

**Asset Management:
A Challenging Business
Aboriginal Community Housing**

My Perspective

- Non indigenous
- A working career in public housing in regional and central positions
- Working with community housing providers through the whole journey from CTS to the modern, dynamic CHPs
- Working with the AHO on a range of matters
- replacement of “lost” AHO properties
- Regional Advisory Committees
- Establishment of Regional Management Services
- Issues relating to confirmation of Aboriginality

ACH - A COMPLEX SECTOR

- Extremely steep learning curve
- Individual ACPs have issues of scale and a complex legal and governance environment
- Legacy of 200 years of displacement and isolation from mainstream, complexity of NSW Land Rights Act
- ARMS working with a range of owner organisations, with different funding bases, different management agreements, different rent and allocation policies
- Particular issues with former missions & reserves
- Different capacities to adapt to the need for self-sustaining strategies

Complex Policy Framework

- AHO has developed and implemented policy frameworks and funding models intended to build community capacity for self-sustaining future
- Intended to bring housing stock for Land Councils and Aboriginal Housing Companies to a standard and then move to rents that could provide this self-sustaining based on professional housing management
- There have been a number of issues in implementation

Policy Framework

- Processes designed to build organisational capacity have been patchily implemented and under resourced
- Confusing subsidy framework, not necessarily well understood by ARMS, or client organisations
- Road to state & national accreditation has been rocky, with many organisations failing to establish sound asset and financial management strategies
- Inconsistent development of rental policies and uneven application
- Client organisations reluctance or incapacity to increase rents and support professional management framework for their housing and members

Outcomes

- Poor service delivery
- Client dissatisfaction - organisations & individuals
- Insufficient provision made for asset maintenance & replacement
- ARMS have not placed themselves well for national registration or to have critical mass to consider management transfer of AHO stock
- Questions of capacity to access land or capital for development purposes

Conclusions

- Transition to AHO Build & Grow rents insufficient to fully fund long-term asset management strategies, particularly without subsidy
- Transition to social housing rents for community tenants will be difficult & contested
- Challenging environment to maintain value of assets and to pave way for organisations to proactively move into development, expansion of stock and increased choice in the affordability and ownership spectrum

Where to?

- No easy answers
- Clear need to build organisational capacity to develop business competence and acumen, to be supported by systems fit for purpose, to have trained and professional staff, with good governance in an environment with clear objectives will be a start
- The assumptions that underpin a vibrant and independent community housing sector are different and cannot be applied in the same ways to Aboriginal CHPs.
- Subsidies may need to be an ongoing factor for sometime in a framework that increases accountability while providing the right supports