

AN EVALUATION SNAPSHOT:

ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES OF HOUSING FIRST

Zero Project Snapshot

Shannen Vallesi and Lisa Wood
The University of Western Australia

April 2021



ARTWORK BY ANTHEA CORBETT. Anthea is a Yamatji and Wajarri Noongah/Yuet woman who was housed by the 50 Lives project in 2016 after experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping for many years. The pieces are entitled “Wadgee Mia [No Home]” – *Piece 1* (above) is about a strong and healthy family unit and trouble free.

Piece 2 (back inside cover) shows the difference through challenges stemming from the difficulties within the lifestyle. The feet walking keeping the Culture connected.



THE 50 LIVES 50 HOMES PROJECT

The 50 Lives 50 Homes (50 Lives) project was a collective impact project that commenced in late-2015 with the aim to house and support the most vulnerable rough sleepers in Perth.

50 Lives was founded on a Housing First approach, working to provide people with safe and stable permanent accommodation without preconditions. Exemplifying its collective impact ethos, over 30 organisations have been involved across homelessness, health, welfare and community service sectors. Having a lead backbone agency is a key pillar of successful collective impact initiatives, and for 50 Lives this has been provided by Ruah Community Services. As of October 2020, 50 Lives transitioned into a broader **Zero Project**, expanding the model to other communities and adopting an Advance to Zero methodology aimed at ending rough sleeping.

An independent evaluation of 50 Lives has been undertaken by UWA since 2016. This snapshot focussing on how the program has supported and engaged with Aboriginal people, who are over-

represented in homelessness statistics across Australia and in WA, and aligns with the State Strategy on **Improving Aboriginal Wellbeing** as one of the four focus areas.¹

This snapshot explores evaluation findings for the overall 50 Lives project, looking at how experiences and housing outcomes compare between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples who have been supported by 50 Lives. The snapshot also reflects on how Housing First approaches need to be adapted to better suit the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“Over time they lost so much space that they have moved into homelessness. You are focussing on housing and they need belonging.”

– Aboriginal Elder, 50 Lives

ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent only 3% of the Australian population, however, comprise 28% of the total homeless population.² In the 2016 Census, 1 in 28 Indigenous people were homeless, with 39% of these people under 18 years of age.²

Dispossession from land and culture³ and the sense of “not

belonging” this imposes are consequences of the lasting impact of colonisation.⁴ The legacy of assimilation policies also impact intergenerational trauma, cultural oppression, racism, poverty, lower education, and unemployment, contributing to the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal homelessness.^{2,3,4}



INDIGENOUS HOUSING FIRST

To date, there have been few Indigenous-specific examples of Housing First Initiatives, with the only published examples coming from Canada and New Zealand.^{5,6,7} Housing First principles of self-determination (including choice), respect and autonomy have been noted in the literature to be more aligned with Indigenous values and communities than some of the more traditional responses to homelessness that can sometimes be construed as paternalistic.⁶

However as noted in a recent New Zealand paper on homelessness in Maori communities⁶, it is collective self-determination that is culturally paramount. As noted by the authors, conventional Housing First approaches focus primarily on the individual or at best the family unit, whilst for Maori communities, **“Housing First might best operate on a clear and committed understanding of the whakapapa or kinship of the homeless indigenous person in the context**

of their cultural communities and connections”.⁶ The authors also argue that Housing First initiatives need to take into account differing Indigenous understandings of homelessness, home and sense of place and land. This resonates with Australia’s Aboriginal people, where ties to family and country are deeply rooted in culture, with enormous variability in how it looks across the many different Aboriginal nations that exist within Australia.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BEEN SUPPORTED BY 50 LIVES?

Since 50 Lives commenced the organisations involved in 50 Lives have provided support to 427 rough sleepers, 40% of which are Aboriginal. On average, Aboriginal peoples supported

were 39 years old (range: 16–73 years). The majority (72%) of Aboriginal participants were supported via the Rough Sleepers working group, but of total families in 50 Lives two thirds

(66%) were Aboriginal. A higher percentage of Aboriginal peoples were female (56%) compared to non-Aboriginal peoples.

