
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING DATA REVIEW

EQUITY ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
MARCH 2024

About us

ABOUT EQUITY ECONOMICS

Equity Economics is an economic and social policy consulting firm, providing analysis, policy development, design and evaluation services to government, private sector and non-government clients.

We specialise in economic and social policy, applied domestically and internationally across the Asia Pacific region. We combine technical economic skills with policy expertise, helping our clients contribute to a more inclusive, equitable society. Our work addresses the persistent challenge of social and economic disadvantage, through new and practical solutions.



EQUITY ECONOMICS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Equity Economics acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to both their land and seas. We also pay our respects to Elders – past, present and emerging – and generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now and into the future.

Contents

CONTEXT	4
The project.....	4
Report structure.....	4
Project approach.....	5
SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	6
HOUSING NEED ANALYSIS	10
The importance of stable and appropriate housing.....	10
Current picture of homelessness and overcrowding.....	11
Estimating housing need.....	12
Estimating existing efforts against need.....	17
CURRENT HOUSING DATA COLLECTION ADEQUACY	23
The current data landscape.....	23
Reform efforts.....	31
IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION AND USE	34
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Register.....	34
New contributing data sources.....	36
developing new policy proposals.....	39
APPENDICES	40
A. List of agencies and organisations consulted.....	40
B. Housing need analysis – Methodology.....	41
C. Housing need by Indigenous Region.....	44
D. Housing need by Indigenous Area (top 50 by proportion in need).....	45
E. Housing need by Remoteness.....	46
F. Comparison of primary ABS sources that collect data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing.....	47
G. The Community Housing Infrastructure Needs Survey.....	50
H. Reporting requirements for Commonwealth social housing investments and Closing the Gap indicators.....	56

Context

THE PROJECT

The Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee (the Committee) is responsible for providing independent advice to the Australian Government ahead of every Federal Budget on opportunities and reforms to tackle systemic disadvantage and boost economic inclusion and participation, particularly for long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups.

In its 2023-2024 report, the Committee focussed on measures that would target the largest number of Australians experiencing poverty and disadvantage. This included recommending an increase to the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to support people living in the private rental market. The Australian Government's increase to the CRA is welcome. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have significantly worse life outcomes than other Australians, are likely to have benefited least.

- In 2022, only 6.6% of CRA recipients reported having an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person as a household member.¹
- This is particularly pronounced in remote areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be living in social housing than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in non-remote areas (54% of households compared to 15%)², and while still required to pay rent are not eligible for CRA.³

As part of its upcoming report ahead of the 2024-25 Budget, Members of the Committee are seeking advice on the housing, and related infrastructure, needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and on the data needed to inform targeted government investment decisions. Equity Economics have been engaged to provide advice on:

- an estimate of housing need in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities using existing data sources, and an indication of whether existing efforts by Australian governments to increase supply are likely to meet demand
- new data required on remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and related infrastructure needs, and recommendations for its collection.

REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is structured as follows:

- A summary of key findings and recommendations
- An analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need
- A review of current data collection methods and coverage

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2023, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework; summary report 2023. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 19 February 2024. Available at: indigenoushpf.gov.au/getattachment/4a44660b-5db7-48d0-bcec-1e0a49b587fc/2023-july-ihpf-summary-report.pdf

² AIHW 2021, Housing circumstances for First Nations people, Analysis of ABS Census Population and Housing 2021. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 19 February 2024. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-housing>

³ Remote residents living in housing owned by community housing associations have access to CRA, however this is a very small proportion.

- Options to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data collection.

PROJECT APPROACH

Analysis in the report relied on publicly available data and was completed in the time constraints of the project. In shaping its analysis and recommendations, Equity Economics consulted with the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks), the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Productivity Commission (PC), the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (DITRDCA). The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA) were invited to participate but did not make themselves available. See Appendix A for a list of those consulted.

An interim report was provided to the Committee on 26 February 2024 to inform their ongoing deliberations.

While finalising this report, on 12 March 2024, the Australian and Northern Territory (NT) governments announced a jointly funded \$4 billion ten-year project that aims to build up to 270 houses annually in remote Aboriginal communities and halve overcrowding in the NT. Also providing support for repairs and maintenance, the project will be supported by a Partnership Agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory governments and Aboriginal Housing NT.⁴

This announcement is around double that of the previous five years and has implications for the analysis, particularly whether existing efforts by Australian governments to increase supply are likely to meet demand.

For the purposes of this report, we use the term 'social housing' to encompass public housing managed by the relevant state or territory government housing authority and community housing managed by community housing providers including Indigenous providers. While we recognise there is no agreed definition of what it means to be homeless, we have adopted the ABS definition for this report.⁵

⁴ Prime Minister of Australia 2024 'Landmark \$4 billion investment for remote housing in the Northern Territory to help Close the Gap'. Available at: <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/landmark-4-billion-investment-remote-housing-northern-territory-help-close-gap>

⁵ The ABS defines homelessness, for the purposes of the Census of Population and Housing, as the lack of one or more elements that represent 'home'. The ABS statistical definition of homelessness is '... when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations'.

Summary findings and recommendations

This section of the report provides a summary of the overall findings and recommendations.

Key findings:

- There is a housing and homelessness crisis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, undermining efforts across all areas to close the gap in life outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Since 2020, through the initiative of the newly formed Coalition of Peaks, there has been a renewed focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs and the responsibility of the Australian Government. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap Agreement) sets out housing as a key policy priority.⁶ It introduces a housing “outcome” and a housing related “target” for the first time into the Closing the Gap reporting. It also acknowledges the importance of housing and community related infrastructure through the addition of a new dedicated “target”. However, there is no national investment strategy to meet these targets and no capacity for detailed monitoring of improvements in outcomes.
- Existing data collection demonstrates the significant need for additional investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social housing, particularly in remote areas.
 - » In 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were nearly nine times more likely than non-Indigenous people to experience homelessness and overcrowding.⁷ Of these, 60% were living in severely crowded dwellings, 19% were in supported accommodation for the homeless and 9% were living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out.⁸
 - » Over one in three homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were children.⁹

⁶ The Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2024, Closing the Gap website, “Closing the Gap Targets and Outcomes”. Available at: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

⁷ ABS Census Data 2021. Estimates from the 2021 Census indicate that around 24,900 Indigenous Australians were homeless on Census night (3.1% of the Indigenous population). The homelessness rate for Indigenous Australians was 8.8 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians in 2021 (307 compared with 35 per 10,000 population).

⁸ Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

⁹ ABS (2022). Estimating Homelessness: Census.

- The need in remote communities is even greater.
 - » 14% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in very remote areas experience homelessness and 7% in remote areas (compared with 1.5% in major cities).¹⁰
 - » Almost 1 in 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households (24%) need at least 1 extra bedroom (compared with 8% in non-remote areas). This is highest for very remote Northern Territory where over half of houses need at least 1 extra bedroom (53%), and very remote Western Australia where almost 1 in 4 are in need (23%).¹¹
 - » In remote areas, nearly half of overcrowded dwellings (47.5%) are of an unacceptable standard.
 - » Around a third (31.8%) of dwellings not overcrowded were also not of an acceptable standard.

Based on available data, Equity Economics makes a very conservative estimate that there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander minimum housing need of an additional 18,342 houses nationally.¹²

- Of these, a minimum of 5,261 are needed in remote and very remote areas.
- The largest number of houses are needed in remote and very remote areas of the Northern Territory (2989), followed by Queensland (1012), and Western Australia (917).

A further 69,500 existing houses are likely to need either substantial repair or replacement due to significant structural problems or a lack of basic facilities.

Data is not available to reliably estimate the related housing and community infrastructure requirements; however, Equity Economics assess that this is likely to be significant.

- Equity Economics assesses that existing efforts by governments to address the overcrowding and homelessness needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not sufficient.
 - » There is no national approach or dedicated investment strategy to address overcrowding needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people despite the commitments in the Closing the Gap Agreement.
 - » Investments from mainstream intergovernmental agreements are not allocated across jurisdictions based on need and cost and there is not always a clear strategy of how these investments will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, despite often being named a priority cohort.
 - » Tracking levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social housing dwellings (including state-owned and managed housing and Indigenous community housing) before and after 2021, against our estimated additional need in 2021, shows a continued persistent gap between public and social housing availability and unmet need.

¹⁰ ABS (2022), Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

¹¹ Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

¹² While we are unsure of the exact methodology behind the 5,500 dwellings needed in remote communities estimated in the 2017 Remote Housing Review, our number is likely different due to using a different methodology (e.g. including need for 1 and 2 extra bedrooms) and estimating housing need at a national level (rather than just remote). For remote communities, we estimate a need of 5,261 dwellings.

- » Australian Infrastructure Audits continue to highlight the need for significant additional investment housing related and community infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, particularly in remote areas. Like in housing, there is no national approach or dedicated investment strategy to address the significant gaps identified and despite the commitments in the Closing the Gap Agreement.
- There are economic efficiencies in ensuring new and existing housing investments, including repairs and maintenance, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are better targeted and monitored. However, the available data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs, and related infrastructure, is patchy, inconsistent, and insufficient and does not support community-based planning.
 - » There has been a significant decline in the last 15 years in the level and quality of data and information reported, marked by the cessation of the Commonwealth’s Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).
 - » There is no designated entity, governance structure or accountability mechanism in the Commonwealth Government with the remit or resources to interpret and enhance current remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data collection, and no one has a clear, comprehensive understanding of the full extent of data currently available.
 - This is a likely outcome of fragmented responsibility for delivering housing and infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australian Government departments and agencies and across all governments. Ministerial responsibilities at the Commonwealth level to respond to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for housing and infrastructure are complicated. Currently it is understood they are shared between the Minister for Housing and Homelessness, the Treasurer, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) also provides home loans to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which is another piece to the need and data picture not covered by this report.
 - » The biggest gaps in the data collection are more granular data on existing housing conditions and housing-related infrastructure.
 - » There is more housing data collected by states and territory governments and on the ground at a community level by service providers, than is currently shared with the Australian Government and reported on to the public and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
 - » The availability and quality of data for remote communities, where the need is much greater, is more limited than for urban and regional areas.
- There have been numerous efforts and calls over the years to improve data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities and governments. Of note, the Closing the Gap Agreement commits all governments to significantly change the way data on Closing the Gap is collected and shared with communities for the purposes of informing place-based partnerships between communities and governments and supporting communities’ own development priorities and decisions. However, these commitments have been met with little or no progress, are not incentivised nor appropriately resourced.

- A fundamentally new approach, properly resourced, is needed to support improved data collection and usage. Equity Economics is not persuaded that existing commitments and efforts, including a comprehensive audit of existing data sets in relation to housing, will substantially address current deficiencies.

Recommendations:

- Equity Economics proposes the Commonwealth Government invest in a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Register (Register). Not unlike the National Disability Data Asset, the register could be negotiated and agreed as part of the new Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), with state and territory governments contributing to its establishment and ongoing data provision. The register should be informed by new and existing data collections, in particular:
 - » improved performance reporting and state and territory government held data sharing as part of the NHHA and the new Remote Housing Northern Territory Partnership Agreement;
 - » a redesigned CHINS survey, which takes into account the limitations of the earlier iterations of CHINS, subsequent advancements in data collection and includes new measures important to the sustainability of remote housing and communities;
 - » rapid assessments of homelessness and overcrowding in remote hotspot areas to support new projects funded by the commonwealth and the relevant state or territory government; and
 - » existing ABS and AIHW held information and collections.
- The Register and associated data and information contributions should be developed in partnership between governments and the Coalition of the Peaks, be administered by the ABS, and give effect to government commitments under the Closing the Gap Agreement. The Register should be accessible to communities and support place-based planning and partnerships.
- Budget proposals for a redesigned CHINS and rapid assessments could be developed for the 2024-25 Federal Budget and development of the Register could be considered in the following budget, to allow for negotiations with key parties.
- Equity Economics was not asked to consider recommendations on investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. However, we note that the need is significant, not just in the Northern Territory, and current effort is not sufficient, and allocation is not always based on need.

Housing need analysis

This section outlines the importance of housing to the social and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cost-effectiveness of housing investment. A minimum estimate of housing need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using existing data sources is provided. Assessments of whether existing efforts by Australian governments to increase housing supply are likely to meet demand is also provided.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STABLE AND APPROPRIATE HOUSING

Stable, secure, and appropriate housing is the foundation upon which everything else in a person's life can be built and is a key determinant of health, wellbeing and financial security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people¹³:

- Housing has a significant impact on economic inclusion including **financial security** and **participation in employment, educational achievement**, providing a basis for people to plan, look for and maintain a job, budget and save and support school attendance and education attainment for their children. By contrast, unstable and inadequate housing, is “both the result of, and a cause of, ongoing poverty.”^{14,15,16,17,18}
- Overcrowding and lack of access to functional hygiene facilities leading to poor hygiene behaviours, has direct links to poor **health outcomes** – for example through the spread of common illnesses, increased difficulty in managing chronic disease and achieving other health priorities, such as bringing up healthy infants and children. Poorly laid-out or maintained houses impacts on **accessibility issues for people with a disability and elderly people**, who may then be at risk of injury, stress, and isolation.¹⁹
- Homelessness and housing instability also have strong interrelationships with **mental health, domestic violence, child protection** interventions, **alcohol and drug** dependence.²⁰

Efforts across all areas to close the gap in life outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians will be undermined until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are living in appropriately sized, well-maintained, safe and secure housing.

¹³ AIHW. 2023. Tier 2 – Determinants of health: 2.01 Housing. Available at: www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-01-housing#references

¹⁴ Memmott, P. et al. 2012. Australian Indigenous house crowding, AHURI Final Report No.194. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Available at: www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/194

¹⁵ World Health Organization. 2018. WHO Housing and health guidelines. Geneva: Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. Available at: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/276001/9789241550376-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

¹⁶ Dillon, M.C. 3 February 2022. Remote Indigenous housing requires ongoing policy focus: Submission to the Review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU Canberra.

¹⁷ Ware V-A. 2013. Housing strategies that improve Indigenous health outcomes. Resource sheet no. 25. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

¹⁸ Dillon, M.C. 3 February 2022. Remote Indigenous housing requires ongoing policy focus: Submission to the Review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU Canberra

¹⁹ WHO, 2018, p. xv.

²⁰ AIHW. 2023. Tier 2 – Determinants of health: 2.01 Housing. Available at: www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-01-housing#references

There is also a clear economic rationale for social housing investment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where “upfront investment in housing interventions is a cost-effective means of improving Indigenous health outcomes over the longer term” and “a major entry point for intersectoral public health programmes and primary prevention”.²¹

CURRENT PICTURE OF HOMELESSNESS AND OVERCROWDING

Over 20% or one in five people experiencing homelessness in Australia are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – which is almost 25,000 individuals. There are particularly high rates in the Northern Territory (18.7%), Western Australia (3.8%), and South Australia (3.3%).²² At 3%, the homelessness rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is almost 9 times higher than the non-Indigenous rate of 0.3%.²³

Of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness, 60% were living in severely crowded dwellings, 19% were in supported accommodation for the homeless and 9% were living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out., the remaining 12% were living in boarding houses, temporary lodgings or staying temporarily with other households.²⁴

Further, over one in three homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were children (23.6% of those experiencing homelessness were under 12 years of age, and a further 13.3% were aged between 12 and 18 years).²⁵

There are also significant levels of overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. There are various definitions of overcrowding used by different authorities. The ABS' estimate of homelessness includes those living in severely crowded dwellings (defined as needing 4+ additional bedrooms). However, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also live in 'moderately overcrowded' houses defined as needing one to three additional bedrooms – just under one in ten (9.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households nationally require at least one additional bedroom.²⁶

Remote areas²⁷ face a more acute housing crisis, with significantly higher rates of overcrowding and poor housing conditions. In remote areas, almost one in four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households (24%) need at least 1 extra bedroom (compared with 8% in non-remote areas). Overcrowding is highest in very remote Northern Territory where over half of houses need at least 1 extra bedroom (53%), and very remote Western Australia where almost one in four (23%). are overcrowded. The figure is also vastly higher than for non-Indigenous households where only 2.5% of houses in remote areas and 3.3% of houses in non-remote areas need at least one extra bedroom.²⁸

²¹ Garnett ST, Sithole B, Whitehead PJ, Burgess CP, Johnston FH & Lea T 2009. Healthy country, healthy people: policy implications of links between Indigenous human health and environmental conditions in tropical Australia. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 68(1):53–66.doi:10.1111/j.1467-8500.2008.00609.

