



Aboriginal  
Housing  
Office

A diverse group of people, including a young boy, a woman, a man, a baby, and an elderly woman, standing outdoors in front of a large tree. The group is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a lush green tree with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The image is overlaid with decorative wavy lines in shades of blue and teal at the bottom.

# Strong Family, Strong Communities 2018–2028

Implementation Plan 2019–2022

The Aboriginal Housing Office would like to acknowledge and thank the individuals and families whose images appear in this document.



# Contents

<b>Chief Executive Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>	Links to Other Strategies	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>	Implementation, Monitoring and Accountability	<b>7</b>
Overview	2		
Strong Family, Strong Communities	3		
Your Story Starts At Home	3		
<b>Principles and priorities for implementation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Implementation Plan Targets and Outcomes</b>	<b>8</b>
What We Heard	4		
<b>Co-design and Co-delivery</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>The Pillars of the Implementation Plan</b>	<b>9</b>
Putting Culture and Community Voice at the Centre	6	Housing Solutions	9
		Client Outcomes	10
		Growing the Sector	11
		Data and Evidence	12
		<b>Where to from here?</b>	<b>13</b>

# Chief Executive Foreword

**On behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) I am pleased to present the Implementation Plan for Strong Family, Strong Communities 2019–2022.**

**Our shared goal is to ensure that every Aboriginal person in NSW has equal access to, and choice in, affordable housing. We recognise secure housing for Aboriginal people and families improves outcomes in health, education and employment opportunities.**

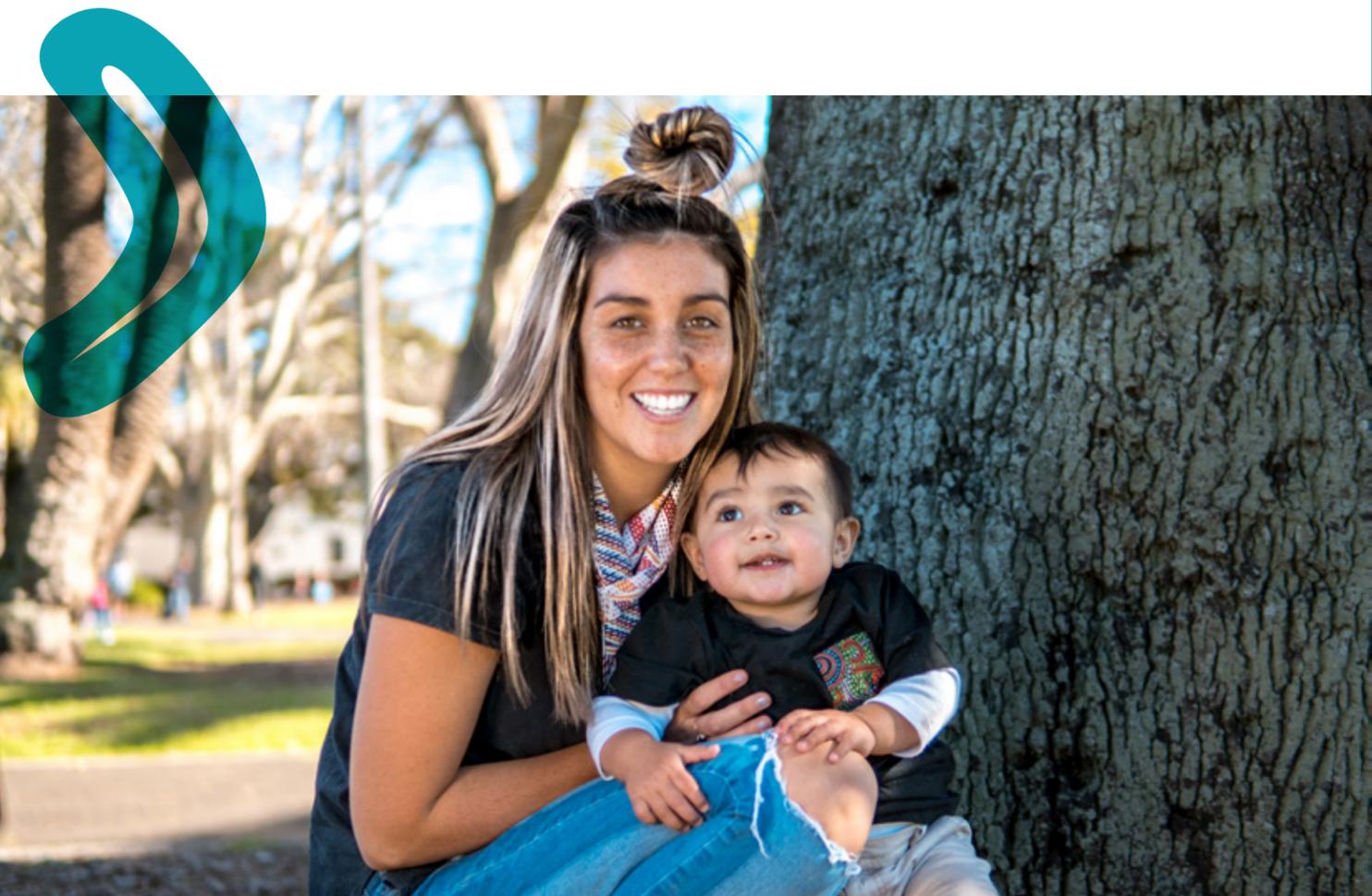
This Implementation Plan builds on learnings from evaluation of the Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy (2008–2018) and addresses the changes needed to boost opportunities for Aboriginal housing clients. It focuses on improving the social housing experience of Aboriginal people and families, including the way we use our asset portfolio. Working with our partners we will strengthen and grow the Aboriginal community housing sector. Intelligent use of data will guide activity under the strategy; with continuous evaluation and analysis ensuring that planning is robust, resources are targeted where they are needed most and reporting is transparent.