OF THE 427 PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY 50 LIVES:

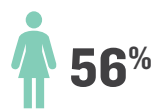
The data presented in this snapshot report was valid as at 30 June 2020.



are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (n=170)



average age – compared to 36 for non-Aboriginal



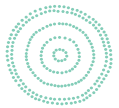
of Aboriginal people are female – compared to 39% for non-Aboriginal



of Aboriginal people are male – compared to 58% for non-Aboriginal

COMPLEXITY OF NEEDS

OF THE 376 INDIVIDUAL* VI-SPDAT RESPONDENTS:



36%

are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (n=137)



6 YEARS

spent homeless** – 11 months longer than non-Aboriginal



92%

serious health condition – compared to 85% for non-Aboriginal



90%

tri-morbidity – compared to 80% for non-Aboriginal



12.1

average vi-spdatt score – compared to 11.9 for non-Aboriginal



50%

had been in care as a child compared to 33% non-Aboriginal



75%

had been to prison – compared to 45% for non-Aboriginal



29%

have diabetes – compared to 8% for non-Aboriginal

* A total of 380 out of 427 of people supported by 50 Lives completed an Individual VI-SPDAT but 4 people did not report Ethnicity. A further 44 people completed a Family VI-SPDAT and 3 individuals did not provide consent for their VI-SPDAT to be used.

** Prior to completing the VI-SPDAT, total time homeless could be much longer if they completed survey and remained homeless for many more years

COMPLEXITY OF HEALTH AND HOUSING NEEDS: A CASE STUDY

Pam is an Aboriginal female in her early forties who has been sleeping in a park for many years.

She originates from a central Australian community but has been permanently banned due to traditional law. She has a history of trauma and suffers from multiple chronic health conditions including alcohol-related end stage liver cirrhosis, anaemia, pneumonia and is legally blind from bilateral cataracts. She has heavy daily alcohol intake in response to the traumatic loss of all contact with her family and Country. Pam scored 14 on the VI-SPDAT in late 2017.

Pam is regularly brought into ED via ambulance often related to alcohol intoxication, abdominal pain and injuries from assaults. She routinely discharges herself as soon as she is sober, so for a long time little work on her underlying physical and mental health, or social circumstances has occurred. In 2020 (up to mid-Nov), Pam had 61 ED presentations and 52 inpatient admissions (totalling 88 days), equating to nearly \$290,000.⁸ Despite frequent ED attendance she has no recorded history with mental health services, nor been linked into community support services.

As the health system often treats AOD, mental health and physical conditions in silos, and Pam has complex physical health conditions and trauma, she in effect has fallen through the cracks in both health and homelessness systems. Pam underwent bilateral cataract surgery once COVID restrictions lifted and was supported into transitional accommodation post-surgery. Unfortunately Pam left her transitional accommodation after only two weeks. She is currently rough sleeping wanting a place of her own; her drinking makes finding suitable accommodation difficult.

DIFFERENCES IN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL NEEDS

Nationally, 28% of people experiencing homelessness are Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander; in 50 Lives 40% of people supported are Aboriginal. This is important to note as the individuals supported via 50 Lives are considered as some of the most vulnerable rough sleepers in our community (as assessed via the VI-SPDAT). Scoring higher on this tool suggests longer time spent homeless and a multitude of health and other psychosocial needs.

Demographic Differences and Implications for Support

Compared to 50 Lives participants overall, there is a larger proportion of Aboriginal peoples who are female. This coalesces with a raft of issues including increased rates of trauma, family domestic violence, and children in care. Interestingly, Aboriginal peoples supported were on average three years older than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

This may be due to only 17% of youth participants being Aboriginal and thus the non-Aboriginal average age is resultingly younger.

