

The sunburnt country or the big smoke? Reshaping Indigenous housing

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the Australian Indigenous housing research identifying strengths and gaps in the body of literature published between 1970 and 2006. The findings of the review of the Community Housing Infrastructure Programme (CHIP), entitled *Living in the Sunburnt Country*, are cast against this overview in order to illustrate housing research strengths and weaknesses. The CHIP review introduced major reforms to Indigenous housing and makes a distinction between Indigenous housing in remote and non-remote locations. The CHIP review proposes to counter the Indigenous homelands movement by encouraging Indigenous migration from smaller settlements to those with greater access to services, a move from 'country' to the 'big smoke'. This paper illustrates the significance of existing housing research to the development of Indigenous housing policy and programs and it identifies ways that housing research can be reshaped to inform current Indigenous housing reforms.

Introduction

The Commonwealth Government's direct participation in Indigenous housing policy began in the 1960s with Aboriginal Welfare Conferences, marking the beginning of regular meetings of State and Commonwealth Government welfare officers who charted direction for welfare measures including social housing. However, in the seminal 1979 publication *A Black Reality* the Director of the Aboriginal Housing Panel¹, Michael Heppell, identified a scarcity of Indigenous housing research that could inform housing policy and programs. Heppell and a small group of researchers were concerned by the failure of government supplied housing to respond to the domiciliary behaviour and architectural traditions of Indigenous users and by the negative social impacts that such housing may cause (see Reser 1979). Heppell argued for housing provision that is informed by a program of research concerned with Indigenous domiciliary traditions. His position was in contrast to the prevailing assumption of Aboriginal Affairs at the time that "Aborigines must enter into the mainstream of Australian life." (Heppell 1979:1-62; Memmott 2003; Long et al 2007:6.)

Since the 1970s a distinct body of Indigenous housing research has emerged which examines numerous diverse, yet interrelated, housing themes and issues. However significant research gaps remain leading to the potential for policy and program decision-making in the absence of an adequate research base. Long et al's (2007) *An Audit and Review of Australian Indigenous Housing Research*² critically reviewed this body of Indigenous housing literature, examining its characteristics and research themes. The audit and review considered the relationship of this research to the Housing Ministers ten-year vision for Indigenous Housing, *Building a Better Future* (BBF) (HMAC 2001).

In early 2007 the review of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' Community Housing Infrastructure Programme (CHIP) entitled *Living in the Sunburnt Country*³ was released (PWC 2007). The CHIP review outlines proposals to significantly reshape the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous housing programme. It established a strategic framework whereby housing in remote locations is to be provided by a new Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Programme (ARIA) and Indigenous housing elsewhere is to be provided by mainstream public housing services. Other features of the review include a reshaping of Indigenous housing need - defining need in terms of overcrowding and accessibility to services, proposed strategies to increase rates of Indigenous home ownership, and proposed strategies to counter the Indigenous homelands movement by encouraging Indigenous movement from smaller settlements to those with greater access to services, or movement from 'country' to the 'big smoke'. Given the

¹ Following the 1972 Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Aboriginal housing conference, the RAI A established and administered the Aboriginal Housing Panel that provided housing design, delivery and research with an exploratory and innovative vision. The Federal Government reconstituted the Panel during 1975-76, placing it under the directorship of anthropologist Dr Michael Heppell. (Long et al 2007:11.)

² Herein referred to as the 'audit and review'.

³ Herein referred to as the 'CHIP review'.

significance of the CHIP review and the associated major reforms, it is noteworthy that it made limited use of the existing housing research as evidenced by the review's list of references. (PWC 2007; FaCSIA 2007.)

The primary purpose of this paper is to present an overview of the Australian Indigenous housing research by drawing on Long et al's (2007) *Audit and Review*. Secondly, the paper aims to illustrate housing research strengths and weaknesses and the relationships between policy and research. It does so by casting some of the findings of the CHIP review against this overview and by considering the relationship of this existing research to the policy document *Building a Better Future*.

