

# **Indigenous housing needs 2005**

**A multi-measure needs model**

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INFORMATION PAPER

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**October 2005**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

AIHW Cat. No. HOU 129

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ISBN 174024 505 9

### **Suggested citation**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005. Indigenous housing needs 2005: a multi-measure needs model. AIHW cat. no. HOU 129. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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Published by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Printed by Pirion. Cover art by unknown artist. Cover design by Lauren Di Salvia.

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# Acknowledgments

The main author of this report is Fadwa Al-Yaman, Head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Unit at AIHW. Michelle Wallis and Helen Johnstone provided valuable assistance with the presentation and analysis of the data.

Thanks are also extended to members of the National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee and the Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing who provided comments on the draft.

Special thanks also go to Richard Madden and Ken Tallis who provided valuable comments on the report.

This work received financial support from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Housing Ministers Advisory Council.

# Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AHBV	Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
ARIA+	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSIS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
BBF	Building a Better Future
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
CSHA	Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement
FaCS	Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services
GSS	General Social Survey
HMAC	Housing Ministers’ Advisory Committee
ICH	Indigenous Community Housing
ICHO	Indigenous Community Housing Organisation
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NIHIIC	National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee
NRF	National Reporting Framework
NSHS	National Social Housing Survey
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SCIH	Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Report on Government Services Provision
SOMIH	State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing

# Symbols used in the tables

- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable
- n.a. not available
- n.p. not published

# Executive summary

The *Indigenous Housing Needs 2005, a Multi-measure Needs Model* report assesses housing needs with the use of a multi-measure needs model. The report presents data from the five endorsed dimensions of need – homelessness, overcrowding, affordability, dwelling conditions and connection to essential services. It also assesses the feasibility of including an additional three dimensions in the model – appropriateness of housing, security of tenure and emerging housing needs. The report compares the housing outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous households for all the relevant dimensions and discusses future data development needs and priorities.

## **What is the current housing situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?**

At 30 June 2005 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was estimated at 492,700 (2.4% of the total Australian population). The Indigenous population has a younger age profile than the non-Indigenous population and has higher fertility and mortality rates (Chapter 2).

In 2002, it was estimated that there were 165,700 households that containing at least one Indigenous person. Indigenous households may also include non-Indigenous people. Indigenous people comprised 82% of all residents in Indigenous households, with half of Indigenous households having only Indigenous members (Chapter 2).

NATSISS information from 2002 suggests that of the estimated 165,700 Indigenous households, 30% owned their own homes, 66% were renters and 4% lived in rent-free housing. About two-thirds (65%) of home owners had a mortgage. Of those renting, 37% were in the private rental market, 57% were in social housing and 5% had other rental arrangements. Of those in social housing, 61% were in houses owned by a state or territory housing authority and 39% were in Indigenous/mainstream community housing (Chapter 2).

## **What is the extent of Indigenous housing needs?**

### **Homelessness**

In 2001, the number of Indigenous people who were 'homeless', defined by a community standards approach, ranged from 7,526 to 10,471 or about 2% of the Indigenous population. They included people with no conventional accommodation, those staying with relatives and friends, those using the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programs (SAAP) services and those in boarding houses. Approximately 56% of Indigenous people who were homeless had no conventional accommodation (35%) or were using SAAP services (21%) while the remainder were either staying with family and friends or staying in boarding houses (Chapter 3).

The pattern of Indigenous homelessness differed from non-Indigenous homelessness. For example 51% of non-Indigenous people who were homeless were staying with family and friends and very few (13%) had no conventional accommodation.

In all jurisdictions the rate of homelessness was higher for Indigenous people; it was 18 per 1,000 – 3.5 times the rate of non-Indigenous homelessness. In addition, the proportion of

Indigenous people using SAAP services is also much higher. In 2003–04, the rate of Indigenous clients using SAAP services was 33 per 1,000 – 8 times the non-Indigenous rate (Chapter 3).

