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Policy Platform Background Paper

Housing Australia's
First Peoples

In considering how to improve housing outcomes for First Peoples in Australia, we have developed our policy responses in line with the work commissioned by Shelter WA from PwC Indigenous Consulting carried out principally by Prof. Kerry Arabena and Mr Shane Hamilton.

Their report, "Reimagining Indigenous Housing, Health and Wealth": The necessary ecological response to unlock the potential in the Indigenous Estate" is a conceptual approach to the long term goals of having First People's health and housing outcomes align with those of non-Indigenous Australia. Building on the concept of an ecological approach to these issues the report outlines steps to build on and utilise the wealth of First Peoples in an Indigenous Estate and the establishment of a national housing pool.

This is a long term goal and our policies also have short and medium term calls for support and the re-building of the capacity of community controlled housing organisations to take the first steps towards a national housing pool.

An important principle guides the report, is embedded in it, emerges from it and reiterates previous statements from Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous organisations including the coalition of peak bodies, that:

1. All Australian governments should adopt a principle of self-determination for First People's housing:
 - a. Community control is the demonstrably successful process governments should use in housing First Peoples.
 - b. A national housing pool should be established using an ecological approach to wealth, utilising, among other strategies, the national Indigenous estate.
 - c. State governments should develop specific First People's housing strategies as part of their bilateral agreement with the commonwealth in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.
2. A national Indigenous housing, health and wealth authority should be established that connects the Indigenous estate to an Indigenous housing pool. The Authority will recognise and build on the success of community control demonstrated by National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO).
3. A national First People's housing strategy should be developed within a national housing strategy to specifically address the lack of housing options for First Peoples' with:
 - a. A maintained focus on remote housing need that should be strengthening utilising community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing organisations to honour the principle of self-determination.
 - b. A new focus on regional and urban housing need reforming and transforming community-controlled organisations through co-design and strengthening sector plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing.
 - c. Include requirements for First People's employment, training and enterprise development using co-design and production.
 - d. The strategy should utilise the successful NACCHO as a model and base on which to build and develop housing.

4. National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) and Indigenous Business Australia should be commissioned to develop options to increase homeownership among First Peoples utilising:
 - a. Shared equity programs.
 - b. Land owned by Indigenous or other organisations and entities.
 - c. The National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF) to bring on developable land owned by Indigenous organisations.
5. The Commonwealth should resource a significant capacity-building project to facilitate the registration of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) as registered community housing providers.
 - a. Explain the advantages of being a registered provider.
 - b. Explore variations for ICHOs to qualify/comply with the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH).
6. The Commonwealth should invest in a project with NATSIHA/CHIA/National Shelter to develop the concept of the establishment of a national First People's housing pool.