The paper commences with an outline of the methods used in the audit and review of the housing literature. This is followed by findings on the characteristics of the Australian Indigenous housing literature and the relationship of these characteristics to the CHIP review. Two broad categories of Indigenous housing research themes are then discussed these being micro-issues and macro-issues. These research themes are compared with a selection of the CHIP review findings.

Methods used in the Audit and Review

In the 'audit and review' Long et al (2007:1,6) employed a broad definition of Indigenous housing in order to encompass the breadth and depth of the literature, and to accommodate the complex interrelationships that exist between various research themes. Thus, Indigenous housing encompasses all aspects of the production, management, maintenance and occupation of Indigenous living environments. These span the social, behavioural and physical properties of living environments. This broad definition of housing includes camps and 'houses'. It includes traditional or self-built architecture and it includes buildings and living environments designed and built by others. It includes internal and external living environments. It includes houses owned by Indigenous people and those rented from either the private market, Indigenous community housing organizations, state owned and managed Indigenous housing, and public housing. Indigenous housing exists within a complex set of broader Indigenous environmental relationships, including relationships to country. Housing is thus defined as both a process and a product. (See Ross 2000:3; Barker 2003: 105; Dillon and Savage 2003:41; Fantin 2003:26a; Hall & Berry 2004:5; Lee & Morris 2005a: 1.)

The audit and review examined three groups of Indigenous housing literature. Firstly, a meta-analysis was made of existing reviews of the Australian Indigenous housing literature published between 1970 and 1999. Key sources were Heppell's (1979) *A Black Reality*, works by Ross such as *Just For Living* (1987, 2000), overviews of Indigenous housing by Sanders (1993, 2000), and a series of papers by Memmott (1988, 1989, 1991 & 1993) including *Aboriginal Housing: State of the Art (or the Non-state of the Art)* (1988).

Secondly, the readily available Australian Indigenous housing literature published after 2000 was gathered and the characteristics and key themes of the publications analysed (this formed the main component of the review). This literature was profiled in terms of eight research characteristics and analysed in terms of twenty-six research themes (see Table 1). These characteristics and themes were generated at the start of the project based on the authors' knowledge of Indigenous housing literature and non-Indigenous housing literature. Thirdly, a small sample of the recent international Indigenous housing literature was analysed for comparable themes.

Table 1: Research characteristics and research themes used to profile and analyse the post 2000 Australian Indigenous housing literature.

Research characteristics	Research themes	
1. disciplinary background of the author, 2. methods used in the literature, 3. place(s) or settlements in the literature, 4. regional representation in the research 5. language group(s) in the literature	1. occupation and use, 2. domiciliary composition, household size and composition, 3. user groups, 4. mobility, 5. design, 6. technology, 7. home, place and space,	Micro-issues
6. State/Territory representation in the literature, 7. settlement type(s) in the literature, 8. remoteness classification of the research.	8. ownership, 9. funding and costs, 10. sustainability and efficiency, 11. management, 12. policy, 13. planning, coordination and decision making about housing, 14. mainstream versus dedicated programs, 15. decentralisation versus centralisation, 16. performance, 17. affordability, 18. accessibility, 19. appropriateness, 20. location and geography of housing provision and services, 21. housing needs, 22. linking of housing and other (non-housing/shelter) services and outcomes, 23. historical, institutional and political aspects of housing, 24. housing preferences, desires, future visions, 25. housing pathways, 26. impacts of cross and inter-generational issues on housing.	Macro-issues

Characteristics of the Australian Indigenous housing research

The field of Indigenous housing research is multi-disciplinary (but not often cross- or inter- disciplinary), with authors employing a range of qualitative and quantitative methods and theories. Authors in the literature reviewed were mostly identified with the disciplines of architecture, anthropology, economics, and health, or they were identified as government employees/agencies. This multi-disciplinary characteristic is a research strength and reflects the diversity and interrelated nature of themes in the literature. However a significant gap is the relatively low number of readily identified Indigenous authors and researchers of published works. This represents a failure to meet Building a Better Future (BBF) outcome 4– ‘improved partnerships’. Yet Indigenous individuals, households and community organisations provide significant in-kind contributions to the housing literature as research participants.

