SUSTAINING TENANCIES IN AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS TOWN-CAMPS

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous housing is an enduring policy problem in Australia. Policy failure (both rhetoric and reality) has characterised the history of the design, provision and management of housing welfare for Australia's Indigenous communities in remote and town-camp locations. Government housing assistance has varyingly fallen short of meeting the functional needs, and personal and cultural aspirations of many Indigenous people in these communities. The reasons for this are complex and contested: to some this indicates repeated housing policy failures whilst to others, it represents the failure of Indigenous people to adapt and evolve to conventional western ways (and standards) of living. Causes aside, the consequences of this are clear-cut: Indigenous people face much higher levels of disadvantage than non-Indigenous Australians. Included amongst their below-average social and economic outcomes are widespread ill-health, poor and overcrowded living conditions, high levels of substance abuse and domestic violence, and low levels of education and employment.

The 2008 reforms mark a significant structural break in government approaches to the Indigenous housing crisis in remote and town-camp communities. Pre-2008, government endorsed a community-housing approach to Indigenous housing provision, advocating for Indigenous housing policies and programs developed and administered in partnership with Indigenous communities. This policy approach was officially abandoned in 2008 with the government endorsement of a public housing system for the provision and management of housing in remote and town-camp communities. Informed by neoliberal views of Indigenous dysfunction, and the individual's role in this, the government pursues a behavioural change approach to induce tenants to adopt ways of life consistent with western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy. One important government objective in these reforms is securing sustainable tenancies for Indigenous tenants. Sustainable tenancies not only prevent tenancy failure but help achieve positive tenancy outcomes (such as stability, security and improved health and well-being). Meeting this objective may provide an important reprieve for Indigenous people from the enduring cycle of policy failure.

This thesis aims to analyse how the initial implementation of the current Indigenous housing reforms can lead to sustainable tenancies for residents in Indigenous town-camp communities. Qualitative research methods were employed to study changes to tenants' ways of living in Indigenous town-camp communities in the Northern

Territory and Western Australia as a result of these reforms. In both these jurisdictions, interviews were conducted with Indigenous tenants and a cross-section of Indigenous housing stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of these reforms. The investigation was then guided by a dual approach to the analysis of the systems of housing welfare provision and of Indigenous tenants' lived experience of these systems in order to understand both the macro- and micro-level contexts for these housing reforms. The first approach was a thematic analysis of Indigenous housing stakeholders' perspectives on the systems of housing welfare provision (macro-level context). The second approach was a social practice theory based analysis of Indigenous tenants' lived experience of housing welfare (micro-level context). These dual lines of inquiry were used to analyse how tenants' ways of living are evolving as a result of these housing reforms and to identify where potential opportunities exist to further optimise positive tenancy outcomes.

The primary contribution of this thesis is to bring together a review of the current systems of housing welfare provision in town-camp communities, with a practice-based analysis of the lived experience of housing welfare in Indigenous town-camps. This thesis develops new understandings of how the sustaining tenancies agenda is met within current Indigenous housing welfare reforms, and especially how the criterion for supportive housing management can be achieved through new dynamics in public housing governance. It identifies a series of issues affecting the implementation of the current Indigenous housing reforms and their overall capacity to attain sustainable tenancies for Indigenous tenants. It concludes by identifying a potential platform (within the constraints of these housing reforms) for remedying some of these issues, so as to optimise positive tenancy outcomes in Indigenous town-camp communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AHURI:	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIATSIS:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIHW:	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIS:	Asset Information System
ALS:	Aboriginal Legal Service
ALT:	Aboriginal Land Trust
AMO:	Asset Management Officer, Territory Housing (Northern Territory)
ANAO:	Australian National Audit Office
ANT:	Actor Network Theory
APSC:	Australian Public Service Commission
ARIA:	Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Program
ASTP:	Alice Springs Transformation Plan
ATSIC:	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSP:	Australian Tenant Support Program
BAC:	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (Maningrida, Northern Territory)
BBF:	Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010 (policy)
BTS:	Basic Tenant Support
CAEPR:	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CAR:	Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
CAT:	Condition Assessment Surveys
CAT:	Centre for Appropriate Technology (Alice Springs)
CHIP:	Community Housing and Infrastructure Program
COAG:	Council of Australian Governments
CRCAH:	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health
CTG:	2008 National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage
CWP:	Capital Works Plan
DDMP:	Discretionary Decision Making Policy
DHLGRS:	Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services (Northern Territory)
DHW:	Western Australian Department of Housing and Works
DKCRC:	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
EOC:	Equal Opportunity Commission
FaHCSIA:	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Australian Government)
HMA:	Housing Management Agreement (Western Australia)

HMAC:	Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee
HMMA:	Housing Management and Maintenance Agreement
HORSCATSIA:	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
HRG:	Housing Reference Group (Northern Territory)
IBA:	Indigenous Business Australia
ICC:	Indigenous Coordination Centres
ICHO:	Indigenous Community Housing Organisations
IHMS:	Indigenous Housing Management System
ITS:	Intensive Tenant Support Program
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NAHA:	National Housing Affordability Agreement
NHMRC:	National Health and Medical Research Council
NIRA:	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
NLS:	New Living Skills (Western Australia)
NPARIH:	National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing
NPM:	New Public Management
PWC:	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
RHTSF:	Remote Housing Tenant Support Framework
RIAS:	Remote Indigenous Accommodation Service
RIHP:	Remote Indigenous Housing Program
RPHMF:	Remote Public Housing Management Framework
RSP:	Remote Service Provider
RTA:	Residential Tenancy Agreement
SCIH:	Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing
SCRGSP:	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SHA:	State Housing Authorities
SHAP:	Supported Housing Assistance Program
SIHIP:	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program
SLA:	Service Level Agreement
SOMIH:	State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing
SRA:	Shared Responsibility Agreements
TAS:	Tenants Advice Service (Western Australia)
TCU:	Town-Camp Unit (Territory Housing, Northern Territory)
TFYS:	Tangentyere Family and Youth Services
THU:	Territory Housing Urban Public Housing
TMS:	Tenancy Management System

TSP: Remote Tenancy Sustainability Program (Northern Territory)

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1   INTRODUCTION

1. 1   INTRODUCTION

Indigenous housing is an enduring policy problem. In the past, government housing welfare has varyingly fallen short of meeting the functional needs, and personal and cultural aspirations of many Indigenous people in remote communities (Fien et al., 2007). Indigenous town-camp communities, interspersed throughout urban areas in northern and central Australia, have suffered a similar fate despite being less encumbered by issues of remoteness (Sanders, 2004:1). Memmott (1988:34), 25 years ago, defined the problem of Indigenous housing as:

> *Many groups of Aborigines suffer high levels of physical and mental stress which appear to be causally linked (either directly or indirectly) to their domiciliary environment. Stress-related factors include lack of protection from the weather, living in squalor, crowding, alcoholism, domestic violence, widespread ill-health, insecurity arising from the temporariness of living circumstances…Occupants may find it very difficult to escape from such circumstances even if motivated to do so, due to lack of finance and credibility which in turn arises from a lack of employment and education.*

This definition holds true for most Indigenous communities today: their housing a poignant symbol of pervasive and persistent Indigenous disadvantage. To some, the living conditions across these Indigenous communities represent the remnants of repeated housing policy failures. To others, for whom the 'white mythology', as Memmott (1988) terms it, of Indigenous housing lives on, they represent the failure of Indigenous people to adapt to conventional western ways (and standards) of living. In the past, judicious government rhetoric has promoted a continual sense of avant-gardism in new policy approaches to remedy this Indigenous housing crisis. This has only thinly disguised the circularity and recursivity of a suite of housing policies that, historically, have had little impact (Lea, 2008a).

However, post-2007 Indigenous housing reforms mark a significant, renewed Australian government commitment to remedying the Indigenous housing crisis. This substantial commitment signals government recognition of the complex role of housing in the lives of individuals: policy is assigned multiple, broad objectives on the premise that housing can secure not only better housing outcomes (such as tenant stability, security and reduced overcrowding), but also broad non-housing outcomes (such as improved health, well-being and education levels) (COAG 2008c). This thesis is about these housing reforms and what they mean for Indigenous tenancies in town-camp communities.

This introductory chapter is divided into five further sections. The next section (Section 1. 2) provides a statement of the Indigenous housing problem that forms the starting point for this research project. Section 1. 3 provides the policy background to this problem through an overview of Indigenous Affairs policy and current Indigenous housing policy. Section 1. 4 outlines the research aim, which is to examine the implementation of current Indigenous housing reforms in Indigenous town-camp communities and, in particular, to investigate the ways in which this reform agenda can lead to sustainable tenancies for Indigenous tenants. Section 1. 5 outlines why this study is significant, and Section 1. 6 details the structure of this thesis.

1. 2   AN INDIGENOUS HOUSING PROBLEM

The history of the design, provision and management of housing in Indigenous communities is one of policy failure. The reason for this failure is not singular. In some cases, failure is more rhetoric than reality, largely due to an absence of systematic policy evaluations that obscures whether outcomes are 'positive, negative or neutral' (Altman, 2009b:7). Beyond the legacy of chronic underfunding, an explanation for Indigenous housing policy failure also arises from five interconnected sources (adapted from Fien et al., 2007). Socio-demographic issues, including severe housing shortages and significant maintenance backlogs; high rates of homelessness and unemployment; poor access to services (such as health and education); and the impact of historical factors (such as the Aboriginal reserves), combine together with high levels of Indigenous mobility to produce below-average Indigenous socio-economic outcomes. These include ill-health, substance abuse, conflict and violence, and severe overcrowding. Western-style houses, the hallmark of past housing interventions, impact on the social well-being of Indigenous family groups due to their ineffectiveness in accommodating Indigenous ways of living. This, in turn, fuels a cycle of housing disrepair. Policy failure is also linked to 'the cost of remoteness', such as the increased expense and complicated logistics of the delivery and management of housing (and associated services and infrastructure) to remote communities (Fien et al., 2007). This subsequently restricts the quantity and quality of both housing assets and housing management services with repercussions for overcrowding, housing conditions and tenancy stability. Policy failure is also linked to the complexity and changeability of the systems, programs and funding frameworks for housing procurement and delivery, and the capacity of housing agencies to implement these. Problematic (or

inadequate) Indigenous engagement in the design, development and implementation of housing policy is another source of failure. This limits government awareness of Indigenous perspectives, cultural traditions and ways of living (such as Indigenous mobility and kinship obligations) relevant to housing, and subsequently inhibits their consideration and accommodation in housing design, provision and management.

It is broadly acknowledged that Indigenous housing needs differ from non-Indigenous needs (due to geographic, demographic and cultural factors) – for instance, the Indigenous need for home diverges from western constructs of 'house-as-home' (Fien et al., 2007:10). Current government metrics inadequately capture this. Since the 1990s, the 'multi-measure' approach has been the dominant system of measurement (This model is linked to Jones, 1994:2–3). Neutze et al (2000) identified seven indicators of housing need for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: overcrowding; homelessness; housing services; housing condition; affordability; cultural appropriateness; and security of tenure. In 2002, the Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing (SCIH) endorsed the first five of these, reflecting a government preference for indicators that allow quantitative assessments (Milligan et al., 2010). 'Appropriateness of housing' and 'security of tenure' indicators, which were excluded from this endorsement, remain without Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee (HMAC)-agreed definitions and thus outside government reporting criteria (AIHW, 2009c:69). Defining a measure for 'cultural appropriateness' is widely recognised, including by government, as a fundamental next step (Milligan et al., 2010:50; Long et al., 2008a; AIHW, 2009a). In the meantime, however, metrics remain heavily biased towards western constructs of housing need, whilst indicators through which Indigenous-specific housing need might be captured are overlooked (Taylor, 2009).

Despite these significant barriers to housing policy success, new approaches in Indigenous Affairs reposition housing policy as the cornerstone of reforms to redress Indigenous social and economic disadvantage. Assigning multiple and broad objectives to housing policy is consistent with current government aspirations for a joined-up, holistic, whole-of-government approach. The elevated status of housing is also consistent with government recognition of the complex role of housing in the lives of individuals, namely housing's dual role: as a platform for addressing the wider 'support needs' of tenants (non-housing needs), alongside their basic shelter needs (Seelig et al., 2008:39). This housing welfare agenda is predicated on

individual (tenant) responsibility and has emerged from prevailing neoliberal beliefs in the responsibility individuals have for the disadvantage they experience (Brough, 2006; Altman & Hinkson, 2010:268; Buckmaster, 2011).

Behavioural change theory resonates with prevailing neoliberal views about the primacy of individual agency in determining social order and human action. This paradigm frames tenants' problematic behaviours as the product of a lack of understanding of, or incentive to adopt, alternate behaviours. Its application provides a concise agenda for policy – 'the conceptual and practical task of which is to identify and affect the determinants' of the behaviours in question (Shove, 2010:1275). The government adopts an individual behavioural change approach, following established trends in public policy at the micro level, to 'promote personal responsibility, engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms' in Indigenous communities (COAG 2008c).[1]

The implementation of a public housing management model is a substantive element of the reform agenda. This standardised, mainstream model for property and tenancy management represents a significant shift from the previously championed community-housing model for the delivery and management of remote Indigenous housing, and conforms to popular mainstreaming trends in Indigenous Affairs. The shift to public housing standards of tenancy management involve the implementation of standard (public housing) residential tenancy agreements. Under these agreements, Indigenous tenants are required to abide by its terms, which include showing 'increased personal responsibility for their houses'; paying 'appropriate rent on time'; covering 'the cost of property damage' and not disturbing 'the peace of their neighbours' (FaHCSIA, 2009:20). These legislative measures are enacted on the basis of providing (punitive) disincentives to tenants for adopting behaviours inconsistent with the terms of this agreement. Another approach is the implementation of a housing infrastructure program for the provision of new houses and housing upgrades and repairs to remote communities. This, together with the implementation of public housing standards of property management, is intended to improve tenants' living environments and extend the life of the housing assets.

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[1] Indigenous housing reforms also involve other programs (such as employment-related accommodation and employment opportunities through construction programs) which are not within the remit of this thesis.

[2] Following George Homan's pioneering work on establishing rational choice theory in sociology, the theory has been developed through the development of different models and frameworks. Central to all these is the assumption that complex social phenomena can be explained in terms of elementary individual actions of which they are composed. Elster (1989: 13) writes: 'the elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals'. This assumption - that we calculate the consequences of our actions and make choices based on these - is the central source of criticism of this rational choice model.

[3] For an analysis of governance through statistics see Altman (2009a) and Saetnam et al (2011).

Together, these behavioural change approaches are adopted on the government assumption, which was expressed most explicitly in the assimilationist era but which still lives on, about the reformative, civilising power of a well-maintained conventional western house (Musharbash, 2008; McDonald, 2011). An additional element of the reforms is tenancy support services and programs intended to assist tenants to sustain their tenancies. Their aim is to increase tenants' awareness of, skills in, and transition to western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy.

One objective of the current housing reforms is to provide safe, secure and sustainable housing (Explicitly stated in the National Housing Affordability Agreement (NAHA), COAG 2008a). This NAHA objective for 'sustainable housing' filters through Commonwealth Indigenous housing policy emerging in jurisdictional-level policy references to 'sustainable tenancies'. In this context, the concept of 'sustainable housing' remains loosely defined by theorists, policy-makers and service providers alike. However, sustaining social housing tenancies has become an attractive government agenda owing to the increasingly residual nature of the public housing sector caused by disadvantage and complex tenant needs (Seelig & Jones, 2004), and despite being counterintuitive to common perceptions of social housing as a temporary housing solution. State housing authorities (SHA) have used the term 'sustaining tenancies' to refer to three different foci in public housing: the avoidance of tenancy failure; the encouragement of positive residential experiences and outcomes; and the provision of supportive housing management practices (Seelig & Jones, 2004). Meanwhile, a broader definition in the literature defines sustainable tenancies as encompassing all housing policies and practices to 'assist…tenants to manage their tenancy successfully and to achieve improvements in their lives' (Habibis et al., 2007:vii). Measuring the achievement of this objective is likely impeded by the controversy surrounding the quantification of Indigenous housing needs (Altman, 2009b). Significantly, with regards to 'security of tenure' indicator, the 2009 AIHW (2009c:69) report suggests further development of this measure should consider this NAHA concept of sustainable housing.

Considered in isolation, the policy approaches being implemented under current Indigenous housing reforms are neither new, nor unusual. However, until now, they had never been concurrently implemented in remote or town-camp Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the public housing management model has, until this point, been geographically limited to urban and regional areas (where it is well-established). Given this lack of precedent, there is little understanding of the

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implications of this reform agenda for Indigenous tenancies in remote and town-camp communities.

Notwithstanding this novelty, the record of problematic urban, Indigenous public housing tenancies forewarns of potential issues with this approach for Indigneous tenancies in remote and town-camp communities. In urban areas, public housing welfare is said to reflect poor government acceptance of indigeneity (Walker & Barcham, 2010:318) and the imposition of western cultural values and expectations on Indigenous tenants on the assumption that sedentary lifestyles and nuclear families are (or should be) the norm (Milligan et al., 2010:66; Sanders, 2000; Prout, 2008; Musharbash, 2008). From a housing provider perspective, these Indigenous public housing tenancies are more likely to be shorter than non-Indigenous tenancies; to incur property damage and substantial repair and maintenance cost; to receive termination notices; and to be abandoned (Prout, 2008; EOC 2004; Flatau et al., 2005). From the Indigenous tenants' perspective, the experience of urban public housing is one of alienation, marginalisation, perceptions of discrimination and discrimination, especially due to housing management practices (such as procedural and administrative arrangements) (Morgan, 1999; EOC 2004; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008), as they 'struggle to maintain comfortable levels of conformity with the settlement expectations of non-Aboriginal society, and simultaneously foster and uphold the practices of self-governance and cultural distinctiveness' (Prout, 2008:6). The resultant 'threats' to Indigenous ways of life engender feelings of vulnerability, humiliation and shame that significantly impinge upon the residential experiences of these Indigenous tenants (Morgan, 1999; EOC 2004; Prout, 2008; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Milligan et al., 2010:66).   In turn, these negative residential experiences destabilise Indigenous tenancies leading to homelessness or itinerancy (Prout, 2008:9, 28). This account of tenancy experiences and outcomes for Indigenous urban public housing tenants calls into question the likely success/quality of Indigenous public housing tenancies within current housing reforms.

Furthermore, there is also recognition, even within government, that the complexity of some policy problems limits the capacity for traditional behavioural change approaches to produce behavioural change (APSC 2007a:iii). Such cases are believed to call for additional tools and understanding about 'how to engage citizens in cooperative behavioural change' (APSC 2007a:iii). The deepest criticisms of this approach are arguably theoretical. These critiques concern its singular policy focus

on the individual and the de-emphasis on social and cultural context and need. Specifically, the rational choice model's[2] focus on attitudes and desires are understood to create a blind spot around how needs and aspirations come to be so, whilst subsequent policy approaches fail to address the related broader issues such as the ways people need to live (Shove, 2010). Its dismissal of contextual influences on human behaviour denies the impacts of peer pressure, family expectations and other key motivators and the difficulties 'for individuals to accurately estimate future costs and benefits particularly if there are high levels of uncertainty around them', as acknowledged by government (APSC 2007a:8). Policy references to contextual factors, motivators, barriers and social norms represent attempts to remedy these theoretical shortcomings, although they also reveal the indeterminate nature of possible behavioural determinants within this model. These policy references in turn lead to calls for more 'holistic approaches', and allow policy makers 'to selectively focus on barriers which are unrelated to the role or previous effects of policy itself' (Shove, 2010:1275). On the other hand, policy references to 'locked-in' behaviours and habits imply path dependency (E.g. APSC 2007a) and thus represent inconsistencies in the application of theory to policy. These criticisms hint at the inadequacies of the lexicon of the rational choice model for discussions on significant social transformation.

1. 3   POLICY CONTEXT FOR REMOTE INDIGENOUS HOUSING

1.3.1   Indigenous Affairs Policy: Past & Present

A notable feature of Australia's Indigenous policy domain is the frequency and speed at which policies have been formulated, overturned and redirected throughout the last century. Following periods of protectionism and then assimilation, policy in the latter half of the 20th century is broadly characterised by the Australian Government's continual reassessment of their role in relation to Indigenous need (Maddison, 2009:1). Today, the Labor Indigenous Affairs agenda follows global

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trends in welfare reform, eschewing welfarist convictions of the State's role in citizen disadvantage, in favour of the neo-liberal view of the citizen's responsibility to the State.

Indigenous Affairs Policy: Background

From the early-1970s to the mid-1990s, both Labor and Coalition governments implemented policies that in principle favoured Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous rights.   Such policies were predicated on the notion that Indigenous organisations were best placed to address Indigenous issues. Accordingly, government legislation and programs supported Indigenous control over their lives. This encouraged the creation of an 'Indigenous Sector' which included statutory bodies such as land councils, native title bodies, as well as regional councils, community government councils acting as local governments, and Indigenous associations and corporations (Hunt, 2008:27).   At the micro-level, the predominantly localised Indigenous organisations responded to the need for community-level governance.   At the macro-level, the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1990, a government-designed and ministerially-controlled body, fulfilled the need for Indigenous representation at the national-level (Hunt, 2008:28). Whilst not without issue, Indigenous representation was finally given a place. Self-determination faced major hurdles: the complex federal legislative context, lack of Indigenous economic independence, poor Indigenous education levels, complaints about the limited national efforts towards Indigenous capacity building, and inadequate policy support (Sutton, 2010; Hunt, 2008). Notwithstanding these, on the whole the policy principle of self-determination was well accepted and some gains were made (Hunt, 2008).

However, pressure for concrete improvements to statistical indicators of Indigenous disadvantage quickly outweighed the policy's popularity, and a different response appeared the only way forward. The election of Howard's Coalition Government in 1996, combined with deteriorating government-Indigenous relations, provided the momentum for this change (Sanders, 2006a). Howard's 'Practical Reconciliation' approach, rationalised by inadequate statistical improvement, switched the focus from self-determination and rights to Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage and

the statistical deficit-reduction (Taylor, 2009; Rowse, 2008).[3] While marketed as a 'new' solution, critics exposed this as little more than moving Indigenous specific programs to mainstream departments with demonstrably little capacity to meet Indigenous need (See Altman, 2004). Further criticism was levelled at the government's selective response to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's (CAR) recommendations for sustaining the 10-year national reconciliation process. These recommendations involved promoting recognition of Indigenous rights, overcoming disadvantage, and fostering economic independence (CAR, 2000). This criticism reinforced the contradiction between 'practical reconciliation' and rights-based approaches.

In 2004, new national arrangements for Indigenous Affairs were announced without Indigenous consultation. This shift was about 'harnessing the mainstream' to better address Indigenous disadvantage through a coordinated whole-of-government approach under a single Indigenous budget. Indigenous self-responsibility and mutual obligations were the new key policy principles. ATSIC and the network of 35 elected regional councils were abolished in favour of direct partnership with Indigenous communities. Whist Indigenous consultation never eventuated, the key policy tools Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICC) and Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRA) were intended to facilitate direct dialogue with Indigenous communities. In practice, their successful was questionable. The primary criticisms concerned the government's willingness to bypass competent Indigenous organisations to negotiate directly with Indigenous communities. The implication was that Indigenous people, beyond the local level and micro matters, were no longer represented in relation to the significant issues of service provision. From 2007, Regional Partnership Agreements (NPA) began to shift the focus away from SRAs.

While these changes took place, a mounting and increasingly powerful narrative of the alleged failure of self-determination policies developed. In 2006, Indigenous Affairs Minister Brough's (2006) *Blueprint for Action in Indigenous Affairs* provided further confirmation of the government's rejection of collective self-determination in favour of support for the individual's right to choose their way of life, albeit one that embraced the 'mainstream', and aligned with the market economy (Hunt, 2008:32).

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[3] For an analysis of governance through statistics see Altman (2009a) and Saetnam et al (2011).

The key messages were about giving Indigenous Australians equitable access to services on the same basis as other Australians, removing barriers to economic opportunity, and that the role of the individual (rather than the community) was critical (Hunt, 2008:31). The election of Rudd's Labor government in 2007 prompted speculation of the imminent rejection of this approach. However, in many ways policy has continued, and even enhanced, the previous government's approach that differentiated Indigenous citizens both from other Australians, and even from other Indigenous citizens, on jurisdictional and racial criteria (Altman, 2009b:8), albeit with a marked increase in financial investments and joint Commonwealth and State commitments.

1.3.2 Indigenous Affairs Policy: Since 2008

The contemporary policy objective is the elimination of Indigenous disadvantage through the pursuit of socio-economic and health (statistical) equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This new agenda is driven by three imperatives: to overcome decades of under-investment in services and infrastructure; to encourage and support personal responsibility as the foundation for healthy, functional families and communities; and to build new understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (FaHCSIA, 2009). The 2008 National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage (CTG) is the overarching policy strategy for achieving these outcomes. It has established ambitious targets for narrowing the statistical gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (FaHCSIA, 2009) and includes seven key building blocks to address specific areas of Indigenous disadvantage, namely: early childhood, schooling, healthy homes, safe communities, economic participation, governance and leadership (FaHCSIA, 2009).

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA), also signed in 2008, gives policy weight to CTG to drive fundamental reforms in remote housing, health, early childhood development, jobs and improvements in remote service delivery. This agreement integrates the activities of federal and state agencies and provides a Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment of $3.6 billion over ten years, with a further $1 billion from the States and Territories. NIRA outlines the objectives and outcomes that all Australian jurisdictional governments are committed to achieving. It is structured through a series of National Partnership Agreements which target five key areas: the mainstreaming of Indigenous housing,

service delivery in remote communities, land tenure reform, welfare reform and strategies for reducing homelessness. NIRA thus provides a holistic picture of the action being taken to meet CTG objectives.

Significantly, following broader welfare reform trends, this current Indigenous reform agenda entails a new welfare agenda based on individual responsibility and behavioural change (Brough, 2006; Altman & Hinkson, 2010:268; Buckmaster, 2011). NIRA is described as 'principles to…promote personal responsibility and behaviours consistent with positive social norms' (Altman, 2010:268). This represents a paradigm shift from the structural view of Indigenous disadvantage to the broad uptake of the neo-liberal belief in the responsibilities that individuals have for the disadvantage they experience. This new order is thereby legitimated through a reframing of the current state of Indigenous Australia, and especially Indigenous communities, in terms of its dysfunction and the individual's role in creating and maintaining it. Essential to this reframing is the repositioning of Indigenous 'difference' as a 'threat' to themselves and mainstream society on the grounds that 'they do not behave like other Australians and are not motivated by the same aspirations' (Altman, 2009a:6). An inference of this paradigm is that 'those who have not adapted to modern society…are trapped in immoral cultures' (Martin, 2011). Recasting the individual's role in Indigenous social dysfunction provides a political case not only for ignoring the rubric of Indigenous culture (values and aspirations), but for pursuing a focus on transforming their communities and lives in particular directions (Martin, 2006:7).

As stated previously, behavioural change theory resonates with widely shared views about the primacy of individual agency in determining social order and human action. Its application provides a concise agenda for policy entailing the use of traditional policy tools to modify behaviour in the public interest include regulations, legislation, sanctions, taxes and subsidies, and the provision of public services and information (APSC 2007a). Accordingly, and in response to criticisms of previous 'socially corruptive' passive welfare approaches (Pearson, 2000), new demands are made on the citizen (Kowal, 2008:342). The state is responsible for providing the conditions for 'the good life', but in turn, the individual must exercise 'active responsible citizenship' (Rose, 2000:1398). Altman (2010:268) terms this new era a 'cultural trope of individual responsibility' for Indigenous people. The Indigenous reform agenda is thus characterised by a distinct 'morally reformative character' and an 'increasingly strong focus on the moral reformation of the individual, abstracted

from his of her social and cultural nexus' through policies that 'emphasise human capital development and personal change for the individual' (Martin, 2006:7). This approach is also a reflection of the rights agenda being pursued: Indigenous people are equal citizens to be 'brought into the mainstream and normalised to the dominant way of life' (Hunt, 2008:40).

1.3.3   Current Indigenous Housing Policy

Improvements to housing are considered foundational to achieving CTG targets on the premise that decent housing is a prerequisite for securing housing and non-housing outcomes, such as health, education, family safety, employment, and 'the restoration of community norms' (FaHCSIA, 2009:20; COAG 2008c). Healthy Homes, one of NIRA's seven priority action areas frames housing reform as the solution to a complex array of housing and non-housing issues. NIRA states: 'A healthy home is a fundamental precondition of a healthy population' (COAG 2008b:7). It outlines the following outcome areas:

- *healthy living environments for Indigenous children;*
- *appropriate housing with access to all basic utilities for Indigenous families;*
- *improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding for Indigenous people (especially in remote areas and discrete communities);*
- *equal housing opportunities for Indigenous people as other Australians (COAG 2008b:73 Schedule C).*

Indigenous housing reform is driven by the 10-year National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) which was signed in 2009 by all States and the Northern Territory. NPARIH establishes new responsibilities for the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments: the Commonwealth is now the major funder for remote Indigenous housing, whilst responsibility for housing provision and management is devolved to the states and territories. State and territory housing authorities (SHA) are mandated to manage, maintain and upgrade Indigenous housing in accordance with mainstream public housing standards. New and existing housing assets must be held by the SHA under secure tenure, including long-term leases with Traditional Owners. The Commonwealth, as the major funder of housing reform, has committed $5.5 billion over 10 years (until 2018). The majority of this is allocated to the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure budget appropriation to be distributed to jurisdictional governments for the completion of a housing construction and refurbishment program: 4,200 new houses and approximately 4,800 upgrades/repairs to 26 priority remote Indigenous communities. The remainder covers a minor repairs and maintenance program, housing

functionality checks, tenancy management, improvements to town camps and the provision of employment related accommodation (COAG 2008c).

NPARIH aims to significantly reduce overcrowding; to increase the supply of new houses and improve the condition of existing housing; and to ensure rental houses are well-maintained and managed in remote and town-camp communities through significant reforms to housing provision and management (COAG 2008c:5). Through this agreement, Indigenous tenants should be afforded appropriate, healthier living environements, improved amenity (such as suitable and culturally-inclusive services) and reduced overcrowding (COAG 2008b:73 Schedule C). Furthermore, as a subset of the broader national housing agenda, the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), there is an additional nationwide government housing objective to provide safe, secure and sustainable housing (COAG 2008a). This NAHA objective is identified in jurisdictional-level policy references to 'sustainable tenancies', even though there is no direct mention of sustainable housing or sustainable tenancies in NPARIH.

Critically, the 2008 reforms mark a significant structural break in government approaches to remote and town-camp Indigenous housing policy. Pre-2008, government endorsed a community-housing approach to Indigenous housing provision (FaCS 2001:4) and advocated for Indigenous housing policies and programs developed and administered in partnership with Indigenous communities. This policy approach is abandoned in the 2008 Indigenous housing reforms through the government endorsement of a public housing system for the provision and management of housing in remote and town-camp communities. These reforms thus mark a critical policy shift in Indigenous housing policy and the beginning of a new era for Indigenous housing in which the primary government emphasis is the delivery of standardised tenancy and property management and the promotion of personal (tenant) responsibility.

1. 4 RESEARCH AIM

Housing welfare - dependency on government assistance for one's housing - is widespread and intergenerational amongst Indigenous Australians, especially in remote and town-camp communities. The provision of housing welfare to these areas is the epitome of a 'wicked' policy problem (APSC 2007b): resistant to resolution despite decades of government policy focus. Policy failure (whether rhetoric or reality) has characterised the history of the design, provision and

management of housing in Indigenous communities. Policies, and their associated metrics, have continually failed to accommodate Indigenous-specific housing needs, notwithstanding increased acknowledgement of their existence. Today, in spite all this, housing policy is repositioned as the cornerstone of Indigenous Affairs reform to redress Indigenous social and economic disadvantage. Informed by neoliberal views of Indigenous dysfunction, and the individual's role in this, the government adopts a behavioural change approach to induce tenants to adopt ways of life consistent with western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy. One important objective of these reforms, and the focus of this research, is securing sustainable Indigenous tenancies. Meeting this objective offers a potential reprieve for Indigenous people from an enduring cycle of housing policy failure. Accordingly, based on the ontological assumption that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between housing reforms and tenancy outcomes, the aim of this thesis is to address the following research question:

How can current Indigenous housing reforms lead to sustainable tenancies for residents in Indigenous town-camp communities?

This study therefore seeks to examine the initial implementation of current housing reforms in Indigenous town-camp communities. In particular, this study aims to investigate the ways in which these reforms can lead to sustainable tenancies for Indigenous town-camp tenants.

However, as noted in Section 1. 2, the behavioural change theories of social change, on which these reforms are premised, are problematic and alternative social change paradigms have arisen to address their perceived flaws. Rather than wholly denouncing behavioural change approaches, the purpose of these paradigms is to better account for the range of factors that promote social change to provide insight into potential new avenues for promoting social change and to generate different understandings of the policy problem (Shove, 2011:264). One such theoretical alternative is loosely termed 'social practice theory' (Bourdieu, 1987; Giddens, 1986; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002; Warde, 2005).

A critical feature of social practice theory is that social change is located in the development and performance of social practices rather than in individual behaviours (Warde, 2005). By shifting the subject of social change, social practice theory overcomes the singular focus on the individual (and their attitudes, opinions

and preferences) that characterise behavioural change paradigms of social change. This shift in locus calls for a parallel shift in analytical focus - from behaviours to practices. Within this paradigm, everyday social practices are loosely conceived as an activity within the social domain such as sleeping, eating or cleaning. An analytical framework for undertaking a social practice analysis describes social practices as moderated and mediated by four elements: rules, material infrastructures, practical knowledge and common understandings (Strengers, 2009). Within this paradigm, the impact of current housing reforms is gauged at the micro-level through changes in social practices.

Accordingly, in order to understand both the macro- and micro-level contexts for these housing reforms, this investigation is guided by a dual approach to the analysis of the systems of housing welfare provision and the lived experience of these systems. The first approach is a thematic analysis of Indigenous housing stakeholders' perspectives on the systems of housing welfare provision (macro-level context). The second approach is a social practice-based analysis of the Indigenous tenants' lived experience of housing welfare (micro-level context).

Given the unprecedented nature of current Indigenous housing reforms and the subsequent limited understanding of how the reform agenda may impact on tenancy outcomes, a series of interrelated questions need to be answered to inform the primary research question.

Specifically, with regards to current Indigenous housing reforms:

How effectively is the post-2007 reform agenda for town-camp Indigenous housing being delivered?

What is the lived experience of town-camp tenants in the early stages of the reforms?

How do the systems of provision under these reforms align (or not) with the lived experience of Indigenous tenants?

Where do opportunities exist (approaches and paradigms) to optimise positive tenancy outcomes?

Together these lines of inquiry are used in this thesis to identify and address the shortcomings of the current Indigenous housing reforms in achieving sustainable tenancies.

The empirical research in this thesis centres on the Indigenous town-camp communities of Halls Creek and Alice Springs. Indigenous town-camps (or 'fringe camps' as they were called until the 1980s when the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs established the term) (Ross, 2000), accommodate not just Indigenous rural migrants but also Traditional Owners displaced by town formation (Memmott, 1991). Until the 1980s, and the creation of the Town Campers' Assistance Program, these were a largely neglected housing arena. Since this time, Alice Springs (Heppell & Wigley, 1981; Drakakis-Smith, 1980; 1981; Collmann, 1979a; 1979b; 1988; Sanders, 2004) and to a lesser extent in Halls Creek (Ross, 1987), have been the focus of several social science studies. However, whilst they have long been considered an urban blight and the site of complex social problems (Ross, 2000) and whilst they share many similar social and economic issues with remote Indigenous communities, they also differ, perhaps most markedly, on the grounds of their access to town services and amenities. References to the literature on remote Indigenous communities in this thesis are made with acute awareness of these differences.

Throughout this thesis, the terms 'western'/'western ways of living' and 'Indigenous ways of living' are used. 'Western ways of living' refers to the legislated and expected standards and modes of living under public housing management in Australia. 'Indigenous ways of living' refers to the ways in which Indigenous people occupy and use houses in remote and town-camp communities in Australia. These terms are used with awareness of the inherent generalisations their usage implies and which conceals recognised (and often substantial) variations that exist across these two terms.

1. 5   RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This research is significant in four ways. First, it coincides with fundamental housing reforms for remote and town-camp communities across Australia. Government investments in housing have been made on the premise that housing is foundational to remedying widespread and pervasive social and economic disadvantage for residents in these communities. However, although a growing body of literature provides diverse disciplinary perspectives on Indigenous housing problems, the

timing of these reforms dictates that very little research has, as yet, been undertaken on current policy implementation. A rare exception to this is the 'Desert Services that Work: Demand Responsive Services for Desert Settlements' project undertaken between the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) and Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) in Alice Springs, which examines the delivery of housing and tenancy management reforms between 2008 and 2009 in two remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Of particular relevance, Porter (2009a; 2009b) investigated both the rationalisations for the policy shift from community housing to public housing management, and the potential for the public housing model to improve service delivery. A desktop policy analysis identified potential areas where policy adjustments are needed to provide a better 'fit' for remote Indigenous communities. However, a research need remains for empirical studies of the impact of current housing reforms, and for additional comparative and town-camp based studies, especially given the prevalence of ideological-driven policy approaches. This research gap is particularly significant given the urgent need to improve Indigenous outcomes – both housing and non-housing – through these reforms. By undertaking this research, it is anticipated that it will offer timely insights for the ongoing reform process.

Second, given the infancy of these reforms, there is little understanding of the ways in which higher-level, Commonwealth and state housing policy is translated, experienced or understood at the local-level. Indeed the policy-to-practice translation has not previously been a strong focus of Indigenous housing research. Yet capturing and understanding this translation process is fundamental as it affects how we understand the house, the public housing management model, and what it is that shapes what tenants do. Accordingly, this research is also significant as understanding how these reforms may transform what tenants do (their ways of living) requires us to open up the 'implementation black box' and study the relationship between policy and what happens on the ground (Mosse, 2004:643) in unprecedent ways.

Third, the focus of this research is uncommon in the context of Indigenous housing research. The prevailing trend in this research field is for studies on individual elements of housing design, provision or management and for broad-focused studies set at the policy and system levels (Long et al., 2008a). This research varyingly draws from multiple disciplines: anthropology, architecture, policy and politics, and housing studies (including housing management and tenancy support

literature). It is significant in considering the concurrent impact of a broad range of approaches on tenancies, shunning dominant trends to investigate changes in housing management, construction programs and tenant support in isolation. It is also significant in focusing primarily on how these approaches shape what tenants do, resisting trends to focus on a particular outcome area (such as health or overcrowding).

Fourth, Indigenous tenants' everyday living practices are not well understood, especially in the context of specific government interventions. A significant research gap exists regarding how the infrastructure of the house is used (McDonald, 2011), how it shapes how tenants live, and how tenants shape housing in turn. This research contributes to understandings of housing and household practice, and the potential role of regulatory contexts, support contexts, and physical contexts in addressing tenants' housing needs (such as the need for home). In addition, the social practice approach adopted here extends our understanding of the ways these factors interrelate to shape how tenants live, thus providing a new perspective on an enduring policy problem. It also contributes to the development of empirical social practice theory research by applying it to a new research field.

1. 6 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis comprises seven chapters. This chapter began by describing an Indigenous housing problem and the policy context for this. In response to this, it then established a research aim and outlined its significance.

Chapter two provides a review of the relevant policy and literature related to this study. This review canvasses four critical areas: (i) Indigenous housing welfare; (ii) current Indigenous housing reforms; (iii) the sustaining tenancies agenda; and (iv) social practice theory. It begins by describing the impact of housing welfare on Indigenous tenants' lives, exposing how a tension between housing welfare interventions and Indigenous ways of life destabilises Indigenous tenancies. Second, it details the current Indigenous housing reforms, and contextualises these by exposing the ideological and theoretical foundations for the current policy positioning. It also raises questions about the potential impacts of jurisdictional autonomy during policy implementation. Third, it describes sustaining tenancies as an emergent agenda for social housing. In explaining its problematic uptake in public housing, the discussion highlights the contested roles played by housing staff

in an attempt to reconcile competing agendas. Fourth, in response to the prevailing policy focus on tenant behavioural change and concerns about the practical and theoretical inadequacies of this approach, Chapter 2 describes social practice theory as a compelling alternative social change theory and reveals its relevance in understanding and exploring social change.

Chapter three outlines the research design of this study. It comprises an overview of the research approach, an account of the data collection techniques (which include informal interviews and observation) and a discussion of trustworthiness and ethics issues in undertaking this research. It concludes with an overview of the conduct of this study.

Chapter 4 and **Chapter 5** report on the results of the case studies in the Northern Territory (Alice Springs) and Western Australia (Halls Creek) respectively. Each chapter comprises two key parts that detail the systems of housing welfare provision (macro context) and the lived experiences of housing welfare in these town-camps (micro context). In the first of these, a thematic analysis is applied to stakeholders' perspectives of the implementation of current reforms. This is used to understand and describe the provision of public housing standards of housing management and the provision of tenant support during the early phases of housing reforms, and the issues impacting on its provision. The second part uses a social practice-based analysis to understand and describe the lived experience of housing welfare provision in the town-camps. This dual approach to the analysis of the data provides new ways of understanding the compatibility between the systems of housing welfare provision and the lived experience of town-camp tenants which are investigated in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 6 provides a two-part analysis of this study to understand the ways in which current Indigenous housing strategies might support sustainable tenancies. The first part reviews the impact (and potential impact) of the current systems of housing welfare provision on how tenants live. The four constituent elements of social practice are used to structure this review. This provides insights into the incompatibilities between the current systems of housing provision and Indigenous ways of life, and new ways of understanding these. The second part analyses the discussion of the systems of housing welfare provision within the context of the sustaining tenancies agenda. It reviews the extent to which key sustaining tenancies interventions are incorporated within the reforms. Finding this

problematic, it then discusses the potential for jurisdictional-level amendments to the public housing model to ameliorate the uptake of this significant agenda. This highlights an opportunity to alleviate the incompatibilities identified in the previous analysis.

Chapter 7 provides an overview of how current Indigenous housing reform strategies can lead to sustainable tenancies (the aim of this study). It also discusses the contributions and limitations of this research and future directions for research.

2 INDIGENOUS HOUSING WELFARE & SUSTAINING TENANCIES

2. 1 INTRODUCTION

Indigenous housing reforms are foundational to the current government response to pervasive Indigenous social and economic disadvantage in town-camp and remote communities. Alongside a construction program aimed at improving housing infrastructure, these reforms seek to provide safe, secure and sustainable housing (COAG 2008a). As such, the reforms involve the transfer of responsibility for housing management from Indigenous community housing organisations to State/Territory government and the introduction of new tenant support programs. These reforms are premised on behavioural change theories aimed at modifying the behaviour of Indigenous tenants so that they conform with conventional western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy. The scope and content of these reforms is unparalleled in Indigenous housing management in town-camp and remote Indigenous communities. The likelihood of achieving the government objective for sustainable Indigenous public housing tenancies is unknown, especially given the infancy of these reforms.

The function of this chapter is to review the literature and policy related to this study in order to investigate the potential for these housing reforms to meet this objective. This chapter comprises four sections. The first section establishes the impacts of housing welfare on the lives of Indigenous tenants. It reveals significant, enduring tension between housing welfare interventions and Indigenous ways of living, and demonstrates that this is detrimental to tenancy outcomes. To understand how these tensions are addressed in current reforms, the second section contextualises and details current Indigenous housing reforms. It begins with a review of the policy shift to public housing, before discussing the ideological tensions and theoretical positionings behind these reforms to reveal the individual responsibility agenda at the heart of these reforms. It then details the scope and content of current housing reforms. In the third section, the focus shifts to the objective for sustainable tenancies. It describes sustaining tenancies as an emergent agenda for social housing and explains its problematic uptake in public housing. This exposes the contested roles played by housing staff in an attempt to reconcile multiple agendas. In response to the focus on tenant behavioural change within these reforms, and driven by concerns about the practical and theoretical inadequacies of this policy approach, the fourth section then turns to social practice theory as a compelling

alternative theory of social change. It discusses the appeal of this perspective for exploring social change.

2. 2   HOUSING WELFARE & INDIGENOUS WAYS OF LIVING

Dependency on housing welfare is widespread and intergenerational amongst Indigenous Australians, especially in remote and town-camp communities. Despite its many benefits, the receipt of housing welfare partially rescinds one's freedom to choose how to live, as the means and methods are largely determined by government. Housing welfare policy dictates and delimits housing options: dwelling type, its location, and its management. Although some, such as Ross (2000:10), suggest that housing may not 'loom large in [Indigenous] people's lifescapes', extensive Indigenous housing welfare dependency hints at the centrality of social housing[4] to Indigenous housing experiences, and its criticality in securing outcomes for Indigenous tenants.

The intent of this section is to capture the impact of housing welfare on Indigenous Australians - their housing experiences, their ways of living, and their tenancy outcomes. Section 2.2.1 describes the nature of Indigenous housing welfare dependency. In order to understand how this dependency shapes Indigenous housing experiences, the Indigenous experience of two substantive housing welfare approaches are described: Section 2.2.2 describes the Indigenous lived experience of the western style house as an imposed built environment; and Section 2.2.3, examines the lived experience of public housing as an imposed regulatory environment. Both subsections review how Indigenous ways of living are preserved or reshaped within these imposed environments and the implications of this for their tenancies outcomes. Together these subsections hint at a problematic disconnection between housing welfare and Indigenous ways of living, one which appears to have critical repercussions for Indigenous tenants and their tenancies. To shed light on the impact of this disconnection on housing outcomes, Section 2.2.4 reviews the evidence of Indigenous housing welfare outcomes. This exposes the evaluation of housing welfare approaches as problematic.

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[4] Social housing is an umbrella term for government subsidised housing. It includes both community housing (including Indigenous-specific programs) and public housing (Jones et al., 2007).

2.2.1 Housing Welfare Dependency

Most Indigenous people are dependent on housing welfare to meet their housing needs. Prior to current reforms this translated to an intergenerational reliance on community housing (managed by Indigenous community housing organisations) in remote areas; or a reliance on community housing or public housing (managed by government) in urban and regional areas. These Indigenous social housing tenancies are characterised by their length and instability. They are shorter than non-Indigenous tenancies due to higher rates of eviction and abandonment (Flatau et al. 2005). They are also riddled with instability: a survey of urban Indigenous social housing tenants found that 70% had moved domiciles within a 10-year period, and almost half of these respondents had moved four or more times, and some up to seven times (Beer & Faulkner, 2009:94).

Indigenous housing careers[5] - 'the sequence of housing stages that an individual…moves through over a lifetime' - are thus characterised by domiciliary instability and residential turnover (Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007; Flatau et al., 2004:glossary). Beyond this, comparatively little is known about the specific features of Indigenous housing careers, despite growing attention over the past two decades. It is recognised that significant differences in the cultural values and aspirations; demography; geographic location; policy settings; and socio-economic circumstances of Indigenous Australians require Indigenous-specific studies of their housing careers, yet such studies are scarce (Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007; Beer et al., 2006; Beer & Faulkner, 2009; Long et al., 2008a). Exceptions to this predominantly focus on specific geographic areas (such as particular towns or communities), and comparative studies tend to focus on one jurisdiction. Equally, broad-based housing career studies, with non-culturally specific methodologies, have resulted in underrepresentation and limited insights into Indigenous housing careers (Beer et al., 2006; Beer & Faulkner, 2009).

Notwithstanding this research paucity, Indigenous housing career trends (especially social housing dependency and tenancy instability) are substantiated by limited detailed ethnographic studies of urban Indigenous housing careers in Perth, Broome

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[5] The term 'housing careers' is used here with awareness of the debates surrounding research approaches to housing studies (housing careers, housing histories, housing pathways or a housing transitions) (Beer et al., 2006:8). However, this is not a primary focus of this research.

and Carnarvon in Western Australia (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007). These highlight a common housing experience: renting, especially from a public housing provider (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008:12). Indigenous participants perceived themselves 'as petitioners with needs they must fulfil from a narrow range of service and resource providers', rather than consumers with a palette of housing options (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008:36). Public housing was favoured because of the stability and longevity of its leasing arrangements. Stability is used in two senses:

> *One is the sense of personal knowledge of a home that comes from longevity of tenure, which sometimes stretches over more than one generation of a family. The other is the value placed on being able to achieve such longevity (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008:1).*

Such findings challenge popular perceptions of social housing as a temporary housing solution.

Further to this, a body of (predominantly anthropological) research addressing aspects of Indigenous ways of life (such as mobility or kinship-related behaviours), provides insight into the identified Indigenous housing career trends by exposing two important cultural determinants (Beer et al., 2006; Beer & Faulkner, 2009; Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007). The first of these is Indigenous mobility. This occurs between remote communities, town-camps, regional areas and metropolitan areas, and arises from, for example, traditional cultural values (attendance at ceremonies and visiting family); overcrowding and escape from violence; and health and service access. Indigenous mobility is influential on tenure type and longevity (Minnery et al., 2000; Habibis et al., 2010; Memmott et al., 2004; Memmott et al., 2006; Prout, 2008; Beer & Faulkner, 2009:94), although the reverse is also true (See Section 2.2.3 on the impacts of public housing). The second factor is kin-based attachments to place and kin-relatedness, which together form a particularly important determinant (far more so than for non-Indigenous Australians) of residential choice and household composition in urban and regional Indigenous communities, (Beer & Faulkner, 2009; Birdsall, 1988; Birdsall 1990 in Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007; Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Prout, 2008). These two determinants intertwine, especially in the context of alternate Indigenous networks of support and reciprocity (termed the 'Indigenous domestic moral

economy'),[6] to destabilise the tenancy. For instance, instability arises from conflict within and between kin, or from overcrowding resulting from Indigenous mobility and associated cultural imperatives (Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007). Arguably, these factors can also encourage domiciliary stability. For example, kin-based attachments to place 'act to encourage continuity of residence within the kin group's locality and region of affiliation, and to a lesser degree, continuity of residence in particular domiciles (Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007:1).

However, whilst instability in Indigenous housing careers may be a product of these cultural factors, it is not solely traceable to these. Indigenous dependency on housing welfare dictates the imposition of built and regulatory living environments, such as conventional western houses and particular forms of housing management. The following subsections review the Indigenous experience of these housing welfare approaches, and in doing so implicates them in the housing instability discussed herein.

2.2.2   Imposed Built Environments: The House

The provision of shelter is a substantive component of housing welfare. Throughout the history of colonial settlement, beginning with government-run reserves and church missions, conventional European-style houses (hereafter: houses/housing) have been provided to accommodate and also control and institutionalise Indigenous people (Ross, 2000). This avenue for imposing 'dominant non-Indigenous cultural values' is founded on government's 'Eurocentric expectations that assumed sedentary lifestyles and nuclear families as the norm' (Milligan et al., 2010:64; Sanders, 2000; Prout, 2008; Musharbash, 2008). During the protectionist and assimilationist eras, the government variously viewed this provision as a 'protecting' or 'civilising' mechanism against 'primitive' Indigenous ways of living, and as a vehicle for cultural change (Fantin, 2003; Ross, 2000). For instance, assimilationist housing policies (1950s-1972) were predicated on the understanding that the progression of Indigenous people's living arrangements from traditional camp to house should be staged, beginning with a very rudimentary 'transitional

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[6] This terminology is borrowed from Peterson and Taylor (2003) and used throughout this thesis to refer to Indigenous networks of support and reciprocity, of which 'sharing with kin' is a key feature (for dicussion on reciprocity see Altman, 2011).

house' (later labeled a 'sweat-box') (Heppell, 1979). Whilst current housing reforms shy away from such outwardly paternalistic and patronising rhetoric, long-held and enduring government assumptions that (well-maintained) housing has the power to instil certain behavioural changes in tenants towards western ways of living and managing their tenancy remain (Musharbash, 2008:39). The designation of a behavioural change role for housing is illustrated, for instance, through three case studies in the Closing the Gap – Prime Minister's Report 2011. These case studies infer that appropriate housing management will lead to a tenant's employment; will improve children's school attendance; and will encourage tenants to educate their children about health and hygiene (FaHCSIA 2011:37–38).

As a result of the Indigenous dependency on housing welfare (Section 2.2.1), Indigenous Australian communities have lived for some time in imposed built environments, dislocated from their own vernacular traditions (i.e. built environments designed and constructed by Indigenous people). In much of the western world, the house represents a permanent structure for the physical and ontological protection of a stationary, nuclear family (Prout, 2008). The house also embodies Eurocentric cultural frameworks, including European codifications of domestic space that designate specific spaces for particular domestic activities (Wigley & Wigley, 2003). These houses represent a marked departure from Indigenous vernacular traditions such as traditional flexible, seasonal Indigenous shelters (and their spatial arrangements within the camp), which were generated from 'distinct spatial and cognitive rules and behaviours' (Memmott, 2000:104) and which accommodated various configurations of family units (Sanders, 2000) and activities within and around them (Reser, 1979). Critically, these living environments were 'broadly consistent with [Indigenous] cultural values and physical requirements' (Ross, 1987:59).

Over time, Indigenous people have varyingly adjusted to some aspects of sedentary life. Indeed some Indigenous people have come to share western aspirations for 'moving into a house and creating a sense of home' (Ross, 2000:13). However, suggestions that this represents an Indigenous aspiration for western ways of living and a desire for the western values of privacy, stability, and future-orientation, have been criticised as misinterpretations (Musharbash, 2008). These criticisms stem from the problematic standpoint of a 'Western series of building-dwelling-thinking' (Musharbash, 2008:156) and from a decontextualising of 'the house' from housing provision and management systems. Together these interpretations paint a false

picture of Indigenous housing aspirations (Ross, 1987; Sanders, 2008). For other Indigenous people the house is more incidental to their lives (Ross, 2000:13).