The Implementation Plan will see the AHO at the forefront of commissioning housing services that drive collaboration across government and the Aboriginal community housing sector to improve housing outcomes for current and future tenants. While this Implementation Plan primarily focuses on actions by the AHO, it also includes actions to be undertaken by other stakeholders. I intend that the Implementation Plan will grow and in future years it will include the important contributions of other government and non-government, and private sector service providers.

I would like to thank all of our stakeholders who through *Your Story Starts At Home* provided invaluable insight that has informed the development of this Implementation Plan. I would like to express my gratitude to the AHO Board for their vision and direction, and for acting as the bridge between community and government. I would also like to acknowledge the critical role that Aboriginal leaders, communities and organisations play in improving outcomes for their people. Sustaining this partnership approach will be essential as we roll out the Implementation Plan.

The AHO is committed to delivering the outcomes of *Strong Family, Strong Communities*. Achieving our goals will require collaborative effort across the sector and government. I believe that together we can realise our vision.

Jody Broun  
**Chief Executive**  
 Aboriginal Housing Office



# Introduction

## Overview

Stable housing for Aboriginal people and families supports positive health, education and employment outcomes.

We've developed this Implementation Plan with input from Aboriginal people and families, communities and service providers.

It outlines what we heard and how we will respond.

We see housing as the foundation for improving the lives of Aboriginal families' and strengthening communities.

This Plan organises work around four pillars – which the AHO published in 2018 as part of the *Strong Family, Strong Communities* framework. These pillars are shown in the diagram below.

- Housing Solutions** Delivering housing solutions with Aboriginal families based on demand for social and affordable housing.
- Client Outcomes** Achieving better outcomes with Aboriginal tenants and clients through partnerships with Aboriginal organisations, human services agencies, and by creating study, work and business opportunities.
- Growing the Sector** Strengthening and growing Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHP) through sector investment, regulation and the transfer of housing and property management.
- Data and Evidence** Improving data collection, evaluation and analysis to plan and invest in the future.

