



## **New arrangements for Indigenous community housing organisations in Queensland**

The Commonwealth Government has reviewed arrangements for Indigenous housing over the past few years. This has resulted in changes to the way Indigenous community housing services will be funded in the future and will streamline the levels of government responsible for ensuring consistent and sustainable housing outcomes for Indigenous people.

One mechanism to achieve these reforms is that funding for Indigenous community housing in Queensland will be provided through the Queensland Government's Department of Housing from 2009.

The new arrangements will replace the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP). This will mean that the Commonwealth Government will no longer provide direct funding to Indigenous community housing organisations for housing.

### **Which organisations are included in the new arrangements?**

All Indigenous community housing organisations in Queensland are invited to become part of the state's one social housing system.

The opportunity to participate in Queensland's broad housing system is available for every organisation that is providing a housing service to Indigenous people. Both governments are keen to work with organisations to secure their future and viability.

### **What is the one social housing system?**

Over the past two years, major reforms to the social housing system have been introduced in Queensland. These reforms, delivered by the Department of Housing in conjunction with a network of community housing providers, are designed to provide an efficient and responsive social housing system to meet varying types and levels of housing need in the community

## **What options are available?**

To benefit from the special funds available, organisations will need to advise the Department of Housing formally of their decision by 1 April 2009 to either:

- retain their housing assets and become registered providers under the *Housing Act 2003*
- transfer their assets to the Queensland Government for the continued use of tenants
- transfer their assets to an existing registered provider or
- merge their interests with another participating organisation.

## **What do organisations need to do?**

The Department of Housing has established a team to work with organisations to provide information, answer questions and discuss the options available to them based on their individual circumstances.

To benefit from the transition into the one social housing system, your organisation will need to:

- meet with the team to discuss your options and receive important information to inform your decision
- review your constitution to check any legal issues that may impact on decisions relating to your housing assets
- ensure your board members, organisation members and tenants are informed and involved in the process
- consider all the information provided and ensure your Board makes a timely decision
- formally advise the Department of Housing of your decision and
- provide the necessary information to apply for registration as a registered provider within the Queensland one social housing system.

Each organisation will be assisted on a case-by-case basis with the aim of achieving the best outcomes for the organisation, government, and most importantly, for present and future tenants.

## **What if organisations are already registered providers?**

A small number of Indigenous community housing organisations that are affected by these new arrangements are already registered providers under the state system.

If this is the case, you will have the opportunity to consolidate your housing portfolio under the one social housing system. Properties transitioned under these arrangements will be eligible for inclusion in the special funding program.

## **What will the special funding be used for?**

Our highest priority is to ensure that the condition of properties transitioning into the one social housing system is consistent with public housing standards in Queensland.

To achieve this, the type of work on properties may include:

- safety repairs, including such things as smoke alarms and safety switches
- maintenance, including such things as repairing walls and floors, leaking taps, broken cupboard doors, leaking gutters, and internal and external painting
- disability modifications (as recommended by an occupational therapist) and

- upgrading key elements of properties to public housing standards, such as kitchens, bathrooms, laundries and roofs.

There may be other options available for properties that are in a good condition and already meeting public housing standards. This may include expanding or diversifying housing stock or participating in broader social housing initiatives to enhance long-term viability and sustainability.

The options will be considered in the context of the organisation's asset management and development goals and the housing needs of the broader community.

### **How will a decision be made on the special funding?**

As part of the new arrangements, the Department of Housing will decide on the application of the special funding with the aim of achieving an equitable allocation.

We will consider all available information on your properties, such as previous property condition audits and asset management plans you may have in place. Qualified Department of Housing inspectors will also conduct inspections on each property to determine a program of works.

The information will inform the Department of Housing's decision-making on the funding allocation. A funding agreement will then be developed that will detail the assistance that will be provided within the special funding that is available to support the transition process.

### **What if an organisation wants to hand over its housing assets?**

If your organisation decides not to participate in the new arrangements, there are options for housing assets to be transferred to the Department of Housing or another participating organisation or to merge your assets with another organisation that is becoming registered as a new Indigenous community housing provider.

In the event that your board decides to progress one of these options, any legal interest held by the Commonwealth Government will need to be dealt with.

### **What will happen to the Australian Government's interests?**

As part of the implementation of the new arrangements, the Commonwealth Government is reviewing its security arrangements and legal interests in housing assets acquired and maintained through funds it provided.

Upon transitioning to the one social housing system, organisations will enter into new security arrangements with the Department of Housing.

### **How will the change affect tenants?**

For organisations that decide to become part of the one social housing system, there may be changes to how rents are set and the level of rent collected. The system requires that 25 per cent of the combined household income, capped at current market rental rates, apply.

More information will be provided to you to ensure the rent policy is correctly applied in the future. Your clients may also be eligible for rental assistance from the Commonwealth Government.

Indigenous community housing organisations could also consider sales of properties to tenants as part of the new arrangements.

### **How would clients be referred?**

Under the one social housing system, applications for housing assistance are made using a consistent application form used by all registered housing providers in Queensland, which is then submitted to the Department of Housing. All eligible applicants are listed on a single housing register.

When an organisation notifies the department of a vacant property, the department will provide three applicants from the housing register. The organisation then makes a decision on the most appropriate applicant for allocation to the vacant property, makes an offer to one of the applicants and notifies the department of the outcome.

No doubt your organisation manages a waiting list for clients requiring housing. Under the one social housing system, clients will need to register their housing need with the Department of Housing.

### **How does the one social housing system accommodate the needs of Indigenous people?**

There are a number of community housing organisations in Queensland providing safe and affordable housing for Indigenous people as part of the social housing system.

The system, of which these organisations form a part, has improved access to housing options for Indigenous people in a number of ways.

It now provides a single entry point to a broad range of housing services, simplifies the process and provides a better range of options to individual households. This means, for example, that people can better match their housing requirements with work, family needs and essential services regardless of whether they live in a remote Indigenous community, a regional town, or suburban location.

The Department of Housing also manages and supports programs for Indigenous Queenslanders that cater to their specific needs.

Your participation in the one social housing system would add to this valuable service and the sustainability of housing provided to Indigenous people into the future.

### **Who can I contact for more information?**

Please contact the Indigenous Community Housing Transition Project, Department of Housing, 3247 6391 or email [CHIPchange@housing.qld.gov.au](mailto:CHIPchange@housing.qld.gov.au) as soon as possible.

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