²² ABS 2022. Estimating Homelessness: Census. Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release#aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples>. ((accessed Feb 2024)).

²³ Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

²⁴ Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

²⁵ ABS 2022. Estimating Homelessness: Census.

²⁶ ABS 2022. Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/housing-statistics-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/latest-release#housing-suitability-and-overcrowding>.

²⁷ Based on the ABS Australian Statistical Geographic Standard (ASGS) classes of remote and very remote Australia.

²⁸ Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder]

This significant disparity is partly due to the absence of mainstream housing options in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Unlike non-remote areas with more diverse housing choices, remote communities often lack readily available housing, making overcrowding a pressing issue.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in overcrowded housing are also more likely to experience poor housing standards— that is, their housing has major structural problems or lack basic facilities (e.g. working kitchen, toilet etc.). The most recent National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) survey, undertaken in 2018-19, found that 69% of overcrowded dwellings met an acceptable standard compared to 81% of dwellings that are not overcrowded. This is particularly the case in remote areas only around half (52.5%) of overcrowded dwellings housing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were of an acceptable standard. Even dwellings without overcrowding had significant structural problems and a lack of facilities, with 31.8% or just under one in three houses deemed not of an acceptable standard.²⁹

ESTIMATING HOUSING NEED

Notes on methodology

The analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need should be considered a minimum estimate and is based on people experiencing homelessness and overcrowding. We have taken a conservative approach and chosen to exclude other marginally housed (people in other improvised dwellings and those marginally housed in caravan parks), instead focusing only on those that meet the ABS definition of homelessness or in overcrowded dwellings.

Data is from the 2021 Census data Table Builder except where outlined.

In developing our methodology, we reviewed the approach in the Commonwealth's 2017 Remote Indigenous Housing review,³⁰ noting only limited information on the methodology is publicly available. That review estimated 5,500 new dwellings were needed to house Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities.³¹ Our methodology differs from the 2017 approach in three key respects:

1. we use a broader definition of overcrowding to include all households who need additional bedrooms;
2. We use a narrower definition of homelessness, removing those who are homeless due to overcrowding (to avoid double counting) and excluding other marginally housed people.
3. we primarily use 2021 data, providing a snapshot in time, which does not include forward population projections or account for events that may have compounded housing issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in recent years, including major flood events in Northern Australia.

Our full methodology is provided in Appendix B.

²⁹ Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2001. Table 1.1. Whether dwelling of an acceptable standard, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, State/Territory, NATSISS 2008 and 2014-15, NATSIHS 2012-13 and 2018-19.

³⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, 2017. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Remote Housing Review: A review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018).

³¹ Commonwealth of Australia, 2017. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Remote Housing Review: A review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018).

Our analysis is necessarily dependent on the reliability of publicly available data and challenges with existing data means that our estimate is likely to be conservative. For example, the ABS acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homeless figures in the 2021 Census are underestimated – *“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have been under enumerated in the Census and estimates of homelessness based on Census data will be an underestimation. In the 2021 Census, the net undercount for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was 17.4%. Some of those who were under-enumerated may have been experiencing homelessness at the time of the Census.”* This undercount is likely to be amplified in remote Indigenous communities where collection of Census data is more difficult, and often involves collection via field officers over a longer time period. This means that people can be missed when they move between locations – as is often the case for people with insecure or no housing, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cultural and family obligations and the need to travel to access certain services.

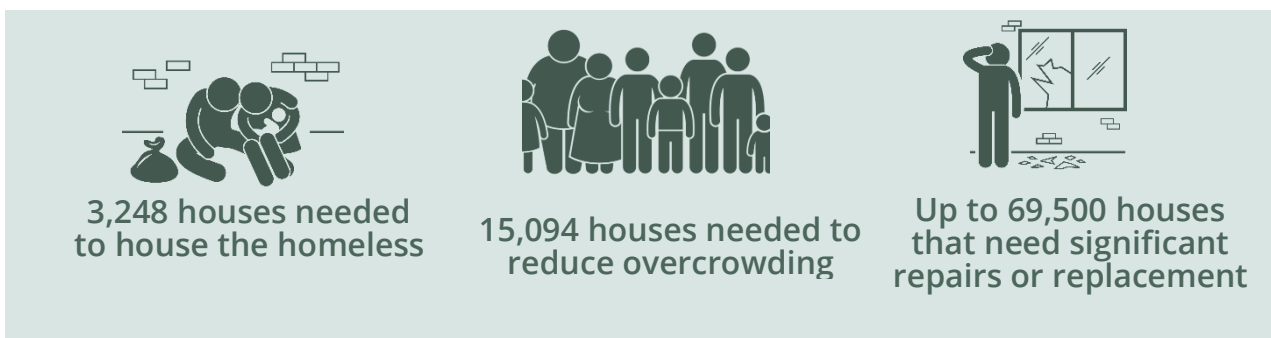
Our figure is also likely to be a conservative estimate of need as, unlike the Commonwealth's 2017 Remote Indigenous Housing review, it does not include future population growth projections. We decided not to include projections due to available population projections being outdated and due to their inconsistency with 2021 Census data.³² These population data challenges hinder interpretations of trends like homelessness rates, as they might be influenced by demographic shifts rather than actual improvements. For more information see Appendix B.

³² Most recent population projections are from 2016. There are also challenges with current population estimates due to challenges with changing norms around self-identification. The ABS is currently working new population projects set to be released at the end of July.

Estimation of need

Based on our analysis, a conservative estimate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need is an additional 18,342 houses nationally³³ — of which 3,248 houses (around 18%) are required to house people experiencing homelessness³⁴ and 15,094 houses (around 82%) are required to house those living in overcrowded dwellings (see Figure 1).³⁵ Of these, 5,261 are needed in remote and very remote areas. The most common housing types needed are three-bedroom homes (53% of total), four-bedroom homes (22%) and two-bedroom homes (18%). the remainder of homes required are five-bedroom homes (4%) and one-bedroom homes (3%). A further, also conservative, estimate is that 69,500 existing houses are likely to need either substantial repair or replacement due to significant structural problems or a lack of basic facilities.

Figure 1. Estimated national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing need



Source: Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

³³ Note, the number has changed slightly since the interim report due to an improvement in the approach of calculating total number of houses (i.e. using national level data rather than the sum of rounded disaggregated data).

³⁴ As noted in the methodology, people in severely overcrowded housing have been excluded from the 'homeless' category of housing need to avoid double counting. This cohort – which is the largest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homeless in the ABS data – have been picked up in the calculation of houses required to address overcrowding.

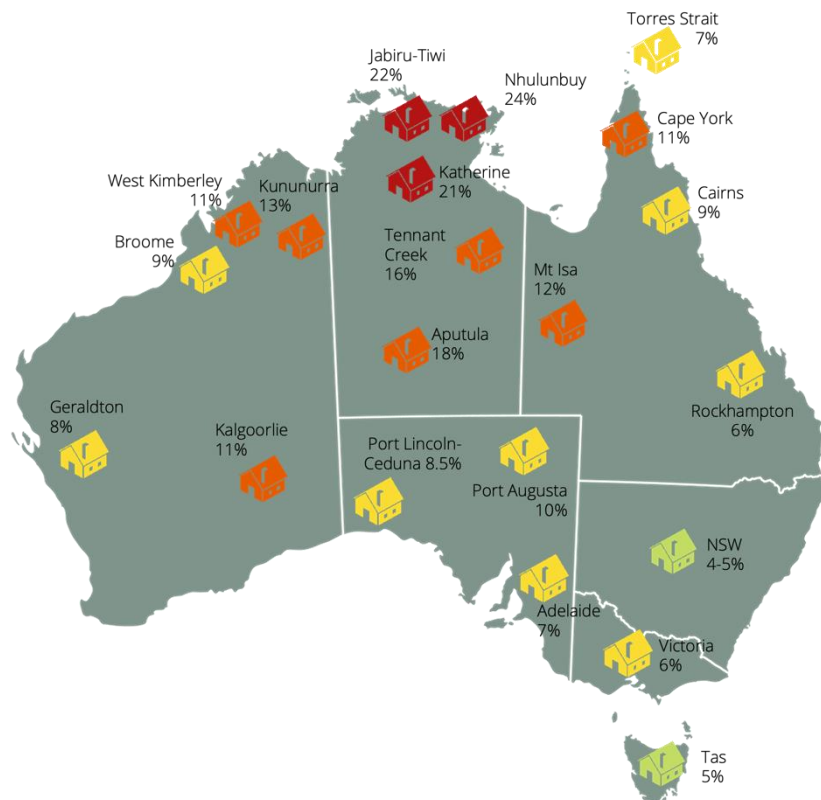
³⁵ We are unsure of the exact methodology behind the 5,500 dwellings needed in remote communities estimated in the 2017 Remote Housing Review, as the full methodology is not publicly available. But we expect our calculations are likely different due to differences in methodology (e.g. including estimating the need for one and two extra bedrooms) and estimating housing need at a national level (rather than just remote). For remote communities, we estimate a need of 5,261 houses. It is also possible this slight decrease is because of new investment in the Northern Territory.

Housing need by Indigenous Region³⁶

An analysis of homelessness and overcrowding by Indigenous Region and comparing housing need across regions reveals two key insights:

- When looking at the absolute number of houses needed, Queensland (5,173), followed by New South Wales (NSW) (4,375) and the Northern Territory (3,577) top the list. Reflective of their larger populations, the most houses in absolute terms needed are generally found in more urban areas including in Brisbane (1,828), the NSW Central and North Coast (1,639), Sydney – Wollongong (1,442), and Cairns – Atherton (883). However, the regions of Jabiru – Tiwi (743), Nhulunbuy (681) and Katherine (601) in the Northern Territory also have high numbers of houses needed. A full breakdown of houses needed by Indigenous Region is at Appendix C. More detailed analysis by Indigenous Area for the top 50 highest need areas is at Appendix D.
- However, when considering the number of people needing housing as a proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population size in each region (a more suitable indicator of relative need), the highest need is in Northern Territory (17.7%), followed by Western Australia (7.5%), South Australia (7.5%), Queensland (6.7%), Victoria (6.2%), and New South Wales and the ACT (both 4.9%). The highest need Indigenous Areas by state or territory are given below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Highest need Indigenous Regions by proportion of population needing housing



A red-coloured house indicates need of greater than 20%; orange 11-20%; yellow 6-10% and green is 5% or less.

Source: Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

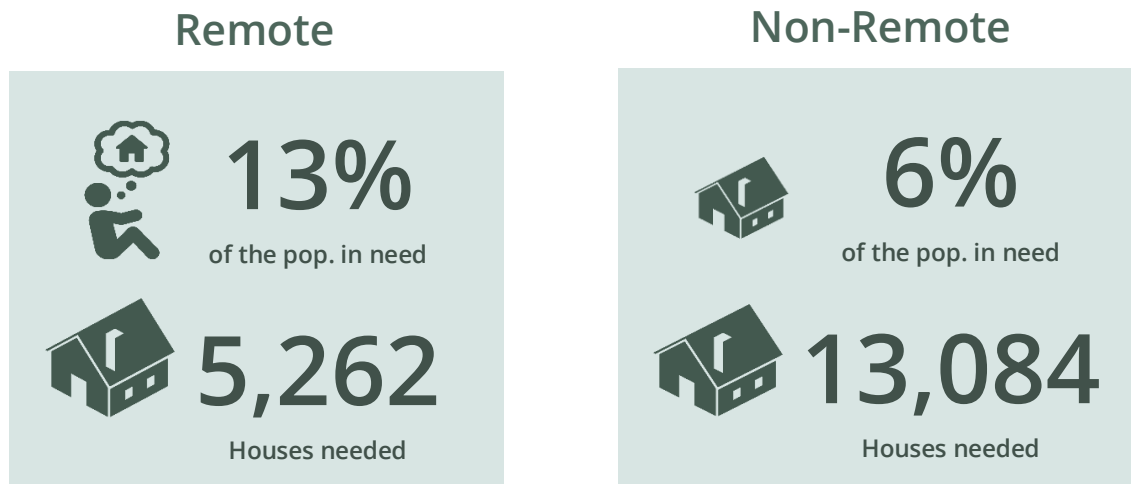
³⁶ Indigenous Regions are a component of the Indigenous Structure hierarchy under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). The Indigenous Structure is a geographical standard used by the ABS for the publication and analysis of statistics about the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. We have chosen to present the data for Indigenous Regions in this report for ease of interpretation. More detailed analysis at the Indigenous Area level is available in the appendix.

Housing need by Remoteness

Despite making up only 15% of the population, remote and very remote areas make up almost 30% of the total number of houses needed (5,262 houses). By far the largest number of houses is needed in remote and very remote Northern Territory (2,989), followed by Queensland (1,012), and Western Australia (917). A full breakdown of number of houses needed by remoteness is given in Appendix C.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people needing housing is significantly higher in remote areas compared to non-remote areas. In remote areas, 13% of the population needs housing (11% in 'remote' and 15% in 'very remote') due to homelessness or overcrowding. This contrasts with non-remote areas, where only 6% of the population needs housing due to overcrowding or homelessness (see Figure 3). By state, Northern Territory has the highest proportion of people in remote and very remote areas in need of housing (20%), followed by South Australia (12%), Western Australia and Queensland (10%) and Tasmania and New South Wales (5%).

Figure 3. Estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs due to homeless and overcrowding by remoteness



Source: Equity Economics calculations from ABS 2021. Estimating Homelessness. [Census TableBuilder].

Box 1. The extra burden for remote and the need for strong government involvement

There is no housing market in remote areas (private rental or homeownership opportunities), leaving residents to rely on social housing and government investment. This makes the role of governments in the provision of social housing in remote and some regional areas much more significant and important than in urban areas.

In other settings social housing tends to be allocated based on need. In many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, this is all the housing there is, especially for local people. Even if there was a housing market, the incomes of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in remote are not sufficient to buy a household out of social housing.

Further, in mainstream social housing, expenditure on the ongoing management of properties and tenancies (not including asset depreciation) can be largely offset by rental revenues.³⁷ In remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, rent revenues typically only cover an average of 16% of the recurrent expenditure on managing housing stock.³⁸ This significant gap between revenue and

³⁷ Nous Group, Efficient system costs of Remote Indigenous housing, 2017, for the NIAA Review of Remote Housing.

³⁸ Figures based upon the gap between rental income and total recurrent costs in 2017/18 budgets (not including depreciation) for the NPARIH program from data provided in February 2017 from four jurisdictions. Further explanation and analysis can be found in: Nous Group, Efficient system costs of Remote Indigenous housing, 2017, for NIAA Review of Remote Housing.

cost is driven largely by the increased cost of housing delivery because of the remoteness and small size of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the associated costs and challenges in servicing them, and shortened asset lifecycles due to harsh climatic conditions.