Cultural traditions and imperatives - especially Indigenous mobility (Prout, 2008) and the Indigenous domestic moral economy (Peterson & Taylor 2003) - inform Indigenous ways of living that continue to clash with western expectations about occupying a house (Fien et al., 2007:10). This lack of fit between conventional housing and Indigenous ways of life has encouraged studies of Indigenous domiciliary behaviours (Heppell, 1979; Ross, 1987; Memmott, 1988; 1991; 1996; Fantin, 2003; Lee & Morris, 2005; Long et al., 2008a; Keys, 1999; Musharbash, 2008). Some of these suggest Indigenous 'social dynamics' or 'patterns of life' from traditional camps translate uneasily to the conventional house (See for example: Heppell, 1979; Ross, 1987) and that this disjuncture necessitates 'some adaptation…either on the part of the [Indigenous] people, or the way they use the house' (Ross, 2002:140). An alternative suggestion is that there is a more bi-directional and reflexive relationship between housing and Indigenous ways of life (See for example: Musharbash, 2008; Fantin, 2003).

Where the built environment inhibits culturally prescribed ways of living, the house is described as a source of stress, frustration and dissatisfaction for its inhabitants (Ross, 1987; Fantin, 2003; Fien et al., 2010; Reser, 1979), and the symbol and target of 'many concrete problems and frustrations' (Reser 1976:22 in Fantin, 2003:14). For instance, living with extended family in a conventional house may result in unintentional, stressful breaches of Indigenous cultural imperatives (despite learnt adeptness), due to its physical constraints (Fantin, 2003). At the extreme, Reser (1979:69) personifies the tension between house and Indigenous ways of living, likening conventional housing to 'a virtual straightjacket' for Indigenous people. Equally, Indigenous resistance and struggle to adapt to the fixed socio-spatial arrangements of the house (Attwood, 2000) may place 'stress' on the house itself (Fantin, 2003). Examples of this include infrastructure overuse due to overcrowding; infrastructure damage (solely to imposed built environments) caused by high occupant stress levels resulting in aggression and violence (Reser 1976, p.22 in Fantin, 2003:13);[7] coupled with inadequate repairs and maintenance

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[7] Although research suggests such issues are not endemic, and that as little as 10% of the housing maintenance jobs are the product of vandalism or misuse (Torzillo et al., 2008).

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services to remedy these issues. These tensions have encouraged the 'cultural design' approach to Indigenous housing which views understandings of Indigenous ways of living as foundational to appropriate house designs (Memmott, 1988; Keys, 1999; Fantin, 2003).

The incompatibility between the house and Indigenous ways of living is symptomatic of deep-seated differences between western and Indigenous understandings of the role and purpose of housing (Prout, 2008). On a conceptual level, divergent understanding of home remind us that the concept of dwelling is not unequivocal:

> *its connotations vary between cultures and between individuals and the interpretation of what constitutes a dwelling, its meaning and use, will depend on the experience and cultural framework of the individual employing it (Fantin, 2003:8).*

In this context, the house is a site of contestation between two cultural or value systems (Sanders, 2000), namely between incongruent, contradictory western and Indigenous expectations and desires. Musharbash (2008:156) captures this contestation:

> *…houses are physical manifestations of the intersection of two opposing series of building-dwelling-thinking…there are two readings – houses as symbolising the state's expectations and houses as symbolising [Indigenous] people's desires.*

In much of the western world, housing plays a critical role in satisfying our need for home. In this context, home is an intangible, multi-dimensional concept, although the literature identifies several normative meanings, including: family, identity, privacy, stability and belonging, and attachment. A 'home' in western civilisations represents a site of emotional shelter, identity creation, homemaking, and stability. Norberg-Schulz (1980:5) famously stated:

> *Man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment, or in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful. Dwelling therefore implies something more than 'shelter'. It implies that the spaces where life occurs are places, in the true sense of the word.*

The inter-changeability between house and home in western cultures (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Bachelard, 1994) is not universal (Shaw, 2004).

Western notions of home are challenged, and possibly incompatible with conceptualisations in Indigenous culture (Beer & Faulkner, 2009; Birdsall-Jones et al., 2010; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008; Cooper & Morris, 2005; Long et al., 2008a). In Indigenous culture, the cultural tradition of 'house-as-home', so common to most non-Indigenous Australians, is not replicated (Fien et al., 2007). Indeed the Indigenous experience of home is not necessarily

predicated on access to conventional accommodation: 'A person may have a sense of 'home,' a sense of belonging to a place (or set of places) and recognition and acceptance in such a place, but nevertheless may not have any conventional accommodation' (Memmott et al., 2003:i). For Indigenous people 'campsites and other places in the landscape, not specific shelters' are imbued with the stable links to the past and treasured memories commonly associated with 'home' in the western sense (Memmott, 2000:33).

Researchers contend that despite these divergent constructs of 'home', the experience of home remains an essential need (Relph, 1984). Autonomy – a household's control over how they live – is considered important to 'making a home' (Hulse et al., 2011), and is linked to environmental satisfaction, self-identity and mental health (Fantin, 2003; Reser, 1979). In this context, imposed physical environments that symbolise the hegemony of an alternative, dominant, non-Indigenous cultural framework are problematic. Musharbash (2008:157) explains: 'read this way, houses mediate the idea of what people do not have: control'. Thus the house, through its 'internalisation of white values', is to many Indigenous people, symbolic of both Indigenous deficiencies and settler state attempts 'to reform and remake their identities' (Reser, 1979:78). The implication is that the provision of conventional western housing may not address the Indigenous need for home in the way a house is presumed to for non-Indigenous Australians.

However, to suggest (as some have) that the sustainability of the 'social characteristics of Indigenous life' (Ross, 2002:140) is jeopardised by the imposition of conventional housing, is perhaps to overlook the bi-directional and reflexive relationship between built-form and culture (Fantin, 2003). Despite having resided in imposed built environments for some time, Indigenous Australians retain many traditional beliefs, identities and ways of living (See for example: Fantin, 2003; Musharbash, 2008). To illustrate this, Musharbash (2003) identifies three house usages that diverge from western expectations: Indigenous domestic activities such as sleeping, cooking, eating predominantly take place outside the house or on the veranda; most rooms are primarily used for storage, with sleeping or socialising a secondary usage; and Indigenous houses generally have fewer possessions and decorations. In this way, the conventional house, rather than being the 'source of intense frustration' that inhibits Indigenous ways of life, is commonly adapted by its occupants to suit their cultural lifestyles (Musharbash, 2008:37). Musharbash (2008:153) explains how traditional camps (such as the way beds, swags and

blankets are arranged) are in fact regularly adjusted to fit into western style houses: 'camps are adjusted to fit into new spaces (and times) and houses are appropriated to make camps fit into them'. In the same vein, Fantin (2003:169) exposes how Yonglu Indigenous people have 'managed to divert some of the social change intended with non-Indigenous housing by adopting those practices they find useful', such as technology (telephone, televisions and radios), and 'coping with or disregarding those practices that create dislocations in their own culture', such as housing occupancy regulations. Thus, despite the imposition of built environments, some Indigenous domiciliary traditions are conserved or incorporated through adaptation to fit the conventional house (Wigley & Wigley, 2003). As a result, Indigenous tenants maintain some sense of control over their houses by occupying them in ways that suit family organisation, composition and cultural imperatives, even when the environments are particularly unconducive to these (Fantin, 2003).

The ongoing Indigenous occupation and usage of houses in ways that do not coincide with western expectations challenges persistent government framings of the transformational power of conventional housing, and triggers relentless public criticism (Fantin, 2003; Musharbash, 2008; Wigley & Wigley 2003). There are multiple interpretations of this. For instance, Parnell and Seemann (2005) contend western values are 'not always obvious, acknowledged and valued' by Indigenous tenants. This in turn promotes 'substantial discontinuity in understandings of how to manage and maintain their housing' (Parnell & Seemann, 2005:340) which explains why Indigenous occupation and usage of houses continues to diverge from western expectations.

A cultural perspective frames these divergent Indigenous ways of living as coping mechanisms in response to imposed environmental stimuli. For instance, Fantin (2003:14) contends the Indigenous tendency to hang clothes on windows arises not simply from the need to dry clothes and the lack of clothesline, but from the limited visual privacy at night due to a lack of curtains and fears of malevolent spirits. In this way, Indigenous ways of living (such as aggression towards the house) are cast as culturally specific coping mechanisms. These are considered a necessary part of the 'adjustment process' that allows the resolution 'of tensions created by the demands of their environment' (Marsella & Dash-Scheuer, 1988 in Fantin, 2003:14). From this perspective, divergences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous coping mechanisms (due to imbedded differences in the constructions of the self; the communication of emotions; cultural assumptions about causality and control; and

objective life circumstances) help explain non-conformant Indigenous ways of living in a house (Reser 1991 p.250 in Fantin, 2003).

Reconciling imposed cultural change and Indigenous cultural preservation requires Indigenous people to 'maintain and live their cultural system within the context of non-Indigenous housing, education health, media and economics' (Fantin, 2003:220). Accordingly, as these non-Indigenous contexts evolve, the cultural imperatives of Indigenous Australia in remote and town-camp communities are reassessed and reformulated from within. Indigenous cultural production is not autonomous from externalities, but rather intimately related to non-Indigenous perceptions and frameworks encompassing or displacing it (Merlan, 1998). Fantin clarifies this: 'The principles behind each cultural imperative are maintained by Yonglu [Indigenous people] but change occurs in when and how Yonglu choose to apply the principles' (Fantin, 2003:220). Fantin describes how particular socially-prescribed Indigenous behaviours are abandoned in educational settings (as the non-Indigenous setting justifies altering cultural imperatives in that location), whilst in other cases the environment is changed rather than the behaviour (e.g., a woman leaves a workplace where adhering to prescribed cultural behaviours is too difficult, rather than changing these behaviours). Fantin concludes: 'depending on the environmental forces placed on them, individuals in different environments choose different responses to adhering to cultural prescribed behaviours' (Fantin, 2003:11).

This section demonstrates how Indigenous ways of life are preserved and adapted within conventional houses, sometimes in unanticipated ways. It reveals the conventional house as a site of contestation between two incongruent value systems, with damaging repercussions for both the tenant (such as feelings of stress, frustration and dissatisfaction) and for the house itself.

2.2.3 Imposed Regulatory Environments: Public Housing

Today, nearly 40% of all Indigenous social housing welfare recipients are housed in urban public housing (Milligan et al., 2010). However, this is a recent occurrence, as in the past Indigenous people were largely excluded from accessing mainstream housing welfare (Milligan et al., 2010:66). As stated in Chapter 1, the public housing model has been criticised for its poor acceptance of indigeneity (Walker & Barcham, 2010:318) and the imposition of Euro-centric cultural values and expectations on Indigenous tenants. From a housing provider perspective, Indigenous public

housing tenancies are likely to be shorter than non-Indigenous tenancies, to incur property damage and substantial repair and maintenance costs, to receive termination notices and to be abandoned (Prout, 2008; EOC 2004; Flatau et al., 2005). From the Indigenous tenant's perspective, the experience of urban public housing is one of alienation, marginalisation, perceptions of discrimination and discrimination, especially due to housing management practices (Morgan, 1999; EOC 2004; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008). The resultant 'threats' to Indigenous ways of life engender feelings of vulnerability, humiliation and shame in their dealings with state housing authority that significantly impinge upon the residential experiences of these Indigenous tenants (Morgan, 1999; EOC 2004; Prout, 2008; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Milligan et al., 2010:66). Indigenous tenants are 15% less satisfied than other public housing tenants, with satisfaction levels of 57% and 71% respectively (AIHW, 2009b; AIHW, 2009c; AIHW, 2009a). In turn, these negative residential experiences destabilise Indigenous tenancies, leading to homelessness or itinerancy (Prout, 2008:9, 28).

Previous housing policies have limited Indigenous experiences of public housing geographically to urban and regional areas. Insights into these experiences are provided by Birdsall-Jones and Corunna (2008); Cooper and Morris (2003; 2005); the extensive Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC 2004) inquiry into discriminatory practices in the provision of public housing to Indigenous tenants in Western Australia by Homeswest (Western Australia's SHA) (hereafter EOC inquiry); Morgan (1999) and Prout (2008). Western Australia is disproportionately represented in this literature largely due to the report from the EOC (2004) inquiry and other qualitative research (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Birdsall-Jones & Christensen, 2007; Cooper & Morris, 2003; 2005; Flatau et al., 2005). This section discusses three concerns raised in this literature: (i) the disconnection between public housing and Indigenous ways of living; (ii) the tenant-landlord relationship; and (iii) the impact on Indigenous ways of living.

The Disconnection between Public Housing and Indigenous Ways of Living

A substantial body of literature captures the disconnection between public housing and Indigenous ways of life. This is linked to previous, marginalising approaches of state housing authorities (SHA) (Milligan et al., 2010:66) and the Eurocentric foundations of current public housing that ignore Indigenous understandings about the role and purpose of housing (Prout, 2008:6,9). Three interrelated themes

capture the essence of this mismatch: (i) overcrowding, (ii) the Indigenous domestic moral economy, and (iii) the Indigenous mobility that maintains these.

Overcrowding is an outward manifestation of the contested relationship between Indigenous people and the public housing system (Prout, 2008). The impact of overcrowding is twofold: it has physical, social and emotional wellbeing impacts on Indigenous tenants; and impacts on the housing assets (increased property damage) and management costs (increased repairs and maintenance costs). Sub-standard accommodation, the lack of responsiveness to maintenance requests and poor repairs and maintenance services provide the critical backdrop to Indigenous tenants' experience of public housing. These conditions are then exacerbated by the prevalence of overcrowding that leads to higher than average repair liabilities (EOC 2004)[8] and, ultimately, compromise Indigenous tenants' health and safety (Pholeros, 1993; Shaw, 2004; Bailie & Wayte, 2006). One consequence of this is that Indigenous public housing tenants prefer to remain in inappropriate accommodation, rather than risk incurring high tenant liabilities on exiting their current property and transferring to more suitable accommodation.

Overcrowding is both a cause and consequence of a cycle of alienation from the public housing system. It increases household conflict, violence and property damage, and subsequent increased maintenance costs are linked to debt, eviction and preclusion from re-entering the public housing system (EOC 2004; Prout, 2008). Evictees often relocate with kin, thus exacerbating overcrowding. Accordingly, overcrowded public housing tenancies are a strong determinant of Indigenous tenancy failures. Based on these pervasive impacts, overcrowding is commonly a key measure for 'the effectiveness and appropriateness of housing programs for Indigenous populations, and the capacity of Aboriginal tenants to conform to appropriate settlement expectations' (Prout, 2008). However to singularly frame overcrowding as a supply issue is to partially misconstrue its origins based on a narrow understanding of the role of housing in the Indigenous lived experience (Sanders, 2000; Prout, 2008). It ignores both the Indigenous preference for living communally (despite restrictive accommodation) and the Indigenous patterns of mobility that produce this overcrowding (Prout, 2008:7).

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[8] There are suggestions that the responsibility for some of this accumulated debt is misplaced (For discussion see EOC 2004:204).

The embedded socio-cultural practices of the Indigenous domestic moral economy raise particular tenancy concerns. Hospitality towards kin is illustrative of this. Tenants are responsible for the conduct of visitors on their property (with consent) under the jurisdictional Residential Tenancy Acts (RTA). Yet, many tenants have little authority over their visitors and in some cases are intimidated by them (EOC 2004:214). Visitors and their activities lead to anti-social behaviour complaints: some legitimate, some discriminatory, that in turn evoke Indigenous tenants' sense of 'rejection and alienation' (EOC 2004:209). Hansen and Roche (2003:5 in Prout, 2008:11) describe a common sequence of events:

> *During times of funeral or family illness or crisis, rent becomes food provision for extended family members. Every room in the house is potential shelter for weary long-travelled mourners to lay their head. Paintwork becomes damaged, fly-screens are torn, keys are lost and windows are broken to gain entry. Water use escalates, as do costs for heating, cooking and lighting. The home becomes noisy. The children play and fight and laugh and throw a stone or two. The neighbours complain.*

The Indigenous domestic moral economy is maintained by Indigenous mobility. Public housing does not address Indigenous mobility needs, removed as these are, from its Eurocentric foundations. Public housing assumes tenants have rigid family structures and stationary lifestyles. The size and fluidity of Indigenous family units – 'that shares and travels, and expands and contracts according to family needs and events' – is incongruous with western ideals of family stability and stasis, and counter to restrictive public housing occupancy rates (Hansen & Roche 2003, p.5 in Prout, 2008:11). This incongruity is manifest in, for instance, the limited number of large public housing properties (with five or six bedrooms) and the subsequent institutionalisation of overcrowding (EOC 2004:165) despite large family sizes; and in the minimum-age requirements for public housing applicants (18 years) despite high numbers of Indigenous teen mothers who desire housing independence (EOC 2004).[9] Additionally, public housing is founded on individual responsibility for each tenancy. Yet for many Indigenous people, housing is neither a locational constraint nor something for which there is a cultural tradition of singular responsibility. Instead, 'the responsibility for [housing] can change and be shared amongst various family members' (Prout, 2008:8). Frequently abandoned tenancies (where tenants fail to give due notice for their absence or where properties are left to kin whilst tenants travel) lead to the incurrence of rental arrears, and high repairs and

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[9] However, SHAs have discretionary provisions for housing applicants between 16 and 18 years of age.

maintenance bills. Together, these fuel a cycle of tenant debt accumulation, tenancy destabilisation and alienation from public housing.

The disconnection between public housing and Indigenous ways of living described herein is exacerbated by the incompatibility between public housing procedural and administrative arrangements and the Indigenous lived experience (EOC 2004). Standard public housing protocols typify government unawareness of, or irresponsiveness to, the Indigenous struggle to comply with housing regulations (Hansen & Roche 2003 in Prout, 2008). For instance, warning letters are an ineffective deterrent to problematic visitor behaviour. Indigenous tenants' indifference or incomprehension of their tenancy rights and responsibilities magnifies the impact of this incompatibility. The reliance on written correspondence for communication (with previous or existing) tenants is found to be 'intimidating and incompatible' with the transience of some Indigenous lifestyles (HORSCATSIA 2001:88) and Indigenous tenants' literacy levels (EOC 2004). The EOC (2004:154) inquiry found accessibility and comprehension issues surrounding Homeswest's systems, policies and procedures. Yet whilst tenants may fail to understand or miss crucial correspondence, the penalties for their irresponsiveness are often significant: removal from waiting list, accumulation of debt or even eviction (Prout, 2008:9). For instance, ill-considered property condition reports can expose tenants to financial liability from property damage caused by previous tenants (Prout, 2008); termination notices may be misinterpreted and tenants may vacate immediately without defending any action (EOC 2004); and failure to respond to notices of rental arrears and repairs and maintenance charges can result in eviction. Compounded by further cross-cultural communication and English-proficiency issues, this encourages further Indigenous disengagement from public housing. These arrangements are a source of 'discomfort, fear, humiliation or frustration' for many tenants (EOC 2004:153). The EOC (2004:154) inquiry concluded that this reduced awareness 'may result in Homeswest policy not being equitably effective for all'.

The Tenant-Landlord Relationship

The contested relationship between Indigenous tenants and SHAs is both cause and consequence of the disconnection described above (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2008a:19). Often this relationship is negative, a source of conflict and sometimes discriminatory (Beresford, 2001; EOC 2004), and characterised by an imbalance of power and a lack of transparency (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008). This relationship is 'frequently a site of open contestation in the form of an endless

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argument…[that] a tenant expects never to win' (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008:11). Poor tenant-landlord relationships worsen tenancy outcomes (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Beresford, 2001). Indeed when conflict is present in this relationship, this conflict is found (along with the experience of domestic or family violence, rape or sexual assault) to subsume the Indigenous tenant's housing career in the constant effort to obtain a resolution' (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008:36).

The Indigenous tenant-landlord relationship is commonly one of discretion and discrimination. The literature describes both intentional and unintended discretionary management practices. With regards to intentional discretionary management practices, the EOC (2004:158) inquiry refers to Homewest's Discretionary Decision Making Policy (DDMP) and its application, for example, in the tenanting of underage applicants. A second example suggests that while discretionary practices are required there is insufficient guidance around these. The Tenants Advice Service (TAS) submission to the EOC (2004:158) inquiry refers to discretionary decision-making resulting from housing managers facing conflicting pressures from economic objectives and tenants' needs. In a challenge to the intent of the DDMP, TAS contends:

> *…no guidelines are provided in relation to the types of issues that should be taken into account…Homewest justification is that it would limit the use of discretion (EOC 2004:158).*

However, there are far more illustrations of unintended discretionary practices. Submissions to the EOC (2004:200,161) inquiry describe eviction and allocations processes being dependent on the inclination of housing managers. In the case of allocations, rather than following the waiting list, some decisions are based on personal presumptions about prospective tenants' living standards or on a common, (yet undocumented) 'sensitive allocations policy': 'they [housing managers] try and estimate who is going to be causing problems for us in the future' (EOC 2004:162,165). The literature suggests difficulties in policy interpretation compound the issue of discretionary management practices by creating a wider variance in housing management practices. Differing interpretations of the Homeswest's Cultural Policy and 'appropriate tenant standards' are two such examples, both of which encourage inconsistencies across management practices (EOC 2004). The TAS submission to the EOC (2004:50) Inquiry contended that within Homeswest there was a lack of awareness of policy across all levels of management and that policy would remain ineffectual without policy awareness not just at policy-making levels, but through to the Homeswest housing officers.

Discrimination is one product of these discretionary practices. The TAS submission to the EOC inquiry (2004:236) states: 'it is the experience of people who work with tenants that discretion is rarely applied in favour of the tenant' and 'in the operation of policy, there is a sense that the Aboriginal population is disadvantaged and treated less favourably'. Another submission identifies varying staff responsiveness to Indigenous tenancy needs: from sensitive and timely, to 'inappropriate, tardy and unhelpful' (EOC 2004:220). Equally, Indigenous tenants are subject to more frequent and rigorous inspections, and experienced higher levels of non-notified, drive-by and tardy visits as well as negative, presumptive and demanding attitudes of housing staff (EOC 2004). The sense of threat and humiliation experienced by tenants as a result these led to tenants' avoidance of housing appointments, irrespective of the consequences (EOC 2004).

Housing managers are a primary determinant of the quality of the relationship between landlord and Indigenous tenants in urban public housing (EOC 2004:221). For instance, some allege Indigenous tenants receive maintenance services proportionate to managers' perceptions of whether they were 'good' tenants (EOC 2004:195). Housing manager responses are jeopardised by resourcing issues and limited cultural awareness. Workload pressures exacerbate staff turnover, in turn disrupting the continuity of service provision and the development of trust between housing staff and tenants (EOC 2004). Managers also face conflicting pressures in attempts to meet both the SHA's economic objectives and tenants' needs. Cultural awareness is also a limitation. The EOC (2004) inquiry found that language services, such as translators, weren't commonly accessed by Homewest (except in court). The Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) submission to the EOC (2004:223) inquiry argued Homewest staff should 'be able to relate to Aboriginal people and have a deeper understanding of the social influences on Aboriginal people, that is not evident today'. Similarly, several submissions challenged the capacity for Homewest to translate its commitment to cultural awareness into housing management practices, giving examples such as tenancy abandonment for cultural reasons, avoidance laws and procedures following a death in the house (EOC 2004:223). Together these issues undermine the establishment of a strong relationship with tenants (EOC 2004:221). Recommendations to counter these issues include: staff training, particularly in communication skills and cultural

awareness (EOC 2004:119);[10] the adoption of innovative service approaches (including more face-to-face tenant contact and tenant involvement in dispute/problem resolution and strategy development); and the employment of Indigenous housing staff (Flatau et al., 2005; Baldry et al., 2006:368).

So far, this section has analysed the incongruity of the western values, assumptions and expectations on which public housing is founded, and Indigenous ways of living. It identified how housing management arrangements exacerbate this disconnection. It also described the role of housing managers in further broadening this disconnection, and their potential role in narrowing it. The subsection ends by describing the impact of this disconnection between urban public housing and the Indigenous lived experience.

Impacts on Indigenous Ways of Living

Two contrasting impacts are identified in the literature. On the one hand, public housing elicits some changes to Indigenous ways of living, primarily by way of constraint. This is captured in a tenant's description of their modified mobility:

> And I think you get into a Homeswest home and you get behind in your rent, and you feel that you shouldn't move out you know, you gotta pay the rent. I don't know, all these, little responsibilities that tie you down. Obligations and responsibilities to other people I think (Indigenous tenant in Prout, 2008:6).

Equally changes are observed in Indigenous networks of support and reciprocity; Peterson and Taylor (2003:106) contend that in the achievement of 'a mainstream standard of living, some modification or modernisation of this Indigenous domestic moral economy is unavoidable'. Expanding on this, they describe how this involves a shift away from the Indigenous domestic moral economy's focus on 'producing and reproducing social relationships outside the domestic group' towards 'the moral economy of contemporary mainstream Australia' that involves a 'more inwardly focused household' and 'the emergence of individualism' (Peterson & Taylor, 2003:107).

Contrastingly, a second response to the identified disconnection is further tenant disengagement from the public housing system. This alienation is particularly

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[10] Baldry et al (2006:370) caution this is often taken 'begrudgingly by workers' and resulted in 'a negligible change in attitudes'.

significant, as Prout (2007) argues, it further entrenches alternate Indigenous networks of support and reciprocity and the Indigenous mobility that maintains them. Prout (2008:6) contends that in certain cases Indigenous mobilities: 'may represent a reluctance to wholesale engagement with the public housing system, which has, in the past, been the handmaiden of the colonial project' and with reference to Peterson and Taylor's (2003) terminology, perhaps a reluctance to part with the Indigenous domestic moral economy.

2.2.4   Housing Welfare Outcomes

Indigenous dependency on housing welfare (Section 2.2.1) reminds us of the critical role of social housing interventions (Sections 2.2.2 & 2.2.3) in securing outcomes for Indigenous people.   The suggestion of poor Indigenous tenant outcomes from conventional houses and from public housing are corroborated by the identification of major shortcomings in the capacity of urban social housing to address Indigenous tenants' needs and values (Milligan et al 2010; 2011).   However, evidence of the housing and non-housing outcomes of social housing, especially for Indigenous Australians, remains patchy, contradictory and highly contested (Milligan et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2003; Altman, 2009b).   This is largely due to the sporadic and limited nature of independent evaluations of housing interventions (Milligan et al., 2007).   Altman (2009b:7) contends:

> *In the absence of independent assessment of policy performance, together with a growing trend to report policy success in the popular media in an orchestrated manner, it is becoming harder and harder to gauge whether results are positive, negative or neutral.*

Inadequate systematic policy evaluations (Sanders, 2009) are explained in part by the difficulties in evaluating policy outcomes within non-empirical policy arenas (Davies et al., 2000).   Indeed, NPARIH performance indicators are biased towards housing outcome indicators that are readily measurable through baseline measures (Australian Bureau of Statistics census or Centrelink data).   They include:

- *Overcrowding and Homelessness (average occupancy and overcrowding rates; incidence of homelessness);*
- *Dwelling stock (number of new and upgrades dwellings and total number of dwellings);*
- *Tenancy management (number of households covered by tenancy management arrangements overseen by government);*
- *Property Management (number of dwellings inspected through a standard property inspection regime; number of dwelling repairs and maintenance works completed as programmed using property condition data; average time taken to complete identified repairs and maintenance) (COAG 2008c).*

This follows government trends to ignore non-housing outcome metrics, despite acknowledgement of their connection to housing interventions (SCRGSP 2009:9).

The Report on Government Services (SCRGSP 2010), which comprises a performance appraisal for the provision of social housing, uses the following metrics: match of dwelling to household size, affordability, property condition and services and tenant satisfaction.   No distinction is made between Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants with the exception of data provided on previous, Indigenous-specific housing (such as State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH)). This data confirms discrepancies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants in levels of tenant satisfaction and 'match of dwelling to household size' (SCRGSP 2010).

Research on non-housing outcomes partially addresses this deficit.   Mainstream literature identifies the following non-housing outcomes: improved health status, education outcomes, employment, crime levels, community participation and social cohesion, income and wealth effects and locational advantage/disadvantage (Bridge et al., 2003; Phibbs & Young, 2005; Dockery et al., 2008; Waters, 2001).   Some of these outcomes are also identified in the Indigenous-specific literature.   For instance: housing location is found to be an important determinant of employment; security of tenure is found to be important for children's education; and overcrowding is found to be detrimental to education outcomes and family relationships (Memmott et al., 2006; Young, 2002; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Sanders, 2005; SCRGSP 2003; Jardine-Orr et al., 2004; Penman, 2008).

Mirroring tendencies in the mainstream literature, this Indigenous literature generally focuses on singular housing attributes (such as house design, condition or tenure) and a specific non-housing outcome (Phibbs & Young, 2005; Bridge et al., 2003; 2007; Mullins & Western, 2001; Wigley & Wigley, 2003; Memmott, 1988).   For example, literature on the health-outcomes from housing reviews the impact of poor dwelling conditions (specifically basic sanitation infrastructure Pholeros, 1993; Torzillo et al., 2008) or overcrowding (Booth & Carroll, 2005).   However, there is negligible Indigenous-specific research on the link between housing management and non-housing outcomes (See for example Walker et al., 2007; as noted by Phibbs & Young, 2005; Milligan et al., 2007; 2010), despite some consensus that non-housing gains can be more fully realised through such mechanisms (Bailie et al., 2010:9; Mullins & Western, 2001).   Establishing a clear causal link between specific housing interventions and their outcomes is inherently problematic due to the complexity of causal factors (Bridge et al., 2003; 2007; Phibbs & Young, 2005).

Shortcomings in the housing evaluation methods and metrics of government and community housing organisations were investigated by Walker et al (2003) and Rogers et al (2005) in their framework for the evaluation of the Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010 (BBF) policy. Critiques of the dominance of western socio-economic indicators in these evaluations argue quantitative evaluations 'interpreted in isolation, often obfuscate the interrelationships, underlying causes or consequences and possible solutions' and lead to 'a blame the victim mentality' (Walker et al., 2003:iv). Equally, others urge a 'move beyond the identification and lamentation of quantitative disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations on standard socioeconomic indicators', thus reiterating the need for strategies that consider other aspects, such as historical legacy, cultural difference, diversity of circumstance and remote demographics (Walker & Barcham, 2010:328; Altman et al., 2008; Ingamells, 2010). Health indicators are illustrative of this issue. CTG's commitment to improve Indigenous health relies on Western understandings of health (and its associated bio-medical indicators) which sit in opposition to research from within the field of public health (and in particular social epidemiology) that recognises that western constructs of health ignore Indigenous understandings of health and well-being (Kowal et al., 2007). As Walker et al (2003:iv) contend:

> *It is important that Indigenous housing problems arising from deficiencies within the system to cater for the diversity of Indigenous needs, issues and aspirations are identified and properly understood to avoid their being misconstrued and/or inappropriately addressed.*

International literature suggests there is further scope for Australian research to go beyond the cost-benefit and program evaluations and apply more rigorous methodologies (Phibbs & Young, 2005:20). Responses to this issue have differed, with some calling for further longitudinal studies (Mullins & Western, 2001) and others requesting more evidence about how housing policies and services approaches impact on outcomes (Milligan et al., 2010). Milligan et al (2010) recommend the BBF evaluation framework be adapted to assess current housing reforms.

2.2.5   Conclusion

This section captures the impact of housing welfare on Indigenous people's lives: on their ways of living and their housing experiences. In doing so, it refutes suggestions about the minor role of housing in Indigenous people's daily lives (See for example: Ross, 2000). It began by describing the instability and brevity of the

social housing tenancies that typify the Indigenous housing career, describing how these have been traced to cultural factors. Section 2.2.2 and Section 2.2.3 then exposed a critical disconnection between two housing welfare approaches and Indigenous ways of life. Together this demonstrates that short, unstable tenancies are not simply the product of cultural determinants, but also a product of housing welfare through government-imposed living environments (built and regulatory). This suggestion is all the more significant because of the insidious nature of Indigenous housing welfare dependency; these unstable tenancies subsequently subsume Indigenous housing careers.

Critically, these tenancy circumstances are poorly captured in housing welfare outcome data (Section 2.2.4). The dearth of systematic housing welfare evaluations, together with the western bias of housing evaluation measurement indicators, paints an incomplete picture of the impact of housing welfare on Indigenous lives. Inadequate metrics and evaluations also severely limit the capacity to identify effective housing welfare approaches.

In an Indigenous community setting, the Indigenous experience of public housing is undocumented and its tenancy outcomes unknown. However, by foreshadowing their potential form, this section raises doubts over the capacity for housing welfare approaches to achieve positive tenancy outcomes. Additionally, it queries how its future success will be established, given the current evaluation limitations. In light of this, the approach adopted in the current housing reforms may be construed as somewhat puzzling. The following section discusses the rationale behind these reforms.

2. 3 INDIGENOUS HOUSING REFORMS

Current Indigenous housing reforms entail a shift from the previously championed community housing model to a mainstream public housing model for the provision of Indigenous housing in remote and town-camp communities. Although both models are common forms of social housing welfare, there are critical differences between them. Community housing stock is vested in, and managed by community organisations, whereas public housing stock is owned and managed by SHAs (Porter, 2009a:1). Conversely, whilst public housing is characterised by high levels of standardisation across policies, services and procedures for all client groups, community-housing is inherently more flexible, constrained to a much lesser extent

by government regulations (Sanders, 2006b). Until now, with public housing geographically-limited to urban and regional areas, community housing has been the dominant model for housing welfare throughout remote and town-camp communities.

The intent of this section is to contextualise and detail current Indigenous housing reforms by expanding upon the background provided in Chapter 1. Section 2.3.1 establishes the policy context for current housing reforms by outlining Indigenous housing policy since 2001, when government support for Indigenous community housing was first tabled. To understand the rationale for the shift from community housing to public housing, Section 2.3.2 reviews the role of evidence and ideology in housing policy production. Finding the evidence in support of this shift problematic, the perspective then broadens to review the foundational ideological debates driving policy in Indigenous Affairs. Section 2.3.3 then locates Indigenous Affairs vis-à-vis these debates, and particularly the ascendant individual responsibility agenda. Section 2.3.4 then details current housing reforms, describing the specific housing welfare approach adopted by government. It concludes by discussing state/ territory autonomy in the administration and delivery of these reforms.

2.3.1   From Community Housing to Public Housing

New directions for improving Indigenous communities' access to appropriate, affordable, well-maintained housing over the subsequent decade were announced, following the 2001 Housing Ministers' Conference. Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010 (BBF) documented a government commitment to endorse a community-housing approach to Indigenous housing provision (FaCS 2001:4). BBF advocated for Indigenous housing policies and programs developed and administered in partnership with Indigenous communities. By mid 2004 there was a coherent nationwide push for the development of the Indigenous community-housing sector.

A key national program in support of this new policy approach was the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP). CHIP was initially administered by ATSIC and then transferred to the (then) FaCS when ATSIC was abolished in 2004, and delivered by State and Territory Governments, local government and Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHO). CHIP funding targeted four key areas: community housing (including housing construction and purchase,

renovations/ upgrades, repairs and maintenance and supplements to housing management costs), infrastructure, 'Home living' skills and municipal services. Under CHIP, a network of approximately 600 ICHOs were responsible for the management of housing construction programs, housing assets and tenancies in remote and town-camp communities.

Although CHIP (and its self-determination premise) was generally well-accepted, support for the program was not all encompassing, especially as program outcomes fell short of the expectations of many its champions and supporters. In 2006-7, the Commonwealth commissioned an independent review of CHIP to provide evidence on the housing situation of Indigenous people and advice on the future delivery of housing (PWC 2007). The subsequent report of the CHIP Review, Living in a Sunburnt Country (2007), found that despite government and community commitments, Indigenous people continued to suffer housing-related problems, including overcrowding and associated issues of social breakdown (Fien et al., 2008:11). It found these problems were attributable to longstanding issues, such as:

- *severe shortages in the availability of public housing;*
- *the community title system, which limited both the availability of private rental housing and opportunities for private home ownership;*
- *poorly designed housing with high construction costs, that was unsuited to the needs of occupants; and*
- *lack of maintenance (Fien et al., 2008:11; PWC 2007:16).*

The report claimed these problems were symptomatic of local community and wider systemic factors, and in particular:

- *barriers to expanding housing options because of community title over land and housing; and*
- *inefficient use of available housing funds because of the poorly developed capacity of the ICHO sector (Fien et al., 2008:11; PWC 2007:16).*

Living in a Sunburnt Country (PWC 2007) argued that these factors restricted enterprise and innovation in responses to housing shortages and overcrowding, despite considerable funding. The impact of these shortcomings were exacerbated by inadequate rent collection systems which limited maintenance funds perpetuating a downward spiral of poor housing conditions. The report also cited high administrative costs and overheads, poor governance, alleged financial and operational mismanagement, nepotism and favouritism (PWC 2007:16). The report concluded that CHIP 'contributes to policy confusion, complex administration and poor outcomes and accountability of government funded housing' and should be abolished (PWC 2007:16).

The report made extensive recommendations for a new strategic approach to housing delivery and management involving a refocusing on 'national, state, regional, community and individual responsibilities and accountabilities', and provided an operational framework for achieving this. Included amongst its recommendations were:

- *the establishment of a six year Remote Indigenous Accommodation Service (RIAS) to focus resources on remote areas in greatest need;*
- *increase supply of public housing in remote communities through transfers of community housing to public housing agencies and through transfer of ownership of new houses delivered under RIAS to State and Territory public housing agencies;*
- *increase state and territory involvement in tenancy and property management either directly or through public housing agency contractors;*
- *focus on areas with access to education, health, law and order and other basic services; and*
- *assist new tenants and home owners with home living skills and financial management skills (PWC 2007:23–25).*

There were several indications of complete government acceptance of the CHIP review and its recommendations before government publicly announced its significant policy u-turn (See Fien et al., 2008:14). The 2007/08 Commonwealth budget statement documented government's abandonment of CHIP including its community housing policy approach and support for ICHOs (although BBF was not explicitly renounced) effective 30th June 2008, in favour of a centralised, mainstream approach to housing delivery and management.

CHIP's replacement, the 7-year Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Program (ARIA), was closely modelled on the strategic and operational frameworks within the CHIP Review (Brough, 2007:1). Funding for Indigenous housing increased to a total of $1.6 billion over fours years, to 'kick-start a major reform strategy aimed at reducing overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities' (Brough, 2007:7). This program signalled the beginning of a significant change in housing policy direction consistent with broader policy reforms across Indigenous Affairs.

In addition to land tenure reform, housing ownership and cost-efficient housing construction, ARIA was significant for repositioning Indigenous housing delivery and management under the mainstream public housing model - effectively signally the redundancy of the ICHO sector (Hunt, 2008:36). This was accompanied by policies to encourage migration to larger settlements where other services (such as education and health) were provided alongside access to public housing (Long et

al., 2008b:3). The underlying premise was that Indigenous people had not only the right to receive the same levels of service as non-Indigenous people, but also the same responsibilities. ARIA was subsequently subsumed under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), and in January 2009 was replaced with the Remote Indigenous Housing Program (RIHP) (FAHCSIA, 2009).

Public housing is currently being implemented on the basis that subsidized provision of housing, improved economies of scale, standardised housing management and cost-effective maintenance programs represent the most effective means of securing better housing and non-housing outcomes for Indigenous tenants (Dillon & Westbury, 2007:152–153; COAG 2008c). However, its success remains unsubstantiated in remote and town-camp communities with culturally and linguistically diverse groups (Sanders, 2008), creating contention around government rationalisations for the shift. The following subsection exposes the roles of evidence and ideology in this policy shift.

2.3.2   Rationalising the Policy Shift: Evidence & Ideology

A mystique surrounds the policy production process within Indigenous Affairs (Martin, 2011): there is limited proof of positivist approaches to policy production (Altman, 2010:266), despite evidence being lauded as the key to 'good' policy.[11] The two substantive policy trends in Indigenous Affairs (mainstreaming and public-sector delivery) are justified by a 'powerful narrative of policy failure, and not by any evidence that such approaches deliver superior outcomes' (Altman, 2009b:6). Consistent with this and other policy production trends, such as the tendency to ignore both research (Long et al., 2008a) and the lived experiences of policies (Altman, 2010:269), the shift to public housing seemingly occurred not just without public debate or Indigenous consultation but also without 'an evidence-base' (Porter, 2009a:1). This subsection begins by outlining the inadequate evidence base in support of this housing policy shift. It then turns to the broader ideological debates in Indigenous Affairs to understand their role in shaping policy. It outlines the dominant ideological principles in Indigenous Affairs: equality and difference. It then

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[11] The ideology-evidence framing of good and bad Indigenous Affairs policy emerged during the period from January 2006 to November 2007 (Sanders, 2009).

addresses the inadequacies and oversimplifications of this dichotomous framing through alternative analytical schemas for Indigenous Affairs. It concludes by locating current policy within these conceptual frameworks.

The Evidence

The CHIP Review, characterised by a convincing rhetoric of policy failure, provided a rationale for the housing policy shift to mainstream housing provision and management. Some contend this review was not evidence-based, and indeed that the earlier CHIP Review Issues Paper (developed by FAHCSIA in 2006 in collaboration with PWC) argued pre-emptively for the recommendations later made in the CHIP Review (See Taylor, 2008b). The CHIP Review was seen to trade on 'persuasion and support, rather than…objective veracity' (Head 2008:5 in Taylor, 2008b). It left unscrutinised the failures of the 'governance of governments' (Porter, 2009a:2) and government capacity in remote housing provision and management. Dillon (2007) makes four important criticisms: its oversight of the raft of consequences of Indigenous population growth trends; the new funding arrangements established for CHIP's first replacement (ARIA); the abandonment of outstation funding; and the selective mainstreaming of housing provision (to the exclusion of critical mainstream services such as Rent Assistance).

Further to these, a key criticism of the CHIP Review is that it inadequately accounts for the circumstances under which CHIP and the ICHOs operated; many of problems it identifies relate to broader contextual issues and their role in undermining the community housing sector, rather than failures of the ICHO sector per se (Porter, 2009a; Hunt, 2008). Such criticisms draw on research on the relative viability of the ICHO sector to suggest it may have been successful under different arrangements (Porter, 2009a:11). Operating deficits (See Hall & Berry, 2006:vii; Spiller, Gibbins & Swan Pty Ltd, 1998; PWC 2007) promote a critical 'ruinous cycle' for ICHOs of insufficient revenue, inadequate maintenance and poor property management, reduced rents, and less housing management expenditures, and so on (Hall & Berry, 2006:18), all exacerbated by the poor quality of the asset base at the outset. However, these operating deficits are not unique to ICHOs: similar deficits are identified for SOMIH (Porter, 2009a; Hall & Berry, 2006),12 and even

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[12] SOMIH was public housing specifically earmarked for Indigenous households under the previous policy setting.

public housing is known to operate at a deficit (Hall & Berry, 2004; Hall & Berry, 2007). On the other hand, ICHO's relative organisational capacity (in terms of governance, human resource management, location and housing management viability) in less convincing (Eringa et al., 2008), and the difficulties in directly comparing housing models, (given critical contextual differences, such as the location of housing stock and funding frameworks) undermines such arguments.

This policy shift also disregards support for community housing approaches and research linking top-down, externally-prescribed housing provision to failed outcomes. It ignores those who contend community housing represents 'perhaps the only philosophically coherent and historically realistic approach to future Indigenous Affairs policy' (Hall & Berry, 2006; Sanders, 2002:11), and those who argue that the characteristics of successful remote Indigenous housing are Indigenous control and self-determination, an enabling environment and a culturally-responsive system (Jardine-Orr, 2005). Mainstreaming housing management denies those who advocate cultural specificity in housing management (Tripcony, 2000; Burke, 2004) and those who advocate Indigenous involvement and responsibility in housing management (Neutze et al., 2000). It also ignores Indigenous experiences of public housing in urban areas, as described previously in Section 2.2.3. The new policy approach also eschews broader Australian social housing trends to increase the role of non-government providers in social housing provision in urban and regional areas, and reserve public housing for tenants with complex welfare needs (Milligan et al., 2010).

Ideological Tensions: Equality & Difference Principles

More sensitive understandings suggest 'evidence', despite its positivist connections, is naturally located in debates and context (Sanders, 2009). For example, our metrics - what we count or what we consider indicators of well-being – are ideologically derived. These understandings not only undermine the good-policy/bad-policy rhetoric surrounding the use of evidence and ideology in policy production, but stress the importance of ideological debates to policy production by implying these debates are prerequisites for contributing to this process (Sanders, 2009:13). Pearson (2007) identifies ten fundamental dichotomous sets of 'classic dialectical tensions' that define human policy and political struggle. Debate surrounding Indigenous Affairs policy commonly shuns many of these to focus exclusively on the tension between the principles of equality and difference. Indeed

the tension between these principles is a permanent undercurrent of the Australian post-colonial experience.

The principles of equality concern attaining (legal or socio-economic) equality or some form of integration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Altman, 2009a:1; Also see Sanders, 2009:6). In policy, mainstreaming agendas (such as public housing) typify the privileging of this principle. On the other hand, the principles of difference imply 'adherence to different and diverse life worlds' (Altman, 2009a:1). Difference also denotes culture in the anthropological sense of shared systems and of meaning and practices of Indigenous people. The principles of difference are associated with policy support for self-determination (such as community housing) and freedom of choice (Altman & Rowse, 2005).[13] The tension arising from the dual quest for equality and respect for Indigenous difference is considered the ultimate dilemma for social improvement (Kowal, 2008:343). Each paradigm of Indigenous governance manages this tension through a different policy orthodox (Kowal, 2010:191–192).

Conceptual frameworks have emerged to map and reconcile these tensions. For instance, Noel Pearson's 1997 model of the 'recognition space' (which he has since abandoned) used a basic Venn diagram to schematize Indigenous equality, difference, and the reconciliation of these principles (Pearson, 1997). He placed the issue of native title in Australian property law in the area of 'intersection' (recognition space) between the two 'sets' of competing principles (Aboriginal Law and Australian law). This conceptual framework has been applied to various Indigenous research (See: Sullivan, 2007; Taylor, 2008a), including, most recently, Porter's Northern Territory-based Indigenous housing reform research (Porter, 2009b).

Kowal's notion of 'postcolonial logic' provides an alternative conceptual framing of a set of progressive beliefs concerning the principles of equality and difference typical of the self-determination era. It is useful here as it captures the conflicting impulses of liberal multiculturalism which underlie the equality-difference framing in ascendency today (Kowal, 2008; 2007; 2010). Kowal (2008:338) defines two pillars of 'postcolonial logic': 'remedialism' as attempts to eliminate inequality, and

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[13] The tension between equality and difference principles is linked to disciplinary contestation (in approaches to Indigenous Affairs) between economics (equality) and anthropology (difference) (Altman & Rowse, 2005).

'Orientalism' as the preservation of essential differences. In this framing, Indigenous difference comprises two parts: 'sanitised alterity' and 'un-sanitised alterity' (Kowal, 2008:343). 'Sanitised alterity' is 'allowable' difference, that is, all that is 'congruent with liberal morality: songs, dances, art and stories' whereas 'un-sanitised alterity' is all that is 'dissonant with liberal morality: fighting, drinking, eating fast food and of course, the sexual abuse of children' (Kowal, 2008:345).

Postcolonial logic hinges on Indigenous difference (alterity) being 'remediable' or amenable to normalisation (Kowal, 2007:60, 206; 2008:343), this implies that the 'gap' is exclusively associated with 'unsanitised alterity' (Kowal, 2008:344). This policy positioning assumes Indigenous people are not so different (in their health, education, living standards, etc) that they cannot be brought more closely in line with non-Indigenous Australians through appropriate intervention (Kowal, 2007:60). Thus, within this framing, an important quality of Indigenous people is their remediableness (Kowal, 2007:148). Kowal (2008:344) illustrates this logic with reference to public health: 'Indigenous people are less healthy because of oppression. Therefore, when oppression is lifted, they will lose their unsanitized alterity (the substance use, the gambling, the truancy, and the violence) and become healthy subjects'. Remedial difference requires that a 'disregard for one's health' forms part of 'unsanitised alterity'. Postcolonial logic divorces 'unsanitised alterity' from 'sanitised alterity', enabling acceptable Indigenous difference ('sanitised alterity') to remain unaltered by their loss of 'unsanitised alterity', 'to ensure these newly healthy subjects are recognisably Indigenous' (Kowal, 2008:344).

'Unsanitised alterity' becomes anathema to 'remedial' difference where there is 'no awareness' that practices are 'abnormal', and no desire to 'improve'. In such instances, 'remediable' difference is threatened by 'radical' difference – difference that is not amenable to change, that is, 'the pathological…made normal' (Kowal, 2007:207). Kowal's (2007) finding that a 'disregard for one's health' is a legitimate part of Indigenous culture is one such example, its implication being that the desire to improve health is solely a western ambition. The notion of 'radical difference' poses a threat to postcolonial logic by destabilising the integrity of 'remedial difference': 'If Indigenous people are not remediably different, but, in fact, radically different…the viability of a postcoloniser subjectivity is called into question' (Kowal, 2007:61). Accordingly, that postcolonial logic 'allows for one type of difference'

(remediable difference) in the recognition of Indigenous people, 'is the undoing of white antiracist subjectivities and their associated knowledges' (Kowal, 2007:87).

Alternative Frameworks

Although equality-difference principles provide some insight to policy approaches, the over-simplification of the policy conundrum of postcolonial Australia to trade-offs between difference and equality principles overlooks many of the competing ideological principles shaping Indigenous Affairs policy. Perceived inadequacies and oversimplifications of dichotomous framings and frameworks have led to alternative analytical schemas for Indigenous Affairs. Three significant ones are briefly outlined here.

Altman's Framework

Altman's framework, as the most recognisable evolution from the dichotomous framing above, comprises three notions: 'equality', 'difference' and the notion of 'historical legacy'. Altman draws from New Zealand models to argue for 'more coherent and inclusive notions of equality and difference' (Barber 2008; Humpage 2005 in Altman, 2009a:14), that are both 'universalistic in meeting citizenship entitlements' and 'flexible and effective in targeting both aspirational and regional differences' (Altman et al., 2008:10). Altman (2009a:4) clarifies that while equality of inputs is critical, differences in outcomes are unavoidable. The notion of 'historical legacy' concerns the 'compensatory measures…to allow catch up for decades of neglect' (Altman, 2009a:11).

Sanders' Competing Principles

Sanders identifies a triangular relationship between three critical 'competing principles': 'equality', 'choice' and 'guardianship'. 'Equality', as the central principle, is placed at the apex. First and foremost, 'equality' concerns equality of opportunity, but it also encompasses legal and socioeconomic equality (Sanders, 2009:7). The two corners at the base of the triangle relate to alternative interpretations of the principles of difference: 'choice' - its positive interpretation (informed Indigenous agency); and 'guardianship' - its undesirable interpretation (misinformed or irresponsible Indigenous agency, or exploitation of Indigenous people) (Sanders, 2009:8). Sanders (2009:11) demonstrates that while one or two principles are often dominant at a given time, 'there is a sense in which Indigenous Affairs is always and at all times a balancing, and re-balancing, of all three of these competing principles'. Overlayed on this schema, is the concept of ideological (economic or social)

tendencies. Of relevance, social tendencies concern broad trends in attitudes (in Indigenous Affairs) towards the social behaviours of Indigenous people. Two tendencies are identified: the tendency to view Indigenous social behaviours as something to be respected 'as their own responsible informed choosing' (socially liberal); and the ascendant tendency, to view such behaviours as something to be 'more externally directed in the pursuit of some good' not yet fully appreciated and taken into account' by Indigenous people (socially directive) (Sanders, 2009).

Pearson's Radical Centre

Pearson (2007:29) steps beyond the previous frameworks to contend that policy complexity exists because human policy is not neatly confined but rather 'involves a broad range of dialectical tensions simultaneously'. His discussion focuses on five of these: social order/liberty, idealism/realism, structure/behaviour, opportunity/ choice, and rights/responsibility (Pearson, 2007:29). For Pearson (2007:25), the 'radical centre' is construed as 'the intense resolution of the tensions between opposing principles…a resolution that produces the synthesis of optimum policy'. Pearson (2007:29) insists this resolution should not involve the compromise or triumph of one principle over another, but rather the tension between dialectical sets should be resolved through 'dialectical synthesis'. He contends this resolution is located at the 'point of highest tension' between competing principles: where both principles remain 'strong' and where 'the policy position is much closer and more carefully calibrated than most people imagine' (Pearson, 2007:28). In a similar vein to Sanders, Pearson recognises the need for continual balancing and re-balancing between principles overtime.

The following subsection locates current policy vis-à-vis these tensions.

2.3.3   The New (Housing) Welfare Agenda: Individual Responsibility

The movement away from the dominance of progressive-Left thinking in Indigenous policy in recent years signals a radical shift in the dominant ideological principles underpinning Indigenous Affairs (Sutton, 2010). This involves a move away from the principles of choice, positive difference and diversity and 'remediable difference' (Kowal, 2008), and a political repositioning closer to the base of Sanders' triangle

and its principles of guardianship, negative difference, and protectionism (Sanders, 2009).[14] This ascendant political positioning is not simply the result of the perceived failings of the self-determination era (and community housing), but the product 'of the internal contradictions of liberal multiculturalism', as captured in the shattered logic of remediable difference (Kowal, 2008:346). As Kowal (2008:345) contends, 'remediable difference' - the marriage between remedialism and Orientalism - has 'split apart at the seams'. In its place, the politics of the gap 'have swung heavily towards remedialism and an intolerance of the long-standing tension between equality and difference' (Altman, 2009a:6).

Remedialism, 'unadulterated by cultural specificity' (Kowal, 2008:346) – namely, Closing the Gap – involves the abandonment of attempts to commensurate equality and difference (on the grounds that separate policy and different standards have 'short-changed Indigenous people' (Vanstone, 2005:41)), and the pursuit of mainstream policy and programs, such as public housing (Altman, 2009a:13). This gives every (eligible) citizen equitable access to government welfare services irrespective of geographical, linguistic or cultural differences (Porter, 2009a; Hunt, 2008).

This pursuit of citizenship entitlements and rights (Altman, 2009b:6) reflects the view that Indigenous people are equal citizens to be 'brought into the mainstream and normalised to the dominant way of life (Hunt, 2008:40). This pursuit is bolstered by Indigenous pathologies that militate against support for Indigenous difference (Johns, 2008; See for example: Hughes, 2007). This deficit reduction approach is strongly criticised by those who contend statistical policy aims undervalue diversity and difference by relying on western categorisations of the 'deficit' which inherently downplay 'the significance of unique Indigenous priorities and world views' (Taylor, 2008a:115) and their role in shaping alternative Indigenous indicators of success. In this vein, such policy approaches are deemed 'rhetorical and hollow'; they are an oversimplification of complex development problems, which renders them '"technical"…both in financial input and statistical outcome terms' (Altman, 2010:269). Thus, attention to, and effective policy on, the root causes of socio-economic difference is denied (Altman, 2009a:6).