## Strong Family, Strong Communities

The AHO is the only legislative authority in Australia delivering housing solely for Aboriginal people.

The 10-year *Strong Family, Strong Communities* strategy is based on lessons learned during the AHO's 20 years of operation including the Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy, and through wide-ranging engagement with Aboriginal families, communities and housing providers during 2017 and 2018.

Our experience and relationships give us a clear remit as a leading authority on the current and future housing needs for Aboriginal people in NSW.

The strategy has four pillars (below):

## Your Story Starts At Home

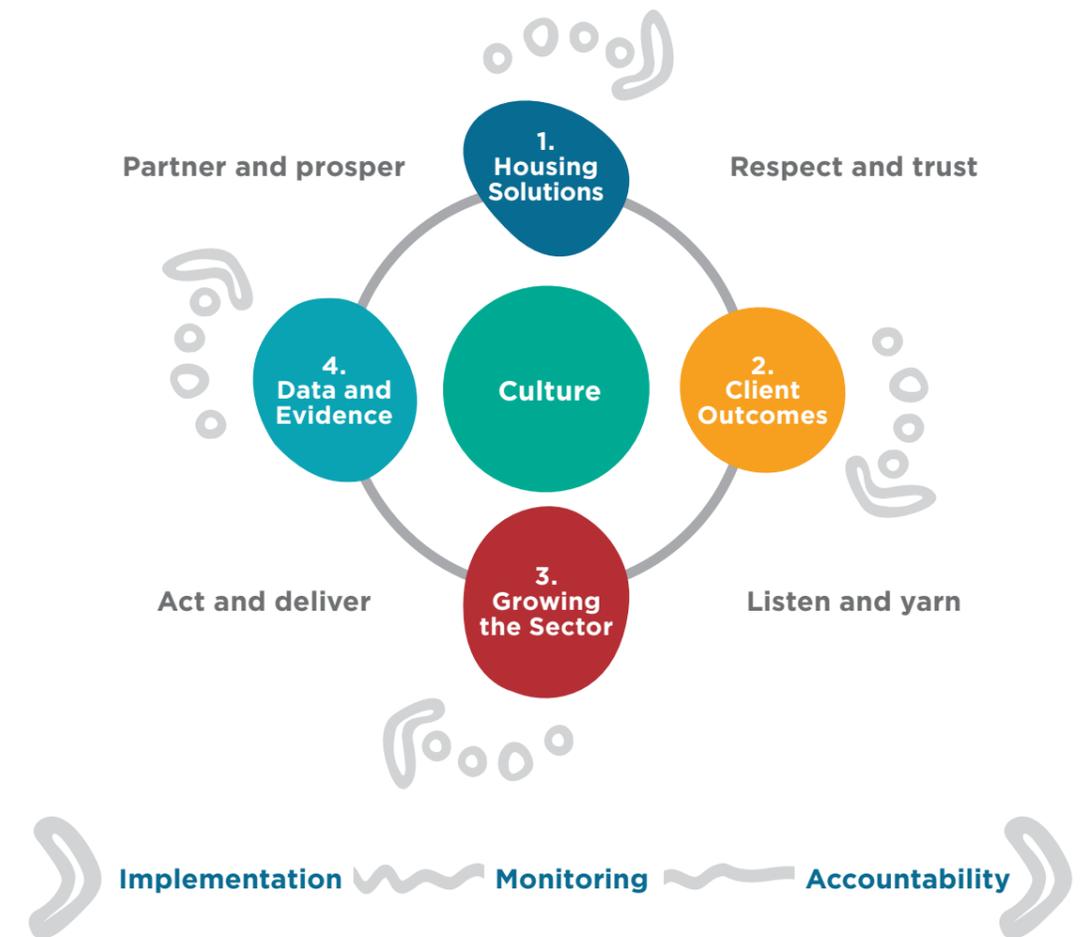
We recognise Aboriginal communities are best placed to design housing solutions.