Houses that are not of an acceptable standard

We can estimate the number of houses needed due to substandard housing conditions using 2018-2019 NATSIHS data. However, this data cannot be directly combined with figures on homelessness and overcrowding due to differences in how and when the data was collected and analysed.

We estimate that a minimum additional 69,500 houses occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders³⁹ are needed either to be substantially repaired or replaced due to having significant structural problems or a lack of basic facilities.

Most of the houses requiring repairs and maintenance are needed in non-remote areas (53,600 houses, compared with 16,100 houses in remote areas). However, a markedly higher proportion of houses occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households need repair or replacement in remote areas (35%) as compared with non-remote areas (18%). In very remote areas, just under half of houses need repair or replacement (43%). By state, houses are most likely to not meet an acceptable standard in the Northern Territory (33% of all houses), South Australia (29%) and Western Australia (26%).^{40,41}

Community and essential housing related infrastructure

The absence of current data on essential community infrastructure presents a significant obstacle in accurately estimating the true need for housing investment. Infrastructure, such as access to clean water, sanitation, reliable power, and transportation, forms the foundation upon which healthy and sustainable communities are built, and from the available evidence we know there is significant need and gaps, in remote communities especially.

We also note that missing from our analysis, and data, is future needs of community and essential infrastructure to help communities and households prepare for and mitigate against the impact of the changing climate and increased weather events. Without understanding the current state of these vital services, we risk overlooking critical aspects of the housing equation.

ESTIMATING EXISTING EFFORTS AGAINST NEED

While drawing a concise picture of whether existing efforts address housing needs is challenging due to limitations in data availability, Equity Economics assesses current efforts, including the recent housing investment announced in the Northern Territory, is not sufficient to meet need.

Examining current initiatives

Dedicated effort on the housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, led by the Commonwealth government and generally matched by state and territory governments, has significantly deteriorated since the end of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). The NPARIH, a \$5.5 billion investment over ten years (2008 – 2018), was designed to respond to the deep and ongoing complex market failure in the remote Indigenous housing sector and sought to address the long standing under provision of social and community housing, the extremely short life spans for existing social housing assets due to extreme overcrowding, poor repair and maintenance

³⁹ As of 2018-19 based on ABS (2022), Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2001. Table 1.1. Whether dwelling of an acceptable standard, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, State/Territory, NATSISS 2008 and 2014-15, NATSIHS 2012-13 and 2018-19.

⁴⁰ ABS 2022. Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Collation of housing and household characteristics statistics from ABS collections

⁴¹ Note as our estimate of additional houses needed is based on *extra* rooms needed in a dwelling (not the count of people living in an overcrowded dwelling), this should not pose a problem in terms of double counting.

arrangements, poor administration oversight and harsh environmental conditions, and poor or non-existent supporting infrastructure (both physical and social).

Between 2018 and 2020, efforts to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs were largely subsumed in mainstream jurisdictional government efforts. Dedicated investment continued in the Northern Territory, with a \$550 million investment over five years through the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government National Agreement on Remote Housing Northern Territory (NARHNT).

Mainstream funding efforts

The majority of Commonwealth led investment in social housing is now through three main mainstream housing arrangements:

- **Housing Australia Future Fund** will make disbursements of \$500 million a year to:
 - » Housing Australia (Commonwealth corporation) to oversee financing deals for 30,000 new social and affordable housing dwellings (majority of the funding);
 - » Housing organisations for ‘acute housing’ (crisis accommodation) within Commonwealth constitutional power limits; and
 - » State and territory governments for acute and social and affordable housing (via Council of Australian Governments Reform Fund).⁴²
- **Social Housing Accelerator funding** has already been provided to State and Territory Governments and ‘initial’ implementation plans endorsed by National Cabinet:
 - » \$2 billion one-off payment in 2022-23; and
 - » Funding must be committed within 2 years and spent within 5 years.⁴³
- **National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA):**
 - » Re-negotiated in 2018 and provides \$1.6 billion a year to state and territory governments to improve access to affordable, safe, and sustainable housing.⁴⁴
 - » A one-year \$1.7 billion extension of the NHHA to 30 June 2024 has been agreed to support renegotiation of a new agreement.⁴⁵

While these funding agreements and arrangements identify priority cohorts to benefit from investment, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there is no plan or public transparency on how this is being managed or met. There are no specific targets for investment or outcomes that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and need. Nor is there an identification of a proportion of funding that is being allocated to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As covered further in the report, there is also very limited reporting on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are benefiting from these investments. The exception is a one-off allocation of \$200 million announced by the Commonwealth government for repairs, upgrades and maintenance of

⁴² Department of Finance 2023. Housing Australia Future Fund. Available at: <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/australian-government-investment-funds/housing-australia-future-fund>.

⁴³ Australian Treasury 2023. Social Housing Accelerator. Available at: <https://treasury.gov.au/housing-policy/shap>.

⁴⁴ Department of Social Services 2022. National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/housing-support-programs-services-homelessness/national-housing-and-homelessness-agreement>.

⁴⁵ National Indigenous Australians Agency 2023. National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). Available at: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/closing-gap/implementation-measures/national-housing-and-homelessness-agreement-nhha>

housing in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from the Housing Australia Future Fund.⁴⁶

The funding provided through these arrangements are also not allocated on need. Nor is the differing costs of delivery in jurisdictions taken into consideration. For example, general funding under the NHHA is distributed between states and territories according to the share of the total population in each jurisdiction. Homelessness funding is distributed according to the share of the homeless population in each jurisdiction based on the 2016 Census. The PC's review noted the impacts that these arrangements can have on meeting housing and homelessness needs across the country and highlighted stakeholder support for having these arrangements reviewed in a new Agreement. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to quantify but reasonable to conclude that existing effort is not sufficient to meet the overcrowding and homelessness needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

State and territory governments have their own social housing investments and strategies. Many of these also identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as priority cohorts to benefit, but like the commonwealth investments, do not set out how this will be achieved. Further, whilst some state and territory investments set out targets for the number of houses to be built, and notwithstanding that this is not disaggregated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it is not done in a complete or consistent manner within and across jurisdictions. Consequently, we are unable to build a full, quantitative national picture of whether and how mainstream housing investments are contributing and sufficient to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but it is again possible to draw the same conclusion that existing mainstream effort is not sufficient.

Dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing investments

In 2020, through the efforts of the newly formed Coalition of Peaks, there has been a renewed dedicated focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs and the responsibility of the Commonwealth. The Closing the Gap Agreement, the first ever intergovernmental agreement negotiated and agreed between all Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, sets out housing as a key policy priority.⁴⁷ As summarised in Box 1, the Closing the Gap Agreement introduces a housing “outcome” and a housing related “target” for the first time into the Closing the Gap reporting. It also acknowledges the importance of housing and community related infrastructure through the addition of a new dedicated “target”.

Box 2. National Agreement on Closing the Gap Housing Outcome and Targets

Outcome 9: Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need.

Target 9a: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent.

Target 9b: By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:

- within discrete Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard
- in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town-based reserve”).

⁴⁶ Available at: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/2023-commonwealth-closing-gap-implementation-plan/delivering-outcomes-and-targets/outcome-9-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-secure-appropriate-affordable-housing-aligned-their-priorities-and-need> (accessed February 2024)

⁴⁷ The Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2024, Closing the Gap website, ‘Closing the Gap Targets and Outcomes’. Available at: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

Source: The Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2024, Closing the Gap website.⁴⁸

The Closing the Gap Agreement also commits governments to change the way they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled representatives, communities and organisations. Specifically for housing, this includes a commitment to:

- Establish a Housing Policy Partnership designed to bring all governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled representatives and experts together to support coordinated action on the design and delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing services.⁴⁹ The NATSIHA co-chairs the HPP with the DSS.
- Develop an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (HSSP). A three-year plan, it outlines 17 actions to support and build the community-controlled housing service sector, with the key areas for action being: a consistent funding model; the workforce; capital infrastructure; service delivery; governance; and peak body arrangements.⁵⁰

As part of this work, the Commonwealth government provided funding for the establishment of NATSIHA and the Housing Policy Partnership (\$9.2 million over four years), although this does not include capital expenditure.⁵¹ The Sector Strengthening Plan is largely unfunded and there is also no investment strategy to meet the housing and infrastructure targets in the Closing the Gap Agreement.

The recent announcement from the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments for a jointly funded \$4 billion ten-year project that aims to build up to 270 houses annually in remote Aboriginal communities, as well as providing for repairs and maintenance, is significant and is more than double the level of investment in the Northern Territory in recent years. The previous agreement between the governments has built the equivalent of 650 homes in the Northern Territory's remote communities since 2018. In announcing the commitment, the Commonwealth Government advised that this new investment would halve the gap in overcrowding in the Northern Territory.⁵²

Given that there is no dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and homelessness national investment strategy, and the new investment in the Northern Territory will halve the gap in overcrowding, we can assess that existing effort is not sufficient to meet need.

Examining investment and housing stock trends

Given the available data, we believe the most informative quantitative assessment of whether current government effort is sufficient to meet the overcrowding and homelessness needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is to track levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social housing dwellings (including state-owned and managed housing and Indigenous community housing) before and after 2021, against our estimated additional need in 2021 (see Figure 4).

We note this analysis does not take account of new dwellings or bedrooms that may have been built since 2021, including through the Northern Territory's dedicated investment. However, it demonstrates a continued persistent gap between social housing availability and unmet need.

⁴⁸ The Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2024, Closing the Gap website, 'Closing the Gap Targets and Outcomes'. Available at: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

⁴⁹ Australian Government National Indigenous Australians Agency 2023, 2023 Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, Delivering on Outcomes and Targets, Outcome 9. Available at: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/2023-commonwealth-closing-gap-implementation-plan/delivering-outcomes-and-targets/outcome-9-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-secure-appropriate-affordable-housing-aligned-their-priorities-and-need>.

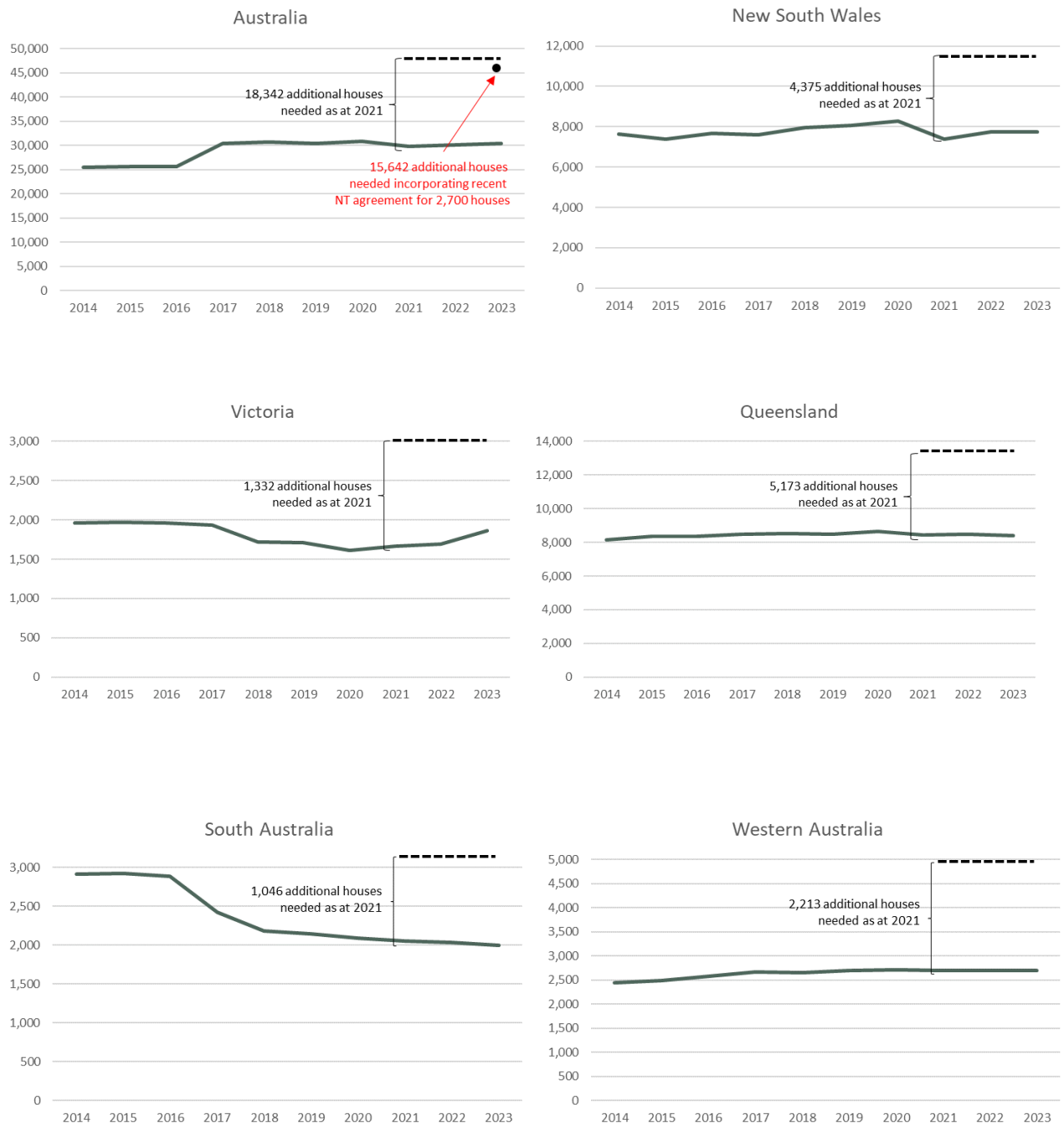
⁵⁰ Australian Government National Indigenous Australians Agency 2023, *Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (Partnership Action)*. Available at: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/closing-gap/implementation-measures/housing-sector-strengthening-plan-partnership-action>.

⁵¹ Australian Government National Indigenous Australians Agency n.d., Housing Policy Partnership (DSS). Available at: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/closing-gap/implementation-measures/housing-policy-partnership-dss>

⁵² Prime Minister of Australia 2024 'Landmark \$4 billion investment for remote housing in the Northern Territory to help Close the Gap'. Available at: <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/landmark-4-billion-investment-remote-housing-northern-territory-help-close-gap>

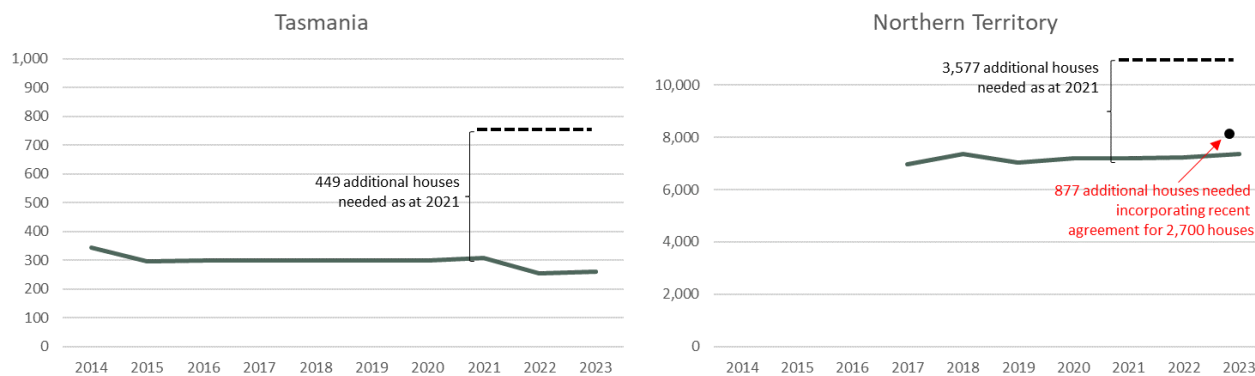
Combined with there being no dedicated national investment strategy to address the housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that mainstream funding agreements and arrangements do not allocate funding based on need and do not have dedicated plans for meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it can be reasonably concluded that current levels of funding and announcements are not sufficient and a higher level of dedicated investment is necessary.