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[14] This is contrary to the Right in ascendancy pre-1960s which could be positioned at the apex of Sanders' triangle with its strong equal rights discourse.

This positioning also relies on a simplistic framing in which 'negative' behaviours are linked to externalities (such as dispossession, discrimination, alienation, poverty, stress and drug use) rather than culture per se (See Pearson, 2000:18; and discussions of "unsanitised alterity" in Kowal, 2007). Indeed it is government tendencies towards theoretical naïveté in its framings of Indigenous culture (Anderson, 2009), that enable the partitioning of culture and pathology such that 'culture' remains untouched, whilst social pathologies ('unsanitised alterity') are remedied (Kowal, 2007). This shunning of culture's broader definition, in which cultural change is understood as intrinsic to social reform (Peterson, 2010:251; Altman, 2009a:7; Sutton, 2001:151; Smith & Bond 1993, p.275 in Fantin, 2003), transpires despite evidence to the contrary (See Sutton, 2001:134). Indeed this is precisely what enables government to evade the social improvement dilemma of the multicultural nation state, namely the contention that the pursuit of social change may be 'making them less Indigenous' (Kowal, 2008:345).

Such policy positionings are legitimated by a reframing of the current state of remote Indigenous Australia in terms of its dysfunction, and the individual's role in creating and maintaining it. Indeed, the legacy of the Howard government's eschewal of welfarist convictions of the State's role in citizen disadvantage lives on in Labour government policy today (Martin 2011).[15] This has reinstated the instrumentality of the individual and encouraged the abandonment of long-held structural views of Indigenous disadvantage (and past policy focuses on collective responsibility). What Altman terms a 'cultural trope of individual responsibility' for Indigenous people (Altman, 2010:268), marks the eschewal of welfarist convictions of the State's role in citizen disadvantage, echoing national (and also global) trends in welfare reform (Rose, 2001:1400; Watson, 2009:93, 105; APSC 2007a:2).[16] This has been encouraged by a politically persuasive responsibilities discourse (championed largely by Pearson) and criticisms of previous corruptive (passive) welfare approaches.

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[15] A sense of this new framing first publicly emerged in a policy statement by Minister Philip Ruddock in 2002 in which he claimed that 'to make better gains we need a far stronger focus on encouraging and supporting individuals to become self-reliant, take responsibility for themselves' (Ruddock 2002).

[16] Watson (2009, p.105, 93) links this reframing with international trends in welfare reform, citing Blair's 'Third Way' in the United Kingdom and 'compassionate conservatism' in the Bush administration in the United States. The 20th century welfare state has been replaced, under various guises ('late liberalism', 'advanced liberalism' and 'third-way politics' (in Britain)) by government demands for 'individual morality, organisational responsibility and ethical community' (Rose 2000, p.1400).

Under this paradigm, the Indigenous tenant is no longer a passive welfare recipient. Instead, tenants face new responsibilities because remedialism is a 'two-way enterprise' (Kowal, 2008:342): the state is responsible for providing the conditions for 'the good life', but equally, the individual must exercise 'active responsible citizenship' (Rose, 2001:1398). This positioning is evidenced in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, which describes 'principles to…promote personal responsibility and behaviours consistent with positive social norms' (Altman, 2010:268), and in the 2011-2012 government budget (Buckmaster, 2011), albeit it first appeared in a policy statement in 2002 (Ruddock, 2002). The focus on behaviour is political in the sense that it enables a construction of the Indigenous housing problem centred almost exclusively on problematic tenant behaviours. This problematisation of housing governance establishes a political case for ignoring the rubric of Indigenous values and aspirations and the transformation of remote and town-camp communities in particular directions (Martin, 2006:7). On the basis that problematic behaviours stem from a lack of understanding, education or incentive to adopt alternate, 'good' behaviours, this paradigm, to use Sanders' 'social tendencies' terminology, is 'socially directive', premised on the view that Indigenous behaviours should be 'more externally directed in the pursuit of some good they do not yet fully appreciate or acknowledge' (Sanders, 2009:11). This positioning also reflects a conceptual shift towards Sanders' principle of 'guardianship'.

Like much of micro-level public policy in Australia (such as in the areas of health, education, criminology and energy), housing welfare policies are underpinned by the rational choice model of human behaviour (APSC 2007a). This model elevates the role of individual values and attitudes in moulding our behaviour, whilst downplaying the role of context as a causal variable (Shove, 2010). This theory of behavioural change resonates with widely shared views about the primacy of individual agency in determining social order and human action (Reckwitz, 2002). It is also reinforced by accepted paradigms of the rational economic consumer society, namely the assumption that people act rationally in assessing choices available to them and making decisions that maximise their benefits.

The individual responsibility agenda thus translates to an 'increasingly strong focus on the moral reformation of the individual' through policies that 'emphasise human capital development and personal change for the individual' (Martin, 2006:7) and 'the promotion of behaviours consistent with positive social norms' (Altman, 2010:268). Indeed, as stated in the previous chapter, the application of behavioural

change theory provides a concise agenda for policy: 'the conceptual and practical task of which is to identify and affect the determinants' of the behaviours in question (Shove, 2010:1275). This entails the use of traditional policy tools to modify behaviour in the public interest, including: regulations, legislation, sanctions, taxes and subsidies, and the provision of public services and information (APSC 2007a). Interventions thus involve establishing 'the parameters of this distinction within individualised pathological explanations of ethical self-conduct' and policy solutions that reshape 'these behaviours in line with a normalised set of values attributed to wider society' (Flint, 2004b:906).

This positioning has encouraged a shift towards contractual (and conditional) forms of welfare delivery, and particularly the notion that welfare entitlements are dependent on certain behavioural conditions being met (Jacobs et al., 2005:268). (New approaches to government income-support were a forerunner of this condition-based approach). In social housing, this 'contractualisation of social relations' is embodied in the tenancy agreement (Lister, 2006:124). Flint argues that the dominance of a 'politics of behaviour' in housing governance (over other areas of social policy) is a reflection of the 'contractual basis of this new politics of conduct' that parallels 'the rights and responsibilities that have always been enshrined in tenancy agreements' (in reference to the U.K. Flint, 2004b:907). Yet whilst encouraging the responsible conduct of tenants is a primary housing governance discourse, the effectiveness of tenancy agreements in doing so is contentious, with some arguing they are not ideal and should be used in conjunction with proactive prevention measures (Lister, 2006). The following section details the reform approach adopted to encourage the responsible conduct of tenants in Indigenous remote and town-camp communities.

2.3.4 Town-Camp & Remote Public Housing

In 2009 all states and the Northern Territory committed to the 10-year NPARIH, marking the beginning of significant reforms to housing provision and management. As outlined in Chapter 1, NPARIH aims to significantly reduce overcrowding; to increase the supply of new houses and improve the condition of existing housing; and to ensure houses are well-maintained and managed in Indigenous communities (COAG 2008c:5). As a subset of the broader national housing agenda, the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), these reforms also seek to contribute to the nationwide government housing objective to provide safe, secure and sustainable

housing (COAG 2008a). This subsection describes the approach adopted by government to secure these outputs and objectives.

Central to NPARIH is a shift to a public housing model. As described earlier in this section, this represents a critical departure from the previously championed community-housing model. Under NPARIH, the responsibility for Indigenous housing provision and management is devolved to states and territories, continuing the trend set by the ARIA program to divest ICHOs of their role in Indigenous housing. Their responsibility is threefold: the provision of housing to Indigenous people in remote areas; the provision of standardised housing management consistent with public housing standards (sometimes through existing remote/regional service providers); and the development and implementation of land tenure arrangements to support the latter (COAG 2008c). Indeed Commonwealth funding is conditional on securing tenure over the Aboriginal controlled land on which housing is to be built, upgraded and managed (COAG 2008c:6). Leasing agreements vary between jurisdictions.

Under public housing management, SHAs are mandated to manage, maintain and upgrade Indigenous housing in compliance with mainstream public housing standards of property and tenancy management in effect in urban and regional areas. In some communities, Regional Service Providers (RSP) are contracted to undertake this work. State and territory tenancy and asset management delivery frameworks outline these standards (COAG 2008c:4). Under newly administered Residential Tenancy Act (RTA)- compliant tenancy agreements (between the SHA and the Indigenous tenant), tenants have the right to standardised public housing property and tenancy management. In return, tenants are expected to 'show increased personal responsibility for their houses'; pay appropriate rent on time; cover the cost of property damage and not disturb the peace of their neighbours (FaHCSIA, 2009:20). Thus, public housing management entails both regulations and expectations about how tenants live in their houses and manage their tenancies, such as in relation to maintenance, hygiene standards and the appropriateness of different activities. These tenancy rights and responsibilities are largely aligned with those of public housing elsewhere in Australia. However, there are some minor differences. For instance, income eligibility restrictions do not apply and the longevity of agreements differs as tenants in Indigenous communities are signed up to periodical leases in perpetuity (in contrast with the 6 or 12 month agreements usually available in public housing).

This shift to public housing management is supported by a range of tenant support initiatives. These include programs and services to inform, educate and support tenants through changes to their housing arrangements and in sustaining their tenancies in the longer term. However, NPARIH is vague on the specifics of these, simply stating the following as benchmarks: 'All prospective tenants of new houses should be offered Living Skills support training' and that 'tenancy support services in place for all existing and repaired and replaced houses in remote communities by 2015' (COAG 2008c:8). The content and delivery of these initiatives varies between jurisdictions and tenant support providers.

The current reforms also involve an extensive housing infrastructure upgrade and construction program involving the construciton of 4,200 new houses and approximately 4,800 rebuilds/refurbishments to 26 priority Indigenous communities. The Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure budget appropriation is to be distributed to state and Northern Territory governments for the completion of this program. As of 2011, more than 480 houses and 1750 rebuilds and refurbishments have been completed (FaHCSIA 2011:36). Additionally, in the Northern Territory, as a further subset of NPARIH, the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) will invest $672 million between 2008-12 in 73 Indigenous communities (including some town-camp areas) in the Northern Territory. SIHIP aims to deliver 934 new houses, 415 rebuilds (>$100,000 in capital works) of existing houses and 2500 refurbishments (>$20,000 in capital works) by 2013. Together, these works contribute to the NPARIH objective to increase the supply of houses and their condition in Indigenous communities and to reduce overcrowding in remote communities (Australian National Audit Office, 2012).

Jurisdictional Autonomy & Hybridised Public Housing

The implementation of public housing is founded on the premise that 'the minimum acceptable housing for Aboriginals is that which meets the same standards and regulatory by-laws that are generally applied for the European population in towns or cities' (Scott et al in Sanders, 2008:5). However, seemingly contrary to this, Commonwealth government has espoused the need for: 'sufficient flexibility not to insist on a one-size-fits-all approach for each of the hundreds of remote and regional Indigenous communities across the country but instead allows [sic] flexible tailored local approaches to achieve commonly-agreed national objectives' (Rudd, 2008). This approach recalls Memmott's (2004:48) notion of 'ethno-sensitive mainstreaming', 'whereby the mainstreaming is modified by some culturally specific

techniques'. However, neither negotiation around agreed objectives or 'evidence that the policy juggernaut is countenancing "flexible tailored local solutions"' have been forthcoming, leading some to conclude that such qualifiers are 'mere lip service' (Altman, 2009a:13).

However, the administration and delivery of policy and services at state and territory level guarantees a level of jurisdictional autonomy (and thus influence), despite Commonwealth government dominance over Indigenous Affairs since the 1967 referendum. In particular, there are early indications that the implementation of public housing for Indigenous remote and town-camp communities has involved slippages from the standardised public housing model of urban and regional Australia. In the Northern Territory context, Porter (2009b:2) reported in the very early days of policy implementation that the public housing model has been amended ('hybridised') through government's engagement with Shire Local Governments and some ICHOs, and through the creation of Housing Reference Groups (HRG). However, beyond this early assessment, there is no research on the implementation of public housing in these communities, nor any understanding of the impact of any such amendments on Indigenous tenancies.

Notwithstanding this, these reported hybridisms of Indigenous public housing hint at the potential impacts of Australian federalism on policy implementation. Specifically, they suggest that the ideological positioning that informs current housing reforms may be partially obscured by jurisdictional hybridisms. Furthermore, this may distort (or 'skewer', to use Pearson's (2007) terminology) the relationship between political ideology and policy, especially through the misalignment of political ideologies and competing agendas between and across jurisdictions (Anderson, 2009).

2.3.5   Conclusion

This section contextualised and detailed current Indigenous housing reform. It began by outlining the background for the policy shift from a community housing model to a public housing model for housing provision and management in Indigenous remote and town-camp communities. In considering the rationalisation for this shift, Section 2.3.2 revealed its evidence-base as problematic. This prompted a focus on the role of ideology in informing Indigenous Affairs policy. Several alternative conceptual schemas were described to capture the key ideological debates and tensions underlying Indigenous Affairs. A more

comprehensive picture of the ascendant political positioning (and its associated policy directions) was obtained by locating Indigenous Affairs vis-à-vis these schemas. This located the shift to public housing within broader mainstreaming and public sector delivery trends within Indigenous Affairs, and revealed the prevailing government framing of Indigenous difference underpinning these. In doing so, it exposed the hegemony of ideology over evidence in informing the policy shift to public housing. Section 2.3.3 then highlighted the centrality of the individual responsibility agenda and explained how this translated to an increasingly strong focus on the moral reformation of individuals through behavioural change approaches.

Section 2.3.4 detailed the current Indigenous housing reform agenda which includes a shift to public housing management, tenant support initiatives and a housing construction program. Section 2.3.4 also considered the role of jurisdictional autonomy in the administration and delivery of this Commonwealth housing policy. This hinted at its capacity to create diversions from Commonwealth housing policy during implementation, and specifically for diversions from the standardisation that typifies mainstream public housing. However, it also exposed the limited identification or understanding of any such amendments or their potential.

The implications of this reform agenda for Indigenous remote and town-camp tenancies are largely unaccounted for given the lack of precedent in these contexts. For instance, whilst many contend that without behavioural change, structural reforms will have very little impact (Pearson, 2010), others contest the capacity for such interventions to effect social change due to potential marked differences in the ways Indigenous and western people are influenced to change their behaviours (Martin, 2006; 2011; Ross, 1987). Potential 'hybridisms' of the public housing model further obscure the tenancy outcomes that might be achieved. Notwithstanding this, one of the many policy objectives of the shift to public housing is to secure sustainable housing for Indigenous people. The following section defines sustainable tenancies and investigates understandings of the uptake of this new agenda for social housing.

2. 4   SUSTAINING TENANCIES

Public housing's failure to satisfy Indigenous housing needs has perpetuated a cycle of at-risk, failing and failed Indigenous tenancies in urban areas (Milligan et al.,

2010; 2011), as described in Section 2.2.3.   Despite this, public housing is believed to be uniquely positioned to rupture this cycle 'by integrating a sustaining tenancies approach into routine housing management practice' (Habibis et al., 2007:x). 'Sustaining tenancies' has become a catchphrase of Australian housing welfare: the policies, programs and practices it encompasses are of increasing interest to state SHAs (Jones et al., 2003).   Despite this, the concept itself remains loosely defined by theorists, policy makers and service providers (Seelig & Jones, 2004).   In its narrow (reactive) definition it entails the assistance of at-risk tenants to avoid tenancy failure (Jones et al., 2003).   In its broader (proactive) definition, it refers to interventions designed to achieve positive tenancy outcomes and improvement to tenants' lives (Seelig & Jones, 2006).   This includes 'supportive tenancy management', namely: 'actions…designed to maintain a tenancy and maximise positive housing and non-shelter outcomes' (Jones et al., 2003).[17]   In essence, this agenda is predicated on the view that tenancies should be sustaining, not simply sustained (Seelig & Jones, 2006).

Seelig and Jones (2006) describe trends across housing authorities for a range of sustaining tenancy interventions to become core functions of many SHAs.   These interventions target the drivers of tenancy vulnerability, including tenant behaviours believed to jeopardise positive tenancy outcomes.   It is deemed likely that SHAs (and those working with them):

> will increasingly be drawn into supportive tenancy management, proactive and problem-solving approaches to managing tenancies in difficulty, working jointly with other human service agencies to provide a more holistic approach to the needs of clients, and management of neighbourhood improvement programs (Seelig & Jones, 2006).

However, the uptake of this agenda is not straightforward (Seelig & Jones, 2006).

The intent of this section is to describe this new social housing agenda and contextualise its problematic uptake in public housing.   Section 2.4.1 outlines the factors known to place Indigenous tenancies at risk of failure.   Section 2.4.2 describes three key interventions to sustain tenancies: service integration, tenant

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[17] Other researchers provide similar definitions. Cooper and Morris (2003:12) state: 'sustaining tenancy is having the necessary personal skills, and social and economic circumstances to ensure that tenancy can be accessed and, once achieved, will be sustained and maintained'. Conversely, Habibis et al (2007:vii) define sustainable tenancies as services and support to 'assist social housing tenants to manage their tenancy successfully and to achieve improvements in their lives'.   Seelig and Jones (2004) refer to the achievement of tenant satisfaction, tenancy stability and tenant outcomes.

support, and supportive housing management. This reveals their criticality, but also hints at impediments to their implementation. In Section 2.4.3 the focus turns to public housing management to investigate in more depth some key practical challenges in the uptake of this agenda. This exposes not only substantive barriers to its uptake, but also serious concerns about the boundaries of housing management responsibility, and in particular whether this agenda should be a core responsibility for SHAs. Section 2.4.4 moves beyond these practical challenges, to position the challenging and contested uptake of the sustaining tenancies agenda as symptomatic of countervailing pressures propelling social housing in alternate directions. It does this by detailing a significant counter pressure on social housing management encompassed in new understandings of tenant and landlord responsibilities as a result of the current emphasis on tenant responsibility. It identifies that these pressures are felt most profoundly by frontline housing staff in their attempt to reconcile the subsequent multiplicity of their roles. Discretionary housing management practices are exposed as one by-product of housing staff operating amidst competing organisational agendas.

2.4.1 Tenancies at Risk

Housing is a complex good (Long et al., 2008a; Phibbs & Young, 2005). One way of understanding housing is through the human needs it addresses. Within a sustaining tenancies approach, a successful tenancy involves more than simply maintaining a tenancy. It is about achieving improvements in tenants' lives through intervention (Habibis et al., 2007:vii), namely tenant satisfaction and tenancy stability (Seelig & Jones, 2004) and other positive housing and non-housing tenant outcomes. Specifically, the key dimensions of tenancy success are security of tenure, safety, quality, affordability, appropriateness and tenant satisfaction (Jones et al., 2003). Equally, tenancy failure is understood in terms of eviction, exit under duress (threat of eviction) or tenant departure as a result of a poor housing experience or outcome. A tenancy is thus labelled 'at-risk' when the tenant struggles to establish or sustain their tenancies due to either immediate or long-term social, health or economic needs, or when the tenant is under threat of eviction due to tenancy breaches (such as rent arrears, property damage or anti-social behaviour) (Flatau et al., 2009; Seelig & Jones, 2004).

Habibis et al (2007:2) identify Indigenous people as one of the groups most at risk of tenancy failure in public housing. Generic and Indigenous specific drivers of

tenancy instability have been identified (Flatau et al., 2009). Flatau et al (2009:38) contend Indigenous tenants are more likely than non-Indigenous tenants to face many of the generic risk factors, such as: mental health conditions; drug and alcohol dependency problems; poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; overcrowding; accumulated or sudden debt and low or inadequate income; lack of financial management; lack of coping skills; location and social isolation; and lack of contact with, or awareness of, services and entitlements. Indigenous tenants also face culturally-specific barriers to accessing and sustaining their tenancies, which include:

- *Discrimination by landlords and neighbours;*
- *Lack of housing options resulting in acceptance of poorly located, sub-standard and poorly maintained housing;*
- *Limited experience of managing a tenancy;*
- *Powerlessness associated with a history of institutionalisation and 'state control', colonisation and dispossession;*
- *Struggle to meet unforeseen expenses, such as funeral costs (Flatau et al., 2009).*

Indigenous tenants also face barriers that expressly relate to the contestation between Indigenous cultural imperatives and Eurocentric social housing provision systems. These include:

- *Failure of landlords and housing agencies to appropriately address cultural behaviour and imperatives;*
- *Lack of understanding of Indigenous patterns of occupation and use of housing (domiciliary behaviour);*
- *Lack of fit between Indigenous domiciliary behaviour and western housing typologies;*
- *Lack of fit between household size and composition and house size, contributing to overcrowding;*
- *Indigenous belief systems and mourning customs;*
- *Indigenous patterns of mobility (Flatau et al., 2009).*

These barriers are corroborated by other studies. For instance, a study focusing on Indigenous women found intergenerational unemployment, poverty and low levels of literacy were also inhibiting factors to sustainable tenancies (Cooper & Morris, 2003; 2005). Likewise, Memmott et al (2003:23) note that housing providers have commented that 'few conventional tenancies would survive for people who have had a long record of homelessness due to a range of reasons: difficulty of changing spending patterns to sustain tenancy, lack of budgeting or other living skills, and relatives visiting and breaking conditions of tenancy or causing damage'. Seelig and Jones (2004) propose that most public housing tenancies present with 'vulnerability' factors (most of which are similar to the drivers identified by Flatau et al, see above), and that it is 'precipitating life events', such as unemployment, relationship breakdown, domestic violence or neighbourhood conflict) that commonly trigger tenancy failure. However, Seelig and Jones (2004) also identify the need for a

deeper understanding of the factors that make tenancies vulnerable, as the mere presence of these drivers does not always amount to public housing tenancy failure. They also highlight a research bias towards 'landlord instigated actions' for tenancy failure (such as evictions), rather than other aspects of tenancy failure (such as tenant-initiated termination due to dissatisfaction), although tenants' complex needs are generally associated with both forms of tenancy failures by SHAs and others (Seelig & Jones, 2004). Better understanding of these risks is foundational to the development of more effective interventions.

2.4.2 Interventions for Sustaining Tenancies

The increasing uptake of the sustaining tenancies approach has given rise to a range of interventions (policies, programs and practices). In 2003, Jones et al (2003) argued these interventions were largely unsubstantiated due to limited understandings of the relationship between tenancy risk factors, interventions and outcomes. This area has since received more attention (Jones et al., 2003; Seelig & Jones, 2004; 2006; Flatau et al., 2009; Habibis et al., 2007). In 2006, Seelig and Jones (2006) identified five key interventions: intensive tenant support; supportive housing management; tenancy initiatives focused on neighbourhood improvement; initiatives focused on the management of breaches and evictions; and program linkages with other agencies (service integration). Most recently, Habibis et al's (2007) *A Sustaining Tenancies Approach to Managing Demanding Behaviour in Public Housing: A Good Practice Guide* provides a manual to aid housing practitioners in applying this approach to public housing.[18] This subsection centres on three sustaining tenancy interventions which emerge from this body of literature as particularly critical: (i) service integration, (ii) intensive tenant support, and (iii) supportive housing management.

Service Integration

To begin, the sustaining tenancies approach does not occur in a housing management vacuum, instead it requires service integration across the human service sector (inclusive of tenant support services). Its widely recognised criticality (See for example: Habibis et al., 2011; Jacobs & Arthurson, 2003; Seelig & Jones,

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[18] The extent of the manual's use is unreported.

2004) is a reflection of the trend in public sector management towards whole-of-government approaches that bring together human service sectors to achieve better social policy outcomes (See Jones et al., 2007). It is also a reflection of the increased targeting of social housing for 'special needs' and 'greatest needs' individuals. This trend has filtered through to tenants, who now expect coordinated service provision (See for example: Baldry et al., 2006:372).

SHAs have variously established a wider range of partnerships with other service providers (Milligan et al., 2010:6), such as mental health, disability, family and child welfare, community health, and community corrections (Seelig & Jones, 2006). However, as with social housing generally (Phillips et al., 2009), service integration is a key policy and management challenge in public housing. The development of effective relationships between housing management and other human service agencies is challenging (Jones et al., 2007; Phillips et al., 2009; Milligan et al., 2010; 2011). For instance, difficulties in maintaining sustained access to support services present a major barrier to effective collaboration between housing managers and other human service agencies (Phillips et al., 2009:10). Milligan et al (2011:5) contend that in urban areas this requires a 'more holistic policy approach and more flexible use of resources from federal and state/territory governments that, while talked about, have not been forthcoming'. They also refer to the need to empower front-line workers to flexibly apply policies in order to improve integration (Milligan et al., 2011).

Intensive Tenant Support

Intensive tenant support is another critical intervention for sustaining tenancies. This comprises reactive and proactive specialised programs and services, including:

- *advice/education/referrals;*
- *needs assessment and case management;*
- *financial support to access housing;*
- *individual advocacy;*
- *counselling;*
- *family/household management skills including financial management; and*
- *living skills development (Flatau et al., 2009:4).*

These are deemed critical to establishing and sustaining tenancies (Walker & Ireland, 2003), and are increasingly included in housing infrastructure, welfare and management reforms (Seelig & Jones, 2004; Milligan et al., 2010).

Reasons for tenant support referrals include rent arrears, tenant liabilities, poor property standards, other tenancy breaches and neighbourhood issues (Flatau et

al., 2009). They also include: homelessness, a history of tenancy management problems and other housing or non-housing related needs (Flatau et al., 2009:4). Although tenant support aims to also address any underlying problems (See Section 2.4.1), it is often limited to the treatment of these symptomatic issues. In some cases this is because the 'drivers' of these issues sit beyond the remit of tenant support (such as the resolution of conflict between Indigenous cultural imperatives and Eurocentric housing management) (Elvin et al., 2010). In other cases external constraints, such as resourcing or access to additional services (Jones et al., 2007; Phillips et al., 2009; Milligan et al., 2010), a client's unwillingness to engage (Flatau et al., 2009), or the objectives of the tenant support funder (Flatau et al., 2009:6) are limiting factors.

Notwithstanding these limitations, systematic intensive tenant support can be highly effective in supporting tenant behavioural change, including for Indigenous clients (Nixon et al., 2006; Habibis et al., 2007; Flatau et al., 2009). Key program outcomes include:

- *reduction in rent arrears and tenant liabilities;*
- *improvement in property conditions and reduction in property damage charges;*
- *fewer reports of disruptive behaviour;*
- *increased linkages, referrals, and access to other support services;*
- *capacity building; and*
- *increased self-esteem, confidence and trust resulting in greater engagement with support services and community participation (Flatau et al., 2009:4–5).*

Early intervention; client empowerment; local knowledge and trust; support workers with cultural sensitivity; case management; and external support linkages (integration) are key contributors to successful outcomes (Flatau et al., 2009:5). Additionally, a clear separation of housing management and tenant support functions is advised to prevent jeopardising the supportive relationship between the tenant and support services due to perceptions of (and real) power imbalance between advocator and tenant (Randall & Brown 1999, Tsemberis & Amussen 1999 in Habibis et al., 2007:27).

However, the true extent of the success of intensive tenant support is obscured by inadequate systematic data collection and evaluation of tenant support services. There is limited nationally-consistent data on the outcomes of such programs, especially for Indigenous households, although this was partially addressed by the Australian Tenant Support Program (ATSP) Survey (Flatau et al., 2009:4–5). Weak data has two critical implications: it compromises the capacity to secure tenant

support funding; and it inhibits the identification and sharing of innovative and effective tenant support programs between agencies and jurisdictions (Flatau et al., 2009:100).

Evaluation deficiencies aside, the expansion of tenant support services is recommended, including in the case of current Indigenous housing reforms (McDonald, 2011). Seelig and Jones (2004:22) argue for 'a suite of interventions and policy options to tailor to individual circumstances' including early detection and proactive tenant support for mainstream public housing. Tailored/specialised support is a recognised service gap (Habibis et al., 2007). Tenant development programs, such as home living skills/housekeeping/Life Skills programs are also important (Flatau et al., 2005; 2009; Birdsall-Jones & Shaw, 2008; Birdsall-Jones et al., 2010; Walker & Ireland, 2003; Cooper & Morris, 2003; 2005). Habibis et al (2007:99) conceptualise such programs as 'a bridge between the two cultures', but caution that 'no amount of life skills is going to bridge the gap between some Indigenous populations and the white "model" of urban living and that this may not be desired or desirable'. To maximise their success Habibis et al (2007) contend such programs should be developed on action-research and community empowerment principles, and delivered in conjunction with Indigenous organisations.

Supportive Housing Management

Finally, supportive housing management is a crucial yet highly problematic intervention for sustaining tenancies. According to Habibis et al (2007) supportive housing management involves holistic intervention which includes prevention, early intervention, support, and the training of housing officers. Further, a key distinction is made between supportive measures and last-resort disciplinary/punitive measures. Supportive housing management is also premised on the availability of a range of accommodation options. Habibis et al (2007) describe a flexible social housing system ('a step-up model') encompassing a gamut of accommodation options (from crisis shelters, transitional, public housing to private rental) to accommodate, in a gradual staged-process, tenants' evolving needs (such as from intensive support to more independent living). It is unpromising that within this model, public housing is associated with 'lower' tenant needs rather than the higher-risk tenancies described in Section 2.4.1. Habibis et al (2007:91) suggest that for Indigenous tenancies this should include culturally sensitive management policies

and practices, which are flexible, holistic and which provide 'avenues for Indigenous consultation and participation in service development and delivery'.

Despite contributions by Habibis et al (2007), the definition of supportive housing management remains contested and under-researched (Seelig & Jones, 2006; Long et al., 2008a). This is especially the case in the context of remote Indigenous communities, where specialised and flexible housing management practices to respond to local Indigenous housing needs have received very little attention (Porter, 2009b). Notwithstanding this, there is consensus in the Indigenous housing literature that (even subtle) flexibility in the management of Indigenous cultural imperatives (Flatau et al., 2005; EOC 2004; Cooper & Morris, 2005; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Jacobs & Atkinson, 2008) and specialised service delivery models and practices (Milligan et al., 2010:50; 2011; Long et al., 2008a; AIHW, 2009a), can best address Indigenous needs. Five areas of mainstream housing policy and procedures are identified as needing to be reconfigured to suit Indigenous ways of life:

- *Flexible and locally responsive policy settings (e.g. local allocation rules);*
- *Housing design and construction standards;*
- *Cross-cultural skills of non-Indigenous front-line staff;*
- *Culturally appropriate and accessible service delivery modes (e.g. outreach services);*
- *Specialised information and communication strategies (Milligan et al., 2011:104).*

This need emerges from the discordance between tenants' ways of life and public housing management described in Section 2.2.3.

The literature cautions the failure of housing management to address Indigenous cultural imperatives. Memmott (2004:48) warns, 'To not take cultural needs into consideration, at…management levels, may ultimately result in a service failure'. The limited research on the current Indigenous housing reforms anticipates cultural imperatives will emerge as increasingly critical issues 'unless tenancy management is expressly more flexible or managed within the community' and housing and tenancy management reforms recognise and accommodate Indigenous cultural imperatives, such as mobility (Elvin et al., 2010:13). Although there are others who contend this approach 'risks becoming yet another socially and politically constructed concept that helps to protect dominant and dominating power relation' (Gibson 2009 in Milligan et al., 2011).

The literature details the possible nature of these changes to public housing management. For instance, Prout (2008) and Habibis et al (2010) both suggest amendments to service provision to suit Indigenous mobility. At a procedural level, Habibis et al (2011) advocate increased management flexibility in response to tenancy absences, and more lenient discretionary tenant identity requirements for housing applications where the applicant is known to the SHA. The literature also calls for better recognition and support of tenants' cultural imperatives around hosting kin (such as the provision of larger houses, extra support for managing high need visitors, and extra maintenance services to combat high use wear-and-tear) (Habibis et al., 2011). Furthermore, as cultural imperatives impact on property condition (Section 2.2.2), and given that the house itself is a known contributor to stable housing (Kolar, 2003:23), property management services are deemed critical. Habibis et al (2007) call for more frequent maintenance checks, and a program of early maintenance for damaged fittings and fixtures that does not rely on up-front payment by the tenant.

The literature also advocates increased tenant awareness and understanding of the management of Indigenous cultural practices (Habibis et al., 2011; Elvin et al., 2010). Mechanisms for achieving this include: improved communication, using local language, the collocation of housing and translation services, and more accessible support and advocacy services (Habibis et al., 2007). Elvin et al's (2010:1) research on the current Indigenous housing reforms argues:

> *effective engagement and information distribution processes would reduce the damage done by the concomitant constant turnover in staff that results in the loss of corporate memory, competencies, and most importantly, effective working relationships.*

The literature also advocates improved organisational strategies for recruiting, retaining and developing Indigenous staff, and the cultural awareness of non-Indigenous staff (Milligan et al., 2011; Habibis et al., 2007; 2011).

With regards to specialised and flexible housing management in the remote community context, Porter's (2009b) *Towards a Hybrid Model of Public Housing in Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Communities* (mentioned in Section 2.3.4), is the notable exception to the stated dearth of literature. Porter (2009b) investigates how remodelling public housing may facilitate a 'better fit' with Indigenous ways of living, proposing 'a hybrid model of public housing' that supports sustained, two-way dialogue and engagement between government and Indigenous communities. Central to this model is the notion of a 'recognition or translation space' through

which common ground can be carved out between Indigenous ways of life and standardised public housing policies and procedures (Porter, 2009b:2). Indeed the notion of 'intercultural space' between Indigenous ways of life and mainstream service provision is an emergent theme in the anthropological literature as a way to conceptualise desired service and practice flexibility in housing management (Milligan et al., 2011), and one which is echoed in Elvin et al's (2010) recent work on the current reforms.

Porter's hybrid model of public housing is non-prescriptive: it remains to be defined through 'bargaining and compromise' between Indigenous communities and the state housing authorities. Nevertheless, it is described as:

> likely to capture those aspects of community rental housing and public housing that best 'fit' the remote environment and heterogeneous Aboriginal community contexts and deliver housing services that have meaning for community residents' (Porter, 2009b:2).

In practice, Porter (2011:6) contends one aspect of this involves seeking and pursuing opportunities for tenant and community engagement, for 'the creation of spaces and processes that are conducive to meaningful engagement'. The Housing Reference Groups (HRG), which are a unique aspect of current Indigenous housing reforms in the Northern Territory, are identified as a potential site for this dialogue, although this has not been investigated.

This subsection has identified and described multiple interventions that support the sustaining tenancies agenda. The identification of numerous challenges regarding these interventions hints at the problematic uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda. The following subsection turns its focus to public housing management to investigate these suggestions in more detail.

2.4.3   Challenges in the Uptake of the Sustaining Tenancies Agenda

The sustaining tenancies agenda challenges traditional views of social housing as a temporary, transitional housing solution.   Instead, it casts public housing as a enduring platform for addressing tenants' housing and non-housing needs (Seelig et al., 2008:39).   This agenda also represents a fundamental shift from 'welfare-focused' public housing to a 'human-services orientated system based on more specific and composite conceptions of need and service responses' (Seelig & Jones, 2006).   The pursuit of this approach continues a trend dating back to the 1980s to consider broader tenancy outcomes (Seelig & Jones, 2004), rather than

limited shelter needs (Hayward, 1996; Burke, 1994). In the broader context of increasingly limited housing supply and high demand, such trends are encouraged by three interrelated issues: the impact of the increased policy targeting of high/complex needs individuals on public housing demographics (Milligan et al., 2010), the residualisation of public housing,[19] and the need to find more efficient and effective responses for dealing with homelessness (Seelig & Jones, 2006). There are also economic incentives that make the adoption of a sustaining tenancies approach a cost-effective strategy, namely: government costs associated with evictions and homelessness, and the 'revolving-door' syndrome of tenants cycling in-and-out of tenancies with increasing amounts of debt (Habibis et al., 2007; Beer et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2003). Its uptake is also encouraged by the mounting focus on the contribution of housing to individual, family and community wellbeing driven by the re-conceptualisation of housing as a critical component of a whole-of-government approach to social policy issues, itself driven by political and economic problems facing SHAs (Jones et al., 2003; Seelig & Jones, 2006).

As stated, Seelig and Jones (2006) describe trends across Australian SHAs for a range of sustaining tenancy interventions to become core functions of many housing authorities. Through its dual focus on housing and non-housing outcomes, this new agenda repositions and reasserts housing welfare's role in achieving a broad range of whole-of-government social and economic objectives. This in turn legitimises the role of public housing on which claims for continued political and financial support can be pinned (Seelig & Jones, 2006). However, in practice, the uptake of this agenda is not straightforward. Three barriers to this uptake are outlined here: (i) the need for disciplinary housing management; (ii) the need for efficient housing management; and (iii) bureaucratic change-management.

Disciplinary Housing Management

SHAs are responsible for ensuring tenants pay their rent, look after their property and behave in ways that are considerate to their neighbours (Seelig & Jones, 2006). They are also responsible for 'ensuring [public housing] estates are well managed, and that anti-social behaviour is minimised' (Seelig & Jones, 2006). However, the capacity for SHAs to meet these responsibilities, and especially SHAs' commitment

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[19] The residualisation of public housing refers to the housing of an increasing proportion of economically inactive and vulnerable tenants.

to challenging anti-social behaviour, are potentially in conflict with their commitment to sustaining tenancies.

One potential area of unresolved tension is SHAs' ongoing reliance on traditional disciplinary or punitive measures for dealing with problematic tenant behaviour. SHAs have long relied on measures that require 'tenants to conform to normative standards of behaviour or lose their security of tenure' (Habibis et al., 2007:19). According to some, these measures, with their threat of legal procedures and eviction, have acted as a useful behavioural deterrent (Jacobs & Arthurson, 2003; 2004). However, such approaches are contrary to the very essence of a sustaining tenancies approach (Habibis et al., 2007). As such, they are criticised for problematically assuming that by 'forcing tenants into a crisis they will be more responsive to requests to change their behaviour', when in fact tenants often risk homelessness rather than dealing with housing management requirements 'they feel unable or unwilling to meet' (Habibis et al., 2007:14). Disciplinary measures are also criticised for their embedded promotion of 'good' tenant/ 'bad' tenant dichotomies (Seelig & Jones, 2004) that ignores 'the difficulties some tenants may have in responding to demands for behavioural change' (Habibis et al., 2007:14). Such measures are ultimately challenged for ignoring 'the complexity of the construction of "demanding behaviour" and the environmental factors that may lie behind it, such as the impact of poor health, low skills and poverty on self-esteem and coping skills (Habibis et al., 2007:14). Habibis et al (2007) suggest that whilst in some cases disciplinary measures may be necessary, they should be accompanied by supportive measures. The tension between public housing's reliance on disciplinary measures, and the marginality to these measures to the sustaining tenancies agenda, leads Seelig and Jones (2006:6) to argue that 'there must be some limits to a commitment to sustaining tenancies'.

Efficient Housing Management

Another challenge SHAs face is conflicting expectations; they must be supportive, yet also to efficient, housing providers (Seelig & Jones, 2004:21). Despite noted economic incentives for the adoption of a sustaining tenancies approach, significant countervailing pressures also exist, namely: 'the requirements of efficient property and financial management as distinct from effective tenancy management' and

'declining resources to support effective, client-centred management practices' (Jones et al., 2003). These pressures emerge from a specific public administration agenda - New Public Management (NPM)[20] - which has been pursued across the Australian Public Services since 1984 with the intent of rendering the public sector more efficient. Managerialist pressures are identified by Seelig and Jones (2004) who note how public housing priorities (such as to reduce annual stock turnover, to increase tenancy lengths, and to improve tenants' residential experiences) are coupled with significant economic obligations and efficiency objectives. Milligan et al (2010) refer to a continued focus on arrears performance over avoiding eviction, and a focus on vacancy control, over suitability of dwelling. Several submissions to the EOC Inquiry (See for example EOC 2004:156, 222) corroborate these tensions between meeting SHA economic objectives and the social imperatives of its tenants.

The sustaining tenancies agenda is associated with expensive intensive engagement with tenants which is likely to exacerbate rising operational costs in social housing (Seelig & Jones, 2006). Jacobs and Arthurson (2003; 2004) find holistic approaches (based on supportive housing management measures) whilst preferable, involved considerable time and expertise on the part of the housing managers. For instance, they describe an important role for housing managers in preventing and managing anti-social behaviour (such as by working directly and informally with tenants, administering flexible allocation policies, and providing local level communication and publicity strategies) but found this required additional training and resources (Jacobs & Arthurson, 2003; 2004). Equally, sustaining tenancies potentially restricts social housing access, due to the subsequent decline in stock turnover (Seelig & Jones, 2006). Seelig and Jones (2006) contend the sustaining tenancies approach raises 'key issues of cost-effectiveness and equity of access that require careful consideration'.

Reforming the Bureaucracy

Interwoven within these two challenges, lies the third challenge of reforming the longstanding SHA bureaucracy to facilitate the uptake of this agenda. Milligan et al (2010:61; 2011) confirm that 'strengthening and sustaining culturally appropriate

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[20] NPM is a contested term. Barzclay (2001:xi) provides the following definition: 'a shorthand expression regularly used by scholars and professionals to refer to distinctive themes, styles, and patterns of public service management that have come to the fore within the past two decades, notably in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand'.

systems and practices in a large bureaucracy, such as an SHA, is a difficult and ongoing challenge'. In urban and regional areas, they argue that 'frameworks for achieving transformational reform of how mainstream services operate do not appear to be well developed and more nuanced approaches will be needed' (Milligan et al., 2010:69). Numerous recommendations in the EOC Inquiry report (2004) corroborate this. Earlier quests made by SHAs to improve the cultural appropriateness of public housing service delivery, such as through the adoption of new approaches (for instance, specialist tenancy programs to sustain tenancies, conciliation strategies, service delivery reforms, and Indigenous workforce strategies) portend these challenges. Flatau et al's (2005; 2009) research exposes these quests as piecemeal in many urban SHAs, as later confirmed by Milligan et al (2010), and identify several problems: management commitment; skills and awareness, the availability of resourcing, embedded organisational cultures, and a widespread lack of cultural knowledge within SHAs. These barriers also recall Seelig and Jones (2006) contention that SHAs require 'new skills, reallocation of resources and priorities, and cultural change within housing authorities' to support the adoption of a sustaining tenancies approach.

Perhaps the most overt symbol of the unresolved tensions in the uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda lies in the current government performance indicators for NPARIH. These centre on overcrowding, the number of houses with public housing tenancy management, etc. with no mention of tenancy outcomes (COAG 2008c:7–8). Equally, current metrics for measuring Indigenous housing need, as discussed in Chapter 1, are overcrowding; homelessness; housing services; housing condition; and affordability. Significantly, metrics for cultural appropriateness and security of tenure, although recognised as important, remain outside reporting criteria. As such, there is a significant likelihood that tenancy success or failure (in the sense embodied in a sustaining tenancies approach) will not be captured.

Whilst the practical challenges outlined here are real and substantive barriers to the uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda, they are overshadowed by serious concerns about the boundaries of housing management responsibility and indeed whether this agenda should be a core responsibility for SHAs (Seelig & Jones, 2006). Critically, this agenda requires a particular policy positioning, namely that SHAs' responsibilities towards their tenants extend beyond their legal duties and responsibilities as landlords - hence the expression 'social landlord' (Jones et al.,

2003). This widens the scope of social housing governance from controlling problematic behaviour to encouraging and facilitating tenants to engage in specific, positive behaviours. The next subsection contextualises this problematic expansion of housing governance.

2.4.4 Competing Agendas, Contested Roles

The challenging and contested uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda is symptomatic of countervailing pressures propelling social housing in other directions (Seelig & Jones, 2006). This subsection contextualises the challenges of the previous section (Section 2.4.3), by detailing a significant counter-pressure on social housing management as a result of tenant and landlord roles under the individual responsibility agenda. It shows how these pressures are felt most profoundly by frontline housing staff in their attempt to reconcile a multiplicity of roles (Franklin, 2000). Discretionary housing management practices are exposed as one by-product of housing staff operating amidst competing organisational agendas.

The Locus/ Limits of Responsibility

Government agencies rely on ideological discourses to reshape the state's relationship with its subjects, including its current emphasis on tenant responsibility over other economic or structural interventions (Jacobs, 2008).[21] Rose (2001) locates these developments within neo-liberal governmentality, describing a new 'ethopolitics' of housing in which these discourses 'operate as a technology for government agencies to pursue their agendas' (Jacobs, 2008:469). To simplify, contemporary housing management combines two discourses (Manzi, 2009) alongside social welfarism (or communitariansim), consumerism and managerialism (See for example Flint, 2004a; Jacobs, 2008). There is a 'cultural' discourse, 'based on the notion that housing management can promote behavioural change and increased self worth' (Manzi, 2009:7). Countering this, there is a 'social control' discourse that contends 'peer-group pressure will lead to conformity of social norms, but also manifested in more authoritarian, disciplinary approaches to address social problems' (Manzi, 2009:7). These discourses arise from shared assumptions about

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[21] This subsection also draws on British housing management literature, as despite contextual differences, this provides much insight into the broader ideological context shaping contemporary housing governance in neoliberal economies (Flint, 2003; 2004a; 2004b; Rose, 2001).

the limitations of government responsibility and the responsibilities of other institutions and individuals within civil society (Manzi, 2009:7). Thus the new 'ethopolitics' of housing requires 'the reconfiguration of social housing governance, characterised by a realignment of the roles and relationships of those to govern and those to be governed' (Flint 2004a). However, the rationales, processes and outcomes of this are ambiguous and contested (Flint, 2004a). This is especially the case as there is much contestation surrounding how responsibilities should be demarcated between tenant and social housing landlords (Flint, 2004a), in part because responsibility in housing welfare is poorly defined (See King, 2006).

Discourses of Control

Although no single discourse exclusively shapes housing governance, social control discourses that seek to 'secure the conformity of individuals' behaviour to constructed social norms' (Flint, 2004b:894), are particularly influential. This is not a new focus, but rather an enduring feature of social landlordism since its inception in the late 19th century (Crawford, 2006; Cowan & McDermont, 2006; Haworth & Manzi, 1999; Lister, 2006). However, the residualisation of public housing and perceptions of its increasingly problematic management, as well as 'wider notions of a behavioural decline' (associated with the ill-defined notion of anti-social behaviour) (Manzi, 2009:8) have encouraged its re-emergence as a powerful influence in housing governance, albeit now expressed through a more consensual language (Jacobs, 2008).

An important distinction is made between obligation and desirability in the governance of tenants' behaviour (Flint, 2004b). Through the tenancy agreement, there have long been 'legally enforceable contractual duties' for tenants (disciplinary social control), and under post-welfarist regimes, the conditionality of welfare on conduct, is increasingly prevalent (See contractual/coercive welfare in Flint, 2003; Jacobs, 2008). Distinct from these, there is 'a [recent] moral exhortation of tenants enacted through policy discourse or housing management techniques', which involves 'a reshaping or moral reinterpretation of existing contractual agreements' (peer-group pressure) (Flint, 2004b:896). Housing governance increasingly calls upon self-regulation (or to use Foucault's term, 'technologies of the self') to meet government aims (Flint, 2004b; Rose, 1999). These aspects of responsibility (and the associated housing management techniques) 'give differing emphasis to the elements of consumerist, managerialist and communitarianism rationales, which are sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting' (Flint, 2004b:897).

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The Responsible Tenant

The conceptualisation of the 'responsible and responsive tenant' is an increasingly central figure in housing governance (Flint, 2004b). Hunter (2006) argues that whilst not a new concept for housing governance, the nature and scope of tenant responsibility are currently being refigured and broadened in line with ideological framings of responsibility (with reference to the UK). Flint (2004b:895) describes how tenant responsibility is 'deepening' through increased individual agency and accountability, and 'widening' through 'moral communitarian duty'. He clarifies that the re-emergence of the focus on tenants' duties as citizens does not signal a return to welfarist state/citizen relationships, instead 'it conceives subjects, including tenants, as members of communities: required to regulate their own behaviour in accordance with the "norms" and values of these communities and owing duties to promote the wider well-being of these communities' (Flint, 2004b:899). Tenants' identities are thus understood to be recast: no longer passive social welfare recipients, they are instead both 'autonomous, empowered and responsible individuals' and 'duty-owing members of communities' who act 'within a dominant discourse of ethical conduct based upon prescribed aesthetics of consumption and moral codes of behaviour' (Flint, 2004a:151). These new traits of self-agency and self-responsibility arise from discourses of managerialism and consumerism in housing governance and are encouraged by a problematisation of social housing provision 'creating a dependency culture…by an over (and unconditional) reliance on archaic and outmoded bureaucratic welfarist forms of housing management' (Flint, 2004b:151). These identities also arise from government conviction that agency, autonomy and self-responsibility are inherent to good citizenship.

Despite this emphasis on responsibility, dominant policy constructions of the concept of responsibility are criticised for ignoring much of the concept's inherent complexity. For instance, King (2006:112–13) contends that while making people more responsible is viewed as a 'good thing', responsibility remains ill-defined in terms of 'how it should be shared between individual households, landlords and government, and what outcomes might derive from proposals explicitly aimed at changing behaviour in a fairly fundamental way'. King (2006:113) also criticises common government assumptions that greater personal responsibility will 'automatically follow from a policy change'.

The Roles of Frontline Housing Staff

The emphasis on tenant responsibility recasts the nature of housing governance, engendering 'new identities for official agencies' (Flint, 2002:630). However, whilst tenant responsibility signals an acknowledgement of the limits of government responsibility (Cowan et al., 2001), it does not correspond to a contraction of housing governance (Flint, 2004b). Flint (2004b:904) refers to the generation of new responsibilities and the need to develop 'structures that support the capacities of tenants to fulfil these behavioural obligations'. Yet differing perceptions of housing management's aims and objectives have meant the scope of housing governance remains contested (Franklin & Clapham, 1997; Clapham et al., 2000; Saugeres, 1999; Casey, 2008). Flint (2004b:905) contends 'policy has focused on changing the roles of tenants, without exploring the necessary corollary of what these changes actually mean for the roles of housing officers'.

Notwithstanding this, frontline housing staff are understood to be critical to these new processes of housing governance, tasked once again with shaping behaviours and controlling residents (Manzi, 2009). Since the 1990s, their roles have been recast in two ways: a returned focus on tenancy management, and following this, a role as 'disciplinary surveyors and regulators of problematic tenant behaviour' (Casey, 2008; Saugeres, 1999; Dufty, 2011:169). Some contend their role has become unrealistically multifarious, expected to expand to encompass the roles of 'policy implementers, performance monitors, rational bureaucrats, caring professionals, job providers, anti-poverty strategists, community developers, agents of social control, promoters of well-being, immigration controllers, custodians of health and morality, and proponents of better education' (Franklin, 2000:195). Ultimately these roles place contradictory pressures on housing staff to adopt both a policing and empowering/caring role (Saugeres, 2000:558).

Tenant Responsibility and Punitive Measures

The responsibility agenda can be construed as a vehicle for social control ideologies. The focus on crime and anti-social behaviour in much of the recent social control discourse has directed the discussion on tenant responsibility to 'the increasing range of reactive, punitive sanctions' deployed by landlords (Flint, 2004b:895). This reveals 'an emergence of a more intensive and interventionist form of housing management' (Flint, 2004a:155; and see Flint, 2002; Franklin, 2000) and 'a greater variety of sanctions and disciplinary mechanisms' to control individual conduct (Manzi, 2009:9). This is 'framed within policy rationales of dependency and

moral deficiency and negatively based on interventions to prevent or punish unacceptable conduct' (Flint, 2004b:895). Under this new so-called 'politics of behaviour', housing governance involves 'the conduct of conduct based on a dominant moral discourse of sanctioned "responsible" behaviour' (Flint, 2004a:152) or what Rose (2001) terms the 'grammars of living', entailing aesthetic and moral judgements about the conduct of individuals as both consumers and dutiful citizens. The bifurcation of good and bad tenants is intrinsic to social control discourses; housing staff distinguish tenants as good, namely 'respectable citizens willing to conform to the dominant social order', and bad, namely 'social misfits without any rules and any respect for the prevailing social order and its values' (Saugeres, 2000:590; Jacobs, 2008).

The imposition of these dominant values (as a means of social control) takes place on 'formal and informal, conscious and unconscious, covert and overt levels' (Saugeres, 2000:590). For instance, tenants' upkeep of their houses and gardens are found to be 'an important symbol of conformity to the social order by which housing staff assess whether tenants are respectable or non-respectable citizens and try and control their behaviour' (Saugeres, 2000:590). In this sense, housing professionals are 'community control professionals…exerting a growing domination over "problematised" social housing tenants' (Flint, 2004a:155). Tenants are viewed as living outside the social order, and in response, 'housing staff become agents of social control behaving much like parents towards children: supervising, educating, looking after, punishing and rewarding tenants' (Saugeres, 2000:590). In doing so, housing staff 'reproduce capitalist and patriarchal ideologies [such as the heterosexual family, the labour market and the education system] by attributing the root of social problems to the breakdown of traditional capitalist and patriarchal institutions and values' (Saugeres, 2000:590).

Tenant Responsibility and Supportive Measures

However, the changing narratives of housing governance require not only the remedying 'bad behaviours', but also another dimension in which the responsibility agenda is framed as 'a proactive and empowering mechanism within housing governance' (Flint, 2004b:895). In this sense, housing management revives its philanthropic roots in British social reformer Octavia Hill who promoted the role of the housing manager as 'providing guidance to tenants on non-housing issues such as thrift, housekeeping and moral worth' (Dufty, 2011). This alternative dimension of the 'politics of behaviour' expands the scope of social housing governance by

creating new governance imperatives and responsibilities 'as attempts are made to encourage and facilitate tenants to positively engage in certain behaviours' with the aim to 'help tenants meet their obligations, form positive relationships within the community, and sustain their tenancies' (Flint, 2004b:907). For housing staff, this entails 'developing structures that support the capacities of tenants to fulfil these behavioural obligations' (Flint, 2004b:904). In practice, this involves broadening the range of interventions aimed at reshaping tenants' conduct both in terms of the aspects of individual behaviour governance seeks to influence and in the number of techniques deployed to achieve this (Flint, 2004b). Flint (2004b:903) gives examples of housing managers' workloads increasing as a result of assisting tenants, especially at the outset of the tenancy, such as in explaining the responsibility agenda.

