menzies understands this is the only instance where a housing maintenance coordinator contract was extended.
[15] All trade panel contracts in the Healthy Homes period relate to the former trade panel tender A13-0032.

Bulla	Healthy Homes
Bulman	Healthy Homes
Canteen Creek (Owairtilla)	Healthy Homes
Daguragu	Healthy Homes
Engawala	Trade Panel
Finke (Aputula)	Trade Panel
Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island)	Healthy Homes*
Gapuwiyak	Healthy Homes*
Gunbalanya	Healthy Homes
Gunyangara (Ski Beach)	Healthy Homes
Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji)	Trade Panel
Hermannsburg	Trade Panel
Imangara (Murray Downs)	Healthy Homes
Imanpa	Trade Panel
Jilkminggan	Healthy Homes
Kalkarindji	Healthy Homes
Kaltukatjara (Docker River)	Trade Panel
Kintore (Walungurru)	Trade Panel
Kybrook Farm	Healthy Homes
Lajamanu	Healthy Homes
Laramba	Trade Panel
Maningrida	Healthy Homes*
Manyallaluk	Healthy Homes
Milikapiti	Healthy Homes
Milingimbi	Healthy Homes
Milyakburra	Healthy Homes
Minjilang	Healthy Homes
Minyerri	Healthy Homes
Mount Liebig (Watiyawanu)	Trade Panel
Mutitjulu (Rangerville)	Trade Panel
Nauiyu (Daly River)	Healthy Homes
Nganmarriyanga (Palumpa)	Healthy Homes
Ngukurr	Healthy Homes
Nturiya	Trade Panel
Numbulwar	Healthy Homes
Nyirripi	Trade Panel
Papunya	Trade Panel
Peppimenarti	Healthy Homes

Pigeon Hole	Healthy Homes
Pirlangimpi	Healthy Homes
Pmara Jutunta	Trade Panel
Ramingining	Healthy Homes
Rittarangu	Healthy Homes
Robinson River	Healthy Homes
Santa Teresa (Ltyentye Apurte)	Trade Panel
Tara	Healthy Homes
Tennant Creek Community Living Areas	Healthy Homes
Titjikala	Trade Panel
Umbakumba	Healthy Homes
Wadeye	Healthy Homes
Wallace Rockhole	Trade Panel
Warruwi	Healthy Homes
Weemol	Healthy Homes
Willowra	Trade Panel
Wilora	Trade Panel
Wudapuli and Nama**	Healthy Homes
Wurrumiyanga	Healthy Homes
Wutunugurra (Epenarra)	Healthy Homes
Yarralin	Healthy Homes
Yirrkala	Healthy Homes
Yuelamu	Trade Panel
Yuendumu	Trade Panel

Figure 23. Healthy Homes communities and maintenance contract type

* Healthy Homes contracts discontinued and replaced with trade panel in 2022
** Wudapuli and Nama are not included in the usual list of 73 remote communities but are included in the Healthy Homes program

The extent to which Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts have been established is necessary to keep in mind in relation to any analysis of the impact of the Healthy Homes program on house quality or householder health outcomes. In many communities the provision of maintenance services continues to operate according to the old system, less the role played by housing maintenance coordinators, and housing outcomes will not represent any impact of the new program. This sets aside the separate issue of whether service providers contracted to deliver housing maintenance services under Healthy Homes are meeting contract obligations that would distinguish those contracts from the prior regime.

7.3   Healthy Homes Remote Housing Maintenance Services Tenders

Tenders for remote housing maintenance services are published on the QTOL website. They remain open for applications for a period of approximately three months. Tenders are awarded between three and six months of the closing date. Document packages include the Request for Tenders, Response Schedule, and the appendices listed in '3.4. Schedule of documents included in the contract (Figure 24). The Request for Tender (RFT) outlines the conditions that service providers must meet if they are awarded the contract. Regarding the practical delivery of remote housing maintenance services, Section '3.8 Cost Limits for Repair Work' is notable. The RFT states that 'Where it becomes evident during the course of an item of work that the cost will exceed $500 (labour and materials), the Contractor shall not proceed without the approval of the Superintendent'. That section outlines how directions to work may be issued (for example, by telephone call, with a Contractor's Service Report [CSR] issued by the Superintendent) and sets time limits for the contractor's attendance at jobs. Menzies is aware of at least two contracted service providers that negotiated a significantly higher dollar threshold before the contract superintendent is required to approve works. This was an outcome of repeated delays experienced by service providers in relation to approvals by DIPL for maintenance works. While the request to increase this dollar threshold was denied at the contract negotiation stage, the delays associated with approvals made evident that the $500 threshold was insufficient, given the volume of jobs that exceed that amount in remote community contexts.

3.4   SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN CONTRACT

The following documents shall form part of the Contract:

DOCUMENT NO	TITLE
Attachment A	Remote Housing Maintenance Services Handbook
Attachment B	Property Management Policy
Attachment C	Condition Assessment Tool – Inspection Sheet
Attachment D	Operational Guide on Habitable, Safe, Clean and Secure Housing
Attachment E	Monthly Activity Statement
Attachment F	Monthly Employment statement sample
Attachment G	Table of Reports and Audits
Attachment H	2019 Remote Community Housing Schedules

Figure 24. Schedule of documents included in Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services tenders. Image. NT Government

It should not be the case that only the more experienced housing service providers are savvy enough to negotiate a higher threshold for works that do not require the approval of DIPL. Given that workload pressures on contract superintendents are unlikely to shift, and that backlogs are therefore likely for

proactive service providers that generate a high number of work orders, the default dollar threshold should be increased across these housing maintenance services contracts. An increase in the value threshold for works requiring departmental approval will have a proportional reduction in departmental contract superintendents' visibility of work undertaken by contracted service providers. However, this change is likely to reduce the administrative burden on contracted service providers and DIPL staff, and to reduce delays in delivering repair and maintenance works.

General maintenance services are classified by relative urgency, as: immediate, attend and render safe within four hours of notification; urgent, attend and fix within five working days of notification; and routine, attend and fix within 25 working days of notification. Section 7.20 of the RFT states that the $500 cost limit for unscheduled items 'shall not apply to work urgently required to make safe, secure, protect, isolate, cut, cap or join as may be necessary to protect persons or properties or to conserve utilities' (28). Section '9.5 Description of Works' provides a detailed summary of the various works and services that the contracted service provider is expected to deliver. Section '9.9.2.3 Works Exempt from Pre-Approval', reproduced below (Figure 25), lists works that present a risk to the health, safety and security of tenants and which can be repaired at the time of triage, without seeking further approval from the contract superintendent.

Plumbing		
Blocked drains	Toilet leaking onto floor	Broken shower rose
Blocked toilets	Fast dripping taps	Water leaking into electricals
Running taps	Water leaking into cupboards from U-bends	Burst water pipes
Unable to flush toilet	Leaking Hot water systems	
Carpentry/Building	**Arboreal**	**Electrical**
Broken windows and Replacement of Louvres blades	Fallen trees on houses, fence or footpath	Stove not working at all
Replacing external doors	Fallen trees restricting access to dwelling	Exposed wires
Replacing/Servicing door locks/hinges on external doors		No power
Replacing/Servicing locks on sliding windows		Buttons on GPO's pushed in
Servicing/repair of handicap modifications		

Figure 25. Works exempt from pre-approval. Image. NT Government

The assessment of tender applications is governed by the NTG Procurement Framework and various documents direct the award of housing maintenance tenders, used by Department staff recruited to participate on tender assessment panels. A tender assessment plan outlines individual and group

evaluation of a submission according to the Scoring and Comments spreadsheet, followed by a referee check, assessment of risks associated with each application, and the finalisation of panel scores and comments. This process is described in Appendix G – The Tender Assessment Process.

7.4   The Condition Assessment Tool

The Condition Assessment Tool – Inspection Sheet is included as Attachment C in the tender documents for remote housing maintenance services contracts (see Chapter 6 for an extended discussion of the Condition Assessment Tool and CAT inspections). Service providers contracted to deliver remote housing maintenance services are required 'to develop a plan to ensure that all dwellings within the community have been surveyed within 3 months of commencement [of the contract], and the report submitted to the Superintendent' (S 9.8.1). This is described in the tender as a 'cyclical maintenance survey', and contracted service providers are expected to repeat this process within each twelve month period. Section '9.5 Description of Works' states that the contractor is expected to: 'conduct a cyclical preventative maintenance work survey at each dwelling annually or otherwise at the direction of the Superintendent, for the purpose of establishing the condition of the dwelling'. It is unclear whether this inspection is expected to be conducted alongside, in addition to, or in place of a tenancy inspection as required under the *Residential Tenancies Act.* Contracted service providers have noted the increase in inspections that householders are subjected to, where inspection types and delivery of the Living Strong program (Chapter 8) are not able to overlap. The extent of training provided to contracted service providers related to the use of the Condition Assessment Tool is also unspecified and has been limited. During interviews, some service providers have not been aware of the Condition Assessment Tool and the obligation to undertake CAT inspections. Section 6.2 describes the form and content of the Condition Assessment Tool.

The application of the Conditional Assessment Tool – Inspection Sheet within remote housing maintenance services contracts is intended 'to prolong the expected lifespan of dwelling components' (Section 9.5.1). Practically, the process whereby contracted service providers undertake inspections using the CAT is supposed to also generate work orders for those properties. Works that present a risk to the health, safety or security of tenants should be undertaken at the time of the survey. Section '9.8.2 First Fix Planning (Works under $500)' states that 'The Contractor will develop a plan to repair all items identified in the survey as requiring repair in all dwellings in the community within 9 months of the completion of the survey'. Where the value of the items requiring fix work exceeds $500, the Contractor will notify the contract superintendent at DIPL, who will determine which works will be funded.

7.5   The Schedule of Rates

In their applications for remote housing maintenance services contracts, service providers submit a completed schedule of rates table. This is subject to negotiation with and approval by the Department

of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL). The schedule of rates is an excel spreadsheet which lists items that are coded and priced, representing labour rates and building works costs. It includes an estimated quantity of units of individual items for that contract, based on the total number of houses subject to maintenance works.

7.5.1   Price variation

There is some variation of pricing among service providers, although this information is generally considered commercial-in-confidence and Menzies' analysis is limited by the documents that have been shared by service providers. This variation is reasonable given the different logistical issues involved in delivering maintenance services at contexts proximate to urban areas, such as Darwin and Alice Springs town camps, and very remote communities that require plane, ferry, and barge travel. There is significant variation across the NT in terms of whether service providers are located within the communities they service and, if this is the desired situation, there are often access issues that must first be worked through, such as securing leases through relevant land councils for housing, office space, warehouses, storage yards, and so on. These factors bear on set-up costs where service providers are not already established. Some of these costs are significant when compared to the total value of contracts scheduled to last less than two years and which provide no exclusivity clause or presumption of contract renewal.

7.5.2   Travel expenses

If service providers are located in regional towns servicing nearby remote communities, then significant travel costs are involved in maintenance work. However, the frequently asked questions document included in tender packages states that 'Travel costs are only included within [the] schedule of rates for works associated with Government Employee Assets (GEH) only'. The FAQ document also explains that 'All other travel costs associated with Remote Housing shall be calculated as an on-cost spread across scheduled items and works raised as un-scheduled works'.

It is not justified that a distinction is made between remote community housing and government employee housing with regard to the right of contracted service providers to invoice for travel-related costs. This is a distinction that has the potential to prioritise service provision at government employee accommodation over remote community housing. Menzies is aware of at least one contracted service provider that has negotiated with DIPL to invoice some of its maintenance-related travel expenditure for remote community housing, at cost.

7.5.3   The challenge of pricing to cover costs

The RFT document includes the following text related to the schedule of rates and on-costs:

> The rates tendered are deemed to represent the full value of the work inclusive of labour, materials and waste, plant and equipment, transport, material procurement and delivery, all incidentals to complete the work (e.g. fixings, glue, sealants, gas, solder, welding rods, cutting blades, tools, consumables, finishing materials and the like), attendance, supervision and for overheads and profit.

This approach to calculating pricing has at least two effects. First, the unit cost of an individual item in the schedule of rates can appear significantly inflated. This value does not represent the cost of labour, materials, and travel related to a specific work order, but also a proportion of all costs associated with the contract. Second, this approach to distributing the costs associated with the contract across total estimated works means that the service provider is only likely to cover costs when it has delivered close to the total number of units specified in the schedule of rates. However, the contract has no guaranteed minimum of work. In other words, in what one property manager described as 'pay as you go' contracts, if there is only a need to replace 20 doors and the contract estimated 30 doors would be replaced, and this shortfall of actual work is replicated across work types estimated in the schedule of rates, the preliminaries, overheads, and on-costs built into pricing are unlikely to be recouped by the contracted service provider. Alternatively, a service provider may under-quote in the original contract negotiation, under pressure from a contract superintendent to keep prices down despite the real cost of delivering maintenance services in remote contexts and with limited direct experience as precedent. This establishes a situation where the schedule of rates does not adequately cover preliminaries, overheads, and on-costs, whereby the more work that is undertaken by a contractor, the more money it stands to lose. This is highly undesirable, given the remote housing maintenance services contracts outline the requirement that service providers use CAT inspections to proactively generate preventive maintenance work that is not otherwise reported as responsive repairs.

A further issue identified by contracted service providers relates to the comprehensiveness of the schedule of rates. The extent of maintenance work required by housing exceeds the listed items in the schedule. One property manager noted, 'The list isn't extensive enough to cover all the works that we do, and it captures a lot of works that aren't relevant to us as well, which I imagine would be similar across all the regions', while acknowledging that DIPL had 'brought out another 200-odd item codes that we're currently pricing to hopefully close that gap a little bit'. Where work is required that is not listed in the schedule of rates, service providers are required to seek permission to undertake 'unscheduled' works. However, such works have not been priced by individual service providers in original contracts. In such instances, Menzies is advised that service providers are only able to invoice for the price of labour and materials (including a small mark-up of approximately 15 per cent). However, the default pricing of such work does not include the value of preliminaries, overheads, and on-costs, which are otherwise distributed across items listed in the schedule of rates. In some remote contexts, the value of works negotiated for items within the schedule of rates may be more than 100 per cent over default pricing of those items, taking into account the actual costs associated with

remote delivery. As such, service providers stand to lose where items are not listed on the schedule of rates.

Both situations – where insufficient work is generated to cover preliminaries, overheads, and on-costs, and where under-pricing means the more work that is generated the higher the loss – are undesirable for individual providers, detrimental to the stability of the sector, and undermine good outcomes for remote community housing. This is especially the case given the broader context of the NTG's policy to shift control of housing to Aboriginal community housing providers, some of which may be managing housing maintenance contracts for the first time and with limited experience of pricing maintenance works. In order to guarantee the security of the sector and the success of smaller service providers, it may be necessary to restructure contracts to separately recognise establishment provisions, overheads, and on-costs, and/or to expand the comprehensiveness of the schedule of rates. DIPL and TFHC must also show a willingness to renegotiate pricing in contracts where the experience of service providers comes to show a higher-than-originally-estimated cost of delivering specific works. This sort of flexibility is necessary to support the expansion of Aboriginal community control of housing in remote communities and it is evident in the comments of one property manager about the need for greater consultation by government departments with regard to contracts:

> It's constantly changing. The goalposts move all the time with what we're meant to do. They make decisions without thinking about how it's actually going to work operationally. They need to consult more. They've done the first consultation, but I think it needs to be not necessarily a conversation consultation. It probably needs to be more people providing feedback, and then reviewing that and them asking questions, rather than them wanting to have the conversation but dominating the conversation about why they can't do things instead of why they could or how they could. They all say they want to change, but I'm not seeing evidence of anyone wanting to be the person to make that change.

7.5.4 Additional pressures on business and sector sustainability

Service providers have also expressed that since the establishment of some of these contracts in mid-2021, a range of global factors have undermined the adequacy of established pricing. These factors include significant increases in the price of fuel, manufacturing shortages, supply chain disruptions, and, more locally, an ongoing shortage in tradespeople, especially in remote areas, and housing to accommodate employees. These factors have undermined contracted service providers' abilities to recoup costs, let alone profit, on maintenance contracts with tight margins. This factors are also experienced by businesses that are subcontracted by contracted housing maintenance services providers, with the latter effectively wedged between schedules of rates established in government contracts and the flexible pricing of subcontractors who in many remote contexts hold an effective monopoly of specific trade services. Alongside dynamic pressures related to changes in the global economy, there are more structural barriers that limit the potential of Aboriginal community controlled organisations to deliver housing services, especially where they are doing so for the first time. In most

remote communities, there is a severe shortage of accommodation for specialist tradespeople and contractors, as well as a shortage of facilities for businesses to lease to safely store equipment and materials. The schedule of rates and the approach to contracting outlined in this chapter does not take this into account. This situation encourages a fly-in-fly-out model of maintenance services provision, which does not encourage the community development and self-sufficiency required for a large-scale devolution of control of housing services. The establishment of a new Commonwealth agreement in 2024, following the one-year agreement for 2023-24, provides an opportunity for such service providers to reset pricing that adequately recognises establishment and ongoing costs, as well as the increased costs of inputs such as fuel, materials, and labour.

7.6   Remote Housing Maintenance Services Data Analysis

7.6.1   Healthy Homes data available

The Menzies project plan anticipated that routine statistical data collected by or reported to the NT Government would be provided to the researchers to describe:

- Housing survey data describing health hardware
- Cyclical and responsive maintenance performed
- Training
- Local Aboriginal employment
- Water stress and water consumption.

Menzies did not receive data related to water stress or consumption and there appears to have been limited training delivered that relates to Healthy Homes and thus little related data. More generally, Menzies has sought to determine what data is collected by the NT Government that relates to the Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts, including: total expenditure and expenditure by contract; relative to expenditure under the prior maintenance model; the amount and value of work following CAT inspections; the breakdown of work by trade type following CAT inspections and in general; the proportion of work classified as immediate, urgent, and routine, and attributed to tenant responsibility; and Aboriginal employment as a proportion of total work; among other things.

In August 2022, following considerable delays, TFHC provided a series of CBIS datasets, and subsequently clarified questions about data definitions and provided updated datasets. This included the datasets: CBIS0085 Housing Stock, CBIS0093 Dwelling Details, and CBIS0107 Inspections Completed for relevant communities. In November and December of 2022, Menzies was supplied with a variety of reports generated from ASNEX related to the Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts and maintenance works at remote communities under the old model contracts. This included expenditure data related to active contracts, including ASNEX005 Period Contract Summary, ASNEX075 Contract Item Usage, and ASNEX095 Contract Item Usage Detail Reports. In addition, Menzies received ASNEX092 Period Contract Expenditure Per Year Reports for

historical trade panel and housing maintenance coordinator contracts. Menzies requested and was provided with updated versions of these datasets at the beginning of March 2023. Chapter 6 describes expenditure data related to repair works at town camps not included in the original Healthy Homes program and Chapter 8 includes consideration of data related to the Living Strong program. Menzies is appreciative that this data was provided and we have been especially grateful to the support provided by one TFHC project officer to respond to our requests from late 2022 onwards.

Menzies also requested data from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics related to the following program components:

- The proportion of Aboriginal employment (number of individuals and FTE) for the years of the current national funding agreement 2018-2023 under the Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. program

- The proportion of Aboriginal employment (number of individuals and FTE) under Healthy Homes contracts

- The proportion of remote community properties receiving annual property inspections, per annum for the years of the national funding agreement 2018-2023 (as reported to the JSC)

- The proportion of remote community dwellings not inspected for more than 1 year, per annum for the years of the national funding agreement 2018-2023 (as reported to the JSC).

Menzies received some employment data on 27 July 2023 as this report was being finalised, following feedback from EAG members. However, the employment data provided included combined figures for employment in capital works, property maintenance, and tenancy management services and could not be differentiated to show Healthy Homes specific data. As such, it has not been represented in this report.

The analysis that follows identifies the specific NT Government data sources on which tables and graphs are based. Statistical analyses were conducted with Stata 17. While this report can comment on the completeness of the data provided and available, it is not possible to report on its accuracy. This chapter adopts 1 July 2021 as an approximate date for the commencement of Healthy Homes to distinguish the program from the prior maintenance model, unless otherwise specified. The commencement dates for Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance and remote tenancy management support services contracts varied significantly.

7.6.2   What the data does not show

Based on the program data that we have received, and our understanding of the datasets compiled by the NT Government in relation to remote housing, it is not possible to examine a number of key program impacts. In particular, it is not possible using available NT Government data to distinguish between preventive and responsive repairs and maintenance works. More specifically, it is not possible to determine which work orders are the result of Condition Assessment Tool inspections. Given that the requirement to undertake CAT inspections is central to Healthy Homes'

characterisation as a preventive maintenance program, further consideration is needed as to how any such preventive maintenance work can be distinguished and tracked.

Similarly, it is not possible using existing data to distinguish among completed work orders those jobs completed by qualified tradespeople and non-trade-qualified handypersons. This distinction would be useful to track in relation to consistent suggestions from within the sector to increase the employment of remote-located Aboriginal householders in housing maintenance. It is also not possible to determine whether there has been an improvement in the timeliness of completion of work orders following tenant reporting. Existing datasets are a more accurate representation of contracted service providers' reporting processes (i.e. when they bulk upload invoices) than the actual delivery of jobs, and as such they are a poor source of information about the lengths of time between tenant reporting and maintenance works.

Unlike Healthabitat data, NT Government data such as exists within CBIS0093 Dwelling Details does not provide detailed information about the condition of health hardware at dwellings at the time of the inspections and dwellings' capacity to support healthy living practices (HLPs), or about the repairs and maintenance that is required to improve individual house function. This could be extrapolated from completed Condition Assessment Tool inspections but this data (where it is available) is not currently integrated into datasets such as CBIS0093 Dwelling Details.

7.6.3 Remote community housing stock and crowding

As at December 2022, TFHC data (CBIS0201 Overcrowding) represented 5498 dwellings (houses and units) subject to the Healthy Homes program, with 89 per cent (4894) of those houses currently occupied. Of these, 5084 dwellings are located in remote communities, 298 in Alice Springs town camps, and 116 in Tennant Creek community living areas. The NT Government uses the Canadian National Occupancy Standard to calculate crowding levels, which determines crowding based on how many bedrooms are required for the number of occupants, their age, and gender. Of the total occupied dwellings, 52.9 per cent are classified as overcrowded, with overcrowding at 18.3 per cent at Alice Springs town camp houses and at 55.8 per cent of Tennant Creek community living area houses. Figure 26 provides an overview of comparative dwelling numbers and the prevalence of overcrowding by Northern Territory region.