Figure 4. Number of Indigenous social housing dwellings⁵³ compared to 2021 estimated additional housing need, by state or territory⁵⁴



⁵³ State owned and managed Indigenous housing plus Indigenous community housing, as estimated in Productivity Commission 2024. Report on Government Services 2024.

⁵⁴ ACT does not have any SOMIH or Indigenous Community Housing as per the report.



Examining dedicated investment on related infrastructure

The provision of infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water and sewerage is an essential part of providing sustainable social housing and creating healthy and functional homes, and the need is significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households and communities, particularly in remote areas. For example, the 2019 ‘An Assessment of Australia’s Future Infrastructure Needs’ highlights:

- the quality of infrastructure services for people living in remote communities does not meet the standards Australians expect and is not in line with minimum standards;⁵⁵
- in some remote communities, many with predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, do not have access to reliable and safe water and wastewater services, while monitoring is often inadequate;⁵⁶ and
- the 2019 Infrastructure Priority List estimated that the combined economic and social cost of overcrowding for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations is expected to exceed \$100 million per annum over the next 15 years based on existing overcrowding rates.⁵⁷

Assessing whether existing effort is sufficient to meet the need is challenged by similar, if not worse, data limitations to housing. We note that the Commonwealth Government has committed \$100 million for housing and essential infrastructure on Northern Territory homelands and assume that the new funding announcement of \$4 billion is likely to consider related housing infrastructure needs. However, given there is no dedicated, national investment strategy to meet the infrastructure target in the Closing the Gap Agreement, we consider it reasonable to assess that current effort and investment is not sufficient to address the need. We also note that this is an area that seems to be consistently not well planned for in housing investment considerations. For example, infrastructure funding under the NPARIH was originally planned for new subdivisions and was not intended to address major upgrades of the existing essential services needed to accommodate higher demand from the increased number of houses, or connections from the new subdivisions. As a result, infrastructure requirements were significantly higher than forecast.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Infrastructure Australia 2019, An Assessment of Australia’s Future Infrastructure Needs: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019, July 2019. Available at: https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/2019_AIAudit_may2020_update.pdf, p.6.

⁵⁶ Infrastructure Australia 2019, An Assessment of Australia’s Future Infrastructure Needs: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019, July 2019. Available at: https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/2019_AIAudit_may2020_update.pdf, p.73.

⁵⁷ Infrastructure Australia 2019, Infrastructure Priority List, Infrastructure Australia. Available via: www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/files/IA18-4005_Priority_List_2019_ACC_L.pdf.

⁵⁸ <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/implementation-the-national-partnership-agreement-remote-indigenous-housing-the-nt>

Current housing data collection adequacy

This section provides an assessment of the adequacy of existing data and identifies gaps in current data collection and reforms and commitments to improve it.

THE CURRENT DATA LANDSCAPE

Access to consolidated, comprehensive and systematic data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and related infrastructure has significantly diminished over the last 15 years and is now difficult to obtain, analyse and meaningfully use.

Equity Economics' summary assessment is that:

- data is fragmented and spread across multiple collections
- responsibility for data collection, collation and analysis is also fragmented, not always clear or coordinated
- there are significant gaps in the data collected and / or the frequency of collections
- the more remote, the more patchy and less reliable the data
- data is not readily available or accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to use, to plan for their futures and inform partnerships with governments
- reporting on housing investment expenditure is not maximised to show benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ensure government accountability and inform future investment needs
- multiple commitments to improve data quality and accessibility have not led, or are unlikely to lead, to the improvements needed.

Equity Economics' assessment is consistent with views expressed by stakeholders during consultations for this project.

Box 3. Types of housing data

Housing data collection encompasses various aspects of housing, including:

- *Housing stock or inventory*: Data on the number of individual dwellings, including locations, size and type, including housing provider and ownership.
- *Demographic data*: Information about residents, including age, income, family size, and other demographic factors.
- *Housing conditions*: Data on the overall condition of housing units, including issues like maintenance, occupancy rates (including overcrowding), and vacancy rates.
- *Housing satisfaction*: Residents' views on the quality and appropriateness of the dwelling and satisfaction with associated services (e.g. repairs and maintenance).
- *Housing-related infrastructure*: Essential physical and organisational structures that support and facilitate housing within a community including but not limited to:
 - » Utilities: The provision of, and access to, reliable and efficient basic utilities such as water supply, sewage systems, electricity, and other forms of energy. This can include an assessment of the load or capacity of associated infrastructure to take on additional housing or dwellings.
 - » Transportation: Adequate transportation infrastructure, including roads, footpaths, public transportation, and parking facilities, where appropriate.
 - » Communication Networks: Infrastructure for communication, such as broadband internet and telephone services.
 - » Waste Management: Systems for the proper disposal and recycling of waste, including garbage collection services and landfill facilities, that contribute to a clean and healthy living environment.
 - » Access to public and emergency services: Access to public services such as health centres, schools, government offices or service providers, post offices, and emergency services such as fire stations, police stations, and acute medical facilities (e.g. hospitals).
 - » Urban Planning: Planning and zoning regulations, which often also considers infrastructure capacity.

Responsibility for data collection

There is no designated entity, governance structure or accountability mechanism in the Commonwealth Government with the remit or resources to interpret and enhance current remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data collection, and no one has a clear, comprehensive understanding of the full extent of data currently available. There is also no designated responsibility for collating existing data and ensuring it is brought to the policy discussions underway on improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Key entities with varying levels of responsibility include the ABS, AIHW, the PC, DSS, NIAA, Treasury, DITRDCA and IBA.

In addition, there are a range of working groups considering opportunities to improve data collection and use, but these do not seem to be coordinated. For example, the working group established to improve data available under the Closing the Gap Agreement, including housing, and the NHHA's data improvement working group do not appear to be joined up. This is discussed further below.

This is a likely outcome of fragmented responsibility for delivering housing and infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australian Government departments and agencies and across all governments. Moreover, ministerial responsibilities at the commonwealth level appear to be shared between the Minister for Housing and Homelessness, the Treasurer and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs. The Minister for Infrastructure also has some responsibility. This creates a risk of responses not being integrated and cost-effective, noting that all agency representatives expressed to Equity Economics a strong commitment to collaboration.

Improving the data collection and use on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing will require clarifying responsibilities and ensure there is a dedicated lead.

Census, survey and administrative data collections

At the national level, current data collection relies on a combination of Census, surveys, and administrative data. The main public source of housing data is the national ***Census of Population and Housing*** (Census) (and the associated Census Estimates of Homelessness) and is the responsibility of the ABS.

The Census is undertaken every five years and latest data available is from 2021. It measures the number of people in Australia on Census night, their key characteristics and the households and dwellings in which they live.

In relation to housing, the Census seeks to enumerate the type of dwellings people reside in, including the number of bedrooms, the ownership status and financial contributions to housing. A granular level of data (by geographic area) is collected — in the most recent Census, the smallest geographic area was ‘Statistical Area Level 1’ which seeks to capture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (among others) as accurately as possible, particularly in remote areas. This lower level of data is not generally published but can be accessed upon request (and for a fee). Data variability and privacy concerns are noted with the lower level of data⁵⁹. The Census does not seek to identify repairs and maintenance requirements or the quality of housing and does not examine related housing and community infrastructure.

Notably, those we consulted noted that the reliability of Census data decreases with remoteness. In particular, the Census is undertaken across several weeks in remote areas and thus cannot capture the true extent of need across highly mobile Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. That said, Equity Economics has primarily used the Census data to estimate housing needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and find that there is sufficient information available to generally inform government investment decisions on where the greatest need is.

Further, the PC relies on the national and jurisdictional level Census data for its ***Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard***, which tracks progress against the Closing the Gap targets including the housing target. However, the PC notes that, with only two data points available (2021 and 2016 Census), it is not reliable at this stage to draw any meaningful conclusions on progress against the housing target.

The ***Census Estimates of Homelessness*** provides estimates of the prevalence of homelessness from the Census. Homelessness is not a characteristic that is directly measured in the Census and estimates of those experiencing homelessness are derived using analytical techniques based on the characteristics observed in the Census and statistical assumptions⁶⁰. The ABS’ estimates are released after each Census.

The ABS also undertakes two multidimensional social surveys which includes aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing conditions. The first is the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*

⁵⁹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/about-census>

⁶⁰ <https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/estimating-homelessness-census-methodology/2021>

Social Survey (NATSISS), which captures socioeconomic, cultural, health and wellbeing information at the national, state/territory and remoteness geographies. More extensive than the Census, the NATSISS includes additional questions on housing condition (e.g. repairs, standards). It was last conducted in 2014-15. The ABS advised that there is currently no funding to undertake another NATSISS.

The second survey is the ***National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey*** (NATSIHS) which captures information about long-term health conditions, disability, lifestyle factors, physical harm, and use of health services. It collects very similar information on housing and housing conditions as the NATSISS and was last conducted in 2018-19.⁶¹ A new 'cycle' of NATSIHS has just been completed and data is expected to be available by the end of the 2024 calendar year.

None of the surveys are designed to support community-level planning of housing and infrastructure needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and people, and the data that is provided through the surveys are not organised or available in a way that is accessible and easy to use for communities and representative organisations. Appendix F provides further detail on the three ABS datasets, including a comparison of the housing data captured.

Another national data source is the annual ***Report on Government Services*** (RoGs), which provides information on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of government services in Australia. Prepared by the PC, it is intended to help governments improve and evaluate their service delivery and effectiveness and includes performance indicators on childcare, education and training; justice; emergency management; health; community services; and housing and homelessness. For housing, the administrative data focuses on government performance across eleven indicators, which includes some information about prioritisation, expenditure, conditions, and distance to other amenities.⁶² Most indicators are disaggregated by Indigeneity and some capture remoteness as well. However, data are not always complete and/or available across jurisdictions. In 2023, National Cabinet tasked the Council on Federal Financial Relations to review RoGs and its associated Performance Reporting Dashboard. The review is underway and is being led by Treasury.⁶³

The AIHW also undertakes two significant related surveys — the ***Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*** (SHSC) and ***National Social Housing Survey*** (NSHS). The SHSC collects information about people who are referred to, or seek assistance from, specialist homelessness services. These services collect the data on an ongoing basis and are responsible for submitting the data to the AIHW monthly. Updated data is made available quarterly, with an annual summary report release. Information is disaggregated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Geographic location is collected, but not publicly reported by the smaller regions.

The NSHS is a survey of social housing tenants which complements administrative data collected by social housing providers (reported through RoGs) and includes information on a sample of tenants and their social housing experiences. It is ordinarily conducted every two years, with the most recent survey undertaken in 2021. Information on the Indigeneity of clients is collected and reported. Data is publicly reported mainly at the jurisdictional level, but it is also collected at smaller geographical levels.⁶⁴

Like the ABS run surveys, these surveys do not collect information on the condition and quality of housing and related infrastructure requirements and are not intended to support investment decisions on new housing and repairs and maintenance.

⁶¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-survey>

⁶² <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services>

⁶³ Review of the RoGS and Dashboard – Terms of reference | Treasury.gov.au

⁶⁴ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/national-social-housing-survey#:~:text=The%20National%20Social%20Housing%20Survey%20%28NSHS%29%20is%20a,informati%20on%20tenants%20and%20their%20social%20housing%20experiences.>

The AIHW also brings together a range of datasets to produce the *Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities*.⁶⁵ This includes reporting on overcrowding and homelessness at lower geographic levels, based on data that is not otherwise publicly available. This is drawn from Census and state and territory government collections and has the potential to support community planning and partnership discussions between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A major setback to collection of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data (and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data more generally) has been the cessation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the then Department of Families, Housing and Community Services sponsored *Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey* (CHINS) that was last conducted in 2006 as a preliminary to the ABS Census of that year. The CHINS provided five-yearly enumeration of the adequacy and functionality of all community housing and related infrastructure at even the smallest of locations. It captured details of current housing stock conditions, information on Indigenous organisations providing housing, and specifics about housing-related infrastructure at various levels, including discrete Indigenous communities.⁶⁶ A more detailed overview of CHINS including the indicators collected is provided at Appendix G. Aboriginal community-controlled organisations such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (NACCHO) and NATSIHA, amongst others, have called for its reinstatement while noting that it would need to be redesigned to meet contemporary needs.⁶⁷

Commonwealth housing investment reporting

Other data and information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing comes through reporting on intergovernmental agreements relating to housing and homelessness. The key agreements or investments – the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement* (NHHA), the *Housing Australia Future Fund*, the *Social Housing Accelerator Fund* – have their own reporting on expenditure, performance measures and outcomes. Appendix H provides a summary of the existing and expected reporting under these agreements.

However, much of this reporting is not consistently produced by states and territory governments and what is provided is often not timely, not made public, and/or unable to be compared across jurisdictions. The reporting also does not often break down data by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or households making it difficult to ascertain how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have benefited and how investments are contributing to Closing the Gap.

⁶⁵ See AIHW website at <https://www.rific.gov.au/>.

⁶⁶ ABS (2007). *Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*, Australia, 2006. Cat no. 4710.0.

⁶⁷ NATSIHA (2023) *Productivity Commission review of the National Housing and Homeless Agreement*. Available at: www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/337560/sub055-housing-homelessness.pdf.

For example, a 2022 Productivity Commission review⁶⁸ of the NHHA found that, while it sets out a series of outcomes and national performance indicators and required annual independent reporting against them, the Productivity Commission's Performance Reporting Dashboard is only able to report on 4 of its 14 indicators:

- the number of people experiencing homelessness
- the proportion of rental households with household income in the bottom two quintiles that spend more than 30% of their income on rent
- the number of social housing occupants with greatest need as a proportion of all new allocations
- the proportion of Indigenous Australians purchasing or owning their own home.

Consequently, this provides no additional data than what is already provided in the Census or other data sources (other than state expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing as per the Statements of Expenditure). The PC concludes that “the NHHA performance framework is not sufficient to hold governments to account on their contribution to improving access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing across the housing spectrum. The performance indicators are not comprehensive, and some are ambiguous, and reporting is incomplete”. The PC goes further to say that the statements of assurance required by state and territory governments do not provide much useful information for understanding expenditure on housing across jurisdictions and do not support analysis of the full costs of providing housing assistance.⁶⁹

The *National Agreement on Remote Housing Northern Territory* (NARHNT) draws its reporting framework from the Northern Territory Government's 'Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes' program and the Northern Territory government is responsible the provision of public reporting under the Agreement. However, on review, much of what was agreed to be reported publicly is not available and the website contains caveats around data definitions including timeframes. It is also not possible to distinguish what has been achieved with the Commonwealth investment compared to the Northern Territory government's investment and its other programs including for other parts of the Territory.⁷⁰

A significant loss in the government reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing investment and outcomes was the cessation of the *National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing* (NPARIH) and its subsequent iterations, ending in 2018. The NPARIH sought to significantly reduce severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities; increase the supply of new houses; improve the condition of existing houses in remote Indigenous communities; and ensure that rental houses are well-maintained and managed in remote Indigenous communities. It included public targets against these areas with regular reporting by relevant jurisdictions, compiled by the Commonwealth. Release of funding to relevant jurisdictions was generally tied to meeting the targets which incentivised timely reporting.