Self-Report Health and Justice Differences and Implications for Support

While the overall individual VI-SPDAT score was similar (only 0.15 difference in score), there were a number of outcomes Aboriginal respondents were more likely to report experiencing. All justice-related questions were answered yes at a much higher rate: including youth detention (48% vs 31%), watch house (82% vs 68%) and prison (75% vs 45%). Additionally, Aboriginal respondents were more likely to be in institutional care as a child (50% vs 33%). There was also a statistically significant difference observed in the average number of interactions with police reported in the last six months (18 vs 8 interactions, $p < 0.05$). If justice contacts are recent, individuals

may require additional legal support, and as observed in report 3⁹, past indiscretions may catch up with you and result in loss of tenancies.

The prevalence of many of the self-reported health conditions were similar, however Aboriginal respondents reported more diabetes (29% vs 8%), hypothermia (16% vs 11%), asthma (50% vs 45%) and less cancer (8% vs 13%) than non-Aboriginal respondents. Overall, they were significantly more likely to have at least one serious health condition (92% vs 85%, $p < 0.05$) and significantly more likely to be tri-morbid (90% vs 80%, $p < 0.01$).

Poor health outcomes may have implications for housing location and type (i.e. needing 24 hour support, or a ground floor home, close to transport), which can contribute to further delays to be housed. Additionally it may mean individuals require longer ongoing support to ensure treatment compliance and well-health.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND SUPPORT

“Aboriginal people make up around half of street present homeless people in Perth, so it is vitally important to support and work with them in a responsive and culturally appropriate way. It is also imperative that WA returns to an Aboriginal housing policy that recognises the unique desires, needs and obligations of Aboriginal peoples and their families in relation to housing. We need to support these families to thrive in their own way, rather than making them fit into the small boxes the government has always tried to force them into. Fundamentally, though, Aboriginal people need the same thing we all do – a stable, secure home to raise their family. That is a basic human right, and it is absurd that so many are denied this – righting this historic wrong ought to be an immediate and urgent priority for any government who is serious about Closing the Gap and creating genuine reconciliation with First Australians.”

– Aboriginal Organisation

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO SERVICES

50 Lives is collaborative in nature, with over 30 different participating organisations across Perth.

As homelessness is a deeply-set, multi-factorial and multi-faceted issue, these services span over the community, housing, health and justice sectors providing individuals differing types of help as per their individual needs.

While there are many challenges to housing long-term rough sleepers regardless of their cultural background, there are additional sensitivities and cultural requirements that need to be considered for Aboriginal peoples experiencing homelessness (see pages 9-10). Where possible, people should be connected to culturally relevant services that are able to respond to the complex and intertwined nature of Aboriginal homelessness. This includes both Aboriginal housing providers and Aboriginal support services.

Ongoing systematic racism and deeply rooted intergenerational trauma that many Aboriginal peoples continue to experience today can contribute to an overall distrust of mainstream services, hence the need for Aboriginal-specific services. 50 Lives has worked closely with service key Aboriginal services across Perth and established the Wongee Mia project as a novel Aboriginal Housing First Model.

One specific example of how Noongar Mia Mia (an Aboriginal Housing Provider) works differently to other mainstream housing providers, is that they have established Tenant Housing Standards. These Standards were developed by a council of 100 Elders through the ***Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort (Our Children, Our Heart)*** Project and each tenant signs off on them before moving into their property. This helps to ensure that tenants are aware of their Elders' expectations of them and how they are to manage and behave in their home.

THE WONGEE MIA PROJECT

Wongee Mia is a special initiative of 50 Lives that was designed to house and support Aboriginal chronic rough sleepers in Perth. It was developed from small seed funding in consultation with both Indigenous staff within Ruah and with specialist Aboriginal organisations as there was an identified gap within the program for supporting Aboriginal people. The project developed strong ties with the family Elders and as a result the project was renamed Wongee Mia. The program works with a central person and their entire family.

