



**NSW
Aboriginal
Housing
Office**

***Annual Report
2006/2007***

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Cover painting by Lorraine Brown and Artists from the Coomaditchie Artists Cooperative

“Campsites and Walking trails of the East Coast Kooris”

This painting represents the connection of the Aboriginal Missions stretching from La Perouse to Nowra and showing how we are all connected.

This artwork was created as part of a series of panels that were on display outside the Wollongong City Art Gallery for the 1993 World Indigenous People’s Conference.

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Minister's Message



The Aboriginal Housing Office was set up in 1998 to increase access to safe, affordable and culturally appropriate housing. Since that time we have housed 17,000 Aboriginal people across the state and I am proud of that achievement.

In the past financial year 81 new dwellings have been completed and a further 23 new homes have commenced and this construction has included employment of Aboriginal people.

The lemma Government is committed to maintaining a viable and sustainable housing sector for Aboriginal people in NSW, but we face very challenging times ahead due to the Commonwealth's abolition of the Community Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP), which will be a loss of \$13.25 million in annual funding for Aboriginal housing in NSW.

The Aboriginal Housing Office relies on support from the Commonwealth Government and recent announcements signalling their potential withdraw from the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement means we cannot be sure what funding will be provided until after the Federal election that will be held later this calendar year.

Despite these times of uncertainty, the staff at the Aboriginal Housing Office and the Board have remained focused and committed to providing housing options to Aboriginal people in NSW.

I would like to express my thanks to all the staff of the Office and in particular the Chairperson of the Board, Mrs Ann Weldon, and the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Russell Taylor, for their hard work and dedication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matt Brown".

Matt Brown MP
Minister for Housing
Minister for Tourism

The Hon Matt Brown MP
Minister for Housing
Minister for Tourism
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

31 October 2007

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of the Aboriginal Housing Office for the year ended 30 June 2007.

The report has been prepared for submission to Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984* and is submitted in accordance with *Section 9A* of that Act.

The report details the achievements of the Aboriginal Housing Office and provides all required statutory and financial information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell Taylor', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the left.

Russell Taylor
Chief Executive Officer
Aboriginal Housing Office

Our Role

The Aboriginal Housing Office (the Office) develops a viable Aboriginal housing sector by increasing access to safe, affordable and culturally appropriate dwellings. At the same time, employment opportunities for Aboriginal people are promoted.

The Office is established under the *NSW Aboriginal Housing Act 1998* to provide housing assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Aboriginal people) and increase the range of housing choices, especially for those most in need.

Our functions are guided by the principles of self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people with the Office working in partnership with Aboriginal housing providers and the Aboriginal community in delivering housing programs and developing housing policy and standards.

In 2006/07, the Office improved access to housing services with the completion of 81 dwellings, improved housing standards by upgrading 117 dwellings and repairing 744 community dwellings.

In the area of creating employment opportunities, 145 Aboriginal tradespeople and trainees were employed and 12 Aboriginal building companies were contracted in 2006/07.

In setting our strategic policy and direction, the Office is assisted by an all-Aboriginal Aboriginal Housing Office Board that advises the NSW Minister for Housing on Aboriginal housing issues in NSW. Since its establishment in 1998 the Office has contributed to the housing of some 17,000 Aboriginal people.

Our vision

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in NSW have culturally appropriate, affordable, quality housing.



*Sydney Region, Elders Units
in Belmore*

Achievements 2006/07

1. Improved Housing Access

- Completed 81 dwellings, with a further 23 dwellings commenced
- Opened accommodation for Elders in the Sydney Region
- Opened accommodation for recently released offenders in Tamworth
- Since establishment in 1998 some 17,000 Aboriginal people have been housed by the Office.

2. Improved Housing Standards

- Upgraded 117 dwellings and repaired 744 community dwellings
- Developed a system of governance and management standards for the Aboriginal housing sector.

3. A Sustainable Housing Sector

- Completed an assessment of the condition of nearly 3,800 community managed dwellings
- Started a sector reform strategy to increase efficiency and improve service delivery
- Started developing a single, consistent and equitable rent setting policy.