⁶⁸ Productivity Commission 2022. In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Available at: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pc.gov.au%2Finquiries%2Fcompleted%2Fhousing-homelessness%2Freport%2Fhousing-homelessness-overview.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

⁶⁹ Productivity Commission 2022. In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Available at: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pc.gov.au%2Finquiries%2Fcompleted%2Fhousing-homelessness%2Freport%2Fhousing-homelessness-overview.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

⁷⁰ <https://ourfuture.nt.gov.au/>

Housing and community related infrastructure

Housing-related and community infrastructure is one of the most significant and consistent gaps in the data landscape. For example, there is currently no reporting available on the Closing the Gap target that relates to the housing and community related infrastructure target (Target 9b), which looks at access to power, water, wastewater, and solid waste management. The DITRDCA is responsible for the target and developing its associated data. However, it is noted in the most recent Commonwealth Annual Closing the Gap Implementation Plan that effort on this has ceased. No rationale or alternative is provided.⁷¹ In consultations for this report, DITRDCA advised that they are continuing to look at opportunities to report on the target properly, but challenges were significant including the different data collection regimes across jurisdictions and more resources would be required to make meaningful progress.

Infrastructure Australia also has responsibility to undertake an *Australian Infrastructure Audit*, designed to strategically audit Australia's nationally significant transport, energy, water, telecommunications and social infrastructure, and develop 15 year rolling infrastructure plans with national and state level priorities. The last audit was conducted in 2019 and its accompanying plan was released in 2021 (the 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan).

In developing the 2019 audit, Infrastructure Australia notes that there is no single source of data on the current and future performance of our infrastructure networks and assets. Instead, responsibility for generating and updating data is fragmented across a huge range of public and private sector institutions, who are each focused on a sub-section of infrastructure, and who each adopt different methodologies. There are clear gaps in the data that is available. Some parts of the country – particularly regional and remote areas – are not covered with great detail or clarity by existing datasets. Given these challenges, Infrastructure Australia does not seek to create a new single evidence base to support the analysis of the Audit⁷². Further, whilst the audit provides some general information on the infrastructure needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it is not sufficient or at the level required to support community planning.

State and territory government held data

Aligned with their responsibilities, state and territory governments collect their own data on public housing and generally hold the information on repairs and maintenance required as well as data on supporting infrastructure such as water and power services and transport links. States and territories also have their own housing strategies, frameworks and investments which have their own performance reporting requirements. Much of this data is not publicly available or shared with the Commonwealth to support discussions on future investment needs. Given each state and territory has their own data collection methods and definitions, data that is shared or made public is often not comparable across jurisdictions. There is also likely to be 'no single bucket of housing data' collected by states and territories and instead multiple collections exist by tenure type (e.g. public housing, community housing, home ownership etc.). Further, aside from investments targeted specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, publicly available information on the outcomes of investments is not disaggregated to clearly ascertain how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have benefitted.

⁷¹ <https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/ctg-annual-report-and-implementation-plan-hq.pdf>

⁷² https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/2019_AIAudit_may2020_update.pdf

That said, views of those consulted differed about how much data state and territory governments collected. There was agreement that more housing-related data is collected than is currently shared with the Commonwealth but also that there were still likely to be gaps in data collection. Views differed as to why data already collected was not shared with the Commonwealth, ranging from a lack of incentives given responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing had been shifted to state and territory governments by the former Coalition Government; no consequences for not providing data or meeting targets related to Commonwealth investments; concern about being shamed due to challenges in delivery and performance; privacy concerns over data sharing and a need to review the Privacy Act; to a lack of resourcing to make improvements.

Future data requirements

As noted above, some of those we consulted, and other stakeholders, have called for the re-instatement of CHINS to fulfil many of the existing data gaps. However, it is noted that CHINS also had some data limitations and did not collect information on some areas that would be important for future collections, such as:

- the number of serviced blocks in a community and capacity of housing and community-related infrastructure to take on additional housing supply
- accessibility of housing for residents living with a disability or ageing
- climate appropriateness and resilience of housing and infrastructure
- stages and infrastructure required to transition to renewable energy
 - » a 2021 report on sustainable indigenous housing in regional and remote Australia, prepared by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) found that, ‘...attention to climate change is not yet a feature of indigenous housing and infrastructure agreements, with inadequate funding and attention paid to climate preparedness in new builds, refurbishments and retrofit programs’.⁷³
- CHINS data reporting on access to drinking water, sewerage and electricity services did not use definitions comparable to those used for performance by major water, sewerage, and electricity utilities.⁷⁴

The need to ensure that any new surveys take account of climate appropriateness and community resilience in housing and related infrastructure is particularly prominent amongst Coalition of Peaks members.

Equity Economics also notes that the surveys and reporting by number of additional bedrooms required to address overcrowding runs the risks of adverse implications for the adequacy of a kitchen and other wet areas (bathroom, toilet, laundry), assuming that these may also need to be upgraded to be appropriate for the size of the household. For example, under the NARHNT, reporting was measured per bedroom, rather than number of houses delivered as the number of bedrooms per house that were delivered varied depending on each community's needs. It is not clear however if there were corresponding upgrades to other amenities. Given the importance of the kitchen and other wet areas to health and the acceleration of wear and tear on these areas in overcrowded houses, we suggest any new surveys and reporting consider this issue, including for the new investment in the Northern Territory.

⁷³ AHURI 2021, Sustainable Indigenous housing in regional and remote Australia. Available at: <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/368>, p.2.

⁷⁴ SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2009, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009, Productivity Commission, Chapter 9 ‘Home Environment’, p.30.

REFORM EFFORTS

In addition to those already mentioned, there are some key initiatives, commitments and efforts underway to improve the data quality and use. However, progress is behind schedule on most commitments.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Priority Reform Four

The Closing the Gap Agreement is a commitment to change the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations and this change is set out in four priority reforms.

- *Priority Reform One* is a commitment to shared decision making between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.
- *Priority Reform Two* is a commitment from governments to build and strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.
- *Priority Reform Three* is a commitment from governments to transform mainstream organisations and institutions so that these are significantly more accountable and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- *Priority Reform Four* is a commitment from governments to share data and information with communities and organisations, including at the community level to support shared decision making between governments and communities on policy and program priorities and to support communities determine their own development objectives. Priority Reform Four is also a commitment to support Aboriginal organisations to be able to better manage and use their own data.

The Priority Reforms have significant implications when considering improved data collection opportunities.

Community data projects

As part of Priority Reform Four, governments and the Coalition of Peaks have committed to establishing community data projects in up to six locations by 2023. The PC notes the objective of the projects should be to develop and test new approaches that demonstrate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be empowered to develop and access data that serves their interests and to use and govern it in a way that reflects their cultural protocols and aspirations. Community housing and infrastructure needs are likely to be part of these projects. They are all behind schedule, however the PC notes that the way they are progressing shows promise.⁷⁵ The Coalition of Peaks have indicated that the NIAA is developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Community Data Projects but there is no other information available on how this is being advanced.⁷⁶

Closing the Gap reporting and data development

The Closing the Gap Agreement includes a range of indicators to support reporting on targets based on an understanding of available data, and also identifies a range of indicators for data development. This includes a number of housing and community infrastructure indicators. To progress these indicators and

⁷⁵ Productivity Commission 2024, Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Study report, volume 1, Canberra, p.71.

⁷⁶ Productivity Commission 2024, Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Study report, volume 1, Canberra, p.71.

improve reporting against the Closing the Gap targets more generally, the Closing the Gap Agreement also commits governments to develop a Data Development Plan (DDP). A Data and Reporting Working Group (DRWG) consisting of the Coalition of Peaks, state and territory governments and representation from the ABS and AIHW has been established to progress the DDP.

In relation to housing, the DRWG was considering additional data collection and survey questions for the next Census, including to potentially consider the appropriateness of the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) of overcrowding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, among others. However, Equity Economics has been advised that there has been little progress by the DRWG and actions under the DDP. It was noted that resourcing was a key constraint and, the next Census in 2026 will not include any new questions despite DRWG discussions.

Further, the PC notes in its Review of the Closing the Gap Agreement that many of the indicators that were assumed to have existing data sources do not exist, are not routinely collected, or have been found to be unsuitable. They also note that coordination of data development could be consolidated under the DRWG through the DDP, but DDP development and implementation has been delayed and is still in its initial stages. The result is currently multiple working groups and data custodians with different priorities, often no resources, and resulting in a dataset that struggles to present a coherent account of progress.⁷⁷ The PC goes on to suggest that a Bureau of Indigenous Data should be established to support governments to embed Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty into their data systems and practices; enhance data capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities; and consolidate and oversee data development work for the Agreement.⁷⁸

Housing Policy Partnership

The Housing Policy Partnership has agreed to undertaking a mapping exercise (a stocktake) of all existing data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. This mapping exercise is being commissioned by NIAA and seeks to identify gaps, overlap, and key areas of need in housing data to inform clear and targeted future housing policy. The last update on the NIAA website, dated December 2023, states this is a planned activity but we understand it is yet to progress.⁷⁹

National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

The NHHA includes a commitment to a Housing and Homelessness Data Improvement Plan to drive improvements to a range of indicators, including number of dwellings, proportion of social housing occupants that are housed in homes that meet their needs, number of people experiencing homelessness, proportion of people at risk of homelessness, number of permitted dwellings, rental stress data, as well as committing data priorities for the Community Housing and Indigenous Community Housing collections.

However, the 2022 Productivity Commission review of the NHHA found that many of the promised data improvements under the Data Improvement Plan are yet to be developed and even so, the Data Improvement Plan is narrow and technical in scope and, if fully delivered, is unlikely to yield much change.⁸⁰

In developing a new NHHA, currently being negotiated between governments, the PC's review of the NHHA called for:

⁷⁷ Productivity Commission 2024, Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Study report, volume 1, Canberra, p.76.

⁷⁸ Productivity Commission 2024, Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Study report, volume 1, Canberra, p.8.

⁷⁹ See NIAA website at: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/grants-and-funding/funding-under-ias/evaluation-work-plan/indigenous-housing-data-mapping-project>.

⁸⁰ Productivity Commission 2022. In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Available at: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pc.gov.au%2FInquiries%2Fcompleted%2Fhousing-homelessness%2Freport%2Fhousing-homelessness-overview.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

- the development of a new performance monitoring and reporting framework with annual reporting against outcomes and performance indicators
- a schedule outlining support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and homelessness services, including capability building and effective involvement in the co-design of policies and programs
- decisions on data selection and collection should be led by a proposed National Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing
- state and territory governments to undertake stock takes of the supply and quality of social housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and identify unmet housing needs
- state and territory governments to work in partnership with the proposed Committee to agree on indicators and targets for the next NHHA.⁸¹

The PC review, along with the Coalition of Peaks, NATSIHA, NACCHO and many Aboriginal community-controlled organisations also recommended that the next NHHA embed the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including aligning it with Closing the Gap Agreement's housing and infrastructure outcome and targets and Priority Reform Four.⁸²

⁸¹ Productivity Commission 2022, *In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*, Study Report, Canberra.

⁸² Productivity Commission 2024, *Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, Study report, volume 1, Canberra, p.94.

Improving data collection and use

In this final section, Equity Economics makes recommendations to improve the collection and use of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and related housing and community infrastructure. We note that there are significant opportunities to improve data collection and use with newly announced housing investment in the Northern Territory and the negotiations of the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Any changes that the government may consider should be done in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks, in line with the commitments in the Closing the Gap Agreement.

Equity Economics finds that there is a compelling case for new and improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing data collection, including a radically different approach to existing arrangements. A substantive shift in approach is required as commitments — by all levels of government — have been made for over a decade but so far met with little progress and it is difficult to see how continuing with existing commitments is likely to change this trajectory. Our recommended shift includes the Commonwealth Government taking a national leadership role including nominating its own lead agency. Active participation from state and territory governments also remains essential but a greater contribution will require them to have ‘skin in the game’ including through stronger incentives to systematically collect, share and report meaningful data.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOUSING DATA REGISTER

We propose that the Commonwealth Government invest in a **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Data Register** (Register) to hold data and information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and related housing and community infrastructure.

While necessary, it would not be sufficient, for the Register to bring together existing ABS and AIHW held information and collections. The Register should also be informed by:

- improved performance reporting and State and Territory Government held data sharing as part of the NHHA and a new remote housing Northern Territory Agreement
- a redesigned Community Housing Infrastructure Needs (CHINS) survey, which takes into account the limitations of the earlier iterations of CHINS and subsequent advancements in data collection
- rapid assessments of homelessness and overcrowding for remote hotspot areas to support targeted investments by government
- community held data as agreed by communities and community-controlled organisations.

These contributions are further discussed below. The housing data mapping exercise (stocktake) that has already been commissioned under the Housing Policy Partnership could also inform and contribute to the shape of the Register.

The Register would inform community planning and investment decisions to respond to need as well as research priorities. Its information should be made accessible to communities and support place-based planning and partnerships. Reporting from the Register could be considered at regular intervals by the Housing Policy Partnership and the Joint Council on Closing the Gap to enable these bodies to make recommendations on current and future investment requirements to governments, through National Cabinet.

The Register should be the responsibility of the Commonwealth Minister for Housing, be jointly governed between governments and the Coalition of Peaks, and the ABS should have a lead role in ensuring the integrity and analysis of the data in the Register, enabling coordination with existing collections and reduce role confusion in the collection and collation of data.

The Register could be negotiated and agreed as part of the new Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), with state and territory governments contributing to its establishment and ongoing data provision. The NHHA provides the best, if imperfect, vehicle for achieving the effective involvement of state and territory governments including through funding incentives.

Equity Economics notes that there are likely to be significant establishment costs to the Register, including developing new data contributions. We note, however, that in other policy areas, the Commonwealth Government has recognised the need for upfront investment in data to support policy development and improve service delivery. For example, the Commonwealth Government has committed \$68.3 million to the establishment of the National Disability Data Asset and its underlying infrastructure. The asset contains linked and de-identified Commonwealth, state and territory data on Australians with disability and is designed to inform research and disability policy and help to improve service delivery.

NEW CONTRIBUTING DATA SOURCES

The following sets out proposed new data collection opportunities that could contribute to the Register. These options can also be considered as standalone options, with each option making a step towards improved data and information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing needs. We also note that the Register could take some time to establish, and the below options can also be undertaken now so there are progressive improvements.