As hinted in Section 2.4.3, the concurrent pursuit of policing and empowering or caring management responses creates tensions and ambiguities in the approaches adopted by housing agencies. Flint (2004a:155) states: '[housing] governance is characterised by complexities and ambiguities between policy rhetoric and implementation' exposing 'tensions, conflicts, reinterpretation, inconsistency and subjectivity'. Ultimately, housing staff must reconcile two roles: that of the disciplinary landlord, and that of the supportive social worker (Chalkley, 2011). However, understandings of how staff operate in these contexts are limited by a tendency in housing research to ignore the ideological underpinnings of housing management (Kemeny, 1992; King, 1996; Franklin & Clapham, 1997), and to focus instead on positivist paradigms and the managerial or policy-orientated interests of professionals and policy-makers (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000; Saugeres, 1999; Franklin & Clapham, 1997; Casey, 2008). This shortcoming is partially remedied by a wave of social constructionist housing studies exploring how housing managers construct their everyday realities (Kemeny, 1992; Jacobs & Manzi, 2000; Franklin & Clapham, 1997; Clapham et al., 2000; Saugeres, 1999). Significantly, this research counters perceptions of welfare bureaucracies (and their staff) as apolitical and neutral (Saugeres, 1999).

Coping Strategies, Discretionary Practices

The adoption of two conflicting roles: landlord and welfare worker (Chalkley, 2011:195), requires housing staff to develop strategies within the organisational constraints of rules, policies and procedures. Saugeres (1999:97) explains:

> these strategies are not necessarily conscious or deliberate rationing
> devices, they can be coping strategies that staff have developed to

*deal with pressures and resource constraints, but they can also be
deliberate and written within bureaucratic procedures.*

Staff thus reproduce 'the rules and bureaucratic ways of knowing of the organisation while interpreting and negotiating these according to their own sense of self' (Saugeres, 1999:97).

Significantly, these strategies produce housing management practices that are highly discretional (Cole & Furbey, 1994; Henderson & Karn, 1987; Card, 2006). These practices may be supportive or discriminatory, and they can also constitute a mechanism for frontline staff to resist the power structures of the organisation (Clapham et al., 2000). In the Australian housing management context, understandings of the experiences of frontline housing workers, and especially how they apply discretion to decision making, remain limited. Clapham and Franklin (1997:12) describe housing professionals resorting to 'negotiating, bargaining and boundary maintenance behaviour' through which they exercise considerable autonomy. The higher echelons of housing management are described as aspiring to restrict this discretion, although such attempts are deemed futile by some to the extent that housing staff cannot leave their own subjectivities aside: 'staff are already imposing views constructed and created by a certain type of bureaucracy' (Saugeres, 1999:101). Others also contend that housing management staff (like other frontline welfare bureaucrats) require scope for discretion within the bounds of policies and procedures in recognition of varying tenant circumstances. These views have been substantiated most recently in the Australian context by Chalkley's (2008; 2010; Chalkley, 2011) unpublished (PhD) ethnography of public housing officers in Victoria, Australia, which follows earlier work by more prominent housing researchers such as Clapham et al (2000), Hayward (1996), Dalton (1988) and Saugeres (1999; 2000).

Further to this, understandings of discretional management practices are also informed by descriptions of the role of civil servants in the interpretive, bottom-up policy implementation literature. This literature elevates the role of civil servants in welfare policy implementation on the premise that policy enactment is not a rational process directed by the higher echelons of public administration (See for example: Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Lipsky (1980:3) coined the term 'street-level bureaucrats' to denote frontline civil servants who interact directly with citizens and who are 'at the sharp end of resource allocation in a situation where demand far exceeds supply' (Barton, 1989:42). Inadequate resources or unsatisfactory working conditions, unpredictable or uncooperative clients, and ambiguous job specifications

and guidelines result in street-level bureaucrats facing high levels of conflict and ambiguity. The 'inescapable exercise of discretion' in their decision making affords frontline civil servants high levels of power to determine 'the nature, amount and quality of benefits and sanctions provided by their agencies' (Barton, 1989:42). It is frontline civil servants role in policy creation, distortion, or the widening of the gap between policy and practice (the implementation deficit) that leads Lipsky (2010:24) to the describe frontline workers as 'de facto bureaucratic policy makers'.

Brodkin (2008:327) contends 'discretion is neither good nor bad but the "wild card" of [policy] implementation, likely to produce different results in different organizational contexts'. However, arguments are also levelled against discretionary practices. The literature cites 'the difficulty of overseeing and monitoring [street-level bureaucrats'] actions' (Peters, 2007:155) to caution that some discretionary practices become standard practice irrespective of either their justness or alignment with policy intent (Brodkin, 2008:327). Some also contend that unabated discretion constitutes a convenient strategy for organisations as the management practices it produces can be 'functional' to the organisation, such as leaving the frontline professionals to resolve difficult rationing with the client (Barton, 1989:44). For instance, the literature suggests discretion leads to inconsistent and particularistic treatment of similar clients, and the routinised treatment of clients with different needs (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Brodkin, 1995; Peters, 2007). This is captured in Brodkin's (2008:24) description of frontline workers: 'they do not do just what they want or just what they are told…they do what they can'. In Saugeres (1999:101), these arguments are employed to argue that the dominant housing management discourse based on a framing of housing organisations as objective and rational (and policies and procedures that are standardised to treat everyone as equal) are an illusion sustained and reproduced 'to justify and legitimate an essentially unequal process of allocation of scarce resources' and to 'justify the views of those in power and the ways in which welfare bureaucracies operate'.

A major criticism of the street-level bureaucrat literature is its limitations in stepping beyond the identification of discretional practices to explain the complex web of influences acting upon frontline professionals (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Brodkin, 1995; Peters, 2007:156). For instance, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003:6) argue that decision making is guided by beliefs and norms 'especially about what is fair', more than by rules, training or procedures. Lin (2000:126) extends this, claiming the 'implementation of new policies is likely to succeed only when the

policies are congruent with the organisational context of the implementing agencies'. Peters (2007:159) contends that deeper understandings of the circumstances and contexts in which discretionary practices occur are necessary to clarify the influences producing these practices.[22]

In the Indigenous context, the street level bureaucrat construct is brought to life in Lea's (2008a) ethnographic study of the Northern Territory health system and its workforce. Her work is significant for diverting the research focus from Indigenous people and communities to the service delivery bureaucracy. Echoing the literature above, Lea finds the implementation of well-intentioned health policy is heavily influenced by frontline staff and the organisation in which they operate. Lea suggests that frontline health professionals are problematically positioned as agents of government and community advocates, and concludes a limited understanding of these bureaucrats by policy-makers and academics is a barrier to resolving problems in Indigenous health.

Returning to housing management research, Franklin (2000; 2008) contends the tension and conflict in housing management (some of which was captured in this subsection), will likely remain, until such time as the views and experiences of those on the frontline are considered. Lea's research highlights the absence of parallel ethnographic understandings of Indigenous housing management bureaucracies. And whilst devolution associated with NPM, and its rhetoric of 'let the managers manage' (Kettl, 1997), hints at the importance of housing staff, how these public administration developments are brought to bear on Australian Indigenous Affairs remains largely undocumented (Sullivan, 2009). Indeed some have contested the notion of devolution in Indigenous Affairs, arguing government is actually more top-down than ever with civil servants working in an environment of increasing constraints (Podger, 2011). To address this research paucity, Flint (with reference to housing management more broadly) recommends future work should look to the 'actualities of implementation and resistance' to obtain a better understanding of how the new processes of governance influence tenants' behaviours and the wider impacts of this reconfiguration of responsibility. Equally, Seelig and Jones (2006),

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[22] This literature primarily concerns governmental agencies, rather than other non-governmnet organisations and agencies that are potentially driven by different motivations (Peters, 2007).

suggest more analysis of the frontline of policy/program implementation is also necessary for understanding the sustaining tenancies agenda.

2.4.5 Conclusion

This section described the sustaining tenancies agenda and contextualised its problematic uptake in public housing. It began by outlining the factors known to place Indigenous tenancies at risk of failure, and then described three key 'sustaining tenancies' interventions known to dissolve these risks. This revealed the criticality of service integration, intensive tenant support and supportive housing management. Understandings of supportive housing management, especially for remote Indigenous tenancies were shown to be especially limited, although flexible and specialised housing policies and management procedures appear to be central to this. Furthermore, Porter's research on a hybrid form of public housing provided suggestions for incorporating such practices into remote public housing. Impediments in pursuing these interventions hinted at the difficulties in incorporating a sustaining tenancies agenda in public housing. These issues are particularly significant given the limited attention given to these in the Commonwealth government's Indigenous housing reforms.

In Section 2.4.3 the focus shifted to the uptake of this agenda in public housing. Key challenges were identified in relation to disciplinary management measures, the need for management efficiency and bureaucratic reform. This also exposed serious concerns about the boundaries of housing management responsibility, and concerns about the positioning of the sustaining tenancies agenda as a core responsibility for SHAs. In the final subsection, the challenges of the previous subsection were contextualised as symptoms of countervailing pressures (agendas) propelling social housing in alternate directions. In particular, Section 2.4.4 described how new loci of responsibility have emerged from the pursuit of a tenant responsibility agenda, and its constructions of the responsible tenant. It described how this recast the nature of social housing governance in neo-liberal economies. In doing so it exposed, on the one hand, how this agenda had reinstated the centrality of social control ideologies and their accompanying reactive, disciplinary/ punitive housing management measures. On the other hand, it revealed this agenda as creating new housing governance imperatives to support and encourage tenants to meet their new obligations. The description of the impact of the tenant responsibility agenda on the shape of housing governance illustrates how these

agendas place similar (and cohesive) demands on housing governance (namely through their requirement for supportive housing management). However, it also suggests potentially conflicting demands placed on housing management, namely through the value placed on punitive/disciplinary housing management measures. Ultimately, the repositioning of any agenda (such as the sustaining tenancies agenda) as 'core business' for SHAs, involves reshaping the social housing system and the practice of social housing management. This section demonstrates that this is a challenging and contested process (Seelig & Jones, 2006).

For now, SHAs' commitment to the sustaining tenancies agenda is 'emergent, partial and uneven, and often ineffectual' (Seelig & Jones, 2006). Undoubtedly the emergence of a third housing welfare goal: sustainability, in addition to past housing policies objectives of access and affordability (Seelig & Jones, 2006), raises a significant concern. As described in Section 2.4.4, the capacity of housing management to reconcile competing agendas largely rests with housing staff. These staff juggle a multiplicity of roles in their effort to reconcile these agendas. In doing so, they develop strategies which produce high levels of discretionary housing management practices. Significantly, these discretionary housing management practices (and their impacts on tenancies) are not well understood. Finally, whilst these practical concerns are substantial, the theoretical basis for interventions to change tenants' behaviours (whether supportive or punitive) are, as yet, unquestioned. This is the focus of the following section.

2. 5 THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Policies are not atheoretical: theories, although essentially abstractions and constructions of reality, 'work on' and manifests themselves in policy (Strengers, 2012). Current Indigenous housing policies are no exception: they are informed by rational actor theories of behavioural change. However, as hinted in Chapter 1, this theoretical positioning is not without criticism. On a practical level, there is acknowledgement, even within government, that increasingly the complexity of some policy problems limits the capacity for traditional behavioural change policy tools to effect behavioural change (APSC 2007a:iii; 2009). However, its deepest criticisms are theoretical. These critiques concern its singular focus on the individual and the de-emphasis on context and need.

Alternative social change paradigms have arisen to address perceived theoretical flaws. These paradigmatic challenges evoke longstanding debates in the social sciences regarding the question of social ontology: do social structures shape human action or does human agency?[23] Social and cultural theories, for instance, provide a range of alternative conceptual models to explain the social world. Cultural theories in particular are unified by their shared emphasis on cognitive or symbolic structures of meaning in explaining and understanding human action. As Shove (2011:264) argues, the purpose of these alternative theories is not to wholly denounce behavioural change approaches or to provide more 'holistic perspectives or solve existing policy problems'. Instead, their significance lies in their capacity to generate different understandings of policy problems by better accounting for the factors that promote social change, and perhaps most significantly, their capacity to provide insight into potential new avenues for promoting change. One subtype of cultural theory – social practice theory – offers a compelling conceptual alternative to other theories of social change. The 'smallest unit', or locus, of social theory is 'practices'.

The intent of this section is to describe social practice theory and expose its relevance as an analytical device for understanding and exploring social change. Section 2.5.1 describes social practice theory, including its critical divergences from behavioural change theory. Social practice theory intrinsically calls for a shift in analytical focus from behaviours to everyday practices. Section 2.5.2 details an analytical framework for investigating social practices that involves the dissection of social practices into four components. These new understandings of social change inform new questions about the ways in which social change might be encouraged. Section 2.5.3 discusses the reconfiguration of social practices, especially intentional attempts to modify social practices.[24]

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[23] In essence, this question concerns whether we are capable of autonomous, self-directed social action or if we are constrained, without individual or collective control, by historical and social processes. Whilst different theories have argued the primacy of either structure or agency, modern theorists have gravitated towards constructions of the social world involving a reconciliation, balancing or co-construction of both components (See for example Bourdieu, 1987; Giddens, 1986).

[24] This section refers to social practice theory variously as practice theory, social practice perspective and social practice paradigm.

2.5.1 Social Practice Theory

Social practice theory decentres the prevailing analytical focus from the individual and framings which privilege social totality (social norms), institutions or systems (structure), cultural symbols and meanings (symbolism) or attitudes, and behaviours and choices. It expands the subject of change to encompass the social and collective organisation of practices, specifically the 'broad cultural entities that shape individuals' perceptions, interpretations and actions within the world' (Hargreaves, 2011:79) or simplistically, social beings and their practices (Strengers, 2009). In doing so, social practice theory constructs a unique social ontology which differs markedly from dominant behavioural change theories. This said, social practice theory is not a coherent theory (Halkier, 2009). Instead, it comprises an assemblage of theoretical elements and common assumptions about the performativity of social practices that are drawn from social theorists such as Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1986) and later conceptualised by Schatzki (2002) and Reckwitz (2002). In summary, social practice theory concerns itself with the 'organisation, reproduction and transformation of social life' (Schatzki, 2001:10).

Social practice theory locates the social in 'practices'. Everyday practices are activities within the social domain such as sleeping, cooking, eating, cleaning, consuming, working and parenting. These practices are understood as social phenomena: 'participating in them entails immersion in an extensive tissue of coexistence that embraces varying sets of people' and their organisation is part of the 'nexuses of doings and sayings that compose them' (Schatzki, 2002:87; Strengers, 2009). Reckwitz (2002:249) describes practice as:

> *a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.*

Schatzki (2002) makes the distinction between practice as a coordinated entity and practice as a performance. Practice as a coordinated entity consists of a mix of intertwined components, the ingredients of which differ amongst theorists (See Section 2.5.2), whereas practice as a performance is actualised and sustained through individuals' reproduction of it.

Social practices are not static; they evolve and change. Shove (2003) and Strengers (2009) both emphasise the dynamic, changing nature of 'normal' household routines, such as household organisation, dominant modes of economic

exchange and cultural traditions. Strengers (2009:39) cautions the misinterpretation of social practice theory as relating to 'what people do or what they say about what they do rather than the ways in which these doings and sayings are constituted and interconnected'. This leads to their faulty reframing as 'behaviours' (the product of individuals) and 'obscures the historical, social, cultural and material configurations which shape what we do and how we explain what we do' (Strengers, 2009:39). Warde (2005:139–140) describes practices as having a 'trajectory or path of development, a history'. Accordingly, understanding why people do what they do is necessarily contextual, historical and institutional, in recognition of 'the social construction of practices, the role of collective learning in the construal of competence, and the importance of the exercise of power in the shaping of definitions of justifiable conduct' (Warde, 2005:140).

In this way, social practice theory provides a very distinct account of everyday life; any perceptions of social ontological convergence with the rational choice models are deceptive (Reckwitz, 2002). First, social practice theory describes a world constructed and ordered by social practices, not by individuals, their attitudes, behaviours or choices (Strengers, 2012). Second, the role of the individual differs: individuals are neither autonomous nor 'the judgemental dope who conforms to social norms', but rather they assume the role of 'carriers' of a practice - concurrently 'captured' by practices and constituted through their reproductions (Reckwitz, 2002:256; Strengers, 2012). Meanwhile, attitudes, beliefs and values arise from, and are cultivated within, practices rather than individuals, and agency resides within practices, people and things, not solely in people. Third, change is understood as 'emergent, dynamic and often uncontrollable' and involves changes to practices, namely the 'sources of changed behaviour lie in the development of practices themselves' (Warde, 2005:140), as opposed to conceptions of 'orderly, predictable, and controllable change' that occurs within people within the rational choice model (Strengers, 2012). Variation in behaviour is thus construed as the product of 'contrasting understandings, levels of practical competence, and degrees of involvement' rather than simply 'as a function of stratification by socio-demographic factors' (although still relevant) or 'differential distributions of attitudes, interpretations and motivations' (Warde, 2005:146).

A major appeal of social practice theory is that its social-theoretical vocabulary offers a heuristic device – 'a sensitising framework for empirical research in the social sciences' – that affords new ways of seeing and analysing social phenomena

(Reckwitz, 2002). An additional appeal of social practice theory lies in its appreciation of cultural phenomena, which is unparalleled in the rational actor model (Reckwitz, 2002:245–246). Warde (2005:145) contends the approach 'offers a distinctive perspective, attending less to individual choices and more to the collective development of modes of appropriate conduct in everyday life'. Yet he also argues that the practice approach 'does not give "culture" more than its due', instead preserving both the social and the cultural together in this frame of reference (Warde, 2005:147). Such analyses can yield significantly different readings of attempts to change behaviour than would be produced by the prevailing paradigm's focus on individual attitudes and values (Strengers, 2009; Hargreaves, 2011). Ultimately it can generate different constructions of policy problems (Shove, 2011), and offer insight into potential new avenues for promoting change (Strengers, 2010). Inherently, social practice theory calls for a shift in analytical focus from behaviours to practices. The following subsection details an analytical framework for this analysis.

2.5.2   Analysing Social Practices

Warde (2005:149) suggests that the application of social practice theory requires the research of practices in order to understand how 'careers' within practices are initiated, develop and end, and 'of how people come to an understanding of what is required by the practice and their role within it'. However, a major criticism of practice theory is its difficult transposition into empirical analysis: it is deemed too philosophical and there is limited consensus amongst practice theorists on how practices are configured and reproduced (Strengers, 2009:38). This has not thwarted its empirical application, including to the study of domestic and leisure practices, environmental science, gender studies and organizational studies. Many of these studies focus on practices in primarily private domestic settings, such as comfort (heating/ cooling) (Strengers, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; Strengers & Maller, 2011), home-improvements (Hand et al., 2007; Maller et al., 2011), refrigeration (Strengers & Maller, 2011) and Nordic walking (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

To counter empirical criticisms, analytic frameworks to facilitate empirical studies grounded in practice theory have emerged based on the deconstruction or dissection of the elements of social practices. For instance, Shove and Pantzar (2005) identify the following practice elements: images/meaning, skills and stuff, whilst Schatzki (2009) identifies action understandings, rules, telo-affective

structures and general understandings. By way of these analytical elements of practice, practice theory offers a distinct and useful analytical approach for empirical analysis by providing 'a set of concepts to understand and analyse the everyday realm' (Strengers, 2009:36).

Of particular interest is the conceptual framework developed by Strengers (2009) which identifies four analytical concepts shared across social practice theory:

- *rules and regulations (such as regulations, restrictions and advertisements);*
- *material infrastructures (such as technologies, resources and systems of provision);*
- *practical knowledge (what makes sense for someone to do); and*
- *common understandings (what is acceptable or appropriate for someone to do).*

These four elements are not discrete or independent. Social practices are 'a co-ordinated entity of [these] four inter-related and mutually reinforcing "components" [elements] which are reproduced at particular moments in time and space' (Strengers, 2010:3) and moreover that 'components intersect and emerge out of a practice with reference to each other' (Strengers, 2009:47). Everyday practices are thus understood as 'loosely bounded entities constituted and reproduced' through these elements (Strengers, 2009:11). These elements are described below.

Rules

'Rules' are the aspects of a practices which must (or must not) be done (Strengers, 2010:8). They reflect direct attempts (either explicit or implied) by interested parties (institutions, commercial or other) to reconfigure or reinforce a practice (or parts of it) (Strengers, 2009). Practice theorists' definitions of rules vary; Strengers' (2009:43) definition draws primarily from Giddens: 'those that are given verbal expression as canons of law, bureaucratic rules, rules of games and so on'. Rules are 'the embodiment and reproduction of regulations, restrictions, targets, standards, theories and recommendations' that are instated by influential or institutional bodies (Strengers, 2009:43). Rules can also emerge from and be embodied in material changes or things, such as four-minute shower timers and building codes. Thus, whilst not necessarily monitored or enforced, rules are attributed the same status as many laws, 'becoming the source of social censure and new common understandings about in/appropriate practices' (Strengers, 2009:43). Importantly, rules are not construed as institutional 'forces' acting upon practices, but rather they are absorbed into and emerge out of practices, often in different ways than originally intended.

Rules are commonly implemented to sustain an existing practice, although at times they seek to reconfigure them. Rules explicitly regulating one aspect of everyday life, may implicitly reinforce and legitimise other practices. Strengers (2009) illustrates this with reference to urban water restrictions, which by imposing rules on outdoor water practices (such as watering the garden), implicitly legitimise and reinforce indoor water consumption practices (such as showering). Thus, Strengers (2009:45) contends, 'what a rule says about a practice is just as important as what it overlooks'. Whether rules are explicit or implied, they are often the 'subject to extensive public debate and manipulation with reference to existing "normal" practice' (Strengers, 2009:45).

Material Infrastructure

'Material infrastructure' comprises the means by which practices are undertaken and made possible, and thus includes objects, technologies, infrastructures and systems of provision (Strengers, 2009). Material infrastructures are not 'passive bystanders' in a practice, but rather they 'often shape the practice itself' (Strengers, 2009:46) by guiding what we do through 'patterns of unconscious actions…acting like beacons or signs (Jelsma 2006, p.222 in Strengers, 2009). They are often overlooked in understandings of why people do what they do due to their commonness and their frequent hidden nature.

Material infrastructures are understood to be long lasting, path dependent and hence difficult to change (Strengers, 2009; Chappells & Shove, 2004). The term 'scripting' is used to describe the process 'whereby an object prescribes or recommends certain practices and outcomes' (Akrich 1992 in Strengers, 2009:46). For instance, 'rules' may be scripted into and emerge out of these material infrastructures. Often material infrastructure sustains certain practices well beyond 'the common understandings and material landscapes they were intended for' (Strengers, 2009:46). This is compounded by 'the modernist solution to infrastructure [which] has been to seek "the one best way" and apply it at the largest scale' (Newman 2008 in Strengers, 2009:46). To compensate for the immutability of material infrastructures, new material infrastructures (such as water-efficient showerheads) or rules (such as those concerning water consumption) are commonly introduced to reconfigure the practices the original material infrastructures were implicated in.

Practical Knowledge

'Practical Knowledge' is the 'tacit skills' or 'learned social know-how' accumulated through everyday experience and which is required to undertake a particular practice (Strengers, 2009:39). Social theorists similarly locate practical knowledge in actors (and objects and systems) and their practices, despite differing terminologies and understandings of the level of consciousness brought to bear on practices. Practical knowledge is captured to varying degrees in the terms: practical consciousness (Giddens, 1986), habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) and practical intelligibility (Schatzki, 2002). Strengers (2009:41) overcomes these divergences by broadly defining 'practical knowledge' as both 'consciously reflected and semi or deeply embedded interpretations' of practical knowledge. Moving away from the logic of conscious decision-makers, practices are understood as containing the logic of 'sedimented history in everyday activity' (Sterne 2003:375 in Strengers, 2009). That is, practical knowledge is not natural or inborn, but rather what makes sense for us to do is informed by our past (including social history, such as education, upbringing) (Schatzki, 2002; also see: Strengers & Maller, 2011:160).

Given their shared source, practical knowledge may be 'totally or partially common to people who have been the product of similar social conditions' (Bourdieu, 2005:45). Thus, although practical knowledge is 'individually experienced' it is the result of 'socially shared and culturally similar conditions and experiences with practices' (Strengers, 2009:42). Strengers refers to the process of showering to clean oneself to illustrate shared practical knowledge across a particular historical, social and cultural context in what it makes sense to do. Accordingly, we understand that people partaking in socially similar practices produce, share and reproduce practical knowledge. Strengers (2009:41) summarises practical knowledge as:

> an accumulated history of experience with a particular practice, which may or may not be consciously expressed and, while individually experienced, has a commonality with other participants of the same practice.

Practical knowledge can be changed, such as through awareness and education (Bourdieu, 2005). Practical knowledge is therefore understood to have a 'generative capacity which can produce a variety of outcomes and habits within any given context' (Strengers, 2009:41) and within the bounds of its 'originary structure' (Bourdieu, 2005:47).

Common Understandings

Common understandings are accepted benchmarks or expectations for particular practices that inform acceptable and unacceptable practices. As with the other elements of practice, common understandings are produced through practices rather than imposed onto them by an external social force. Common understandings are closely linked to practical knowledge but distinguished on the grounds that 'what makes sense to someone to do [practical knowledge] is not the same as what someone thinks is appropriate, right or correct [common understandings]' (Schatzki, 2002:75). They are also differentiated based on social expectations about how practices 'ought' be undertaken (Strengers, 2009:42). However, the literature cautions the use of 'social norms' to denote common understandings (despite this shared sense of 'oughtness'), as the dissolution of the distinction between individuality and sociality in social practice is inconsistent with the understanding of social norms as 'external to the individual, being the property of culture' (Turner 1991, p.3 in Strengers, 2009:43). Put simply, common understandings reframe 'social norms' as something that emerges from a practice.

As stated, these four elements of social practice do not exist in isolation. Social practice analysis seeks to reframe what people do as an 'outcome of socially shared, institutionally positioned, technologically mediated practices, rather than an outcome of personal attitudes, opinions or preferences' (Strengers & Maller, 2011:155). The social practice literature describes the interaction between these four elements as an 'organised nexus of actions' (Schatzki, 2002:71). As such, changes in 'normal' practices, even within a single household, are explained by altering combinations of practice elements experienced by the carriers of a practice (Strengers & Maller, 2011). The house provides one site where different practices 'meet' and 'people contest and manage [the practices] in relation to each other through constant debate, negotiation and compromise' (Strengers & Maller, 2011:163). The following subsection addresses a critical outstanding issue of where opportunities might exist to intentionally alter the course and composition of social practices.

2.5.3   Reconfiguring Social Practices

Social practice theory provides a new framing for conceptualising the social (Section 2.5.1), and for understanding and analysing what people do (Section 2.5.2). This section describes understandings about how practices are established, sustained,

transformed and retired. It asks what makes a carrier of a practice contest, resist or adopt it (Strengers, 2010:16)? If practices are legitimised and sustained through regular performance (Warde, 2005), how does their performance also produce change? This subsection addresses these remaining questions about how social practices are reconfigured and where opportunities may exist to alter the course and composition of everyday activities.

Social theorists respond varyingly to these questions. Warde (2005:141) contends practices 'contain the seed of constant change', and thus 'through their recursive reproduction' actors contest, resist and adopt 'shifts in its [practice's] composition in reference to their past experiences, thus contributing to the transformation of practices' (Strengers, 2010:15). Strengers refers to Barnes to provide a partial answer to the question of reconfiguring or changing social practices, describing how 'as participants in a social practice discuss it with each other, they mutually interpret the "correct" ways of undertaking it, and modify their routines to either conform to, or deviate from, this new understanding' (Barnes 2001, p.24 in Strengers, 2010). Shove and Pantzar (2005:58) suggest that 'the emergence and demise of practices has to do with forging and failing links between materials, images and skills (i.e. the ingredients [elements] of any one practice)'. That is, the different configurations of elements of social practice lead to change. However, this is qualified by references to the significance of history, and thus, change is understood to occur 'against the backdrop of previous, related and associated ways of "doing"' (Shove & Pantzar, 2005:62). Turning to Reckwitz (2002:255), he contends 'the "breaking" and "shifting" of structures must take place in everyday crises of routines, in constellations of interpretative interdeterminancy and of the inadequacy of knowledge with which the agent, carrying out a practice, is confronted in the face of a "situation"'. Thus, crises are understood to occur when there is change in the composition of a practice, such as the imposition of new restrictions, and these changes may be temporary or long term. Conversely, Hand et al (2005) explain this change in terms of 'disruptions' within one of the practice elements, or as 'disjunctions' between them. Whilst these understandings vary slightly, there is consensus that practices are fluid and open, and their transformation involves a dynamic process involving changes in its constitutive elements.

These understandings raise doubts about policy approaches premised on behavioural change theories of social change. For instance, in empirical studies of household cooling practices the effectiveness of government recourse to technical

and behavioural policies to achieve the same ends (to moderate the effects of heat) are challenged on the grounds that these may produce counterproductive outcomes, 'as one [set of policies] mediates the other in ways which are not anticipated' (Strengers & Maller, 2011:164). In doing so, these studies identify traditional behaviour and communication campaigns targeting the individual as potentially limited, given the diversity of practices related, for instance, to cooling and heating within one household (Strengers & Maller, 2011:164). Whilst these understandings are foundational to a study of social practices, particular interest lies in the capacity to intentionally change social practices. In particular, in considering mechanisms for change, where do opportunities or points of leverage exist to take advantage of the disruptions and disjunctions that Hand et al (2005) refer to (and how are these identified)? Some of the social practice literature conceptualises how social practices might be intentionally reconfigured. The challenge is seen to lie in recognising and engaging with what is termed the 'meta-level structuring' of the practice as a whole (Hand et al., 2005).

Shove and Walker (2010) considerably advance the discussion of changes ('transitions') to social practice by introducing the idea of governance. Located in the field of sustainability, their research uses the implementation of the London congestion zone policy to demonstrate 'what it means to actively shape the direction in which entire complexes of practices evolve' (Shove & Walker, 2010:473). In doing so they offer significant insight into how the state and other actors are involved in configuring 'private ways of life' - that is, the governance of social practice[25] - and the challenges they face in doing so, namely 'the possibilities and practicalities of goal-orientated steering' (Shove & Walker, 2010:476). They raise two critical points in relation to reconfiguring social practices.

First, Shove and Walker (2010) contend responsibility for social change is often disproportionately attributed. For instance, outcomes of the implementation of congestion zone charging are commonly misinterpreted as the 'unmediated results of top down modes of intervention' (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). Shove and Walker (2010:475) argue that while socio-technical systems (like city design or bureaucratic procedures), 'as complexes of elements', might function 'indirectly but sometimes effectively as instruments of governance', this strategy for engineering social change

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[25] Governance is used in its broadest sense to denote shaping society in desired directions.

is complicated and qualified. Social practice theory makes evident the criticality of other elements, and also that practices 'have emergent and uncontrollable trajectories' (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). Accordingly, Shove and Walker (2010:475) challenge the tendency within the socio-technical transitions literature to concentrate on the role of new technologies and systems of supply to engineer social change, as social practice theory suggests change actually depends upon 'self-organising, and to a degree self-regulating, forms of self-governance'. However, seemingly contradicting this, and despite inherent suggestions in this argument that 'practices and systems of practice have lives of their own' and 'that therefore there are no reliable means of steering or governance', Shove and Walker (2010:475) also demonstrate how often deliberate interventions have been 'cumulatively effective' and resulted in transitions (changes) in practices.

Second, Shove and Walker (2010) challenge the common representation of those being governed; that is, the 'us' and 'them' of much governance literature and its implication that one set of actors governs over another. This representation is inconsistent with social practice understandings of the criticality of not only 'producers'/'promoters', but also 'consumers'/'practitioners', to social change. They state 'when practices change, they do so as an emergent outcome of the actions and inactions of all (including materials and infrastructures) and not only humans (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). All actors are not equal in the reproduction and transformation of social practices; producers/promoters 'can and do influence the availability and circulation of elements knitted together in the course of daily life' (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). One research challenge lies in understandings how consumers/users/practitioners are 'actively involved in making and reproducing' practices (Shove & Walker, 2010:475).

Overall, Shove and Walker are critical of the enduring narrow focus on policy and 'promoters' within transition management literature, despite repeated acknowledgement of the criticality of 'users'. They argue this focus obfuscates a much broader debate about social systemic change and the role of practitioners within it, through generating, sustaining and overturning everyday practices (Shove & Walker, 2010:476). However, the crux of their argument is not simply a call to refocus on the users, but rather 'focusing on practices, their trajectories and their interconnections' which requires an engagement with 'processes of ongoing transformation, feedback and related circuits of reproduction' (Shove & Walker, 2010:476). Shove and Walker (2010:473) suggest this 'requires an analysis both of

the history of the elements involved and the dynamic and often uncontrollable emergent relation between them'. They clarify that this approach does not refute the existence of 'powerful interests deliberately seeking to reconfigure the details of daily life', but rather it informs 'the ways in which we understand their role' (Shove & Walker, 2010:473). In concluding, Shove and Walker (2010:476) emphasise the importance of both 'attending to all requisite elements of practices' (as described in Section 2.5.2), as well as to 'how patterns and practices of daily life interrelate, erode and reinforce each other' in understanding changes (transitions) in practice.

Strengers also engages with the idea of the governance of social practices, implicitly touching upon some of Shove and Walker's issues with prevailing representations of 'us' and 'them'. Focusing of household demand and consumption of water and cooling, Strengers contends one approach to reconfiguring everyday practices is to move beyond the typical provider-consumer divide in demand and resource management. Strengers proposes an alternative paradigm which combines the concepts of social practice and co-management, and in which the new focus centres on the co-management of everyday practices related to these resources. This involves a participatory and collaborative approach in which there is mutual responsibility between providers and consumers for 'what people do and why they do it' (Strengers, 2011:48). This co-management involves: providers relinquishing control to householders; providers taking responsibility for their role in shaping householders' everyday practices; providers recognising householders' skills; expertise and adaptiveness as managers of everyday practices; and engagement between householders and providers in co-management (Strengers, 2011:45).

Three significant points regarding the reconfiguration of social practices are raised in this paradigm. First, this approach calls for a change in methodologies: the crucial methodological starting point for the design and evaluation of policies and approaches is a consideration of how and why practices change, and how stakeholders can facilitate further change. Strengers (2011:47) cautions that this is not a call for a prescriptive listing of 'recommended' practices, but rather a call for the identification of 'opportunities for assisting with the reconfiguration of practice elements and for supporting carriers of practice in new reproductions of them'. Second, Strengers (2011:49) notes this new paradigm paves the way for a much wider range of potential strategies, across various scales, involving the reconfiguration of practice elements. Strengers (2011:49) states:

> *the aim of co-managing everyday practices is to change what makes*
> *sense for someone to do, not by educating, informing, stimulating or*

A third point concerns changes in the relationship between the producer and the consumer. On the one hand consumers are cast as the carriers of practice, that is, 'knowledgeable reproducers of everyday life', whilst providers are 'active and deliberate facilitators of practice configurations and are able to implement wide-ranging decisions and regulations' (Strengers, 2011:48). However, these roles are also considered flexible and interchangeable: facilitators are themselves also carriers of practices, and likewise, carriers can facilitate their own co-management, for instance, in relation to the water and cooling policies, by installing their own water supply system (Strengers, 2011:48).

More recently, Strengers (2012) develops these insights further describing how change agents' roles are recast within the social practices paradigm. Strengers (2012:229) contends, with reference to Shove and Walker: 'they can no longer be seen as purposive agents in the process of change, steering practices on particular courses…their ability to affect change is complicated and qualified'. This role is contingent on the ways 'the problems they seek to address are defined' and 'the strategies they employ to address them are established' (Strengers, 2012:229). Ultimately, this paradigm challenges traditional understandings of who is considered a change agent by implying that the householder performing the everyday practice is perhaps the most critical change agent of all.

2.5.4 Conclusion

This section described social practice theory and exposed its relevance as an analytical device for understanding and exploring social change. Section 2.5.1 described social practice theory and exposed important divergences from the prevailing rational actor model of behavioural change. A critical feature of social practice theory is the location of social change in the development and performance of social practices (Warde, 2005), rather than in individual behaviours. This shift in locus calls for a parallel shift in analytical focus from behaviours to practices. Section 2.5.2 outlined an analytical framework for undertaking this analysis, describing social practices as moderated and mediated by four elements: common understandings, material infrastructures, practical knowledge and rules. This analytical model hinted at new opportunities to explicitly consider how new infrastructure or new regulations might inform, and be informed by, practical

knowledge and common understanding, rather than simply considering their role in 'shaping psychological or behavioural attributes such as attitudes and beliefs' (Strengers & Maller, 2011:165). These new understandings of social change raised questions about the ways in which social change might be encouraged. These questions were investigated in Section 2.5.3 which first described how social practices are reconfigured, before exploring understanding of how they might be intentionally reconfigured. This entailed a focus on two different notions, the governance of social practices (Shove & Walker, 2010), and the co-management of social practices (Strengers, 2011; 2012). Together these perspectives indicated that the dominant representation of 'us' and 'them' in behavioural change approaches was incongruous with social practice theory, and that the roles and identities of change agents should be reconsidered.

The hegemony of behavioural change theories (and particularly the rational choice model) in micro-level public policy encourages policies targeting individual behaviours. The privileging of this theoretical positioning is challenged by alternative framings of social change, such as social practice theory. However, whilst policy discourses evolve over time, including through academic research, the hegemony of the rational choice model is not simply theoretical, but also political – sustaining as it does certain ways of life (As discussed in relation to climate change policy, see: Shove, 2010). This represents a major limiting factor on the uptake of alternative theoretical paradigms.

Notwithstanding this, this section exposes social practice theory's relevance as a compelling analytical device for understanding and exploring social change. A large part of its appeal lies in the ability for social practice theory to account for a broad range of factors in explaining social action and change. Social practice theory has not been applied to Indigenous housing studies (or to Indigenous studies more broadly). Indeed, social practice theory has not commonly been applied to housing studies. Where it has, it reflects the increasingly influential 'postsocial' turn in housing studies which encompasses both a theoretical and methodological revolution (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008; Clapham, 2009). Notwithstanding this, contemporary housing research trends support the potential for social practice analysis to be applied to a study of the potential implications of the current Indigenous housing reforms on what tenants do.

2. 6   CONCLUSION

Government housing welfare (including physical and regulatory interventions) has a significant impact on how Indigenous people live: their housing experiences and their ways of living. In some cases, it leads to adjustments in how Indigenous people live, but rarely without provoking tension and emotion. In other cases, Indigenous ways of life might be sustained, but rarely without destabilising the tenancy in some way. The tension between housing welfare interventions and Indigenous ways of life is symptomatic of the inadequacies of housing welfare to accommodate Indigenous housing needs. This deficiency is not emphasised in government reporting as current housing metrics overlook the proposed 'security of tenure' and 'appropriateness' indictors through which this might otherwise be captured.

Given this, it is not surprising that the current Indigenous housing reforms emerge from prevailing government neoliberal ideological framings of Indigenous social dysfunction (and the role of individuals in perpetuating this), rather than from substantive evidence of their potential. These reforms, and specifically the individual responsibility agenda, are predicated on behavioural change theories of social change (specifically the rational choice model) following trends across much of micro-level public policy. This theoretical stance privileges individual values, attitudes and choice in shaping an individual's behaviour, and informs the adoption of behavioural change approaches targeting these. Section 2.3.4 described the housing welfare approach adopted under the current reforms. It identified the capacity for jurisdictional autonomy in the administration and delivery of this Commonwealth housing policy, and hinted at possible diversions from the standardisation that typifies mainstream public housing during policy implementation. In highlighting this feature, it exposed the limited understanding of any such amendments ('hybridisms') to the public housing model and of their potential impact on tenancy outcomes. Overall, the tenancy implications of this housing welfare approach for Indigenous communities are largely unknown given its unprecedent in remote and town-camp communities.

A key government objective of these housing reforms is to achieve 'sustainable housing' (COAG 2008a). As an emergent agenda for Australian social housing, sustaining tenancies encompasses not only the avoidance of tenancy failure, but also the encouragement of positive tenant experiences and outcomes. Indigenous

tenancies are a critical target for this agenda as they face particularly high levels of tenancy failure. However, despite the established effectiveness of sustaining tenancies interventions (such as service integration, tenant support and supportive housing management), these do not appear to be a central focus of current housing reforms.

Indeed for now, SHAs uptake of the sustaining tenancies agenda is challenging and contested. This is partially a reflection of practical concerns: supportive housing management includes specialised and flexible practices that are antithetical to public housing's traditionally standardised and punitive approaches. It is also symptomatic of countervailing pressures (such as the individual responsibility agenda) propelling public housing management in divergent directions. The repositioning of any agenda as 'core business' for SHAs involves reconfiguring the social housing system and the practice of social housing management. Housing staff are foundational to this reconfiguration: the management practices they adopt are a product of their capacity to reconcile competing agendas and to juggle a multiplicity of roles. Ultimately, the strategies they develop to navigate this juggling process produce high levels of discretionary housing management practices. The impact of these management practices on Indigenous tenancies is not well understood.

The behavioural change approach adopted within current housing reforms are informed by prevailing behavioural change theories (themselves underpinned by the rational actor model). Social practice theory offers a compelling alternative theory of social change in which change is located in the development and performance of social practices (Warde, 2005), rather than in individual behaviours. Its appeal lies in its ability to account for a broad range of factors in explaining social action and change. An analytical framework comprising four elements (common understandings, material infrastructures, practical knowledge and rules) provides a novel platform for an empirical exploration of social change. Specifically, this represents an unexplored but promising device for investigating the impact of the current Indigenous housing reforms on Indigenous tenancies. Furthermore, by introducing new understandings of social change, social practice theory potentially also provides new insights into how social change might be encouraged.

3   RESEARCH DESIGN

3. 1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter argued that the rational choice model of social change, on which current Indigenous housing reforms are predicated, obscures from view the role of other factors in shaping how Indigenous tenants live. Understanding the domestic social practices performed by these tenants and the systems of provision under which they are take place is a critical next step in addressing the tenancy challenges arising within Indigenous housing welfare. Chapter 2 began this task by identifying a conceptual framework for understanding and analysing social practices. The chapter also raised a series of research questions and two methodological concerns: how do we study tenants' social practices, and how do we study the potential role of current housing reform approaches in reconfiguring these?

The function of this chapter is to describe the research design employed to address these issues. Section 3. 2 begins by detailing the scope of the study and the research questions being addressed by this study. Section 3. 3 discusses the research approach including the methodology and the basic qualitative and case study methods underpinning this study. The research techniques adopted to undertake this study are then described in Section 3. 4. These include in-depth interviews and observation. The rationales and limitations surrounding these selections are also discussed. Sections 3. 5 and 3. 6 review the issues of trustworthiness and ethics in the design and conduct of this study. This chapter concludes in Section 3. 7 with a description of the four phases of the conduct of this study: initiating the research, data collection, data analysis and theorising from the data.

3. 2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which current Indigenous housing reforms can lead to sustainable tenancies for Indigenous town-camp tenants. In order to achieve this aim, the following four research questions need to be answered:

How effectively is the post-2007 reform agenda for town-camp Indigenous housing being delivered?

What is the lived experience of town-camp tenants in the early stages of the reform?

How do the systems of provision under the reform align (or not) with the lived experience of Indigenous tenants?

Where do opportunities exist (approaches and paradigms) to further optimise positive tenancy outcomes?

Answering these questions requires a dual approach to the analysis of housing welfare provision and the lived experience of housing welfare which can provide insight into the relationship between the macro-level policy environment and life in the town-camps. This chapter outlines the methodology, method, and techniques used to collect and analyse the data necessary to respond to these questions.

3. 3   RESEARCH APPROACH

3.3.1   Methodology

Methodology is 'the philosophical framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective' that guides the research (Van Manen, 1990:27). The methodology guiding this study is derived from the 'post-social' turn in housing studies (Jacobs & Atkinson, 2008; Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008; Franklin, 2006), which has variously been referred to as 'science and technology studies', actor network theory (ANT), feminist techno-science and post-humanism (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008). It is informed by the writings of actor-network theorists such as Law (2004), Latour (2005) and the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (2004). Ultimately this approach involves a decentring from the individual to reconsider the interconnectivity between the human and material worlds (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008; Jacobs & Atkinson, 2008; Smith, 2004). Specifically, a post-social perspective eschews the 'modern impulse to separate the natural world from the social world' (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008:528) and its subsequent focus on the social (human) aspects of housing. Instead, it considers these aspects of housing alongside the impacts of non-human actors, such as materials and technologies (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008; Jacobs & Atkinson, 2008; Smith, 2004). As Gabriel and Jacobs (2008:529) explain:

> *… to do post-social science is to dispense with a human-centred world in which rational individuals interact with one another for particular ends, and instead to begin with an understanding of the social world as one that is comprised of hybrids and assemblages of the human and the non-human.*

A critical assumption of social practice theory is that representational, behavioural change models of social action are unsatisfactory for explaining social change. Instead social life is understood to comprise a range of practices performed and re-performed over time (Schatzki, 2002). These social practices are the 'site of the social' in which 'individual actions are constituted by practices' and, moreover, where 'social order, structures, and institutions come into being through practices' (Røpke, 2009:2491). From this methodological standpoint, we understand:

> *the socially and culturally structured world…is socially constituted; objective forms and systems of activity, on the one hand, and agents' subjective and inter-subjective understandings of them, on the other, constitute both the world and its experienced forms (Lave & Wenger, 1991:51).*

At its crux, this positioning calls for a shift in focus from 'cognition in the head' to 'cognition in practice' (Lave, 1988) and emphasises the socially-constituted, indeterminate and negotiated character of knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991:50) explain that:

> *A theory of social practice emphasizes the relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing. It emphasizes the inherently social negotiated character of meaning, and the interested, concerned character of the thought and action of persons-in-activity.*

3.3.2   Methods

Research methods are understood as the approach or strategy for conducting research within the philosophical perspectives of the methodology (Van Manen, 1990). The post-social methodological positioning thus calls for a method that is principally focused on social practices and on how and why these change, rather than focused on the individual (Reckwitz, 2002). However, empirical studies of social practices are not common, and indeed a significant shortcoming of the social practice field is the limited consensus or practical advice on how practices can be studied (Warde, 2005).

Basic Qualitative Study

The positivist paradigm has shaped the modus operandi of much housing research to date (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000), encouraging a focus on dwelling numbers, and calculations of housing deficits, housing need, and housing policy outputs. This trend has not been without significant consequences. King contends that the subsequent inadequate focus on, and understanding of, other actors in the housing field has resulted in the dehumanisation of housing policy and provision, and is thus

accountable for many of the problems evident in housing (King, 1996:23–24). Despite these criticisms, evidence-based research and positivism remain popular in housing research (Marston, 2002:84). Nevertheless, the appeal of alternative non-positivist approaches to housing research has grown in recent years mirroring the general rise in qualitative policy-orientated research (Clapham, 2002).

In housing policy research, the recognition of the value of qualitative research approaches corresponds with growing acknowledgement of a broader definition of housing. As Turner (1972:151) famously asserted in *Housing as a Verb*:

> *In English, the word 'housing' can be used as a noun or as a verb. The verb 'to house' describes a process or activity of housing. While the idea of housing as a collective noun is obviously associated with housing activities, the word does not generally indicate this fact. On the other hand, the activity of housing is too difficult to conceive without including the house promoted, built or used.*

In a similar vein, Law (2004) more recently argued housing studies should deploy 'a sociology of verbs' rather than nouns.

Yet housing studies continues to face an identity crisis in Australia with housing research criticised on two accounts. First, it is criticised for the prevailing dominance of positivism, outlined above (Marston, 2002). It is criticised for the lack of a clear theory of housing and failure to engage with theoretical developments across the social sciences (Kemeny, 1992; Jacobs & Manzi, 2000). This latter point is captured in Smith's (2004:90) remark on health-focused housing research's reluctance to look beyond its traditional humanist traditions:

> *It [housing research] seems resistant to a relational framework weaving mice, mites and moulds into woods and wools, through airways and organs, between bodies, onto scientific instruments, and into political imaginations.*

Second, it is criticised for its uncritical acceptance of constructs, questions and issues within housing policy debates (Saugeres, 1999; Winter & Seelig, 2001). In this sense, much housing research remains atheoretical in its framing, positivist in approach, and continues to view housing policy problems 'as objective facts, rather than contested realities' (Winter & Seelig, 2001; Saugeres, 1999:94).

It is in this context that the post-social turn has emerged in housing studies, repositioning some housing researchers vis-à-vis important post-humanist debates concerning the relevance of non-human actors, such as materials and technologies (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000; Clapham, 2009). Post-social housing research spans 'the full gamut of housing studies' including the 'performativity of housing material

culture', accounts of 'housing neighbourhood, the operation of housing markets, housing policy and neighbourhood planning (Franklin, 2008:276). This study follows in the approaches of this research movement by adopting a basic qualitative method.

The purpose of a basic interpretive qualitative study, as described by Merriam (2002), is to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and the meanings they attribute to these experiences. Basic interpretive qualitative study is ultimately flexible, and can feature elements from a range of methods without being dedicated to any one. It does not feature long-term immersion in the field, unlike traditional ethnographic research, although elements of the ethnographic method are still appropriate. As applied in this study, it also features elements from the case study method.

(Comparative) Case Study

This study adopts the case study method in order to provide in-depth insight into social processes that would not be possible if the research focus was not purposefully limited (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Mitchell (2006:27) defines the method accordingly:

> *a detailed examination of an event which the analyst believes exhibits the operation of some identified general theoretical principle*

Thus, 'case study' refers to:

> *an observer's data; i.e. the documentation of some particular phenomenon or set of events which has been assembled with the specific end view of drawing theoretical conclusions from it (Mitchell, 2006:27)*

Mitchell (2006:27) clarifies:

> *what is important is not the content of the case studies as such, but the use to which the data are put to support theoretical conclusions (Mitchell, 2006:26).*

Case studies are used to address several aims: they can provide description; they can test a theory; and they can be used to generate theory (Kinder 1982; Pinfield 1986; Anderson 1983 in Eisenhardt, 1989). They do not provide the possibility of generalising findings to other case sites, as the case study is not representative of these. Specifically, these contexts impose certain constraints on the actors in the case study, namely 'these contexts constitute a panoply of *certeris paribus* conditions which the analyst will need to allow for in some way' (Garbett, 1970; Mitchell, 2006:27; Van Velsen, 1967). Mitchell (2006:25) describes this limitation:

> *The basic problem in the use of case material in theoretical analysis however, is the extent to which the analyst is justified in generalising from a single instance of an event which may be – and probably is – unique.*

Yet whilst case studies do not provide an opportunity to generalise to other case studies, they do provide opportunities to generalise the findings to theory (Yin, 1994). Indeed the 'cogency of theoretical reasoning', or what Yin (1994) terms 'replication logic', is seen as the defining feature of case study research:

> *…a case study is essentially heuristic; it reflects in the events portrayed, features which may be construed as a manifestation of some general abstract theoretical principle (Mitchell, 2006:28).*

Issues surrounding generalisations to theory feature strongly in the literature on the case study method (Bryman & Burgess, 1999; Mitchell, 2006; Yin, 1994). The process of inference from case studies is argued to be necessarily logical[26] (rather than statistical)[27] on the basis that:

> *we infer that the features present in the case study will be related in a wider population, not because the case is representative but because our analysis is unassailable (Mitchell, 2006:34).*

A further distinction is made by Stake (2005:445) between intrinsic case studies, which are focused on the specific case in question, and instrumental case studies, in which 'the case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else'.

The selection of cases is therefore significant. Eisenhardt (1989:537) contends: 'the cases may be chosen randomly, [but] random selection is neither necessary, nor even preferable'. Indeed Platt (1999) argues the use of logical inference calls for the strategic selection of case study types:

> *Thus case studies are just as good a basis for such inference as other sorts of study, although its justification will also depend upon the adequacy of the theory and the corpus of related knowledge. This argument suggests that a strategic choice of types is likely to be of more use than either a single case or a representative sample.*

Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (1994) argue that in studies aiming to derive theory from case studies, the selection of case studies should be dictated by a 'replication logic'

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[26] Logical inference (also called scientific or causal inference) is 'the process by which the analyst draws conclusions about the essential linkages between two or more characteristics in terms of some systematic, explanatory schema – some set of theoretical propositions' (Mitchell, 2006:33).

[27] Statistical inference is 'the process by which the analyst draws conclusions about the existence of two or more characteristics in some wider population from some sample of that population to which the observer has access' (Mitchell, 2006:33).

or 'theoretical sampling' rather than a 'statistical logic/sampling' or 'statistical sampling'. The goal of theoretical sampling is to select cases which are likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory, in contrast with statistical sampling which involves selections made on a random basis, with the goal of obtaining 'accurate statistical evidence on the distributions of variables within the population' (Eisenhardt, 1989:537). In theoretical sampling, post hoc rationalisations of the selection of case studies are deemed to be unpersuasive (Eisenhardt, 1989; Platt, 1999). Expanding on this, Flyvberg (2006:230) distinguishes between random selection and 'information orientated selection' of which he identifies four further case study selection strategies:

- *Extreme cases: to obtain information on unusual cases, which can be especially problematic or especially good in a more closely defined sense;*
- *Maximum variation cases: to obtain information about the significance of various circumstances for case process and outcome;*
- *Critical cases: to achieve information that permits logical deductions of the type;*
- *Paradigmatic cases: to develop a metaphor or establish a school for the domain that the case concerns.*

The selection of case studies in this study is guided by understandings of the instrumental (Stake, 2005) and paradigmatic case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Within the latter typology, the choice of case study will be made to advance the understanding of 'that other interest' (Stake, 2005:445). This approach allows for the control of 'extraneous variation and helps to define the limits for generalizing the findings' (Eisenhardt, 1989:537). Each case is thus selected as an experiment in and of itself, and subsequent sites are used to either replicate or refute the previous findings. On this basis, the site selection is determined by an expectation that they will either yield similar findings (literal replication) or that they will yield contrary results (theoretical replication) according to theory (Yin, 1994).