Region	Total dwellings	Occupied	Overcrowded (%)
Top End (Arafura)	1643	1482	51.9
Arnhem	988	931	68.1
Barkly	290	263	41.8
Big Rivers	1015	927	55.6
Central Australia	1138	916	45.1
Alice Springs town camps	298	262	18.3
Tennant Creek community living areas	116	113	55.8
Total	5498	4894	52.9

Figure 26. Number of dwellings and proportion of overcrowded dwellings by region

* Figures in this table for the Barkly region exclude houses at Tennant Creek community living areas and figures for Central Australia exclude houses at Alice Springs town camps

Figure 27 shows the prevalence of overcrowding in remote community (including Alice Springs town camps and Tennant Creek community living areas) houses over time (based on CBIS0201 Overcrowding reports). The period shown (2017-2022) represents crowding at the commencement of the Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. program (2017), the commencement of the *Northern Territory National Remote Housing Agreement* (2018), and the commencement of Healthy Homes (2021). The improvement in the prevalence of overcrowding across this five-year period has been marginal. Total dwellings has increased by 421, or 8.3 per cent of total housing stock at 2017. The prevalence of overcrowded dwellings has decreased by 2.09 per cent across five years.

Year	Dwellings	Occupied	Overcrowded (%)
2017	5077	4599	54.99
2018	5139	4724	54.38
2019	5210	4771	54.47
2020	5310	4845	53.15
2021	5417	4915	52.27
2022	5498	4894	52.90

Figure 27. Proportion of overcrowded dwellings in remote communities over time

Figure 28 shows the total number and proportion of unoccupied dwellings at remote communities by year. Since 2017, this has ranged from eight to 11 per cent. It is important to maintain a proportion of vacancies, as such situations are opportunities for upgrade works. However, this is a relatively high proportion of the total remote community housing stock. Improvements to the timeliness of vacate scope and maintenance work (see Section 2.3.4) could reduce the total number of unoccupied properties and by extension the prevalence of overcrowding.

Year	Dwellings	Unoccupied	Unoccupied (%)
2017	5077	478	9.4
2018	5139	412	8
2019	5210	439	8.4
2020	5310	465	8.8
2021	5417	502	9.3
2022	5498	604	11

Figure 28. Proportion of unoccupied remote community dwellings on 31 December each year

7.6.4   Inspections

The CBIS0107 Inspections Completed report records a total 1812 inspections undertaken from 1 July 2021 to 28 February 2023 across houses involved in the Healthy Homes program. These inspections were conducted on 1483 (26.9 per cent) of a total 5498 dwellings. Of these 1483 dwellings, 243, 39 and 6 dwellings received two, three, and four inspections respectively, while the remaining 1195 dwellings received only one inspection.

Overall, the CBIS0107 report records only 143 inspections performed on 143 dwellings using the Condition Assessment Tool. This accounts for 7.9 per cent of the total 1812 inspections undertaken across the 20-month period (Figure 29).

Condition Assessment Tool Inspections
as a Proportion of Total Inspections

■ Condition Assessment Tool inspections   ■ Other types of inspections
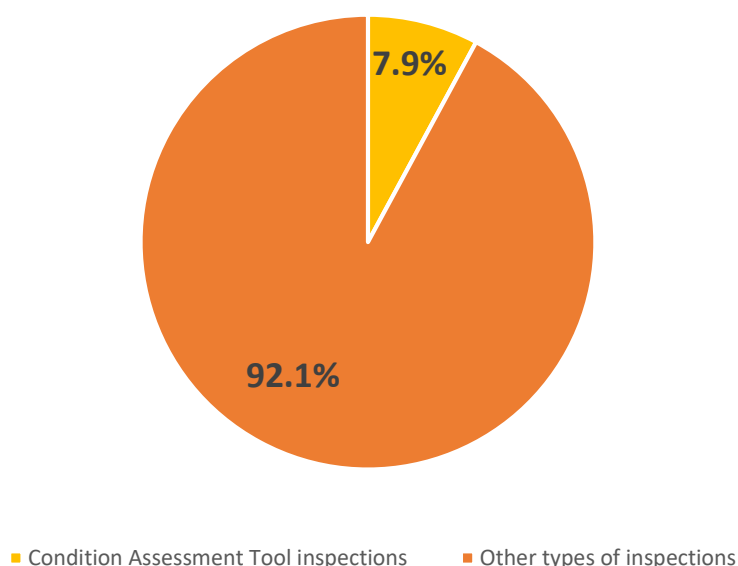
Figure 29. Condition Assessment Tool inspections as a proportion of total inspections recorded in CBIS0107

The total number of Condition Assessment Tool inspections recorded in the CBIS0107 report (143) equates to addressing just 2.6 per cent of the total 5498 dwellings included in the Healthy Homes program as at December 2022 (Figure 30).
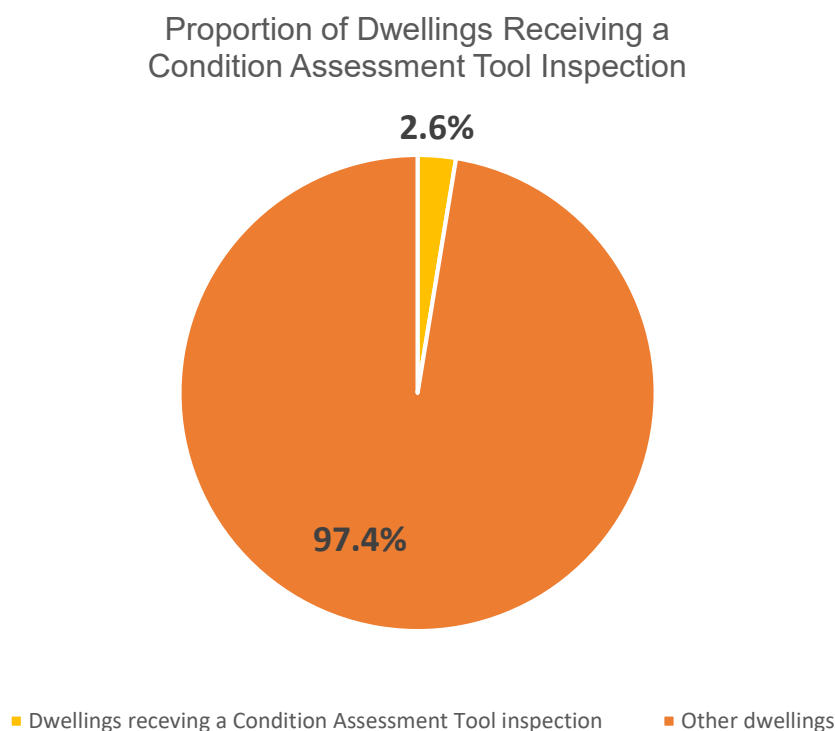
Figure 30. Proportion of dwellings receiving a Condition Assessment Tool inspection as recorded in CBIS0107

According to the CBIS0107 report, the most common types of inspection undertaken were Period Lease inspections (a standard tenancy inspection where a tenant is on a period lease), and Property Condition Reports (an inspection conducted at the start of a tenancy to provide the tenant with a property condition report, which is used at the end of a tenancy for determining wear and tear or tenant damage). Across the 20-month period, 687 Period Lease inspections and 719 Property Condition Report inspections were reported. 121 Maintenance inspections were also reported as being undertaken during this time (see Figure 31).

The application of the Condition Assessment Tool and other types of inspections results in various coded outcomes, including a pass (no work required), contractor and tenant maintenance required, contractor maintenance required, and tenant maintenance required. The different inspection types generated quite different results. Only two (one per cent) of the CAT inspections were recorded as a pass, while all of the remaining CAT inspections reported that maintenance by a contractor was required, except one that only required tenant maintenance. In contrast, 67 per cent of Period Lease and 88 per cent of Property Condition Report inspections were recorded as passing. The most similar,

outcome related to Maintenance inspections[16], which recorded a 17 per cent pass rate and all but one of the remaining maintenance inspections requiring contractor maintenance. These results suggest a greater thoroughness of the CAT inspections compared to other types of inspections, and that other types of inspection were unlikely to generate repairs and maintenance works consistent with the aims of Healthy Homes.

The inspections dataset recorded that a follow up was required after only 54 (9 per cent) of the 615 inspections which did not pass and required some form of maintenance. There were no entries recorded in the field for whether a follow up occurred or not. Despite the importance of monitoring whether the required repairs and maintenance occurred following these inspections, the recorded data provided is unable to support this task. Overall, according to the CBIS0107 report, less than 3 per cent of the 4894 occupied dwellings (as at December 2022) were subject to a CAT inspection during the period represented by available data. There were no CAT inspections recorded in the last five months for which Menzies received CBIS data (November 2022 to March 2023), after Menzies highlighted the low number of CAT inspections in the interim report delivered October 2022.

Inspection type	Pass (%)	Contractor & tenant maintenance required (%)	Contractor required (%)	Tenant maintenance required (%)	Total
Condition Assessment Tool	1	16	82	1	143
Final	67	6	27	0	98
Fixed-term Lease	55	18	27	0	11
Legacy Dwelling*	24	0	76	0	17
Maintenance*	17	21	62	0	121
Period Lease	67	7	25	1	687
Property Condition Report	88	4	8	0	719
Transfer*	100	0	0	0	2
Vacate*	43	7	50	0	14
Total	66	8	26	0	1812

Figure 31. Inspection type and result as a proportion of inspection type

* These inspection types are no longer in use or typically undertaken by contracted service providers.

While the CBIS0107 Inspections Completed report suggests a very small number of CAT inspections have been completed since the commencement of Healthy Homes, our analysis of expenditure data

---

[16] Prior to Machinery of Government changes, this was an inspection type that was conducted by a Property Contract Officer on a dwelling. Although there is an expectation that this inspection type is no longer used, it was reported throughout the period under analysis.

indicates different results. Using ASNEX Contract Item Usage Detail Reports, coded for work type, it was evident that significant expenditure had been attributed to the subcategories 'Cyclical Housing Preventative Maintenance Survey – Tradesman' and 'Cyclical Housing Preventative Maintenance Survey – Trainee' under the 'Other' code. This data provided a total expenditure attributed to CAT inspections and a total number of CAT inspections (using the total dwellings associated with charges for 'Cyclical Housing Preventative Maintenance Survey – Tradesman').

Taking this alternative approach, the total expenditure attributed to CAT inspections since the commencement of Healthy Homes at 1 July 2021 until 28 February 2023 is $623,766.3. The contract expenditure data suggests that the total number of CAT inspections undertaken across the same period is 1315. This is a notably larger figure than the 143 CAT inspections recorded in the CBIS0107 report. However, it remains a small proportion of the total remote community houses serviced under the remote maintenance program, at 23.9 per cent (see Figure 32).[17] By February 2023, many of the houses subject to Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts should have received two CAT inspections, as an annual inspection to be undertaken within the first three months of contract commencement.

Proportion of Dwellings Receiving a Condition Assessment Tool Inspection, According to Expenditure Data
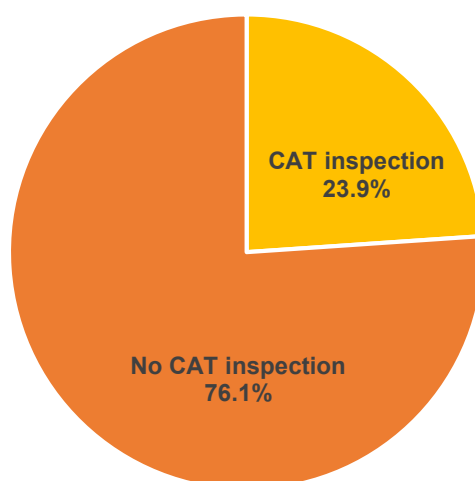
Figure 32. Proportion of dwellings recorded as receiving a Condition Assessment Tool inspection using expenditure data

---

[17] It is possible that individual dwellings have been subject to multiple CAT inspections, and that the total number of dwellings receiving a CAT inspection across this period is thus lower than 1315. However, this is unlikely, given the short period represented by the analysis and that these inspections are conducted at most annually.

There are two issues of note here. First, and most importantly, there is the widespread non-delivery of CAT inspections as intended by the program and as required by program contracts. This undermines the claim that Healthy Homes has prioritised cyclical or preventive maintenance. Second, there is a disjuncture between contract expenditure data and program reports. This undermines the ability of TFHC to understand what is happening in a program where maintenance contracts are superintended by DIPL staff.

7.6.5 Expenditure

Healthy Homes did not aim to increase overall expenditure on remote community housing maintenance. On the contrary, one factor prompting the reform of the remote maintenance program was a concern inside the NT Government that it was subject to overcharging by trade panel contractors. In other words, expenditure is only an approximate proxy for the total quantity of housing maintenance services delivered to remote householders. Expenditure is not a good indicator for the quality of maintenance works.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider expenditure on remote housing maintenance services, including whether this approximates the $35m per annum budgeted for this purpose by the NT Government under Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. This section draws on expenditure data (ASNEX005 Period Contract Summary, ASNEX075 Contract Item Usage, and ASNEX095 Contract Item Usage Detail Reports) for all remote housing maintenance contracts awarded under Healthy Homes, and all trade panel and housing maintenance coordinator contracts awarded under the prior model.

Year	TP/HMC ($)	Healthy Homes ($)	Total ($)
2014	2,930,996		2,930,996
2015	25,758,472		25,758,472
2016	42,193,618		42,193,618
2017	37,538,453		37,538,453
2018	56,782,857		56,782,857
2019	50,914,835		50,914,835
2020	36,331,174		36,331,174
2021	28,875,640	305,146	29,180,786
2022	10,883,019	32,238,183	43,121,202

Figure 33. Total expenditure on remote community housing repairs and maintenance, by service model over time

Figure 33 shows the total expenditure[18] on remote community housing repairs and maintenance across the period 2014 to 2022, by calendar year. Under the former remote housing maintenance model, expenditure occurred under the combination of trade panel (TP) and housing maintenance coordinator (HMC) contracts. Healthy Homes contracts commenced from July 2021, but most Healthy Homes expenditure is related to 2022. Despite the commencement of Healthy Homes, new remote housing maintenance services contracts were not awarded in some communities, where the former trade panel contracts (though not typically the housing maintenance coordinator contracts) were renewed, which accounts for the associated expenditure in 2022.

Figure 34 represents the annual remote community housing maintenance expenditure by service model. Expenditure peaked in 2018 with a total of $56.78m. From 2015 to 2022 inclusive (excluding 2014), the average total expenditure was approximately $40.23m. Under the first complete year of the Healthy Homes model (2022), total expenditure was approximately $43.12m.
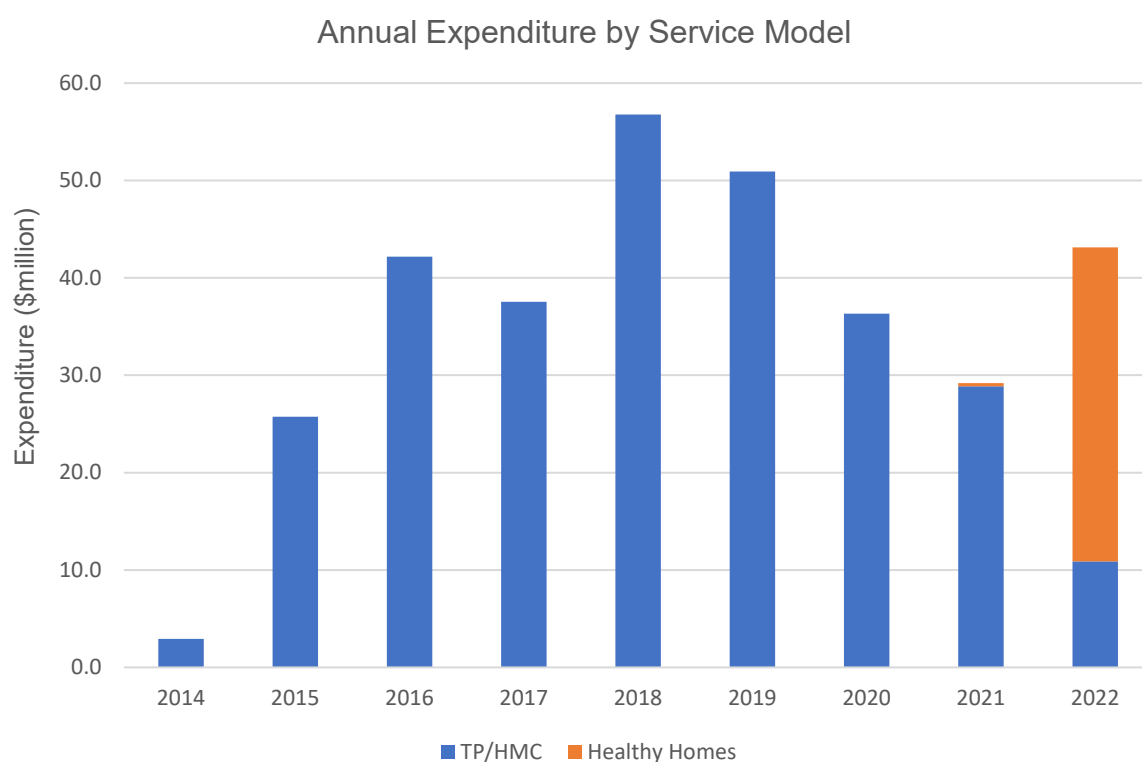
Figure 34. Annual remote housing community maintenance expenditure by service model

Figure 35 shows the average expenditure per house across the period since the commencement of the former (trade panel and housing maintenance coordinator) remote community housing model and into the Healthy Homes period. This has been calculated by dividing total expenditure per annum by total housing stock (with figures drawn from CBIS0085 Housing Stock reports for remote communities

---

[18] All expenditure data in this chapter includes goods and services tax (GST).

plus Alice Springs town camps and Tennant Creek community living areas as at 31 December each year). The highest average annual expenditure per house was experienced in 2018 at $11,049.4 while averages have typically fallen in a range between five and nine thousand dollars per annum. Figure 36 presents the average expenditure per house across the period 2014-2022 as a bar chart.

Year	Expenditure per house ($)
2014	581.4
2015	5155.8
2016	8375.1
2017	7393.8
2018	11049.4
2019	9772.5
2020	6842.0
2021	5386.9
2022	7843.1

Figure 35. Average expenditure per house over time
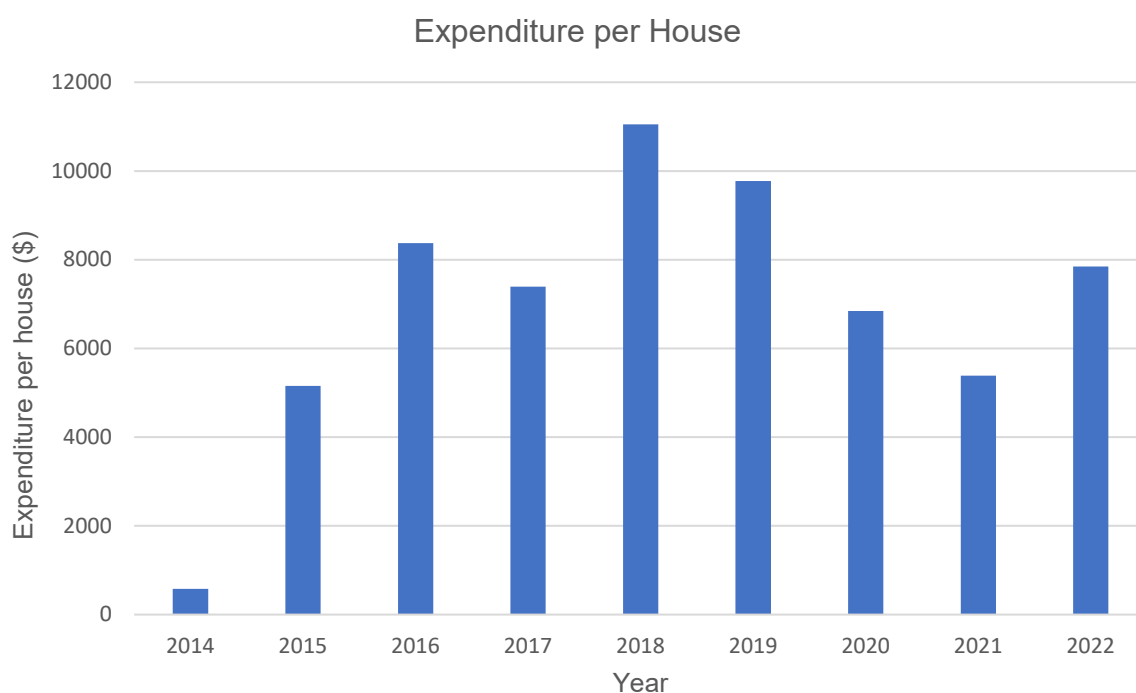
Figure 36. Average expenditure per house over time

There is significant variability in expenditure across the NT's five regions, as defined by government. These are Top End, Arnhem, Big Rivers, Barkly, and Central Australia. Figure 37 shows the total annual expenditure by region across the period 2017-2022. The year with the highest average expenditure was 2018, during which the combined regional average was $11.4m, which was skewed

by significant expenditure in Central Australia ($26m). The highest expenditure is consistently in the Central Australian region, with an average per annum expenditure of $13.3m across the six-year period. The lowest expenditure is consistently in the Barkly, with an average per annum expenditure of $3.1m across the six-year period. Figure 38 represents total annual maintenance expenditure by region across the period 2017-2022 as a line chart.