Table 1. Proposals for improvements to Indigenous housing data collection, that can also contribute to the Register

Proposal one: Use the renegotiation of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement and the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory to incentivise data sharing and improvements		
Proposal	Opportunity	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise data sharing from state and territory governments through tying Commonwealth funding for social housing and homelessness services to improved reporting and data sharing with a focus on regional level annual reporting of: number of new houses and bedrooms built where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have benefited from Commonwealth government investments. number of new houses and bedrooms built where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have benefited from state and territory government own funding. proportion of funding that is being allocated to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and homelessness needs. quality of social housing stock for Aboriginal and Torres 	<p>The renegotiation of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) and the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory (NTRHNT) provide an opportunity to agree new data arrangements on how funding is reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and households and incentivise sharing of existing state and territory held data on housing stock quality.</p> <p>This would also give effect to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, where governments have committed to mobilise all available resources to the task of Closing the Gap (clause 16) and where mainstream funding arrangements and efforts must make a bigger contribution to improving the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Priority Reform Three).</p> <p>The required data to be shared from state and territory governments should be negotiated and agreed between the Commonwealth and the Coalition of Peaks.</p> <p>The Housing Policy Partnership should review the annual reporting and make recommendations to government on progress of investments and any changes needed.</p>	<p>Reaching consensus on new data (including performance indicators) is likely to be difficult and it will be important to select a small number that will provide the most valuable information to support monitoring of investment and future planning.</p> <p>Any data shared is unlikely to be comparable across jurisdictions. There are no minimum national data standards on management of social housing and stock and any data that is shared by state and territory governments is unlikely to be comparable. State and territory governments are also likely to raise privacy concerns over the release of data, particularly with respect to small communities like homelands.</p> <p>Any efforts to develop and agree minimum national data standards on management of social housing stock is likely to be very protracted, noting the delays across the board in progressing existing data commitments.</p>

<p>Strait Islander people's households, including number of houses requiring repairs and maintenance and with working health hardware.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality and type of community and housing related infrastructure (housing amenities, power, water, sewage) • number of transfers from homelessness to social housing to private rental / homeownership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and households. 		<p>The Commonwealth would need to be prepared to not release funds to state and territory governments who have not met reporting and data requirements.</p>
---	--	---

Proposal Two: Undertake rapid needs assessments in targeted areas building upon Census data indications

Proposal	Opportunity	Limitations
<p>Use existing Census data to identify regional hotspots of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness and overcrowding for rapid assessments to support new and targeted regional investment shared by the Commonwealth and relevant State or Territory.</p>	<p>To help inform immediate government new and existing investment decisions, available ABS data by SA2, overlaid with areas of high population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, can be used to identify regions where overcrowding and homelessness are worse. These areas should be agreed by governments and the Coalition of Peaks.</p> <p>For the identified areas, dedicated teams – consisting of ABS officers from the Centre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, NACCHO and NATSIHA staff and NIAA and relevant state or territory governments officers – could undertake rapid surveys to inform a comprehensive picture of need. The previous data points and outputs from CHINS could be used as a starting basis.</p> <p>The ABS would have lead responsibility for synthesising the data collected.</p> <p>This approach could help inform how the \$200 million from the Housing Australia Future Fund for repairs and maintenance to Indigenous housing should be spent and facilitate an equitable share, based on need, of other</p>	<p>Based on Census data, this approach does not take account of regions that may have a lower level of homelessness and overcrowding, but a significant level of required repairs and maintenance and high needs of community and housing related infrastructure.</p> <p>While this approach will likely yield detailed data and information on regions with the highest level of overcrowding and homelessness, it does not provide a national data set.</p> <p>Consideration will need to be given to how regularly this approach should be undertaken and following any targeted investment. Given its targeted</p>

	<p>Commonwealth and State and Territory housing investments.</p> <p>The Housing Policy Partnership could consider the outcomes of the rapid assessments and make recommendations to governments on investment planning. The Joint Council on Closing the Gap should also consider the recommendations of the Housing Policy Partnership.</p>	<p>approach, it could be done more regularly than the Census and the previous CHINS and could be done every two years.</p> <p>This approach is likely to produce data with less rigour than the Census. However, it would be sufficient to inform investment decisions on housing and monitor outcomes including after natural disasters such as the floods in the Kimberley.</p>
--	--	---

Proposal Three: Redesign and roll out a new CHINS-style survey

Proposal	Opportunity	Limitations
<p>Redesign and undertake a new CHINS, with the methodology built around the Priority Reforms of the Closing the Gap Agreement including additional data points on climate resilience and other community planning metrics.</p>	<p>A redesigned CHINS, led by the ABS, should be undertaken in two phases. The first would be to undertake a new survey based on a methodology similar to that of previous CHINS, supported by a new advisory body / governance arrangement that includes NACCHO, NATSIHA and the Coalition of Peaks.</p> <p>Whilst including some additional data points on climate resilience and other community planning metrics as outlined above, it could be comparable in scope to the last CHINS in 2006.</p> <p>Whilst the first new CHINS is underway, a new approach for a second and subsequent CHINS should be developed in partnership with NACCHO, NATSIHA and the Coalition of Peaks. This new approach should be designed to give effect to the Closing the Gap Agreement and consider a locally based, community-controlled survey led approach and where data and information collected is accessible to communities to support their own planning and development decisions, including partnerships with governments. The ABS would still have a central role in ensuring data quality and providing overarching data analysis.</p> <p>The CHINS should be undertaken more frequently than the past — every three years — to ensure the data is reliable and current. However, a community-controlled approach</p>	<p>It will take some time to design and undertake a new CHINS, including a more sustainable model that gives effect to the Closing the Gap Agreement.</p> <p>An estimate of between \$15 million to \$20 million was provided to undertake a similar CHINS.</p>

	<p>may provide an opportunity for more 'real time' updates, especially if supported by the option below.</p> <p>The outcomes of the survey could be considered by the Housing Policy Partnership and the Joint Council on Closing the Gap and recommendations made to governments on current and future investment and community planning.</p>	
--	--	--

DEVELOPING NEW POLICY PROPOSALS

There is some urgency to capitalise on current opportunities: negotiations on the new NHHA and the partnership agreement to support the new investment in remote housing in the Northern Territory are underway now.

In line with the commitment in the Closing the Gap Agreement, the Register, and any new data collections to inform the Register, should be developed in partnership between the Commonwealth Government and the Coalition of Peaks. The Housing Policy Partnership provides an existing forum to advance policy development with respect to housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But to secure political agreement and reinforce a sense of urgency, National Cabinet engagement will also be required. Equity Economics understands that the Coalition of the Peaks is due to meet with National Cabinet in the first quarter of this year and this could provide a useful opportunity to seek agreement on a way forward.

Budget proposals for a redesigned CHINS and rapid assessments could be developed for the 2024-25 Federal Budget and development of the Register could be considered in the following budget, to allow time for negotiations with key parties.

Appendices

Appendix A.

List of agencies and organisations consulted

1	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, People and Place Division	21 February 2024
2	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)	Deputy CEO Group	23 February 2024
3	Department of Social Services (DSS)	Participation and Family Payments Division	12 February 2024
4	DSS	Housing and Homelessness Policy Branch	19 February 2024
5	Productivity Commission	Strategic Communications and Engagement Group (involved with Closing the Gap Review and Dashboard and NHHA Reviews)	22 February 2024
6	Coalition of Peaks	Including Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory and Aboriginal Housing Victoria	5 March 2024
7	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts	First Nations Partnerships	20 March 2024

Housing need analysis – Methodology

In assessing the need for housing, we consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who:

- are homeless;
- live in overcrowded homes; or
- live in houses of an unacceptable standard.

To calculate the number of houses needed we:

1. Aggregated the total number of additional bedrooms needed (based on ABS homelessness and overcrowding data)
2. Translated this to number of additional houses needed, both by
 - » Assuming a standard 3-bedroom house, and
 - » Based on historical distribution of house size (i.e. number of bedrooms) in SOMIH and Indigenous community housing.
3. Separately estimated the number of additional houses that are likely to need repair or replacing due to structural problems or a lack of basic facilities.

Step 1: Aggregating the number of additional bedrooms needed

The 2021 ABS Census data provides numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including people:

- living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- living in supported accommodation for the homeless
- staying temporarily with other households
- living in boarding houses
- in other temporary lodgings
- living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

The ABS also provides an estimate of overcrowding in terms of the number of dwellings requiring extra bedrooms (by number of additional bedrooms needed).⁸³ These data are provided at a range of different geographic levels, such as by state or territory, Indigenous region or Indigenous area, remoteness. For simplicity, we have presented most data by state, remoteness and Indigenous region in this report.

Our Approach

Assuming one homeless person to a bedroom, we use the two datasets to estimate the total number of bedrooms needed nationally. To estimate additional houses needed as a result of overcrowding, we chose to use the housing suitability (overcrowding) dataset rather than the overcrowding categories of the homelessness dataset as: 1) it provides data at the dwelling level which minimises double counting and 2) it allows us to incorporate all levels of overcrowding (i.e. all dwellings that needs 1+ extra bedroom(s)). Consequently, to ensure we are not double counting those living in severely overcrowded dwellings⁸⁴ we exclude those people from the count of people experiencing homelessness.

⁸³ We note that there are challenges associated with current measures of overcrowding, and translating this to housing need, particularly in terms of personal and family relationships and dynamics. Though addressing these is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁸⁴ The ABS measure of homelessness includes individuals living in overcrowded dwellings where the number of usual residents requires at least 4 additional bedrooms to meet standard occupancy levels.

Such that: It is important to note that these figures likely provide an underestimate of housing need, due to how data on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders is collected in the Census. The ABS states: *“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have been under enumerated in the Census and estimates of homelessness based on Census data will be an underestimation. In the 2021 Census, the net undercount for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was 17.4%. Some of those who were under-enumerated may have been experiencing homelessness at the time of the Census.”*

The AIHW also states that *“The ABS definition of homelessness was developed for the general population in Australia. There are likely to be additional aspects of homelessness from an Indigenous perspective that this definition does not adequately capture”*.⁸⁵

Step 2: Estimating the number of additional houses needed

We first provide an estimate of total number of houses needed by assuming a standard three-bedroom house (total number of bedrooms needed/3). We also provide an estimate of the number of 1-,2-,3-,4- and 5-bedroom houses respectively based on the average distribution of house types for existing State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) and Indigenous Community Housing, based on data from the AIHW. We aggregate the total of each category of house type to get a total number of houses needed (which we use as our total throughout the report).

We calculate the number of houses needed at various geographic levels, including by remoteness, Indigenous Region, and Indigenous Area.

While this report estimates need for housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as at 2021, it does not attempt to project future need due to significant challenges encountered with current data on the Indigenous population. These include:

- Outdated population projections. The latest ABS release was in July 2019. These estimates do not align with Census data as collected in 2021. New projections are expected for release in July this year.
- The 2021 Census data counted a substantial rise in people identifying as Indigenous. While part of this is due to population growth, it is also due to an increasing number of people identifying as Indigenous. This presents methodological challenges in interpreting the data due to potential demographic differences between the newly identified population and the previously reported population. Consequently, it is difficult to compare the old projections with the current 2021 Census data.
- Changes in how people identify as Indigenous can lead to misinterpretations of housing data. For example, a decrease in the reported rate of Indigenous homelessness might not reflect an actual improvement in housing access. It could be due to a rise in higher socioeconomic individuals identifying as Indigenous, shifting the overall demographic makeup of the reported Indigenous population.

“Indigenous status is collected through self-identification and any change in how a person chooses to identify, or whether they respond to the question themselves or someone responds on their behalf, will affect the count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Census” – Australian Bureau of Statistics⁸⁶

⁸⁵ AIHW 2014. Homelessness among Indigenous Australians. Cat. no. IHW 133. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/8336e0f83-0fff-492f-8862-8ae43ceb6ab4/17595.pdf?v=20230605181202&inline=true>. .

⁸⁶ ABS 2023. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experiencing homelessness. Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-experiencing-homelessness>.

Step 3: Estimating the number of additional houses that may need repair or replacement

The Census data does not provide data on whether dwellings are of an acceptable standard. However, the 2018-19 NATSIHS dataset gives estimates of the number of dwellings that are of an acceptable standard at a state and territory or remoteness level. We provide a separate estimate for this data, as it pertains to a different timeframe and higher geographic level(s).⁸⁷ It is also important to note that a dwelling can be both of an unacceptable standard and overcrowded. As our estimate of additional houses needed is based on *extra* rooms needed in a dwelling (not the count of people living in an overcrowded dwelling), this should not pose a problem in terms of double counting.

A further note on our methodology

Our analysis is primarily based on 2021 Census data (and 2018-2019 NATSIHS) and gives a good indication of the picture of need at that point in time. However, we note there have been events which are likely to influence results in particular areas (e.g. flooding) that will not be included in the data. Updating the figures included in this report based on additional data such as population growth, changes in rates of homelessness, etc. is also challenging due to changes to the number of people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person over time.

⁸⁷ Though the ABS notes that between the 2012-13 and the 2018-19 NATSIHS, the proportion of dwellings that were of an acceptable standard did not change significantly (around four in five dwellings) nationally and remained stable in both non-remote and remote areas.

Housing need by Indigenous Region

Indigenous region	Total Number of houses (by bedrooms)					
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
New South Wales						
Dubbo	6	37	108	44	8	202
North-Eastern NSW	10	62	184	75	13	344
North-Western NSW	3	20	59	24	4	110
NSW Central and North Coast	46	296	876	356	64	1,639
Riverina - Orange	12	80	236	96	17	441
South-Eastern NSW	7	45	134	54	10	250
Sydney - Wollongong	40	261	771	313	57	1,442
Victoria						
Melbourne	18	120	354	144	26	663
Victoria exc. Melbourne	19	122	361	147	27	675
Queensland						
Brisbane	51	331	978	397	72	1,828
Cape York	9	57	169	69	12	316
Mount Isa	10	62	183	75	13	343
Rockhampton	17	109	323	131	24	604
Toowoomba - Roma	12	78	231	94	17	432
Torres Strait	4	25	74	30	5	138
Cairns - Atherton	25	160	472	192	35	883
Townsville - Mackay	18	114	336	137	25	629
South Australia						
Adelaide	20	128	379	154	28	709
Port Augusta	7	48	142	58	10	266
Port Lincoln - Ceduna	2	13	40	16	3	74
Western Australia						
Broome	4	26	76	31	6	142
Geraldton	5	30	89	36	7	167
Kalgoorlie	5	34	100	41	7	187
Kununurra	6	41	122	50	9	229
Perth	24	156	463	188	34	865
South Hedland	5	35	105	43	8	196
South-Western WA	7	46	136	55	10	254
West Kimberley	4	27	80	32	6	149
Tasmania						
Tasmania	12	81	240	97	18	448
Northern Territory						
Darwin	17	109	321	130	24	600
Jabiru - Tiwi	21	134	397	161	29	743
Katherine	17	109	321	131	24	601
Nhulunbuy	19	123	364	148	27	681
Tennant Creek	5	31	90	37	7	169
Alice Springs	8	49	146	59	11	273
Apatula	14	88	259	105	19	484
Australian Capital Territory						
Australian Capital Territory	4	26	77	31	6	143
Other Territories						
Christmas - Cocos (Keeling) Is.	0	0	1	0	0	1
Jervis Bay	0	1	2	1	0	5
Norfolk Island	0	0	0	0	0	0

Housing need by Indigenous Area (top 50 by proportion in need)