Eisenhardt builds on the arguments provided by Yin and Mitchell in providing a roadmap for the generation of theory from case study evidence. Eisenhardt's (1989:533) framework includes eight steps: getting started; selecting case studies; crafting instruments and protocols; entering the field; analysing data; shaping hypotheses; enfolding the literature; and reaching closure. Nevertheless, the process is described as an iterative one, wherein the researcher is involved in constant iterations back and forth between different steps (Eisenhardt, 1989:546).

The case study method has three main strengths (Eisenhardt, 1989), notwithstanding ongoing debate surrounding the capacity to generalise findings.

First, it is associated with the generation of new theories. Eisenhardt (1989:546) describes how 'creative insight often arises from the juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence' and that the reconciliation of these accounts using the constant comparative method forces the researcher to adopt new ways of seeing. In this way it produces 'theory with less researcher bias than theory built from incremental studies or armchair, axiomatic deduction' (Eisenhardt, 1989:547). Second, because data and theory are closely related, it is anticipated that the theories emerging from this research method are 'likely to be testable with constructs that can be readily measured and hypotheses that can be proven false' and that these can be further tested and developed by additional studies (Eisenhardt, 1989:547). The third identified strength is that theories are likely to be empirically valid, as the constant comparisons and questioning of the data from the outset (with the constant comparative method) serve as a form of validation. Eisenhardt (1989:547) states: 'this closeness can lead to an intimate sense of things' which 'often produces theory which closely mirrors reality'.

While the selected research methods focus on the tenants themselves, the intent is to investigate the practices they perform. This distinction is critical. It raises questions about how we can understand social practices through the performers (or carriers) of practice, such as their 'ability to articulate and reflect on arguably non-individualistic phenomenon'. It also raises questions about how '"hidden" and "silent" aspects of practices' are accounted for through people's accounts of them, such as the 'systems of provision, historical configurations, and taken for granted assumptions' (Strengers, 2009:57). Indeed, it is in view of these challenges that many recent studies of social practices appear reticent about the role of 'talk' in their research (Bissell, 2010; Macpherson, 2010; Simpson, 2011; Spinney, 2009). However, whilst some dimensions of practices might be obscured by research methods focused primarily on the carriers of practice, an argument for the viability of this research method is constructed by Hitchings (2012) based on the practice framings of Bourdieu, Giddens, Schatzki and Reckwitz.

In these (latter) more recent incarnations of practice theory, references to people as 'unwitting "carriers" of practices by which they have previously been infected' can suggest that once individuals are 'recruited' to a practice, to use Warde's (2005) phrasing, 'the practice thereafter buoys them effortlessly along without them ever giving it much thought' (Hitchings, 2012:62). However, social practice theory's aim to fight against the implicit hyper-rationalisation inherent in much of previous social

theory does not preclude some scope for individual will. As Shove and Pantzer (2007:166) argue, carriers are not subordinate to their practices: 'practitioners are not innocent carriers of readymade entities'. It is this that leads Hitchings to argue that the elements of practice can reasonably be traced through what people say – the 'sayings'. Indeed, whilst the observation of practices will reveal its visible elements (material infrastructures), this process will reveal little about the rules, practical knowledge and common understandings also implicated in these, or why and how they are reproduced and reconfigured. In fact, capturing this knowledge requires that the carrier of the practice articulate it. Several empirical studies corroborate the validity of this method (Day & Hitchings, 2011; Hitchings & Day, 2011; Hitchings, 2010; Halkier & Jensen, 2011).

On these grounds, the methods adopted for this study focus on the carriers of practice with the intent of encouraging them to explain (through their 'sayings') what they do and why they do it, and observing and understanding the material and regulatory context in which these practices are performed. The research ambition is not simply to describe these practices, but to establish understandings that can be generalised through theory (Mason, 2002).

3. 4 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Research techniques are the specific tools or procedures for data collection and analysis (Van Manen, 1990). The methodological positioning and research methods adopted for this study have implications for the appropriateness of the data collection and data analysis techniques. One implication is that 'all qualitative data can be seen as "enactments" – social action, which can be used actively in interviewing to embody and elicit interaction about the shifts and intersections of the multiple practitioner positions of the research participants' (Halkier & Jensen, 2011:117). An implication for data analysis is that social practice theory can support the making of analytical generalisations that are not based on methodological individualism (Halkier & Jensen, 2011). Research techniques are best described in the context of their use. This description is provided in the account of the conduct of this study in Section 3. 7. The purpose of this section is to define these techniques and explain their usage as a preliminary step to this. This section defines data collection and analysis techniques sequentially despite these largely occurring simultaneously in the study.

3.4.1 Data Collection

Interviews

The primary technique for data collection was the interview, specifically in-depth (focused), face-to-face, semi-structured interviews (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Interviewing is a technique used extensively for social science research data collection, and although the ways in which it is employed vary, it is considered one of the most socially accepted ways of engaging research participants in discussions about topics they may be hesitant to discuss (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Qualitative interviewing or semi-structured interviews, in contrast to structured interviews, refers to a technique whereby 'each respondent is asked the same series of questions, but they are given considerable latitude in how they answer and the sequence of asking questions' (Bryman & Burgess, 1999:xviii). In recognition that all interviews are structured to some degree, Powney and Watts (1987) propose an alternative categorisation based on the power of the participant within the interaction: namely, informant interviews where the interviewer maintains control (tightly or loosely structured), and respondent interviews where the respondent maintains a level of control and can impose their own structure or purpose on the interview. Within this latter categorisation, informant interviews are called 'focused interviews' when the interview adopts the power relationship common to the informant interview type, but where the focus of the interview is defined by the researcher. Focused interviews are a form of in-depth interview. Within this adopted approach and the exploratory nature of this study, interview probes were designed to be diagnostic and open-ended, allowing unanticipated, important issues to be raised and discussed by interviewees as they deem necessary.

This technique was adopted on the basis that it enables 'interviewees to construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words' and thus provides a significant amount of rich data (Valentine, 2005:111). Minchiello (1990:94) describes the process: 'when we are engaged in in-depth interviewing, what we are actually interested in is people's experience of social reality through their routinely constructed interpretations of it'. Specifically, the concern was to access the 'words and meanings' adopted by 'practitioners of everyday life' as they talked about and reflected on everyday life (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003:73). As stated, interviews also represented another active performance (Denzin, 2001).

There were three key research considerations to be made in the application of this technique. The first was the distribution of power between researcher and participant. The importance of the researcher-participant rapport emerges from the rejection of positivist research calls for distancing to avoid research bias. Empathy and sensitivity to context are identified as important personal strategies for establishing trust and building this rapport. Consideration was given to some of the elements identified by Powell (2000), including: obtaining prior knowledge about the interviewee; establishing rapport with the interviewee; seeking interpretive assistance when necessary; and adopting effective interviewing techniques such as incorporating open-ended questioning. In the application of this technique, the neutrality of the researcher is a contested concept; it is considered by some to be paramount whilst for others it establishes a 'hierarchical, asymmetrical (and patriarchal) relationship in which the interviewee is treated as a research "object"' (Rapley, 2004:19). Positioning itself within the non-neutral interviewing camp, this study follows one of the approaches identified by Rapley (2004), in which the researcher aims to remain neutral to the topic, gently probing to facilitate the interview without biasing the responses. The ethical concerns associated with this researcher-participant relationship (especially in an Indigenous context) are discussed in Section 3. 6.

A second concern in the application of this approach was the veracity of participants' responses or self-reporting bias. This recalls the issues discussed previously in Section 3.3.2 regarding methods for studying social practices. Specifically, interview responses are potentially problematic due to discrepancies between what participants do and what they say they do. Indeed studies benchmarking actual behaviour against reported behaviour have exposed significant discrepancies in results (Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Thus, this technique is understood to be vulnerable to participants providing responses they believe the researcher seeks (socially desirable answers), whether due to self-consciousness, embarrassment, perceptions of power-imbalance with the researcher or a lack of prior consideration of the questions being posed leading to the fabrication of responses when pressed by the researcher. Participants' capacity to establish a reflexive awareness of how their practices were performed and to verbalise these might also contribute to the occurrence of such discrepancies. For instance, prompting about why a practice was carried out in a particular way may lead participants to formulate responses so as to demonstrate they are capable of rationalising their actions (Hitchings, 2012). Additionally, gentle probing from the researcher to encourage participants to

respond, whilst deemed essential (Becker & Geer, 2004), risks biasing participants' responses. These are all recognised shortcomings in interviewing participants about everyday practices, and they suggest that the research data should be treated judiciously. These concerns are partially remedied by establishing trust and rapport with the participant and establishing procedures to ensure face validation. However, these processes do not verify or refute participants' descriptions of how or why they undertake practices.

A final concern was that interviews capture moment-in-time data, revealing little of the dynamics of change inherent to social practice studies. Despite this, a persuasive argument is constructed for the suitability of this technique in obtaining useful data, by researchers such as Hitchings (2012). This argument was presented in Section 3.3.2 in relation to the focus on the carriers of social practices.

Utimately the flexibility afforded by the unstructured format of qualitative interviewing generates two stages of explanatory data. Ethnographers Wilk and Wilhite (1987:57) describe this:

> *First is the explanation offered by respondents for their actions in response to direct or indirect questioning. The second comprises synthetic explanations composed by researchers as interviews are dissected and analysed.*

As these interviews take place in participants' routine environments (their home or office), they have the advantage that this data can be supplemented by observational data.

Field Observation

Observation was adopted as a secondary research tool. As one of the quintessential techniques for qualitative data collection, participant observation is defined as a research technique 'in which a researcher immerses him or herself in a social context with the aim of uncovering through an empathetic understanding, the meaning systems of participants in that social context and hence to see the world from their point of view' (Bryman & Burgess, 1999:xvii). The complexities associated with participant observation and the guidelines for application are overlooked in this definition (Bryman & Burgess, 1999:xvii), and indeed, participant observation is an ambiguous term. This is demonstrated by Gold who describes a continuum of participant observation techniques (Gold in Dane, 1990:158–160). Placed at opposite ends of this continuum are the 'complete observer', who studies an event without partaking, and the 'complete participant', who participates without

knowledge of his status being known to others. Neither of these extremes are tenable to research wherein validity involves a level of trust between researcher and participants. Thus, two middle-ground positions are proposed by Gold, wherein the researcher's position is made known to other participants: observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer. In the former, the researcher does not take part in events, and the latter s/he does. This research adopts the former technique, wherein the researcher is not involved in the events.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

This study adopts a dual approach to the data analysis of the systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision and the lived experience of these systems. Whilst the data at the centre of these two analytical approaches differs, on a practical level, they both involve thematic analysis.

A Thematic Analysis of the Systems of Housing Welfare Provision

Outside the field of public administration and policy analysis, the work of civil servants often escapes analytic gaze (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). This is despite, as Carlsson and Berkes (2005:73) contend, the 'well-known fact within social science that the structure of formal political administration systems may have little in common with how real-life actors behave'. Indeed even with public administration and policy analyses, street-level bureaucrats are paid less attention than 'policy elites' (Page, 2006). Government and the role of administrators in policy implementation is termed a 'black box' in this context (Mosse, 2004), reflecting, in part, a normative ideal of public administration processes as entirely rational (Olsen, 2008). In heeding this common shortfall, the first approach to data analysis in this study is a thematic analysis of Indigenous housing stakeholders' perspectives on the systems of housing welfare provision. The thematic analysis applied to understand these findings is detailed at the end of this section.

Social Practice Analysis of the Lived experience of Housing Welfare

As stated, a dual analytic approach is adopted in this study. The lived experience of housing welfare is understood through a social practice based analysis. However, there is a paucity of literature surrounding data analysis in social practice based studies. Indeed, it has been argued that a focus on social practices 'does not narrowly circumscribe theoretical perspectives to be adopted for informing data

analysis and it does not prescribe analytic codes and categories' (Lankshear et al., 2011:151). Indeed interpretation and categorising is identified by Halkier and Jensen (2011) as a central concern with social practice based analysis. Even using 'fairly empirically applicable concepts from practice theory', Halkier and Jensen (2011:211) identify that:

> as part of the categorizing of data-patterns and the building of the dimensions of differences in the ideal types, it leaves quite a large room for (inter-)subjective interpretation.

For instance, how do we recognise when to categorise what a participant says as something to do with rules, material infrastructures, practical knowledge or a common understandings element of their social practices? However, Halkier and Jensen (2011:115) also purport this challenge is inescapable in qualitative data analysis generally, as this ensures that the process of analysis 'should never become mechanical, otherwise it will loose one of its comparative methodological strengths'.

Wilk and Wilhite's (1985) description of the dual layers of ethnographic data provides some direction. They distinguish a first level in 'the explanations offered by respondents for their actions in response to direct or indirect questioning', and a second level in the 'synthetic explanations composed by ethnographers as interviews are dissected and analysed' (in reference to ethnography Wilk & Wilhite, 1985:624). Thus, in attempting to negotiate the complications described in Section 3.3.2 surrounding how we understand social practices through the carriers of practice, the analytical focus adopted for this study centres on the 'second level' of data obtained through interviews (Wilk & Wilhite, 1985). Specifically, the analysis focuses on 'the synthetic explanations' composed by researchers when they dissect and analyse the responses of their participants by contextualising these in a cultural context (or 'practice' context in this case) and seeking deeper meanings to their 'folk explanations' (Wilk & Wilhite, 1985:624).

Thematic Analysis

The technique used in this study to analyse this data is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has been described as a 'poorly branded' analytical technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79), and indeed contention surrounds its application, despite its popularity (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Unlike many other methods it is essentially independent from theory and epistemology, and is thus suited to a range of epistemological and theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006:80). Thematic analysis is a technique which enables the identification,

analysis and reporting of patterns and themes within qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998:4), the outcome and the focus of which will vary depending on the epistemological stance taken (Braun & Clarke, 2006:85).

The initial analytic strategy in thematic analysis is coding. A code is defined as: 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998:63). The range of things that can be coded is broad, and includes behaviours, activities, meanings, participation, and conditions or constraints (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The process of reading and re-reading the data and identifying and labelling data extracts is the beginning of a process of ordering the data into meaningful groups. The coding process enables the researcher to efficiently regroup all data they have associated with a particular idea, such that it can be re-examined as a whole. Once an initial coding of the data set has taken place, the focus shifts to themes. Themes are the unit of analysis, and are often broader than the codes. A theme is described as:

> *a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organises possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. A theme may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon) (Boyatzis, 1998:4).*

Themes are identified in two primary ways (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:88). The deductive approach (or priori coding) involves themes being developed prior to data collection. These can be theory driven, prior data or prior research driven (Boyatzis, 1998:4). This approach is associated with 'theoretical sensitivity' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:41–47). In practice, this often translates to the use of research questions, interview questions or theory-derived categories, as a 'start list to priori themes for coding data documents' (Lapadat, 2010:926). Alternatively, the more common inductive approach (or grounded coding) involves themes can be identified after data collection by the researcher (Boyatzis, 1998:41). The data analysis undertaken for this study combines both approaches. This hybrid approach has proven an effective technique (for example: Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) in overcoming some of the drawbacks associated with each approach (Boyatzis, 1998:13; Charmaz, 1990; Lapadat, 2010:927; Ryan & Bernard, 2003:94). As stated, the application of these data analysis techniques is discussed in Section 3.7.3.

A cautionary note is made about the 'stability of generalisations' drawn from practice theory based studies. Halkier and Jensen (2011:15) warn that conclusions about these data patterns 'still tend to exhibit more stability than is perhaps intended'. This

methodological challenge is commonly raised, such as by Law (2004), with regards to anti-foundational approaches to social scientific research. Halkier and Jensen (2011:115) cite their 'ideal typology of ways of doing healthier food consumption' as an example of this. In particular, their ideal typology of these ways of doing does not directly demonstrate the instability that exists, namely how each practice carrier can perform different types of practices in 'different contexts, relations and intersections with other practices'. To overcome this, examples of 'negotiations and positioning processes' can be provided to supplement the ideal typology of ways of doing (Halkier & Jensen, 2011:15).

3. 5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The evaluation of qualitative social science research is contested. Differences between evaluation criteria primarily relate to the degree by which a realist position is broadly accepted or rejected. To explain these differences, Bryman (2008) refers to an axis, with realism at one end and anti-realism at the other. Researchers who broadly adopt the traditional (quantitative research) concepts of reliability and validity position themselves as realists, with the belief that social reality can be captured through their theories and concepts. Positioned at the other end of the spectrum, researchers, such as Lincoln and Guba (1994), share the belief that theories and concepts in qualitative research are representations, and that multiple representations exist for a single phenomenon. At a mid-point on this continuum are researchers, such as Hammersley (1992), who acknowledge the existence of social phenomena that are part of an external reality but who reject the suggestion that such a reality can be reproduced for the recipients of social science research (Bryman, 2001:276). While most qualitative researchers position themselves in this middle ground, many do so without endorsing Hammersley's position, and furthermore they adhere to many of the research criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba. Their criteria are based on the concepts of authenticity and trustworthiness. The following subsections describe the concept of authenticity and the four elements of trustworthiness (which parallel the quantitative research criteria): credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity) (Lincoln & Guba 1985 in Guba & Lincoln, 1994:114).

3.5.1   Authenticity

The concept of authenticity was viewed as an early effort to deal with the criterion for quality. The concept of authenticity comprises five elements: fairness (fairly represent different viewpoints); ontological authenticity (provide a better understanding of social milieu); educative authenticity (lead to improved understandings of constructions of others); catalytic authenticity (stimulate to action); and tactical authenticity (empower action) (Guba & Lincoln 1989 in Guba & Lincoln, 1994:114). In prior research, Guba and Lincoln (1994:114) note that while these criteria have been well received, their 'parallelism to positivist criteria make them suspect'. More recently Bryman (2001:275) critiqued their adequacy, noting that their emphasis 'on the wider impact of social research is controversial' and that 'the emphasis on practical outcomes differentiates it from other social research'. As this criterion is not widely applied to qualitative research, it is not used to assess this study.

3.5.2 Credibility

This criterion is predicated on the existence of multiple accounts of reality. As Bryman (2001:272) states: 'After all if there can be several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality, it is the feasibility or credibility of the account that a researcher arrives at that is going to determine its acceptability to others'. Guba and Lincoln (1994) contend the research should follow good practice principles and that the research findings should be submitted to a process of 'respondent validation', such as 'face validity' whereby data (such as interview transcripts) and/or findings are reported back to the research participants for confirmation that the researcher's understandings mirror their own social world. Triangulation is an alternative technique, which is used within and across research strategies in 'an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:5). It involves the use of multiple methods which are cross-checked against each other to increase confidence in the findings (Bryman, 2001).

In reference to the case-study research method and its aim to generate theory, Eisenhardt proposes two additional criteria. The first relates to the assessment of research as 'good theory'. Eisenhardt adopts Pfeffer's suggestion that 'good theory is parsimonious, testable and logically coherent' (Pfeffer 1982 in Eisenhardt, 1989:548). The second criterion relates to empirical issues, namely the strength of the method and the evidence grounding the theory. Eisenhardt (1989:548) argues that researchers 'should display enough evidence for each construct to allow

readers to make their own assessment of the fit with theory…a strong theory-building study has a good, although not necessarily perfect, fit with the data'.

3.5.3   Transferability

Transferability parallels external validity in quantitative research evaluations. As qualitative research's primary preoccupation is depth, rather than breadth, 'qualitative findings tend to be orientated to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied' (Bryman, 2001:272). The transferability of findings, such as to some other context, is considered an empirical issue (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Researchers are urged to produce 'thick description' (Geertz 1973 in Bryman, 2001:272) in order to provide a database for others to pass judgement on the transferability of findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985 in Bryman, 2001:272–273). Specific issues of transferability in case study methods are discussed in Section 3.3.2.

3.5.4   Dependability

This criterion concerns the merit of the research and has parallels with the criterion for reliability in quantitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) urge that researchers must adopt an auditing process whereby complete, accessible records are kept of all stages of the research, from problem formulation to data analysis decisions. The detailed account of research design given in this chapter seeks to address these aspects of dependability. Lincoln and Guba also call for peers to 'audit' the research, including the assessment of the degree to which theoretical inferences can be justified (Lincoln & Guba in Bryman, 2001:274), although Bryman (2001:274) notes that this has not 'become a popular approach to enhancing the dependability of qualitative research'. This approach is not adopted in this research.

3.5.5   Confirmability

This criterion parallels objectivity in quantitative research, but is premised on the understanding that complete objectivity is not obtainable in social research. As Bryman (2001:274) states, 'it should be apparent that [the researcher] has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical implications manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and findings deriving from it'.

3. 6 ETHICS

Within social research generally, there are four primary ethics considerations: doing no harm; informed participant consent; respect for privacy and avoiding deception (Bryman, 2004). These considerations are pertinent to Indigenous research, but they are not sufficient. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Smith (1999), an Indigenous researcher, sets an agenda for planning and implementing Indigenous research. Smith (1999) argues that we must shift away from colonial conceptions of the research and the positioning of the Indigenous as 'other', instead calling for a decolonisation of research methods such that the research becomes part of a wider project of reclaiming control of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The more recent *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Denzin et al., 2008) continues this dialogue, making connections amongst many of the perspectives of the new critical theorists and emerging Indigenous methodologies. The ethics considerations for this research arise in a context of mounting concern that Indigenous Australians have been over-consulted without producing tangible outcomes for their communities, and mounting contestation surrounding the topic of Indigenous housing, especially within Indigenous communities. This section outlines the ethics guidelines and principles steering the design and conduct of this study.

3.6.1 Ethics Guidelines

This study is guided by the ethics guidelines within the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC & ARC, 2007:4.7) for research with humans, and its advice on research with Indigenous people. This document outlines six values and ethics principles. Guidelines are also provided in regard to the research merit and integrity, and justice and beneficence (NHMRC & ARC, 2007:4.7). This document also underpins RMIT University's ethics guidelines for Indigenous research. In this study, these guidelines are supplemented by the more detailed guidelines in *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (NHMRC, 2003) which address the implications of the six identified key values for researchers, and guide researchers on how to engage with these in a sincere way. These are developed in the following subsection.

In addition to these NHMRC guidelines (NHMRC & ARC, 2007; NHMRC, 2003), the design and conduct of this study is guided by further publications on ethical standards in research involving Indigenous people, and several publications that specifically address ethics issues relating to Indigenous housing research. The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* lists key principles for ethical research, and provides guidelines for their practical implementation (AIATSIS, 2002). Additional guides outline ethics issues surrounding consultation practices. These include AHURI's *Best Practice Models for Effective Consultation: Towards Improving Built Environment Outcomes for Remote Indigenous Communities* (Lee & Morris, 2005) and AHURI's *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Indigenous Research*. The latter document provides a conceptual and analytical framework and an operational framework specifying principles and methodologies for conducting appropriate evaluations in Indigenous housing, including the proposal that Indigenous research principles and indicators need to be framed within a context of human rights and cultural democracy (Walker, 2009). This study is also guided by ethics debates in Indigenous health research, and in particular several publications provided by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRCAH) on collaborative research principles and guidelines, and by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC, 2003; NHMRC, 2006).

3.6.2   Ethics principles

Returning to the six values and ethics principles within the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC & ARC, 2007:4.7), developed with regard to Indigenous research within *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (NHMRC, 2003), the driving principles of ethical Indigenous research are understood as (i) reciprocity, (ii) respect, (iii) equality, (iv) responsibility, (v) survival and protection, and (vi) spirit and integrity. These are briefly outlined here.

Reciprocity (between researcher and participants) is important in Indigenous research in two ways: 'inclusion' and 'benefit'. First, there is a need for Indigenous involvement in research concerning their lives and their communities. Second, there is a need for research to be of 'benefit' to the Indigenous people and their communities. The importance of reciprocity is not unique to Indigenous research; it is also identified as a major ethical issue for critical research generally, where

empathy and negotiation have superseded positivist detachment and power imbalances (Lather, 1986).

Respect for Indigenous people in research involves: respect for Indigenous people and their contribution; limiting 'difference blindness'; and awareness of the consequence of the research. The researcher acknowledges the significant ethical and legal requirements for consent, as set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, and understands that true informed consent is a key issue in undertaking Indigenous research:

> *Truly informed consent…could be the greatest protection against exploitation by the researcher of the Indigenous people concerned. It is also a strong way of demonstrating respect for the Indigenous culture. Being properly and fully informed of the aims and methods of a research project and the implications of these and its potential outcomes would allow a community to decide for themselves whether to oppose or embrace a project (Australia. National Board of Employment & Australian Research Council, 1999:27).*

The issue of gaining informed consent is made more complex by the fact that Indigenous knowledge is collectively owned (although Indigenous individuals may have differential rights) consent is usually given by a group (AIATSIS, 2002; Walker, 2009).

Responsibility in research with Indigenous participants involves two factors: doing no harm and accountability. This involves transparency in the study's scope, its possible outcomes and its limitations. It also calls for a data analysis feedback-loop to participants in the study. The additional principles of survival and protection require that the researcher recognise the distinctiveness of Indigenous culture, values and customs and seeks to uphold these within the research. Lastly, the principle of spirit and integrity seeks to combine all the aforementioned principles. This also involves two aspects. The first is continuity between the past, current and future generations. The second is 'about behaviour, which maintains the coherence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultures' (NHMRC, 2003:19).

Aside from the ethics considerations surrounding Indigenous research, a further ethics issue arises from research of government departments, especially given the sponsorship source of this study (external non-academic partners such as government departments). Acknowledgement of this enables the researcher to remain diligent of personal or organisational pressures on research content and direction.

RMIT ethics approval was granted for this study on the basis of the researcher's consideration of these ethical issues (see Appendix).

3. 7   CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

The previous sections outlined the research techniques used in the study, explained their selection and identified issues of trustworthiness and ethics in their application. This section describes the way these research techniques were used within this study; it is structured by the four phases conducted for this study.

3.7.1   Phase 1: Initiating the Study

The first phase of this research involved all the activities undertaken in order to initiate this study. Since this study forms part of a multi-partner research project, the broad focus for this study - current Indigenous housing policy - was determined by my scholarship agreement.   A first step involved informal conversations with research partners and attendance at project meetings. Concurrent with this, an initial review of Indigenous housing policies and literature was undertaken. My research autonomy within the broader project enabled my topic to emerge from a growing personal interest in the government objective for sustainable Indigenous tenancies in remote and town-camp communities and the new approaches being implemented to achieve this. This focus was further refined through an extensive desk-based review of particular facets of Indigenous housing literature (housing welfare and ways of living) and policy, as well as the literature on sustainable tenancies. From this, a series of preliminary research questions were established to address these. Overall this review suggested that current housing reforms were being implemented with limited understanding of the potential impact of its behavioural change approaches on Indigenous tenants' ways of living (especially in remote and town-camp community settings), and thus, this raised questions about their potential to support the government objective for sustainable tenancies. This review also revealed the primacy of ideological (individual responsibility agenda) and theoretical (behavioural change theories of social change) policy drivers, over evidence-based drivers. Important theoretical and practical limitations with this government positioning turned my focus to alternative theories of social change. Social practice theory was identified as a compelling alternative theoretical perspective, which offered a way forward for an essential empirical study to

investigate the impact of these reforms on how tenants live. To undertake this task, a better understanding was required of tenants' social practices in and around their houses, and the macro-level policy context in which these practices were being performed. A social practice based theoretical framework for this study was then identified. Together this suggested a particular approach to the design of the study in terms of the research methodology, methods and techniques.

3.7.2   Phase 2: Data Collection

The second phase of this research involved a series of activities associated with data collection. In the first instance a number of activities were undertaken concurrently, including: (i) identifying participants; (ii) identifying case study sites; (iii) identifying the appropriate research techniques; and (iv) gaining ethics approval. Subsequent to these activities, the field work was undertaken.

Identifying Participants

The identification of participants was driven by the focus of this study on understanding the social practices of Indigenous tenants and the macro-level policy environment in which these practices are performed. This informed the selection of the first category of participants: Indigenous tenants living in town-camps targeted under current housing reforms. In this thesis, this category of participants is referred to as '(Indigenous) tenants'. In addition to this, the need to obtain insight into the policy environment informed the selection of a second category of participants: housing professionals involved in the policy implementation process. The complexities of Commonwealth housing policy implementation determined that a cross-section of jurisdictional housing stakeholders was required to best capture the intricacies of this implementation process. Thus it was determined that participants would be recruited with state level, regional level, and local level involvement in Indigenous housing, to incorporate insights from strategic level, middle-management and frontline professionals working both in government (logically dominant in state and regional level positions) and with contracted housing service providers in housing management or tenant support (predominantly local level). In this thesis, this category of participants is referred to as 'housing professionals'.

Identifying Case Studies

To refine the research scope, preliminary, unstructured, informal meetings were arranged with staff at the Department of Housing and Works in Perth who were identified through our project partners and through referrals. A preliminary site visit was also conducted of the Indigenous town-camp communities that surround the small town of Halls Creek in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia. During this visit informal discussions also took place with several local housing professionals. Together, this led to a further refinement of the research questions. At this point, the benefits of undertaking comparative research between jurisdictions were raised both through the design of the study, and through the policy review which hinted at possible divergences from current Commonwealth housing policy in its jurisdictional implementation.

The selection of the town-camps of Halls Creek as the first case study site, was informed by the preliminary site visit. This trip revealed its suitability. Given the infancy of the reform process, Halls Creek's position as a priority community under current housing reforms ensured that policy implementation would be well underway at the time of research. Advice from housing professionals and Indigenous housing researchers corroborated its suitability, including the logistics of undertaking research, such as issues of access. Additionally, both the local government housing office in Halls Creek and our industry partner, the Western Australian SHA (Department of Housing and Works) supported this selection.

The selection of Halls Creek as a case study site established some criteria for the selection of the second case study site, namely: the presence of Indigenous town-camp communities, a priority community under current housing reforms, and issues of accessibility and support from housing stakeholders (such as project partners and the local housing professionals). The decision to choose a case site in the Northern Territory was driven by the eventful recent history of government interventions in Indigenous Affairs across the territory, such as the Intervention in 2007, which made it particularly interesting and relevant. It was also informed by the presence of another key industry partner, Territory Housing, the housing arm of the Department of Local Government, Housing and Regional Services. Informal discussions with these and other project partners, Indigenous housing researchers, and other contacts established during a project meeting in Alice Springs, suggested that the town-camps of Alice Springs provided an appropriate comparative case.   These case sites are described in more detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Identifying Appropriate Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary research technique. Given that the information sought from the two categories of participants differed, one series of interview prompts were tailored for the tenant interviews and another for the housing professional interviews. The purpose of interviews with Indigenous tenants was to understand how current social practices were being carried out in and around the house, why these were performed in these ways, and if they were changing. Thus, the interview was structured by questions about participants' activities in and around their house and their construct of home (as this informs social expectations about our domestic social practices in much of the western world); questions to identify intervening factors and other open-ended questions about the participants' perceptions of the current housing reforms. The purpose of interviews with housing professionals was to understand the macro-level policy context in which these social practices were being performed by tenants. Thus, the interview centred on questions about the policy implementation process which were tailored to the participant's professional position and remit. These also included questions to elicit how these stakeholders and their organisations understood Indigenous ways of life and how the reforms might be changing these understandings. Observation was selected as a secondary research technique to supplement the information obtained through these interviews.

Gaining Ethics Approval

At this stage, ethics approval was sought for this study from RMIT University. Once granted, further work was undertaken to find potential participants. Housing professionals were identified from preliminary site visits, through project partner contacts and through referrals. Potential housing professional participants were then contacted via email and phone. During this correspondence, details of the project were provided, including: the study's aim and desired outcome, an explanation of the fieldwork process and participant time commitments. Potential participants were then invited to participate in the study. It was not feasible to find potential tenant participants whilst based in Melbourne. It was therefore decided, with advice from project partners and local housing stakeholders, that tenants would be recruited during subsequent site visits.

Undertaking the Fieldwork

Fieldwork was undertaken between July 2010 and December 2010, once the aforementioned activities were complete. In total 51 interviews were undertaken,

including: 10 interviews with Indigenous tenants from five different town-camps in Alice Springs and another five in Halls Creek, and interviews with 15 housing professionals in Western Australia and 16 housing professionals in the Northern Territory. The distribution of housing professionals across local, regional and state/territory positions in Indigenous housing policy differed between jurisdictions. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 explain the reasons for this and Chapter 7 discusses its implications for this study.

The fieldwork involved several trips to interview housing professionals in Perth and Darwin. Consent was received and these discussions were taped. These interviews were conducted face-to-face in participants' offices or adjacent meeting rooms. These interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Notes of these transcripts were emailed to participants for review and confirmation, as a measure to address the face validity of the interview data. Throughout this thesis, the collection of these interviews is referred to as 'housing professional interviews/data', specific subgroups are also referred to, such as local housing professionals or tenant support professionals. Each of these interviews is referred to individually and anonymously (e.g. P02WA or P14NT), with the letter 'P' denoting an interview with a housing professional, and 'WA' or 'NT' their jurisdiction.

The fieldwork also involved two trips (totalling two weeks) to Halls Creek and Alice Springs. As stated, participants had not been recruited prior to my arrival, but arrangements were made in advance for local housing staff in both jurisdictions to facilitate this recruitment process. In both cases, this recruitment involved driving through the town-camp communities and approaching tenants who were sitting or standing outside their houses. In other cases it involved knocking on the doors of tenants that were well-known to the housing staff assisting with this process. Preliminary discussions with tenants involved providing an explanation of the research. This was given by either the researcher or the housing professional and included a description of the aim and desired outcome of this study, the fieldwork process and participant time commitments. Tenants were then asked if they were interested in participating. Consent was received verbally, and these discussions were also taped. These interviews were conducted face-to-face in close proximity to the tenant's house, usually on their veranda or in their yard. In many cases several other people were present at the time of the interview. These were usually kin of the participant who sometimes added additional commentary after a participant had responded. The process of recruiting participants provided valuable time for

observations to be made of multiple town-camp communities in both jurisdictions. Notes of these observations were taken by the researcher at the time and at the end of each day. These interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Throughout this thesis, the collection of these interviewees is referred to as '(Indigenous) tenant interviews/data', specific subgroups are also referred to, such as Halls Creek tenants. On return to Melbourne, notes on these discussions were sent out to the local housing staff who had facilitated the process, with a request that these be distributed to participants and any feedback be returned to the researcher. It was recognised that this was an onerous task for the staff involved, and no feedback was received. Each tenant interview is referred to individually and anonymously (e.g. T02WA or T08NT) with the letter 'T' denoting an interview with an Indigenous tenant, and 'WA' or 'NT' their jurisdiction.

3.7.3 Phase 3: Data Analysis

The initial data analysis for each of the case studies comprised two stages. The first stage comprised two processes. The first process was familiarisation with the data. Soon after each interview was conducted, digital recordings of the discussions were played back and verbatim transcriptions taken to increase the researcher's familiarity with the data (Reissman, 1993). The recordings were then replayed to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts and the transcripts were read multiple times. Following this, all the interview data from Northern Territory case (Dataset 1_NT) was coded according to the systems of housing welfare provision: tenancy management, property management and tenant support. Separate from this, the data from all tenant interviews (Dataset 2_NT) was coded as it related to specific social practices, as these emerged through an initial review of the transcripts.

The second process involved more rigorous data analysis of each of the data subsets in Dataset 1 and Dataset 2. During each re-reading of the subsets of Dataset 1, emerging themes were noted using inductive thematic analysis. These themes were then condensed and refined through further readings, and key phrases or words ascribed to each data subset. Key quotations embodying each of these themes were also highlighted.[28] During subsequent re-readings of the subsets of

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[28] Quotations from interview recordings were edited lightly in order to improve the flow of expression and to remove spelling, grammatical and other errors.

Dataset 2, deductive thematic analysis was undertaken based on the social practice framework detailed in Chapter 2. For each subset, data was regrouped as it described the varying ways practices were described. Within these subsets another similar process was undertaken grouping together 'sayings' that highlighted aspects of the four practice elements (rules, material infrastructures, practical knowledge and common understandings) implicated in each practice. Key quotations were also highlighted for each subset.

The second stage of data analysis built upon this initial review by re-examining, reconsidering and refining each of these data subsets. This refinement included a consideration of their internal homogeneity, namely whether they cohered together meaningfully. It also considered each subset in relation to the data set as a whole, such as whether there were sufficient distinctions between each subset. Data extracts were selected that best illustrated the essence of each of these subsets for use in the documentation of this analysis. In the final phase of data analysis, and in order to ascertain the overall story the data was telling, the relationships between the subsets of Dataset 1, between the subsets of Dataset 2, and the relationship between Dataset 1 and Dataset 2, were all reviewed and their meanings considered in relation to the research questions.

Concurrently, these two stages of data analysis were repeated for the Western Australian case study. The datasets were labelled Dataset 1_WA and Dataset 2_WA. Once these stages of the analysis were complete, the Northern Territory case study was written. This is documented in Chapter 4.

Following this, a cross-case analysis was undertaken based on the systems of housing welfare provision (Dataset 1) and the social practices (Dataset 2). This involved re-examining Dataset 1_NT and Dataset 1_WA and identifying similarities and differences in the themes identified in the earlier individual case study analysis. These were then noted, re-examined and refined through subsequent readings of the data. This also involved looking across Dataset 2_NT and Dataset 2_WA and identifying similarities and differences in the social practices identified, the ways these were performed and the 'sayings' about them. In the case of Dataset 2 (social practices), high levels of overlap in the social practices identified between case studies determined the inclusion of these same practices in the account of the Western Australian case study. As before, these were noted, re-examined and refined through further readings. Following this, the Western Australian case study

was written incorporating initial comparisons with the Northern Territory case study. This is documented in Chapter 5.

3.7.4 Phase 4: Theorising from the Study

In this final stage of the study, the intent was to go beyond the surface of the data to broaden the analysis from a descriptive to an interpretative level. In doing so, the researcher's aim was to provide broader analytic statements and to address the 'bigger picture' that these datasets reveal to us about the research questions. In particular the researcher sought to produce theoretical findings that were grounded in the data, but that went beyond it. This involved contextualising and discussing the findings from the data analysis phase in understandings about Indigenous housing policy, the Indigenous lived experience of housing welfare, social practices and sustainable tenancies established in Chapter 2. The purpose of this was to theorise from the study about the manner in which the government housing welfare can achieve sustainable Indigenous tenancies. This is documented in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

3. 8 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the research design for this study. It drew on the findings of the policy and literature reviews in Chapter 2 to identify the research scope and questions. It then provided an overview of the research methodology and described and justified the selection of the research methods, and data collection and analysis techniques. This chapter also described trustworthiness and ethical considerations in the design of this study. It concluded with an overview of all the activities undertaken in the conduct of this study.

4 TOWN-CAMP TENANCIES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

4. 1 INTRODUCTION

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, one objective of the current Indigenous housing reforms is sustainable Indigenous tenancies. The government seeks to meet this objective by transforming the regulatory arrangements for housing management by improving the quality of the living environments in which tenants reside, by educating tenants about conventional western ways of living in a house and managing their tenancy and by supporting tenants to adapt to these changes. Chapter 3 details the research design and methods used to undertake a dual approach to the analysis of the systems of housing provision and social practices (as these relate to achieving sustainable tenancies) within the current Indigenous housing reforms.

The function of this and the following chapter is to report on the results of the case studies in two Australian jurisdictions: the Northern Territory (this chapter) and Western Australia (Chapter 5). Each chapter begins by introducing the town-camp communities at the heart of these case studies. This is followed by two sections that respectively detail the systems of housing welfare provision (macro context) and the lived experiences of housing welfare in these town-camps (micro context). In the first of these, a thematic analysis is applied to stakeholders' perspectives of the implementation of current reforms. This is used to understand and describe the provision of public housing standards of housing management and the provision of tenant support during the early phases of housing reforms and to identify critical issues inhibiting their provision. The second section uses a social practice-based analysis to understand and describe the lived experience of housing welfare provision in the town-camps. It draws on the analytic framework detailed in Chapter 2, in which social practices are conceptualised as four interwoven elements: rules, material infrastructure, practical knowledge and common understandings. Through this framework, we understand the capacity to achieve changes in the domestic social practices performed by Indigenous tenants hinges on the reconfiguration of the practice elements implicated in these practices. It begins by describing the meaning of home for town-camp tenants to highlight common understandings about the role of housing in their everyday lives, before describing a series of domestic social practices commonly performed by these tenants. In this way, the dual approach to the analysis of the data in this chapter and the following chapter provide

not only insights to the effectiveness of the current systems of housing welfare provision and the lived experiences of these systems, but new understandings of the compatibility between them.

4. 2   INTRODUCING THE TOWN-CAMPS OF ALICE SPRINGS

The first vestiges of town-camp life dot the sides of the road leading to the community's entry: discarded beer cans and empty plastic Coke bottles, a couple of old car tyres, and three discarded mattresses, two pocked with fire-burn marks. Around a bend, an overturned car lies abandoned after a serious accident three days earlier. The cyclone-wire fence is soon visible, running the perimeter of the town-camp. At the community's entrance, one sign announces the name of the camp and access restrictions, others announce the prohibition of alcohol consumption and pornography, and of unleaded petrol, spray paint and glue. By the entry, the ferns are overgrown, the grass is spotted with litter and a broken stroller lies overturned. Five young children are grouped in the distance, bikes at their feet, leaning up against the fence. The road weaves through the dusty community. There are no street names, no street lights, no road-markings. Trees spattered randomly throughout cast grey pools of shade in the dust. The houses sit haphazardly along these roads: painted blockwork walls, plain aluminium-frame windows and corrugated roofs that overhang the facades to create simple verandas or porches. Some walls are painted brightly, others have muted tones. Graffiti and dirt marks scrawl across some, others are unsoiled, some are recently painted.   A low metal fence demarcates a dry dirt yard around each house. On one plot, construction is in progress: a skeleton of posts and beams is anchored to fresh concrete foundations.   In the pockets between the houses, and in the yards, there are signs of earlier activities: makeshift stoves, tables with a few chairs scattered around them, mattresses piled with blankets, an old bed frame, rusting oil drums, bits of food packaging and empty bottles.

It is mid-morning and the town-camp is fairly quiet. Some men and women sit in the shade of their veranda whilst three young kids play with buckets of water in the yard. A car drives past heading towards the exit of the camp. Three young men stand by the gate of one house, laughing and smoking.   Two dogs lie in the shade cast by a rudimentary garage. Further up the road there is an adult asleep on a mattress under a tree. As the car drives through slowly, two women approach. They want to know if we're with Tangentyere - are we here to fix their leaking tap? Do we have

their mail? Some of the kids have taken the school bus earlier this morning and will not return to the town-camp until mid-afternoon. Many of those around at this time of day are unemployed, some are elderly, or women with responsibilities for children and grandchildren. Some tenants have lived in the town-camps all their lives, others describe relocating between different towns and communities and living under various housing management systems. Most tenants had lived in a range of accommodation, from caravans and tin sheds to western vernacular houses in various states of disrepair. Not all the town-camps in Alice Springs are exactly like this - some are smaller, others appear more orderly - but this one is not unusual.

Alice Springs, the third largest town in the Northern Territory (Pop. 28,000 residents, ABS 2011), is home to 19 legally-established town-camps with special purpose leases (Sanders, 2004:1). These town-camps are scattered across town: some on the sites of traditional Indigenous ceremonial camping areas, some close to its centre and others on its fringes. The town-camps comprise approximately 200 households, and are generally composed of Indigenous family members, members of the same language group or those with shared geographical origins, as well as their visitors (McCalman et al., 2010:4). Most of these communities were settled during the 1970s, at which time they received no essential services and the dwellings were rudimentary, consisting of tin sheds and tents (Foster et al., 2005:3). Today, these town-camps are amongst the most well established in Australia, largely due to the involvement of the Indigenous-owned and -controlled Tangentyere Council over the last 40 years (Sanders, 2004:1). The town-camps vary in their service populations from 6 people up to 170 people (Foster et al., 2005:12). Altogether they have a base population of 1,765-2,065, and a service population of 2,560-3,300 (Foster et al., 2005:43). Town-camp residents (and their visitors) reside in simple single-storey western vernacular houses (usually with three or four bedrooms, although sometimes only two) which range in condition from brand-new to very poor (Foster et al., 2005). As these communities remain outside the official town boundaries (not classified as urban subdivisions) residents continue to suffer from a lack of municipal infrastructure and service provision (Foster et al., 2005), which exacerbates widespread underlying social and economic issues.

As a priority community under NPARIH, Alice Springs is benefiting from an extensive housing construction and refurbishment program. Under the Northern Territory based Strategic Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP),[29] and alongside Tangentyere Constructions, all existing houses in the town-camps are being brought up to public housing standard through refurbishments or rebuilds by Territory Alliance (TA), a SIHIP alliance consortium. An additional 85 new houses are also being built in the town-camps under SIHIP. Whilst these construction programs are not a focus of this study per se, their impacts on tenants' living environments are.[30]

4. 3 SYSTEMS OF PROVISION FOR TOWN-CAMP HOUSING

The current Indigenous housing reforms change the systems of provision for town-camp housing in the Northern Territory. The shift to public housing management accounts for a substantial component of this change. In the Northern Territory, the content and delivery of remote and town-camp public housing management (in addition to Commonwealth housing policy, as detailed in Chapters 1 and 2) is informed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services' (DHLGRS) Remote Public Housing Management Framework (RPHMF) and is underpinned by the *Northern Territory Housing Act* and *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA). The RPHMF, although largely derived from the principles of mainstream urban public housing policies, also features amendments (hybridisms) to mainstream public housing. Alongside these change to housing management provision, the content and delivery of tenant support has also changed in the Northern Territory. In addition to Commonwealth housing policy detailed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, these changes are largely informed by DHLGRS's Remote Housing Tenant Support Framework (RHTSF).

The provision of housing welfare to the Alice Springs town-camps is affected by these new Commonwealth and jurisdictional arrangements. Property management is provided by the property division of Tangentyere Council (Tangentyere), as a government contracted service provider. Tenancy management is jointly provided

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[29] SIHIP is a significant housing construction being carried out across 73 'priority' remote Indigenous communities and town-camps in the Northern Territory.
[30] The limitations of this are addressed in Chapter 7.

by two small teams (of approximately 5 persons): a specialised Town Camps Unit (TCU) located within Territory Housing's regional Alice Springs office and the tenancy management arm of Tangentyere. At the time of research, Tangentyere's responsibilities for property and tenancy management were not formalised in a Service Level Agreement. Under informal agreements, Tangentyere was responsible for the tenancy management of all tenants living in legacy dwellings (under pre-existing tenancy agreements), whilst TCU managed all tenants residing in new, rebuilt and refurbished properties (under new tenancy agreements). Tenant support is contracted to Tangentyere Family and Youth Services (TFYS). These housing welfare arrangements will be reassessed when the government leases on the Alice Springs town-camps expire in December 2012.

The intent of this section is to describe the functioning of these systems of housing welfare provision in the Alice Springs town-camps during the early phases of housing policy reforms. This section begins with a focus on the provision of public housing standards of housing management to the town-camps. Section 4.3.1 describes a critical hybridisation of public housing management in the Northern Territory - the Housing Reference Groups (HRG). Section 4.3.2 then describes the problematic nature of tenancy management in the Alice Springs town-camps before identifying key contributing factors for this. Section 4.3.3 follows a similar structure to discuss the provision of property management. In Section 4.3.4 the focus shifts to the delivery of tenant support. It begins by detailing problems surrounding the provision of tenant support to the town-camps of Alice Springs, before identifying and detailing reasons for this. This section is based on discussions with Indigenous housing stakeholders in the Northern Territory, including: tenancy management professionals working within TCU, tenancy and property management professionals from Tangentyere and tenant support staff from TFYS, as well as Territory Housing professionals at regional and territory levels. It is also informed by discussions with tenants in the Alice Springs town-camps.

4.3.1   Northern Territory's Hybridised Indigenous Public Housing Management

As stated, the RPHMF features amendments or hybridisms to mainstream public housing. These introduce divergences from mainstream public housing, such as differences in allocation procedures (which are not based solely on need as per mainstream public housing) or use of income in eligibility criteria (DHLGRS, 2008).

The most significant of these hybridisms is the Housing Reference Groups (HRG). HRGs are an unprecedented amendment to the public housing model, and one of the distinguishing features of Indigenous public housing in the Northern Territory. The RPHMF stipulates HRGs, comprising approximately 15 tenants vetted by government, will work with Territory Housing in every Indigenous community. The purpose of these groups is to allow special consideration of 'family structures and cultural and community issues' in housing management (DHLGRS, 2008:1):

> *a well-grounded and well-informed commonsense approach to housing management at the regional and community level, resulting in local cultural and community issues to be taken into account in the decision process.*

HRGs are designed to promote and support bi-directional communication between tenants and Territory Housing and its service providers on housing-related issues. According to Territory Housing working papers (cited in Porter, 2009b:15) this includes HRGs providing advice on cultural matters relating to wait lists and house allocation decisions, family or social group living arrangements, the designs of new homes; engagement and communication strategies and other housing-related cultural and social concerns. Whilst some government documentation identifies these groups as significant 'change agents' in remote Indigenous housing (Porter, 2009b:16), the HRG is an *advisory* body; final decision-making power resides with government.

The very limited research previously conducted on the early stages of these housing reforms questions the effectiveness of HRGs. Porter's (2009b) Northern Territory based research, cited in Chapter 2, questions the motivations of the Northern Territory government to engage in policy development around Indigenous customary values and practices given its monopoly over housing provision. Equally, Porter (2009b) questions the motivation for communities to take ownership of their HRGs. Notwithstanding these criticisms, Porter (2009b:21) uses the concept of 'recognition space' (also referred to in Chapter 2) to identify the HRG as the 'only structure proposed in the RPHMF that could support a sustained [community] dialogue', through which public housing management may better accommodate Indigenous ways of life. Porter (2009b:2) argues this potential should be further investigated, stating that:

> *The extent to which tenancy management rules are hybridised will depend on the quality of the engagement with communities to identify culturally specific behaviours (and solutions) that require nuanced, rather than standardised tenancy management answers.*

4.3.2   Tenancy Management

This section describes the implementation of public housing standards of tenancy management in the Northern Territory, and specifically in the town-camps of Alice Springs. It begins by describing the problematic nature of tenancy management in the Alice Springs town-camps. It then identifies and details the contributing factors for this as related to policy, procedural and organisational issues.

4.3.2.1   Managing the Town-Camp Tenancies

The data established the prevalence of lenient, ad hoc, case-by-case tenancy management practices,[31] despite the pervasive rhetoric of the standardisation of housing management. The interview data suggests management approaches to sign-ups, move-ins, and tenancy breaches varied between both Territory Housing and its service providers, and from month-to-month and day-to-day, and that these approaches commonly constituted divergences from public housing policy and procedures. This case-by-case, learn-as-you-go approach to tenancy management was captured, for example, in the following statements:

> *There is quite a lot of inconsistency. And things have changed so much in the last year…between Tenant Support, Territory Housing and Tangentyere Housing…we'll all decide to do something one way, and that's how we decide to work, but then a month later we find it wasn't working…so we change our approach (P05NT, 2010).*

> *It makes you wonder if Territory Housing are going off the proper legislation, the timelines that they're supposed to, the procedures, the requirements (P13NT, 2010).*

Examples of such approaches include several cases where tenants were signed up to a new tenancy agreement without undertaking the tenant support program mandated under the NPARIH. Another professional cited a mix-up where a family had been moved into a new house without the proper paperwork being in place:

> *They [Territory Housing] moved them in without the application. So Territory Housing was breaching their agreement just by doing that. Why'd they go and do that? Anyway so they issued this letter which said the tenants had 7 days or 14 days to supply Territory Housing with this information that Territory Housing should have obtained from them before moving them in. It's not the tenant's fault…(P13NT, 2010).*

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[31] Housing/tenancy/property management practice/s and 'management practice/s' are used throughout this thesis to denote the management activities of housing professionals. In these instances, the use of the word 'practice' is distinct from social practice theory connotations.

Tenancy management approaches were also in a constant state of flux (or not yet established), such as the management of extended tenancy absences or tenancy issues related to Sorry Business:

> *Tangentyere used to go in and repaint a house after someone had died there and then people could move in, or it would be ok for people to swap houses…and that has happened forever. Now it is really hard for Territory Housing to work out how to manage that. How do we be flexible about that?…like they can't just swap houses…but they may end up just doing it anyway (P05NT, 2010).*

In the same vein, another commented on the mistake with the tenant's paperwork (cited above):

> *Anyway, after that happened Territory Housing stepped back and said we were in the wrong there. They're sort of learning from their mistakes (P13NT, 2010).*

Divergences from standard tenancy management were demonstrated most clearly in the lack of contingency planning around housing tenants during the construction program. Territory Housing intent was to rehouse tenants in Alice Springs' urban public housing as an interim measure. However, several tenants commented that they had to move in with family, or that they knew of neighbours who had had extra family staying with them whilst their house was being refurbished. Government reliance on this was identified by tenants and professionals alike as being contrary to acceptable approaches in urban public housing. For instance, one professional stated:

> *…its sort of saying that you can't live in overcrowded houses, but then we know you'll put up with it while we do work on your house. You're relying on the fact that people are happy to live in overcrowded conditions, but telling them at the same time that they aren't allowed to live in overcrowded conditions once they get a new house…Seems to go against urban Public Housing policies…you'd never plan or rely on that kind of thing in the mainstream system (P05NT, 2010).*

Some suggested that tenancy management was lenient in the application of public housing rules and regulations:

> *We've got asked by Territory Housing to go with them for the delivery of a letter of evacuation [eviction process]. It was a family where the house boss had been kicked out after a whole lot of family had come in. There were 30-40 people staying there. Territory Housing had given them a lot of notice. They were really lenient. They really gave them a lot of notice (P05NT, 2010).*

Another example was cited where high visitor numbers in one household had resulted in property damage and excessive noise levels, yet no disciplinary measures were taken. Housing professionals suggested that the standard public housing response, of holding the 'head tenant' to account for their property and activities taking place on it, was not appropriate given that the elderly and infirm head tenant had no control over her household. Indeed in most cases,

professionals considered the standard recourse to eviction as an unviable option in the town-camp context.