4. Employment Strategies

- Aboriginal people filled 67 per cent of contract, permanent and temporary positions in the Office
- Included employment of Aboriginal people in 151 contracts with non-Aboriginal builders
- Lead the NSW Public Sector in overall employment of Aboriginal people and in the number of senior staff.

5. Policy Development

- Participated in development of national policy through data contributions
- Took the lead in developing housing directions within the *Two Ways Together* framework
- Worked on a joint project to help people with mental health problems and disorders living in Aboriginal public and community housing.

6. Program Planning

- Started development of a monitoring and compliance framework to encourage on-going improvement in housing management
- Implemented components of a major review of the regional planning cycle
- Staged introduction of additional mandatory key performance indicators for management of rental dwellings by community housing providers.

7. Asset Management

- Completed an extensive repairs and maintenance program
- Made excellent progress in information management and communication technology.

8. Governance

- Gained national accreditation of a course titled Certificate IV Community Services (Social Housing)
- The Aboriginal Housing Information Service dealt with over 800 enquiries
- Participated in the second National Social Housing Survey of tenants of state owned and managed indigenous housing.

Performance Summary

The following table shows quantitative outputs for the eight key performance areas that were developed in 2005/06.

Table 1: Key Performance Area

Key Performance Area	Output 2006/07	Output 2005/06
1. Improving Access to Housing		
Total houses completed (construction and acquisition)		
• rural, regional and remote	60	30
• major urban	21	15
Total	81	45
2. Improving Housing Standards		
Aboriginal Housing Office houses upgraded	117	182
Direct expenditure on upgrading program (excluding GST)	\$4.2 m	\$5.2 m
Number of Aboriginal community houses repaired under the Repairs and Maintenance Community Assets Program	744	660
3. Reformed and Sustainable Aboriginal Housing Sector		
Registered Aboriginal housing organisations	234	268
Aboriginal housing organisations meeting key performance indicators	56	64
Aboriginal housing organisations with CentrePay agreements	143	182
Organisations assisted through operational grants	4	4
Dwellings sold to Aboriginal Housing Office tenants	3	10
4. Delivering on Employment Strategies		
Housing dwellings constructed/upgraded with Aboriginal tradespeople and trainees	87	137
Housing dwellings repaired/maintained with Aboriginal tradespeople and trainees	493	300
Aboriginal building companies contracted	12	12
Aboriginal people receiving accredited training	31	26

Purpose of the Funding

The Aboriginal Housing Office administers an integrated housing and housing-related program for Aboriginal people that focuses on:

- addressing housing need
- improving and maintaining housing assets
- ensuring Aboriginal housing organisations are trained and resourced to effectively manage housing for their communities

Financial Summary

Where the funds come from

The Office received \$67.0 million from the NSW and the Australian Governments in 2006/07.

NSW Government funding of \$6.6 million, under the Bilateral Commonwealth State Housing Agreement targeted housing need in the greater Sydney metropolitan area. A total of 22 priority communities in rural, regional and remote areas were provided an additional \$11.1 million for new housing under the NSW Government Aboriginal Communities Development Program. This funding was to alleviate poor environmental health conditions and a pressing need for housing in these communities. The Australian Government, through the Department of Families, Communities, and Indigenous Affairs, provided funding under the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program. This program targeted Aboriginal housing in rural and remote areas and totalled \$18.5 million in 2006/07.

This Australian Government Department also provided funds under the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement 2005/08 for the regional component of the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program of \$13.3 million which matched funding in 2005/06, the Healthy Indigenous Housing Initiative of \$2.4 million which matched funding in 2005/06, and ceased funding the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, a loss of \$2.4 million on 2005/06.

