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# **The cultural and social exclusion consequences of contemporary remote Aboriginal housing management**

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**National Housing Conference  
Sydney, 2017**



# NPARIH

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- Ten year (2008-2018) housing strategy
- Australian Gov. provides funding to the states and NT for;
  1. Construction of new homes - 4200
  2. Refurbishment of existing homes - 4876
  3. Management of housing on remote Indigenous communities
  4. \$4400 Million



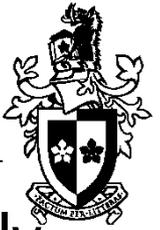
# The power struggle

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- This is NOT public housing
- 40 year lease
- Allocations
- Tenancy agreements
- Rent paying
- Rules

# Ngukurr, NT

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- The population of Ngukurr in 2006 was approximately 1,137, of which 93% were Indigenous
- The Indigenous population of Ngukurr is projected to increase by 37% 2006- 2026.
- The overcrowding is going to get worse not better - In very remote areas, overcrowding is 18.8 times the non-Indigenous rate (Atkinson et al. 2007).

# Cultural Reproduction

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- Refers to the mechanisms by which the rich and distinctive Aboriginal culture of this region is sustained across time and transferred from generation to generation to ensure cultural and societal continuity and strength.
- The Long View – back in time and forwards
- Occurs through everyday lived observances of kinship and behavior rules

# Culture

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The ability to maintain core cultural practices was considered paramount by almost all of the research participants we spoke with at Ngukurr:

- seen to underpin identity, strengthen wellbeing, maintain social balance and safety, mediate change and provide purpose for young people potentially at risk from substance abuse harm.
- “Carrying the culture is very important to people and with customary law you have to keep it strong.”

(EW, 40 year old male, a ceremonial leader)

# Rules

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- Rules that designate kinship affiliation, marriage and avoidance relationships and the complex moiety-based observations around funeral practices have consequences for housing tenants.
- Attendance at ceremonies can sometimes mean leaving houses vacant for extended periods. A similar situation can occur around funerary observations.

# Vacating houses after Funerals

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- “Its all if you are losing your nephew, son or daughter, but if you lose your partner you have to stay away from the house for one or two years.”
- “Its hard to leave and return when there’s a death. Its very hard for a lot of us. Even if I’m an old lady I still use that avoidance system. Our system is not complicated, it’s okay.”
- “We might be like fringe dwellers in this community. Everytime we go to them [housing management] there’s a barrier.”

# Imposition of nuclear family models

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Many in the community perceive that there have been government attempt to reduce family size to comply with western tenancy management practices, rather than to build and manage houses aligned with Aboriginal family models that accommodate larger numbers of people

# Ceremony

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- Ceremony, particularly in the context of funerals and boys' initiation rites, is a major and frequent cause of short-term mobility, which can see tenants vacate houses for extended periods or house kin .
- Each year 3 Iragge ceremonies are held in the wider Ngukurr region. They last for up to six months.

# Mobility

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*Some people go away for very big problems like when they fight each other (tribal way) they have to move people out: don't want people to get hurt. They are still in our care. They go bush or to another community until everything settles down.*

*When this happens you have to pull out a lot of things, tidy up, bring in food and extra mattresses for unexpected family members. After 2 weeks it a problem for the housing management, we don't have that support. ”*

# Cultural strength and wellbeing

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- Participants almost wholly considered that maintaining culture was a priority and a source of strength and health for the community.
- “With our identity intact, we want to take the best of *munanga* [white people’s] way”

# Conclusions

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- Cultural laws intersect with both housing provision and management in remote communities such as Ngukurr. The spatial and tenancy restrictions of living within a western-normative home can pose a considerable challenge and cause discomfort, stress and feelings of exclusion to the residents.
- The case-study research has illuminated a considerable lack of willingness to understand and work around the historically based factors that drive housing use.