Since the 1970s, Australian Indigenous housing research has focussed almost exclusively on remote and very remote Australia, or that part of Australia described by Peterson (2004:225, 236) as the ‘Aboriginal domain’ and by Rowley (1972) as ‘colonial’ Australia as distinct from ‘settled’ Australia. Within remote Australia, the literature has concentrated on Central Australia, Arnhem Land and the Western

Desert. A significant characteristic of this field of research is that it is dominated by Aboriginal housing, whereas Torres Strait Islander housing is a neglected area of research. In comparison to the Australian literature research on urban Indigenous housing appears as a strength in the international literature.

Another characteristic is that the representation of jurisdictions in the literature is not proportionate to the size of their Indigenous population. The Northern Territory has the fourth highest Indigenous population yet it has the highest representation in the literature (ABS 2001). This may reflect the fact that the Northern Territory has the highest Indigenous population by proportion (ABS 2001). A further characteristic of the Indigenous housing research is the low representation of specific language groups in the literature. This low representation may indicate that the research is not adequately culturally specific; it may also indicate a failure to understand that Indigenous housing traditions, circumstances, preferences and needs are not necessarily homogeneous across the different cultural groups of Indigenous Australia.

This field of research is also characterised by a focus on discrete settlements and a failure to adequately engage with other settlement types such as major cities that have substantial Indigenous populations. In contrast the international literature contains examples of substantial research projects that examine Indigenous housing issues in urban contexts.⁴ By way of contrast the non-Indigenous housing literature is heavily urban-focussed and mostly employs quantitative, empirical and observational methods. A consequence of this urban gap in the Indigenous housing research is the absence of detailed research into Indigenous private rental issues and urban home ownership. A further settlement type that is somewhat neglected is self-built camps and their associated traditions.

These characteristics of the Australian Indigenous housing research have implications for BBF and the extent to which the BBF outcomes can be achieved, particularly outcome 1 – ‘better housing’, outcome 2 – ‘better housing services’, and outcome 4 – ‘improved partnerships’.

The characteristics of the Indigenous housing research also hold implications for the reforms to Indigenous housing that are associated with the CHIP review. Key features of the CHIP review are that it makes a strong distinction between remote Australia and urban Australia. It recommends that CHIP funding be used for housing in remote Australia with urban Indigenous housing to be provided by mainstream housing services.⁵ It recommends that housing provision be linked to access to services, with housing in remote Australia to be provided in settlements with access to education, health, employment and law and order services. It recommends a cessation of funding of housing ‘on country’ outstations where they do not have access to services. It recommends the introduction of incentives to encourage Indigenous migrations away from small homeland based settlements and into major settlements and potentially migrations from small remote settlements to remote towns such as Alice Springs.

⁴ See for example the Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing, Community-University Research Alliance (CURA), Saskatoon Canada, <http://www.bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca/reports/>.

⁵ Funded under the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program which is part of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (FaSCIA 2007).

Thus the CHIP review has as one of its core principals a shift from 'country' to the 'big smoke'. (PWC 2007:23,24.)

The CHIP review recommends that a new Remote Indigenous Accommodation Service (RIAS) replace CHIP, this new programme has since been introduced as the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Programme (ARIA) (PWC 2007: 24; FaCSIA 2007). The naming of this new programme ARIA instead of RIAS is interesting as ARIA is also commonly used as an acronym for the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia. This is an index that measures remoteness in terms of access to services along road networks (HAC 2001; Memmott, et al 2006:11). Thus the name of this new programme explicitly expresses the new remote focus and perhaps coincidentally expresses the new emphasis on linking housing provision and access to services.