The family named the project after the grandmother of the central family member, who was an advocate for strengthening family ties and providing shelter, her family call her “Wongee” meaning strong woman, with “Mia” meaning home in the Noongar language.¹⁰

Central to the Wongee Mia project and how they support Aboriginal chronic rough sleepers is via the input of Elders. Elders provide information on relationships to consider when housing someone, preferred living arrangements,

and guide and educate towards culturally appropriate responses. In contrast to traditional one-to-one case management models, the Wongee Mia project takes a “family-centred approach”, whereby the total caseload is the whole family.¹⁰

“Wongee” meaning strong woman, with “Mia” meaning home in the Noongar language.¹⁰

CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS OF HOUSING: A CASE STUDY

Bella is an Elder who has been supported by Wongee Mia since mid-2018.

After the passing of her son, she applied for a property transfer via the Housing Authority which was initially rejected. There are policies under the “**Cultural Diversity and Language Services Policy**”¹¹ that enables Aboriginal tenants to transfer to alternative properties for cultural reasons such as death in a property, but this didn't apply in this situation as her son did not die in the

property nor did he live with her at the time of his death due to property restrictions placed on the tenancy.

Bella was filled with deep sadness after his death and she believed his spirit was tied to the property. Over time Bella spent less and less time in her flat.

Her Wongee Mia case worker and her Housing Support Officer (HSO) worked together to submit a second transfer request. The HSO provided her case worker with more appropriate

wording for the application, focussing on physical issues with the property rather than the cultural inappropriateness and spiritually-related issues. The HSO also waived the ‘cooling off’ period, which enabled Bella to submit the second request shortly after her first rejection. After about eight months she was rehoused in her new home.

HOUSING NEEDS AND OUTCOMES

HOUSING OUTCOMES

In total, 68 out of 170 Aboriginal people supported through 50 Lives have been housed at some point, meaning that an overall smaller proportion of the Aboriginal cohort was housed (40%) compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts (51%).

However, there were no differences in the percentage of Aboriginal compared to non-Aboriginal peoples housed as at 30 June 2020, Aboriginal peoples were less likely to sustain a tenancy for one year (75% vs 83%) and were more likely to be evicted (39% vs 34% – excluding deaths). However, Aboriginal people were less likely exit their

tenancy directly into homelessness (48% vs 55%), this was partly due to moving into other types of accommodation (not necessarily permanent) but was also partly due to higher tenancy exits into prison (10% compared to 2%).

AS AT 30 JUNE 2020, 199 INDIVIDUALS HAD BEEN HOUSED IN 240 HOMES:



of Aboriginal people supported have been housed at some point – compared to 51% for non-Aboriginal



of Aboriginal tenants were still housed as at 30 June 2020 – same as non-Aboriginal



of Aboriginal tenants sustained their tenancies for at least one year – compared to 83% for non-Aboriginal



of Aboriginal tenancy exits were into homelessness – compared to 55% for non-Aboriginal (excluding deaths)

THE NEED FOR ONGOING SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY TO REHOME: A CASE STUDY

Background

Daisy is an Aboriginal woman in her mid-late twenties who has been in and out of homelessness for nearly half her life after running away from foster care.

She has experienced extensive trauma, including many years of domestic violence and she has complex mix of mental health issues and drug use. Other chronic health conditions include poorly controlled type 2 diabetes and asthma, both of which have worsened considerably over her years of rough sleeping.

Engagement with 50 Lives

In early 2016 Daisy scored 15 on the VI-SPDAT survey, and became part of 50 Lives a couple months afterwards. Daisy has cycled through many accommodation options over the past four years, including in transitional accommodation, public housing, private rentals and various other supportive accommodation services. Throughout this time she was periodically supported by the After Hours Support Service (AHSS) to help manage her medical needs including wound care and diabetes management,

however has a history of non-engagement. Due to her domestic violence situation she has had to leave multiple properties, often returning to sleeping rough.

Current Situation

Through ongoing support via Ruah, Tranby drop-in centre (UnitingWA) and Homeless Healthcare she has been recently rehoused via the Department of Communities. Safe and secure housing remains critical to enable Daisy to manage her complex health and social issues.