The relative leniency of current tenancy management (as compared with standard public housing) was confirmed by one professional who compared town-camp tenancy management with public housing where they had worked previously:

> *It seemed a lot stricter than here. I don't know why. We do it in a round about way, like we're not so forceful – you've got to do this…we don't say under this legislation you've got to do this. We're not about that, telling them off (P13NT, 2010).*

Some suggested that Tangentyere was even more lenient than Territory Housing in their tenancy management as property damage was likely to be blamed on 'wear and tear', poor design or poor construction. Indeed some professionals acknowledged management leniency, referring to a 'grace period' or a 'transition period' to allow tenants time to adjust to the new housing management arrangements. However, there was no consensus on the terms or length of this.

Some expressed concern about the policy-to-management practice translation, as captured in the following comment by a senior Territory Housing professional:

> *We're [Territory Housing] is really taking the lead on trying to establish what the interpretation of policy should be. I'm concerned that certain approaches are becoming business as usual…(P15NT, 2010).*

On the other hand, other professionals refuted suggestions of management inconsistencies and leniency, arguing that tenancy management was now standardised. Notably, these professionals were largely not involved in frontline tenancy management. For instance, one Territory Housing professional stated:

> *And I think when in doubt you legislate. So that way people are going to learn in a quicker fashion. Sometimes punitary stuff works….Fair dinkum implementation of policy across the different cluster groups in town-camps is needed now. People understand rules, but what has happened in the past is that we've been bit airy-fairy about things – it is alright, it will be ok, etc…And we have had a tendency to appease, rather than to talk to people in a frank, but respectful type of manner…Well, it is not alright, and it is not ok. So we need to be applying those rules and regs consistently so that people know where they stand. I think this change is really happening (P01NT, 2010).*

Many tenants associated the housing reforms with stricter housing management, but almost all tenants commented this had not been their experience as yet. Instead, most tenants described receiving very mixed-messages about the new rules, regulations and responsibilities under these reforms, and being confused about who was responsible for their tenancy management. For instance, several described being told repeatedly to clean their houses and yards, but beyond verbal reprimands

there had been no obvious consequences for breaching such requests. Tenants' perceptions of inconsistent management practices are only partially explained by the two-tiered system of tenancy management operating in the town-camps which meant that some tenants were still under the pre-existing tenancy agreements at the time of this study.

4.3.2.2 Policy, Procedural & Organisational Issues

This subsection details five contributing factors impinging on the quality of tenancy management. First, it describes (i) policy ambiguity and (ii) procedural ambiguity in the implementation of public housing standards of tenancy management. It then details three organisational issues: (iii) the division of tenancy management between Territory Housing and TCU; (iv) the organisational partitioning of town-camp housing management from mainstream public housing management; and (v) resourcing constraints.

4.3.2.2.1 Policy Ambiguity

Professionals' divergent interpretations of the policy framework encouraged tenancy management inconsistencies and differing standards, especially at the local level. Some professionals argued the reforms brought mainstream housing management to remote communities. Some qualified this, suggesting that management practices reflected the more lenient approach to tenancies found in urban public housing in Alice Springs. As one urban public housing professional stated:

> *I think we have a softer approach here. We don't immediately progress to a Notice to Remedy, or to legal action. We'll try and get all of that support on board first. We'll try and give it a bit of time (P07NT, 2010).*

On the other hand, some professionals believed hybridisations of public housing constituted a significant diversion from mainstream public housing which, at the extreme, constituted a new model of social housing management. Housing professionals listed a series of public housing 'anomalies' to support this view, including: HRGs, Indigenous specific regulations for visitor stays; tenancy absences; tenant references; eligibility; and other Indigenous specific procedures such as in relation to client engagement (face-to-face services and interpreters) or tenancy breaches. The partitioning of remote community and town-camps housing management from mainstream urban housing management was cited as the

ultimate manifestation of these management differences (see below). For some, these anomalies were interim measures to be phased out in the future in order to align town-camp housing management with urban public housing. However, others argued these measures were critical to policy success. These differing interpretations encouraged the tenancy management inconsistencies described previously in Section 4.3.2.1.

4.3.2.2.2 Procedural Ambiguity

Procedural ambiguity also promoted tenancy management inconsistencies. Some suggested this ambiguity was telling of underdeveloped policies and procedures in public housing management generally. Public housing approaches to (tenant) debt management in Northern Territory public housing was cited as one example of this. One Tangentyere professional summarised this problem:

> *So we're meant to be adopting this great generic public housing system, and yet it's not that well designed. Territory Housing haven't worked it out themselves. There is a lot of work to do their end. And yet they are just rolling it out (P04NT, 2010).*

Procedural ambiguity is also traced to the incongruity of some mainstream policies and procedures to town-camp tenancy management. Town-camp environments were perceived by some professionals to be unconducive to the strict enforcement of public housing regulations largely due to unaddressed structural issues, persistent overcrowding and the lack of alternative housing options (for dealing with evictions, overcrowding or visitors). A disciplinary response was viewed as problematic in a town-camp setting where an eviction, for instance, would ultimately result in increased pressures on another town-camp household who sought to accommodate these evicted tenants. This management dilemma was also evident to some tenants. For instance one tenant stated:

> *They said if you muck up three times then you are out. But..like what are they going to just chuck us out on the street? (T01NT, 2010).*

Professionals also cited the government not meeting its own responsibilities under the RTA (such as poor repairs and maintenance services, discussed in Section 4.3.3), tenants' poor understandings of their new housing arrangements, including their new responsibilities under the RTA (a failure of the government information campaigns, also discussed later), and below standard living environments (blamed on a lack of municipal services such as rubbish collection and poor maintenance services). Management recourse to punitive measures was also only deemed appropriate so long as the procedures were consistent and fair.

A less tangible impediment to the stringent enforcement of the RTA was the longevity of tenant leases (periodical leases in perpetuity). Some perceived these lease arrangements to alter the relationship between tenant and landlord by incentivising the development of a strong, lasting relationship with the tenant and dis-incentivising any punitary approaches that may jeopardise this. Two professionals commented:

> *In Urban [public housing] leases are used to manage. We don't have that in Remote [Indigenous housing management]. So the relationship [between tenants and landlord] is very different from the 'Big Brother' relationship in Urban (P02NT, 2010).*

> *This puts government on the back foot in terms of social housing management…ongoing provision for these people in perpetuity (P06NT, 2010).*

Others also commented that Tangentyere's status as an Aboriginal organisation provided a comparable disincentive to apply stricter, more stringent rules so as to remain on good terms with 'their own people'.

More commonly, however, procedural ambiguity was linked to the co-implementation of 'hybrid' and standard public housing policies, and in particular the introduction of the HRGs. The influence of HRGs on housing management was contested by both tenants and professionals. Most tenants were aware of the groups' advisory statuses, but some believed HRGs had little influence, whilst others argued they were overly influential. These discussions centred on the value Territory Housing attributed to HRG recommendations, and its capacity and resolve to act on these recommendations.

Several housing professionals attributed significant value to HRG advice, describing it as critical cultural and social information to gain and maintain social harmony within the town-camps:

> *…say we've [Territory Housing] got an agreed list of who is going to move in [to a town-camp], then they'll [HRG] say, well this mob can go in next to these people because they don't get on with people over that side, and those people over there (P01NT, 2010).*

> *We [Territory Housing] couldn't do without them [HRG] because there is no way we would have the information on the social fabric…they are absolutely essential, and if they [HRGs] don't work it will cause problems for us. It is in our interest that they work really well (P09NT, 2010).*

> *What they [HRG] are providing is a blueprint for maintaining calm and tranquillity in their communities, the best that they possibly can…. (P01NT, 2010).*

They [HRG] take their responsibility to Territory Housing and to the residents very, very seriously. They make very excellent decisions and recommendations, and very valuable recommendations and information about social and cultural issues (P04NT, 2010).

Others, however, argued that recommendations were of limited value to housing management, particularly given issues surrounding HRG representativeness and concerns that HRGs would become unduly influential in housing management:

Territory Housing sort of don't step back and assess and think about the advice. They don't get other people involved like they should, get other opinions. They take it too much as face value…They don't have the in-depth understanding of the community, the bigger picture. Also in my opinion, you've got so many policies and procedures to follow, but then you've also got to listen to the HRGs (P13NT, 2010).

Both professionals and tenants similarly challenged whether HRGs adequately represented the town-camp residents, especially given the vetting of HRG members by Territory Housing, and equally, whether these members were willing and able to speak for everyone in the camp. Tenant confusion and low levels of tenant engagement with their HRG suggests underrepresentation and misrepresentation of town-camp wishes. The interviews found communication between HRGs and tenants was fairly poor; tenants did not know their HRG members, nor when meetings were held or the issues tabled. These tenants generally blamed their HRG members for inadequate communication with them, sometimes accusing its members of being self-interested or suggesting that HRGs suffered from power inequities within. Some professionals corroborated these accusations by giving examples of dominant or self-interested factions within HRGs. Some professionals also drew parallels with the flaws of the previous remote community government councils who acted as representatives based on clan affiliations. On the other hand, confidentiality surrounding the functioning of the HRG encouraged high levels of tenant confusion regarding the purpose of HRGs and encouraged poor tenant engagement. One tenant commented:

I'm not quite sure what happens on it, it's all confidential. There are leaks sometimes. Sometimes it is family groups who are out to accommodate their own family. Some people just don't really care. They don't understand the importance of the HRGs…That's where you need to take your opinion and get someone to carry it on for you. It is usually the ones who talk up for themselves, who know how to talk up for themselves…(P07NT, 2010)

As stated, Territory Housing's resolve to act upon HRG recommendations was also contested. Some argued that Territory Housing tried to accommodate the HRG whilst others suggested the notion of HRG influence was deceptive:

The people [HRG members] are just workers like us. They don't really have a voice. They are just doing their job, passing on the information

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> *sometimes, but they are bound by rules from Territory Housing…They get no say about how the information is used (P11NT, 2010).*

An HRG member (tenant) stated:

> *There are always big debates on the decisions, sometimes people are happy, sometimes not. We get to say to Territory Housing what we want, but we are just making recommendations. They take it on board, they do. We feel like we are in control…Sometimes Territory Housing will override it, they don't always explain why. But then sometimes it is really good, they listen to us (T01NT, 2010).*

A Territory Housing professional provided another view, suggesting underlying tokenism and paternalism in the functioning of the HRG:

> *We let the HRG win sometimes, you know, so to make it fair…(P04NT, 2010).*

Many argued Territory Housing's capacity to act on HRG advice was limited by the constraints of public housing policy. Some professionals were reassured by these limitations. For instance, one professional cited the public housing needs-based housing allocation criteria as an example of an opportune constraint, remarking:

> *Ultimately Territory Housing sits above those groups [HRG] and decides what to do with their advice. If we have learnt anything then it is that resources are, generally speaking, not allocated on a needs basis (with community consultation) [i.e. HRG recommendations], but on a family clan-centric or linguistic, or family basis, and we can't do that anymore. We need to be more fair and equitable (P01NT, 2010).*

However, challenging this one HRG member (a professional who lived in the town-camps) argued:

> *If Territory Housing is going to override the HRG according to 'need', they need to define what they mean by need. I asked what is need. Is it homelessness? Cleanliness? Overcrowding? No response. If they don't know what it is…if they can't clarify it…then how are we meant to know? We need that clear information (P07NT, 2010).*

A Territory Housing professional provided further confirmation of this confusion when they defined need as: 'Overcrowding, homelessness, safety of children, elderly, frail…ummm, the normal things', but was unsure whether the TCU's and mainstream public housing's definitions were aligned (P01NT, 2010). One senior Territory Housing professional commented:

> *So there needs to be more clarity around the interpretation of the framework…there needs some clear working instructions that stamp out that self interpretation about how policy needs to be interpreted. So now it is about refining and providing clarity, is there consistency around documents, is a governance issue too,…– quality control across the regions (P15NT, 2010).*

4.3.2.2.3 The Division of Tenancy Management between TCU and Tangentyere

The division of tenancy management responsibilities between Territory Housing's TCU and Tangentyere (described in the introduction to this section) was unclear to most participants. One Tangentyere professional stated:

> *My understanding when Territory Housing first took over was that we [Tangentyere] were doing the tenancy management and they were supporting us. They weren't doing the tenancy management. But somewhere along the line that all changed…their roles changed: one minute they were tenancy support officers, then engagement officers, then they're not, now they are something else. Now they do stuff to a certain extent (P13NT, 2010).*

Whilst a Territory Housing professional claimed:

> *…it is such a serious, serious initiative, you can't afford to leave someone alone to pick it all up, so we [Territory Housing] are around to pick up the slack, we just can't leave them [Tangentyere] alone and just sit here and tell them what to do. They need someone,us, to get in there and get our hands dirty as well (P01NT, 2010).*

Another Territory Housing professional expanded on this:

> *Yes, Tangentyere is paid for this but it is a new system, a totally new procedure. They are dealing with a new type of government (P04NT, 2010).*

Tenants were equally confused and unsure who to approach for tenancy issues. They perceived both Territory Housing and Tangentyere to be evading responsibility. One tenant stated:

> *It doesn't feel any different from the past really. At the end of the day Tangentyere are saying they are getting on to it, or Territory Housing is saying it is Tangentyere's job (T03NT, 2010).*

Tenant confusion (combined with loyalty to Tangentyere) resulted in Tangentyere being the primary point of contact for most tenants. One tenant explained:

> *We still mainly talk to Tangentyere. Territory Housing come around sometimes, but mostly Tangentyere. We know them more. If we ring up they [Territory Housing] are never there…but we just give Tangentyere a ring (T05NT, 2010).*

Confusion also created inefficiencies, such as in the management of applications and tenant sign-ups for new/refurbished houses. Two Tangentyere professional explained:

> *There is a lot of doubling up with Territory Housing. It is really frustrating at times. We don't know what they're doing and they don't know what we're doing (P13NT, 2010).*

4.3.2.2.4 The Organisational Partitioning of TCU within Territory Housing

TCU was established to manage the Alice Springs town-camp housing independently from the urban public housing (THU) in Alice Springs. Interviews revealed the TCU-THU relationship as illustrative of the partitioning of Indigenous

housing management from mainstream public housing across the Northern Territory. Many, especially those who perceived Indigenous public housing as distinct from mainstream public housing, viewed this organisational partitioning as necessary and appropriate. Others perceived it as a wasted opportunity to harness the very benefits of mainstreaming, namely maximising organisational efficiencies by pooling resources, professional expertise and departmental know-how in public housing management.

In Alice Springs, the extent and quality of TCU-THU collaboration was contested. Some suggested cooperation was effective; they detailed weekly meetings, the sharing of tenant information, assistance with tenant references, and locating and delivering information to tenants. Some also described THU providing policy support and advice. Their co-location in the Territory Housing office supported this cooperation. However, other professionals, especially at Tangentyere, argued collaboration was poor:

> *The change was going to be to this unified public housing system – so the strangest thing about this whole thing is that Territory Housing have their urban public housing system and the Town Camps Unit. They won't even share a photocopier! Totally separate! Very siloed! There is no relationship between the two (P04NT, 2010).*

The management of evictions was cited to illustrate how TCU intended to develop their own capacity despite THU's capacity in this area, including a specialised unit dedicated to issuing Notice to Remedy (the first step of the eviction process).

Some professionals believed this organisational partitioning restricted TCU's public housing management leadership capacity by restricting its ability to guide Tangentyere. Corroborating this, some Tangentyere staff likened the implementation process to a case of 'the blind leading the blind', describing how from one week to the next TCU's instructions or advice might change quite drastically. Tenant debt management was cited as one such area where expertise was lacking. A Tangentyere professional commented:

> *…people who are meant to be guiding Tangentyere from Territory Housing (TCU) are really just trying to work out what the hell is going on…It would be good if they could at least learn the system from Urban so they know what the system is (P04NT, 2010).*

Some suggested that this organisational partitioning of Indigenous housing management from mainstream public housing management reflected the peripherality of organisational change management to the design, planning and implementation of these housing reforms. Although directly mentioned by only one senior Territory Housing professional as a serious impediment to reform efficiencies,

it was indirectly touched on by many others. Both the speed of the reform and organisational conservatism were identified as prohibitive to progressive thinking around corporate reform. Commitment to any significant change was also undermined by uncertainties surrounding the future role of Territory Housing in Indigenous housing management following the expiration of current leases over the town-camps.

4.3.2.2.5 Resourcing

Many professionals remarked on the 'phenomenal turnover' of staff in Indigenous housing management. The interviews revealed two interrelated resourcing problems: the difficulties in finding and retaining qualified staff, and the pressures of under-resourcing on existing staff. The interviews also revealed that the urgent need to fill essential roles sometimes led to the employment of inexperienced staff, and the retention of unsatisfactory staff. This contributed to staff frustrations and promoted a vicious cycle of staff exhaustion, staff-burn out and high turnover, which many argued was exacerbated by the increased bureaucracy and tight timeframes of the reforms. One professional summarised a critical issue regarding this high turnover:

> *New people get the run around. For the tenancy stuff local knowledge*
> *is so essential (P04NT, 2010).*

Communication and system challenges exacerbated inefficiencies. Inter-organisational meetings were frequently postponed, cancelled or poorly attended due to professional time-pressures and despite a formal meeting schedule and the prevalence of professional goodwill to foster good inter-organisational working relationships. One professional commented:

> *We try to keep each other in the loop, but it's not that easy…I knew at*
> *the start that there would be teething problems but I thought the*
> *communication would be a lot smoother…There is nothing…no sort of*
> *feedback [for Tangentyere from Territory Housing]. There is meant to*
> *be a meeting every week and it is only then that we find out. But then*
> *the meetings don't happen until a later date. There is a lot of confusion.*
> *It is not good communication (P13NT, 2010).*

Additionally, tenancy management relied on Territory Housing's urban public housing tenant database, an antiquated mainframe green-screen database called the Tenancy Management System (TMS). At the time of research, not all town-camp tenants had been transferred into this system. A Tangentyere professional stated:

> *I've never seen anything like it [TMS], it's an old dinosaur system that they've got, it's not really user friendly. It takes a lot of time to enter and lots of back-tracking to pick things up (P13NT, 2010).*

Some professionals suggested TMS was ill-equipped for dealing with Indigenous housing management specificities, such as large family sizes or tenants living in legacy dwellings (and thus not paying standard rents). Tangentyere professionals also commented on their limited understanding of the system and their inadequate access to it:

> *I don't know how it's [TMS] run, we still haven't been shown (P13NT, 2010).*

> *Tangentyere can't print because they don't have access to a mainframe computer. It means they can't print lease agreements, can't access the procedures, can't access "TRIM" common database about wait lists, etc…So Tangentyere is expected to manage and do everything, but it's incredibly frustrating for Tangentyere because they are only given half the tools to do so (P04NT, 2010).*

Professionals also criticised the inability to amalgamate application and wait-list information for town-camps and Alice Spring's urban public housing, arguing that the avoidance of duplications between their shared client-bases increased staff workloads. Overall, these resourcing issues compromised organisational momentum and professional know-how, and impinged on inter-agency communication. In turn, these issues impacted on the standard of tenancy management provision leading to inconsistencies.

This section described the implementation of public housing standards of tenancy management in the town-camps of Alice Springs. It highlighted tenancy management practices as lenient, ad hoc and case-by-case, despite the strong rhetoric of standardisation of tenancy management within public housing. Policy, procedural and organisational issues were identified as contributing factors for this. These findings are particularly significant as the shift to public housing management is premised on the efficacy of RTA-compliant tenancy agreements in creating incentives and disincentives for adopting (or not adopting) western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy. Inconsistent tenancy management practices potentially obscure these disincentives by sending mixed messages to tenants about the new rules, regulations and responsibilities under these reforms. The legal authority of the tenancy agreement is thus potentially undermined by these tenancy management practices, as these represent divergences in the enactment of the terms of these agreements and create uncertainties about tenant and landlord responsibilities.

4.3.3   Property Management

This section continues to describe the implementation of public housing in Alice Springs, shifting the focus to the provision of public housing standards of property management. Included in this account are the impacts of the ongoing construction program, as these relate to the quality of tenants' living environments. It begins by describing the substandard quality of property management in the Alice Springs town-camps.   It then identifies and describes three organisational issues that contribute to this.

4.3.3.1   Managing the Town-Camp Housing Assets

Poor repairs and maintenance services were cited by professionals and tenants as the key issue affecting day-to-day property management.   Tenants voiced complaints about delays to repairs and maintenance services:

> *Seems like "R and M" [repairs and maintenance] takes longer now. Now we have to report things three or four times. We tell Tangentyere, then they have to go to Territory Housing. It just takes a lot longer. We're waiting for a bit (T01NT, 2010).*

> *It's just the same as before. It takes a long time (T02NT, 2010).*

> *Then there are things like the leaking tap. Like they [Territory Housing and Tangentyere] know about it, but it keeps going on. I mean the standard of service was one of the main reasons that the government took over in the first place (T03NT, 2010).*

These complaints were corroborated by professionals:

> *But I see it from the tenant side. They ring up everyday. Emergencies they can do, but they won't do basic things, like the security screen - a basic part of public housing. And they have to wait and wait. And it seems to be getting worse (P13NT, 2010).*

Tenants who had previously lived in urban public housing in Alice Springs suggested town-camps services were not of comparable standard:

> *[In urban public housing in town] You call up for maintenance and they fix it so quickly, like in a day or two. Compared with here [town-camps], it takes so long to get anything fixed (T03NT, 2010).*

> *They [Territory Housing] said the standard was going to match that urban [public housing] standard, then we were going to pay these bigger rents. But then if we don't think the standard has improved, then the issue is why do we have to pay more for it? Just when will we get a better service (T03NT, 2010)?*

Tenants also complained about other inequities, citing issues such as unaddressed overcrowding and municipal services and infrastructure (including rubbish collection, neighbourhood maintenance and street lighting). Tenants argued:

> *Like our outdoor areas, they aren't maintained…Same with rubbish disposal. Like we asked for a skippy bin and it has taken forever. I mean they want us to keep a certain standard, but they have to do their bit…It makes it look like it is us who aren't doing our bit. But we don't have the resources, the trucks or whatever to come and take the rubbish away (T03NT, 2010).*

> *We told Territory Housing that there was this dark spot on the camp and that we want some lighting so we can see people coming and going, to make it safer. But we have to just wait. Who knows if they will do anything (T06NT, 2010)?*

The interviews suggested the division of housing management responsibilities between the two organisations not only exacerbated tenant confusion with their new housing arrangements, but encouraged the view that Territory Housing and Tangentyere were evading their new responsibilities. Tenants commented:

> *People don't know who to go to for maintenance and repairs. I know when I moved into my house, there was a lot of things that wasn't done properly and there was a lot of passing of the buck, between Territory Alliance and Territory Housing and now with Tangentyere (T10NT, 2010).*

> *It doesn't feel that different from the past really. At the end of the day, Tangentyere are saying they are getting on to it, or Territory Housing is saying it is Tangentyere's job (T07NT, 2010).*

Professionals corroborated these issues, although they identified the persistent under-reporting (by tenants) of property maintenance issues as an additional barrier to meeting property (management) standards.

4.3.3.2   Construction Standards & Organisational Issues

Sub-standard property management was traced to three issues. The first of these was (i) problems related to the construction program (SIHIP) which affected the quality of tenant living environments. The other two issues were organisational: (ii) TCU's micromanagement of Tangentyere; and (iii) communication and system impediments, and both exacerbated management inefficiencies and service delays.

4.3.3.2.1 Housing Specifications & Design

Tenants commonly complained about discrepancies in house specifications across the town-camps, citing details such as the lack of washing machines (these are no

longer provided under current arrangements) and different specifications for outdoor lighting and paint colours:

> *Under SIHIP's recent scope of works, a refurb used a fly screen instead of "Crimsafe" due to a range of errors. Everyone knew this was a bad idea. It wouldn't last - proven. Within a month tenants complain because there are holes that have been poked through intentionally. But it should never have been used. It was a SIHIP construction defect. SIHIP had intended to fix it. Territory Housing wanted to charge the tenants (P04NT, 2010)!*

> *Like Tangentyere originally put a sensor light out the back because that was where I thought the activity was. But then Territory Alliance never put the lights out the front. They said the regulations were for lights on the front and back doors, like porch lights not just sensor lights. Like there are issues that it isn't consistent, some people have these lights and some have those (T03 NT, 2010).*

> *See there's an issue with paint colours, like now people are getting different colours, but it is too expensive for them to come back and change ours (T09NT, 2010).*

Criticisms were also levelled at design and workmanship. For instance, tenants commented:

> *…there was some shoddy work here when we moved in. Like the water was coming out from under the bathroom door, and we've told Territory Alliance, Territory Housing and Tangentyere. It still hasn't been fixed (T03NT, 2010).*

> *We had an issue with a light that wouldn't turn off. We went to Territory Alliance and that still hasn't been done. Like they say they are going to do it, or the buck is passed. And in the meantime we are just waiting, you get sick of complaining. You go to everybody…but between Territory Housing and Tangentyere they are saying it is the other's issue (T09NT, 2010).*

Several tenants and professionals complained that houses were not being brought up to the standard they expected through SIHIP:

> *So this house behind us had some money spent on it [previously]. It didn't seem like it had much done on it, just a new air-con or something. Anyway, when it came to this set of upgrades [SIHIP] they said they weren't going to do anything to that house because it had had work done on it…But just looking from the outside, it hasn't been painted…I mean it doesn't look any good (T03NT, 2010).*

> *And I mean Territory Housing do nothing with the yards…they are a real dust issue, stagnant water, people would really like grass (P05NT, 2010).*

Expectations, such as these, that construction funds would address the high-visibility (superficial/aesthetic) elements of a house refurbishment (such as painting) and indeed that such work was necessary to meet RTA compliant standards, were not just limited to tenants. For instance, one senior Territory Housing professional related a recent meeting between housing professionals elsewhere in the Territory, in which some understood repainting to constitute RTA compliance. Together these

issues surrounding the quality and specifications of new houses had repercussions for property management. First and foremost they contributed to housing maintenance workloads.

4.3.3.2.2 TCU's Micromanagement of Tangentyere

TCU's micromanagement of Tangentyere was identified as a source of property management inefficiencies. For instance, property surveys were perceived to be critical for identifying maintenance issues in the town-camps, especially given perceptions of widespread underreporting. Tangentyere employed two full-time staff to undertake the surveys every 6 months (from July 2010). They used the Fixing Houses for Better Health methodology (See Pholeros et al., 1993) to evaluate the performance and functionality of the house, and recorded the findings in their own database. Based on these, Tangentyere issued job requests to TCU. However, these surveys were beyond Tangentyere's (informal) contractual obligations to TCU, which only included standard public housing property condition reports (i.e. marked walls, etc). Concurrently, Territory Housing's Asset Management Officers (AMO) also undertook Condition Assessment surveys (CAT) based on the functionality of the house, recording this information in the government Asset Information System (AIS). Multiple, uncoordinated surveys were deemed highly inefficient. Both believed their surveys to be more thorough than the other's, and Tangentyere staff further criticised Territory Housing's surveys for being purely a reporting tool, rather than a management tool. Tangentyere also considered their surveys to render superfluous Territory Housing's AMO, especially as AMOs lacked the authority to issue work orders to Tangentyere. These surveys indicate a level of inefficiency in town-camp property management, resulting from the ineffective co-involvement of Tangentyere and Territory Housing.

Inefficiencies created by TCU's micromanagement of Tangentyere were also illustrated by the system for job requests and work orders for maintenance issues. This system involved Tangentyere submitting a job request to Territory Housing for every repair and maintenance item they identified. TCU then input this into their database, issued a work order and sent this back to Tangentyere. Only then was Tangentyere authorised to commence addressing the issue. Tangentyere staff described this bureaucratic procedure as not only contributing to staff workloads and frustration, but also causing a serious bottleneck. Specifically, Tangentyere described waiting on work orders for the majority of job requests they had submitted.

Furthermore, TCU was accused by some of 'shifting the goal posts' in order to compensate for their delays. A Tangentyere professional described the situation:

> *In reality it means that urgent stuff isn't being done on time, but Territory Housing gets around this by saying that the work has to be done within the stated timeframes, but that this time starts from when they issue the work order. So they might have the work order for weeks, but when Tangentyere gets it, it has to be done within 4 hours (P04NT, 2010).*

Tangentyere professionals also suggested TCU had used non-compliant job request formatting as an excuse for repairs and maintenance delays. Tangentyere had since modified their own database system to produced AIS-compliant job requests.

Ultimately, perceptions that this micro-management gave TCU complete oversight of the work being undertaken by Tangentyere were described as misleading. The current $750 upfront standing work order on each house allowed some work to be undertaken without TCU's approval. However, the interviews revealed that in practice much of this buffer was spent within the first few weeks, and in some cases it was exceeded in order to address serious maintenance concerns or to alleviate significant backlogs. One Tangentyere professional explained:

> *Tangentyere has started taking the risk and spending over the $750 per house where needed, because they feel they can't just sit back and watch things get worse and worse (P04NT, 2010).*

Tangentyere questioned whether the invoices sent to TCU detailing these miscellaneous items were even recorded within their systems since they fell outside the work order database, the Asset Information System (AIS).

This latter issue reveals a further property management issue: the fairly widespread willingness to bend the rules or diverge from public housing policy and procedures. This was expressed by multiple staff, commonly, but not exclusively within Tangentyere. In these cases, references were often made to the disconnection between public housing policy and regulations and 'the realities on the ground'. Three professionals similarly commented:

> *Some are bound by the regulations, but those on the ground are more aware of the issues, they get that it is not just straightforward (P05NT, 2010).*

> *There is some serious stuff in all this, with the [repairs and maintenance] backlogs, Territory Housing just see it as bureaucratic procedures. They are so removed from it. They don't have their heart in it. They don't see the possible health implications from delays in repairs and maintenance (P04NT, 2010).*

> *Obviously with the delays in "R and M", that can't be any good. Like with the washing machines, and the water, and with the air-con. You've got people on dialysis, lots of children, people are waiting for their order*

to come through for air-con…it gets to 40 degrees. A lot of them are used to it, but still, that is no excuse. Washing your clothes and all that, has a big impact on health…I don't think Territory Housing understand the urgency for an order (P13NT, 2010).

4.3.3.2.3 Communication & System Impediments

Communication issues (described in relation to tenancy management in Section 4.3.2) and system challenges both also contributed to property management inefficiencies and service delays.   Property management relied on the Asset Information System (AIS) which is a government-wide system used for all government assets, not just housing.   Tangentyere, despite its responsibilities for property management, was not inputting data into this system, and indeed some professionals claimed they did not have complete access to it.   Instead, data originating from either AMOs' Condition Assessment surveys (CAT) or from job requests forms from Tangentyere was inputted manually by Territory Housing's AMOs.   This constitutes an often unmanageable workload that requires additional administrative assistance from Territory Housing in Darwin. Moreover, the quality of this data was undermined by claims the 800 categories of property assessment in the CAT were open to interpretation.   The limited functionality of this database further contributes to its inadequacies; it is not a management tool per se, as stated previously. And whilst steps were being taken at the time of research to address its functionality, these were not expected to remedy the inefficiencies surrounding Tangentyere's job requests as it was assumed these would continue to be completed manually by Tangentyere.

This section described the implementation of public housing standards of property management in the town-camps of Alice Springs. It highlighted breaches in public housing standards of property management which were linked to the SIHIP construction program and organisational issues.   These findings are particularly significant as the shift to public housing standards of property management is premised on its efficacy in creating and sustaining living environments that are conducive to western ways of living in a house. Substandard property management has potentially significant repercussions for the quality of these environments.

4.3.4 Tenant Support

In this section, the focus shifts from the provision of public housing management to the concurrent provision of tenant support services. Due to the complexity of tenant support arrangements and programs, this section begins with an overview of the content of tenant support in the Northern Territory and the logistics of its provision in Alice Springs. It then describes the unsatisfactory quality of tenant support in the early stages of policy implementation in Alice Springs. Following this, key operational, programmatic and organisational factors contributing to these issues are identified and detailed.

4.3.4.1 Policy Framework & Program Overview

Territory Housing recognises that the changes in housing arrangements mandated under the RPHMF create an increased support need for tenants in remote and town-camp communities across the Northern Territory. DHLGRS (2010:3) states:

> *Many clients on town-camps may lack knowledge of the legal requirements of renting a dwelling (as specified under the Residential Tenancies Act); have limited 'life skills' which includes poor financial management, limited knowledge of appropriate and acceptable standards of dwelling/property cleanliness and maintenance, health and hygiene; and may experience difficulty in managing noise and visitors (DHLGRS, 2011:1).*

With the aim of supporting the development of these tenant capabilities, the Remote Housing Tenant Support Framework (RHTSF) guides tenant support provision to these tenants. This support is primarily delivered by tenant support professionals. In addition to this, both tenant support professionals and housing professionals are informally tasked with informing tenants of changes to their housing arrangements through structured and unstructured engagements, including community meetings, one-on-one house visits, drop-ins at stakeholder offices and HRG meetings.

RHTSF identifies tenant support as a 'core function of successful tenancy management' in the Northern Territory (DHLGRS, 2010:4). This framework sets out three forms of tenant support:

- *Basic Tenant Support (BTS) available to all tenants on an ongoing basis; [provided by housing professionals];*

- *Intensive Tenant Support Program (ITS) a short-term (6-12 week), one-off program for all tenants being signed over to new, standardised tenancy agreements; [provided by housing professionals] and;*

- *Remote Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP) which is targeted case-work and life skills training [provided by tenant support professionals, and not currently funded in remote communities] (DHLGRS, 2010:6).*

In principle, all tenants signed up to new RTA tenancy agreements are offered ITS 'to ensure they have sufficient knowledge and skills to maintain a successful tenancy' (DHLGRS, 2010:4). Tenants identified as requiring further support are then offered additional assistance (on a case-by-case basis) through TSP (DHLGRS, 2010:4).

With regards to TSP, DHLGRS states its preferred service principles and approaches are based on the Hygiene Improvement Model (although it does not specify what this is) and behaviour change theory (DHLGRS, 2011:4). TSP comprises two distinct elements: (i) standard tenant case-management and (ii) Life Skills. Case-management is support for tenants at risk of eviction or tenancy failure (due to property damage, debt or anti-social behaviour). A critical part of this is working with and brokering access to additional support services to ensure 'integrated, holistic and culturally appropriate support to meet clients' needs' (DHLGRS, 2011:4). Life Skills, as the second element of TSP, is defined in RHTSF as 'the knowledge, capacity and skills that enable people to maintain a safe, healthy home and living environment, and to meet their housing (tenancy) and financial obligations, including interactions with the broader community' (DHLGRS, 2010:9). The development of specific modules and their performance criteria occurred after this study (See DHLGRS, 2011), and consist of skill development through four training modules:

- *Money and Resource Management;*
- *Visitor and Crowding Management;*
- *Household Orientation and Functionality;*
- *Maintaining a safe, healthy and hygienic home and living environment.*

The provision of TSP is premised on tenant access to functional health hardware, such that they can maintain good personal and domestic hygiene and adopt healthy living practices (DHLGRS, 2011). The provision of TSP is driven by government awareness that poor knowledge of tenancy responsibilities and limited life skills are costly not only for Territory Housing (in terms of capital outlays and recurrent staff and support expenses) but also for the tenant, both financially (in terms of arrears and property damage debts) and for long term outcomes from compromised health and hygiene (DHLGRS, 2011). Specifically, it aims to ensure:

> *that tenants in new, refurbished and rebuilt dwellings on town-camps understand their new tenancy agreements; are able to sustain their*

> *tenancy socially and financially; and can maintain their dwelling in a good condition (DHLGRS, 2011:1).*

DHLGRS cites environmental characteristics of Indigenous communities as a challenge to the delivery of these programs, including: unmet housing demand, poor housing infrastructure, a maintenance backlog, a lack of available alternative accommodation and limited social support services at the community level (DHLGRS, 2010:3).

In Alice Springs at the time of this study, Tangentyere Family and Youth Services (TFYS) were contracted to deliver TSP to 50 households across the town-camps. This subsequently increased following TSP Expansion in 2011.[32] In addition to Life Skills, TFYS professionals also managed 30 individual cases (beyond their case-load capacity of 6-8 cases per staff). Responsibility for the delivery of ITS, the 12 week, standardised, Territory-wide educational tenancy support program outlined in RHTSF, was unclear: the interviews revealed confusion and contention amongst professionals. Some contended Territory Housing was providing this, but the interview data indicates the program was not systematically delivered in the town-camps. Further to this support, information about the new housing arrangements was jointly delivered to Alice Springs town-camp tenants by Territory Housing, Tangentyere, TFYS and HRGs.

The context for tenant support provision in Alice Springs town-camps is somewhat atypical in the Northern Territory due to concurrent programs aimed at enhancing social support services, such as the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP) and the Commonwealth and Northern Territory government A Place to Call Home program.

4.3.4.2 Supporting the Town-Camp Tenants

The interviews revealed that attempts made to increase tenants' understanding of the new housing arrangements were limited by poor untailored communication

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[32] Over the 18 months from June 2011, TFYS, together with additional service providers (Anglicare and Mission Australia) will deliver TSP to a further 124 households through Alice Springs Transformation Plan funding.

approaches. They also revealed the content of tenant support programs to be inadequate and contested.

4.3.4.2.1 Mixed Messages

Discussions, especially with tenants, revealed communication between tenants and Territory Housing, Tangentyere and the HRG was problematic from the outset of the reform dialogue and that it had worsened overtime. Tenants perceived communication about the new housing arrangements to be inadequate. They described receiving mixed messages from different housing professionals about the content and timelines of the housing reform process, and most recently, about the strictness of the new housing arrangements. They related that communication was largely one-directional and that there was a lack of follow-up on issues they raised to housing stakeholders, whether at community meetings or in one-on-one interactions. For instance, one tenant argued:

> *I just think that we really need to have regular meetings so that we can get this stuff off our chests. So you don't get this build up of frustration…And then a bit more communication about what is going to happen next (T03NT, 2010).*

Further, a tenant support professional stated:

> *A lot of people just still don't know what is going on…they haven't for the last 3 or 4 years. They think that the government is bad…they don't understand that the government is trying to help. The things we are explaining to them, it's the changes (P11NT, 2010).*

Yet whilst dialogue was perceived to be inadequate, this was not from lack of stakeholder house visits. From the tenant's perspective, these visits were generally unwanted and unwarranted. This was described:

> *They would be getting visits from TFYS on a weekly basis in the new or renovated houses. And then Territory Housing would be doing a 6 week and 3 month inspection. And then Tangentyere might be there doing a [house] survey or whatever they're doing. I know [if I had] five people coming to my house all the time… (P13NT, 2010).*

> *One tenant had a real problem. She had this four bedroom house, a new one, and was sick of having so many different government departments coming to see her, and she didn't know what about most of the time…she was actually willing to move back into her shed, because she was over people visiting her and telling her to pick this up and do that, and you've got an inspection tomorrow (P13NT, 2010)!*

Yet most housing professionals felt justified in these frequent and repeated interactions. For instance, one professional claimed:

> *I think the best way to manage that [tenant confusion] is to apply and implement policies and procedures fairly and obviously across the*

> *board and just reiterate, 6 week inspections, 3 month inspections…*
> *You have to reiterate these things (P01NT, 2010).*

Tenants' understandings ranged from those who claimed to know nothing or very little and those who were misinformed, to those who held a more satisfactory grasp of the new housing arrangements. On the whole, housing professionals were aware of this, with some arguing that criticism of this were premature given the reform's infancy:

> *There was quite a lot of confusion last year when Territory Housing took over…what it was going to mean. Lots of rumours…you can't have a broken down car, fires in yards and you can't do this or that or you'll get evicted. It was damage control there for a while (P05NT, 2010).*

> *…the house doesn't belong to them [tenants]. It doesn't belong to Tangentyere. It belongs to Territory Housing! So there is a new landlord and with the new landlord there are rules and responsibilities. And that is the biggest hurdle and it is ongoing. It is a fundamental shift, and it would take time. And the tenants wouldn't fully understand that at the moment (P01NT, 2010).*

4.3.4.2.2 Inadequate Programs

The interviews suggest the content of tenant support was inadequate and contentious. As stated, ITS was not systematically delivered to the Alice Springs town-camps by Territory Housing, as anticipated under RHTSF. Confusion surrounded who was responsible for its provision. Discussions with TFYS exposed a flawed belief that it was within their contracted remit. One professional stated:

> *Yeah, I don't know how we got away from the 12 week program. That is what they [Territory Housing] wanted. I mean I know how we have… (P05NT, 2010).*

Notwithstanding ITS's absence, many commented on the ineffectiveness of its scope and format. Its short-term, infrastructure-focused support was commonly deemed redundant without first identifying and addressing underlying household problems, such as domestic violence or alcohol abuse. For instance:

> *I don't' think it would really work…not being pessimistic. I think they'll [Territory Housing] come to see that too (P05NT, 2010).*

> *But often we'll find people walk away from a meeting and say we understood it. Then we'll go in the next day and they won't have had any idea about what went down at the meeting. Language is still a really big barrier (P05NT, 2010).*

Others argued that even 'low needs' tenants required a tenant support commitment beyond the scope and short-term commitment of ITS given the magnitude of behavioural changes demanded of tenants in the reform.

The lack of ITS was not the only diversion from the RHTSF. The Life Skills component of TSP was also altered to accommodate the infrastructure of the house (in the absence of ITA) and how to 'be a good tenant'. As one tenant professional stated:

> Then there is education about how to live in their house, send their kids to school, how to feed the family, where to get the food from, the budgeting (P11NT, 2010).

Territory Housing referred an increasing number of newly housed tenants to TFYS to undertake Life Skills, exacerbating existing resourcing issues. However, TFYS's approach to tenant engagement was flexible. TFYS professionals described turning away some clients (as corroborated by several tenants) to prioritise tenants with higher needs:

> ….some people don't need it. They would tell us to go look at our own backyards, they know the stuff. They know how to look after themselves (P07NT, 2010).

> That is one really different thing from the urban model…like if people don't engage after three sessions, then they are off the program. If we did that then we'd have no clients! You really need to take the time to get to know people…we can support you with that, etc. It might involve doing things that aren't part of the program to build that trust…Like taking someone food shopping to use the opportunity to talk in the car about things (P05NT, 2010)

TFYS professionals forecast that the current housing arrangements could promote inconsistent and inappropriate expectations and increased pressures on tenants:

> There is an issue with the tenancy support team, which is finding the line between a normal messy house and a clean house…a house that hasn't been damaged. We've had staff who've gone in and said…rah, rah, its too messy, really bad, really judgemental…If these people were living in Urban [urban public housing], then they wouldn't have weekly inspections to see if their house is clean. So we need to have a bit of leeway. If it's just normal everyday mess, then that is ok. You need to look beyond that, and see that if there is a big 40 litre bin in the lounge that hasn't been emptied for ages, etc….(P05NT, 2010).

> We have noticed now with the changeove that people [tenants] are feeling like they have got to achieve. We don't want to rock up and seem like we are testing them. We want to be non-judgemental. We are actually here to advocate for them (P05NT, 2010).

TFYS professionals described intensive case management (of voluntary clients) as the major element of their workload, despite their engagement to administer Life Skills:

> Sometimes there are just really significant other underlying issues (like serious domestic violence or substance abuse or really bad overcrowding) and that needs to be dealt with before you can really start talking about the [infrastructure of the] house (P05NT, 2010).

> If we come across a family that needs a lot of help we'll give it to them. We don't let ourselves be limited by the program (P05NT, 2010).

TFYS commitment to case-management was contested. TFYS justified their focus:

> *The public housing system is not changing those underlying issues…there are no changes that I can see. Everything is still the same, the families got those problems too. They might have a new house…but if you really look at the houses they are just rooms. They are chucked in with no education, a lack of support. They have their issues on top of issues that they are dealing with day-to-day (P11NT, 2010).*

> *Life Skills is all about education, teaching these people to live in these houses…But you get to the point where they know the stuff, but that there are underlying reasons why they are not doing it in their houses (P07NT, 2010).*

> *We are working with some families that we have been working with for a long time. We can't just walk away from that….We are working with people who are a long way off being where they need to be…(P05NT, 2010).*

Territory Housing professionals challenged this focus, maintaining case-management sat beyond the remit, budget and professional expertise of the housing authority. They drew parallels with Anglicare (TFYS's counterpart in Alice Springs' urban public housing) who refer on case-management work:

> *…there is a need to draw a bit of a line between Life Skills and case management, because whilst it is true that people can't sustain their tenancy whilst they have got alcohol, domestic abuse, etc problems, while those problems certainly need to be dealt with…But as a landlord [Territory Housing], where do you draw the line (P09NT, 2010)?*

> *And then we are trying to focus on their ability to pay rent, live within the rules, know your rights, keep your house clean and manage your visitors. They are kind of the core things we [Territory Housing] need to focus on and put our resources to with some help from others (P09NT, 2010).*

However, the involvement of yet another agency to deliver case management was criticised on the grounds that tenants needed a consistent and co-ordinated approach to support. TFYS argued it was best placed to provide this support given its history of working in the town-camps and their position within Tangentyere Council which enabled them to coordinate support with other family and child services:

> *It is just our belief that people with such complex needs need to have consistency. They don't need three different departments from Tangentyere working on all the same issues…and to have a coordinated approach (P05NT, 2010).*

A lack of detailed performance criteria under TFYS's funding agreement suggests this program contestation stems in part from a lack of forethought about the expected tenant support program content and outcomes. A TFYS professional explained how they reported on their work:

4.3.4.3 Operational, Programmatic & Organisational Issues

Poor communication and contested tenant support programs are traced to three primary issues: (i) the problematic implementation of public housing management; (ii) the incongruity of the programmatic focus given tenancy needs; and (iii) resourcing pressures.

4.3.4.3.1 The Implementation of Public Housing Management

The delivery of TSP was affected by the substandard living environments described in Section 4.3.3, and by the inconsistent tenancy management practices described in Section 4.3.2. For instance, poor contingency planning around the construction program spoiled plans for systematic early engagement with tenants. TFYS staff argued substandard houses and housing management were barriers to educating tenants about the expected upkeep of their house:

> *Like we'll be trying to teach the tenant about how to keep their kitchen hygienic…How to clean the bench tops, keep the floors clean, and the sink unblocked…But then they've got an issue with a cockroach infestation or a leaking tap…well that doesn't help us (P03NT, 2010)!*

Several also referred to the lack of washing machine provision.

Equally, inconsistent tenancy management practices undermined the very messages about tenants' new rights and responsibilities TFYS were tasked with conveying. Another TFYS professional commented:

> *So I've got one tenant that I've been working with…trying to let them know about the new arrangements. But they've heard all these different stories about what Territory Housing is expecting, like whether they can have visitors or what happens if something gets damaged. All these mixed messages…it's no surprise they don't know what to do (P07NT, 2010)!*

TFYS described being forced to navigate and resolve any repercussions of these implementation issues:

> *At the moment all we can do is go by whatever decisions Territory Housing make and we work in the background around the repercussions of those decisions (P05NT, 2010).*

Many contended that social change could not be expected until the benefits of the new housing arrangements were evident to the tenants themselves.

However, others contested the role of implementation issues, attributing tenants' confusion to external contextual factors, such as tenant disengagement, concurrent housing construction programs and rumours. The need for a fundamental shift in tenant mindset and the time required for this were also cited:

> *…from the tenancy side there is confusion. With any changes of this scale, there is confusion. We need time to allow for transition, both for staff to understand what the division of roles are, and from tenants about what Territory Housing is doing and what Tangentyere is doing (P04NT, 2010).*

4.3.4.3.2 Programmatic Focus

The complexity and diversity of tenants' needs was also a contributing factor to the inadequacies of tenant support approaches. On the one hand, many tenants are considered to be mid- to high needs due to a range of complex issues (such as alcoholism, domestic abuse or severe overcrowding) or due to little or no experience in managing a tenancy. On the other hand, many other tenants who are largely unencumbered by personal issues have positive tenancy histories. Thus professionals described the advocacy profile of the town-camp tenants as covering a vast spectrum of need (as corroborated by some tenant comments), and this profile was perceived to be quite distinct from the increasingly exclusively high needs client base of public housing elsewhere. Untailored communication approaches, the infrastructure-focus of Living Skills and the marginality of intensive case-management within tenant support approaches were ill-equipped to address this diversity of need.

Further to this, the interviews suggested that the reform created increased tenant advocacy needs, such as in their housing administration (for example, support in the more complex tenancy application process). Further, policies centred on individual responsibility placed complete responsibility for the tenancy on the head tenant, rather than to all members of the household. For instance, head tenants were financially responsible for other tenants' rent non-payment or property damage. This created advocacy needs around the pressure on the head tenant and around the disengagement of all other tenants from tenancy responsibilities. Head tenants who observed many Indigenous cultural traditions (such as high visitor numbers and frequent mobility) were deemed most vulnerable. Housing stakeholders described attempts to militate against this:

> *There is still a lot of pressure on the house boss, the head tenant. So that is one thing that we do a lot of work around, is helping people in the house to realise that yes, this is the house boss, but everyone*

needs to take responsibility for the house. Otherwise the house boss ends up not wanting to be the head tenant (P05NT, 2010).

So this person we went to see, she's in a wheelchair, she's the head tenant. She's got her husband, and then her nieces with the young babies. It's a lot of people. I told her that I could help talk to the younger ones tell them what needs to happen…you know give her a hand to talk to the young mob. Or that TFYS, they could come out and give you a hand, and give you a bucket and cleaning stuff (P13NT, 2010).

The thing we [TFYS] keep talking about here is how to get more members of the family involved, like not always talking to the mum or just the house boss. But then some house bosses will say, only talk to me, I don't want you talking to anyone else or x, y, z. Other house bosses might say I need more help with dealing with my brother or x in the house (P05NT, 2010).

These advocacy needs were amplified by tenants' poor understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

4.3.4.3.3 Resourcing

TFYS staff cited resourcing as a major challenge to the provision of adequate tenancy support. A Territory Housing professional commented about ongoing referrals to TSP:

…even though they can't take on any more!!…they [TFYS] are up to their capacity, and they can't deliver more, and that is why they are asking for more funding (P04NT, 2010).

A TFYS professional described the repercussion of these workloads, many of which mirrored those issues (such as staff burn-out) described in relation to tenancy management in Section 4.3.2:

This TSP program is so unfunded. You're just going to get staff who get fed up, run down, sick, or who leave. They need to fund it properly so that it can run properly. It is really hard doing all this case management work. It is really hard…getting round all the camps, dealing with all the problems, too many issues, too many clients (P07NT, 2010).

As stated, these issues were exacerbated by the increasing number of referrals to Life Skills as new and refurbished properties were handed over to tenants. Based on the assumption that Territory Housing had been judicious in their initial housing allocations, TFYS anticipated tenant support would increase as more (high need) tenants were rehoused. A TFYS professional described the situation:

It is going to get harder for Territory Housing and us [TFYS] to keep across it all…to do all the educational stuff. We really need someone to focus on that…or actually we just need a lot more workers. It is just too hard…(P11NT, 2010)!

The increased bureaucracy involved in tenant housing applications and locating references was also a strain on TFYS resourcing. TFYS described interim, informal agreements which had been made between Tangentyere, Territory Housing and TFYS to share this unexpected workload. One TFYS professional explained:

> *That stuff sort of sits outside the box a bit, because they are not people who have a house, but… they are things that help make it possible for them to get a house…It's so much more bureaucratic [now]. We could spend a whole day just helping with one application for one family (P05NT, 2010).*

Together these resourcing issues severely restricted the capacity for TFYS to effectively integrate their services with those of other housing and support networks in Alice Springs.

Several professional classified these issues as symptomatic of a perceived oversight of these reforms, namely the poor consideration of, and investment in, tenant support. One professional hinted at this oversight when they argued: 'Housing is not the magic wand…the building of the house is the easy side of the equation' (P09NT, 2010). Professionals anticipated that a funding injection for TSP expansion would partially remedy these issues.

This section described the early stages of the implementation of tenant support programs and services in Alice Springs. It highlighted poor communication and the problematic nature of tenant support program content. These issues were linked to some of the identified problems surrounding the implementation of public housing management in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, to tenants' increased advocacy needs and to resourcing pressures. These findings are particularly significant as the implementation of tenant support services and programs is premised on their capacity to provide tenants with the requisite skills for adopting conventional western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy, and to support their uptake of these new ways of living. The problems identified in this section suggest the capacity of these programs and services to educate and support tenants in making these changes is compromised and problematic.

4.3.5   Conclusion

This section described the functioning of the systems of housing welfare provision in the Alice Springs town-camps during the implementation of the Indigenous housing reforms. It started with a focus on the provision of public housing standards of

housing management and identified inconsistent tenancy management practices and substandard property management as critical issues affecting this provision. These findings were then linked to a broad range of policy, procedural and organisational issues, as well as to the impacts of SIHIP. These issues are especially significant as they represent serious barriers to government provision of public housing standards of tenancy and property management. This section then reviewed the provision of tenant support to the Alice Springs town-camps. It identified that communication approaches and the content of tenant support programs were not well tailored to meet the diversity of tenant needs. Operational, programmatic and organisational issues were identified as contributing factors to these issues. Overall, the issues surrounding both the systems of provision for public housing welfare and for tenant support highlight potentially significant limitations on the effectiveness of the reform agenda to secure its intended objectives. However, understandings of the potential impact of current housing reform are not achieved by a review of the systems of provision alone. The following section seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this impact by shifting the focus to the lived experience of housing welfare in the Alice Springs town-camps.

4. 4   THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOUSING WELFARE IN THE TOWN-CAMPS

The potential impacts of the current Indigenous housing reforms are understood not solely through the systems of housing provision, but critically, through the lived experiences of the housing welfare recipients being provided for. In order to highlight this significant alternative perspective, the focus of this section shifts to the social practices performed by tenants during the course of their everyday lives. Descriptions of these social practices draw upon the analytical framework detailed in Chapter 2 in which social practices are understood to comprise four intermeshed elements: rules, material infrastructure, practical knowledge and common understandings. The intent of this section is to provide an account of the lived-experience of tenants in the Alice Springs town-camps. It begins in Section 4.4.1 by describing the meaning of 'home' for tenants. In a social practice context, these meanings of home are important because they highlight common understandings shared between tenants about the role of housing in their everyday lives. This starting point is also premised on the importance of understandings of home in informing social expectations about living in a house in the western world. Following this, Section 4.4.2 identifies and describes a series of domestic social practices

performed by the town-camp tenants. These practices are selected based on their identification in the analysis of interview data. This section is based on discussions with ten tenants across five Alice Springs town-camps. Of the ten participating households, seven reside in a new or refurbished house, and three in old housing stock (legacy dwellings) awaiting housing upgrades.