Although the CHIP review made limited use of existing remote Indigenous housing research, there exists a significant opportunity to utilise such research in the design and implementation of Indigenous housing reform and the operations of the ARIA programme. The CHIP review indicates the need for culturally specific approaches to Indigenous housing (PWC 2007:20-24,89,92-96). The current period of Indigenous housing reform provides an opportunity to implement an ongoing systematic program of culturally specific remote Indigenous housing research that builds upon existing research strengths in order to inform the development of housing policy and programmes. Such research should consider Indigenous housing in terms of broader environmental relationships, including relationships to country, and it should consider culturally specific housing requirements.

At the same time there exists a significant risk that the future direction of Indigenous housing policy, as represented by the CHIP review, will see an ongoing neglect of urban Indigenous housing research. There are indicators that the housing needs of Indigenous households in urban and regional Australia are not the same as non-Indigenous households (or the mainstream). An increased level of urban Indigenous housing research is required to inform the design of housing programmes and policies (SCATSIA 2001; Sanders 2005).

Themes in the Australian Indigenous Housing research

Two categories of research were identified amongst the research themes (1) research of micro-level issues of Indigenous housing, and (2) research of macro-level issues of Indigenous housing. The scale of the issues addressed in the research distinguishes these categories. Micro-issues are research themes associated with actual living environments; they are focused on the house and household. By contrast, macro-issues are research themes that extend outside of the realm of living environments but nonetheless impact on them. They are usually preoccupied with the scales of regions, states or the whole country. Micro-issues were prominent in literature published between 1970 and 1999; this was particularly so in the earlier part of this period. The post 2000 literature examines both categories of research and has research strengths in both.

Micro-issues of Indigenous housing research

Micro-issue research themes in the Australian Indigenous housing literature were (1) occupation and use of housing, (2) domiciliary composition, household size and composition (includes overcrowding), (3) user groups, (4) mobility, (5) design, (6) technology, and (7) home, place and space. The overarching aim of this category of

research is to inform the competent provision of appropriate Indigenous housing. A feature of this micro-issues category of research is that much of the research is concerned with remote and very remote Australia. Numbers of sub-themes were identified within each theme area.

Research strengths within this category of literature and the Indigenous housing literature as a whole are the research themes of Indigenous housing design and the interrelated theme of Indigenous occupation and use of housing. These themes first emerged as research strengths in the early 1970s (see Heppell 1979). Occupation and use of housing includes the sub-themes of externally orientated behaviour, surveillance, kinship and the occupation of housing, privacy, hearth-based activity, cooking activities, sleeping arrangements, daily cycle of social life, belief systems and the occupation of housing, sharing behaviour, seasonal domiciliary behaviour, Indigenous domiciliary behaviour and western housing typologies, mourning customs, and the personalisation of dwellings. The theme of housing design includes the sub-themes of culture and design, climatically appropriate design, visual appearance of houses, technological research, self-built housing, housing design and health, environmental health and design standards and codes, design portfolios, and design and housing as process. (See Memmott & Chambers 2003.)

The significance of culturally appropriate design and the importance of understanding Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing are also emphases that are paralleled in the international Indigenous housing literature (e.g. Hoskins et al 2002; Dawson 2004). However, despite this long-term research strength in the Australian research there remains significant gaps in the level of engagement with the housing design research. Houses continue to be designed for Indigenous households that do not support, or respond to, Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing. This may be exacerbated by current trends towards mainstreaming service provision in Indigenous Australia.

The CHIP review makes reference to the literature on housing design and health (e.g. FaCS 2003). It recognises the need for culturally appropriate housing design and associated research, yet it makes limited reference to the literature on Indigenous housing design and the occupation and use of housing (PWC 2007:21, 24, 64, 89, 96).

In addition to ongoing investigation of these research strengths there are research gaps and therefore micro-issue research themes that require further investigation. A significant theme that requires further research is Indigenous household size and household composition preferences, and in particular Indigenous perceptions of overcrowding. Currently overcrowding is mostly investigated quantitatively and by using non-indigenous occupancy standards (Canadian and Proxy). Yet despite research that acknowledges that perceptions of overcrowding are subject to cultural norms there are no significant Australian studies of Indigenous perceptions and experiences of overcrowding. (AIHW 2005a:2, 31-32, 43; Long et al 2007 53-55.)