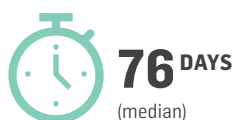
TYPES AND RAPIDITY OF HOUSING PLACEMENTS

Of the 240 homes that these 170 individuals have been housed in; Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples were just as likely to be housed in Community Housing (21% compared to 20%), they were slightly more likely to be housed in public housing (61% of placements compared to 51%) and were less likely to be housed in a private rental (8% compared to 16% of placements). Many stakeholders noted how the rental market

can be prohibitive to Aboriginal peoples, with 78% of all rental placements for 50 Lives being for non-Aboriginal people, however median time-to-rental from 50 Lives application was quicker for Aboriginal placements (63 days compared to 91 days).

Overall, it took nearly two months longer to house an Aboriginal person supported by 50 Lives (186 days compared to 134 days).

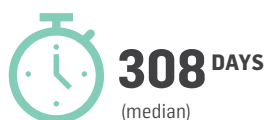
While it took approximately the same amount of time to complete someone's priority listing after completing the 50 Lives application form (76 days for Aboriginal, 74 days non-Aboriginal), but took nearly **double the time** for an Aboriginal person to be housed after being priority listed compared to a non-Aboriginal person (308 days compared to 170 days); this pattern was observed for both public and community housing.



76 DAYS
(median)
to get priority listing after 50 lives application – compared to 74 days for non-aboriginal (for those who were priority listed after app)



186 DAYS
(median)
to be housed after 50 lives application compared to 134 for non-Aboriginal



308 DAYS
(median)
to be housed after priority listing compared to 170 for non-Aboriginal



31%
of aboriginal people waiting for housing are priority listed – compared to 36% for non-aboriginal (of those not exited and not housed)

Due to the wide range in time-to-house for this group, the medians have been presented instead of averages.

CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING RAPID AND APPROPRIATE HOUSING

A dual focus of the Housing First ethos is to provide rapid housing and wrap-around support to individuals without precondition. As identified in the Third Evaluation Report⁹, there are a range of challenges in WA to actually achieving rapid housing. The main barrier for 50 Lives participants to rapid housing mirrors the larger

obstacle state-wide to ending homelessness, that is, the extensive waitlist for public housing properties in WA. Public Housing waitlist data to the end of 2019 showed that even on the priority waitlist, the 'time to house' on average is 1.3 years for a one-bedroom property, which is the type of housing in highest demand among 50 Lives participants and

more broadly. While many of the obstacles to rapid housing are shared across all 50 Lives participants, there are a number of additional challenges and considerations that have been identified by organisations working at the coalface with Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness in Perth; these are discussed below.



POLICY & BUREAUCRACY CHALLENGES



SUITABILITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS



CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS OF HOUSING PROVIDERS

POLICY AND BUREAUCRATIC CHALLENGES TO RAPID HOUSING

It is recognised that policies and criteria need to underpin the social housing allocation mechanisms of any government. Learnings from 50 Lives however suggest that the standard policies and requirements relating to public housing in WA pose some additional challenges for people who homeless and Aboriginal.

Size of Home Eligible for

Under the **“Allocations Policy”** of the Department of Communities Rental Manual¹¹, accommodation size is dependent on individual circumstance at the time, it has guidelines on the need for cultural considerations around providing irregular care to family and the need for bigger properties. However, stakeholders gave multiple examples of ineligibility due to children or grandchildren not being specifically listed on their Centrelink etc.

Beyond caring obligations, to be eligible for a larger property e.g. to allow visitors to stay, individuals

have to have a co-applicant listed; the challenge with this being the long delays for the waitlist meaning that the situation between the two applicants may have changed by the time a property becomes available.

Further Assistance Reviews

Under the **“Allocations Policy”** it states that a tenant may be required to wait longer than usual for assistance or that specific conditions may be applied to their tenancy (i.e. liquor restricted) if they had substantial previous tenancy breaches. Anecdotally stakeholders suggested that these reviews are contributing to longer time taken to house Aboriginal tenants in 50 Lives. While we only have FAR records for 12 people, the overwhelming majority (83%) were for Aboriginal tenants.