Table 2: Summary of funding sources for Aboriginal Housing Program 2006/07

Source of funds	2006/07	2006/07	2005/06	2005/06
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
1. NSW Government				
CSHA State matching – base funding (metro)	6,580		6,366	
Other State funding				
AHO Upgrading	Nil		3,705	
GST compensation/Other	1,100		696	
Carried forward from previous year	3,254		Nil	
State owned and managed Indigenous housing	60		Nil	
ACDP funds (DAA)	11,109		15,451	
TOTAL		22,103		26,218
2. Australian Government - CSHA				
Tied – ARHP	18,487		18,235	
AHO operating costs contribution	4,437		4,437	
CSHA subtotal	22,924		22,672	
Other				
CHIP funds	13,250		13,312	
HIHI Funds	2,400		2,400	
NAHS Funds	Nil		2,740	
Other subtotal	15,650		18,452	
TOTAL		38,574		41,124
3. Other sources of funds				
Rental income	3,815		2,923	
Interest income	1,750		1,398	
Proceeds from Asset Sales	633		3,057	
Other	124		296	
TOTAL		6,322		7,674
GRAND TOTAL		66,999		75,016

Acronyms

CSHA Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement

Australian Government	NSW Government
ARHP Aboriginal Rental Housing Program	AHO Aboriginal Housing Office
CHIP Community Housing and Infrastructure Program	ACDP Aboriginal Communities Development Program
GST Goods and Services Tax	DAA NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs
HIHI Healthy Indigenous Housing Initiative	
NAHS National Aboriginal Health Strategy	

Where The Funding Goes

Table 3: Expenditure Summary

Program Expenditure	2006/07	2005/06
	\$'000	\$'000
Sector support & resourcing	1,105	1,491
Aboriginal Housing Office upgrade	4,259	5,309
Aboriginal Housing Office asset management	1,149	799
Healthy Indigenous Housing Initiatives	1,087	17
Tenants initiatives	2	61
Aboriginal Community Development Program	11,111	15,451
Home ownership	1	1,018
Housing for Aboriginal Communities Program	2,804	5,525
Repairs and Maintenance Community Assets Program	6,912	7,018
Resourcing Community Organisations	3,100	4,467
Acquisitions and construction	13,610	9,000
Sub-Total (Program Expenditure)	45,140	50,156
Aboriginal Housing Office operating costs	9,314	8,877
Total Expenditure	54,454	59,033

Chairperson's Report



I take this opportunity to say farewell to the Aboriginal Housing Office and the community as my term as Chairperson of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Board comes to an end.

It has been a memorable experience for me to be a part of the positive changes that have been made in the Aboriginal housing sector within NSW. I acknowledge the dedicated voluntary members of the Aboriginal community-controlled housing organisations for their excellent contribution towards improving housing for Aboriginal people.

Sadly, the assault from the Commonwealth Government on the Community Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP) and the recent invitation by the Commonwealth Government for other bodies to submit ideas for funding at the expense of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, will lead to serious implications for Aboriginal people in NSW.

I find it incomprehensible that the Commonwealth Government could even consider endorsing the proposal to redirect funding from urban areas to remote Australia because according to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey Report less than 18 per cent of Aboriginal households in Australia live in remote areas.

It should also be recognised that research has been conducted by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute to suggest that a reduction in funding would only increase overcrowding and homelessness.

It has been a privilege for me to travel the path that I have taken with the Aboriginal community in my capacity as Chairperson over the last 7 years and I hope that the legacy that I leave is one that the community can be proud of.

In closing, I especially thank all our Aboriginal Elders who have led our struggle for many, many years and who continue to inspire us. Their wisdom and vision set the direction for all our work.

Yours in the Struggle,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Weldon'.

Ann Weldon
Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's Report

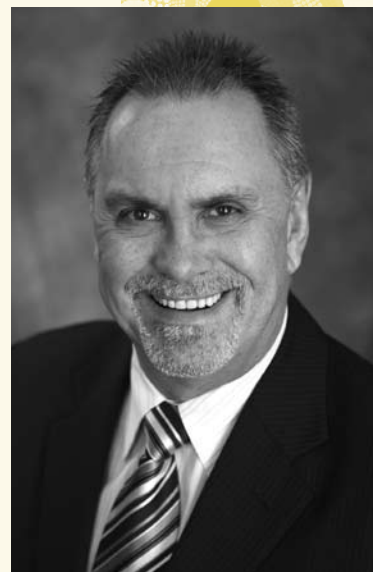
The 2006/07 year under review has again been one of significant effort and commendable achievement by the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office (the Office) and in my contribution to this report as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), I will highlight only a few of these activities and outcomes.