The CHIP review has a strong focus on the alleviation of overcrowding in remote Australia (PWC 2007). Existing research that employs occupancy standards supports this response (e.g. Neutze et al 2000; AIHW 2005). However, if overcrowding is to be addressed through reforms to remote Indigenous housing provision then a greater understanding of Indigenous household sizes and compositions and Indigenous perceptions of overcrowding is required (see AIHW 2005: 31-32, 43).

Another research theme requiring further investigation is the nature of Indigenous mobility and associated housing implications. There are recent contributions to this research theme such as Memmott et al's (2006:3) work which found that "kinship is the great driving force of Aboriginal mobility; kinship is maintained through mobility; kinship makes mobility possible; and kinship contributes to the definition of mobility region" (see also Memmott et al 2004; Taylor & Bell 2004; Foster et al 2005; Long & Memmott 2007). However nationally Indigenous mobility and its implications for housing services and housing design remains poorly understood, this includes the impact of the centralisation of services on Indigenous mobility, and the implications of service orientated migrations from remote areas to urban areas, and the impact of forced migrations (see Walker and Ireland 2003; Memmott et al 2004 & 2006; Foster et al 2005; Altman 2006).

Despite this research gap the CHIP review recommends the centralisation of housing services and encourages Indigenous migrations to settlements with better access to services, this includes a proposal for 'mobility incentives' (PWC 2007:24, 80). There is an urgent need to further investigate Indigenous mobility and to consider the implications of the types of migrations that are recommended in the CHIP review. For example, will these reforms create an upsurge in unmet housing need in major remote settlements and towns? If so, do these reforms have the potential to exacerbate rather than alleviate overcrowding? It is also timely to investigate existing patterns of circular mobility, or orbits, that involve movement between mainstream economic and educational opportunities and the maintenance of relationships with country and the potential to facilitate such mobility (see Pearson 2003; Memmott et al 2004 & 2006; Long & Memmott 2007).

If housing reform is to be successful and if BBF outcome 1 – better housing is to be achieved then greater research effort is required that addresses the micro-issues of Indigenous housing in outer and inner regional Australia and the major cities and metropolitan areas. At the same time an ongoing, if not enhanced program of research is still required in remote and very remote Australia in order to provide the evidence base required for policy and programme development.

Macro-issues of Indigenous housing research

Macro-issue themes in the Australian Indigenous housing literature were: (1) ownership, (2) funding and costs, (3) sustainability and efficiency, (4) management, (5) policy, (6) planning, coordination and decision-making about housing, (7) mainstream versus dedicated programs, (8) decentralisation versus centralisation, (9) performance, (10) affordability, (11) accessibility, (12) appropriateness, (13) location and geography of housing provision and services, (14) housing needs, (15) linking of housing and other (non-housing/shelter) services and outcomes, and (16) historical, institutional and political aspects of housing.

Numbers of sub-themes were identified within each of these research themes. For example, the theme of management included the sub-themes of management and governance, evaluation of management, management training, management and delivery, tenancy issues, tenancy sustainability, management and environmental health, asset management, and economic analysis of housing management.

The theme of Indigenous home ownership has appeared in the literature for some time, for example rates of homeownership have been used as an indicator of housing need, as an indicator of performance in housing provision, and as an indicator of

Indigenous disadvantage (see SCATSIA 2001; AIHW 2005b:66-70; SCRGSP 2005a:3.47-3.51). Yet there is relatively little detailed Australian research in this theme area particularly concerning the issue of home ownership on community title land, how a remote Indigenous home ownership market, or markets, will operate and how people will be able to accrue or realise wealth through such a market (see Moran et al 2001, 2002). Despite this research gap the Federal government generally, and the CHIP review specifically, has recently placed a strong emphasis on increasing rates of Indigenous home ownership, particularly on remote community title land as a way of Indigenous people achieving economic independence and as a way of alleviating unmet demand for Indigenous social housing (PWC 2007). Homeownership is a significant research theme in the international Indigenous housing literature (see Sutton 2004; NAIHC 2006; Waldegrave et al 2006). Home ownership should become a significant and emerging theme in the Australian Indigenous housing literature, such research potentially addresses BBF outcome 3 – ‘more housing’. Future home ownership research must be undertaken with close attention to micro-issue themes including culturally appropriate design.

