

Wednesday, 26 March, 2025

MEDIA RELEASE: Limited funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing in the Federal Budget will diminish efforts to close the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland (Housing Queensland)—a peak body and First Nations housing think tank—has welcomed some aspects of the Federal Budget 2025–26 (released on Tuesday 25 March 2025), particularly the investment of \$1.3 billion over six years from 2024–25 in initiatives to improve the lives of First Nations peoples.

The Federal Budget 2025–26 includes a total of \$112.1 million which is earmarked for three projects under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, infrastructure and essential services category.

“This housing-related funding commitment is welcomed”.

Housing Queensland praises a commitment to redirect funding to Indigenous Business Australia’s Indigenous Home Ownership Program to increase opportunities for First Nations people to buy their own home and build intergenerational wealth.

“This backs up the intent in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which is supported by the Prime Minister.”

Despite these positive developments, Housing Queensland CEO Neil Willmetts has highlighted that the Government has made no commitment to fund or work on the four big national issues impacting on the housing of our children, adults and families which includes addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overcrowding, preventing homelessness, increasing home ownership and guaranteeing housing assistance across Australia.

“Some of these important national housing priorities were not funded. As a result, this budget does not give us policy direction or the funding that is needed to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing in Australia.

Once again, very few housing initiatives or measures in the Federal Budget were targeted towards new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing policy developments and program delivery,” Mr Willmetts said.

There are also concerns about how the Australian Government is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

“The Australian Government is a critical partner in the national approach to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. We expect them to act like a partner and to be accountable.”

Positives:

Mainstream housing measures:

- Housing Support Program – offering new home incentives
- Expanding Help to Buy – adding an extra \$800 million to this program
- Banning forging buyers of established homes – banning foreign investors from purchasing existing dwellings for 2 years
- Improving access to housing and homelessness services – providing \$9.3 billion to State and Territories to help combat homelessness, provide crisis support and maintain and repair housing
- Supporting renters – increasing Commonwealth Rental Assistance for about 1 million people
- Boosting the construction workforce – Up to \$10,000 incentives for apprentices.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing measures:

- \$112.1 million which is earmarked for three projects under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, infrastructure and essential services. Which includes:
 - \$70.9 million is being redirected to Indigenous Business Australia's Indigenous Home Ownership Program to increase opportunities for First Nations people to buy their own home and build intergenerational wealth. \$20 million of the \$70.9 million will be quarantined for single carer workers as part of the Single Carers Home Finance package. This investment will prioritise First Nations women and families to access more affordable, sustainable and culturally secure housing through home ownership.
 - \$41.2 million (subject to co-contribution from the Queensland Government) over five years (to 30 June 2030) for urgent community infrastructure works in the Torres Strait.

Concerns:

1. No National Voice Investment

"We are disappointed that the Government has missed key opportunities to change the way they do business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations through investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led decision-making and partnerships. This was a key recommendation of the Productivity Commission's review into the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

As an example, there is no dedicated or ongoing funding for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisation. This will reduce the national voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations and consumers that must inform the development of housing related policies and programs that affect them and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community."

2. Uneven Distribution of Federal Investment

"We note that in the Federal Budget there is inequality in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander investment to jurisdictions. We believe that this is harmful.

A system that leaves some States, like Queensland, behind is a bad national approach to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing across the whole of Australia. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing investment is concentrated in a few hands, better housing outcomes for the whole nation are diminished.

Every State and Territory—not just the Northern Territory—needs a multi-billion-dollar investment from the Australian Government over the next 10 years to accelerate housing delivery, invest in homelands, reduce overcrowding, improve housing quality, support community-controlled housing models, and deliver repairs and upgrades as well as essential infrastructure", Mr Willmetts said.

3. No ICHO Investment

There is no investment for Indigenous Community-controlled Housing Organisations (ICHOs) in the 2025–26 Federal Budget to maintain, upgrade or grow their housing stock.

"This continues the appalling approach of no new ICHO funding from the Australian Government which has been a practice since 2006. This is negligent considering that it was the Australian Government who supported, encouraged and funded the establishment of most ICHOs".

We again highlight the important role that ICHOs play in affordable and stable housing. They offer many benefits, including culturally safe housing programs and affordable rent. Importantly, they are trusted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who rely on them for a housing service", Mr Willmetts said.



4. No Allocation in Home Ownership Scheme

“Another example of failure to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, can be seen in the investment of an additional \$800 million to broaden the “Help to Buy” scheme to \$6.3 billion to allow homebuyers to “co-buy” their property with government. This scheme does not make any mention of allocating a proportion of this money to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home buyers which is the view of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

Prioritising and investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home ownership pathways and a large portion of the “Help to Buy” scheme will set our families up to thrive for generations.”

5. No Housing Commissioner

“We are disappointed to see no multi-million-dollar investment allocated over forward years to establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Commissioner. This Commissioner is urgently needed to work with peak bodies and fast-track efforts to address the limited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing policy coordination being achieved by all governments across Australia.”

6. No National Housing Plan

“We are also disappointed that the Government has missed a key opportunity to work with State and Territory Governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing leaders, consumers, and housing organisations to develop Australia’s long term National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing plan.

We have advocated for a national plan since 2021 and believe that it is urgently needed to refocus the Australian and State and Territory governments' efforts and harmonise four reform areas—addressing overcrowding, preventing homelessness, increasing home ownership and guaranteeing housing assistance across Australia.

Housing Queensland believes that closing the gap starts with creating better housing outcomes that have been identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners. This is why government investment in housing will have the most impact in the lives of First Nations people”, Mr Willmetts said.

****END****

For all media queries, please contact Belinda Davis on (07) 3012 6349 or media@housingqueensland.com.au