Acknowledging this, we needed to *Listen and Yarn* before we *Act and Deliver*.

We recognise Aboriginal families need services to be local and flexible to their unique circumstances.

We'll partner with Aboriginal communities, the Aboriginal community housing sector and other Aboriginal organisations to design and deliver services and outcomes.

Figure 1: Outline of the pillars and principles that inform the Implementation Plan



# Principles and priorities for implementation

## What We Heard

We asked communities what's important when it comes to housing, what makes a good experience and what could we do better.

These conversations happened around NSW via workshops, community events, with families at their home, surveys and written submissions.

We've summarised hundreds of pages of feedback into **three guiding principles and 16 priorities** for this Plan.

Put culture at the centre of all we do	Who we are and how we can help	Empower community voices through active participation
<p>Aboriginal culture must be at the heart of all we do. An understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture and diversity will be at the centre of Strong Family, Strong Communities.</p>	<p>Tenants and providers support the existence of a government agency dedicated to housing for Aboriginal people, and the AHO needs to do more to help people understand what our role is and what we can do to help.</p>	<p>We are committed to working in partnership with tenants and providers to deliver the services and supports that Aboriginal people, families and communities say they need.</p>
<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the sector to co-design cultural competency capabilities and standards.</li> <li>Strengthen the cultural capabilities of government and non-government housing and service providers.</li> <li>Model and champion culturally appropriate service delivery models.</li> <li>Form an Aboriginal Knowledge and Research Advisory Group to guide research and evaluation activities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a communication strategy to clarify and communicate the role of the AHO.</li> <li>Produce an information package for new tenants to assist with understanding all elements of housing, including AHO, housing provider and tenant roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an engagement strategy and toolkit to support an ongoing conversation and localised engagement.</li> <li>Gather the views and values of tenants and ACHPs across NSW with an ongoing survey series</li> </ul>

## Housing Solutions

<b>Repairs and maintenance</b>	Prioritise repairs and maintenance. Improve the quality of repairs, time taken and communication. Progress overdue housing upgrades.
<b>New supply of properties</b>	Promote the supply of new houses that are culturally appropriate and co-designed with communities. Provide secure housing and a better housing experience to improve families' wellbeing.
<b>Home ownership</b>	Scope home ownership models so more Aboriginal families can buy a home.
<b>Asset Management</b>	Implement best practice asset management policies and procedures, so there is quality housing when and where it is needed.

## Clients Outcomes

<b>A culturally responsive sector</b>	Support culturally appropriate service delivery. Promote cultural awareness and accountability for mainstream providers to better tailor services to Aboriginal families' needs.
<b>Access to housing</b>	Streamline the application process and make it clearer how housing is allocated.
<b>Homelessness</b>	Improve the availability and appropriateness of accommodation to sustain tenancies.
<b>Services working together</b>	Invest in government and non-government service coordination and collaboration to support tenants to access early intervention services.
<b>Neighbourhood safety</b>	Focus on whole of community safety, including infrastructure and the environment when buying, building, allocating and managing housing stock.
<b>Stable homes</b>	Support tenants to maintain stable and successful tenancies so they can benefit from study and work.

## Growing the Sector

<b>Tenancy management</b>	Scope best practice models of tenancy management that are responsive to tenant needs. Support tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities.
<b>Community housing regulation</b>	Support ACHPs to register for and comply with the National Regulatory System for Community Housing.
<b>Growth providers</b>	Strengthen the capacity and sustainability of of Aboriginal Community Housing Providers.
<b>Fair rent, collected reliably</b>	Increase tenant awareness of how rent is calculated and collected. Work with ACHPs to support the timely collection of rent.

## Data and Evidence

<b>Ongoing need analysis and evaluation</b>	Build ongoing analysis and evaluation into the work of the AHO so evidence is available for decisions about Aboriginal social housing.
<b>Better reporting to improve quality</b>	Streamline reporting and compliance for ACHPs. Share data collected with the sector to drive performance and improvement.