The sustainability of Indigenous housing is not a strong research theme in the literature. The CHIP review (PWC 2007) has a strong focus on economic viability and sustainability with considerable attention to funding and costs. It is the authors’ view that research on economic viability is part of sustainability research but is not in itself sustainability research. The literature illustrates an opportunity to embrace a model of sustainability in which economic, socio-cultural and environmental concerns are considered in an integrated manner (see Ross 2002).

Indigenous housing management is a strong research theme within this macro-issues category and within the body of literature overall (e.g. Jardine-Orr et al 2004; NTDCDSCA 2004; Hall & Berry 2006). A critical issue is asset management, the repair and maintenance of housing, and this appears as a key theme in the CHIP review which recommends a short-term “maintenance blitz” (PWC 2007: 23-25, 36, 66, 92). Research on Indigenous housing management has implications for achieving BBF outcome 2 – ‘better housing services’, outcome 4 – ‘improved partnerships’, outcome 5 – ‘improved performance linked to accountability’, and outcome 7 – ‘coordination of services’.

An ongoing theme in the literature is Indigenous control in the process of Indigenous housing provision. This theme is associated with BBF outcome 4 – ‘improved partnerships’ and outcome 7 – ‘coordination of services’. Yet little detailed research has addressed this theme. Similarly little research has examined mainstream versus Indigenous housing programs. However such research is critical to achieving BBF outcome 3 – ‘more housing’, outcome 5 – ‘greater effectiveness and efficiency’, and outcome 7 – ‘coordination of services’. The CHIP review (PWC 2007:20-26, 45, 52, 58, 59) recommends making greater use of mainstream services and it emphasises that Indigenous people outside of remote areas are to access mainstream housing services. This emerging emphasis on Indigenous use of mainstream housing services requires greater research. A key issue is what research informs decisions to mainstream Indigenous housing programmes and what research is ignored when such decisions are made?

Very little research has investigated the theme of decentralisation versus centralisation. There is a tension between the BBF outcome areas of better housing, more housing and greater effectiveness and efficiency in terms of decentralisation and

centralisation. The literature suggests that research of decentralisation/centralisation requires an approach that considers these three outcomes in a balanced manner. Decentralisation versus centralisation is emerging as a significant research theme as the CHIP review (PWC 2007) recommends the centralisation of housing provision and incentives for Indigenous people to migrate to centralised housing provision– a shift from ‘country’ to ‘the big smoke’. In contrast Altman (2006:15, 16) argues there is no compelling case to encourage centralisation, he also argues for outstation policy based on “deep local knowledge”. There is a need for further research of this theme, particularly research that considers economic and socio-cultural issues in an integrated manner.

Indigenous housing performance is a research strength in the literature (e.g. SCRGSP 2006). However, performance indicators are yet to be developed that thoroughly engage with the assessment of performance in terms of housing standards, appropriateness, health outcomes and well-being. An important, yet under-utilised type of performance research is post-occupancy evaluation of housing in terms of socio-cultural, technical and economic factors (see Memmott et al 2000; Lee & Morris 2005). Performance assessment is critical to all of the BBF outcome areas and it is critical to monitoring the success of the housing reforms described in the CHIP review. An ongoing and systematic program of post occupancy evaluation would inform decisions concerning improvements to the supply of remote Indigenous housing and the performance of remote housing (see PWC 2007:25).

A theme that dominates the recent Indigenous housing literature is housing needs and in particular multi-measure needs assessment (see Neutze et al 2000; AIHW 2005a). Although such needs assessments employ standards of need from mainstream Australia they are useful in revealing many dimensions of Indigenous housing need. Multi-measure needs assessments have been endorsed by housing ministers and have been applied (NTCDSCA 2004; AIHW 2005a). The CHIP review employs a more limited model of need by prioritising need in terms of overcrowding and access to services. Whilst overcrowding is recognised as a critical issue in remote Australia, other dimensions of need also require consideration including the critical dimension of culturally appropriate housing (Neutze et al 2000; AIHW 2005a). Not only is further development of multi-measure Indigenous housing needs assessments required, but it seems that engagement with such assessments is also required.