Region	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average by region ($m)	Total houses (at 2022)
Top End	8.9	10.1	12.6	9.8	7.1	16.0	10.8	1643
Arnhem	8.9	10.7	11.5	8.5	5.9	6.4	8.6	988
Big Rivers	6.7	7.4	8.6	6.2	3.4	6.4	6.4	1025
Barkly	1.8	2.7	5.2	2.8	3.0	3.3	3.1	406
Central Australia	11.2	26.0	13.1	9.0	9.7	11.0	13.3	1436
Average by year ($m)	7.5	11.4	10.2	7.3	5.8	8.6		

Figure 37. Total annual maintenance expenditure by region ($million), 2017-2022
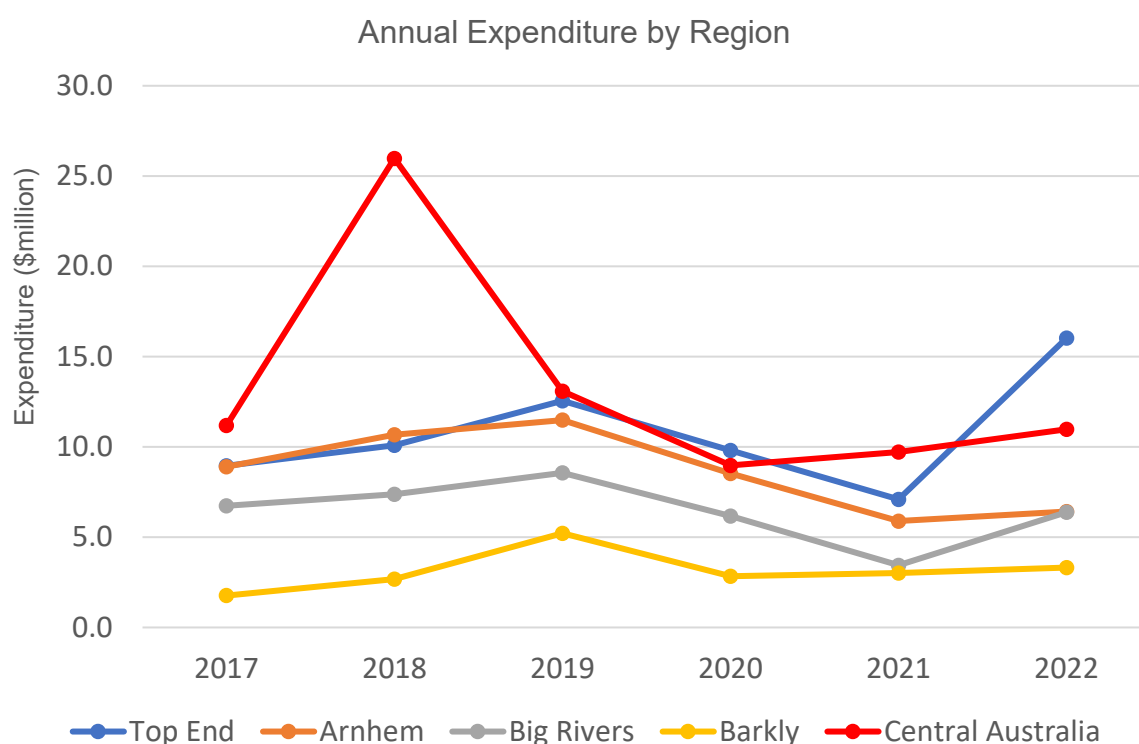
Figure 38. Total annual maintenance expenditure by region ($million), 2017-2022

The average expenditure per house also varied significantly across the five NT regions. Figure 39 shows the average expenditure per house by region for the period 2017-2022. The region with the

highest per house expenditure across the period was Central Australia, at an average of $9449 per annum. The region with the lowest per house expenditure across the period was Big Rivers, with an average of $4782 per annum.

Region	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average by region ($)
Top End	8321.8	9193.6	11,335.5	8697.4	4401.9	7994.0	8324.0
Arnhem	9888.6	11,558.3	12,049.1	8901.8	6096.5	4341.7	8806.0
Big Rivers	4969.6	5348.4	6076.5	4221.3	3399.3	4678.0	4782.2
Barkly	4549.9	6898.6	13,482.3	7323.8	7424.7	4491.9	7361.9
Central Australia	8239.0	19,203.5	9677.0	6536.9	6860.1	6179.3	9449.3
Average by year ($)	7193.8	10,440.5	10,524.1	7136.2	5636.5	5537.0	

Figure 39. Average expenditure per house by region, 2017-2022

In 2022, when the two service models – Healthy Homes and the trade panel arrangement – were operating simultaneously, average expenditure per house for the respective service models can be compared. Figure 40 shows that Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts now apply to a significant majority of remote community houses that receive maintenance services (79 per cent). These houses are on average subject to significantly less maintenance spending – $7424.7 per house in 2022 as compared to $9414.4 expended on average per house under renewed trade panel contracts. Given that the continuing trade panel contracts exist in the Central Australia region, the higher expenditure may reflect the region as much as the service model.

	Trade Panel	Healthy Homes	Total
Total expenditure ($)	10,883,019	32,238,183	43,121,202
Number of houses	1156	4342	5498
Per house expenditure ($)	9414.4	7424.7	7843.1

Figure 40. Average expenditure per house by service model in 2022

7.6.6   Healthy Homes expenditure and Government Employee Housing

Healthy Homes is a program that has been designed to improve house function in remote communities, Alice Springs town camps, and Tennant Creek community living areas on behalf of improving the housing and health outcomes of Aboriginal householders. It uses Commonwealth Government funding and draws from the $200m allocated to repairs under the Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. program, distinguished in that program from funding allocated to HomeBuild ($500m), Room to Breathe ($200m), and Government Employee Housing ($200m). However, existing datasets related to Healthy Homes contracts for remote housing maintenance services are

complicated by not being limited to representing expenditure at public housing in remote communities, Alice Springs town camps, and Tennant Creek community living areas. Instead, a significant proportion of expenditure under these contract specific datasets relates to the repair and maintenance of government employee housing in those locations.

Figures in the CBIS0085 Housing Stock report at December 2022 show a total 5498 remote public housing properties (including 298 in town camps and 116 in community living areas). In those contexts, in addition to remote public housing reserved for Aboriginal householders, there are an additional 1864 government employee housing units, as well as 37 emergency housing units, and 4 other (industry housing) units. This is a total 7403 properties in prescribed remote communities, Alice Springs town camps, and Tennant Creek community living areas.

Under the prior remote housing maintenance model, it was typical that tenders for trade panel services applied to larger clusters of communities than equivalent tenders for housing maintenance coordinator services. For example, Figure 41 shows the communities subject to trade panel services under the 2014 tender 'A13-0032 Central Australian Region – Panel Contract for the Provision of Trade Qualified Repairs and Maintenance Works in Specific Remote Communities for a Period of 55 Months' as compared to communities subject to housing maintenance coordinator services in the same region under 'A13-0030 Central Australian Region – Provision of Housing Maintenance Coordination Services in Specified Remote Communities for a Period of 55 Months'.

A13-032 Trade Panel	A13-0030 HMC
Amoonguna	
Areyonga	Areyonga
Atitjere	Atitjere
Engawala	Engawala
Finke	Finke
Haasts Bluff	Haasts Bluff
Hermannsburg	Hermannsburg
Imanpa	Imanpa
Kaltukatjara	Kaltukatjara
Kintore	Kintore
Laramba	Laramba
Mount Liebig	Mount Liebig
Nturiya	Nturiya
Nyirripi	Nyirripi
Papunya	Papunya
Pmara Jutunta	Pmara Jutunta
Santa Teresa	Santa Teresa

Titjikala	Titjikala
Wallace Rockhole	Wallace Rockhole
Willowra	Willowra
Wilora	Wilora
Yuelamu	Yuelamu
Yuendumu	Yuendumu
Ankerrapw	
Anmatjere	
Arlparra	
Burt Plain	
Flynn	
Hart	
Hart Range	
Hugh	
Ipolera	Ipolera
Kulgera	
Mbunghara	Mbunghara
Ormiston Gorge	
Orrtipa-Thurra	
Mutitjulu (Rangerville)	Mutitjulu (Rangerville)
Stuart	
Ti Tree	Ti Tree
Trephina Gorge	
Watarrka	

Figure 41. Comparison of application of trade panel and housing maintenance coordinator tenders

In general terms, housing maintenance coordinator contracts only applied to remote Aboriginal communities. Trade panel contracts were established to provide services at remote Aboriginal communities and other remote settlements, including non-Indigenous towns, national parks, homelands, and other small settlements. In those contexts, maintenance services were also delivered to government employee housing. This situation, where more communities were included in trade panel tenders than in housing maintenance coordinator tenders, was typical for program arrangements across the Northern Territory.

The central Australian example described above is apt for a consideration of the contemporary arrangement as no Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contract was awarded in the region. Instead, this trade panel arrangement has been renewed. Under the renewed arrangement, houses at the full list of communities included in the original 2014 trade panel tender continue to be serviced (e.g., including at Ankerrapw, Anmatjere, Arlparra, etc.). In 2021, this totaled

an additional 59 houses to those in the proportion of the 73 remote communities named in this contract (e.g. Amoonguna, Areyonga, Atitjere, etc.). Elsewhere, while Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services tenders and contracts specify housing at 73 remote Aboriginal communities these arrangements appear to also have remained in operation. Practically, this means that contracted service providers deliver maintenance services to remote public housing and government employee housing. This has implications for how we should understand total expenditure under the Healthy Homes program.

To explore this issue of the proportion of expenditure in Healthy Homes contract datasets that relates to government employee housing, we randomly selected three contracts to examine the distribution of expenditure. Within ASNEX data, the ASNEX005 Period Contract Summary report differentiates expenditure by Project Number category, which is itself differentiated into Project Component Numbers.

Contract A is a remote housing maintenance services contract related to four communities in the Barkly region. Figure 42 shows that total expenditure under this contract in 2022 was $1,308,647. 87.8 per cent of the total expenditure ($1,149,374) was related to remote community housing while almost all of the remainder (12 per cent or $157,117) was related to government employee housing.

Contract A Project Description and Number	Expenditure ($)	Expenditure (%)
Government Employee Housing Maintenance (HOT58140)	157,117	12.0
Remote Community Housing Panel[19] (HOT58200)	1,149,374	87.8
Barkly Community Living Areas and Township Maintenance Services (HOT07910)	1879	0.2
Urban Public Housing – Responsive Maintenance (HOT58330)	277	0.0
Total	1,308,647	100

Figure 42. Expenditure breakdown for Contract A

Contract B is a remote housing maintenance services contract related to two communities in the Big Rivers region. Figure 43 shows that total expenditure under this contract in 2022 was $1,264,496. 86.7 per cent of the total expenditure ($1,096,714) was related to remote community housing while

---

[19] The reference to 'panel' in the Project number here is a legacy coding issue. The contract is a Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contract, rather than a trade panel arrangement.

almost all of the remainder (11.6 per cent or $146,396) was related to government employee housing under two project numbers

Contract B Project Description and Number	Expenditure ($)	Expenditure (%)
Government Employee Housing Maintenance (HOK58140)	121,435	9.6
Remote Community Housing Panel (HOK58200)	1,096,714	86.7
Government Employee Housing – Minor Works (HOK88140)	24,961	2.0
Remote Community Housing – Residential Tenancies Act – Remote Rent Review – Katherine (HOK57550)	21,386	1.7
Total	1,264,496	100

Figure 43. Expenditure breakdown for Contract B

Contract C is a remote housing maintenance services contract related to one community in the Top End (Arafura) region. Figure 44 shows that total expenditure under this contact in 2022 was $1,610,536. 87 per cent of the total expenditure ($1,400,875) was related to remote community housing while most of the remaining expenditure (10.7 per cent or $171,893) was related to the maintenance of government employee housing.

Contract C Project Description and Number	Expenditure ($)	Expenditure (%)
Government Employee Housing Maintenance (HOJ58140)	171,893	10.7
Remote Community Housing Panel (HOJ58200)	1,400,875	87.0
Grounds Maintenance / Cleaning / Litter / Arboreal / Remove Vehicles (HOJ07450)	1,760	0.1
No description available (HOJ58450)	877	0.1
Government Employee Housing – Minor Works (HOJ88140)	8,504	0.5
Remote Community Housing Minor Works (HOJ88200)	26,305	1.6
Remote Community Housing Panel (HOK58200)	322	0.0
Total	1,610,536	100

Figure 44. Expenditure breakdown for Contract C

The above contracts relate respectively to 158, 164, and 177 remote community houses across a total seven communities. This is a total 499 houses, or approximately 8.4 per cent of the total remote community housing stock at December 2022. Based on the expenditure data represented in Figure

42, Figure 43, and Figure 44, the total expenditure in 2022 under these three contracts was $4,183,679. Dividing total expenditure by total houses, the approach taken in the expenditure section above (7.6.5), the average expenditure per house in 2022 across these contracts is $8384.1.

However, the above figures indicate that a significant proportion of this total expenditure has actually been dedicated to government employee housing – between 10.7 and 12 per cent. Of the total $4,183,679, $450,445, or 10.8 per cent, has been dedicated to government employee housing. Across the seven communities receiving services under the three contracts there is a total 89 government employee houses. This means the total expenditure across the three contracts is actually distributed across 588 houses, as the total of remote community and government employee housing. Figure 45 shows the average expenditure per house by contract, distinguishing expenditure dedicated to remote public housing and government employee housing. Across the three contracts, the average expenditure on government employee housing in the year 2022 was $5061.2, while the average expenditure on remote public housing was $7308.5. If we divide the total expenditure under active maintenance contracts in 2022 ($43,121,202) by the combined total of remote public and government employee housing (7403), the average expenditure per house in 2022 is $5825. However, this assumes the same expenditure on remote public and government employee housing. If the ratio of expenditure per house on remote public housing to government employee housing was the same in all other contracts as in the three selected contracts ($7308.5: $5061.2), the average expenditure per house in 2022 was $6352 on remote public housing and $4399 on government employee housing. In summary, average expenditure per remote public house in 2022 is estimated to be about $6,000.

Contract	House Type	Number of Houses	Expenditure ($)	Expenditure Per House ($)
A	Government Employee Housing	26	157,117	6043.0
	Remote Public Housing	158	1,149,374	7274.5
B	Government Employee Housing	29	121,435	4187.4
	Remote Public Housing	164	1,096,714	6687.3
C	Government Employee Housing	34	171,893	5055.7
	Remote Public Housing	177	1,400,875	7914.5
Combined Contracts	Government Employee Housing	89	450,445	5061.2
	Remote Public Housing	499	3,646,963	7308.5

Figure 45. Total expenditure and average expenditure per house distinguished for remote public housing and government employee housing under selected contracts

This analysis indicates that there is some inflation of expenditure figures for remote public housing in remote communities if such figures are extracted from the expenditure datasets for Healthy Homes contracts without due consideration given to expenditure on government employee housing. Across the Northern Territory, the total combined expenditure under Healthy Homes contracts (remote

housing maintenance services and trade panel) in 2022 actually refers to a total 7403 houses (a total comprised of 5498 remote community houses, 1864 government employee houses, and a small number in other categories). It is not clear why expenditure datasets for contracts awarded under Healthy Homes represent such significant expenditure on government employee housing. Maintenance works on government employee housing are not a key feature of Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts. TFHC and DIPL should ensure that any figures on maintenance expenditure drawn from ASNEX expenditure datasets account for the inclusion of expenditure on government employee housing. Relatedly, these departments must ensure that expenditure on government employee housing does reduce the available funding allocation for remote community housing.

7.6.7   Expenditure by work type

Expenditure data supplied by TFHC is based on invoicing by contracted service providers. Those contractors invoice completed works with regard to the schedule of rates agreed to under each contract. This means that total expenditure under the remote housing maintenance program can be disaggregated by work or trade type.

The work types represented in the expenditure data include: air conditioning; building; cleaning; electrical; fencing; general carpentry; ground maintenance; labour hire; landscaping; miscellaneous; other; other expenses; painting; pest control; plumbing; and travel. There is some obvious imprecision in these categories. To provide further clarification, 'Other Expenses' (EX) typically relates to expenses incurred through plant hire, disbursement or fixed monthly management costs. 'Other' (OT) typically relates to unscheduled items and CAT inspections. 'Miscellaneous' (MM) typically relates to materials, percentage mark-up materials, percentage mark-up on specialist subcontractors, and miscellaneous quoted works. This analysis has subsumed the code 'Mechanical/Air Conditioning' (MA) into the category 'Air Conditioning' (AC). Similarly, it has subsumed the code TG, typically used for travel or site attendance, into 'Travel' (XP).

Figure 46 shows the distribution of expenditure by work type for all active maintenance contracts in 2022. Expenditure on key trades constitutes a significant proportion of total expenditure, as might be expected. Electrical work accounts for $6.2m, General Carpentry accounts for $3m, and Plumbing accounts for $4.7m of the total $43.1m. However, what is also evident in Figure 46 is the significant proportion of work coded to Miscellaneous, $11.9m, Other, $8.3m, and Other Expenses, $1.9m. Together, approximately 51.5 per cent of total expenditure in 2022 was coded to one of these categories.

Expenditure by Work Type, All Contracts, 2022
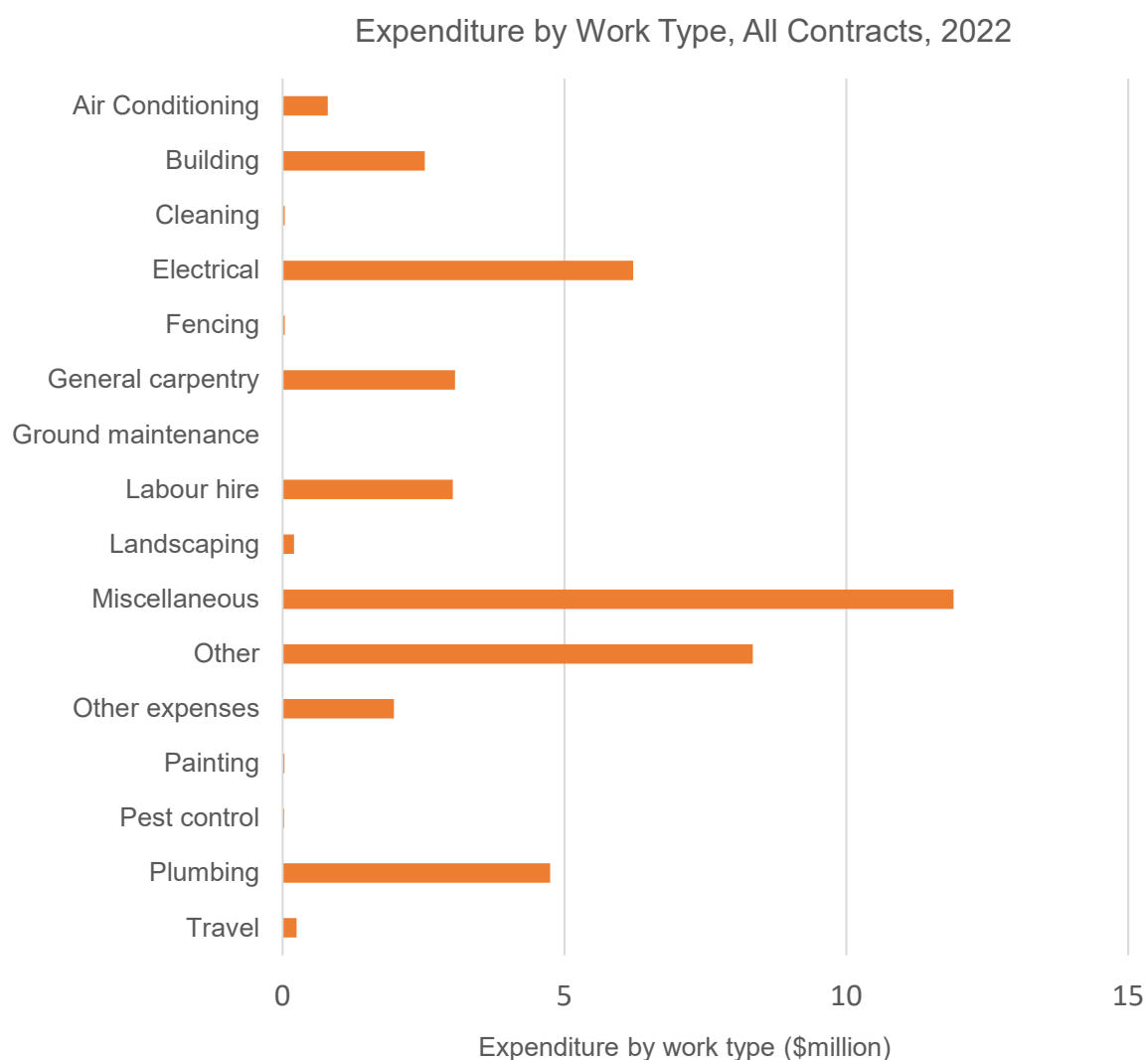
Figure 46. Distribution of total expenditure by work type in 2022

There is significant variation across individual contracts in terms of the distribution of expenditure by work type. This is most evident in relation to the categories 'Other' and 'Miscellaneous'. Within the expenditure data, 'Other' includes a number of subcategories: cyclical housing preventative maintenance survey – tradesman; cyclical housing preventive maintenance survey – trainee; unscheduled item – provide quote for scoped works; non access to dwelling. Across the period July 2021 to February 2023, a total $11,522,983.74 was categorised as Other within the remote housing maintenance data. Figure 47 shows that 75.2 per cent of this expenditure categorised Other was attributed to the subcategory 'Unscheduled item', while 5.4 per cent of this amount related to CAT inspections.