Ability to Transfer

The ability to transfer to a more suitable home is often impeded by policies that deem someone ineligible. For example, under

the **“Transfer Policy”** you cannot have had a breach in the year prior, which poses challenges if the tenant was not the source of the breach (i.e. visitors, disruptive neighbours or family feuding).

“You have to be empathetic in a lot of cases, and you have to be able to make decisions that are not about a policy or document that says it can only be – you can’t say if someone calls up “well my policy says this and because of this you have a strike and you’re out” – its almost like the policies and procedures cause them to treat people as numbers and not as individuals and that’s where we are a little bit different ... the way the tenancies are managed are totally different... its more culturally appropriate”

– Aboriginal Property Manager

SUITABILITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS

House Size, Reunification and Visitors

Additional rooms are fundamental in enabling family to stay, or for reunification to occur. Strong kinship relations and pressures to accommodate extended family members who are homeless can lead to overcrowding. Which can contribute to risks of tenancy eviction and homelessness, e.g. increased chance of family and domestic violence, property damage, and antisocial behaviour. As observed in 50 Lives and by its stakeholders, if there are cumulative evictions within a family group these can create a “domino effect” in which multiple generations can end up homeless all at the same time.

Overall, 39% of Aboriginal tenancy exits were due to eviction, compared to 34% of non-Aboriginal exits. As demonstrated throughout case studies, many people were unable to let family stay due to fear of losing their homes. This often led to deep feelings of sadness and increased loneliness, and in some instances the eventual abandonment of properties to be closer to family either in someone else’s tenancies or on the streets.

Location

Housing location is critical for the Aboriginal people supported through 50 Lives for a multitude of reasons e.g. proximity to other family members and healing areas (such as those situated on the Swan River)

and the need to avoid areas where there may be family feuding that could put their tenancies in danger/at risk.

Design

Housing is typically designed for western families and is at odds with Aboriginal obligations to accommodate extended families.¹² As noted above Aboriginal tenants supported in 50 Lives need homes that can accommodate family therefore more culturally appropriate housing that is affordable, safe and secure is critical to address this. In a study by Shelter SA, 60% of respondents indicated that private rentals were not culturally appropriate for them or their families.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS OF HOUSING PROVIDERS

Throughout discussions with individuals supported by 50 Lives and their lead workers, feelings of judgement were often noted when non-Aboriginal landlords came into their homes for property inspections. Per recommendation 4 of the joint Shelter WA and WA Alliance submission to the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry on Homelessness **“services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be culturally informed and culturally led...”**

This includes the provision of housing supply and services managed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.”¹³

Additionally, Shelter SA recommends mandatory cultural training for all property managers to ensure they understand cultural differences and how to challenge negative cultural stereotypes.¹²

“I’m actually going to do the inspections for those particular people... I went out there to meet them – to introduce myself and just find some connection with them, which I did through family, friends and so. And they were actually looking forward for me to come and inspect their property to show us that they can live, they’re doing well. So it’s just things like that that make a difference.... you have to build a relationship with them where they trust you.”

– Noongar Mia Mia

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING FIRST IN AN ABORIGINAL CONTEXT

The findings and recommendations presented in this snapshot provide an overview of some of the key successes and challenges for Aboriginal peoples in the Australian Housing First context. These should be considered in the adaptation of an Aboriginal Housing First model that is due to be developed in 2021 led by Noongar Mia Mia in conjunction with the WA ACCO's and sponsored by the WA Alliance to End Homelessness.

As shown in the recently published paper on Wongee Mia¹⁰ and in the literature more broadly, different approaches to Aboriginal housing are needed that are both driven by and are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people themselves. Flexible models of support and housing are needed to account for changing circumstances (such as the need to care for grandkids), family responsibilities and cultural security. Self-determination and choice are paramount, along with non-punitive support that enables people to flourish within their tenancies.