### **Overcrowding**

In 2001, according to the Proxy Occupancy Standard, there were 13,380 (10%) overcrowded Indigenous households. Overcrowding varied by state and territory with the highest proportion being in the Northern Territory where 32% of all Indigenous households were overcrowded. Overcrowding was also highest in the Indigenous Community Housing sector with about one in every three (34%) households being overcrowded (Chapter 4).

A high proportion of Indigenous people were living in overcrowded conditions. Across Australia, 80,370 (22%) Indigenous people were living in overcrowded households and the proportion was highest in the Northern Territory (61%), followed by Western Australia (27%), Queensland (21%) and South Australia (20%).

The rate of overcrowding among Indigenous people was 953 per 10,000 households – 6 times the rate of overcrowding among non-Indigenous people. The proportion of Indigenous people living in overcrowded conditions was also 6 times the rate of non-Indigenous people (22% compared with 3.5%).

### **Affordability**

In 2001, the number of Indigenous households in affordability need – households in the bottom 40% of equivalised gross household income who were paying more than 25% of their income in rent – was 31,255 (37%). The proportion of households in affordability need varied by tenure type and was highest among households who were private renters (66%) and lowest among those in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (16%). The proportion of Indigenous private rental households in affordability need was lower (54%–56%) if only those households in the second to fourth deciles of equivalised gross household income were considered. The proportion of households in affordability need was highest in major cities (68%) and lowest in very remote areas (36%).

The proportion of households in affordability need was 37% among Indigenous households and 30% in non-Indigenous households (Chapter 5).

### **Dwelling conditions and connection to essential services**

Many dwellings on discrete Indigenous communities are in need of repair or replacement. In 2001, 5,814 out of 21,287 (27%) dwellings were in need of major repair or replacement (Chapter 6).

The number of dwellings occupied by Indigenous people that were not connected to essential services was relatively low – 147 not connected to water, 257 not connected to electricity, and 301 not connected to sewerage. In total, these houses were less than 2% of all houses occupied by Indigenous households in discrete Indigenous communities. Most of these houses were in the Northern Territory (Chapter 7).

### **What is the feasibility of including security of tenure, appropriateness and emerging needs into the model?**

Appropriateness can be defined as the ability of a residential dwelling to permit a reasonable quality of life and reasonable access to work, social contacts and services. Data collected on this dimension of need is important to inform policy and assist in the delivery of better housing services to Indigenous peoples (Chapter 8).

Insecurity of tenure is mainly a problem for homeless people, those living in caravan parks or those in the private rental market. It is estimated that in 2001, there were 7,526 to 10,471 Indigenous people who were homeless. A further 1,787 people lived in caravan parks where security of tenure is an issue. Apart from homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, private renters have the least security of tenure. Data from the NATSISS shows that those renting privately are more likely to move with 38% having lived in two dwellings in the previous 12 months and 15% having lived in three dwellings or more in that time. Similarly, Census data shows that 45% of Indigenous private rental households had moved in the last year (Chapter 9).

The two dimensions – appropriateness and security of tenure cannot yet be used to measure housing needs but data collected on these dimensions can be useful in the planning and delivery of better services to Indigenous people.

Emerging needs is an assessment of future housing needs, using the first five dimensions based on projected growth in the Indigenous population and existing tenure. Estimation of the extent of future need is an important part of planning for future housing demand for Indigenous people (Chapter 10).

## **Conclusion**

The report does not attempt to create a single measure from the five dimensions of housing need examined. The creation of a single measure upon which resource allocation is based is not straightforward. A serious obstacle is that the different dimensions of need use different 'units' of measurement. For example, homelessness is derived from counts of people; overcrowding and affordability from counts of households; and dwelling condition and connection to services from counts of dwellings. What is needed to overcome this problem is administrative data sets that are developed from unit records, where the household is the unit of measurement. In this way the association between the various measures would be better understood, and a single measure of housing needs could be developed from the model. In addition, the relative impact on the lives of Indigenous people of the different dimensions examined is not known, so they cannot be weighted or adjusted for their relative contribution to the overall single measure that the model would produce (Chapter 11).

Despite this, the report demonstrates a significant level of housing need, where overcrowding and poor dwelling conditions in particular are suffered by a large number of Indigenous households. The report also shows that serious disparities exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing in Australia.