We listened to what communities told us, what is important and what families need. To find out more visit: [www.aho.nsw.gov.au/WhatWeHeard](http://www.aho.nsw.gov.au/WhatWeHeard)

# Co-design and Co-delivery

## Putting Culture and Community Voice at the Centre

We recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal communities and will support self-determination for Aboriginal families and communities.

The knowledge and experiences of tenants, their families and communities has informed and will underpin how we implement this Plan.

Culture is at the heart of everything we do. This includes:

- **Respect and trust**
  - Communicate respectfully and acknowledge culture. Respectful communication places culture at the centre.
- **Listen and yarn**
  - Commit to two-way conversation. Listen first to ensure stakeholders are heard and understood.
- **Act and deliver**
  - Reflect stakeholders' views, and follow up and deliver on commitments made.
- **Partner and prosper**
  - Work in partnership and provide opportunities for stakeholders' to participate in the design and delivery of programs and initiatives.

We all have a role to play in supporting Aboriginal people and families.

We're partnering with peak Aboriginal organisations.

As a first step we're sharing and handing over decision making power. Chaired by the newly formed Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA) the Strong Family Strong Communities Peak Reference Group includes membership from Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA), NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC), Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (Absec), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW (AHMRC), Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), Darrawarra, Homelessness NSW and Shelter NSW.

## Links to Other Strategies

- The Implementation Plan will support other plans including:
- Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW
  - NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023
  - OCHRE — the NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs plan
  - The Refreshed Closing the Gap Framework
  - Aboriginal Prosperity Framework

## Implementation, Monitoring and Accountability

The AHO Board and the *Strong Family, Strong Communities* Program Board have oversight of the Implementation Plan and a role in making sure work is coordinated across government and with stakeholders.

The Program Board includes The Treasury, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Family and Community Services, the AHO and a client advocate.

We'll build on good practice and recognise the information we gather from tenants and providers belongs to Aboriginal people and families, communities and the organisations we work with.

The Plan will be refreshed to reflect evolving priorities and new opportunities as they arise and as a result of planned program evaluations across forward years.

Figure 2: Informing implementation



# Implementation Plan Targets and Outcomes

We have ambitious targets for the first four years and more to be reached over 10 years.

Our four pillars align to outcomes we aim to achieve by 2028 (see Appendix A).

We'll use our targets to measure progress and to galvanise community and government efforts and help to promote accountability.

We've used colours in the diagram below to make it easy to see what targets relate to what priority.

Strong Family, Strong Communities				
<b>Principles</b>	Put culture at the centre of all we do Who are we and how can we help Empower community voices through active participation			
<b>Pillars</b>	<b>Pillar 1:</b> Housing solution	<b>Pillar 2:</b> Client outcomes	<b>Pillar 3:</b> Growing the sector	<b>Pillar 4:</b> Data and evidence
<b>Priorities</b>	Repairs and maintenance New supply of properties Home ownership Asset management	A culturally responsive sector Access to housing Homelessness Services working together Neighbourhood safety Stable homes	Tenancy management Community housing regulation Growth providers Fair rent, collected reliably	Ongoing need assessments and evaluation Better reporting to drive quality
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHO tenants have greater access to opportunities through secure housing and a better social housing experience.</li> <li>A diverse sector with organisations realising efficiencies through economies of scale.</li> <li>AHO tenants have greater access to prevention and early intervention support services where and when they are needed.</li> <li>The AHO continues to provide housing and has clear evidence of housing need, including when and where it is needed and the needs of Aboriginal people.</li> <li>AHO tenants have improved health, education, justice and employment outcomes.</li> <li>The sector is strong, viable, well-governed and provides high quality tenancy services to Aboriginal tenants and their families.</li> <li>Improved data and evaluation results in improved outcomes for Aboriginal services and programs delivered by other NSW agencies, ACHPs and the AHO.</li> </ul>			

# The Pillars of the Implementation Plan

## Housing Solutions

### Vision

Deliver housing solutions with Aboriginal people informed by evidence of demand for social and affordable housing.