Expenditure Categorised 'Other' by Subcategory (%)
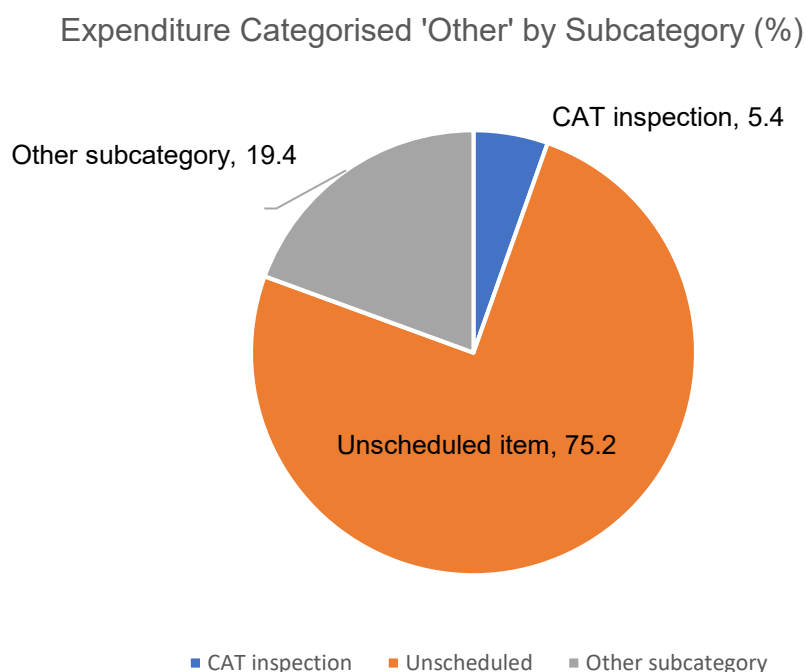
Figure 47. Expenditure categorised 'Other' by subcategory, July 2021 to February 2023

The proportion of total expenditure coded as 'unscheduled item' is the major cause of significant variation between contracts. Figure 48 uses the same three contracts considered in the section 7.6.6 above to represent the distribution of expenditure by work type within each contract for the year 2022. In Contracts C, B, and A, the proportion of total expenditure coded as Other across the period 1 July 2021 to 28 February 2023 was 52.2 per cent, 7.9 per cent, and 11.3 per cent respectively. In contract C, almost all the expenditure coded Other was attributed to 'Unscheduled item' (94.7 per cent, or $1,131,889.6) and similarly for Contract A a majority of the expenditure coded Other was attributed to 'Unscheduled item (67.2 per cent, or $174,576.8). Contract B showed a different distribution, with only 0.4 per cent of the total expenditure coded Other attributed to 'Unscheduled item'.

Consideration of these individual contracts suggests significant variability in terms of how contracted service providers are using agreed upon schedules of rates to bill the NT Government for completed works. In some instances, it appears contracted service providers are invoicing for work with limited consideration given to the schedule of rates. This undermines the ability of the NT Government to ensure that the cost of maintenance works is consistent and reasonable.
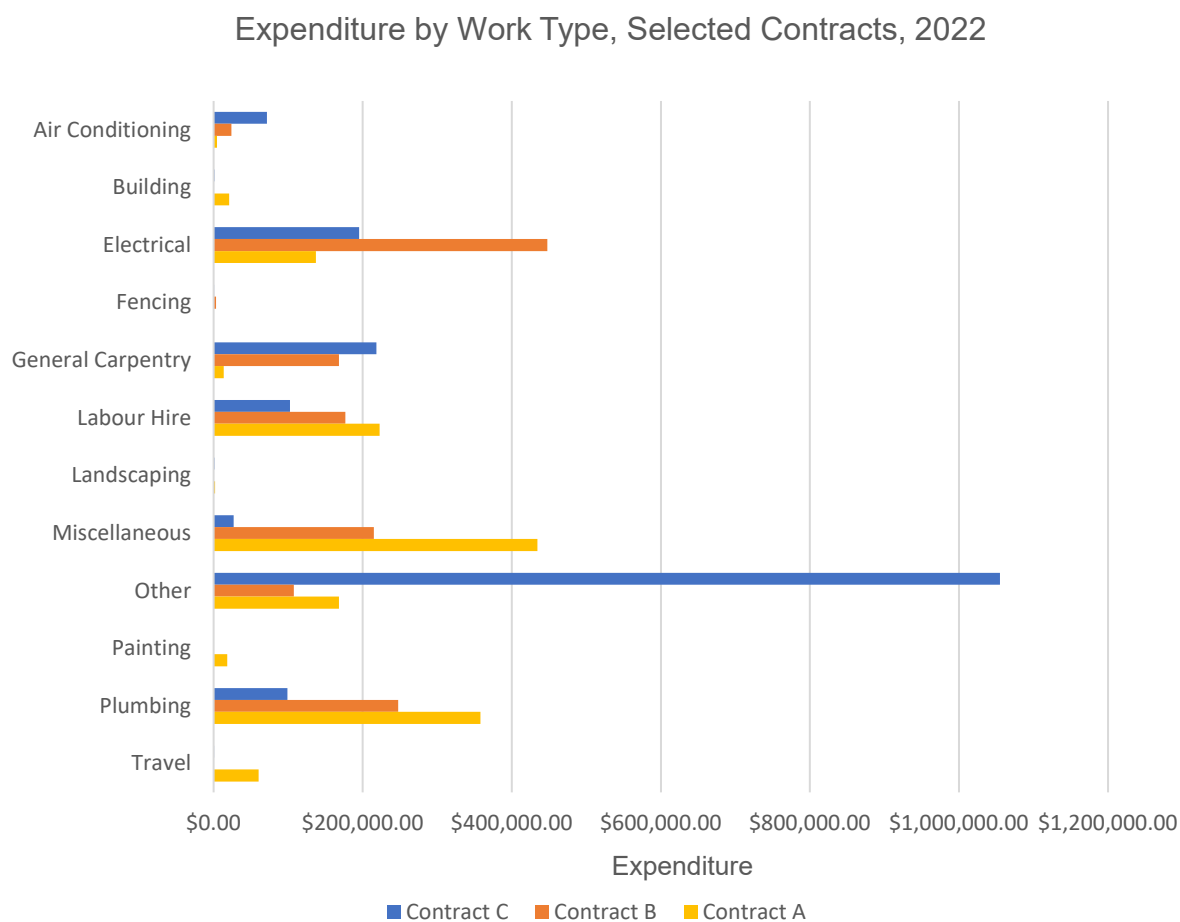
Figure 48. Expenditure by work type for selected contracts in 2022

7.6.8   Summary

Setting aside the delivery of Housing for Health projects described in Chapter 5, there is limited evidence in the NT Government datasets provided to Menzies to show that preventive maintenance focused on the nine Healthy Living Practices – the core focus of remote housing maintenance services contracts under the Healthy Homes program – has been undertaken in more than a few locations in the Northern Territory. CBIS0107 Inspections Completed report data indicates that less than three per cent of remote community houses subject to current maintenance services contracts were subject to a Condition Assessment Tool inspection across the period of July 2021 to February 2023. Expenditure data suggests a larger number (1315) of CAT inspections have been undertaken across the same period, however this still represents a small proportion (23.9 per cent) of total dwellings that should be receiving this form of attention on an annual basis.

The NT Government datasets supplied to Menzies do not provide detailed information about the health hardware of dwellings at the time of inspections and their related capacity to support healthy living practices. Based on what has been provided, routine data is inadequate for the NT Government

to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Healthy Homes program, with respect to existing KPIs and reporting requirements.

7.7   Recommendations

12. Following machinery of government changes that have distributed housing staff across TFHC and DIPL, it is imperative that these departments establish an inter-departmental governance mechanism for the effective management of remote community housing maintenance programs.

13. The NT Government should commit greater resources to business development in NT regions where there is no take-up of remote housing maintenance services tenders, and consult further with the sector about whether contracts are under-costed, and if so in what ways.

14. In order to reduce administrative delay and increase the autonomy of contracted service providers, contracts for remote housing maintenance services should set a threshold higher than $500 for service providers to require DIPL approval for works that are not exempt from pre-approval.

15. Condition Assessment Tool (CAT) inspections must be undertaken with more consistency as only a small number of CAT inspections have been undertaken by contracted service providers. This is the key cyclical mechanism by which the Healthy Homes program is supposed to instigate preventive maintenance. If the NT Government continues with this tool, training should be provided to contracted service providers to demonstrate the importance of undertaking such inspections to generate preventive housing works.

16. TFHC and DIPL should undertake a review into the relationship between expenditure and reporting data, to investigate whether program works are adequately captured by existing processes, including the coding of works according to the schedule of rates.

17. It is not clear that data generated by CAT inspections on the condition of housing health hardware is collated into any dataset. This inspection data should be carefully managed to establish baseline information about the condition of housing and the impact of preventive inspections.

18. TFHC and DIPL should investigate the proportion of works undertaken as 'unscheduled' works and why this is the case. There is potential to expand the schedule of rates within remote housing maintenance services contracts to increase the consistency and transparency of pricing for trade works.

19. Contracts for remote housing maintenance services should set the same conditions for the right of service providers to invoice for travel-related costs whether they are servicing remote community public housing or government employee housing.

20. Contracts for repairs and maintenance services should be longer than two years and closer to five years where possible, provided contracted service providers are subject to appropriate performance requirements. Contracts under two years in length do not support the growth of Aboriginal community housing providers or the continuity of reliable maintenance services.

21. Contracts for remote housing repairs and maintenance should adequately recognise establishment and administrative costs, as well as the increased costs of inputs such as fuel, materials, and labour, especially in areas where there are few established housing services providers.

8 The Living Strong Program

- The Living Strong program is delivered by tenancy management support services providers and aims to support householders in remote community housing to enact Healthy Living Practices.
- The program is non-prescriptive in terms of the material delivered to householders and the means of delivery, with the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities providing suggested session plans and various materials that can be drawn on selectively by service providers.
- There is significant variability among service providers regarding their familiarity with and commitment to delivering and reporting on the Living Strong program.
- TFHC has collated very little data related to the delivery of the Living Strong program.

8.1 Contract Overview

At mid-December 2021, 30 tenders had been advertised by Territory Families, Housing and Communities for contracts to provide remote housing tenancy management support services. Nineteen contracts had been awarded to 16 companies for 35 communities. At May 2023, 25 contracts for tenancy management support services have been awarded to 18 companies, including 19 contracts to 15 Aboriginal Business Enterprises (ABEs) (see Figure 22). These contracts cover 47 remote communities, Alice Springs Town Camps, and Tennant Creek Community Living Areas. The most recently awarded contract was to Central Desert Regional Council for ten central Australian communities, which commenced on 1/10/2022 and was originally scheduled to run until 30/6/2023.

Menzies understands that in remote communities where tenders for tenancy management support services have not been awarded TFHC has assumed responsibility for the delivery of tenancy services. Various solutions (such as negotiation with service providers for revised contracts and the expansion of TFHC staffing to deliver services in certain regions) have been pursued for service provision at those 26 communities.

8.2   Program Policy

The requests for tender for supply of remote tenancy management support services contracts outlines a range of services. Sections '3.6.1 General description of Services required' and '3.6.2 Specific Services required from the Contractor' outline the obligations of providers, which include employing Community Housing Officers (CHOs), liaising with tenants, supporting residents with housing forms, delivering letters and notices, providing a point of contact for repairs and maintenance and liaising with the maintenance contractor, and generally supporting tenants to maintain successful tenancies. One of the main responsibilities of contractors under Healthy Homes tenancy management support services contracts is to deliver the Living Strong program to all households over the period of the contract. The similarly titled 'Living Skills support training' was required to be offered to tenants moving into houses that received NPARIH investment, under the 'NPARIH NT Implementation Plan (2013-14 to 2017-18).' The more recent request for tender describes that Living Strong aims

> to focus on a proactive, culturally appropriate and engaging experience for tenants. The key outcomes for this Service is [sic] to improve the quality of tenancies, improve health outcomes for households and engagement in the Tenancy Management process. (3.6.2.1a)

The request for tender describes that Living Strong should provide support and information to residents on the following topics:

- their rights and responsibilities as a Tenant;
- maintaining a safe and healthy home;
- managing finances to pay rent and other financial obligations;
- reporting maintenance;
- how to manage visitors; and
- responsible pet ownership. (9)

It states that 'The Living Strong program is also designed to engage Tenants in the process of integrating a preventative approach to repairs and maintenance work and health hardware with a focus on the nine (9) Healthy Living Practices (HLPs)' (9).

It is notable that under Healthy Homes TFHC delivers a range of tenancy management services directly. Compared with the former tenancy contracts, TFHC has assumed specific duties that were previously the responsibility of contractors, such as conducting inspections. The services delivered by TFHC are outlined in section '3.6.4' and include:

a) Manage the waitlist and support the allocation process in the Community;
b) Conduct tenancy inspections for every dwelling every six (6) months;
c) Assess and process rental rebate applications including arranging of Agreements To Pay (ATP) if rebate is not backdated;
d) Conduct property condition inspections at the start and end of all tenancies;

e) Monitor and address rental arrears and other debts, including maintenance debts, for all tenancies;

f) Maintain up to date tenancy information for all dwellings in the Tenancy Management System (TMS);

g) In conjunction with the Contractor, case manage problematic tenancies including visitor management and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) as required;

h) Consult with residents through regular HRG meetings or alternative housing forums identified through the Local Decision Making Framework, with a minimum of four (4) meetings to be held per year, this includes record keeping of all meetings and actions;

i) Provide a point of contact for repairs and maintenance and liaise with the Remote Housing Maintenance Contractor to enable them to carry out works as per response times; and

j) Maintain a key register and hold spare keys in a secure facility.

Where possible, tenancy management support services contractors are expected to co-locate in communities with housing maintenance services providers, although such contracts are often awarded to different organisations. The Tenancy Management Handbook (2021) outlines reporting procedures governing the Living Strong program: 'The Contractor is required to report in TMS all instances of the Living Strong program being delivered in a Community by creating a task against the Community (for time/labour hours claimed), and against each group where a Primary Client or Co-Client attended (no time claimed, marked for attendance)' (12). Contractor and Department obligations are reproduced below in Figure 49.

3.1.1. Record Invitations and Attendances

Contractor	Department
Provide a delivery plan to the Department as part of their tender.	Refer to the delivery plan when assessing completeness.
Take attendance at each session. Recording which Primary Client or Co-Client was invited to attend and who actually attended.	Verify the session against the plan.
Create Task for each group: • Living Strong – Attendance • Living Strong – Non Attendance Do not create a task where a Primary Client or Co-Client group was not invited to attend. Ensure Task includes the module covered at that session.	Ensure that task time is only claimed on the Community Level task, not at each individual group.
Mark the task complete.	Ensure all reporting requirements are met and close the tasks.

Figure 49. Living Strong reporting by contractor to department. Image. NT Government

The Living Strong program is outlined in the 'Living Strong: Program guide to sustaining our remote communities'. The Program Guide describes Living Strong as

> an innovative tenancy support program for Aboriginal housing in remote communities…
> The program provides early engagement and support for tenants to build better skills and
> maintain their household. It focuses on enabling people to develop up practical living
> skills and better coordinated property maintenance with an understanding that looking
> after your housing and yard is an important part of looking after your family's health (5-6).

The 'Program Principles' emphasise the importance of culturally appropriate strategies to encourage the adoption of healthy living practices, the use of 'action learning methods', and that activities are tailored to the needs of specific clients (7). It is an approach that responds to criticisms of housing programs that focus on improving household infrastructure without equivalent attention paid to behavioural hygiene interventions (Bailie et al. 2010a; Bailie et al. 2011).

The Living Strong Program Guide (2020) includes three types of program material:

1. Suggested session plans (six)
2. Fact sheets and guides (including online resources) collated for each Tenancy Information Pack; and
3. Money manager and budget planning tools (Excel spreadsheets).

The session plans are formatted to include learning outcomes and related suggested resources. These are titled as follows:

1. Tenancy Agreements, Pets, Managing Visitors and Managing Money
2. Looking after your house focusing [sic] (HLPS)
3. Looking after your kitchen (HLPs)
4. Looking after your laundry, bathroom and toilet (HLPs)
5. Looking after your yard and pest control (HLPs)
6. Preventative Repairs and Maintenance (HLPs)

For example, session 1 sets as a learning outcome that a tenant understands the legal rights and responsibilities established by a tenancy agreement and suggests resources for meeting this outcome, such as the tenancy information pack and Housing Authority Western Australia's video 'Deadly Tenants, Deadly Homes – Rights and Responsibilities'. Session 3 sets as a learning outcome an understanding of the frequency that different areas of the kitchen require cleaning and suggests this will be communicated by practical demonstration and resources including the provision of cleaning materials and Rheumatic Heart Disease Australia's 'Keeping your house clean – Flipchart'.

8.3   Program Delivery

Although the request for tender for remote tenancy management support services includes session plans and resources, TFHC expects contracted service providers to deliver the Living Strong program in a form each deems appropriate. THFC staff communicated that the logic of this approach is that such messages about tenancy and Healthy Living Practices have been delivered many times by

government employees and that local, especially Aboriginal community controlled, service providers are more likely to tailor the program in ways that are culturally and tenant appropriate. This was echoed by service providers, with one manager noting that the resources as provided 'wouldn't work for us' due to language and cultural reasons. Eschewing a one-size-fits-all approach is also justified because tenancy management support services contracts apply to significantly different numbers of properties, ranging from small discrete communities to multiple communities with hundreds of properties. One TFHC employee noted that

> while we've got learning outcomes and some materials for [service providers], we want the different organisations to work out how to run that more effectively. That's going to be meaningful and engaging to the people in the community.

Another stated that

> I think in some cases it does make it harder for contractors to be able to structure it. But ultimately I think it's an opportunity for them to be able to design something that they think will work, or that will suit their community.

For example, one service provider expressed the intention to deliver accredited training under Living Strong for participants' pursuing a Certificate Two in Aboriginal Health. In other instances, the contracted service providers have negotiated with TFHC to assume responsibility for conducting tenancy inspections directly. In one instance the service provider was not aware that this had become the responsibility of TFHC in most contexts, while in multiple cases providers found that tenancy inspections were relevant opportunities to engage householders in relation to the Living Strong program and in particular to focus on specific aspects of the program and avoid the delivery of irrelevant content. A TFHC employee described one of these providers as 'trying to work individually with the households to identify which spaces they are excelling at and which spaces they need assistance in, which I think is much better for the client and will see them be more responsive'. The combination of delivering Living Strong alongside CAT inspections has also been described by providers as a means to highlight the program's emphasis on preventive maintenance, rather than behavioural management. Practically, this option is more straightforward to implement for organisations that hold both the housing maintenance services and tenancy management support services contracts. Other providers have commented on the utility of undertaking inspections as semi-regular events during which their staff are able to meet with householders and help to identify other issues on behalf of sustaining tenancies.

The expectation that different service providers will tailor Living Strong as they see appropriate introduces issues of quality assurance. This relies on effective contract management by regionally located contract managers, typically regional Directors of Housing employed by TFHC. Tenders for tenancy management support services contracts include the Living Strong program as one performance indicator, with the target: '100% of primary clients in each household have completed the Living Strong program over the course of the contract'. Achievement of the contracted service provider relative to the target is determined by task reporting data, attendance records, and reference

to the Contractor's plan for delivery. The extent and regularity to which such information is collected for individual contracts is unclear to Menzies. One tenancy manager of a contracted service provider noted their frustration with reporting processes, in particular the functionality of updating records in the TMS system.

Reports from organisations contracted to deliver tenancy management support services contracts are variously positive about the support they are able to provide to householders, while emphasising the structural disadvantages experienced as household-level impediments to achieving program goals, such as crowding and poverty. Service providers identified the short-length of tenancy management support services contracts as impacting organisational planning, including in relation to the secure employment of staff:

> the uncertainty of funding makes it difficult to forecast a business plan. To attract and retain staff there needs to be some sort of business security of the position. . . Whether it's twenty-four months or twelve months, when you're getting towards the end of the business cycle, you are in a position of "Is it going to be renewed? Is it not? What do we need to do? Do we need to plan for redundancies?" … It's an uncertain business model and really difficult to forward plan.

It is significant that multiple contracted service providers interviewed, including organisations with strong reputations for delivering tenancy services, were unfamiliar with the Living Strong program. This does not mean that those organisations were not delivering tenancy support services that resembled aspects of Living Strong. However, it does suggest that there has been limited communication by TFHC to contracted service providers about this new program and their obligations related to its delivery. One tenancy program manager noted that 'They task us to report on information but they are not providing a tool to do it… Reporting wise, basically, I read through my contract, the handbook and everything, and pick up what I think I should be making a comment on in my monthly reports. I've created my own report to do it.' In some cases, service providers noted that meetings with TFHC were sporadic and typically instigated by service providers themselves. The inconsistent familiarity with Living Strong is also likely to be a factor related to the widespread underreporting of any tasks associated with the program.

8.4   Program Data

Unlike remote housing maintenance services contracts, where any work order undertaken is evident through the submission of an invoice to a contract superintendent at DIPL, tenancy management support services contracts primarily fund Community Housing Officer (CHO) positions. Although contracted service providers are supposed to report in TFHC's TMS tasking system each instance of the delivery of the Living Strong program, there appears to be scant quantitative data on the program.

Menzies was supplied with reports extracted from TMS that provided an overview of all reported tasks associated with the Living Strong program. There was a total of 276 tasks listed from the award of tenancy management support services contracts until May 2023. A significant majority of these tasks were described as either tasking a community housing officer to distribute a Living Strong program invitation letter to householders, or sending those invitations, while only a small number were described as relating to delivering or developing the Living Strong program. It is unclear whether this is an accurate representation of the extent of work taking place by contracted service providers related to the Living Strong program. However, TFHC should recognise that a more effective process for capturing and collating Living Strong data is necessary. Service providers noted challenges with TMS, the system used for capturing program task delivery: 'Their systems are very archaic and very difficult to use as well. So it's very hard to get reports that we can actually work with.'

8.5   The Future of Living Strong

Tenants cannot be compelled to attend or participate in the Living Strong program. Nor should they be, as this would constitute a discriminatory requirement for tenants of public housing in remote Aboriginal communities. Given that tenants are not compelled to participate in Living Strong, it is questionable whether 100 per cent engagement by 'primary clients' should be set as a target for contracted service providers. Similarly, it is unclear how TFHC contract superintendents assess the performance of service providers where such engagement does not reach the 100 per cent target. Contracted service providers have indicated that the reporting expected of them in relation to Living Strong is both extensive if followed to the letter of the contract and inconsistent in practice, while obligations could be made clearer. Given the flexibility in the content of the program, and in terms of the extent to which it is delivered, there is a question about what constitutes meaningful delivery and engagement of the Living Strong program.

The emphasis on delivering a bespoke, locally- and culturally-appropriate program also introduces an expectation of TFHC that service providers might create additional resources that are relevant to specific communities, such as relate to money management or financial counseling, and to provide referrals to other social services providers. TFHC staff suggested such materials could take the form of fact sheets or videos, to communicate to householders in local languages, and so on. Certain established service providers conveyed that they had undertaken this process:

> We've been going door-to-door and we have a full suite of translated videos that we've created, tenancy videos as well as the handbook that we leave with the tenant. And the reason is that [in this community] English is a second language and English literacy levels can be low, so the resources need to be verbal and preferably in [language]. That's what we've done. Every fact sheet that tenancy was provided with, they created a short video and had it all translated so it's in language with pictures to make it a little bit easier. It's delivered by one of our traditional owner team members and they go through the videos with the tenant and talk about it and then there's a checklist to sign off.