4.4.1 Understandings of Home

When asked to describe what home meant to them, most tenants cited the town-camps. When asked why, a sense of belonging emerged as one of the common and dominant features in their responses. For some, belonging was about people. For example, tenants related being surrounded by their children, their extended family and wider kin networks:

> *It [home] is family, I think. You can't separate families: they travel together, they live together, and they die together. They have that respect for each other. They don't really care what Territory Housing is saying in that sense. They will leave for a funeral…(T09NT, 2010).*

> *Yeah, this is home here. Just because I've got all my kids here. We've lived in this house for a long time. In the beginning we just slept outside under that roof over there [rudimentary garage], that was when we already had our kids. Not sure how long we've had this house, but a long time. We've got our kids staying in our house, they have kids. So our grandkids are with us too. We've got family on the camp as well (T04NT, 2010).*

> *I chose to live on the town camp because of family mob. Our camp is all just family and I'm related to every single one of them (T06NT, 2010).*

For others, belonging was about place. For instance, tenants referred to their spiritual connection to specific geographic locations:

> *Yeah, this is home, it has been home since I was a kid here [despite tenant having lived in other locations since their childhood on the town-camp]. This camp feeling…it was my grandfather's place before Tangentygere took over. He had a 90 year lease here, and we've all grown up here. So this place has a sense of belonging…See that tree there [in front yard]? That is our Dreaming Tree, so that is why we have a sense of belonging here (T03NT, 2010).*

Of the tenants who defined home as elsewhere (typically citing specific remote communities or outstations), many also shared the importance of a sense of belonging to place or a spiritual home on the land. In addition to this, a significant part of home for these tenants was the perceived ease in following more traditional ways of living around sharing with and supporting kin:

> *Home for me is the outstation, not here. [But] I don't have any family out on the outstation anymore, we're all in town. So that is good. We see each other. We are all together here…Before we used to go out to*

> *the outstation, but we don't have a car anymore. So my grandkids*
> *aren't getting that opportunity to grow up out bush…hunting and stuff.*
> *And they have all the pressure from the town…sweets,*
> *alcohol…(T01NT, 2010).*

> *It's just easier. We live our old ways and we can take better care of*
> *each other. You know? There's less pressure. All these regulations*
> *here about this and that, it doesn't make it easy here (T05NT, 2010).*

For others, home was a combination of both these aspects of belonging: home was where they had connections with both people and with place. They referred to both the presence of family and kin, and their spiritual belonging and shared family histories with particular geographic sites:

> *This is our family camp. We've had family living here for a long time*
> *and we've got history with this place. All my family is together here.*
> *This is home, this is where we want to be (T06NT, 2010).*

In this sense, spiritual stability (people) and physical stability (place) were both important in promoting tenants' sense of belonging, enabling them to experience a sense of home.

In all these definitions of home, the interwoven notions of mobility and aspects of the Indigenous domestic moral economy[33] were central. Although mobility appears counterintuitive to notions of stability, for most tenants for whom the town-camps were home, the capacity for family and kin to travel to the town-camps to spend time with them, was critical in affording them this sense of home:

> *Yeah this is home…I am mainly here. If I've got a car, I travel. If not, I*
> *can't travel. But they come out from the bush, come visit (T10NT,*
> *2010).*

> *I've been in this community since I was a little boy. In the whole camp,*
> *it is all family. Everyone has been here for a long time. Some of the*
> *people here are visitors. I have a lot of visitors too (P02NT, 2010).*

Equally, for those who identified home as somewhere else (whether another town, a remote community or an outstation), their own capacity to travel to these locations afforded them an experience of home, even if this was a temporary:

> *For me, it's the outstation. I don't go there much now. It's too difficult*
> *with no cars. But when we do go back, well that's home. That's where*
> *my people belong (T08NT, 2010).*

Tenants' involvement in kin networks of reciprocity and support were equally important. A house in the town-camps enabled tenants to accommodate family and

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[33] As discussed in Chapter 2, the 'Indigenous moral economy' broadly refers to Indigenous networks of support and reciprocity of which 'sharing with kin' is a key feature (Peterson & Taylor, 2003).

kin (whether permanently or temporarily), such as by providing a safer environment for their children or assisting with the infirm:

> *Before coming to Alice Springs, I lived in Hermannsburg in a tin shed. So this is better than that. But life is better out bush. I just stay here because of the services and the schools for the kids (T04NT, 2010).*
>
> *And then with the kids, it's just safer with them playing around outside and stuff because we know all the people around. But really, it is only for the kids' sake we are here (T09NT, 2010).*
>
> *I'm happy where I am. Yeah, cos I'm close to the hospital. And also my mum is at a home in town, so I can visit her there. It means I can see her a bit more (T05NT, 2010).*
>
> *I mean one of the reasons I want to be here is because it is a family camp. And I've got my brother living in the house just behind there. He's a quadriplegic and I look after him (T03NT, 2010).*

These definitions demonstrate that a sense of belonging is central to tenants' sense of home; connections to people and place provide spiritual and physical stability through which tenants experience a sense of belonging, and thus, feel at home. The interwoven notions of mobility and tenets of the Indigenous domestic moral economy underpin most of these definitions. In a social practice context, these definitions of home imply that tenants' performance of social practices, in which common understandings about the Indigenous domestic moral economy are implicated, promote a sense of home for them.

Two tenants' definitions of home are distinguished from those detailed above. Their definitions identified the house itself as their home and suggested a personal attachment to, and pride in, their house. These definitions were exceptional because this focus was unparalleled in others' definitions. For instance, these tenants expressed aesthetic and material concerns, such as about the paint colours of their new homes, about the furniture and design of their houses. They also expressed pride in the garden they had established in their yard, and they described the importance of keeping their house and the town-camp orderly and clean:

> *But the refurbs are good though. It is heaps better. We have an air-con now, and the paint, and tiles on the walls. It is just the little things…I mean we try to take pride in our camp and keep it clean and safe for the kids (T03NT, 2010).*

The discussions with these tenants were also exceptional for suggesting a lesser engagement with the Indigenous domestic moral economy. Family was still important, but they spoke critically of large numbers of visitors to the camp ('I mean it is hard for people, especially those living in a culturally appropriate way, with all their visitors!' (T03NT, 2010)) and described trying to minimise their own visitors, the length of their stays, and their own travel. They were also the most vocal about

'humbugging' and were critical of others who didn't maintain the same house-keeping standards. In these exceptional cases, tenants' definitions echo the house-home duality common to western constructs of home. Notably, in these definitions, the relative importance of the notions of mobility and the Indigenous domestic moral economy appear to be diminished. As such, these definitions of home imply that the domestic social practices performed by tenants are less likely to be informed by these Indigenous cultural imperatives, and instead, more likely to be informed by the (western) social expectations to look after and take pride in one's house.

This account of these diverse definitions of home raises two points. First, tenants' varying definitions of home suggest that a range of common understandings may inform the domestic social practices performed by tenants in the town-camps of Alice Springs. Second, the centrality of the Indigenous domestic moral economy to many tenants' definitions of home suggest that these common understandings are likely to differ from western social expectations of living in a house.

4.4.2   The Domestic Practices of Tenants

The everyday lives of the Indigenous people living in the town-camps are not all the same. Tenants described performing a significantly diverse array of practices in their houses, which were explained using an equally diverse range of 'sayings'. Even so, in each household, the 'doings' highlight that certain domestic practices have been established, and are sustained and transformed through their repeated performance at varying intervals. Tenants 'sayings' about these practices reveal their common understandings and practical knowledge about these practices. They also highlight the available material infrastructures and their understandings of the rules and regulations pertaining to these practices. This section describes the practices of hosting, housekeeping, personal hygiene, food (cooking and eating) and mobility (travel) in the town-camps.

4.4.2.1   Hosting Practices

Hospitality involves a range of hosting practices of which socialising and accommodating visitors are integral. In the town-camps socialising, as a practice, involves sitting together to chat, gossip and share stories, sometimes in small groups comprising of men, women and youths, sometimes in larger groups.

Tenants describe congregating on the veranda or porch, under the eaves of their house, or in the yard, and sitting on chairs and old bottle crates or lounging on mattresses. Another hosting practice is the provision of accommodation for visitors. This may include providing a mattress for visitors to sleep on (visitors will usually have blankets) and it might also include providing the visitor with a shared room in which to sleep. These practices are sustained by the steady influx of family and kin to the town-camps and often consume a considerable part of the tenant's day.

Tenants' descriptions of socialising highlight how these practices are informed by the town-camp infrastructure, such as the house design. When there are more visitors, some hosting practices are performed in the shade of the yard, with tenants and kin sitting on chairs or the ground. When the weather is warmer, some hosting practices take place inside (usually in the lounge room) and are performed in the cool afforded by the air-conditioner, with tenants and kin sitting on available sofas or chairs, on the floor or on mattresses carried through from another room:

> *We sit out here for a few hours. In summertime it might be too hot after a bit and we'll go inside. But we prefer it [socialising] outside mostly (T08NT, 2010).*

> *The kitchen and lounge are small. We wouldn't sit around in there, except if we're needing the air-con. We'd just get together out here. It's better out here (T09NT, 2010).*

The introduction of air-conditioning has led to the transformation of some hosting practices. The 'sayings' highlight new practical knowledge about the use of air-conditioners for cooling and the health benefits of this, such as the importance of keeping cool (especially for the elderly and infirm). They also reveal common understandings about heat, for instance that heat is more uncomfortable and unpleasant than being cramped inside. In other cases, despite this practical knowledge and these common understandings, the size limitations of tenants' houses sustained some outdoor hosting practices despite the heat.

Most significantly, 'sayings' about hosting practices highlight common understandings about spending time with, and hosting, family:

> *That's what we do. We spend time with our people…find out what's going on (T02NT, 2010).*

> *Family members and Aboriginal people like to live together. They don't like to send family members back to community. They know how to look after each other, that is what they do (T05NT, 2010).*

Some tenants' 'sayings' about hosting practices highlight tenancy regulations, especially those relating to visitor numbers, noise disturbances and alcohol

consumption. In some cases, hosting practices were being transformed by these regulations, such as by tenants limiting their visitors or controlling their visitors so as to avoid trouble for themselves:

> *But I don't have any problems, I just tell my family cos I've got kids here. I don't want any drunks or anything. We all sit around out here, there's no room in the lounge. If it gets a bit loud I'll just tell them all to quieten down before it causes problems for anyone (T01NT, 2010).*

In other cases, despite these regulations, hosting practices were being performed in ways that breached these tenancy regulations. Tenants' 'sayings' reveal that abiding by regulations was sometimes difficult or impossible especially when visitors were reluctant to leave, where there were large groups or alcohol consumption, and these practices commonly resulted in tenancy breaches, such as damage to the house and noise disturbances:

> *I have a lot of visitors too…It is hard to get the visitors to leave sometimes. They want to stay longer (T02NT, 2010).*

> *We did have problems before with all the drunks, mostly visitors, driving around the camp at night, making a lot of noise. They are mostly visitors who stay for a long time, like it is hard for people to get rid of them (T03NT, 2010).*

Some 'sayings' suggest that such was the importance of these social expectations, that they would be implicated in hosting practices irrespective of the repercussions for their tenancy (whether minor inconveniences or tenancy breaches):

> *I don't mind, it's [hospitality] what we do for family (T05NT, 2010).*

> *And then we've got some visitors who come in for a bit. Usually just for quite short trips. They're no trouble though. We all just make do…(T10NT, 2010).*

4.4.2.2 Housekeeping Practices

Housekeeping generally involved a range of domestic cleaning practices and laundering practices. Domestic cleaning practices include wiping down surfaces in bathrooms and kitchens, sweeping floors, tidying up (after children, family and visitors), and arranging and storing belongings in bedrooms. They also included tidying the yard, such as picking up rubbish, rearranging furniture (moving furniture back inside), and in rarer cases, gardening. These practices were performed weekly or fortnightly by some tenants, yet by others far less frequently. Discussions with tenants reveal diversity in the ways these practices were performed.

Some of 'sayings' about domestic cleaning practices highlight a range of appropriate and acceptable standards of housekeeping. The 'sayings' of tenants who described

regularly cleaning their house, revealed certain standards of orderliness which were associated with taking pride in their house and the town-camps:

> …because that's how it should be, we should take pride in our camp (T06NT, 2010).

> I keep it all in order of course…Keep it clean and organised. I don't have any problems and it looks like brand-new still. They said they were going to help fix up the yard…I'm going to do the garden nice and maybe get some more shade (T03NT, 2010).

> I mean we try to take pride in our camp and keep it clean and safe for the kids (T03, NT, 2010).

These tenants were critical of houses in which these same standards are not maintained, suggesting this was unacceptable. The benchmarking of domestic cleaning practices against those performed by other tenants also reveals particular acceptable standards of housekeeping (common understandings).

Most of these tenants' 'sayings' about domestic cleaning practices also highlight practical knowledge about the importance of cleaning for hygiene and health reasons, such as to reduce the number of infestations, such as cockroaches. It is these same tenants who also described tenant support services coming to teach them house cleaning skills associated with cleaning products and germs, but being told that they 'didn't really fit into that category [as someone who needed Living Skills]' (T03NT, 2010).

Other 'sayings' reveal obligations to keep their house clean and tidy under the new tenancy regulations and with the increase of tenancy inspections:

> I heard it was going to be stricter. Like we'll have to start keeping the yard clean and they'll come around and check the house…make sure it is neat and tidy (T08NT, 2010).

> I think it is good with the new rules. Like people have to be responsible for their houses. Before there were no rules and people just did whatever they felt like… damaged things. Now it is harder, but I think it will be better (T06NT, 2010).

On the other hand, some of the diversity of domestic cleaning practices is reflected in the range of 'sayings' about the material infrastructures involved in the performance of these practices. In particular, several 'sayings' highlight the poor condition of the house. Tenants described how bathroom and kitchen amenities (such as toilets, showers and sinks) were dirty and in poor condition (such as jammed faucets and blocked toilets) due to both wear and tear and misuse resulting from overcrowding and high numbers of visitors. As a result of slow repairs and maintenance services, unaddressed maintenance issues sometimes led to

overflows and leaks which in turn caused further damage to other parts of the house (such as damage to paintwork, waterlogged walls, and damp). Tenants' 'sayings' suggest that domestic cleaning practices were disappearing because of the difficulties and burden of tidying a house with so many people residing in it. They were also disappearing due to the impracticalities or ineffectiveness of cleaning a house with significant unaddressed maintenance issues, with limited assistance in controlling pests (such as stray dogs or cockroaches) and limited community services (such as rubbish collection and landscape maintenance).   Tenants' 'sayings' also revealed these practice retirements were occurring despite some tenants' acquisition of cleaning supplies from tenant support professionals, despite awareness (in some instances) of the health benefits of keeping the house clean and tenancy obligations regarding the upkeep of their houses, and despite (in some cases) social expectations regarding keeping their house clean. For instance:

> *Like our outdoor areas, they aren't maintained. The big ferns there, they get so overgrown. We can't get the workers from Tangentyere to come out and maintain those areas. It was like that in the past too. Same with rubbish disposal. Like we asked for a skippy bin and it has taken forever. I mean they want us to keep a certain standard, but they have to do their bit. Some of this stuff is dangerous for the kids. I mean that has always been an issue. It makes it look like it is us who aren't doing our bit, but we don't have the resources, the trucks or whatever to come and take the rubbish away (T03NT, 2010).*

4.4.2.3 Personal Hygiene Practices

Attending to personal hygiene involves bathing practices and laundering practices. The ways in which showering practices were performed varied considerably amongst tenants. Some tenants described taking daily showers and assisting or encouraging their children or grandchildren to take baths or shower regularly. Others were very vague about how regularly these practices were performed, suggesting perhaps that these occurred far less frequently. Some tenants' 'sayings' about toileting and bathing practices highlighted these social expectations about washing regularly, and that they believed that these practices were not socially acceptable:

> *In the new house the bathroom is good. We've got a nice shower now, it's all clean. Everyone gets a wash in there. And a toilet that doesn't keeping clogging up. It's much better. It's how it should be (T09NT, 2010).*

And indeed, some tenants' reluctance to talk about these practices, beyond them being perceived as too personal, also hints that perhaps their practices were not aligned with these common understandings about taking regular showers to keep clean. Again, much like many of the social practices described previously, tenants'

'sayings' about bathing and toileting practices revealed that these practices were shaped by the condition of the bathroom amenities. For instance, broken or blocked toilets meant toileting practices could not be performed in bathrooms, and were now being performed elsewhere outside the house:

> *The toilets been broken. Just with all the people we had staying. They say they fix it, but then it just keeps breaking…it keeps leaking everywhere. We just make do, we go elsewhere. It is a real hassle (T02NT, 2010).*

In much the same way, showering practices were performed less frequently if there were plumbing problems in the bathrooms, faucets or showerheads were damaged, or if access to these amenities was limited by the number of people also accessing the bathroom. The 'sayings' of other tenants suggested visitors sometimes had limited knowledge about the correct usage of bathroom amenities, such as what must not be thrown in the toilet. This in turn changed the host tenants' showering practices, for instance, by limiting the regularity of their own showering:

> *There's always a problem with that bathroom. We had the toilet not working, putting water everywhere. It took a long time to fix it. Then the shower was leaking under the door, water everywhere. It's good to have that stuff [infrastructure], but it's a hassle too. So many problems. And they're always telling us we just need to do this or do that and we wouldn't have these problems. But it's not that easy. I've got different people staying with me. You end up not using it half the time….it's like you never had it (T05NT, 2010).*

Due to slow repair and maintenance services, these alternative showering practices were sustained for lengthy durations, until the bathroom amenities were in working order. Tenants comments, such as 'we just make do' (T05NT, 2010), suggest these practices were being performed in these ways despite social norms and practical knowledge about personal hygiene.

Laundering practices are also diverse in the town-camps. Some tenants described doing a couple of loads of washing a week, whilst others did none. These laundering practices sometimes involved just washing clothes, but others involved also washing towels and bed linen (although less frequently). Laundering practices always involved the washing machine, and generally occurred in tenants' laundries. A few 'sayings' about laundering practices highlight common understandings about one's presentability, such as having clean clothes for particular occasions. More commonly however, the 'sayings' about these laundering practices highlighted practical knowledge about the health and hygiene benefits of the regular washing of clothes and linen, such as scabies prevention:

> *The washing machine is good. Makes our life easier, especially with all the kids' stuff. I can't remember what we did beforehand, but we use it a bit now (T08NT, 2010).*

> *We've been told about washing all the bedding to prevent the kids getting sick. We try and keep everything clean. I'll do a load and we'll hang it up on that line we've put up over there. Let it dry out in the sun (T01NT, 2010).*

Limited access to washing machines, broken washing machines (damaged through misuse or overuse), the lack of laundry detergents (sometimes due to their expense), and wet weather combined with limited access to clothes dryers, led to less frequent performances of laundering practices. Slow repairs and maintenance services ensured some washing machines were out of service for lengthy durations and some tenants were without washing machines. In such cases, laundering practices were retired. Some tenants commented on the poor design of their laundries implying that laundering practices were not able to be performed as they ought to (common understandings), such as being able to hang clothes on a line rather than over windows and the backs of chairs:

> *With my laundry, well it is so small. They [Territory Alliance] weren't prepared to work with that. They didn't really do anything to fix that. From what I am reading now in the paper, they are doing some things differently now, like they are listening to these issues, but it doesn't help us (T06NT, 2010).*

In other cases, tenants still did washing in spite of their lack of a washing machine. These laundering practices were sustained by going to a laundrette in town or using washing machines at their community centre, despite finding this inconvenient:

> *We don't have a washing machine. We had one before but it stopped working. It's gone now, but they never fixed it. We'll go down to the community centre but it's a hassle, you know. I heard Tangentyere is going to sort us out a new one but we're still waiting (T09NT, 2010).*

4.4.2.4 Food Practices

The primary food practices discussed by tenants were cooking and eating. Cooking practices were diverse.   In many households, cooking practices were not established or currently being sustained. In others, cooking practices involved using a makeshift fire to cook outside. In others still, tenants described using ingredients purchased at the supermarket to prepare home-cooked food for their children or grandchildren:

> *This kitchen now is much better than before. I had nowhere to put my things, the cupboard doors were all broken and they never did anything to fix it up. I've got a fridge now and a cooker. I try and make the food for all the grandkids, I don't want them eating all that junk from the store like some of those people do (T06NT, 2010).*

The 'sayings' about these latter cooking practices highlight social expectations about looking after children, about feeding visitors as part of being a good host and about

sharing (food) with kin. These 'sayings' also reveal understandings about the need for healthy food for nutrition. Where cooking practices were rarely or never performed, tenants' 'sayings' sometimes revealed limited knowledge of the kitchen appliances. In other cases, cooking practices were not sustained because of broken stoves, ovens or fridges, inadequate cooking equipment and utensils and plates, or a lack of food to cook with.

Eating practices were equally diverse. However, when they were performed in the camps (rather than in town) they generally involved informal gatherings of tenants, family and visitors who happened to be around at the time the food was cooked or delivered. These practices were often performed outside. In the households in which cooking practices were rarely performed, eating practices were sustained by access to take-away food from Alice Springs:

> *We don't cook much in the kitchen. My daughter knows a bit, like how to use all the stuff and sometimes she'll cook us up something if she's been to the shops. Mostly we get stuff that is ready to eat and just sit down out here [veranda] (T04NT, 2010).*

> *I don't cook much. The fridge and the cooker aren't working. And we've had [cock]roaches and that. We get stuff in town [to eat], it's much easier that way. My sister will cook for us when we get our new place (T05NT, 2010).*

'Sayings' about cooking and eating practices revealed social expectations about sharing cooking amenities, utensils, and all food with family and kin.

4.4.2.5 Mobility Practices

Mobility practices involve short or long distance travel. These practices are performed in a range of different ways, including short trips into Alice Springs during the day and evening (less frequently) and involve walking (depending on the location of the town-camp), taking the minibus shuttle, or more rarely, getting a lift or a taxi. These mobility practices were performed quite frequently by some tenants and rarely by some others, with the exception of 'pay-day' (when tenants received their Centrelink payments) when most tenants would travel into Alice Springs:

> *We just go into town on payday.   We might get a power card and we'll get food and things. I just see how we go, you know. Sometimes we run out of money and we just have to wait until the next pay day. It's always been this way (T02NT, 2010).*

> *We only really go into town for shopping and pay days. Sometimes I'll get a taxi back (T09NT, 2010).*

In other cases, mobility practices involve longer travels, usually by car or bus (and much less frequently plane) to remote communities, other towns or cities. Descriptions of these practices suggest they were ad hoc and often informed by sudden access to a car: 'If I've got a car I travel, if not I can't travel' (T02NT, 2010). 'Sayings' about these practices reveal common understandings about the importance of visiting family and kin, and cultural expectations about visiting kin. In the case of longer trips, mobility practices involved extended absences from town-camp tenancies:

> We still travel a lot out to communities. Like next week we are going to Darwin to see some family up there. Like my sister is up there in the city. We will go for a couple of weeks. We are going up on the plane with my one other sister. We are visiting my sister and husband – they have good jobs up there. They are rich people. I'll just fly up, and then drive back down. And then they are shouting me a car, and [then] we'll go down to Adelaide (T05NT, 2010).

These mobility practices were often performed despite regulations about the duration of tenancy absences and regulations about giving notice for long absences:

> If he can borrow a car, then we'll just get a few things together and we go. We just leave the house. Sometimes there might be problems when we come back (T02NT, 2010).

> But I don't tell housing. We don't know how long we'll be (T04NT, 2010).

Generally, the 'sayings' about these practices revealed common understandings about the importance of spending time with family and spending time 'out bush'.

However, in other cases, mobility practices were transforming based on tenancy obligations and subsequent concerns about their liabilities if the house was damaged in their absence:

> We have someone look after the place, like my sister will come and stay. We might tell Tangentyere we're going to be gone for a bit. We had problems once [on our return] and we're more careful now. We don't want any damage or debts on our house (T03NT, 2010).

In some instances, these mobility practices were disappearing due to the lack of material infrastructure to sustain them, including inadequate finances or transportation. Some mobility practices were retiring and being replaced by other practices which were incompatible with travel. For instance, they were replaced by healthcare practices informed by practical knowledge about the importance of healthcare and access to health services in Alice Springs, or learning practices informed by the importance of school attendance in increasing education levels and access to the schools.

4.4.3   Conclusion

This section provided an account of the lived experience of tenants in the Alice Springs town-camps. It began by detailing tenants' definitions of home. This highlighted a range of definitions of home held by tenants in the town-camps. This diversity was found to suggest the presence of an equally diverse range of common understandings about living in house. Section 4.4.2 then described a series of domestic social practices performed in the town-camps, identifying a series of hosting, housekeeping, personal hygiene, food, and mobility practices which are commonly carried by tenants. This section revealed diversity in the ways these practices are established and composed, and sustained and transformed. The findings suggest that this diversity and dynamism corresponds to variances in the constitutive elements implicated in these practices. It captured this by revealing some of the ways in which rules, material infrastructure, practical knowledge and common understanding elements are implicated in these practices.

Rules and material infrastructures (and changes to these) were shown to sometimes be paramount in informing domestic social practices in the town-camps of Alice Springs and in transforming these. For instance, new regulations about tenancy absences have led to the retirement of some mobility practices, whilst the introduction of air-conditioning has led some hosting practices to be relocated indoors. However, it also revealed that domestic social practices carried by tenants are not held in place solely by housing regulations or by the physical environment of the house itself. Instead, it suggested that interwoven within many of these practices are particular common understandings underpinned by the tenets of the Indigenous domestic moral economy (such as expectations surrounding relationships with, and hospitality of, family and kin) and shared practical knowledge. It highlighted how tenants are recruited to particular social practices based on these shared social expectations. For instance, social expectations about kin hospitality lead to particular hosting practices such as accommodating large numbers of visitors. In turn these practices might lead some domestic cleaning practices to disappear (as they are of limited effectiveness when the house is overcrowded). Likewise, practical knowledge relating to the health and hygiene benefits of regularly laundering clothes and bedding sustain some laundering practices. Of particular interest, this section suggests that diversity in the ways particular domestic social practices are performed across the town-camps of Alice Springs, is at least partially a product of variances in common understandings, which are understood to be diverse (Section 4.4.1).

4. 5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings from an investigation into the macro and micro level contexts of the current Indigenous housing reforms in the Northern Territory. Section 4. 3 described the systems of housing welfare provision to the town-camps of Alice Springs. It detailed how the provision of public housing standards of tenancy and property management, and the provision of tenant support was problematic. In particular, it identified inconsistent and ad hoc tenancy management practices, sub-standard property management, and poor communication and inadequate tenant support programs as inhibiting the provision of housing welfare. These problems were traced to a wide range of contributing factors, including policy, procedural and organisational issues. These findings provide important insight into the likely effectiveness of the delivery of the current housing reform agenda. In Section 4. 4 the focus shifted to the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps of Alice Springs. Tenants' varying definitions of home were described, suggesting that a range of common understandings may inform their domestic social practices. Moreover, the centrality of the Indigenous domestic moral economy to many tenants' definitions of home suggested that these common understandings likely differ from western social expectations living in a house. By describing five sets of social practices performed in the town-camps, it then demonstrated diversity in their performance. It traced this diversity to differences in the compositions of practices, by revealing some of the ways in which rules, material infrastructure, practical knowledge and common understandings elements are implicated in these practices.   In doing so, it highlighted the role of common understandings in tenants' recruitment to some domestic social practices.

Three important points emerge in drawing together the findings from the review of the systems of housing provision and of tenants' lived experiences. The first of these is that the systems of housing provision may have implications for encouraging transformations in the domestic social practices being performed in the town-camps by causing disruptions in the practice elements implicated in some of these practices. It is evident, at least in theory, that the rules and material infrastructure elements could be altered through the shift to public housing standards of tenancy and property management, and that practical knowledge elements could be altered by the provision of tenant support. However, the problems identified surrounding the implementation of these new systems of housing welfare provision raise doubts about whether these elements will be

dramatically altered. For instance, the quality of property management is significant in determining the capacity for Indigenous housing reforms to change the material infrastructure elements implicated in the social practices performed by town-camp tenants in the Northern Territory. Yet substandard property management raises doubts about how this will disrupt these practice elements. This leads to a second point. Chapter 2 outlined how changing patterns of practice occur from the reconfiguration or re-composition of the all practice elements, either by creating disruptions within elements or disjunctions between them. However, it is unclear the ways in which common understandings will be altered through these systems of provision. Moreover, and as a third point, the second part of this chapter suggests that not only are some common understandings likely to be obdurate, given their grounding in the enduring Indigenous domestic moral economy, but that these appear to be important predictors of some domestic social practices. On this basis, the findings of this chapter begin to raise doubts about the compatibility between the new systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision and the lived experiences of tenants in the Alice Springs town-camps.   These doubts are investigated further in the following chapter in which the results from the Western Australian case study are reported.

5 TOWN-CAMP TENANCIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

5. 1 INTRODUCTION

The report on the results of the Northern Territory case study in the previous chapter raised some initial doubts about the compatibility between the new systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision and the lived experience of tenants in the Alice Springs town-camps. This chapter reports on the results of the Western Australian case study and, in doing so, enables further consideration of these concerns. This chapter follows the same three-part structure as the previous chapter, and details a parallel dual approach to the analysis of systems of housing provision and the social practices performed in the town-camps of Halls Creek during the current Indigenous housing reforms. The first section provides an overview of the town-camps of Halls Creek. Section 5. 3 then uses thematic analysis to describe the systems of housing welfare provision in the town-camps. Section 5. 4 uses the social practices framework detailed in Chapter 2 to describe the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps. Together this chapter provides an additional perspective on the effectiveness of the systems of housing provision and the lived experience of tenants during these reforms. In this way, this chapter advances our understandings of the potential misalignment of the new systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision and the lived experience of Indigenous town-camp tenants which was hinted upon in the previous chapter.

5. 2 INTRODUCING THE TOWN-CAMPS OF HALLS CREEK

The small remote town of Halls Creek (Pop. 1,211, ABS 2006), on the Great Northern Highway in far northwest Western Australia, is home to a number of Indigenous town-camp communities. Within Halls Creek proper, there are four town-camps: Mardiwah Loop, Red Hill (Lundja), Yardgee and Nicholson Block (Yumali). Within close proximity to Halls Creek, but beyond the town boundaries, there are a number of other town-camps, such as Koongie Park (Lamboo Gunian). Further afield, across the Shire of Halls Creek (pop. 3349 residents, ABS 2010), there are additional larger communities and outstations, such as Warmun (Turkey Creek), Mindibungu (Billiluna), Ringer Soak and Balgo. There is considerable (seasonal) mobility amongst these Indigenous settlements for family and cultural reasons (FaHCSIA, 2010:86). With its closest urban neighbours roughly 300km away (Fitzroy Crossing and Kununarra), Halls Creek provides a small service centre

for transport, welfare distribution and other key services (such as healthcare and shopping) for residents across the shire. The provision of these services, alongside district administration and tourism for the East Kimberley region, generates employment for most of the small non-Indigenous population (18%) (ABS 2006).

Just for Living (Ross, 1987), the sole detailed ethnographic study of Indigenous housing perspectives in Halls Creek, informs our historical understanding of the town-camps. The first Indigenous camps were established in 1896 following White settlement in Halls Creek during a short-lived gold rush the year prior (Carnegie in Ross, 1987:13). By the 1980s, 40% of the Indigenous population lived in the reserves (now town-camps, such as Yardgee), Redhill (a large camp) or in small temporary camps consisting of, at the most, two extended households each. The Indigenous residents in these camps were predominantly Kija people whose land lies to the north of Halls Creek, and Jaru people whose land lies to the South, from a range of different language groups. The remaining Indigenous population, who were less inclined to traditional values, lived in government housing in the town proper (as tenants or visitors). In the 1980s, with the exception of the more developed town-camp at Red Hill, accommodation in the camps ranged from 'little more than windbreaks' to 'tent constructions with canvas roof and iron side walls' to 'substantial iron shacks', with no ablution facilities and where water was usually collected by foot (Ross, 1987:27). Today, the houses in the town-camps around Halls Creek are comparable with those in Alice Springs: single-storey government-provided western vernacular houses in variable condition. However, these Western Australian town-camps differ in their leasing arrangements as they are predominantly located on Crown Reserve land vested in Indigenous land trusts, although others have native title claims, such as Koongie Park.[34] Beyond the town-camps, most of the residents of Halls Creek live in mainstream (urban) public housing or designated government staff housing (Government Regional Officers' Housing), with the exception of a few who live in privately-owned, owner-occupied houses.

This study is based on 5 town-camps: Nicholson's Block, Yardgee, Red Hill, Mardiwah Loop and Koongie Park. These town-camps vary in area, number of

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[34] Approximately 7% of Aboriginal Corporations own their land freehold, the rest reside on Crown Land (under a variety of arrangements).

houses and population. Some are very small, such as Nicholson Block (7.3 hectares) with only 7 houses and a population of 30, whilst others are considerably larger, such as Red Hill (67.8 hectares) with 16 houses and a population of 50, and Mardiwah Loop with 23 houses and a substantially larger population of 150-250 (Connell Wagner, 2003b; 2003c; 2003a). It should be noted that these population estimates are deceptive as they poorly distinguish between permanent residents and actual service population. This gives the impression of low-density living arrangements, and disguises both significant population fluctuation due to Indigenous mobility and pervasive overcrowding (FaHCSIA, 2010:89).[35]

Halls Creek is one of the three Western Australian communities targeted under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). Under current government investments, the town-camps of Halls Creek are benefitting from an extensive construction and refurbishment program as part of aims to deliver 295 new houses and 1025 refurbishments in remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia over the first five years of the agreement. In Halls Creek, between June 2009 and June 2011, 24 new houses and 48 refurbishments were completed under NPARIH (FaHCSIA, 2010).

5. 3   SYSTEMS OF PROVISION FOR TOWN-CAMP HOUSING

The current Indigenous housing reforms change the systems of provision for town-camp housing in Western Australia. As is the case in the Northern Territory, the shift to public housing management is a substantial component of this change. In Western Australia, the content and delivery of remote and town-camp public housing management (in addition to Commonwealth housing policy detailed in Chapter and Chapter 2) is informed by Western Australia's Property and Tenancy Management Plan (DHW 2009b:6), as a requirement under the *Implementation Plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Western Australia* (DHW 2009a). A new legal framework underpins the shift to public housing. This framework was

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[35] For instance, the Community Layout Plan for Red Hill shows 16 houses, but suggests 20 or more people live in each (which equates to a service population of roughly 320 people) (Connell Wagner, 2003c), yet the 2001 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (ABS 2001) reported a usual population of 50 people.

established through the *Aboriginal Housing Legislation Amendment Act 2010* and enables the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) and Indigenous communities to negotiate 40-year Housing Management Agreements (HMA) for the DHW to provide housing management services to nominated houses on Aboriginal land.[36] Housing professionals are also guided by the *Housing Management Policy and Procedures Manual and the Repairs and Maintenance Manual* (DHW 2009b:11). At the time of this study (2010), with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* legislation coverage into Indigenous remote and town-camp communities, a tenant support strategy was being developed by DHW to support and facilitate Indigenous tenants through the transition to their new tenancy arrangements.

The provision of housing welfare to the Halls Creek town-camps is affected by these new Commonwealth and jurisdictional arrangements. Like many communities in the Kimberley and the Mid-West/Gascoyne regions, a local branch of the Western Australian Department of Housing and Works (DHW, also referred to as Homeswest by tenants) undertakes property and tenancy management (direct management) for all 341 houses in the Indigenous communities across the Shire of Halls Creek. This direct housing management is notably less complex than the co-management/ contractor arrangements found in Alice Springs (and also in other parts of Western Australia), where Community Housing Service Providers are contracted. Further, whilst DHW manages a larger number of tenancies overall than TCU and Tangentyere in Alice Springs, its *town-camp* tenancy portfolio is smaller. In Halls Creek, at the time of this research, all town-camp communities were under interim arrangements (including previously signed tenancy agreements) and awaiting their HMA negotiation. Red Hill is the sole exception to this: their HMA was signed in 2010. Tenant support provision in Halls Creek was also under temporary local arrangements at this time. This was provided by the local Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) in addition to their existing public housing case load.

The intent of this section is to describe the functioning of these systems of housing welfare provision in the Halls Creek town-camps during the implementation of housing policy reforms. This section begins with a focus on the provision of public housing standards of housing management to the town-camps. Section 5.3.1

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[36] Aboriginal Land includes all Crown Land where an Aboriginal Organisation has the power to lease; and freehold land owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust or another State Government agency. This legislation has no impact on land tenure, nor does it create an interest in the land.

describes the nature of amendments to mainstream public housing in Western Australia. Section 5.3.2 then describes the problematic nature of tenancy management in the town-camps of Halls Creek, before identifying key contributing factors for this. Section 5.3.3 follows a similar structure to discuss the provision of property management. The focus then shifts in Section 5.3.4 to the delivery of tenant support. It begins by detailing problems surrounding the provision of tenant support to the town-camps of Halls Creek and then identifies key reasons for this. This section is based on discussions with Indigenous housing stakeholders in Western Australia, including: tenancy management professionals working within DHW (from state to local level professionals) as well as housing professionals involved in auxiliary service provision. It is also informed by discussions with tenants in the Halls Creek town-camps.

5.3.1 A New Legal Framework for Indigenous Public Housing

As outlined in Chapter 2, a principle feature of federal housing policy is the requirement for jurisdictions to obtain control and access to the land for a minimum of 40 years (with a Commonwealth preference for 99 year whole-of-township leases, rather than precinct leases over individual housing lots). In Western Australia, DHW fought for an alternate approach on the basis of their land tenure: approximately 7% of Aboriginal Corporations own their land freehold, the rest reside on Crown Land (under a variety of arrangements). As an interim measure, in 2007/2008 DHW signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU), after reaching an agreement with the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT), to enable DHW to manage housing on Aboriginal Lands Trust estates until further legislation was enacted. The MOU was supported by Housing Management and Maintenance Agreements (HMMA), which were negotiated with communities. Following this, the Commonwealth eventually agreed that in Western Australia 40 year leases with the State were unnecessary given that the underlying land ownership remained under the Crown. As stated, the new legal framework was established by the *Aboriginal Housing Legislation Amendment Act 2010*, through amendments to the *Housing Act* and the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act* by the Western Australian State Parliament. This framework comprises five agreements and one protocol:

- *A Housing Management Agreement (HMA);*
- *An Agreement to Construct (signed between DHW and relevant Indigenous entity to construct new housing);*
- *A tenancy agreement establishing the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous tenants and DHW;*

- *A Service Level Agreement (SLA) (used by DHW to engage contractors to carry out obligations under the HMA tenancy agreement, such as property repairs);*
- *A joint venture or other arrangement (to enable the same suite of activity on freehold land owned by an Indigenous entity);*
- *The Ascertaining the Wishes of Aboriginal Inhabitants Protocol (DHW 2011).*

The HMA is central to this new legal framework. It is a voluntary, negotiated agreement through which the relationship between DHW and community governance structures is formalised in each community.[37] It encapsulates the critical Western Australian hybridism of Indigenous public housing. Although similarly based on community engagement, HMAs are fundamentally different from the Housing Reference Group hybridism identified in Indigenous public housing in the Northern Territory (Chapter 4). The HMA details community-specific housing management criteria (such as policies for housing allocations), criteria for eligibility to live in the community, non-compliance of tenancy conditions and evictions and transitions to new rent levels. More specifically, it might detail how a house is re-allocated after a death or procedures for Sorry Business. In this way, it is intended to provide flexibility such that housing management can respect Indigenous cultural circumstances. The HMA also seeks to establish agreed processes, standards and reporting requirements for the provision of housing management services. Although these are voluntary agreements, the Commonwealth will not allow DHW to provide new housing or major upgrades without it, nor can DHW manage the leasing of housing on Indigenous land on behalf of an Indigenous entity without it (DHW 2011). Using the Community Layout Plan, lots and houses are identified for inclusion in the agreement. All houses must meet public housing standards (clean, safe, and in working order) to be included (or added) to the agreement. DHW must report annually to the Indigenous community organisation (rent received, maintenance undertaken, etc.). These agreements are reviewed after 5 years.

The *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* (RTA) applies to all Indigenous people renting under an HMA. Applying the RTA is identified as one of the key challenges of the reform in the Western Australian Property and Tenancy Management Plan (DHW

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[37] The land tenure and leasing arrangements determine the specific details of these agreements. On Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT) land with no lease to community, negotiations are undertaken with the community living on the land and signed by the ALT. On ALT or Crown Land leased to a community organisation, the HMA is negotiated and signed with that organisation. On Crown Land with a Management Order with a community organisation, the HMA is negotiated and signed with that organisation. In other cases of State-owned or -managed land, no formal agreement is required, although there would be discussion with residents. And lastly, on Crown land where no leases are in place, government are working to identify community living areas.

2009b:6). Tenancy agreements mirror those in effect in DHW's public housing, with the exception of some variations to reflect the HMA (for instance, provisions for tenants to vacate their property for cultural circumstances and prohibitions on storing and consuming alcohol on the premise in 'dry' communities). Each HMA negotiation will agree a 'transition period' to new rent levels. The Commonwealth requires rents to be on par with mainstream public housing rents (25%). However, DHW is trying to establish a new remote housing rent level on the basis that tenants in the town-camps often pay for services that are provided by local government councils elsewhere. Specifically, these new rent levels would be set at DHW Public Housing rent levels and discounted in places where local government rates are not paid, by an amount equal to local government rates (17%).

The HMA negotiation process is guided by the Ascertaining the Wishes Protocol which is intended to assure that it reflects the wishes of the Indigenous inhabitants. These negotiations are the primary engagement with Indigenous communities within the reform, together with prior HMMA negotiations (DHW 2009b:10). They involve a series of meetings at council, community and regional level with community housing stakeholders, including: Native Title bodies and Aboriginal Lands Trust, community council, elders and the wider community. The publicly available protocol was developed by DHW in consultation with the Aboriginal Land Trust, and uses terminology consistent with the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act* (DHW 2011). According to the new legislation:

> *The Authority [DHW] cannot enter into a Housing Management Agreement [HMA] or list…a house…unless the Authority is satisfied that doing so would accord with the wishes of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Aboriginal land to the extent those wishes can be ascertained and are practical (Government of Western Australia, 2009:8).*

Despite this new Indigenous housing legislation coming into effect from the 1st July 2010, in practice the reform is occurring gradually across Western Australian communities. Initially, the program for HMA negotiations is being guided by construction programming under the Capital Works Plan (CWP), beginning with the 34 communities earmarked for new houses and upgrades in 2010 and 2011. In other communities, the housing standards are being assessed and, where they meet public housing standards, an HMA will be negotiated. In the case of the town-camps of Halls Creek, negotiation of the outstanding HMAs is not considered a state priority (and their scheduling was unconfirmed at the time of this study). This lack of urgency is largely because the lack of HMA is not stalling the progress of construction programs, as much of this work was carried out in 2009/10 prior to the new legislation and requirements for HMAs. The exception to this was Redhill,

which did not receive upgrades at this earlier date. As a result, an HMA was negotiated to enable construction work to be carried out. Thus, for the time being, two systems operate in parallel: the existing policy based system (interim measures) and the new legal framework.

RSPs are required to register as Community Housing Service Providers by June 2011 to ensure they operate within the WA Community Housing regulatory framework, and under which they are subject to service and financial monitoring (DHW 2009b:7). The skill level of RSPs is identified as a key challenge in the Western Australian Property and Tenancy Management Plan (DHW 2009b:6). This is being targeted through clearer requirements in the SLA; access to training through the Community Housing Coalition of WA; funding to contract business systems assistance; and increased contact with DHW staff.

5.3.2 Tenancy Management

This section describes the implementation of public housing standards of tenancy management in Western Australia, and specifically in the town-camps of Alice Springs. It begins by describing the problematic nature of tenancy management in the town-camps of Halls Creek. It then identifies and details the contributing factors for this related to policy, procedural and organisational issues.

Differences in housing management arrangements between Halls Creek and Alice Springs impacted participant profiles in this study as more local housing professionals participated in the research in Alice Springs than Halls Creek. To compensate, more local professionals auxiliary to housing participated in Halls Creek. Indeed, whilst participant numbers were similar across jurisdictions, there were more regional and state participants in the Western Australian study and fewer local housing professional than in the Northern Territory study. This resulted in a focus on broader or more general issues affecting tenancy management in the Western Australian case findings (as reflected in this section), compared with the more local/micro focus on Alice Springs in the Northern Territory findings.

5.3.2.1 Managing the Town-Camp Tenancies

An overarching theme throughout the data was inconsistent and lenient tenancy management practices. Much like in the case of the Alice Springs town-camps, tenancy management approaches were reported to diverge both from standard public housing policy and procedures and from case to case. In Halls Creek, these management practices were particularly evident in the varied accounts of tenancy sign-ups and move-ins, contingency planning for re-housing tenants during construction works and minor tenancy breaches.

The descriptions of tenants who had moved into new or refurbished houses revealed the tenancy sign-up and move-in process to be ad hoc. Some tenants reported being briefed about their new housing rights and responsibilities as a result of changes to their tenancy arrangements. However, several others reported that no one had spoken to them about the significance of the new tenancy arrangements, that they had been spoken to briefly and couldn't remember what had been said, or they couldn't remember being spoken to:

> *[Staff from Tangentyere] talked to us about the new lease agreement. We know we've got to pay our rent and keep the house clean, not have to many visitors, that sort of thing. Keep out of trouble. We haven't had any issues in the past anyway (T08WA, 2010).*

> *I can't remember really what they said. Some people are talking in the community, saying things are going to change a lot. But it seems the same to us, except we've got a better house now (T04WA, 2010).*

> *We had to pay a bond, and the sign lease agreement before we moved in. They said they would come and talk to us about things…but they never came. We don't really understand what the changes are all about, it seems the same as before, except some of us are getting new houses (T01WA, 2010).*

> *Homewest came to speak to us when we moved in about the new rent agreement (T03WA, 2010).*

Conversely, none of these tenants reported receiving any kind of tenant support, despite NPARIH stipulations for tenants to undergo a Home Living Skills style program as part of the sign-up process when moving into a new or refurbished house. Much like the tenancy agreements, some tenants reported that no one had ever spoken to them about it, whilst others mentioned they had heard that SHAP was now working in the town-camps, but that they had not been contacted by them:

> *Yeah I heard SHAP were getting involved. But we've never been contacted by them (T10WA, 2010).*

> *No, never heard about that [Living Skills/ Tenant support] (T04WA, 2010).*

Similarly to Alice Springs, the lack of contingency planning for temporary accommodation for tenants during construction was also identified by professionals as a significant divergence from mainstream public housing tenancy management:

> They should have thought about that a bit more before throwing all these new houses in…Some people just had to dump their things on the veranda and leave them there during the refurbs. Others just had to go to families' houses for 6 to 8 weeks. There was just no plan (P11WA, 2010).

> …like you don't move someone out of a house infested by cockroaches straight into another house where all their stuff is infested…you need to do a proper plan about how you are going to organise all that stuff (P10WA, 2010).

Tenant and professionals' reports about minor tenancy breaches (such as property damage) highlight inconsistent tenancy management practices. For instance, one tenant described how their damaged fly-screen door had been repaired by the DHW with no cost to them despite the damage having occurred from a screwdriver being (intentionally) pierced through it. Other examples were given by professionals about rocks and teabags being put into sinks and DHW paying for the repairs and maintenance. In some of these cases, tenants reported that they had been told they would be liable for the cost associated with further damage. These examples highlight divergences from established tenant responsibility and liability under mainstream public housing policy and, as such, suggest tenancy management was commonly more lenient in applying public housing rules and regulations. One professional stated:

> It isn't going to be stricter and I don't think there'll be more evictions or anything. The Department of Housing [DHW] is all about managing the tenancies. We need to have the programs in place…the education to make that possible. In Halls Creek [town-camp] communities it is much more westernised, say compared to Balgo, so there are less problems (P13WA, 2010).

Indeed from the tenants' perspective, they generally did not report any significant differences in tenancy management and, in fact, most associated any noticeable changes with housing construction work. Unlike in Alice Springs, no tenants perceived management to be stricter since signing up to a new tenancy agreement and moving into a new or refurbished house. These examples also demonstrate that tenants' new rights and responsibilities were unclear to many tenants.

Conversely, several housing professionals acknowledged this management leniency suggesting this was a transitional phase after which tenants would face more onerous housing responsibilities. Professionals referred to 'a transitional phase', 'an interim thing', 'a temporary phase' and 'a mid-point' (various professionals, WA,

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2010). However, there was little consensus about the terms or duration of this phase; some referred to a transition period or a 'grace period' to allow tenants to adapt to changes, although this varied from 6 months, to 2 years, to ongoing. As illustrated in the following statements:

> *Some of the concerns in the back of their minds is that ok, the RTA now applies, but how and when do you start enforcing that? When do we start playing hard ball (P06WA, 2010)?;*

> *As soon as you sign the RTA the conditions apply, but what is the grace period the provider will apply (P08WA, 2010)?;*

> *Almost like a natural justice process: this is where our client base is coming from, realistically how much time do you allow for the clients to come to terms with all these new rules and regulations (P07WA, 2010)?*

At the other extreme, several perceived the government's role in direct housing management as a 'stop gap' after which they anticipated (or hoped) that there would be a re-expansion of RSPs' role. However, this was unlikely until the HMA reviews after the first five years. On the other hand, some other professionals refuted suggestions of management leniency on the grounds that this would obscure the message DHW was trying to convey to tenants about their new rights and responsibilities under the new housing arrangements. For instance, one professional stated:

> *We need to be really confident in the messages that are being sent out there, of their accuracy, so that we can follow through and deliver what we said we would (P11WA, 2010).*

5.3.2.2 Policy, Procedural & Organisational Issues

This subsection outlines four contributing factors affecting the quality of tenancy management. First, it describes (i) policy ambiguity and (ii) procedural ambiguity in the implementation of public housing standards of tenancy management. It then details issues surrounding the (iii) organisational capacity of housing service providers; and (iv) interagency relationships.

5.3.2.2.1 Policy Ambiguity

The interviews revealed multiple interpretations of the new legislative framework that contributed to tenancy management inconsistencies. There was a much stronger acknowledgement within DHW of tenure, cultural and locational differences between mainstream public housing and the housing management system being established

in remote and town-camp communities, than at Territory Housing in the Northern Territory. This was accompanied, unlike in the Northern Territory, by a fairly unanimous consensus amongst professionals that the new housing system was not the same as mainstream public housing. The Western Australian approach was described varyingly as a hybridisation of mainstream public housing model or, at the extreme, as 'another version of social housing' (P02WA, 2010).

Land tenure differences were commonly cited by professionals as a basis for this latter distinction:

> This is Indigenous land. It can't be public housing (P01WA, 2010).

> If a community owns their land, then we [government] respect that, and we will deal with that in a slightly different way…It's like someone entering into my backyard. You need to go with respect. It is a different setup (P01WA, 2010).

The notion of 'doing the right thing' by Indigenous communities was an undercurrent of much of these discussions, as captured in the following statement:

> I certainly feel that this department [DHW] is doing, and has done, a really good job at trying to make this process as respectful as possible. It's definitely nowhere near as interventionist as the NT (P05WA, 2010)!

For the majority, the HMA distinguished Indigenous public housing from mainstream public housing. HMAs were perceived to encourage housing management specificity and flexibility that was intrinsically contrary to the notion of a one-size-fits-all, mainstream housing model. The extent of divergence from mainstream public housing was also implied through references to tension between Commonwealth housing reforms and State-level administration and implementation, especially in terms of the content and timelines of the policy reforms:

> [DHW] really fought tooth and nail [for this alternative approach] (P02, WA, 2010).

> What we're saying now is: "Go away [FaHCSIA], we are the public housing authority we know how to manage houses; this is our business; this is our job" (P05WA, 2010).

> We [DHW] have been pushed faster by FaCHSIA than we would have liked to move. If we had our way we would have rolled [these reforms] out really slowly to get to this point. We've been really pushed and forced into this position, and that makes me feel a little uncomfortable (P05WA, 2010).

To illustrate this tension, professionals cited the Commonwealth's (untenable) expectations that tenants should be paying full rent in two years' time and revealed DHW's unwillingness to place any unrealistic terms in the HMA.

Policy ambiguity arose from the perceived lack of strategic, long-term planning around public housing and what some perceived as the 'absurdity' of a '40 year public policy' for Indigenous communities:

> I think what is missing from the whole picture is some overarching long term policy about what the government is doing about remote communities, and for how long…I don't think there is much government policy about the way forward, the bigger picture for the next 50 years. No one is willing to say it, it is hardly a vote winner (P02WA, 2010).

> I mean most of our [Western Australian] contractual law is….like a lease can be for 25 years, etc. It sort of flies in the face of what we see as State Public Policy. So I see a real problem with that (P05WA, 2010).

Conversely, for some, the decentralised waiting lists, non-needs based housing allocation procedures, and non-standard rent settings within the new housing arrangements gave rise to social justice issues. One professional described perceived injustices in the different rent settings between the town-camp communities and town-based public housing in Halls Creek:

> Indigenous communities are arguing really hard that they should not be paying as much rent as everybody else. But then when I look at Halls Creek, you've got the town based public housing and then the [town-camp] housing which is really just next door…I mean why should they be paying more in town? Where is the justice there (P05WA, 2010)?

Professionals also anticipated disparity between communities based on uneven construction funding across communities.

Most professionals qualified their statements regarding public housing management hybridisation by stating a critical distinction between replicating mainstream public housing in remote and town-camp communities and achieving public housing standards. They argued that public housing management service levels remained the benchmark for housing in Indigenous communities:

> The strategy is to follow the public housing system in terms of standards, but then provide that extra step - the community sign off - to ensure cultural sensitivity (P08WA, 2010).