### Outcome

- The AHO continues to provide housing when and where it's needed, and has clear evidence of the housing needs of Aboriginal people.
- AHO tenants have greater access to opportunities through secure housing and a better social housing experience.

### Context

Demand for social and affordable housing is rising due to population growth and the AHO needs to deliver more housing for Aboriginal people across NSW. This is especially so in city and regional areas where most (95%) Aboriginal people live.

As the Aboriginal population is changing, different types of housing are needed to meet community needs.

We will work with the Department of Family and Community Services and Justice to promote private rental products for Aboriginal people to move into the private rental market with security.

Over the next four years we'll improve how we deliver repairs and maintenance programs.

This review will inform us so that we can drive innovation in construction. We will co-design an Aboriginal Community Housing Innovation Fund (ACHIF) in partnership with the Aboriginal community housing sector.

We'll make sure our housing meets the environmental needs of our communities with solar power and air conditioning so families have more comfortable and energy efficient homes.

Many Aboriginal people aspire to buy their own home. Over the next four years we'll promote and deliver home ownership opportunities and explore new models with partners.

## Targets and Deliverables to 2022

We will:	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Refurbish 1,500 AHO homes				
Deliver 120 new social and affordable houses for Aboriginal families				
65% of AHO houses will have solar power				
35% of AHO houses will have air conditioning				
Increase access to and uptake of private rent products				
100 new Home Ownership opportunities				
Co-design an Aboriginal Community Housing Innovation Fund with \$250,000 investment for FY2019/20				
Improve how our tenants access repairs and maintenance				
Improve how we communicate with tenants and providers				
Review the AHO's asset portfolio and work with sector peaks to co-design solutions to the review				
Pursue investment avenues to contribute to new social and affordable housing				

## Client Outcomes

### Vision

Achieve better outcomes with Aboriginal tenants by facilitating partnerships across Aboriginal organisations, human services agencies, and by creating opportunities for study, work and business.

### Outcomes

- AHO tenants have greater access to prevention and early intervention support services where and when needed.
- AHO tenants will have improved health, education, justice and employment outcomes.

### Context

Stable housing provides the foundation for Aboriginal families to access the services they need, so they can maintain their tenancies, improve their work and study options, keep their families safe and healthy, and continue along the path to housing independence.

We'll deliver 100 Tertiary Accommodation grants delivered in partnership with the TAFE and university sector.

We'll support 14 apprenticeships in the construction sector to support a strong future for Aboriginal people and families.

Government and non-government organisations need to work together to provide the most effective and appropriate services to Aboriginal people and families.

Partnerships will deliver culturally appropriate services and programs developed with the Aboriginal communities they service.

We'll continue to deliver Services Our Way and look to expand this program to support more families out of vulnerability.

We'll ask the community to tell us where there are gaps in service and pilot an Aboriginal model of service delivery with another Government partner.

We'll be listening to and talking with tenants, communities, Aboriginal organisations and government agencies to understand where the greatest needs are and to co-create the local solutions communities need.

We'll work with our stakeholders to make application for housing and the allocation of houses simpler and easier and we'll get better at communicating about different housing choices.

We'll continue to work with and support Aboriginal businesses in the delivery of everything we do.

## Targets and Deliverables to 2022

We will:	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Support more than 250 families a year by delivering Services Our Way across Penrith, Nowra, Tamworth and Armidale				
Co-design and co-deliver one leading community demonstration site to sustain tenancies by commissioning a culturally appropriate wrap around service provider in partnership with other government stakeholders				
Deliver 100 tertiary grants for Aboriginal people				
Fund 14 Apprenticeships for the construction industry				
Support economic prosperity and require businesses we invest in to meet at least 20% Aboriginal employment				
Continue to fund the Tenant Support and Education Program for 2 years in remote NSW				
Improve and simplify the housing application process for Aboriginal people				
Use our assets and partner with stakeholders to support better housing outcomes. We will bring the house and the service provides the support				
Drive uplift in private market rental products delivered by the Department of Family and Community Services and Justice through addressing current barriers				

## Growing the Sector

### Vision

Strengthen and grow Aboriginal Community Housing Providers through sector investment, regulation and the transfer of housing and asset management.