While it would be desirable to have such resources produced by all contracted service providers in relevant Indigenous languages and with consideration paid to culturally appropriate tenancy management, their production should be funded and supported by TFHC, financially or in-kind, rather than hoped for as an unfunded output of proactive service providers. This is especially the case for smaller Aboriginal organisations that may not have more lucrative construction, and even housing maintenance services, contracts, and which are developing their capacity as a provider of tenancy services.

Contracted service providers have also identified that contracts focused on compliance in relation to householder obligations under tenancy agreements are ultimately constrained in terms of their potential impact on householder wellbeing and sustaining tenancies. Organisations identified the opportunity to be more directly involved in the design of contracts for tenancy services: 'We tender for the contracts for services that Territory Families believe are required rather than [TFHC] inviting us to share what could we do differently from the hard contractual stuff'. It is arguable that one intention of Living Strong, as it was designed rather than as it has been implemented, was to do some of the work of supporting householders to maintain tenancies in houses that support their health, social wellbeing, and enjoyment of their home. Beyond this, however, organisations have noted that such contracts prioritise interventions at the individual level, which often become compliance issues, in relation to rent collection, visitors, cleanliness, animal management, and so on. There is potential for such organisations to deliver community-level projects focused on issues that manifest at an individual tenancy level, where interventions are the result of community consultation, planning, and decision-making. As one CEO of a contracted service provider suggested,

> Rather than dealing with issues through individual tenancies, [we could be] looking at issues from a community level. What does the community want to see here? And how can we facilitate that, identify what the solutions might be and help the community to achieve that? So that the community owns the solution.

8.6   Recommendations

22. TFHC should renew its communication with contracted services providers to increase the collective understanding of the obligation to deliver the Living Strong program under tenancy management support services contracts.

23. Given the flexibility concerning the content and method of delivering the Living Strong program, TFHC should review performance metrics included in tenancy management support services contracts to capture the wide range of works undertaken by service providers to sustain tenancies.

24. Future contracts for tenancy management support services that require the delivery of the Living Strong program should include additional project funding for the development of language- and community-specific resources by service providers.

25. TFHC should review how reporting by contracted service providers related to the Living Strong program is currently collated, on behalf of improving the capture of program delivery data.

26. TFHC should undertake further consultation with Aboriginal community controlled organisations regarding the design of Living Strong, and the need for this or a similar program. Such programs are not delivered to mainstream public housing tenancies and depending on how they are delivered, and by whom, can risk reproducing colonial dynamics about household education.

27. TFHC should consider making grant funding available to service providers to develop community-level projects designed by remote community residents and focused on sustaining tenancies.

9 The Context for Reforms to Remote Housing Maintenance in the Northern Territory

- The *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory* was scheduled to conclude on 30 June 2023. A new one-year Federation Funding Agreement has been established to bridge the gap until a subsequent Commonwealth funding agreement is established.

- Litigation concerning incomplete repairs and safe drinking water has tested existing standards under the Northern Territory's *Residential Tenancies Act*, establishing a new standard for reasonable comfort.

- Programs for remote housing in other Australian state and territory jurisdictions, such as on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, provide alternative approaches to planned and cyclical maintenance.

- The transition to Aboriginal control of remote community housing is supported through Local Decision Making Agreements and is taking various forms throughout the Northern Territory.

In making recommendations about how Healthy Homes or a similar remote housing maintenance program might be improved, this chapter offers brief description of relevant housing sector factors that deserve consideration. There are other important factors identified in this report that impact significantly on the success of housing maintenance programs but which cannot be considered at length here. In particular, these include challenges related to employment (recruitment, training, retention, skills shortages, climate change, and so on) and the design of information technology systems (both those used by NT Government departments and their integration with systems used by individual contracted service providers). The remainder of this chapter focuses on four issues that are relevant to, and which might be considered in, future reforms to the remote housing maintenance program: the Commonwealth funding agreement; legislated habitability standards; alternative

preventive maintenance approaches; and the transition of remote community housing to Aboriginal control.

9.1   The Commonwealth Funding Agreement

The five-year *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory* was scheduled to conclude on 30 June 2023. A 12-month federation funding agreement (FFA) has been established for the 2023-24 financial year, while negotiations are ongoing for a longer agreement. The short length of this FFA signals inadequate foresight shown by the Commonwealth Government in particular to the approaching conclusion of the NPRHNT, but also indicates the opportunity that exists to establish a superior funding agreement that provides the best possible basis for improving housing maintenance at remote communities and elsewhere.

It was not the aim of the Healthy Homes monitoring and evaluation project to develop wholesale recommendations for the next Commonwealth-NT Government housing agreement, nor is there space to engage in appropriate detail with these issues in this Report. That agreement will concern components of the larger housing program, such as new builds and refurbishments, which have been beyond the remit of the Healthy Homes monitoring and evaluation project.

Nonetheless, two points about the next national funding agreement warrant explicit acknowledgment. First, a key requirement of the next agreement must be that its length exceeds the five years of the NPRHNT. The original timetable for the current agreement proposed to establish four-year remote housing maintenance contracts by 2019. For various reasons described above, these were not established until much later, with some contracts only 15 months long. Past reviews have highlighted the need for longer-term funding agreements and service contracts to support the consistency of service provision, while this report has shown that short-term (under two years) contracts are inadequate to attract tenders from established businesses and to engage in meaningful business and sectoral development in areas where few housing services businesses exist. Where an organisation commences the provision of remote housing maintenance services according to new program demands, contracts of such short lengths provide narrow timeframes for recruitment and employee training and for establishing subcontracting arrangements. They offer little potential to improve service delivery through iteration of practice and insufficient opportunity to recoup set-up costs. A sustainable remote housing sector providing meaningful economic opportunities to Aboriginal community controlled organisations and employment for remote community residents requires assured long-term funding from both the Commonwealth and NT Governments.

Second, the next Commonwealth-NT remote housing funding agreement must review the performance metrics employed to assess the delivery of remote housing maintenance services. While it is important that a Joint Steering Committee including the Northern Territory land councils and Aboriginal Housing NT has monitored the NPRHNT, the metrics that govern the NT Government's

reporting obligations under the *Reporting Framework* are of varying relevance to the state of remote housing. A subsequent agreement should maintain performance metrics related to the proportion of contracts awarded to Aboriginal Business Enterprises and the proportion of Aboriginal people employed to deliver maintenance services, amended respectively to specify Aboriginal community controlled organisations and Aboriginal people living in remote communities. However, there is little information that can be gleaned from metrics such as the percentage of properties receiving annual property inspections and the total number of inspections conducted. The purpose and the method of the inspection matters, as does the sorts of data an inspection collects about housing condition and function, and the capacity of different inspection types to generate repair works. It is of little value to know that a house has been inspected if that house is also subject to a repairs backlog that means residents are unable to wash themselves, remove wastewater, safely store food, and so on. These critical issues of house function should not disappear through a process of reporting questionably relevant metrics. As discussed in previous chapters, further consideration should be given to how to assess house function and collect relevant data that can inform ongoing maintenance programming, as well as provide a clearer sense of the impact of funding for remote housing maintenance.

9.2   Habitability

A driving factor for reforming remote maintenance services has been strategic litigation instigated by residents of the Central Australian communities of Ltyentye Apurte (also known as Santa Teresa) and Laramba, seeking compensation from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Housing, as landlord, for its failure to conduct necessary repairs on public housing. Seventy public housing tenants from Ltyentye Apurte filed proceedings against the CEO Housing in February 2016, alleging delays in undertaking housing repairs, and seeking emergency repairs and compensation under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* (RTA). Twenty-four proceedings were filed by Laramba residents in 2019 for similar remedies, but also seeking a response to high levels of uranium in community drinking water.

In the Ltyentye Apurte case, the initiating applications listed over 600 repairs that had not been completed. This litigation has moved back and forth from the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NTCAT), to the NT Supreme Court (NTSC), the NT Court of Appeal, and the High Court. Among the matters subject to ongoing consideration has been what constitutes 'habitability' in the RTA. In the NT, the legislative criteria for habitable and safe, secure, and clean housing are undefined in legislation. Unlike other Australian states and territories, the NT has not passed healthy housing regulations that provide greater detail regarding minimum standards for rental properties. A 2019 discussion paper related to a review of the RTA dismissed the need for such standards in the NT:

> With the premises having been initially constructed and certified in accordance with the Building Code and standards of the time, and any subsequent repairs/modifications repaired to be compliant with prevailing standards, it is questionable whether regulations need to be developed to replicate those standards specifically for rental premises. Arguably, any breach of building/sanitation standards would give rise to action under Part

> 7 without having to specifically repeat each standard in the Act. (NT Government 2019d, 75)

This interpretation grants undue confidence to industry to conform to building standards and to the capacity of buildings to maintain their original condition over time. The purpose of such standards is to set thresholds that must be met by governments and private sector housing providers for rental properties once they are being lived in.

At NTCAT in 2019, Presiding Member Les McCrimmon noted that while 'habitable' is not defined in the RTA, a common law meaning could be applied to determine that habitability is not met if the premises and ancillary property posed 'a threat to the tenant's safety, going to both structural and health issues' (*Various Applicants from Santa Teresa v Chief Executive Officer (Housing) [2019] NTCAT 7* [120]). Submissions by the applicants on appeal questioned whether the term 'habitable' should be limited to matters affecting the tenant's safety, suggesting this might be extended to include injury to health and to premises not meeting contemporary standards of humaneness and reasonable comfort. In September 2020, Supreme Court Justice Blokland agreed that the use of habitability in the RTA should not be interpreted to mean safety only (*Young & Conway v Chief Executive Officer, Housing [2020] NTSC 59*, [73]), and concluded that determinations of habitability required 'an overall assessment of humaneness, suitability, and reasonable comfort of the premises, even if only basic amenities are provided judged against contemporary standards' ([80]). Additionally, Blokland determined that 'The assessment of whether premises were habitable should take into account any proven inadequacies cumulatively' ([80]). This was appealed by the CEO Housing, and in the NT Court of Appeal, Justices Southwood and Barr rejected the references to humaneness and suitability made by Justice Blokland (*Chief Executive Officer (Housing) v Young and Anor [2022] NTCA 1*, [50]). But Justices Southwood and Barr maintained that the test for liability include consideration of reasonable comfort, by the following reasoning:

> Questions of fitness for habitation are to be judged against a standard of reasonableness having regard to the age, character, and locality of the residential premises and to the effect of the defect on the state or condition of the premises as a whole. ([50])

This matter is ongoing, proceeding to both NCTAT and the High Court. A class action has also been launched in the Federal Court, with Aboriginal public housing tenants in 73 remote communities across the Northern Territory seeking compensation for rent paid, damages for the condition of their homes, urgent repairs, and alleging racial discrimination. For the time being, the interpretation of habitability depends on a premises being reasonably comfortable, according to contemporary standards, and with consideration of the cumulative impact of any defects and disrepair.

Under Healthy Homes, neither of the tenders for remote housing maintenance services for Ltyentye Apurte and Laramba were awarded.[20] In those contexts, the prior 'trade panel' maintenance model continues, without having renewed the supplementary 'housing maintenance coordinator' contracts. In other words, it is possible that maintenance services in communities where the trade panel model has been renewed but the housing maintenance coordinator has not are now subject to less attention than in the periods that underpinned this litigation. So far as an ongoing repair and maintenance program is concerned, there is a matter of what degree or types of housing dysfunction constitute a failure to meet the standards of the RTA. The Ltyentye Apurte and Laramba cases provide some examples of hardware failures that might underpin a determination of not habitable housing, but this is not comprehensive. Nor is there a clear relationship between the standards employed in the Condition Assessment Tool (Chapter 6) – for example a fair appearance and poor function – and the criteria in the RTA or the test for habitability, including whether the state of some health hardware items matter more than others for a determination of habitability.

There is potential, therefore, for amendments to be made to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* or *Residential Tenancies Regulations 2000* that might clarify the standards that rental properties must meet to be considered habitable. This could include establishing healthy housing, or minimum standards, provisions. Such provisions could offer greater detail about the type and function of housing hardware that tenants can expect of all rental housing.

9.3   Preventive Maintenance in South Australia

There is an opportunity in the Northern Territory to integrate elements of effective preventive maintenance programs delivered in other Australian jurisdictions, adjusted for local conditions. One example that deserves consideration is the preventive maintenance program managed by the South Australian Housing Authority (Housing SA) for communities on the Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, alongside the complementary environmental health program delivered by the Aboriginal community controlled organisation Nganampa Health Council in the same context.

Sustainable housing, or housing that maintains its function over time, depends on preventive maintenance, cyclically delivered (Grealy et al. 2021; Go-Sam 2008). In an article describing these programs on the APY Lands, Grealy et al. (2021) write that a repairs and maintenance program that is effective in checking the degradation of existing buildings

> must be systematic in its planning, attentive to detail, delivered by individuals with
> appropriate expertise, articulated to design and construction processes, funded
> recurrently, responsive to householder and community requirements, and must consider

---

[20] A contract (SA5015-23) for 'Provision of First Response to Remote Housing Maintenance' was awarded in September 2022 and applies to ten communities, including Laramba. This contract supplements the renewed trade panel contacts in those communities.

the technical requirements of the building and its location. (Kim et al., 2016; Pholeros & Phibbs, 2012). If these features are present, then they may protect assets over time, reduce future expenditure, and support the health and wellbeing of householders by sustaining housing quality (Fien & Charlesworth, 2012; Priemus, 2005). (3)

The programs attending 371 houses across 10 APY Lands communities make commendable attempts to satisfy these features of preventive maintenance. The main housing maintenance program managed by Housing SA's Aboriginal and Remote Housing section involves a single head contractor which supervises various subcontractors, under a seven-year contract with both Housing SA and the Department of Infrastructure and Transport. In addition to responsive repairs as a result of tenant requests and reporting by tradespeople, the APY Lands maintenance program operates according to an annual schedule, which organises approximately ten planned visits by licensed tradespeople per house according to hardware and seasonal need. Inspections of work undertaken by tradespeople occur in response to complaints or requests, as quality assurance inspections by Housing SA maintenance coordinators, by tenancy staff, and by Housing SA managers on monthly visits. In addition to this program, Nganampa Health Council, an Aboriginal community controlled health organisation, runs its Uwankara Palyanyku Kanyintjaku (UPK) environmental health program on the APY Lands, which employs Aboriginal health workers to provide responsive housing maintenance services including yard maintenance, rubbish removal, unblocking drains, washing machine repair, hazard reduction, tree lopping, and similar activities that do not typically require a licensed tradesperson. This exemplifies a holistic view of householder health and wellbeing that attends to work outside the house which may not be captured by a typical maintenance program.

A study of this preventive maintenance program by Housing SA on the APY Lands found that the total budget was $3,726,237, equating to an average spend per property of approximately $10,000 per annum in 2019. Most of Housing SA's budget was dedicated to planned maintenance, and only one-fifth to one-quarter to responsive work. Prioritisation is given to works that impact most directly on safety and health inside the house, including electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, and pest control works. Tradespeople working for the head contractor have significant discretion to complete additional jobs while on site, with only larger jobs requiring separate approval by Housing SA. Travel accounted for approximately 10% of the budget, which is a major achievement given the remoteness of communities. This is attributable to the planned approach. The managers of the program described that significant resources are dedicated to proactively 'chasing maintenance', following a belief that this will reduce future costs (Grealy et al. 2021).

There are many aspects of the South Australian approach on the APY Lands that the NT Government could look to incorporate into the next iteration of Healthy Homes. Unlike remote housing maintenance contracts awarded under Healthy Homes, the financial and temporal scale of the maintenance contract with the head contractor allows for adequate investment in site leasing, warehousing, and equipment, as well as stable subcontracting arrangements. It also provides

opportunities for taking on apprentices and supporting their training (see Lea et al. 2021). Rather than inconsistent application of the Condition Assessment Tool, South Australia's scheduling of visits through every property by licensed tradespeople is a more effective way to comprehensively assess the state of housing and what repairs and maintenance work is required. This may be expensive relative to current expenditure in the NT in the immediate term, but it promises short-to-medium term cost reductions as major faults are less likely to be develop over time. It also reduces the cost of travelling to remote communities by bundling work, whether or not this cost is invoiced to government or incorporated into the schedule of rates of individual housing providers. The consistency of visits that involve 'chasing maintenance' is also augmented by in-person inspections of trade works, which ensures the ongoing function of repairs following the submission of work order photographs to contract superintendents for invoicing.

9.4   An Alternative Housing Model

This report has outlined that the management of housing in remote communities by governments as public housing is not an inevitable arrangement. Prior to the Northern Territory National Emergency Response, the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory (IHANT) played an important role in the funding and governance of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (see Chapter 2). The NT Government's Local Decision Making Framework, alongside other policies such as select tendering to Aboriginal Business Enterprises in procurement for housing maintenance services, signals some commitment to increase Aboriginal control of housing in remote communities and town camps. For example, a local decision making agreement between Tangentyere Council and the NT Government ('Schedule 3.1 Shelter and Housing') outlines plans for the establishment of a community housing model for the town camps from the conclusion of the existing NT-Commonwealth Government agreement, from 1/7/2023.

Any such transition of remote community housing to Aboriginal control requires detailed consideration of the stages involved, the associated liabilities, the legal reforms, and funding required. In relation to such a devolution of control, Grealy (2022) asks

> what is the condition, and therefore the related liability, of the assets that Indigenous organisations might inherit? Will it be possible to insure buildings that the NT Government currently self-insures? What repair and refurbishment obligations are Indigenous organisations likely to assume, as the outcome of long-term under-funding of and inattention to maintenance requirements? Clarifying the condition of assets should be a minimum requirement for determining the real cost of providing housing services, going forward, and thus the required funding needed from Australian and NT Governments to subsidise remote housing management in contexts where rental revenue cannot be expected to cover housing costs. (182)

Fortunately, the Central Land Council has undertaken detailed work to propose the development of a new Aboriginal housing model for Central Australia.

The model proposed by the CLC (2020) is based on six principles that safeguard against some of the potential risks described above: self-determination; accountability; partnership; manage risk; financial stability; and build capacity (9). Substantively, the proposal is based on six 'key building blocks'. First, an Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA) will be established as a Commonwealth statutory entity governed by an Aboriginal board, funded by the Australian and NT Governments, and charged with implementing a strategic plan, effectively subsuming the current Aboriginal housing responsibilities of the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL). Second, eight to ten Regional Aboriginal Community Housing Organisations (RACHO) will deliver community housing development, asset management, and planning services across a region, funded by the AHA which would sublease relevant housing to the RACHO. Third, the model envisions the expansion of Aboriginal Construction and Maintenance Companies (AC&MCs), as either Aboriginal community controlled organisations or Aboriginal owned businesses which would be contracted by RACHOs to provide construction, renovation, and maintenance services. Fourth, local communities would establish or use an already established group to represent community members' housing interests as a Local Community Housing Voice, which would be described in the lease and would advise AHA and make decisions about the presence and operation of a specific RACHO. Fifth, a peak body, presumed to be Aboriginal Housing NT, would provide a forum to promote the collective interests of RACHOs, Local Community Housing Voices, and other Aboriginal organisations, consulting with members and advising governments. Sixth, the CLC's proposed model also includes the establishment of an Aboriginal Tenants Advisory Service, which would represent tenants' interests under the system, via independent legal advice and representation, and other means.

Importantly, the CLC proposal recognises that the establishment of such a new housing model would require a lengthy planning and implementation period, which the CLC describes in a three-phase implementation plan timetable across 13 years. It also estimates the cost to fund the implementation plan will require 'at a minimum, Commonwealth and NT governments … to commit $500M per annum for ten years (2023-2033)' (2020, 14). Such a financial commitment, it is estimated, would provide an additional 2750 dwellings to address severe overcrowding, improve the condition of existing stock, replace approximately 500 houses deemed beyond economic repair, and fund adequate repairs and maintenance (14). The CLC recommends that a new national partnership agreement would include 'clauses committing both parties to trials of the community housing model and attach schedules detailing the funding both parties will commit to the trials' (2021, 10).

The CLC proposal is not the only way remote community housing might be reformed in the Northern Territory, although the proposal to establish a statutory Aboriginal Housing Authority warrants greater consideration by government and the housing sector. In some contexts, existing land councils and Aboriginal Corporations have sought to reform housing provision according to their own prerogatives. For example, Menzies understands that at the time of writing Tangentyere Council, the Executive

Director of Township Leasing, and the NT CEO Housing are negotiating a 12-month Transitional Tripartite Housing Management Agreement. This agreement will support the transition to community control of housing at its expiration. In preparation for this, the Tangentyere Town Camp Community Housing Model Consortium (TTCCHMC)[21] has undertaken a significant project of work on behalf of determining the ongoing upgrade and maintenance requirements of Alice Springs town camp housing, including the development of a draft strategic asset management plan. Aligned to this plan, TTCCHMC has used the SharePoint platform hosted by WTP Australia Pty Ltd to establish an Asset Data, Asset Condition, and Lifecycle Dashboard. To date, this Dashboard has been informed by a wide range of data, including: floor plans and elevations provided by Tangentyere Design for pre-SIHIP houses and for SIHIP houses; site plans, floor plans, elevations, and NatHERS certificates for Homebuild new and replacement houses; Healthabitat data generated by the MHBH project; Tangentyere Constructions data related to its role as the housing maintenance services provider; and Community Housing Central Australia data related to its role as the tenancy management support services provider. Tangentyere Council have noted that there is further asset level ground truthing to do to ensure that the data underpinning the Dashboard is fully comprehensive, and that this asset management planning process has required tools more holistic than the CAT. However, the thoroughness of this approach is likely to generate more detailed and accurate information about the condition of individual houses, and the houses within a portfolio collectively, than any process currently undertaken by the NT Government.