The Office's program achievements to address Aboriginal housing need include the supply side provision of an additional 81 homes to the sector, complemented by the completion of substantial upgrading to 117 existing homes and the delivery of significant maintenance and repair effort to another 744 homes during the year. For more insight into the Office program elements and associated expenditure levels please refer to the details shown elsewhere in this report.

Underpinning such program activity, and consistent with the NSW Government's aspirations for its Aboriginal citizens articulated through the *NSW State Plan*, the Office has been able to create employment opportunities in our program delivery through contractual arrangements with various Aboriginal building companies and with other mainstream builders who utilize Aboriginal employment. Within our program effort, such specific Aboriginal employment outcomes have involved the construction of 15 homes, the upgrading of 61 homes (and following acquisition the upgrading of an additional 11 homes) and the repairs and maintenance work in nearly 500 other homes. As CEO, I take much pride in our ability to leverage these significant employment achievements through our modest program capacity.

The Office has accepted the challenge to ensure that all Office activities and effort are directed and integrated within the objectives and projects contained in the *NSW State Plan*. Through the processes and projects involved in the *NSW State Plan*, the NSW Government will drive policy direction over the next decade and introduce a new era of accountability for all government agencies including the Office. To this end, during the year, the Office has embarked on a complete revision of our planning processes and documentary framework and such effort will be reflected in future Corporate, Strategic and Business Plans for the 2007/08 year and beyond.

An important component of the NSW State planning process is the NSW Government aspirations and initiatives aimed at achieving improved outcomes for the Aboriginal people of NSW - known as *Two Ways Together* (coordinated by the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs). I have mentioned this whole of government approach in previous reports however it is noteworthy



that during this year, we have sought to further integrate and consolidate the Office's consultative mechanisms in ways which better reflect our support and participation in the *Two Ways Together* planning, consultative and reporting activities.

The Office has continued to pursue a strong sector reform agenda during the period under review. The Aboriginal Housing Office Sector Reform Strategy aims to deliver a sustainable NSW Aboriginal housing sector in accordance with the *NSW State Plan*, the *Aboriginal Housing Act 1998* and the Office's own organisational vision.

From a perspective of sector reform, there are two significant matters worthy of note and these are:-

- The completion of a comprehensive set of performance standards for governance and management by Aboriginal community based housing provider organizations. Known as the *NSW Standards for Governance and Management of Aboriginal Housing*, these standards, to be linked to an external accreditation process, will guide future sector reform and assist in raising the standard of asset and tenancy management across the sector. This accreditation framework will, over time, also assist in consolidating the Office's pivotal and supportive role and relationship within the Aboriginal housing sector itself.
- The implementation of a sector wide Aboriginal housing survey (known as the Condition Assessment Survey) of community owned properties to determine the extent of the deferred maintenance liability of the portfolio involving some 4,650 properties owned or managed by Aboriginal community housing providers in NSW.

This major project relied on a comprehensive, inclusive, consultative planned and executed field study and the level of cooperation and access from the sector was extremely high. For the first time, the Office now has reliable data on the level of unmet maintenance in the community sector. This information will prove invaluable in all future planning and will be fully utilised in future efforts

to source additional program funding for the Office as well as to guide future funding allocations under our Repairs and Maintenance Community Assets Program.

Over past years the Office has fully appreciated and benefited from the bi-lateral arrangements for Aboriginal housing between the New South Wales and Australian Governments.

However, recent announcements by the Australian Government (contained in the May 2007 Federal Budget) do not augur well in the context of unmet Aboriginal housing need in NSW. Essentially, from an Aboriginal Housing Office perspective, these announcements result in an immediate loss of \$13.25 million in former Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP) funding from July 2008 onwards. More significantly, this immediate loss of substantial funding and an associated dramatic shift of future Australian Government funding away from urban areas to remote areas will serve to severely threaten the Office's capacity to meet future needs as well as to undermine our sector reform plans (previously unconditionally supported by the Australian Government). The Office, supported by the NSW Minister for Housing will continue to seek to influence a different, more receptive approach by the Australian Government.