A key finding of the existing affordability research is that affordability need varies in relation to the remoteness category of the housing. There is a greater level of affordability need in urban areas whereas the supply and condition of housing is more critical in remote areas (Neutze et al 2000; SCATSIA 2001:127). However the housing reforms contained in the CHIP review, particularly the push for increased rates of home ownership and migrations to service centres, could see affordability emerging as a significant issue in remote Australia.

There are two critical notions of accessibility in the literature (1) access in terms of obtaining housing, and (2) access in terms of the physical access to houses for people with disabilities. An overarching vision of the BBF was to improve access to affordable and appropriately designed housing (HMAC 2001:4-7). The CHIP review recommends improving access through a maintenance blitz, via increased rates of home ownership, and via increased access to mainstream housing services (PWC 2007 20-25). There has been very little research of the second notion of accessibility although submissions to the CHIP review suggest that access for those with

disabilities is a significant and emerging issue (PWC 2007:89, 94). The CHIP review also emphasises a third notion of accessibility, this being linking housing provision to access to services (PWC 2007:23-25). This service access strategy could result in a reduction in housing accessibility in parts of remote Australia through either the discontinuation of funding for housing supply and maintenance in small communities leading to increased demands on existing stock, or, through increased unmet demands on housing supply in settlements with adequate services. Have the accessibility issues that may emanate from the CHIP review (and wider Indigenous reforms) been adequately considered or modelled?

Very little research has considered the location and geography of Indigenous housing provision and services. The proposals outlined in the CHIP review of funding remote housing only in settlements with access to services and also of proposing incentives for people to migrate to major settlements indicates a requirement for further research in this theme area. Critical here is research that considers Indigenous perceptions of remoteness and amenity. Many Indigenous people in remote Australia choose to live where they live because they are close to country- they are home. (See Memmott et al 2006; Altman 2006; SCRGSP 2006:16.77-16.78.)

Further research gaps and weaknesses are also evident. For example, while Indigenous housing literature has arguably led the way in terms of investigating housing and non-shelter outcomes particularly in regard to housing and health, there is virtually nothing in the body of Indigenous housing research which considers the themes of 'housing preferences, desires, future visions'; housing pathways; or the impacts of cross or inter-generational issues on housing.

Conclusion – reshaping Indigenous housing research

The existing range of Indigenous research identified and reviewed in the *Audit and Review* represents an important discrete body of housing literature, with both similarities and significant differences to non-Indigenous housing research output. In the context of current policy moves, including moves (back) towards the mainstreaming of Indigenous housing programs and services, a failure to acknowledge the distinct nature of Indigenous housing studies, and their implications, presents the risk of developing inappropriate or unworkable policy and program responses. An appreciation of the cross-cultural context in which Indigenous housing exists can assist in developing research methods and approaches which are specific and sensitive to, and respectful of the needs of Indigenous people. These in turn can provide useful input into policy processes.

As a theoretical basis for conducting Indigenous housing research, a balance between micro and macro- scale research is essential. Further macro-scale research is clearly required, but it ought to be driven and informed by an understanding of micro-scale issues, and be cognisant of the relationships and interactions between the two levels of research. Thus, the aim of macro-level Indigenous housing research is essentially to establish how more successful micro-issue outcomes can be achieved.

The *Audit and Review* and the CHIP review reveal the need to reshape Indigenous housing research in remote and non-remote contexts. A challenge for Australian policy makers and researchers concerns the development of an enhanced and ongoing program of Indigenous housing research which addresses weaknesses whilst extending the established research strengths. Such a program of research would have the potential to inform the development of Indigenous housing policies and programs

which are both respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and which produce improved housing outcomes.

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