To briefly cite other notable examples of work focused on the transition to Aboriginal community control, a local decision making agreement has been established between Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) and the NT Government for the Groote Archipelago, including a Housing Implementation Plan that outlines the transition to ALC and the Anindilyakwa Housing Aboriginal Corporation of responsibilities for housing (Groote Archipelago 2018). Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation has commenced the initiation and due diligence stages of a trial to transition housing at Tennant Creek community living areas to community control.

Despite the differences across NT locations, the CLC proposal remains a valuable reference point as a vision for the large-scale change required to reimagine remote community housing transitioned to Aboriginal control, under the legal, financial, and sectoral conditions that will support positive outcomes. This Final Report recommends simply that consideration is given by TFHC and DIPL to the model proposed by the CLC, including the implementation plan it recommends and the detailed analysis provided of the due diligence (Table 11, 71) that must be taken to ensure successful outcomes for community housing providers and tenants.

---

[21] The Consortium members are Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC); Community Housing Central Australia (CHCA), a National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) accredited Community Housing Provider founded by TCAC in 2009; and Tangentyere Constructions, a subsidiary of TCAC that is a CAL accredited member of the Master Builders Association of the NT. Town Camp Head Leases in Perpetuity are held by the Town Camp Corporate Members.

9.5   Recommendations

28. The next remote housing agreement between the Commonwealth and NT Governments must last longer than five years, and ideally ten years, so that contracts for housing services can be established for sufficient lengths to attract and develop reputable housing providers and ensure a sustainable Aboriginal community controlled housing sector.

29. The governance mechanisms for the next Commonwealth and NT Government remote housing agreement should establish specific performance metrics that capture the condition of house function and the impact of repair and maintenance services on house function.

30. The NT Government should consider the establishment of minimum standards, or healthy housing, provisions that would provide greater regulatory detail to the health hardware required in housing (and its function) so that it meet the standards of the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

31. The NT Government should examine the successes of remote housing maintenance programs implemented in other Australian jurisdictions, in particular South Australia. Specifically, it should trial the establishment of a schedule of preventive visits by various tradespeople through all remote community housing on a cyclical basis, on behalf of reducing major repair costs and increasing the total maintenance work undertaken.

32. Working with Aboriginal Housing NT and the four NT Aboriginal land councils, the NT Government should develop a staged and costed implementation plan for transitioning control of remote community housing to Aboriginal corporations. This should consider the Central Land Council's proposal for the establishment of a statutory Aboriginal Housing Authority, along with other proposals that support regionally-specific local decision making agreements.

10 Conclusion

This Final Report is the culmination of a two-year monitoring and evaluation project focused on the Healthy Homes program. At its heart, the Healthy Homes program has attempted to reform the Northern Territory Government's approach to remote community housing maintenance, instilling an emphasis on preventive maintenance and improving house functionality so that householders are better supported to enact Healthy Living Practices (HLPs). Repairs and maintenance is a typically underfunded-because-uncharismatic component of government housing programs, cast in the shadow of concern over housing under-supply and proclamations about new construction. Yet repairs and maintenance is of fundamental importance to the ongoing function of housing, for protecting the value of government investment in housing assets and, more importantly, supporting householder health and wellbeing.

In 2020, the NT Government's own review of its remote community housing repairs and maintenance program identified numerous challenges associated with program delivery. It offered the following recommendations:

- A greater focus on tenancy management will deliver more sustainable outcomes
- Repairs and maintenance services needs to be considered as part of a broader asset management strategy
- Shifting to a preventive repairs and maintenance approach and greater community control
- Improving program and contract management
- Better integrated data and information will reduce duplication and improve asset management and planning
- Capacity building to support greater Aboriginal community control. (NT Government 2020d, 25-29)

This list of recommendations remains relevant today. Many of the limitations of Healthy Homes outlined in this Final Report will already be familiar to relevant public servants.

In broad terms, while some gains have been made under Healthy Homes, it is not possible to make a convincing case that it has so far delivered on its promise of a new approach to remote housing

maintenance. The contracting of Healthabitat to deliver Housing for Health projects at various remote communities has provided significant benefit to those communities. Such benefit is demonstrable through data collected via the Housing for Health methodology that assesses the function of housing health hardware prior to and following project works. Similarly, Healthy Homes has succeeded in prioritising Aboriginal Business Enterprises in the award of remote housing maintenance services and tenancy management services contracts. Such contracts are awarded and superintended within what remains a state-managed public housing system, rather than a more comprehensive Aboriginal community controlled housing sector. Nonetheless, the prioritisation of Aboriginal Business Enterprises to manage services is an important step in developing sector capacity and service experience on behalf of effectively transitioning control of remote community housing to Aboriginal community controlled organisations, where desired by them. We are unable to comment on the impact of Healthy Homes on Aboriginal employment in housing maintenance services as we did not receive relevant data.

In other aspects of the Healthy Homes program there are opportunities for policy development that might offer significant improvements to subsequent iterations of remote housing maintenance services. These points have been made throughout this Final Report, but are outlined in summary form here as relating to: preventive maintenance; data collection and management; governance; contracts; and the next national agreement.

Preventive Maintenance

Although Healthy Homes sought to introduce an emphasis on preventive and cyclical maintenance it is not clear that this has been achieved. Aside from Housing for Health projects at a small number of communities, the chief means by which Healthy Homes remote housing maintenance services contracts prioritised preventive and cyclical maintenance was via the obligation that contracted service providers use the Condition Assessment Tool (CAT) to assess all houses subject to the contract within three months of its execution and each year thereafter. Data suggests that a small proportion of houses were surveyed using the CAT across the period of this evaluation, even though many houses should have been surveyed twice using this tool. Setting aside issues related to the functionality of the CAT itself, which service providers suggested contributed to its limited use, the widespread absence of its application undercuts the claim of Healthy Homes as a preventive and/or cyclical maintenance program. Where service providers did not implement CAT surveys as intended, the maintenance program remained responsive and ad hoc and in this way practically resembled the trade panel contracts that Healthy Homes contracts replaced. As discussed in Chapter 9, there is potential to establish a program of cyclical/scheduled visits by licensed tradespeople that would guarantee attention is given to key health hardware prior to its failure. Such a program might also reduce double handling where housing maintenance officers and contract superintendents are each involved in determining work orders generated by CAT assessments, where these are undertaken.

Data Collection and Management

This monitoring and evaluation project set out to undertake two phases, wherein the first phase would analyse the impact of program delivery and the second phase would investigate the impact of the program on the health outcomes of residents of remote community housing. Unfortunately, issues with program delivery and the limits of the data available in phase one have precluded progressing into a second project phase. In short, there is inadequate quantitative data to measure the delivery and therefore the impacts of the Healthy Homes program, where remote housing maintenance services contracts are concerned. In part, this follows the lack of consideration given to repairs and maintenance within the development of reporting obligations under national funding agreements, including the *National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory*. For example, the consistent requirement to report the number of inspections conducted on remote community houses is at best a poor, and at worst an irrelevant, measure for establishing any understanding of house function or disrepair. While it publicises data related to new construction (HomeBuild) and extensions to existing houses (Room to Breathe), the NT Government's Our Communities. Our Futures. Our Homes. website does not include data related to repairs and maintenance under Healthy Homes, aside from a figure for total budgeted expenditure. This absence could be interpreted as signaling both the relatively low prioritisation of this program component and issues with tracking actual expenditure on remote housing repairs and maintenance.

So far as Healthy Homes program delivery is concerned, the Departments of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Territory Families, Housing and Communities do collect program data related to crowding, expenditure, inspections, and work orders, which was shared with Menzies for analysis following significant delays. However, based on the available data, it is not possible to distinguish between preventive and responsive maintenance undertaken by contracted service providers and, given the way that work orders are invoiced, it is not possible to gain an accurate understanding of wait times between the reporting of required repairs and the completion of related fix work. NTG datasets provided to Menzies do not include data on house condition collected by either Condition Assessment Tool inspections or Housing for Health projects. Further, data on remote housing maintenance expenditure includes expenditure on government employee housing, undermining the integrity of claims related to total or average expenditure on remote community housing under Healthy Homes or trade panel contracts. In sum, based on the available data, it remains difficult to determine whether there has been a prioritisation of preventive maintenance as a proportion of total expenditure. DIPL and THFC should review the system for managing remote housing data to ensure it is able to collect and collate data relevant to the aims of the Healthy Homes program. Attention to the integration of data systems (e.g. CBIS and ASNEX) is also required, as the analysis of CAT inspections showed that results can vary depending on the reports considered. Existing contracts set expectations for service providers in terms of data collection and reporting, while there is limited oversight of how government departments themselves manage that data. The establishment of the next national funding agreement and the renewal of existing, and award of new, service provider contracts provide opportunities to clarify how data might be collected and managed to demonstrate work that is an outcome of required preventive maintenance inspections.

Governance

The machinery of government changes that led to the reconfiguration of the Departments of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Territory Families, Housing and Communities in relation to remote community housing were clearly detrimental to the Healthy Homes program's commencement and ongoing management. The delays caused by this reconfiguration should give pause to future ministerial decrees to reorganise existing bureaucracies in this way. It is possible that this change produced a fracture between departments regarding the key mission of Healthy Homes, with interviewees frequently commenting on the relative (and apparently competing) prioritisation of asset management and health and social outcomes. However, it is also true that any effective maintenance program serves householders, who benefit from higher and more consistent function of housing hardware. Beyond this institutional reconfiguration, it has not been evident throughout the evaluation that there has been consistent or open communication between the Department responsible for the program (TFHC) and the Department that manages remote housing maintenance services contracts within it (DIPL). The concrete mechanism of a Healthy Homes Preventative Maintenance Program Working Group was planned early on, but not enacted, and meetings about the program not held between the departments until after contracts had been awarded and then only intermittently. While EHOs have participated in Housing for Health projects, there has been limited engagement with EHOs or other staff at the NT Department of Health, who were also to be part of the Working Group. This sort of cross-departmental collaboration and information sharing is fundamental to program success, to clarify and maintain a shared mission. It is also necessary in order that individuals understand how processes related to data collection and reporting impact priorities elsewhere in government, such as reporting to the Joint Steering Committee under the national agreement.

Maintenance Contracts

Given the large number of tenders for remote housing maintenance services that were not awarded, and the additional number of contracts that were awarded and subsequently discontinued, it would be misleading to suggest that a new remote housing maintenance program has been introduced across the Northern Territory. In many communities, especially in the Central Australian region, the old repairs and maintenance model has continued to operate, involving the discontinuation of housing maintenance coordinator contracts and the renewal of trade panel contracts. This patchwork effect is only partly attributable to the contracts themselves. There is significant business development required to grow the capacity of existing Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and establish new organisations, following the dissolution of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations prior to and through the Intervention. This is the case across the NT, but especially within the Barkly and Central Australian regions.

Improving the terms of housing maintenance services contracts is necessary to attract the most competent and diligent Aboriginal community controlled organisations or Aboriginal Business Enterprises available, in a housing sector where there is significant work on offer in the Northern

Territory's regional centres and a shortage of tradespeople, relative to demand. Reputable contracted service providers have shared their criticisms of the existing contracts throughout this evaluation, including that the schedule of rates is not comprehensive, leading to issues with invoicing; that contract length is too short; that total funding is inadequate to cover fixed costs; that the $500 threshold for DIPL's approval for works is too low; that there is no guaranteed minimum work; and that reporting obligations are unclear. More broadly, contracted service providers have expressed the concern that the focus of government contract superintendents can be too focused on contract compliance rather than organisational support, with limited understanding granted to the local factors that impact service delivery. The best outcomes for remote housing require the best available companies contracted to deliver repair and maintenance services. It is thus important that such contracts represent attractive business opportunities in their own right, rather than obligations to undertake work that is effectively cross-subsidised by more lucrative construction contracts or other income streams.

The Next National Agreement

The shortcomings outlined above are exacerbated to some extent by the length of the funding agreement established between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments (the 'national' funding agreement). At five years, and practically shorter given the time required for its finalisation, the national agreement effectively establishes a horizon for investment and capacity building that hampers the quality of remote community housing and the development of an Aboriginal community housing sector in the Northern Territory. The new one-year 2023-2024 agreement only reproduces this dynamic. Under the 2018-2023 agreement, the impact of the short time-frame was exacerbated further by the delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic and Northern Territory machinery of government changes. The result was remote housing maintenance and tenancy management services contracts of between one and two years, with extensions eventually granted for 12 months. This is not an effective approach to supporting a sustainable Aboriginal community controlled housing sector.

It is clear that both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments will each need to contribute to the cost of constructing and maintaining remote community housing into at least the medium term. This is the case even if significant reforms are made to the sector to increase the autonomy of Aboriginal community controlled organisations in housing management. Given this, guaranteeing adequate funding (tied to inflation) for remote housing through a ten-year national housing agreement is needed. So too is extending the application of this agreement to housing at town camps and homelands, only some of which have benefitted from Healthy Homes funding, but which have similar infrastructural needs to remote communities. The impacts of assured longer-term funding trickle down to all levels of the sector, supporting the continuity of service provision for householders, business development and corporate investment, stable employment, training opportunities, and Aboriginal community control of remote housing.

11 Recommendations

Each of these recommendations should be addressed in turn, rigorously, and as soon as possible. An adequate response will require the engagement and collaboration of senior staff from within both Territory Families, Housing and Communities and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, including the participation of Deputy CEOs. This response should take the form of a steering committee or working group that develops and oversees a plan and timeline for implementing responses to each recommendation. This implementation plan and any progress against proposed reforms should be published and regularly updated so that stakeholders in the sector are made aware of ongoing program reforms.

Chapter 5 Housing for Health

1. The Housing for Health program methodology generates extensive detailed data related to house function, repairs, and capital upgrades. This data should be integrated into existing NTG data systems on individual house condition and function.

2. In order to increase local (i.e. Northern Territory) capacity to deliver HFH projects under Healthabitat's licence, Healthabitat should be provided an opportunity to contract with the NT Government to train interested DoH Environmental Health, TFHC, and DIPL staff, as well as interested staff from contracted housing maintenance providers, as HFH project managers and/or team leaders.

3. Relevant TFHC and DIPL staff, including executive staff, should participate in HFH projects to increase their understanding of on-the-ground issues with remote community house condition, function, and repair and maintenance requirements.

4. Further consideration should be given to how the HFH methodology, including its principles and approach, can be incorporated into the business-as-usual of TFHC and DIPL housing maintenance services. This includes revision of the Condition Assessment Tool and how its application through inspections generates work orders for repairs and maintenance.

5. HFH projects should continue to be delivered across select Northern Territory communities as an independent approach to auditing and fixing the condition of remote housing, to improve house function, and to generate goodwill for ongoing housing works.

Chapter 6 Condition Assessment Inspections at Town Camps

6. The Condition Assessment Tool inspection process and related fix work in town camps is currently funded by a one-off grant. Despite different underlying tenure situations, town camp housing requires maintenance services similar to remote community housing and should receive equivalent ongoing funding for repairs and maintenance.

7. The existing paper format of the Condition Assessment Tool is difficult to use. This inspection process should be digitised to more effectively integrate this approach to preventive maintenance into existing housing management practices and data systems.

8. The format of the Condition Assessment Tool should be redesigned to make it more user friendly for both housing officers required to assess health hardware and individuals responsible for interpreting completed forms to plan works and create work orders. Relevant TFHC and DIPL staff should revise the Condition Assessment Tool by undertaking a co-design process including non-government stakeholders involved in the management of remote community housing, to best incorporate the desires and requirements of key stakeholders into housing condition assessment processes.

9. A collaborative co-design process to revise the Condition Assessment Tool and the CAT inspection process should consider the potential to incorporate the 'testing' approach of the HFH methodology, to more accurately determine health hardware functionality.

10. House condition data captured by the Condition Assessment Tool inspection process should be integrated into existing NTG data systems characterising house condition and function, so that this data is easily accessible to current and future housing maintenance services providers.

11. A co-design process related to the Condition Assessment Tool or a similar forum should be established by TFHC and DIPL to initiate discussion with Aboriginal Housing NT, land councils, and Aboriginal community controlled organisations about the collection, management, and access to remote community housing data, in accordance with principles of Indigenous data sovereignty.

Chapter 7 Remote Housing Maintenance Services

12. Following machinery of government changes that have distributed housing staff across TFHC and DIPL, it is imperative that these departments establish an inter-departmental governance mechanism for the effective management of remote community housing maintenance programs.

13. The NT Government should commit greater resources to business development in NT regions where there is no take-up of remote housing maintenance services tenders, and consult further with the sector about whether contracts are under-costed, and if so in what ways.

14. In order to reduce administrative delay and increase the autonomy of contracted service providers, contracts for remote housing maintenance services should set a threshold higher than $500 for service providers to require DIPL approval for works that are not exempt from pre-approval.

15. Condition Assessment Tool (CAT) inspections must be undertaken with more consistency as only a small number of CAT inspections have been undertaken by contracted service providers. This is the key cyclical mechanism by which the Healthy Homes program is supposed to instigate preventive maintenance. If the NT Government continues with this tool, training should be provided to contracted service providers to demonstrate the importance of undertaking such inspections to generate preventive housing works.

16. TFHC and DIPL should undertake a review into the relationship between expenditure and reporting data, to investigate whether program works are adequately captured by existing processes, including the coding of works according to the schedule of rates.

17. It is not clear that data generated by CAT inspections on the condition of housing health hardware is collated into any dataset. This inspection data should be carefully managed to establish baseline information about the condition of housing and the impact of preventive inspections.

18. TFHC and DIPL should investigate the proportion of works undertaken as 'unscheduled' works and why this is the case. There is potential to expand the schedule of rates within remote housing maintenance services contracts to increase the consistency and transparency of pricing for trade works.

19. Contracts for remote housing maintenance services should set the same conditions for the right of service providers to invoice for travel-related costs whether they are servicing remote community public housing or government employee housing.

20. Contracts for repairs and maintenance services should be longer than two years and closer to five years where possible, provided contracted service providers are subject to appropriate performance requirements. Contracts under two years in length do not support the growth of Aboriginal community housing providers or the continuity of reliable maintenance services.

21. Contracts for remote housing repairs and maintenance should adequately recognise establishment and administrative costs, as well as the increased costs of inputs such as fuel, materials, and labour, especially in areas where there are few established housing services providers.

Chapter 8 The Living Strong Program

22. TFHC should renew its communication with contracted services providers to increase the collective understanding of the obligation to deliver the Living Strong program under tenancy management support services contracts.

23. Given the flexibility concerning the content and method of delivering the Living Strong program, TFHC should review performance metrics included in tenancy management support services contracts to capture the wide range of works undertaken by service providers to sustain tenancies.

24. Future contracts for tenancy management support services that require the delivery of the Living Strong program should include additional project funding for the development of language- and community-specific resources by service providers.

25. TFHC should review how reporting by contracted service providers related to the Living Strong program is currently collated, on behalf of improving the capture of program delivery data.

26. TFHC should undertake further consultation with Aboriginal community controlled organisations regarding the design of Living Strong, and the need for this or a similar program. Such programs are not delivered to mainstream public housing tenancies and depending on how they are delivered, and by whom, can risk reproducing colonial dynamics about household education.

27. TFHC should consider making grant funding available to service providers to develop community-level projects designed by remote community residents and focused on sustaining tenancies.

Chapter 9 The Context for Reforms to Remote Housing Maintenance in the Northern Territory

28. The next remote housing agreement between the Commonwealth and NT Governments must last longer than five years, and ideally ten years, so that contracts for housing services can be established for sufficient lengths to attract and develop reputable housing providers and ensure a sustainable Aboriginal community controlled housing sector.

29. The governance mechanisms for the next Commonwealth and NT Government remote housing agreement should establish specific performance metrics that capture the condition of house function and the impact of repair and maintenance services on house function.

30. The NT Government should consider the establishment of minimum standards, or healthy housing, provisions that would provide greater regulatory detail to the health hardware required in housing (and its function) so that it meet the standards of the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

31. The NT Government should consider the successes of remote housing maintenance programs implemented in other Australian jurisdictions, in particular South Australia. Specifically, it should trial the establishment of a schedule of preventive visits by various tradespeople through all remote community housing on a cyclical basis, on behalf of reducing major repair costs and increasing the total maintenance work undertaken.

32. Working with Aboriginal Housing NT and the four NT Aboriginal land councils, the NT Government should develop a staged and costed implementation plan for transitioning control of remote community housing to Aboriginal corporations. This should consider the Central Land Council's proposal for the establishment of a statutory Aboriginal Housing Authority, along with other proposals to support regionally-specific local decision making agreements.

12 Works Cited

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory. 2013. *Partnership Principles for Working with Aboriginal Organisations and Communities in the Northern Territory.* Version May 2018. Darwin.

Ali, Shahmir, Foster, Tim and Hall, Nina. 2018. 'The relationship between infectious diseases and housing maintenance in Indigenous Australian households.' *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 15(2827): 1-11.

Andersen, Melanie, Skinner, Adam, Williamson, Anna, Fernando, Peter and Wright, Darryl. 2018. 'Housing conditions associated with recurrent gastrointestinal infection in urban Aboriginal children in NSW, Australia: Findings from SEARCH.' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 42(3): 247-253.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2022a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile. Imangara (ILOC70700303). Canberra.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2022b. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile. Haasts Bluff (SAL70120). Canberra.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory. 2010. *Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program. June 2010 Report to the Legislative Assembly*. Darwin.

Australian Institute of Family Studies. Developmental evaluation. Australian Government: Canberra. Accessed at https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/developmental-evaluation

Australian National Audit Office. 2011. *Indigenous housing initiatives: The fixing houses for better health program.* Audit Report No. 21. Canberra: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government.

Australian National Audit Office, 2012. *Implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in the Northern Territory*. Canberra: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government.

Bailie, Ross. 2007. 'Housing.' In Bronwyn Carson, Terry Dunbar, Richard Chenhall, and Ross Bailie (eds) *Social determinants of Indigenous health*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Bailie, Ross, and Wayte, Kayli. 2006. 'Housing and health in Indigenous communities: Key issues for housing and health improvement in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.' *Australian Journal of Rural Health.* 14: 178-183.

Bailie, Ross, McDonald, Elizabeth, Stevens, Matthew, Guthridge, Steven, and Brewster, David. 2010a. Evaluation of an Australian Indigenous housing programme: Community level impact on crowding, infrastructure function and hygiene. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 65: 432-437.