The few highlights contained in this introductory report provide only limited insight into the complex and constantly challenging environment in which the Office operates. In dealing with the extremely broad range of issues and challenges, I have continually been able to rely on the strategic direction and support provided by the Aboriginal Housing Office Board and, in particular, its Chairperson, Ann Weldon and all members of our six, statewide Regional Aboriginal Housing Committees. For such support I express my deep appreciation. I have also relied on

the support of Office staff and our senior leadership group who have continually shown a high level of commitment to achieving sustained positive outcomes in the quality and availability of Aboriginal housing for the Aboriginal citizens of this state.

Finally I must thank the Minister, the Hon Matt Brown for his strong leadership and personal support of both the Office, as an agency within his Ministerial portfolio and of myself, as Aboriginal Housing Office Chief Executive Officer. Such support is very much appreciated by myself, by all staff, by the Aboriginal Housing Office Board and more broadly by the NSW Aboriginal housing sector.



Russell Taylor
Chief Executive Officer
Aboriginal Housing Office





The Aboriginal Housing Office Board

Working in close consultation with NSW Aboriginal communities through Regional Aboriginal Housing Committees, and in accordance with the NSW Aboriginal Housing Act 1998, the Aboriginal Housing Office Board (the Board) advises the NSW Minister for Housing on policies and strategic direction.

In undertaking this role, the Board also oversees governance of the Office to ensure statutory compliance and satisfactory performance.

Membership

Under the above Act, the Minister determines the composition of the Board and may appoint members, all of whom must be Aboriginal and represent the community. The Aboriginal Housing Office Chief Executive Officer is also a Board member but has no voting rights.

Membership of the Board comprises of Aboriginal people from around the State who are active in their communities and have wide experience in Aboriginal issues.

In 2006/07, the Board comprised:

- an independent chairperson
- six community representatives
- the CEO of the Aboriginal Housing Office who is an ex-officio member.

Members of the Board during 2007 were:

Ann Weldon (Chairperson)

Stephen Blunden

Lana Callaghan

Robert Carroll

Des Jones

Keith Morgan

Margaret Patterson

Geoff Scott

Tom Slockee

Russell Taylor (Chief Executive Officer).



Aboriginal Housing Office Board members

Regional Aboriginal Housing Committees

These committees perform an important role in advising the Board on the development of Aboriginal housing programs while establishing valuable links with the Aboriginal housing sector, local Aboriginal land

councils, Indigenous coordination centres and other key regional stakeholders.

The committees are required under the *NSW Aboriginal Housing Act 1998*. The Act also requires the Board to determine committee membership, constitution and procedures.

In 2006/07 the committees formulated the regional Aboriginal housing program and held open discussions on issues that tenants and providers are experiencing. Committees often combine their meetings to lessen the demands on key stakeholders who contribute. For example, committees for the Many Rivers and Kamilaroi regions hold combined meetings, as do the committees for Murdi Paaki and Binaal Billa regions.

Committee Membership

Each committee includes:

- a Chairperson who is a Board member and is appointed by the Board
- up to eight community representatives
- the Chairperson of the Board as an ex-officio member.

The committees can draw on the advice of related NSW Government departments and organisations, such as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Housing NSW, Indigenous coordination centres, and local Aboriginal land councils.

Committee members are appointed on merit by an independent selection panel for three years.

Members of the committees are listed in Appendix 3.

Board Committees

The Board participates in six committees:

- Audit – oversees and provides guidance on statutory compliance, risk management and organisational performance
- Employment and Training – develops policy and strategic options for improving employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people
- Finance – oversees financial management and associated decision making
- Policy Review – develops the strategic policy and planning cycle and monitors performance, including the building and buying of homes
- Sector Reform – oversees sector reform initiatives
- Strategic Planning – assists the Office to pursue a coordinated and consultative approach to implementing the sector reform strategy.

Membership of these committees is shown in Appendix 2.

Meetings

During 2006/07, the Board met six times over a total of 11 days.

Details of meeting attendance are in Appendix 2.