### Outcomes

- The Sector is strong, viable, well-governed and provides high quality tenancy services to Aboriginal tenants and their families.
- A diverse sector with organisations realising efficiencies through economies of scale.

### Context

We want a strong and diverse Aboriginal community housing sector.

We recognise ACHPs are best placed to deliver culturally appropriate services to their communities.

Our vision is for ACHPs to meet the same regulatory standards as mainstream community housing providers.

We acknowledge this will require investment and a shared commitment. To address this, we will develop a Sector Investment Plan to grow a strong and sustainable sector positioned for growth.

Meeting the regulatory standards will mean that ACHPs have access to the same State and Commonwealth social and affordable housing funding opportunities as mainstream community housing providers.

We'll work closely with the sector and other Aboriginal organisations to develop a shared vision and plan for the sector's future.

The AHO will continue to transfer the management of AHO properties to the Aboriginal community housing sector and ensure the sector has the tools and resources to deliver a high standard of property and tenancy management.

This will benefit everyone in the community, through increased employment, self-determination and culturally appropriate service provision for Aboriginal people and families and communities.

## Targets and Deliverables to 2022

We will:	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Transfer tenancy and property management of up to 1,500 AHO homes to ACHPs to build sector scale				
Develop Aboriginal housing management tools and resources so Aboriginal tenants receive culturally appropriate services from quality providers				
Fund the Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA) to expand				
Expand Tenant Support and Education Grants to reduce rent arrears and sustain tenancies				
Review the current level of subsidy that delivers improved tenancy management				

## Data and Evidence

### Vision

Enhance data collection, evaluation and analysis so planning is robust and resources are targeted where they are needed most.

### Outcomes

- Improved data and evaluation results in improved outcomes for Aboriginal services and programs delivered by other NSW agencies, ACHPs and the AHO.

### Context

We're committed to measuring our activities and building the evidence base.

Evidence is essential to know things are improving, for informing and refreshing policy, and supporting Government investment in housing for Aboriginal families.

To keep developing new and better ways of working we need a strong and shared evidence base.

We'll give equal consideration to the feedback we receive from families and communities on their lived experiences, housing needs and aspirations to other kinds of evidence and data.

We recognise the rights of Aboriginal people and families and communities relating to the collection, ownership and application of data about them, and about their lives and communities. The AHO will ensure transparency with respect to data management and use. We will commit to sharing evidence and to the co-design of the evaluation.

## Targets and Deliverables to 2022

We will:	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Design and release a Strong Family, Strong Communities Evaluation Framework for 2018–2022				
Establish an AHO Aboriginal Knowledge and Research Advisory Group in 2019				
Publish annual SFSC Scorecards to report on SFSC Implementation Plan progress				
Issue annual ACHP Performance Scorecards to benchmark and provide feedback on performance				
Provide two research internships for Aboriginal postgraduate students				
Share analysis and research results with Aboriginal tenants and families, the sector and other stakeholders each year				

# Where to from here?

In 2019 we will:	Timeframe:
Return to communities to discuss what we heard and what we will do	June–August 2019
Implement a communications strategy to share what's coming next	May–July 2019
Develop a <i>Strong Family, Strong Communities</i> Policy Framework to guide our investment	July–August 2019
Review our assets and develop a supply strategy for funding	July–November 2019
Work with the Aboriginal Community Housing Sector to co-design a sector plan	July–November 2019
Release the <i>Strong Family, Strong Communities</i> Dashboard so we know we are on track to deliver	August–November 2019





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