Bailie, Ross, Stevens, Matthew, McDonald, Elizabeth, Brewster, David, and Guthridge, Steve. 2010b. Exploring cross-sectional associations between common childhood illness, housing and social conditions in remote Australian Aboriginal communities. *BMC Public Health*. 10(147): 1-10.

Bailie, Ross, Stevens, Matthew, and McDonald, Elizabeth. 2011. The impact of housing improvement and socio-economic factors on common childhood illnesses: A cohort study in Indigenous Australian communities. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 66: 821-831.

Bambrick, H., Dear, K., Woodruff, R., Hanigan, I., and McMichael, A. 2008. *The impact of climate change on three health outcomes: Temperature-related mortality and hospitalisations, salmonellosis and other bacterial gastroenteritis, and population at risk from dengue*. Commission report for the Ganraur Climate Change Review. Melbourne: Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

BetterEvaluation. N.d. *Developmental Evaluation.* BetterEvaluation. Accessed at betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/developmental_evaluation

Bowles, D.C. 2015. 'Climate change and health adaptation: consequences for Indigenous physical and mental health.' *Annals of Global Health*. 81(3): 427-431.

Brackertz, Nicola with Wilkinson, Alex. 2017. *Research synthesis of social and economic outcomes of good housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*. AHURI Professional Services for Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Buntsma, Davina, Lithgow, Anna, O'Neill, Evan, Palmer, Didier, Morris, Peter, Acworth, Jason and Babl, Franz. 2017. 'Patterns of paediatric emergency presentations to a tertiary referral centre in the Northern Territory.' *Emerg Med Australas*. 29(6): 678–685.

Busch-Geertsema, Volker. 2010. 'Defining and measuring homelessness.' In Eoin O'Sullivan, Volker Busch-Geertsema, Deborah Quilgars and Nicholas Pleace (eds) *Homelessness Research in Europe: Festschrift for Bill Edgar and Joe Doherty*, 19-39. Brussels: FEANTSA.

Central Land Council. 2021. A Proposal for the trial of the Community Housing Model in Remote Communities. August. Alice Springs.

Central Land Council. 2021. Development of a New Aboriginal Housing Model for Central Australia. Community Housing Proposal. July. Alice Springs.

Central Land Council. 2023. Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia's Inquiry into Northern Australia Workforce Development. January. Alice Springs.

Centre for Appropriate Technology. 2012. *Post Occupancy Evaluation of Alice Springs Town Camp Housing 2008-2011*. Alice Springs.

Chief Executive Officer (Housing) v Young and Anor [2022] NTCA 1.

Commonwealth of Australia. 1999. *National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Indigenous Housing*. Prepared by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Ministers' Working Group on Indigenous Housing. September. Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia. 2001. *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010.* Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia 2017. *Remote Housing Review. A Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018).* Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: Canberra.

Crabtree, Louise, Davis, Vanessa, Foster, Denise and Klerck, Michael. 2018. 'A tale of (at least) three reports: Agency and discourse in the Alice Springs town camps.' *Global Media Journal.* 12(1): 1-25.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu. 2017. *Living on the Edge: Northern Territory Town Camps Review*. NT Department of Housing and Community Development: Darwin.

Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. 2006. *National Indigenous Housing Guide*. Third Edition. Australian Government: Canberra.

Ford, James. 2012. 'Indigenous health and climate change.' *American Journal of Public Health.* 102(7): 1260-1266.

Foster, Tim and Hall, Nina. 2021. 'Housing conditions and health in Indigenous Australian communities: Current status and recent trends.' *International Journal of Environmental Health Research.* 31(3): 325-343.

Gamble, J.A.A. 2008. *A Developmental Evaluation Primer*. The JW McConnell Family Foundation: Montreal.

Gibb, B., Babyack, S., Stephens, D., Kelleher, K., Hoger, D., Vale, C., and Peersman, G. 2019. *Putting Ethical Principles into Practice: A Protocol to Support Ethical Evaluation Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Settings*. BetterEvaluation: Melbourne.

Go-Sam, Carol. 2008. 'Working with and against Indigenous design paradigms.' *Architecture Australia*, September/October: 53-57.

Grealy, Liam. 2022. 'Slow withdrawal as managed retreat: Dismantling and rebuilding an Indigenous community controlled housing sector.' *Geoforum*. 136. 173-185. doi/org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.09.002

Grealy, Liam, Lea, Tess, Moskos, Megan, Benedict, Richard, Habibis, Daphne, and King, Stephanie. 2022. 'Sustaining housing through planned maintenance in remote Central Australia.' *Housing Studies*. First online: 1-23. doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2022.2084045

Green, Donna, Jackson, Sue, and Morrison, Joe (eds). 2009. *Risks from climate change to Indigenous communities in the Tropical North of Australia.* Canberra: Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

Hawe, P, Degeling, D and Hall, Jane. 1990. *Evaluating Health Promotion: A Health Worker's Guide*. MacLennan & Petty: Sydney.

Healthabitat. 2022. 'Why we do the work.' https://www.healthabitat.com/what-we-do/why-we-do-the-work/

Healthabitat. 2022. 'Housing for Health.' https://www.healthabitat.com/what-we-do/housing-for-health/

Healthabitat. 2023. *Housing for Health Final Report for Alice Springs Town Camps MHBH*. NT/06.00/540/21/245. April. Mona Vale.

Hulscher, MEJL, Laurant, MGH, and Grol RPTM. 2003. 'Process evaluation on quality improvement interventions.' *BMJ Quality & Safety.* 12: 40-46.

Joint Steering Committee to the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT. 2022. Communique, Meeting 12. 19 May.

Joint Steering Committee to the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT. 2023. Communique, Meeting 15. 16 March.

Kearns, Therese, Clucas, Danielle, Connors, Christine, Currie, Bart, Carapetis, Jonathan and Andrews, Ross. 2013. 'Clinic attendances during the first 12 months of life for Aboriginal children in five remote communities of Northern Australia.' *PLoS One*. 8(3): e58231.

Koppe, Christina, Kovats, Sari, Jendritzky, Gerd, and Menne, Bettina. 2004. *Heat-waves: Risks and responses.* Health and Global Environmental Change Series, No. 2. Copenhagen: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.

Laycock, Alison, Bailie, Jodie, Matthews Veronica and Bailie, Ross. 2019. 'Using developmental evaluation to support knowledge translation: Reflections from a large-scale quality improvement project in Indigenous primary healthcare.' *Health Research Policy and Systems*. 17(70): 1-11.

Lea, Tess, Grealy, Liam, Moskos, Megan, Brambilla, Arianna, King, Stephanie, Habibis, Daphne, Benedict, Richard, Phibbs, Peter, Sun, Chao, and Torzillo, Paul. 2021. *Sustainable Indigenous Housing in Regional and Remote Australia*, AHURI Final Report No. 368. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited. doi: 10.18408/ahuri7323701.

Lin, Chu Yang, Loyola-Sanchez, Adalberto, Boyling, Elaine, and Barnabe Cheryl. 2020. 'Community engagement approaches for Indigenous health research: Recommendations based on an integrative review.' *BMJ Open.* 10: 1-14.

Linnan, Laura and Steckler, Allan. 2002. 'Process evaluation for public health interventions and research.' In Allan Steckler and Laura Linnan (eds) *Process Evaluation for Public Health Interventions and Research*, 1-23. Wiley: London.

Longden, Thomas, Quilty, Simon, Riley, Brad, White, Lee V., Klerck, Michael, Napaltjarri Davis, Vanessa and Jupurrurla, Norman Frank. 2022. 'Temperature extremes exacerbate energy insecurity for Indigenous communities in remote Australia.' *Nature Energy*. 7: 11-12.

Marmot, Michael. 2010. *Fair society: Healthy lives.* Strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010. London: Institute of Health Equity.

McConnell, Allan, Grealy, Liam, and Lea, Tess. 2020. 'Policy success for whom? A framework for analysis.' *Policy Sciences*. 53: 589-608.

McDonald, E., Bailie, R., Grace, J., and Brewster, D. 2010. 'An ecological approach to health promotion in remote Australian Aboriginal communities.' *Health Promotion International.* 25(1): 42-53.

McPeake, Tess and Pholeros, Paul. 2006. 'Fixing Houses for Better Health in remote communities.' *Australian Social Policy 2006*, 111–124. Canberra: Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Melody, S., Bennett, E., Clifford, H., Johnston, F., Shepherd, C., Alach, Z., Lester, M., Wood, L., Franklin, P. and Zosky, G. 2016. 'A cross-sectional survey of environmental health in remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia.' *International Journal of Environmental Health Research.* 26(5-6): 525-535.

Memmott, Paul, Long, Stephen, and Thomson, Linda. 2006. *Indigenous mobility in rural and remote Australia*. AHURI Final Report No. 90. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

National Indigenous Australians Agency. 2021. National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (2008-18). Accessed 4 October 2021 at: https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/land-and-housing/national-partnership-agreement-remote-indigenous-housing-2008-18

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) Review of Progress (2008-2013). 2013.

North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency. 2016. *Northern Territory Housing Issues Paper and Response to the Housing Strategy Consultation Draft*. Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2007. *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*. Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2019. *A Home for All Territorians: Northern Territory Housing Strategy*. Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2019b. *Building Our Communities, Together: Town Camps Reform Framework 2019-2024.* Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2019c. *Aboriginal Employment and Business Enterprise Development Framework*. Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2019d. *Discussion Paper. Review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1999*. Darwin: Department of the Attorney-General and Justice.

Northern Territory Government. 2020. *Property and Tenancy Management Framework*. Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2020b. *Property Management Policy.* Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2020c. *Reporting Framework*. Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2020d. *Review of Remote Property and Tenancy Management Services*. Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2021. *NT Community Housing Growth Strategy 2021-2030 Discussion Paper.* Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2022. *Northern Territory Community Housing Growth Strategy*. Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities: Darwin.

Northern Territory Government. 2023. Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. Program progress overview. https://ourfuture.nt.gov.au/accountability-and-reporting/program-progress

Northern Territory Public Accounts Committee. 2016. *Report on Repairs and Maintenance of Housing on Town Camps*. Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

Oppermann, Elspeth, Brearley, Matt, Law, Lisa, Smith, James, Clough, Alan, and Zander, Kerstin. 2017. 'Heat, health and humidity in Australia's monsoon tropics: A critical review of the problematization of "heat" in a changing climate.' *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change.* 8(4): e468.

Phibbs, Peter and Thompson, Susan. 2011. *The health impacts of housing: Toward a policy-relevant research agenda.* AHURI Final Report No. 173. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Porter, Rae. 2009. *From community housing to public housing in Northern Territory remote Aboriginal communities*. DKCRC Working Paper 44. Desert Knowledge CRC: Alice Springs.

Price Waterhouse Coopers. 2007. *Living in the Sunburnt Country. Indigenous Housing: Findings of the Review of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Programme*. Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

Redman-MacLaren, Michelle, Turner, Nalita Nungarrayi, Taylor, Judy, Laycock, Alison, Vine, Kristina, Thompson, Quitaysha, Larkins, Sarah, Carlisle, Karen, Thompson, Sandra, Bailie, Ross, and Matthews, Veronica. 2021. 'Respect is central: A critical review of implementation frameworks for continuous quality improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services.' *Frontiers in Public Health*. 9: 630611. 10.3389/fpubh.2021.630611

Saunders, Ruth, Evans, Martin, and Joshi, Parphul. 2005. 'Developing a process-evaluation plan for assessing health promotion: A how-to guide.' *Evaluation and Practice*. 6(2): 134-147.

SGS Economics and Planning. (2006). *Evaluation of fixing houses for better health projects 2, 3 and 4.*Occasional Paper No. 14. Canberra, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government.

Standen, Jeffrey, Morgan, Geoffrey, Sowerbutts, Tim, Blazek, Katrina, Gugusheff, Jessica, Puntsag, Otto, Wollan, Michael and Torzillo, Paul. 2020. 'Prioritising housing maintenance to improve health in Indigenous communities in NSW over 20 years.' *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 17(5946): 1-22.

Stevens, Matthew and Bailie, Ross. 2002. *Environmental Health Survey Year 2 Evaluation. Supplementary Report.* May. Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory.

Stevens, Matthew, Stewart, Allison, Ulamari, Harold and Bailie, Ross. 2002. *Environmental Health Survey Year 3 Evaluation.* November. Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory.

Sweet, Melissa. 2019. 'Inequality and climate change: the perfect storm threatening the health of Australia's poorest.' *The Guardian.* 14 May.

Torzillo, Paul, Pholeros, Paul, Rainow Stephan, Barker, Geoffrey, Sowerbutts, Tim, Short, Tim, and Irvine, Andrew. 2008. 'The state of health hardware in Aboriginal communities in rural and remote Australia'. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 32(1): 7-11.

United Nations. 2008. 'Conference on Indigenous Peoples and climate change.' Meeting Report, Submitted by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. 21 April to 2 May. New York.

Various Applicants from Santa Teresa v Chief Executive Officer (Housing) [2019] NTCAT 7.

Ware, Vicki. 2013. 'Housing strategies that improve Indigenous health outcomes.' Resource sheet no. 25. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

World Health Organization. 2018. *WHO Housing and health guidelines*. Geneva.

World Health Organization. 2018 'Infectious diseases Webpage.' Available online: http://www.who.int/topics/infectious_diseases/en/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

Young & Conway v Chief Executive Officer, Housing [2020] NTSC 59.

13 Appendices

## 13.1 Appendix A – Recommendations of the NPARIH Review

1. A recurrent program must be funded to maintain existing houses, preserve functionality and increase the life of housing assets.

2. Investment for an additional 5,500 houses by 2028 is needed to continue efforts on Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage.

3. The costs of a remote Indigenous housing program should be equally shared (50:50) between the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions.

4. A regional governance structure should be established to facilitate better administration of the program.

5. A higher level of transparency is required: a sound performance framework and information processes that are relevant to individuals and communities, and derivative of the information that is needed for regional governance of the program.

6. Best practice fora should be established to share information across the Commonwealth, jurisdictions, regional governance bodies and service providers.

7. A minimum five year rolling plan for the program should be established.

8. Regional sample surveys (using the survey and fix methodology of the Fixing Houses for Better Health program) must form a core part of the regional governance and monitoring strategy.

9. Details about certification of properties (at all stages of building and for life after acceptance and tenanting) should be reported to the governance structure to ensure construction in remote communities is compliant with the appropriate building and certification standards and sub-standard builders are eliminated.

10. The regional governance body should work with local employers to plan how to develop the local work force and create more local employment.

11. Comprehensive planning across government – involving local communities – is essential for the next remote Indigenous housing national program.

12. Tenancy education programs should be implemented. Outreach services for tenancy tribunals to improve access in remote communities should be funded.
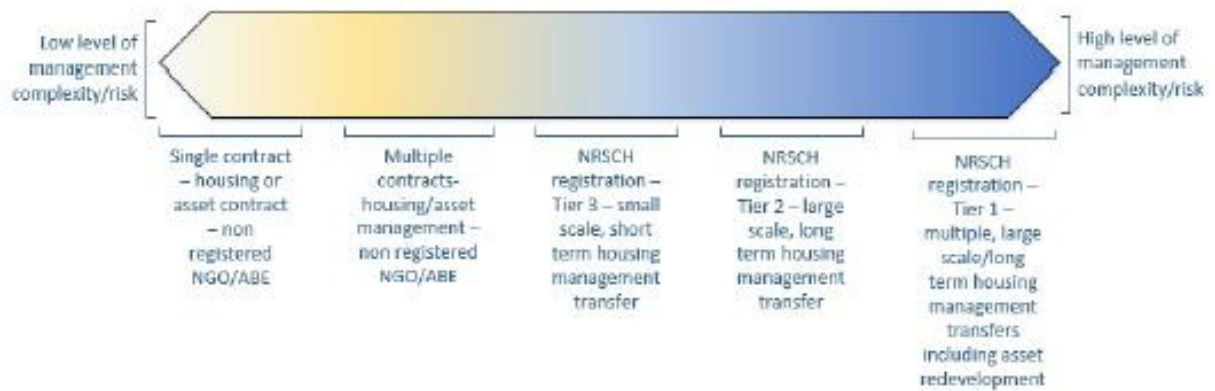
(Commonwealth of Australia 2017, 4)

13.2 Appendix B – The NT Housing System

Figure 1 - The NT's housing system
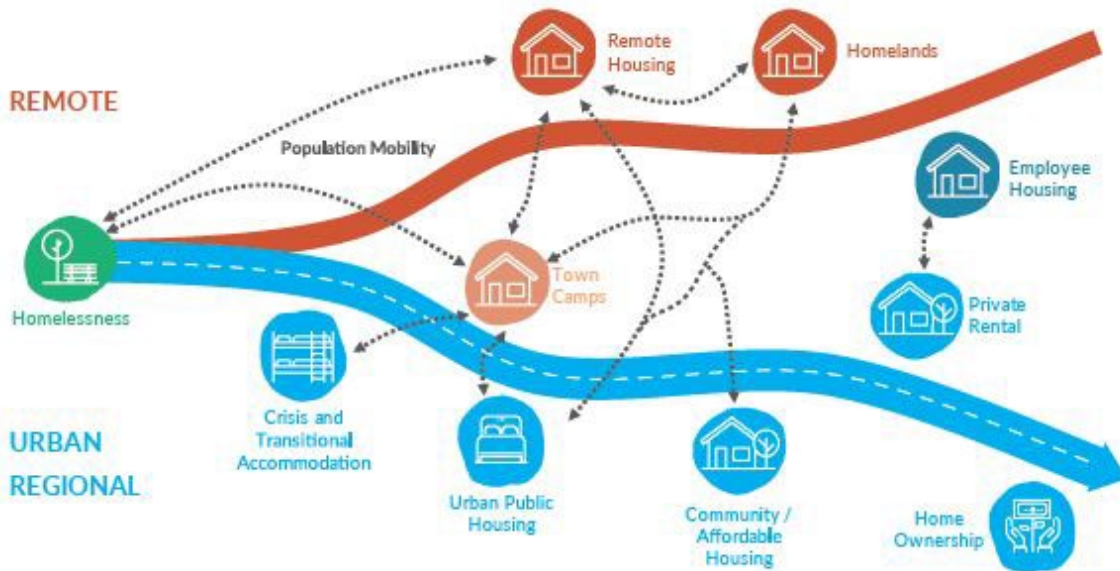
13.3 Appendix C – The Continuum of NT Housing Management

13.4 Appendix D – Draft Program Logic for the Healthy Homes Program

The following draft program logic was developed by Menzies in collaboration with the NT Government for the evaluation and monitoring contract, prior to project commencement.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Long-term outcomes
1. NTG Remote Housing Investment Package $1.1b 2017-2027	1.Upgrade, maintenance and support of data management systems to support and monitor cyclical R&M of health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices.	1. Increased and sustained cyclical R&M	1. Improved housing safety - through improvements to health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices	1. Sustained improvements in health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices	1. Improved Aboriginal well-being
2.National Partnership on Remote Housing NT $550m 2018-23, for capital works and R&M		2. Trained dept staff, service providers and residents.		2. Improved health, educational, social outcomes	2. Reduced infectious and chronic health conditions
Healthy Homes will spend:	2. Training, support and of dept staff, service providers and residents in cyclical R&M of health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices.	3. Collection of data to support and monitor cyclical R&M of health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices	2. Improved health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices		
1. Housing for Health ~$1.7m p.a. 2020-21 to 2026-27. Cyclical R&M survey-fixes in 2-3 communities p.a.			3. Local Aboriginal employment		
2. Maintaining Houses for Better Health in Alice	3. New contractual agreements between dept and service providers to support cyclical R&M of	4. More Aboriginal community-controlled organisations supported and	4. Increased capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations		

Springs town and town camps (~270 houses). Delivered by Tangentyere Constructions and Central Australia Affordable Housing, with support and training from Housing for Health from 2021-22.

3. NTG Remote Property and Tenancy Management - Responsive and cyclical R&M and tenancy services until 2023 in all leased remote communities and Alice Springs town camps. $35mp.a. New arrangements begin 1/7/2021

health hardware and tenancy services to support Healthy Living Practices.

4. Housing for Health survey-fixes in 2-3 communities p.a

5. Maintaining Houses for Better Health in Alice Springs town and town camps (~270 houses).

6. Increased support and monitoring of cyclical R&M of health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices in (a) communities following Housing for Health survey-fixes and (b) other communities

7. Building capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to

providing cyclical R&M of health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices

5. Reduced water stress/consumption

6. Reduced childhood infectious diseases

take over cyclical R&M of

health hardware to support

Healthy Living Practices

Potential moderators/confounders

1. New homes built (eg HomeBuild)

2. New extensions (eg Room to Breathe)

3. Responsive maintenance

4. Type of contracted local housing organisation

5. Other changes to housing or R&M policies or practices

6. Centre vs Top End (or NT region)

7. COVID19 and the response to the COVID19 pandemic

8. Baseline health hardware to support Healthy Living Practices

9. Baseline overcrowding

10. Baseline health, educational, social outcomes

11. Hygiene practices

13.5 Appendix E – Evaluation Framework Performance Measures from NTG Policy

The following extracts from the *National Partnership Remote Housing Northern Territory (NPRH NT)*, the *Property and Tenancy Management Framework*, the *Procurement Framework*, the *Reporting Framework,* the *Remote Housing Maintenance Service Handbook (RHMSH),* and housing maintenance tender documents are cited in the performance measures column of the project evaluation framework.

National Partnership Remote Housing Northern Territory

Part 4 – Performance Monitoring and Reporting, Clause 26

"26. The Northern Territory will report the minimum required during the operation of the Agreement, to demonstrate that outcomes are being delivered in line with the agreed frameworks, milestones have been met and that Commonwealth funding has been matched. Reporting dates will be outlined in the Implementation Plan at Schedule A and will include details on:

(a) proposed program of works to reduce overcrowding and improve housing quality;

(b) delivery of property [and] tenancy management services;

(c) Local Decision Making;

(d) allocation and expenditure; and

(e) employment and procurement frameworks to maximise Aboriginal jobs and business." (NPRH, 26).