As raised by stakeholders, lead workers and Aboriginal 50 Lives participants themselves, there is a critical need for more Aboriginal support workers and Aboriginal housing providers in future Housing First iterations in WA. Reflecting different understanding of their needs and can reduce feelings of "being shamed" by non-Aboriginal workers. Where its not possible to have specific Aboriginal workers involved, it is imperative that

mainstream services and staff embed cultural safety, trauma informed practice and the building of trusting relationships of mutual respect. This may mean that non-Aboriginal workers need to also work with family Elders in addition to their clients to have a more holistic understanding of the ongoing challenges that Aboriginal peoples face today.

Additional ways to strengthen the Aboriginal Housing First approach in WA include the need for:

- **More Aboriginal support services/workers** to help people maintain their tenancies and provide culturally appropriate support;
- **Larger housing options** to allow people to accommodate extended families;
- **More housing provided** via Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) and where not possible, cultural competency training of other HSO's in the importance of family and the kinship obligations around needing to house family when they also become homeless;
- **Expand programs of support** such as Wongee Mia to other suitable families to overcome large-scale family homelessness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remain disproportionately affected by homelessness compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts, with the evidence

indicating that there is an urgent need for culturally sensitive approaches to ending Indigenous homelessness. The Wongee Mia project is one such way to Indigenise Housing First to an Australian context whereby it takes a self-determination model to address family homelessness (which is a fundamental freedom as outlined by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)). There are many other Aboriginal families supported via 50 Lives (now the Zero Project), that this type of framework could be appropriate to expand to.

"...I'm feeling a little apprehensive in that area because there's racism around Fremantle. They just broadcast their racism openly in their front yards. I grew up here, this is my home, and the strong community support is what it's all about, normally. We're all in together as one. Until I saw that flag and was threatened to be lynched."

– *Aboriginal Female, 50 Lives*

REFERENCES

1. Department of Communities. All Paths Lead to a Home. Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030: Department of Communities, Government of Western Australia, 2020.
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness. Canberra: AIHW; 2019.
3. Memmott, P.; Nash, D. Chapter 10: Indigenous Homelessness: Australian Context. In Indigenous Homelessness: Perspectives from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; Peters, E.J., Christensen, J., Eds.; University of Manitoba Press: Winnipeg, MB, Canada, 2016; pp. 213–220.
4. Atkinson, J. Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia; Spinifex Press: Melbourne, Australia, 2002.
5. Bodor DR, Chewka D, Smith-Windsor M, Conley S, Pereira N. Perspectives on the housing first program with indigenous participants.
6. Lawson-Te Aho K, Fariu-Ariki P, Omblor J, Aspinall C, Howden-Chapman P, Pierse N. A principles framework for taking action on Māori/Indigenous Homelessness in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *SSM-population health*. 2019 Aug 1;8:100450.
7. Distasio J, Zell S, McCullough S, Edel B. Localized Approaches to Ending Homelessness: Indigenizing Housing First. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies; 2019.
8. Independent Hospital Pricing Authority. National Hospital Cost Data Collection, Public Hospitals Cost Report Round 22 (Financial year 2017–2018), 2020.
9. Vallesi S, Wood L, Gazey A, Cumming C, Zaretsky K, Irwin E. 50 Lives 50 Homes: A Housing First Response to Ending Homelessness in Perth. Third Evaluation Report. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Social Impact and the School of Population and Global Health: University of Western Australia, 2020.
10. Vallesi S, Tighe E, Bropho H, Potangaroa M, Watkins L. Wongee Mia: An Innovative Family-Centred Approach to Addressing Aboriginal Housing Needs and Preventing Eviction in Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2020 Jan;17(15):5501.
11. Government of Western Australia. Housing Authority Rental Policy Manual. July 2020.
12. Shelter SA. "I am tired of being treated like a second-class citizen!" Racial Discrimination in the Private Rental Market. May 2019.
13. Shelter WA, WA Alliance to End Homelessness. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs. Inquiry into homelessness in Australia. Joint Submission. April 2020.