Indigenous region	Total Number of houses (by bedrooms)					
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	0	0	1	0	0	1
Marrara - Winnellie - Berrimah	3	21	62	25	5	115
Gapuwiyak and Outstations	2	12	37	15	3	69
Walungurru and Outstations	1	7	21	9	2	39
Willowra	1	3	10	4	1	19
Ramingining - Milingimbi and Outstations	5	33	97	39	7	181
Urapuntja	1	8	24	10	2	45
Maningrida and Outstations	6	41	120	49	9	225
Thamarrurr inc. Wadeye	4	27	81	33	6	152
North-West Arnhem	5	30	88	36	6	165
Yirrkala	1	8	22	9	2	42
Ngukurr	2	15	43	18	3	81
Lajamanu	1	9	26	10	2	48
Gulf	2	14	42	17	3	79
Elsey - Roper	4	24	70	28	5	130
Ampilatwatja and Outstations	1	6	17	7	1	32
Marthakal Homelands - Galiwinku	5	34	101	41	7	189
Victoria River	1	6	18	7	1	34
Daguragu - Kalkarindji & Outstations	1	6	18	7	1	34
Ali Curung	1	4	13	5	1	24
Papunya and Outstations	1	6	17	7	1	33
Elliott	0	3	9	4	1	17
Haasts Bluff - Mount Liebig (Watiyawanu)	1	4	13	5	1	24
Darwin - Inner Suburbs	2	15	45	18	3	84
Douglas-Daly	2	15	45	18	3	84
Atitjere - Akarnenehe - Engawala	1	5	15	6	1	28
Laynhapuy - Gumatj Homelands	1	5	15	6	1	28
Anindilyakwa (Groote)	3	18	52	21	4	98
Kowanyama	1	10	28	11	2	53
Argyle - Warmun	1	6	19	8	1	35
Anangu Pitjantjatjara	3	22	64	26	5	120
Coconut Grove - Ludmilla	1	7	21	9	2	40
West MacDonnell Ranges	1	7	21	8	2	39
Menzies - Leonora	1	3	10	4	1	19
Kaltukatjara and Outstations	0	3	8	3	1	15
Perth	2	15	46	19	3	85
Malak	1	8	22	9	2	42
Warburton	1	4	12	5	1	23
Great Sandy Desert	1	9	27	11	2	51
Pormpuraaw	1	5	13	5	1	25
Katherine Town	4	26	77	31	6	143
Kakadu - Marrakai - Jabiru	1	4	12	5	1	23
Halls Creek	2	10	31	13	2	58
Hermannsburg	1	4	13	5	1	24
Alawa - Brinkin - Nakara	1	4	12	5	1	22
Yuendumu and Outstations	1	5	16	6	1	29
Nyirripi and Tanami Outstations	0	2	7	3	1	13
Aurukun	1	8	24	10	2	44
Wutunugurra - Canteen Creek	0	2	6	3	0	12
Fitzroy Crossing	2	10	30	12	2	56

Housing need by Remoteness

Indigenous region	Total Number of houses (by bedrooms)					
	1	2	3	4	5	
New South Wales						
Major Cities of Australia	44	412	1217	495	89	2257
Inner Regional Australia	43	282	834	339	61	1559
Outer Regional Australia	13	88	259	105	19	484
Remote Australia	2	12	35	14	3	66
Very Remote Australia	1	8	23	9	2	43
Victoria						
Major Cities of Australia	20	127	377	153	28	704
Inner Regional Australia	13	83	245	99	18	458
Outer Regional Australia	4	29	86	35	6	160
Queensland						
Major Cities of Australia	46	300	887	361	65	1660
Inner Regional Australia	29	189	558	227	41	1043
Outer Regional Australia	40	262	775	315	57	1450
Remote Australia	11	74	218	89	16	408
Very Remote Australia	17	109	323	131	24	603
South Australia						
Major Cities of Australia	16	103	305	124	22	570
Inner Regional Australia	1	9	28	11	2	52
Outer Regional Australia	6	37	108	44	8	202
Remote Australia	1	6	17	7	1	32
Very Remote Australia	5	34	101	41	7	189
Western Australia						
Major Cities of Australia	26	167	495	201	36	925
Inner Regional Australia	3	22	65	26	5	122
Outer Regional Australia	7	47	139	56	10	259
Remote Australia	7	43	127	52	9	237
Very Remote Australia	19	123	363	148	27	680
Tasmania						
Inner Regional Australia	7	44	131	53	10	245
Outer Regional Australia	5	35	102	42	8	191
Remote Australia	0	2	7	3	1	13
Northern Territory						
Outer Regional Australia	17	107	318	129	23	594
Remote Australia	23	152	450	183	33	842
Very Remote Australia	60	388	1148	467	84	2147
Australian Capital Territory						
Major Cities of Australia	4	26	76	31	6	143
Other Territories						
Inner Regional Australia	0	1	2	1	0	5
Very Remote Australia	0	0	1	0	0	1

Comparison of primary ABS sources that collect data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing⁸⁸

Table B1: Comparison of ABS surveys that include information of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing

Collection	Census of Population and Housing (Census)	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	Census Estimates of Homelessness
Applicable population - housing questions	All persons	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons	All persons
Best For	Analysis at small disaggregation such as low-level geography or age groups on key topics.	Analysis at national, state/territory and remoteness geographies. Cross-classifying socioeconomic, cultural, health and wellbeing information.	Analysis at national, state/territory and remoteness geographies. Cross-classifying socioeconomic, cultural, health and wellbeing information.	Analysis of homelessness prevalence (person counts and rates) from SA2 level. Cross-classifying Homeless operational groups by various personal characteristics.
Geography	Available at all levels of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS)	Data quality better at higher levels of geography such as State and Territory and Remoteness	Data quality better at higher levels of geography such as State and Territory and Remoteness	Data quality better at Statistical Area level 3 (SA3) and above.
Frequency	Collected every 5 years. Most recent available data is 2021.	2004-05, 2012-13, 2018-19.	1994, 2002, 2008, 2014-15.	Collected every 5 years. Most recent available data is 2016.
Comparability	Not comparable with other collections.	Housing data is comparable with the NATSISS only.	Housing data is comparable with the NATSIHS only.	Not comparable with other collections, including Census.
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not collect data on repairs and maintenance or condition of housing Does not include questions on community services/infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current data is outdated (<i>a new survey is due to be released based on 2023 collected data</i>) Data quality is limited/not available at low levels of geography Has limited data on condition of housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is outdated Data quality is limited/not available at low levels of geography Has limited data on condition of housing Has limited questions on community services/infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data quality is limited at low levels of geography Does not collect data on repairs and maintenance or condition of housing Does not include questions on community services/infrastructure

⁸⁸ ABS 2022. Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples methodology adapted with modifications by Equity Economics.

Collection	Census of Population and Housing (Census)	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	Census Estimates of Homelessness
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not include questions on community services/infrastructure 		

Table B2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and community infrastructure topics available in ABS sources⁸⁹

	Census (2021)	NATSIHS (2018-19)	NATSISS (2014-15)	Census Estimates of Homelessness (2021)
HOUSING				
Dwelling structure	Y	Y	Y	Y
Household composition	Y	Y	Y	Y
Family household composition	Y	Y	Y	N
Number of persons in household	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tenure type	Y	Y	Y	Y
Landlord type	Y	Y	Y	Y
Number of bedrooms	Y	Y	Y	Y
Canadian National Occupancy Standard/ Housing Suitability	Y	Y	Y	Y
Equivalised total household income (weekly)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Rent (weekly)	Y	N	Y	Y
Mortgage Repayments (monthly)	Y	N	Y	Y
Household facilities that are not available or that do not work	N	Y	Y	N
Types of repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months	N	Y	Y	N
Types of major structural problems	N	Y	Y	N
Number of major structural problems	N	Y	Y	N
Whether household living in house of an acceptable standard	N	Y	Y	N
Satisfaction with services provided by public housing service provider	N	N	Y	N
Dwelling Type	Y	N	N	Y
Type of non-private dwelling	Y	N	N	Y
Relationship in household	Y	Y	Y	Y
Count of persons temporarily absent from household	Y	N	N	Y
Type of homelessness	N	N	N	Y
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE				
Water supply	N	N	Y ⁹⁰	N

⁸⁹ ABS 2022. Housing Statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples methodology adapted with modifications by Equity Economics.

⁹⁰ NATSISS asks if an individual has problems accessing power, water, or gas providers in a single question. It also asks the type of barriers (e.g. no or inadequate services in the area, costs, poor customer service)

Sewage	N	N	N	N
Power supply	N	N ⁹¹	Y ²⁶	N
Community infrastructure	N	N	Y ⁹²	N
Access to key services (e.g. medical)	N	N	Y ⁹³	N

⁹¹ NATSIHS includes whether household power or fuel is not working, which includes when there is no supply to the household.

⁹² For discrete remote communities NATSISS asks some questions on sporting, medical and other services and public facilities.

⁹³ NATSISS asks if an individual has problems accessing services (e.g. hospitals, banks, etc). It also asks the type of barriers (e.g. no or inadequate services in the area, costs, poor customer service)

The Community Housing Infrastructure Needs Survey

Based on publicly available information largely from the ABS, the following appendix provides an overview of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey, including its scope and methodology.⁹⁴

OVERVIEW

The first CHINS occurred in 1999, and again in 2001 and 2006. Although called a survey, the CHINS was designed as a complete enumeration of all discrete Indigenous communities in Australia that were occupied between the survey periods or were intended to be reoccupied within 12 months, and of all Indigenous Housing Organisations (IHOs) managing housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whether in discrete communities or not. This included organisations and communities located in urban, rural, and remote areas in all states and territories of Australia.

OBJECTIVE

The CHINS was designed to collect data which would assist in the evaluation of policies and programs aimed at improving the housing conditions and infrastructure services of discrete Indigenous communities and other community-managed housing. Specifically, it sought to underpin policy decisions, program development, and targeting of Commonwealth and State and Territory Government funding to discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities most in need.

CHINS also sought to provide performance information to assist in the support and evaluation of IHOs and inform regional housing policy and program development. Similarly, information collected regarding access to health facilities and services and exposure to environmental health risks, sought to inform health policy at various government and non-government levels.

Finally, CHINS data sought to contribute to the national dataset on Indigenous housing and community infrastructure. The 2001 collection was conducted just prior to the 2001 Census of Population and Housing to enable the combination of CHINS and Census data during statistical analysis.

The 2006 CHINS aimed to provide information which could be used to:

- evaluate the current condition and adequacy of the infrastructure and facilities in discrete Indigenous communities, and the housing stock provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by Indigenous organisations
- identify the housing related income and expenditure of Indigenous Housing Organisations (IHOs)
- contribute toward estimates of the cost of upgrading and/or establishing housing and infrastructure in discrete Indigenous communities to meet with benchmark standards
- assist in the process of planning future development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

⁹⁴ ABS (2007). Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Australia, 2006. Cat no. 4710.0.

GOVERNANCE

The ABS was responsible for conducting CHINS. The 1999 and 2001 CHINS were conducted on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and under the authority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989; and the 2006 CHINS was conducted on behalf of the then Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (now Department of Social Services).

An Advisory Group for the 2006 CHINS was established to guide the development of the survey. The Advisory Group comprised representatives from relevant government departments, information committees and research institutions who provided guidance in determining priorities for new content and in reducing content.

SCOPE

The primary topics covered by CHINS includes:

- details of the current housing stock, dwelling management and selected income and expenditure arrangements of Indigenous organisations that provide housing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- details of housing and related infrastructure in discrete Indigenous communities such as water quality and supply, electricity supply, sewerage systems, drainage, rubbish collection and disposal
- details of facilities available such as transport, communication, education, sport and health services, in discrete Indigenous communities.

The following organisations and instances were generally considered to be out of scope, and, as a result, data were not collected:

- organisations which were in liquidation or receivership at the time of enumeration
- government departments that manage Indigenous housing
- communities found to be unoccupied at the time of the CHINS and which were not expected to be reoccupied within the following 12 months.

The main outputs sought from CHINS are set out in Table A.1 below.

Table A1. Main outputs (variables) collected by CHINS

Output	Disaggregation
Applicable population	Demographics (state, remoteness)
Permanent dwellings (by remoteness, state/territory)	Number of bedrooms
	Structure (e.g. house, unit)
	Acquisition + disposals
	Unoccupied dwellings (and reasons)
	Condition (minor or no repairs, major repairs, replacement)
Average weekly rent	
Income (amount, source)	
Expenditure (amount, type)	
Repairs and maintenance expenditure	
Demographics (state, remoteness)	Location
Population	Size
	Change in population
	Reasons for change

Output	Disaggregation	
	By remoteness	
Community Housing	Permanent dwellings	
	Temporary dwellings	
	Condition – minor or no repairs needed	
	Condition – major repairs needed	
	Condition – replacement needed	
	Number of people living in dwellings	
	Proportion managed by IHOs	
Education	Primary school (access and location)	
	Secondary school (y10 or y12, access and location)	
	Other education facilities (pre-primary, homework centre, TAFE courses, Adult education, other)	
Health	Access to Hospital/location	
	Access to Aboriginal primary healthcare centre/location	
	Access to Community state/funded health centre/location	
	Access to Medical Emergency Air Services (distance to hospital)	
	Access to medical professionals and frequency (male/female Aboriginal health worker, registered nurse, doctor)	
Rubbish collection	Community has organised collection	
Telecommunications	Community Satellite	
	Broadcasts (radio, TV)	
	Public telephone access (access, number)	
	Public internet access (access, number, location)	
	Other access	
	Affordability	
	Digital ability	
Water supply	Type/source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bore water - Rainwater tank(s) - River/reservoir - Well or spring - Carted water - Other organised water supply 	
	Water sent away for testing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failed - Did not fail 	
	Treatment/type of treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disinfectants - Direct filtration - Sedimentation or filtration - Aeration - Activated carbon - Other treatments 	
	Water restrictions (by cause and frequency)	
	Water interruptions (by cause and frequency)	
	Electricity	Type/Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State grid/transmitted supply - Community generators

Output	Disaggregation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic generators - Solar - Solar hybrid - Other organised electricity supply - Total communities with an organised electricity supply - Total communities with no organised electricity supply
	Interruptions (by cause and frequency)
	Access
Sewerage	Type
	Overflows + leakages
	Frequency
Flooding and Ponding	Located/not located in town
Transport and Community Access	Main mode of transport (road, air, sea)
	Method (private, public, community)
	Road access
	Airstrip
	Accommodation (visitor, camping, single men/women accommodation, disability, aged, women's refuge, contract workers, hostel)
Other facilities	Public facilities (hall/meeting area, administration building, library, arts/cultural centre, store, library, women's centre, childcare, youth centre, canteen, broadcasting facilities)
	Sports facilities (sports grounds, basketball/netball courts, indoor sporting facilities, swimming pools, other)
Community needs	Communities needs plan in place (and under development)
Community priority planning needs	More housing
	Upgrade to water supply
	Upgrade to electricity supply
	Upgrade sewerage
	Rubbish collection or disposal
	Transport
	Communication facilities
	Education facilities
	Sports facilities
	Health care facilities
	Animal control
	Broadcasting capabilities
	Other

Whilst there were some changes in scope from each survey, as summarised in Table A2 below, one of the principal information requirements of the 2006 CHINS was to maintain comparability with the 1999 and 2001 surveys so that the progress of programs implemented since the 1999 collection could be assessed.

Table A2. Scope of CHINS surveys, 1999, 2001 and 2006

Year	Numbers of IHOs and discrete Indigenous communities surveyed
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 707 IHOs• 20,270 permanent dwellings• 1,291 discrete Indigenous communities
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 616 IHOs• 21,287 permanent dwellings• 1,216 discrete Indigenous communities
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 496 IHOs (reduction in IHOs largely due to management changes for IHOs)• 21,834 permanent dwellings• 1,187 discrete Indigenous communities

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection methods varied over the three CHINS, progressing largely in line with technological developments. The collection process took around 3-4 months for each CHINS.

The 2006 CHINS data were collected in conjunction with field preparations for the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. Data collection was undertaken by ABS Census Field Officers (CFOs) during their public relations visits to Indigenous communities and IHOs over the period March to June 2006 and through telephone follow-up.

The CHINS data were collected at the discrete Indigenous community and IHO level. Personal interviews were conducted with key community and IHO representatives knowledgeable about housing and infrastructure issues. These data providers included: community council chairpersons; council clerks; housing officers; water and essential service officers; and health clinic administrators.