Table A4 Property and Tenancy Management*

This table has been reproduced as it exists within the *NPRH NT 2018-2023* (first three columns only). That table includes numerous errors related to dates. Notably, under the 'Milestones' column, there is confusion over the consecutive reporting periods. Periods are listed as running from 1 November to 31 May with the following periods beginning 1 May, which is presumed to be 1 June. It is not clear why the reporting periods do not correspond to a calendar or financial year. In the 'Due date' column, the 1 June dates are repeatedly one year behind progress (for example, 1 June 19 follows 1 November 19 and should read 1 June 2020).

Milestones	Due date	Payment ($ million)	Achieved (Y/N)	Date Achieved
Approval of Property and Tenancy Management Framework	30 June 19	Nil		
Joint Steering Committee approval of Property and Tenancy Management Measures	31 [sic] June 19 31 May 20	Nil Nil		

	31 May 21	Nil		
	31 May 22	Nil		
4 year Property and Tenancy Management Contracts in place in accordance with the relevant frameworks and measures	30 Sept 19	Nil		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period of 1 July 2019 to 31 October 2019	1 Nov 19	17.5		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period 1 November to 31 May 2020	1 June 19 [sic]	17.5		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period of 1 May 2020 to 31 October 2020	1 Nov 2020	17.5		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period of 1 November 2020 to 31 May 2021	1 June 20 [sic]	17.5		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period of 1 May to 31 October 2021	1 Nov 2021	17.5		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period 1 November 2020 [sic] to 31 May 2022	1 June 21 [sic]	17.5		
Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period 1 May 2022 to 31 October 2022	1 Nov 2022	17.5		

Achievement of the Property and Tenancy Management Measures for the period 1 November 2020 to 31 May 2023	1 June 23	17.5		

NPRH NT Schedule C Definitions

"(m) 'Property and Tenancy Management Measures means performance measures agreed to by the Joint Steering Committee, outlining the property and tenancy management requirements

and milestone targets for each financial year, including:

a. services to be provided;

b. coverage of services;

c. estimated cost of services;

d. Aboriginal employment and business participation outcomes; and

e. engagement of Local Decision Making."

NPRH NT Joint Steering Committee Terms of Reference

15. The Northern Territory Government is responsible for:

a. preparing annual Capital Works Plans in accordance with A21 and A22 of the Implementation Plan to the Agreement;

b. reporting to the JSC on the achievement of performance benchmarks and milestones, this includes advising the JSC as early as possible if milestones are at risk of not being met;

c. preparing for the agreement of the JSC and implementing the Property and Tenancy Management Framework, Reporting Framework, Employment and Procurement Framework;

d. implementing the Local Decision Making Framework;

e. identifying and presenting delivery risks to the JSC, including options for mitigation and ongoing risk management;

f. informing the JSC of other Northern Territory Government investments and programs that may impact on investments and programs occurring under the Agreement;

g. sharing data, statistics and other measurements that may be relevant to the JSC's consideration of the Capital Works Plan and Property and Tenancy Management Measures, where appropriate to do so;

h. providing secretariat to the review of land servicing costs and availability, including by preparing the draft terms of reference for that review

Property and Tenancy Management Framework

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this framework are to:

- maximise the number of suitable houses available to remote tenants in remote Aboriginal communities and selected town camps covered by the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory;

- improve and maintain the standard of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities funded under NPRHNT;

- maintain the amenity of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities as per the RTA and NT public housing standards;

- provide housing services to tenants in remote Aboriginal communities to a level equivalent to that received by public housing tenants elsewhere in the NT;

- increase the number of households in remote Aboriginal communities able to maintain sustainable tenancies;

- engage and empower locally based Aboriginal Business Enterprises in delivering services in remote Aboriginal communities where available;

- maximise opportunities for local Aboriginal employment and training so that service providers have or acquire the capacity to deliver quality services to housing tenants;

- select service providers consistent with traditional Aboriginal owners and community aspirations, where identified under Local Decision Making agreements and/or Housing Reference Groups;

- meet reporting and performance indicator requirements under the NPRHNT implementation plan;

- work towards transitioning property and tenancy management services to local community control through establishment of a community housing model.

The intended outcomes of the framework include:

- improved access for tenants to report faults, request maintenance and make general tenancy inquiries;

- more timely responses to maintenance and tenancy enquiries through capacity development of locally based contractors and/or employees;

- safe and habitable houses for remote community tenants that allow for more healthy living practices;

- improved cost effectiveness of the provision of PTM services;

- increased and sustained local workforce through provision of employment and training opportunities and developing the capacity for ABEs and local Aboriginal people; and

- improved social and health outcomes for remote community residents (pp.5-6).

4. Monitoring and Evaluation (p.11) The following table includes areas related to property management only, rather than tenancy management

FOCUS AREA	
Maintenance and Contactor Quality	- Performance and contract management via monthly performance reporting: o Appropriate standards

	o Reporting requirements are met o KPI targets are delivered o Effectiveness of program o Quality of contractor work o Contractor conduct. • The community identifies that work quality has improved since implementation
Maintenance and Response Times	• Maintenance response times are monitored and performance of service providers are reviewed. • Actual maintenance response times are reported on, and are within tolerable levels of target response times standards. • Monitor maintenance response times to ensure continual improvement. • Monthly reviews of contractor performance against contracted performance targets. • Reduction of time dwellings are unavailable for allocation between tenancies.
Maintenance Amenity Standards	• Maintenance standards are audited against standards and regulations
Planned/Cyclical Maintenance	• Development of planned and cyclical maintenance programs. • Actual performance and schedule monitored, and occurs within tolerable performance levels.

There is a list of performance measures listed in the *PTM Framework* under '5. Reporting' (p.12). This is a shorter list than what exists in the *Reporting Framework*. The only measure that relates to property is '% of properties receiving annual property inspections, 70%'. There are no clear performance measures for assessing the 'Focus Areas'.

Reporting Framework

Appendix A, Property and Tenancy Management

Measurements relevant to property (rather than tenancy) management have been shaded.

Measurement	Scope	Period Reported	Format	Responsibility	Data Source	Report to

Percentage of gap between total rent collected as a proportion of rent charged*	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Activity	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of tenancies with an Agreement to Pay in place as a proportion of total tenants in rental arrears*	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of properties that have tenancy agreements in place with the tenants within eight weeks of handover of capital works*	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS/ASNEX	JSC
Percentage of properties receiving annual property inspections*	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
No. of inspections conducted: • Property • Tenancy • Vacate	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
No. of dwellings inspected	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
No. of dwellings not inspected > = 12 months	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of dwellings inspected < = 6 months	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC

Percentage of dwellings not inspected for more than 1 year	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Average year to date turnaround time (days) – vacant dwellings	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
No. of existing dwellings surveyed against 9 Healthy Living Practices	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of existing dwellings functioning after Survey Fix 1	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of existing dwellings functioning after Survey Fix 2	By community and program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Average year to date turnaround time (days) – Maintenance	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of Aboriginal people employed to deliver PTM services*	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC
Percentage of PTM contracts awarded to Aboriginal Business Enterprises*	Program	By current financial year and Agreement period	Quantitative Outcome	TFHC Remote Reforms	TMS	JSC

* = Measure related to NPRH NT

Appendix B, Monitoring and Evaluation

This table is reproduced from pages 26-28 the *Reporting Framework*, with information removed not relevant to Property and Tenancy Management.

Strategic objectives		Property and Tenancy Management
Reducing overcrowding and improving accommodation outcomes	a. Reduce overcrowding by increasing the supply of new housing and extending existing homes	• % of properties that have tenancy agreements in place with the tenants within eight weeks of handover of capital works • Average year to date turnaround time (days) – vacant dwellings
	b. Increase access to a range of appropriate, place-responsive accommodation options to meet community needs	• % of properties that have tenancy agreements in place with the tenants within eight weeks of handover of capital works • Average year to date turnaround time (days) – vacant dwellings
	c. Upgrade and maintain existing houses to an appropriate standard	• No. of existing dwellings surveyed against the 9 Healthy Living Practices • % of existing dwellings functioning after Survey fix 1 • % of existing dwellings functioning after Survey fix 2 • % of properties receiving annual property inspections • % of properties, as a proportion of all properties covered by this agreement, and other relevant Agreements, receive works as part of a planned maintenance program trial • % of properties which have received a maintenance visit from a local maintenance worker
Improving social and economic outcomes	a. Contribute to the social and economic development of remote Aboriginal communities by ensuring, to the maximum extent possible, that housing services are delivered by local Aboriginal Territorians and businesses	• % of properties which have received a maintenance visit from a local maintenance worker • % of Aboriginal people employed to deliver PTM services • % of PTM contracts awarded to ABEs
Value	b. Reduce whole of life cost of delivering and managing accommodation through innovation and economies of scale at pace with industry and community capacity.	• % of gap between total rent collected as a proportion of rent charged • % of tenancies with an Agreement to Pay in place as a proportion of total tenants in rental arrears • % of properties that have tenancy agreements in place with the tenants within eight weeks of handover of capital works • % of properties receiving annual property inspections • % of inspections conducted

		• No. of dwellings inspected
		• % of dwellings not inspected >= 12 months
		• % of dwellings inspected <=6 months
		• % of dwellings not inspected for more than 1 year
		• No. of existing dwellings surveyed against the 9 Healthy Living Practices
		• % of existing dwellings functioning after Survey fix 1
		• % of existing dwellings functioning after Survey fix 2
		• % of properties, as a proportion of all properties covered by this agreement, and other relevant Agreements, receive works as part of a planned maintenance program trial

Procurement Framework

"Maximising Aboriginal participation through procurement will be done through a prioritised tendering process:

1. Direct engagement of local/community based ABE organisations via a select tender process

2. Direct engagement of regional based ABE organisations via a select tender process; or, if not available

3. Engagement with Territory based organisations, wherever possible, through an open tender process.

This is an exception to the standard NT Government approach to procurement as outlined within the Procurement Governance Policy and Rules. As noted in Section 2.2.1, this alternative tendering approach is permitted through Public Procurement Exemption Clause 'O' (Remote Procurements) within the Procurement Rules. This clause states that '*Procurement activities for supplies to be delivered in a remote area from a legal entity which has a minimum of 30% of its full-time personnel who are Aboriginal are exempt from the public offer requirements*'. This clause enables NT Government agencies to directly procure services from remote ABEs where they have the appropriate capacity and capabilities to deliver the relevant services." (p.10)

"All works delivered under the program will be required to meet a target of 40% Aboriginal employment. This means that 40% of the employees of businesses that deliver housing works and services through the program must identify as Aboriginal. From 2020-21 this target will increase by 2% annually until the target cap of 46% is reached. . . Where possible it is expected that Aboriginal employees will be local to the specific community or region where the works are to be undertaken." (p.11)

Remote Housing Maintenance Service Handbook (RHMSH)

Scope of Work and Specifications

Contractors will perform various services to ensure housing repairs and maintenance works are carried out against each dwelling in the specified communities in respect of which the Contract is awarded, and maintain a preventative approach to repairs and maintenance work and health hardware to focus on the Nine Healthy Living Practices. These include:

a) Provide a first response for any repairs and maintenance on the dwellings and a presence in the community;

b) Provide the services of appropriately qualified trade personnel to carry out responsive and planned woks as required;

c) Conduct required activities as per the work orders;

d) Attend to the requirements in accordance with the Contract and the priority level;

e) Take date-stamped photographs before work has commenced and after work has been completed that clearly identify the date, address and room where the work was performed;

f) Where the authority is required in respect of any requests for repairs and maintenance services, obtain such authority in accordance with the Contract;

g) Ensure adequate supervision of all actions carried out on the Contractor's behalf;

h) Conduct a cyclical preventative maintenance work survey at each dwelling annually or otherwise in line with the contract, for the purpose of establishing the condition of the dwelling, and report the findings;

i) Prepare work plans for each community based on the findings of the survey in accordance with the Contract;

j) Register all repairs and work requests and provide a registration reference number to the person making the request

k) Advise tenants of the progress and expected completion times/dates of their requirements being attended to;

l) Provide an after-hours contact (name and phone number) for notification of any emergency work requirements;

m) Keep adequate records in order to provide reports, in accordance with the Contract; and

n) Provide monthly activity statements detailing the repairs and maintenance services which have been completed during the month at each dwelling in a community (p.10; this list is also included in the *Request for Tender for Provision of Remote Housing Maintenance Services to Remote Community Housing* at 9.5 Description of Works, p.43)

Key Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Target	Method of Assessment

Registration and reporting of maintenance issues	100% registration and reporting is undertaken in accordance with the Contract	Unscheduled Item Statement to be provided by Contractor, Internal CSR reports and from tenant feedback
Ability to demonstrate value for money of materials purchased when requested	Material costs are within 10% of the average supply costs for the location where the relevant Service to the dwelling is provided by the Contractor	Contractor to provide evidence of cost to Contractor of purchasing materials (the intent being that the Contractor will acquire materials at trade prices); independent enquiry by the Superintendent as to average supply costs
Adherence to the Contract	100% work undertaken is compliant with the Contract	Unscheduled Item Statement to be provided by Contractor, Internal CSR reports and photographic evidence, to be provided by Contractor; monthly meeting between the Superintendent and Contractor and from tenant feedback
Annual cyclical maintenance survey on all dwellings	100% of Properties are surveyed for preventative maintenance in each year	CSR report- Scheduled Items Usage
Response to service requests within specified timeframes	100% immediate; 95% urgent and 90% of routine service requests are responded to within required timeframe	CSR Reports and meetings between the Superintendent and Contractor
Percentage of local Aboriginal persons employed by the Contractor	50% of the Contractor's labour hours are performed by local Aboriginal persons at commencement of Contract, increasing by 2% annually on every anniversary of the Contract	Monthly Employment Statement to be provided by Contractor
Quality and workmanship	No outstanding complaints of quality, workmanship or timeliness or where there have been complaints, the Contractor has taken all necessary steps to resolve the complaints	The Contractor has taken steps to resolve the complaints and provided to the Superintendent a satisfactory plan to prevent recurrence.

In addition to the *RHMSH*, these performance indicators are included as 'Monthly Performance Measures' in the *Request for Tende*r, pp.49-50. However, there are two additional performance indicators, a different target for Aboriginal employment, and different methods of assessment. That RHMSH table is reproduced below.

Request for Tender – Provision of Remote Housing Maintenance Services to Remote Community Housing

Description of Works

9.5.1 The Contractor is required to undertake cyclical preventative maintenance surveys by a suitably experienced employee annually for each dwelling as detailed in clause 9.9 [sic, should be 9.8]. The preventative maintenance works are required by the Superintendent to prolong the expected lifespan of dwelling components. (p.43)

9.8 Cyclical Maintenance Survey

9.8.1 Initial Survey and Fix. The Superintendent will provide to the Contractor a checklist of all items to be surveyed. The Contractor will be required to develop a plan to ensure that all dwellings within the community have been surveyed within 3 months of commencement, and the report submitted to the Superintendent.

Where the required repair presents a risk to the health, safety or security for tenants or property, the item should be repaired or made safe at the time of survey, even if the cost of making safe will exceed the value referenced in clause 9.8.3 Survey Variation outlined below.

9.8.2 First Fix Survey Planning (Works under $500). The Contractor will develop a plan to repair all items identified on the survey as requiring repair in all dwellings in the community within 9 months of the completion of the survey.

This plan will exclude items meeting the clause 9.8.3 Survey Variation requirement as outlined below.

9.8.3 Survey Variation. Utilising the schedule of rates line items, the Contractor will notify the Superintendent when it becomes evident that the cost of fix works for a dwelling will exceed $500 or that the volume of first fix items identified for the community [?].

9.8.4 Second Survey Fix Survey Planning. Where the Superintendent has given authorisation to proceed with an item defined under the clause 9.8.3 Survey Variation, the Contractor will develop a plan to complete those works within the timeframe granted under the approval. (pp.45-46)

9.11 Visiting Schedule

The Contractor is required to supply the Superintendent monthly with a proposed Visiting Schedule. The scheduling is to be established in consultation with the Superintendent, in order to complete the cyclical preventative maintenance survey and fix requirements under this scope and to promptly respond to basic requests for repairs and maintenance of dwellings within the community.

Where a Visiting Schedule is to be established, a copy of the schedule should also be provided to other contractors and stakeholders, such as, but not limited to the Tenancy Management Support Services Contractor, Regional Council Office, and Essential Services Officer to ensure required notice is given to tenant.

A copy of this schedule should also be advertised, where appropriate, in a community location where public housing tenants are able to view and plan for scheduled visits, such as the community notice boards, Employment Agency, Community Store and Health Clinic. (p.48)

Monthly Performance Measures (pp.49-50)

The Superintendent will assess the performance of the Contractor on an ongoing basis throughout the period of the Contract, and as per monthly activity statements.

The performance of the Contractor will be assessed in accordance with the following performance indicators and methods of information gathering:

Performance Indicator	Target	Method of Assessment
Registration and reporting of maintenance issues	100% registration and reporting is undertaken in accordance with the Contract	Monthly Activity Statement to be provided by Contractor, and from tenant feedback
Ability to demonstrate value for money of materials purchased when requested	Material costs are within 10% of the average supply costs for the location where the relevant Service to the dwelling is provided by the Contractor	Contractor to provide evidence of cost to Contractor of purchasing materials (the intent being that the Contractor will acquire materials at trade prices); independent enquiry by the Superintendent as to average supply costs
Minimal variance between Triage and Actual Cost	Less than 10% variance between triage value and actual value on total invoices in that month	Values are recorded on the monthly activity statement
Adherence to the Contract	100% work undertaken is compliant with the Contract	Monthly Activity Statement including photographic evidence, to be provided by Contractor; monthly meeting between the Superintendent and Contractor and from tenant feedback
Annual Cyclical Maintenance Survey on all dwellings	100% of Properties are surveyed for preventative maintenance in each year	Monthly Activity Statement to be provided by Contractor in the agreed format
Employee hours efficiently utilised towards the dwelling Maintenance and Inspections	Minimum of 85% of Tendered Labour Hours as proposed by Contractor in the Contractor's Tender utilised towards works directly attributable to the dwellings and agreed training.	Monthly Activity Statement to be provided by Contractor in the agreed format
Response to service requests within specified timeframes	100% immediate: 95% urgent and 90% of routine service requests are responded to within required timeframe	Monthly Activity Statement to be provided by Contractor and meetings between the Superintendent and Contractor
Percentage of local Aboriginal Persons employed by the Contractor	44% of the Contractor's labour hours are performed by local Aboriginal Persons at commencement of the	Monthly Employment Statement to be provided by Contractor

	Contract, increasing by 2% annually, on every anniversary of the Contract.	
Quality and workmanship	No outstanding complaints of quality, workmanship or timeliness or where there have been complaints, the Contractor has taken all necessary steps to resolve the complaints.	The Contractor has taken steps to resolve the complaints and provided to the Superintendent a satisfactory plan to prevent recurrence.

11.2 Monthly Activity Statements (pp.52-53)

The Contractor shall provide a monthly statement to the Superintendent in the prescribed format, which includes but is not limited to the following information:

- Work requests completed and the date of completion;
- Work requests awaiting action from the Superintendent;
- Work requests incomplete and the reason for non-completion (access or other issue);
- Initial Triage values attributed to each work request, and actual invoiced value;
- Labour hours attributed to each work request; and
- Material costs attributed to each work request

The Contractor shall provide a Monthly Employment Statement to the Superintendent in the prescribed Excel template. The information required includes:

- whether they are Aboriginal or not,
- their role and/or labour type rate, and
- total hours worked on this Contract in the month.

13.6 Appendix F – Healthabitat and TFHC HFH Milestones and Hold Points

DOCUMENTATION DELIVERABLES	DUE DATE FOR DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTATION to DTFHC	PAYMENT MILESTONES
Copy of Feasibility report and community acceptance letter for all communities. Evidence of actual expenses for preparation of Feasibility report.	As prepared and submitted to DTFHC in accordance with HH Licence Deed. With Feasibility report	Stage 1 item 1,2
Copy of Masterlist (HfH premises and street identification list) for all communities	Prior to SF1	
Copy of the SF1 database for all communities	Within 2 weeks after completion of SF1	Stage 1,item 3
SF1 database with trade works results for all communities	Within 6 weeks after completion of SF1	Stage 1, item 4
Break period between SF1 and SF2	To be provided in gannt chart by project manager. Min 3 months - Max 6 months	
Copy of the SF2 database for all communities	Within 2 weeks after completion of SF2	
Fully completed final SF database for all communities	Within 3 months after completion of SF2	Stage 1, item 5
Electronic copy of the completed final financial management database for all communities	Within 3 months after completion of SF2	Stage 1, item 6
Explanation of why any HLPs not achieved 100% at SF2 for all communities	Within 3 months after completion of SF2	
Electronic copy of key information for a final report on each project (to be set out in template provided by DTFHC).	Within 3 months after completion of SF2	
Return of all hard copy survey/fix data sheets to DTFHC for archiving	With final report	Stage 1, item 7

13.7 Appendix G – The Tender Assessment Process

An assessment panel briefing is held at the outset of the process, to ensure all panel members operate according to shared approaches regarding project background, governance and probity, particular roles and responsibilities, schedule, communications, security and confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and the assessment process. Panel members will individually score applications according to criteria, weightings, and scoring scales specified in 'Attachment E – Tender Assessment Plan'. A member of the panel, typically the chair, may conduct a referee's report, collecting information regarding the tenderer's past performance, including in relation to workforce size, quality of works and service delivery, Aboriginal employment, timeliness, and administrative management. A Value for Territory excel spreadsheet should be completed by the panel members to develop final scores, according to the weighted criteria of local content, capacity, timeliness, and scope specific. If appropriate, negotiation with tenderers occurs to improve applications, with regard to departures from tender specification, improving service outcomes, or maximising potential value. Risk assessment is undertaken according to the C1: Value Risk Segmentation Tool. A Procurement Assessment Recommendation is finalised by the panel chair and submitted to the Delegate for approval and, once approved, this is forwarded to Procurement Services, including any clarifications, negotiations and other relevant materials to the contract. Contract and Procurement Services (CAPS) will issue notification of the outcome to all applicants, and debrief meetings are held with successful and unsuccessful tenderers, as desired. A 'Contract kick-off meeting' with a service provider will address roles and personnel, a transition plan with an existing provider as needed, compliance requirements, health and safety, commercial and operational requirements, and the relationship between the contract superintendent and service provider.