The ABS recruited Indigenous Engagement Managers (IEMs) in each Regional Office (except ACT) as part of the ABS's Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy. The IEMs facilitated a range of survey and Census activities with Indigenous people across both urban and remote areas, including building and maintaining networks with Indigenous communities and organisations, advising on appropriate materials to raise statistical awareness and providing support to Indigenous communities and organisations on use of and access to statistical information. The IEMs liaised extensively both within the ABS and with external organisations and data users and played a key role in facilitating the collection of the 2006 CHINS data. The IEMs no longer exist, and the ABS now has a Centre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (CoATSIS) which has a leadership and coordination role for national statistical activity about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The CoATSIS engages with communities across a range of statistical activities and outputs such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and social surveys, the five-yearly Census, administrative data, and data integration projects.

Interviewers collected information for the 2006 CHINS using Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI). Responses were recorded directly onto electronic questionnaires on a notebook computer. The notebook computer was used to record, store, manipulate and transmit the data collected during interviews.

DATA QUALITY

The CHINS were not subject to sampling error as it was designed as a complete enumeration of all units in scope. CHINS was subject to three sources of non-sampling error:

- The inability to obtain data from all in scope units.
- Errors in reporting on the part of both respondents and interviewers. These reporting errors may arise through a lack of knowledge of the data required, the inability to provide accurate information, or mistakes in recording answers to questions. For instance, a community's usual population was generally estimated by the community representative without reference to community records. This methodology is considered to be less reliable than a population count as undertaken in the Census of Population and Housing.
- Errors arising during data processing. These processing errors may arise during coding, data entry, editing or the derivation of estimates.

Significant effort was made to minimise these errors. In particular, the effect of reporting and processing errors was minimised by: clear and concise questionnaire design; extensive supporting documentation such as data item definitions; the training and supervision of interviewers; encouraging respondents to refer to administrative records whenever possible; by extensive editing and quality control checking at all stages of data collection and processing, including infield checks as part of CAI; and data confrontation against administrative records where available.

In addition to the survey instrument and methodology testing conducted prior to the previous CHINS in 1999 and 2001, national, state and territory, and regional aggregate data from the 2006 CHINS was compared with those collected in 2001. For the 2006 CHINS, checks were also conducted on related data items for consistency. For example, that increases in stock were consistent with population increases, other ABS data sources and increases in rent. For a number of key items, a comparison of 2001 and 2006 data was also made at the community or IHO unit record level. Where significantly different responses were observed, organisations and communities were re-contacted to determine whether the data was the result of a difference in interpretation by different key respondents or whether the 2006 survey was measuring real change.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND CUSTODY

The commissioning departmental agency for the CHINS has been responsible for the data custody. The National Indigenous Australians Agency is now the data custodian for the CHINS unit record file.

COST

To be confirmed, yet it is generally understood that CHINS was a significant investment and similar to conducting the NATSISS or NATSIHS, costing between \$15 million to \$20 million to conduct.

Reporting requirements for Commonwealth social housing investments and Closing the Gap indicators

Table C1: Summary of reporting requirements, data source and limitations

Arrangement	Overview	Reporting requirements	Data source	Limitations
Closing the Gap Agreement (The National Agreement)	<p>The National Agreement is a partnership between Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations to reduce inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,</p> <p>The Productivity Commission is responsible for a 'Closing the Gap Dashboard' and publishing an annual data compilation report of progress against Closing the Gap targets and associated indicators.</p>	<p>For housing, data is collected specifically on the Closing the Gap socioeconomic outcome area 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need. <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target 9A: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%, and Target 9B: By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> within discrete Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a "town camp" or "town-based reserve"). <p>To assess progress against the targets, the Productivity Commission uses data from the Census of Population and Housing, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and % of appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing by state and territory by age, sex, remoteness, 	Census of Population and Housing, 5 yearly	Provides no additional data collection than what is already provided in the Census or other data sources (as such there is no information on the status and quality of housing or community infrastructure/essential services).

Arrangement	Overview	Reporting requirements	Data source	Limitations
		<p>socioeconomic disadvantage, need for assistance with core activities, tenure type.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowded housing (by numbers of extra beds needed) • Number and % of households living in dwellings of an acceptable standard • Number and % of households living in dwellings with no structural problems • Number and % of households with access to working facilities (washing people, washing clothes/bedding, preparing food, sewerage) 		
Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF)	<p>The HAFF is a \$10 billion fund to support and increase social and affordable housing.</p> <p>The Investment Mandate for Housing Australia (which guides the HAFF) requires quarterly reporting by Housing Australia to the Minister on housing that HAFF has decided to finance.⁹⁵</p>	<p>The report for a reporting period must set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to all projects that Housing Australia decided to finance under the HAFF up to the end of the period—the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the total number of projects » the total number of projects that provided social housing, affordable housing or addressed an acute housing need » the number of projects in each State and Territory » the number of projects that are complete, under development, in planning, or will not be completed » the number of projects funded in regional, rural and remote areas across each State and Territory » the total amount of finance under the HAFF provided in respect of those projects • In relation to each project that Housing Australia decided, during the period, to finance under the HAFF— the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the project proponent of the project » the Statistical Area Level 4 area in which the project is located 	Reporting data from Housing Australia to the Minister.	<p>The data does not provide an estimate of need, rather reporting on houses financed under the HAFF.</p> <p>The data does not specify whether housing is for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>Does not provide data on community infrastructure or services.</p>

⁹⁵ Federal Register of Legislation 2024. Housing Australia Investment Mandate Amendment (Social Housing, Affordable Housing and Acute Housing Needs) Direction 2023. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2023L01637/asmade/text>.

Arrangement	Overview	Reporting requirements	Data source	Limitations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the types of persons that would be assisted by the project » the number and types of dwellings made available under the project » whether the financing is to be through a loan or grant, or through a combination of these » details of each loan or grant for the project » the level of financing for the project under the HAFFF and from sources other than the HAFFF » the expected completion date of the project 		
Social Housing Accelerator Funding	<p>The Social Housing Accelerator is a one-off payment to the states and territories to permanently increase the social housing stock across Australia.</p> <p>Under the Social Housing Accelerator Funding agreement, States are required to provide a Statement of Assurance to the Commonwealth including 6 monthly data on the provision of social housing delivered or supported as well as any</p>	<p>The 6-monthly Statement of Assurance is required to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much of the funding has been expended or committed • Additional social dwellings that have been committed, commenced or completed in the 6-month reporting period (by housing project or program), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the number of existing Community Housing owned or operated social housing dwellings that are currently available » how many publicly owned and operated social housing dwellings are currently available in each jurisdiction; » how many dwellings (net supply increase) have been added every six months » the location of new dwellings by local government area » the number of people housed and/or households provided new housing » the additional dwellings supported where funds under this Schedule are used to expand existing projects or programs. 	<p>Reporting data from the State and Territory Governments to the Commonwealth Government.</p>	<p>The data does not provide an estimate of need (other than changes in social housing waitlists), rather reporting on houses financed.</p> <p>The data does not specify whether housing is for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>Does not provide data on community infrastructure or services.</p>

Arrangement	Overview	Reporting requirements	Data source	Limitations
	additional relevant state policy commitments. ⁹⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to social housing waitlists over the reporting period (and since commencement), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the total number of people on social housing wait lists » the number of people on social housing wait lists who have been housed since the last reporting period and from the commencement of the Schedule » waiting periods for social and public housing. • Additional relevant state policy commitments. 		
National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)	<p>The NHHA is an agreement between the state and territory and Commonwealth governments to improving housing outcomes for Australians.</p> <p>Under the NHHA State and territory governments are required to provide annual reporting on their expenditure through Statement of Assurance Expenditure (SoAs).</p> <p>The agreement also provides a commitment to share data, including a</p>	<p>Under the SoA, State and Territory Governments are required to report their expenditure on housing and homelessness, including expenditure by each of the national priority homelessness cohorts (which includes Indigenous Australians).</p> <p>The NHHA agreement outlines a range of performance indicators to assess performance against the agreement. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proportion of low-income renter households in rental stress • the number of homes sold or built per 1000 low- and moderate-income households that are affordable by low- and moderate-income households • proportion of Australians who are homeless • proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness • proportion of Indigenous households owning or purchasing a home • proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions including in remote and discrete communities 	Reporting data from the State and Territory Governments to the Commonwealth Government.	<p>A 2022 Productivity Commission review⁹⁹ of the NHHA found that while it set out a series of outcomes and national performance indicators and required annual independent reporting against them the Productivity Commission's Performance Reporting Dashboard only reported on 4 of 14 indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of people experiencing homelessness • The proportion of rental households with household income in the

⁹⁶ Federal Financial Relations 2023. Schedule: Social Housing Accelerator Payment. Available at: <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2023-07/Social%20Housing%20Accelerator%20Payment%20-%20Signed.pdf>

⁹⁹ Productivity Commission 2022. In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Available at: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pc.gov.au%2Finquiries%2Fcompleted%2Fhousing-homelessness%2Freport%2Fhousing-homelessness-overview.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

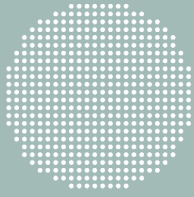
Arrangement	Overview	Reporting requirements	Data source	Limitations
	<p>commitment to provide data for the national minimum data set and a commitment to the continuous improvement of data.</p> <p>A housing and homelessness data improvement plan was developed under the agreement which included commitments to be achieved as a requirement of funding.⁹⁷⁹⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proportion of Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard including in remote and discrete communities; and • estimated cumulative gap between underlying demand for housing and housing supply as a proportion of the increase in underlying demand. <p>The Housing and Homelessness Data Improvement Plan includes agreed data commitments including improvements to a range of indicators, including number of dwellings, proportion of social housing occupants that are housed in homes that meet their needs, number of people experiencing homelessness, proportion of people at risk of homelessness, number of permitted dwellings, rental stress data, as well as committing data priorities for the Community Housing and Indigenous Community Housing collections.</p>		<p>bottom two quintiles that spend more than 30% of their income on rent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of social housing occupants with greatest need as a proportion of all new allocations • The proportion of Indigenous Australians purchasing or owning their own home <p>The review also found that many of the promised data improvements under the Data Improvement Plan are yet to be developed.</p> <p>Consequently, this provides no additional data collection than what is already provided in the Census or other data sources (other than state expenditure on Indigenous housing as per the SoAs).</p>

⁹⁷Federal Financial Relations 2023. National Affordable Housing Agreement. Available at: <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2021-07/national-housing-agreement.pdf>

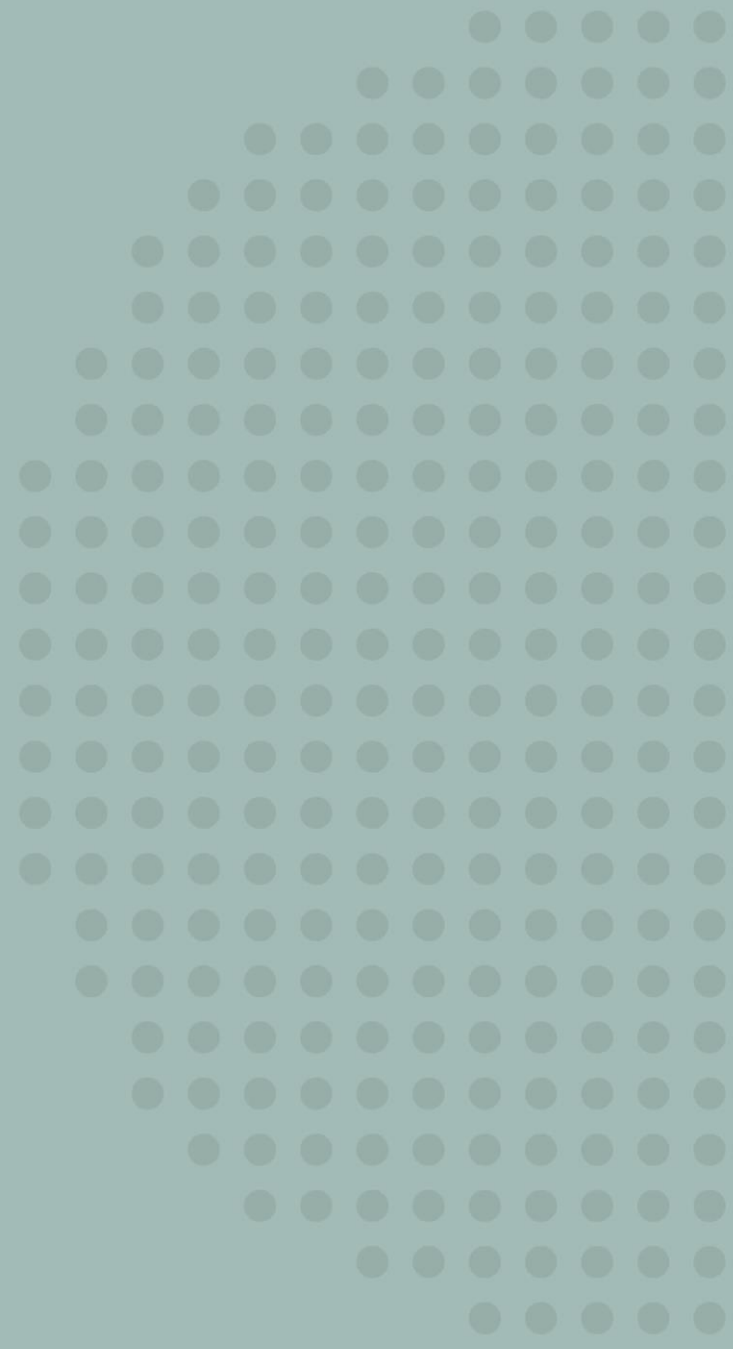
⁹⁸ Federal Financial Relations 2023. Housing and homelessness data improvement plan 2019-23. Available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Ffederalfinancialrelations.gov.au%2Ffiles%2F2021-07%2FNHHA_DIP_Schedule_E.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

Arrangement	Overview	Reporting requirements	Data source	Limitations
National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory	<p>The National Partnership is an agreement between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people in remote Northern Territory Communities.</p> <p>As part of the agreement the Northern Territory Government is required to provide a quarterly program delivery report to the Joint Steering Committee whose members include Aboriginal Housing NT and NT Land Councils.¹⁰⁰</p>	<p>The quarterly program delivery report includes Project Status information for all works delivered in the reporting period, and under the life of the agreement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Works and Property and Tenancy Management Services delivered during the reporting period and since commencement of the Schedule. • Updates on the progress of innovation initiatives • Outcomes of procurement processes • Capital Works commenced during the period (including the number of houses in progress) • Portion of works delivered that are replacing houses that were Beyond Economic Repair • Expenditure of works to date and forecasted total costs • Engagement of Aboriginal Business Enterprise and support provided by the Northern Territory and Commonwealth to develop and build capacity • Schedule performance and corrective actions, if required • Risks and issues, and corrective actions, if required • Approximate project costs 	Reporting data from the Northern Territory Government to the Joint Steering Committee.	<p>The data does not provide an estimate of need, rather reporting on works delivered.</p> <p>Does not provide data on community infrastructure or services.</p>





¹⁰⁰ Federal Financial Relations 2023. Northern Territory Remote Housing. Available at: <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2023-06/Northern%20Territory%20Remote%20Housing%20-%20signed.pdf>



EQUITY ECONOMICS



CONTACT

-  equityeconomics.com.au
 -  info@equityeconomics.com.au
 -  twitter.com/EconomicsEquity
 -  linkedin.com/company/equity-economics/
-