> What it is we're trying to roll out is decent housing management, proper housing management, in a way that actually respects cultural variations (P02WA, 2010).

> Yes, it is absolutely contradictory to the one-size-fits-all, but as I said, as far as we [DHW] are concerned the thing we are interested in is a public housing standard (P05WA, 2010).

On this basis, despite general consensus about the hybridisation of public housing, some professionals perceived the systems to be so closely aligned that some questioned the partitioning of Indigenous housing from mainstream public housing management:

>*The public housing system is already fully established. It is more just a matter of continuing with processes that are already in place (P01WA, 2010).*

>*There may be an expectation about certain types of behaviour, ways of life (noise level, eating bush tucker, etc.) Because it's public housing, the argument might be that you can't do that any more (P07WA, 2010).*

>*It's like we are offering a mainstream product, but institutionally it is still distinct (P07WA, 2010).*

For many, perceptions of the extent of divergence from mainstream public housing management were based on the perceived thoroughness of the negotiation protocol. Some suggested that federal policy mandates for public housing left limited scope to accommodate community specificity or influence in housing management, even if there was state or professional resolve to do so. At the extreme, some believed the negotiations were tokenistic:

>*We [DHW] set up this Mickey Mouse approach saying we are trying to consult with the wider community. They say you can determine the future of the project - well no, you can't…In the end, there is program being offered. There isn't a lot of movement to be had (P07WA, 2010).*

>*I suppose there are a lot of things in the HMA that don't sit well with the way the Aboriginal people want to live on their land. I guess what we are tyring to find is some type of middle ground (P05WA, 2010).*

>*There are some areas that obviously need to be consistent across communities, that need to be workable…we had to negotiate to get that consistency (P02WA, 2010).*

Housing allocations and waiting lists were cited as examples of the restrictive parameters of public housing management, refuting others' comments about community control over these issues:

>*The rationale for picking people is not up to the community, DHW go by their list (P01WA, 2010).*

Weak community governance structures, tight deadlines and government resourcing pressures were also cited as undermining the community engagement process. Some argued that the legitimacy of the negotiation process rested on the goodwill and capacity of existing governance structures to secure equitable agreements for their communities. With many professionals wary that bona fide community engagement was inherently problematic:

>*Yeah, sometimes it is really hard to tell when you are engaging with the community at a group level…sometimes it is hard to gauge what has been taken on board (P02WA, 2010).*

Others were optimistic that negotiations would entail broad community engagement to mitigate the influence of any community powerbrokers.

Genuine negotiation processes were understood to be time-consuming, yet the timelines stipulated through the Commonwealth's competitive bids process (to secure construction funding for the following year) were seen to create pressure to expedite these processes so as not to create a construction programming impasse:

> *So we are sort of stuck betwixt and between. We've got FaCHSIA saying you've got to build these houses. But no matter what the negotiations have to be done properly (P08WA, 2010).*

Many believed the HMA negotiations should be privileged over factors such as in situ construction and Indigenous employment opportunities, arguing that: 'it doesn't make sense to cut corners at the last minute, given how much time has been invested in the process with the changes to legislation' and further, 'we are talking about honesty and transparency…'(P08WA, 2010). Yet some professionals also clamied the process had still been rushed by FaHCSIA, which made them feel uncomfortable.

A final issue was government resourcing of the negotiation process. One professional commented: it is 'a bit of a logistical nightmare' and 'the resourcing hasn't been right' (P02WA, 2010). Doubling the workloads of existing public servants with requisite skills and experience was unsustainable and external recruitment was not always successful. Furthermore, ensuring each public servant's commitment to community engagement was viewed as problematic, with one professional stating:

> *I would hope that we can do this respectfully, but I would have to agree with the politicians…how can we be sure that we can trust everyone to do the right thing? There might be rogue staff out there in the regions…I can't put my hand on my heart and say all our Department staff are going to be sensitive and behave in the right way (P05WA, 2010).*

Policy officers were focused on these issues at the time of research.

As found in the Alice Springs research, these differing policy interpretations encouraged the tenancy management inconsistencies described previously in Section 5.3.2.

5.3.2.2.2 Procedural Ambiguity

Procedural ambiguity also promoted tenancy management inconsistencies. In theory, the HMA provided further direction on housing management policies and procedures. However this was refuted by professionals who claimed hybridised

management procedures were unresolved and that the system was susceptible to inconsistencies. Blaming the speed of reform, one professional stated:

> *It is not the legislation or the policy that is going to be problematic. It's around the procedures, and those haven't been put in place yet. So it's the classic implementation issue (P07WA, 2010).*

There were two main sources of procedural ambiguity. The first of these was the implementation of mainstream approaches side-by-side with hybridised (Indigenous specific) approaches. Many suggested the HMA offered insufficient guidance to counteract against the ambiguity arising from trying to reconcile two parallel approaches. One housing professional warned that:

> *At some point those two worlds are going to collide…you'll have a housing officer saying which protocols do I follow the mainstream public housing ones or these HMA specific things (P07WA, 2010)?*

This view was corroborated by some local professionals who hinted at the potential ambiguity surrounding housing allocations, such as in cases where a community disagreed with a government allocation proposal or the procedures for responding to a death in the community. This ambiguity was encouraged by erroneous understandings of allocation policies, as illustrated in the following junior housing professional statement:

> *We just manage the tenancies, but we don't have anything to do with who goes in the houses. It is a community issue. It does seem like people who go to the meetings get the houses, or people with stronger families in the community (P12WA, 2010).*

One example of this was the management of evictions. Whereas evictions in mainstream public housing usually arise from rent arrears, breaches to property standards or anti-social behaviour, the relevance of these definitions (and particularly antisocial behaviour) in a town-camp context were deemed problematic. For instance, a professional related a hypothetical scenario in which the community wanted to evict someone with whom the government held a legal tenancy agreement:

> *And the reason for the community wanting to evict someone will have nothing to do with us [DHW and the public housing definition of anti-social behaviour]. And we have to work out how we are going to deal with that (P07WA, 2010)!*

The management of Indigenous mobility (and subsequent tenant absences) was also potentially problematic:

> *Transience and mobility is something that we need to find a way to accommodate within our tenancy management. If tenants have left the house more permanently, how do we go about placing someone else in the house for a period (P08WA, 2010)?*

> *Actually putting it into practice will probably be quite problematic. But we will be lenient, or have strategies in place to help the tenant. Like*

> *the system will be flexible – if people are away for medical reasons, or*
> *they can't get back due to flooding, etc., we will accommodate that*
> *(P01WA, 2010).*

The second source of procedural ambiguity was the incongruity of mainstream public housing procedures in a town-camp setting. In the cited examples, this setting distinguished itself on the basis of the lack of auxiliary non-housing community services (such as garbage collection, visitors' accommodation and alternative transitional accommodation). These make the enforcement of RTA compliance difficult. For instance, one professional explained how in urban public housing, tenants are evicted on the premise that alternative shelter will be made available to them:

> *Sometimes it is really important to break families out of really bad*
> *behaviour patterns. There should be an exit to accommodation, not to*
> *homelessness, you might lose your right to chose how you want to live,*
> *but you don't lose your right to shelter (P07WA, 2010).*

In most Indigenous communities, the absence of alternative housing options renders this conventional approach to the enforcement of RTA compliance problematic and undermines DHW's authority. Several professionals recognised that the power to evict was important:

> *You need that power to evict. It's about being in charge…a last resort*
> *(P14WA, 2010).*

These discrepancies also make RTA compliance difficult for tenants, in turn raising concerns about the enforcement of the RTA. For instance, in Halls Creek at the time of research there was no visitor accommodation;[38] residents from over 80 surrounding communities and outstations (who often travel to Halls Creek to access services and visit family) are forced to stay in the town-camps exacerbating on-going overcrowding. As similarly identified by professionals in the Northern Territory, some perceived these unique characteristics of town-camp settings to require alternative framings of the tenant-landlord relationship based on engagement and stability.

Several suggested this procedural ambiguity provided scope for local level management discretion in housing management practices. This in turn enabled management leniency in response to both unique community circumstances and the onerous demands of tenant responsibilities under the RTA. However, local housing staff discretion was seen as potentially problematic given recognised resourcing

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[38] Visitor accommodation has since been constructed at Burke's Park.

issues (Section 5.3.2.2.3), with some suggesting this would encourage further tenancy management inconsistencies.

5.3.2.2.3 The Organisational Capacity of Housing Providers

The quality of housing management was also affected by the capacity of housing management.   Although Halls Creek is under direct housing management, this subsection also refers to RSPs, as professionals at regional and state level commonly referred to these.

Resourcing issues were found to be a major limitation on organisational capacity. Many raised the difficulty of recruiting and retaining proficient housing staff in remote locations, referring to a cycle of tight deadlines, heavy workloads, under-resourcing and high-staff turnover:

> *The department can't get the right staff (P10WA, 2010).*

The employment of local Indigenous staff was also considered 'not particularly successful' (P06, WA, 2010).   In particular some questioned the feasibility of local staff employment given poor professional development opportunities:

> *I think it will depend on how well the service providers and staff are trained not just in applying the RTA, but how well they are engaging with their local communities (P02WA, 2010).*

Professionals cited a skills deficit and attitudinal issues (particularly amongst some non-Indigenous staff) in community engagement and working cross-culturally:

> *It takes time to understand the system of working out here. People are used to the ways of working in the city, doing everything across the counter or sending out a letter…You need to take on that client, help them do what they need to do, so there is consistency…they want to talk to the same person (P10WA, 2010).*
>
> *People from DHW don't always want to leave the office and go out [into the town-camps] and see what is going on (P10WA, 2010).*

Yet current mainstreaming rhetoric was cited as disguising the need for specific training, on the assumption that senior government staff could train local government staff. In practice, most senior local housing managers juggled heavy workloads with reduced organisational capacity, suggesting that the training of local staff was rarely afforded a high priority by senior housing managers.

The interviews revealed RSP training was a stronger priority to meet public housing management standards (including the use of standardised systems and databases). RSPs were required to achieve certain standards to obtain Registered Community Housing Organisations (Community Housing Regulatory Framework) status.   This

training increased DHW's heavy workload. Despite this, the performance of RSP's was described as patchy (although improving). These concerns about the need for extensive support and government hand-holding to help RSP meet new standards, were not mirrored in the Northern Territory. This can perhaps largely be explained by the involvement of the relatively experienced Tangentyere Council.

These organisational capacity issues were all the more significant given that the government was heavily reliant on the current housing service provider arrangements. For instance, some professionals contended that the implication that government would takeover from under-performing service providers was mostly an empty threat. For example, the interviews revealed the inability of government to manage in some communities (such as Fitzroy Crossing):

> *We've got some service providers doing work in areas where we wouldn't be able to do the work (P03WA, 2010).*

> *RSPs are not aware that in some areas the state would find it extremely difficult to come in and direct manage (P02WA, 2010)!*

One professional described a case where DHW was unable to direct manage (due to limited local infrastructure, such as staff accommodation) despite a community preference for DHW over the poorly performing local RSP. They described the subsequent resolution as an ad hoc division of management between DHW and the local RSP:

> *A bit of the RSP doing this and DHW doing a bit. And all the while trying to keep the RSP out of the way if the community has found them offensive (P05WA, 2010).*

This dependency on RSPs raised questions over the capacity to provide public housing standards of housing management, especially given that most RSPs were not even expected to obtain their registration before 2012 or 2013.

In relation to these organisational issues, several professionals commented on the lack of adequate parallel organisational reform in the context of considerable policy change:

> *One thing we haven't done well, or that we need to focus on now, is the change management stuff that goes along with the HMAs (P15WA, 2010).*

Others echoed these concerns, calling for a stronger focus on 'change management stuff' (P02WA, 2010).

5.3.2.2.4 Interagency Relationships

In Halls Creek, inter-agency relationships between housing and other community service providers were perceived to inhibit the quality of tenancy management. Several recognised that the shift to RTA standards necessitated a collaborative effort. There was an overwhelming consensus about the importance of a holistic approach to housing management:

> *We all need to work together. How else are we going to change it (P10WA, 2010)?*

> *You can't talk about housing in isolation; everything has to be on the same page (P10WA, 2010).*

> *I think it is a collaborative effort. You can get Environmental Health running round telling people how to look after their houses, educating people, but if the house is in serious disrepair then it is a losing battle (P01WA, 2010).*

In Halls Creek, professionals described how numerous attempts over recent years to establish interagency working groups, were generally well received. However, the commitment and capacity to sustain effective interagency work appeared limited in Halls Creek.   With regards to capacity, specific job remits and resourcing pressures blinkered professionals' approaches:

> *We seek out the networks. But at times we are at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of our priority to get stuff done (P09WA, 2010).*

> *It is so hard without the spare capacity to engage with each other (P13WA, 2010).*

> *Everyone is short staffed; there is a huge turnover of staff.   If we say we are going to get together as a group…well there are endless meetings already in the community, it is the same people always carrying the load (P13WA, 2010).*

> *Part of the problem is that when you do step back you might say: "This is too big. We'll never solve this." So we'll just focus on our little bit. But in the long run you don't get very far with that approach (P10WA, 2010).*

In terms of commitment, the interviews revealed some housing professionals were unreceptive towards interagency approaches, for instance, following cockroach infestations in recently occupied new houses in Halls Creek:

> *We had to say three times at a meeting that DHW needed to get Environmental Health involved.   It seemed to me DHW was so reluctant to get them involved. It was like "This is housing. It's our program. I'm the manager. We will deal with it" (P10WA, 2010).*

> *The people at the top, the government, are saying you have to work together, but these local housing people here, they don't want to work together. They all want to keep control of everything. People just don't want to work together to get better outcomes (P15WA, 2010).*

Overall, the data suggests that stagnancy in organisational reform to address inter-agency requirements may also impinge on the quality of tenancy management.

The focus on intra-organisational relationships (between housing and other service providers) and service provider capacity in Halls Creek differs from the inter-organisational relationship focus (between housing stakeholders) in Alice Springs. The comparative organisational complexity of tenancy management arrangements in Alice Springs compared with Halls Creek account for this difference. Specfically, the tenancy management arrangements in Halls Creek are far less complex organisationally due to a much smaller management team, no external service provider or HRG involvement, and the pending status of HMA negotiations. Additionally, differing profiles of participant groups between jurisdictions may explain the focus on external agencies in the Halls Creek discussions.

This section described the implementation of public housing standards of tenancy management in the town-camps of Halls Creek. It revealed that, much like in Alice Springs, tenancy management practices were lenient and inconsistent despite a rhetoric of standardisation. It also identified policy, procedural and organisational issues as contributing factors for these management practices. Together, unpredictable tenancy management practices create uncertainties about tenants' responsibilities and accountabilities, inhibit the consistent enforcement of the RTA, and in turn call into question its significance despite tenant and SHA legal accountabilities.

5.3.3 Property Management

In this section, the focus shifts to the provision of public housing standards of property management. It begins by describing the poor quality of property management in Halls Creek, before outlining the contributing factors for this.

5.3.3.1 Managing the Town-Camp Housing Assets

Poor repairs and maintenance services were cited by professionals and tenants as the key issue affecting day-to-day property management. Delays to maintenance issues were the most commonly cited issue amongst both tenants and professionals:

And this change in housing management hasn't made too much difference as far as repairs and maintenance goes (P10WA, 2010).

The problem I've had so far is the roof leaking in the heavy rain, right into the corridor. No one has fixed that yet and that was from 3 months ago (T02WA, 2010).

I am trying to get rid of this gas tank thing on my veranda. They say they are going to pick it up but they don't. I don't want the kids playing with it (T06WA, 2010).

The data highlighted how these delays impacted on tenants' living environments:

[Name of housing professional] tears her hair out with people coming in with maintenance issues. I mean if they have been waiting for something so long and it doesn't get fixed for 3 months, then how do you hold the tenant responsible? ... The toilet is blocked and the whole hygiene of the place just deteriorates in that time (P11WA, 2010).

Some suggested that the incapacity for councils and environmental health departments to hold the SHA to account for breaches related to property maintenance challenged the significance of the RTA, with one asserting: 'Until such time that the Health Act binds the Crown, nothing will be different' (P09WA, 2010). Many identified this as a system of double standards with tenants' accountable to the RTA without corresponding government accountability; they argued: 'I mean it is hard to hold tenants responsible if the department isn't doing their bit' (P02WA, 2010).

However, whilst professionals acknowledged these delays, they also cited tenant misuse or lack of hygiene was a principal contributor to the poor quality of the housing assets and living environments:

…we might have these new houses, but socially its not moving forward…two weeks after they move in they've got cockroaches and filth (P10WA, 2010).

I mean people are putting teabags down the sink. My husband is a plumber and he went out to one of the new houses just the other day. The sink was blocked to the top, it had all this fat, cockroaches and maggots…the tenants just kept turning the tap on and spreading all these cockroaches and maggots across the benches…(P11WA, 2010).

Some suggested these actions were sometimes encouraged by mixed messages regarding the upkeep of their properties, for instance:

Environmental health are saying you can get rid of cockroaches. Then housing [DHW] is saying that you can't get rid of them. They need to work together for better outcomes, to be consistent (P11WA, 2010).

Unreported maintenance problems were another property management issue commonly cited by professionals. Some believed this was due to laziness, or a lack of awareness or concern about the repercussions for their tenancy:

> *Some people are frightened sometimes. They don't want to be too complaining because they don't want their house taken away from them (P10WA, 2010).*

This under-reporting was also acknowledged by some tenants:

> *We used to just go by the office in town and tell them about the problems. Out here [in the town-camps] we wait until they come by (T08WA, 2010).*

> *We had a problem with the stove. We haven't talked to them about it, every time I am in town I keep forgetting to tell them (T09WA, 2010).*

Several professionals commented that current property management approaches were not well tailored to Indigenous tenants. Property condition reports were commonly cited. One professional suggested that changing this to a visual (photographic) report might provide a better platform to engage with the tenant on their responsibilities. Another professional gave the following example in a remote community in the Shire of Halls Creek:

> *In [names community] where the water isn't safe at the moment, there is a little sign on the council office saying "boil all your water for the moment"…How are they meant to follow a little sign like that, especially in this heat (P11WA, 2010)?*

Notwithstanding these issues, some tenants also reported improvements to repairs and maintenance:

> *We had a problem with the tap and water leaking. Homewest [DHW] spoke to the water people and they came and fixed it. That was good. When we were in the demountable no one did repairs there (T03WA, 2010).*

5.3.3.2 Service & Infrastructure Issues

The interviews highlight three contributing factors to poor property management. These are: (i) the maintenance service monopoly; and issues concerning both (ii) housing infrastructure and design; and (iii) municipal services.

5.3.3.2.1 Maintenance Service Monopoly

The data suggests that the provision of property maintenance services was the most critical issue affecting the quality of property management standards. In particular, in Halls Creek at the time of research, property maintenance contractors were under 'gentlemen agreements' (as preferred contractors). Under these arrangements, a couple of contractors were given all maintenance jobs. If they were busy, which they were often reported to be, then the maintenance issue generally remained

unattended until the contractor became available. These contractors quoted a price based on a maintenance schedule provided by DHW, and a work order was issued to them by DHW (in much the same way that Territory Housing issued work orders to Tangentyere). Work orders are returned to DHW on completion of the maintenance. Any maintenance issue incurring a tenant liability are checked by DHW, in addition to an audit on a percentage of these work orders.

These arrangements were blamed for poor accountability for both service standards and deadlines (as well as for the under-employment of other local contractors). One professional made the following comments:

> *This is one of the current difficulties…It means that DHW can't hold them [contractors] to a level of service or to the deadlines that would be required in public housing. I think that the level of service is comparable, but I don't have the recourse I would have if it was a fully contracted process (P01WA, 2010).*

> *They haven't got people to do reliable maintenance. And DHW are not flexible enough to say, if that guy is not there by tomorrow, we'll get in another contractor (P10WA, 2010).*

These arrangements in Halls Creek were being reconsidered at the time of research. Professionals suggested it was likely the system would follow the head contractor model used for Halls Creek's urban public housing, under which a head contractor would be responsible for contractor management whilst DHW would simply manage the contracts. This model was perceived to be more amenable to accountability and compliance checks.

5.3.3.2.2 Housing Specification & Design

Tenants and professionals cited issues with housing specifications and design. Some of these issues were comparable with those identified in Alice Springs. For instance, tenants suggested that the design of the new houses lacked essential amenities such as an outdoor store room, a garage and sealed driveways (especially considering the wet season). Further to these issues, disability access (which was not raised in the Northern Territory study) was also cited by several tenants and professionals. Two tenants interviewed had a disabled household member, and they both commented that although the houses were liveable, they were far from ideal:

> *The house is ok with the wheel chair, but I have to go through the back. I can't get up the step out the front there (T07WA, 2010).*

> *… there are still things we would change. Like my husband is in a wheelchair and the access at the front isn't very good. Like he can manage it, but he bumps the post every time. Homeswest were doing a home with wheelchair access but someone else got it (T09WA, 2010).*

Professionals commented more generally on the house design and its specifications, suggesting there was a definite mismatch between the housing being built and Indigenous housing needs (such as large household sizes). For instance, professionals commented:

> *So here we are putting housing out there that isn't really constructed to serve the needs of the clients in their environment. It is government who are saying this is what you've got, so work with it (P06WA, 2010).*

> *The houses are not going to do the job that you or I would expect a house would do for us (P09WA, 2010).*

A further issue was discrepancies in the standard of housing:

> *The HMA specific stuff is only applying to the new houses and upgrades…and the discrepancies across communities this will potentially create….doesn't seem likely to me though that you will get that equal standard across the board? I think that is the elephant in the room (P14WA, 2010).*

However others refuted this suggesting that whilst discrepancies across Indigenous communities in Western Australia were certainly an issue, the upgrading of whole communities was likely to eliminate inequities within communities. This issue was not raised in Alice Springs, possibly due to the more comprehensive construction program being implemented there under SIHIP.

5.3.3.2.3 Municipal Services

The lack of municipal infrastructure and services was identified as another potential contributing factor for substandard property management. The services most commonly cited were garbage collection and pest control. One professional argued:

> *What's the point of putting houses in remote communities if you are not putting in the infrastructure around it that is going to make it a liveable place? A road into it, water and electricity supply and a waste disposal system…You work out what you are going to do about your rubbish! Unless you provide the backup services that are necessary to run a community and [achieve] environmental health, you're going to get all these agencies coming in to try and solve problems that should have been prevented in the first place (P09, WA, 2010)!*

These service issues were also cited in Alice Springs, but they were justified on the basis that the town-camps were outside the municipal boundaries. However, in

Halls Creek, four of the town-camps are within these boundaries and thus eligible to receive these services.

This section described the implementation of public housing standards of property management in the town-camps of Halls Creek. It described a standard of property management which was comparable with the poor standards identified in the Alice Springs' research (Chapter 4). As in Alice Springs, these findings are significant as the shift to public housing standards of property management is premised on its efficacy in creating and sustaining living environments which are conducive to western ways of living in a house. Substandards of property management have potentially significant repercussions for the quality of these environments. Specifically these environments are seen to negate the potential benefits of adopting western ways of living, or 'living in that two-world way' (P07WA, 2010). However, whilst these property management similarities are identified, in Halls Creek these are linked to a series of service and infrastructure issues, which, whilst also raised in the Alice Springs case study, were not its sole focus. This differing focus is explained by the complexity of organisational arrangements in Alice Springs. Equally, the property maintenance model used in Halls Creek raises issues of service monopoly that were not mirrored in Alice Springs.

5.3.4 Tenant Support

In this section the focus shifts from the provision of public housing management to the provision of tenant support services. This section begins with a brief overview of tenant support in Western Australia, highlighting the program's under-development at the time of this study. The subsequent sections then describe the poor quality of tenant support provision in Halls Creek in the early days of these housing reforms, before detailing four contributing factors for this.

5.3.4.1 Program Development

DHW recognises that the shift to public housing management creates an increased need for tenant support. DHW (2009a:6) states:

> *Many families in remote communities experience enormous challenges in adapting to standard housing, utilising health hardware, maintaining hygiene as well as trying to manage a household often in the midst of family crisis and economic trauma.*

With specific reference to the sustainability of housing, DHW (2009a:6) states:

> *The achievement of sustainable housing (and non-housing) outcomes is dependent upon the tenants in remote communities having the knowledge and the skills required to adequately manage their houses and in turn to protect the capital investments being made.*

As stated previously, applying the *Residential Tenancy Act 1987* is identified as one of the key challenges of the reform in Western Australia's Property and Tenancy Management Plan (DHW 2009b:6).

In response to these new needs and challenges, 'an appropriate education and information strategy to assist tenants to understand their rights and obligations under the RTA' was being jointly developed at the time of this study by DHW and the Department of Commerce (Western Australia). So far, DHW has outlined a three-pronged approach to supporting tenants with their new responsibilities and in sustaining their tenancies:

- *Community education strategies, outlined in a Community Education Strategy in conjunction with the Department of Commerce;*
- *A New Living Skills program; and*
- *One-on-one intensive tenancy support.*

The provision of the New Living Skills (NLS) Program fulfils the NPARIH requirement for tenant support. This is a compulsory induction program to the house for all tenants being signed up to new tenancy agreements. The program covers:

- *Tenants' rights and responsibilities;*
- *A demonstration of fixture and fittings, such as how to use the stove, smoke alarm and switchboard;*
- *Basic home care to deal with drains and blockages, dripping taps, electrical issues (for example broken lights or sockets), damage to property, cleaning and rubbish removal for house and yard, and pest control;*
- *Basic budgeting, including: paying rent, water consumption payments, tenant liability and power cards for electricity.*

Overall, at a policy-level, the approach to tenant support provision and content in Western Australia was notably less well developed than its Northern Territory counterpart at the time of research.

These tenant support services are being provided either by a contracted RSP, or directly by DHW through the well-established Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP). SHAP was established in 1992 by DHW (then Homeswest) to provide tenant support assistance in mainstream public housing. In Halls Creek, at the time of this study, tenant support was being provided by SHAP under a temporary local arrangement.

5.3.4.2 Supporting the Town-Camp Tenants

Professionals were varyingly aware that tenants in Halls Creek were confused about the housing reforms. Some suggested this confusion was fairly typical of the reform process. Most suggested tenant disengagement, rumours and local politics were more likely to inform or cloud a tenant's overall understanding of the reform, as well as SIHIP's concurrent roll out, rather than insufficient government communication. The lack of HMA negotiations (with the exception of Red Hill) was also considered a factor in the high levels of tenant confusion; professionals suggested that in other communities these negotiations were promoting higher levels of comprehension.

As stated, tenant support programs were not finalised at the time of this study. Professionals in Halls Creek described how the programs were being set up as a matter of urgency, although there was no clear timeline for this. Notwithstanding this, some professionals claimed newly housed tenants were well supported by contingency arrangements with SHAP and the additional assistance of local housing managers:

> *The program is still being developed for tenancy support, but that doesn't mean we leave them hanging while that is sorted out and finalised. Our property managers go beyond the normal scope of property managers in supporting clients. And then we've also got the SHAP support (P01WA, 2010).*

Professionals suggested the focus of the tenant support was an induction to the house roughly aligned with the NLS program. One professional stated:

> *The SHAP support is more grass-roots here than it might be elsewhere [in mainstream public housing]. It has a focus on some of the lower level stuff, an education focus: financial management (so that you can pay your rent and budget for food), looking after the house, using the appliances, etc (P01WA, 2010).*

However, contrary to NPARIH requirements for tenant support to be provided systematically upon relocation, the timing of its provision in Halls Creek was determined by DHW's perception of tenant need:

> *The housing induction program [checklist] has been done at the time of the sign up for the new houses, and sometimes a bit later where we [DHW] think that the need isn't as high, and then SHAP has helped support that…We have tried to target it where the need is the highest. Our staff can identify people and refer them onto SHAP (P01WA, 2010).*

The provision of intensive tenant support was notably absent in Halls Creek, in contrast with Alice Springs.

Several professionals in Halls Creek suggested town-camp tenants were much better placed to meet the new tenancy regulations (compared with tenants in remote communities) due to their proximity to town and tenants' subsequent exposure to western ways of living. For instance, in reference to the perceived ease of transition to new tenant responsibilities, one professional stated: 'tenants do seem to be coming into the mainstream quite easily' (P11WA, 2010). Making a similar point, other professionals suggested the shift from community to individual responsibility would be easier for those with more exposure to non-Indigenous culture. However, the accounts, for example, of the condition of houses and tenancy breaches in Hall Creek provided previously in this section suggest the transition may not be straightforward even for town-camp residents who had had this exposure. This may be especially so as others contradicted suggestions that tenants were well supported through the tenancy changes.

These professionals described tenant support in Halls Creek as ad hoc and underdeveloped:

> We think we need to tighten up on tenancy support provision because it has been a bit 'fly by the seat of your pants' (P06WA, 2010).

> There are still some hurdles to work through in terms of tenancy support, which is going to be a key factor in making tenancies sustainable, in keeping the properties to a safe and acceptable standard (P01WA, 2010).

Professionals also criticised the need for a referral from DHW to gain access to tenant support services. In their view, there had been limited change in the provision of support to tenants since the reforms:

> They didn't bother doing real social programs and education around the environmental health stuff (P13WA, 2010).

> It hasn't changed in terms of the social support around the house - the education, the environmental health (P11WA, 2010).

> They are giving tenants houses, but not a clear message that they are responsible (P10WA, 2010).

Tenants' corroborated these opinions. As mentioned previously, most tenants described either not partaking in a housing induction program, or being unsure about whether they had:

> Different people came around talking to us about different things. But I didn't understand what it's all about (T02WA, 2010).

The future of tenant support provision in Halls Creek was also uncertain. One local professional stated:

> We might end up with employed staff. It will just be a matter of seeing what the new tenancy program involves. It might go out to a

> *competitive tender…It just depends what skills are needed (P01WA, 2010).*

Some anticipated both material and social consequences of these inadequacies and the uncertainties surrounding tenant support:

> *All the new houses in a year's time are going to need $100,000 worth of refurbishments (P03WA, 2010).*

> *To me it all goes hand in hand, you don't give people new houses, without that [support], or you end up with everyone living back in the same old [expletive]!…You can give them all the houses in the world, but if they are not teaching them all this other stuff, making them responsible, then it is not sustainable. It's not changing anything (P11WA, 2010)!*

> *You can't just give them all these new houses without the education, the programs…without making sure there is understanding about the new expectations, their responsibilities. The consequences will be disastrous (P10WA, 2010)!*

5.3.4.3 Organisational, Operational, Programmatic & Strategic Issues

The compromised quality of tenant support is linked to four key issues. The first two of these are: (i) limited organisational capacity; and (ii) the implementation of public housing management. The remaining two issues are policy level issues: (iii) the mismatch between program content and tenant needs; and (iv) a perceived mismatch between reform priorities and funding.

5.3.4.3.1 Organisational Capacity

In Halls Creek, SHAP was charged with the provision of tenant support for town-based public housing, and at the time of this study, for the provision of tenant support to the town-camps. This constituted an onerous workload for the two SHAP staff (one of whom was non-Indigenous, the other, local). Indeed as one DHW professional stated: 'where they have the time, SHAP take on extra case loads [of town-camp tenants]' (P01, WA, 2010). To a large degree, this alone explains the findings regarding the poor coverage of tenant support services in the town-camps. This was also substantiated by comments from other professionals. However, further to this, the interviews suggest other underlying problems regarding SHAP's capacity to provide tenant support. One local professional commented:

> *SHAP here don't have a very good reputation here, if I can say that (P11WA, 2010).*

For instance, unfavourable comments were made regarding the willingness and commitment of SHAP staff to build trust (a critical component of effective tenant support delivery) with local tenants. On the one hand, this was perceived by some to be the product of the difficulties of an external (non-Indigenous) tenant support provider in gaining the trust of tenants. One professional described this:

> *That process is all about trust. To have a white lady like me come in and tell them what to do….you need to build that trust, that relationship, informally, getting their acceptance gradually (P06 WA, 2010).*

However, other professionals refuted such claims, suggesting that perceptions that Indigenous agencies (or staff) were better placed to provide tenant support ignored the sometimes complex nature of the tenant-provider relationship (due to family relationships and conflicts between skin groups) in such arrangements.   One professional captured this, describing their unwillingness to 'step beyond the front door and go and tell my aunty how to look after her house' claiming 'it is too personal' (P07WA, 2010). External agencies were deemed largely immune to these particular complications. Furthermore, several professionals pointed to the success of tenancy support services that were located 'in house' (with housing management) because they were able to 'work closely together and support one another' (P06WA, 2010) and because 'the communications lines could be really open and consistent' (P08WA, 2010).

Unfavourable comments were also made about SHAP's willingness to engage in effective interagency relationships in Halls Creek. These interagency relationships were identified by most professionals as critical in providing a collective response between specialised agencies and services (such as the Department for Child Protection, the police and drug, alcohol and mental health services) to achieve social change. In Halls Creek fostering these relationships was considered all the more critical given the limited capacity of SHAP. As an example of this, several professionals pointed to the partnership between Environmental Health and SHAP suggesting this was largely underutilised, especially as 'what they are trying to deliver is the same thing essentially – clean, safe, healthy homes' (P09WA, 2010). SHAP's lacking performance in interagency engagements is explained to a large degree by its evident resourcing pressures. Overall, poor interagency relationships were believed to encourage the continued siloing and piecemeal approach to tenant support provision, in turn restricting its service coverage and detracting from its overall effectiveness.

5.3.4.3.2 The Implementation of Public Housing Management

The provision of tenant support was also affected by the issues surrounding the provision of public housing management (Sections 5.3.2.1 and 5.3.3.1), as was also found to be the case in Alice Springs. The provision of tenant support was made more difficult by inconsistencies in tenancy management. For instance, whilst tenant support was intended to educate tenants about their rights and responsibilities under the RTA, a tenant's experience of lenient housing management practices could undermine this education. These issues were possibly exacerbated in Halls Creek by the status of HMA negotiations which may have provided tenants with greater understanding of the new housing arrangements. The provision of tenant support was also made more difficult by the poor condition of properties from both substandard property management and the lack of forethought around the logistics of accommodating tenants during construction work and then moving them into the new houses. Professionals commented on the subsequent living environments as unconducive to tenant support provision:

> You are going out there to promote a standard of housing - a clean, safe healthy environment - but you've got housing below standard…It is not a positive environment to be promoting a tenancy support program in the housing arena (P06WA, 2010)!

> The danger of it [tenant support provision] is that a tenant that would do well won't because of overcrowding (P07WA, 2010).

> Like in [town-camp], they didn't plan it well enough to encourage those people to have their houses clean and everything free of cockroaches before they moved back in. It would have been a good time to start programming people to start thinking a new way, it is about training their brains to think a new way (P11WA, 2010).

In the context of these issues, one professional suggested that SHAP's role was to 'step in and start picking up the pieces' (P09, WA, 2010). These factors contributed to the difficulties in the provision of tenant support.

5.3.4.3.3 Programmatic Focus

Criticisms of the content of tenant support programs in Western Australia were markedly similar to those identified in the Northern Territory study, although they were more widely voiced in Western Australia. Many viewed NLS to be an overly simplistic, tick-the-box approach to tenant support, and were sceptical of its capacity to instil RTA compliant ways of living or, more generally, of its capacity to achieve social change:

You're not going to get results just by ticking off on the Life Skills form (P06WA, 2010).

When I first read the NPARIH, I was quite taken a back that the intention, the underlying intention, that all prospective tenants be offered the Living Skills…Almost like if we do, this then our problems will be solved…But the reality is, it is not a light switch! So we've done the new Living Skills…And what? Everyone is just going to adhere to the RTA (P06WA, 2010)?!

One issue identified with this approach was the head tenant model (under which one tenant is responsible for the tenancy). As similarly identified in the Northern Territory research, NLS did very little to alleviate the unmanageable pressure on the head tenant or the household disengagement from tenancy responsibilities associated with this arrangement. Several professionals stated: 'this is going to bring this program down' (P09WA, 2010). One Halls Creek professional commented:

Eight new houses were handed over to tenants. By the time I returned in the afternoon, each of the bedrooms in that house was occupied by a family. So with the education, you really can't just go to the head tenant (P09WA, 2010)

Engagement with a larger portion of the household was considered particularly complicated for tenant support due to fluxes in household composition, and in some cases, the specific wishes of the head tenant.

Professionals also referenced the broad spectrum of tenant needs, claiming that NLS was sometimes entirely unnecessary, yet in other cases also completely inadequate:

In some areas you don't even need the tenancy support – the Living Skills is done. It might be successful. But then in another community that is basically really dysfunctional, they might get their housing upgrades, then you can come back in a month and things might be all smashed up (P08WA, 2010).

One professional cautioned this approach could create a problematic 'new class of Aboriginal renter dweller', suggesting those who aren't conforming to the requisite social changes will 'be shunned a bit' (P07WA, 2010):

If the standard is improving, and people's way of life is changing, then people who aren't conforming to the changes will be shunned a bit…The Dept [DHW] might say to the tenants who aren't keeping up to those standards that they won't be put on a waiting list, or they'll have to stay in the older housing.

They also suggested that this was in keeping with the tendency in public housing to reward good behaviour:

DHW still rewards those that do well, rather perhaps than those most in need. And there aren't good systems in place for that (P07, WA, 2010).

They suggested that understandings about 'how to mentor those who do have the capacity to change' (P07, WA, 2010) were missing from the tenant support equation. Hinting at the need for a more flexible approach, another professional commented:

> *The starting point might be different for different tenants, but the end goal will be the same (P11WA, 2010).*

Several suggested that the narrow focus on housing infrastructure was problematic, and that the provision of houses without more comprehensive tenant support services made little sense. At the extreme, some believed this combination of reforms may even exacerbate the Indigenous housing problem:

> *I mean why give people houses like that if you are not going to put in real support to make people understand that they have to do things different (P10WA, 2010)?*

> *In some ways, building houses exacerbates the problem. What you've done is built these you beaut houses with quite significant structural and service problems. So that house is not going to be nice for very long (P09WA, 2010)!*

Several professionals expanded on this, arguing that the new tenant responsibilities and expectations required 'more than just an introduction to the house' (P06WA, 2010). They identified the need for a significant shift in mindset around government approaches to tenancy support. The approach taken by SHAP (in mainstream public housing) was generally reactive (i.e. to save tenancies from failure). Several professionals suggested the need to move towards proactive and intensive long-term tenant support programs. For instance, one professional stated:

> *But the Department [DHW] needs to move dialogue towards looking to help make the tenancy sustainable so that it doesn't come to a head. To be more proactive. More preventative. How do you build up the tenant resilience (P14WA, 2010)?*

Mirroring opinions raised in Alice Springs about the criticality of long-term and intensive tenant support in achieving social change, several professionals commented:

> *It isn't going to happen over night. It will take several years of working with the community governance structures to implement the changes to behaviour and to get the same standards as urban public housing (P01WA, 2010).*

> *The issue we had around the New Living Skills in the NPA is that it is about an induction to the home. But for the long terms benefits - what we consider to be the real benefits, the social behavioural changes - it is going to need more than just an introduction to the house (P06WA, 2010).*

> *…we've ticked off on the New Living Skills, but it was once we kicked in the tenancy support that we got real outcomes, it's about protecting your assets, the sustainability of the tenancy. If you have someone that requires a lot more community education around how to look after*

5.3.4.3.4 Reform Priorities & Funding

Debates about program content commonly turned to the low priority of tenant support in the current housing reforms, especially amongst state level policy and tenant support professionals. The policy level focus on this issue differs from the more local level focus of the Northern Territory interviews. This difference is partially explained by the fact that tenant support programs were less developed in Western Australia than in the Northern Territory, and by the poor coverage of tenant support in Halls Creek. This focus is also traced to the key differences in professional profiles between the two case studies.

Professionals criticised Commonwealth government approaches (which linked State construction outputs to funding), arguing that DHW was prioritising construction to the detriment of other important considerations such as tenancy support provision. A common criticism was that tenant support was an afterthought of reform thinking, with some calling for a reconsideration of the funding ratio between housing and support services:

> *We'd be better off in a way to say, we are going to build 30 houses plus the support systems, rather than 45 houses which are going to be up for refurbishment in a year's time (P09WA, 2010).*

However, as identified by several professionals, difficulties in capturing the outcome of tenant support programs was viewed as a major barrier to the prioritisation of tenant support in the housing reform agenda and budget. For now, the funding framework was perceived to be focused on measurable indicators provided through the data collected on the Indigenous Housing Management System (IHMS). One professional hinted at the problem with this:

> *While in tenant support we want to see: a decrease in repairs and maintenance, long term tenancy, avoidance of evictions, rent paid on time, etc. They [these outcomes] are all great, clearly aligned with housing…But, if you have someone in the house who is a sniffer, has a drug or alcohol problem, can't pay their rent, and if that [issue] is actually changed, then that is really a significant outcome for us. But how do we measure this (P06WA, 2010)?*

However, substantiating tenant support program outcomes by convincingly linking non-housing outcomes (such as improvements in education) and the provision of tenant support services was viewed as problematic, despite some surety amongst professionals that data collection would eventuate from current reforms (through correct waiting lists, better documentation and increased reporting). One professional argued:

> *It's a catch 22: for a successful business case you need to have that substantiation, [but] this flux of restricted funding means restricted programming, and with limited programs you can't prove the effectiveness (P08WA, 2010).*

Some suggested existing data, such as health and education statistics (including the number of trachea problems, health issues related to dogs, scabies, and school attendance) could be better used to capture improvements to living environments. However, revealing the contention surrounding this substantiation, others were unconvinced, suggesting the link between housing and non-housing outcomes was tenuous:

> *You can see that the house has little to do with people's health aspirations, education aspirations, or anything else. You only have to look at some of the refugee situations with all the health and hygiene issues to see how people are still clinging to health and education aspirations. People who can live in a proper house with all these opportunities around them that they don't take up…(P05WA, 2010).*

This section described the implementation of tenant support programs and services in Halls Creek. It revealed both that tenants were poorly informed of the changes to their housing arrangements and that tenant support provision was ad hoc. These issues were linked to problems surrounding the implementation of public housing, the content of support programs, and to policy-level reform priorities and funding. There is some notable overlap with the issues identified in the Northern Territory. For instance, the implementation of public housing management and organisational issues were similarly identified in both jurisdictions (although the specificities are quite different). Generally, the Western Australian findings are more broadly focused on state-wide policy level issues, especially in the discussion of reform priorities and funding. This difference is principally a reflection of the numbers of state level participants and the infancy of tenant support program design in Western Australia. It is also explained by the relative organisational simplicity of housing and tenant support arrangements in Halls Creek, and the limited nature of tenant support provision in Halls Creek. Notwithstanding this, the conclusions to be drawn from these findings are similar to those from the Northern Territory case. Specifically, the identification of these issues highlights limitations in the capacity for tenant support programs and services to educate and support tenants in changing their ways of living to conform to public housing regulations and expectations.

5.3.5 Conclusion

This section described the functioning of the systems of housing welfare provision in the Halls Creek town-camps during the implementation of the Indigenous housing

reforms.   Beginning with the provision of public housing standards of housing management, this section identified inconsistent tenancy management practices and poor standards of property management as key issues affecting this provision. These issues were associated with a range of policy, procedural and organisational issues.   Despite differences in the specific details, there was significant general overlap between these findings and those from the Northern Territory case.   Both drew similar conclusions that these represented substantive impediments to the provision of public housing standards of housing management.   This section then detailed the provision of tenant support to the Halls Creek town-camps, identifying organisational, operational, programmatic and strategic issues as contributing factors to the poor quality of tenant support.   Overall, in a similar vein to the Northern Territory case, problems surrounding the systems of provision for public housing welfare and for tenant support were found to potentially limit the effectiveness of reform agenda in meeting its objectives.   In the Northern Territory, these limitations were partially substantiated by an account of the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps.   This chapter adopts a similar dual analysis approach, turning now to the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps of Halls Creek to better understand the potential impact of the current housing reforms in the Western Australian context.

5. 4   THE LIVED- EXPERIENCE OF HOUSING WELFARE IN THE TOWN-CAMPS

Understandings of the lived experiences of the housing welfare recipients being provided for under the systems of provision (Section 5. 3) constitute an essential piece of the puzzle to uncovering the potential impacts of the current Indigenous housing reforms. The intent of this section, as with the parallel section in Chapter 4, is to provide an account of the lived experience of tenants in the town-camps of Halls Creek. To achieve this aim, an identical structure is adopted: Section 5.4.1 describes the meaning of 'home' for tenants, and Section 5.4.2 describes a series of domestic social practices performed by tenants in the Halls Creek town-camps as identified in the data analysis. This section is based on discussions with ten tenants across five town-camps in Halls Creek. Of these tenants, eight reside in new or refurbished houses and two live in legacy dwellings.

5.4.1 Understandings of Home

For all tenants, the definition of home included their town-camp, and sometimes specifically their plot of land. This contrasts with Northern Territory findings in which home was occasionally defined as elsewhere. This is perhaps reflective of the tenant sample; by chance, all tenants participating in the Western Australian study originated from the local area increasing the probability of ties to the local communities and the proximity of their family and kin. Further, about half of the tenants interviewed had lived in the same town-camp all their lives, and spoke emotively about their strong community ties.

Tenants' definitions predominantly focused on intangible elements, rather than the house itself. Both the presence of family and a spiritual (and ancestral) connection to the land were commonly identified (either one or both) as giving tenants a sense of belonging and making them feel 'at home'. This was comparable with the Northern Territory findings. Tenants stated:

> *Yeah, this is home, right here in this community. I have my wife and kids here. I have my cousins, my uncle, some aunties. All the family, we're all here. So yeah, this is home for us (T01WA, 2010).*

> *I was born at [town-camp] too, my great-grandfather even. This is our family place…these plots here…we have history here. Born here, grew up here, went to school here. This was home to my people, you know. This is home for me (T03WA, 2010).*

> *I have my family all here. My sister and her husband and the kids, they live just over there. We've got some aunties here too. Then I've got my brother, and my three sisters and their kids… Everyone, you know… This is a family place. We've been here for years, always the family's. Before it was my grandfather's. This is home for me. This is our place, you know. We don't belong nowhere else (T08WA, 2010).*

Feeling part of the community (usually the small community of the town-camp, rather than part of the wider community of Halls Creek) was a much stronger factor in tenants' sense of belonging than it was in Alice Springs. This finding is surprising given the impression of complex demographics in some town-camps ('a hodge-podge of all sorts of family, several language groups with different backgrounds, Traditional Owners, Stolen Generation people, etc' (P01WA, 2010)) and some tenants' connections to multiple town-camps):

> *We're a community here. We stick together, We don't want other families coming in and taking the houses. I want to be living in a community (T02WA, 2010).*

Although in the Northern Territory connections to place and people suggested stability (spiritual and/or physical) was important to tenants' construct of home, in

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Halls Creek stability (especially physical stability) appeared even more important to tenants. Notions of stability in the Indigenous construct of home initially hint at parallels with the western constructs of home and appear at odds with some understandings of Indigenous cultural practices such as house-swapping and mobility. For instance, an elderly tenant wished to obtain a freehold title of her house. In one sense, her desire for homeownership was based on familiar western notions of financial security and housing stability that underlie the concept of a western family home. However, this particular tenant's comments reveal that stability, in this case, is also rooted in the capacity for a house to facilitate kinship networks of support and reciprocity which are central to the Indigenous domestic moral economy. Perhaps most importantly, town-camp housing was perceived to afford tenants a sense of control which they did not experience in other social housing (although this is currently at odds with tenants' uncertainty surrounding housing arrangements). As such, in the case of the tenant's desire for freehold, her principal concern was to provide future security for her children and grandchildren:

> *With the freehold thing, what I'm really interested in is that when the kids grow up it means that I can pass the house on to the children (T05WA, 2010).*

A similar concern was expressed by several tenants when they queried the impact of the reform on their housing security:

> *But you know before it was a family house. Now if I move away the family might not get to keep it. We don't really know that yet, we don't really understand that (T02WA, 2010).*

In a similar vein, the town-camp tenancy was considered important because it provided a safe environment (and preferable location) to raise their children. Most commonly, the town-camps provided a place for family and kin from other communities to stay whether they were travelling to access the services of Halls Creek or to visit family. Several tenants referenced how the low residential density and large plot sizes contributed to their feeling of space and allowed more family to congregate and be hosted on their property. Conversely, town-camp housing provided tenants with a base from which to access remote communities and regional towns to visit kin. One explanation for the comparative centrality of stability in tenants' constructs of home in Halls Creek is the perceived difficulty of securing a tenancy in the town-camps. This was described by several tenants as a lengthy, disheartening and complex process due to allocation procedures and limited housing. During this time of housing uncertainty, their housing careers were fairly unstable as they moved in and out of accommodation (sometimes public housing in

town and sometimes in other communities) waiting to be allocated a tenancy in town-camp housing.

Some aspects of a few tenants' constructs of home did appear more closely aligned with western understandings. Much like in the case of the Alice Springs' tenants, Halls Creek tenants were more focused on the house itself, and in particular the benefits compared with living in temporary shelters (such as tin sheds, caravans and demountables) without maintenance assistance and with insufficient space for visitors. These tenants also suggested that there was less humbug in most town-camps than in the public housing in town. Several referred to higher levels of humbug, for example: 'There's too much humbug there, people asking us for things, people want to stay' (T10WA, 2010). A few of these tenants also mentioned privacy. One tenant described their desire to build more accommodation on their current plot to house extended family in proximity whilst also providing privacy to their immediate family.

This account of tenants' divergent constructs of home has evident similarities with the Northern Territory study. In particular, home is linked to a sense of belonging with people and/or place in both jurisdictions. Tenants' constructs of home are also comparably diverse. The findings here further corroborate the suggestion made in the previous chapter that a range of common understandings (themselves similarly based on the tenets of the Indigenous domestic moral economy) may inform the domestic social practices of town-camp tenants. Moreover, that given the centrality of the Indigenous domestic moral economy to these social expectations, these common understandings are likely to diverge from western social expectations about living in a house.

The most notable point of difference between the two jurisdictions is the emphasis on stability (including a sense of community) in the definitions detailed here. There are two explanations for this. First, this may be indicative of the differing town-camp compositions. Whilst tenants in Alice Springs often referred to their town-camps as family camps and implied an inherent sense of community, Halls Creek tenants' descriptions of their town-camps suggest they are more heterogeneous (often described as comprising mixed family and language groups) and in which the sense of community is less evident (although still important). Another reason for this focus is Halls Creek tenants' unparalleled experience of securing town-camp tenancies. This difference suggests that whilst the domestic moral economy remains central to

tenants' common understandings related to living in a house, the way in which support and reciprocity networks are sustained by tenants may differ between case sites.

5.4.2   The Domestic Practices of Tenants

The daily lives of the Indigenous people living in the town-camps of Halls Creek comprise a diverse array of domestic social practices, which tenants explained using an equally diverse range of 'sayings'.   This section describes the commonly performed practices of hosting, housekeeping, personal hygiene, food (cooking and eating) and mobility (travel) in these town-camps.   In doing so, it draws on tenants' 'sayings' about these practices to highlight the common understandings and practical knowledge implicated in these practices.   It also reveals the available material infrastructures and their understandings of the rules and regulations pertaining to these practices.

5.4.2.1   Hosting Practices

Hospitality of kin is central to tenants' daily life. Two social practices are particularly important to this: socialising and accommodating visitors. The findings reveal that these practices are performed in very similar ways as those described in the previous chapter: tenants congregate together around the house with tenants, other residents and visitors:

> *We'll just sit here, like we are now, out the front here. We'll just sit around. Talk, catch up, that sort of thing (T03WA, 2010).*

The accommodation of visitors is also performed similarly: mattresses are provided inside, on the verandas or in other accommodation on the plot (such as old caravans or sheds) when there are numerous visitors:

> *We have people staying most of the time, sometimes short visits but sometimes they'll stay a long time, like if they need the clinic. Now we've got the new house we've got more visitors coming. We have them sleeping inside with us…we've got the old caravan there too, sometimes they will sleep in there too (T03WA, 2010).*

The provision of new houses (material infrastructure) appeared to encourage these practices:

> *It's much easier now with the house. We've got more room for everyone (T04WA, 2010).*

Equally, the 'sayings' about hosting practices reveal similar social expectations about supporting, and spending time with, family and kin and some similar knowledge about keeping comfortable in the heat, such as retreating to shade:

> They come and stay. We don't say no. That is family, you know (T10WA, 2010).

> Sometimes we'll be over there, by that tree if we've got lots of people with us. We just get out of the sun if it is hot (T04WA, 2010).

Despite the notable similarities between these practices in Halls Creek and Alice Springs, there were also notable differences between the jurisdictions. For instance, some of the interviews suggest social expectations might differ between different Halls Creek town-camps:

> We like the new house. Much quieter…We were living in [different Halls Creek town-camp] before. We were getting too much humbug, people asking us for things, to have people stay. [I'm] Just living with my wife and children now (T01WA, 2010).

Some tenants' 'sayings' about hosting practices highlight how tenancy regulations are not breached due to the material infrastructure implicated in these practices. For instance, in the lower density town-camps of Halls Creek, where houses are located on generous plots, these hosting practices are frequently performed without disturbing the peace of their neighbours as tenants and visitors can congregate in large groups and make considerable noise without inconveniencing others:

> We have a lot more room [compared with public housing in town]. It is much more quiet. If people are making noise, well the neighbours don't live so close, so it doesn't matter so much (T04WA, 2010).

However, other 'sayings' also highlight how this very same infrastructure is also conducive to large gatherings of visitors that can easily escalate (especially when coupled with alcohol) leading fights and property damage, despite housing regulations:

> Well it wasn't a problem when we lived in town [public housing]. Sometimes out here [in the town-camp] they'll be a lot of people getting together. It can get out of control, the windows were broken, there was a fire. The police came over, broke it up (T02WA, 2010).

The interviews suggest that some hosting practices may retire or diminish if there was more visitor accommodation in town. However, others' comments suggest that there is a social expectation around sharing one's house with family and kin, suggesting these hosting practices will be sustained. The interviews also revealed how these practices were being transformed. For instance, another tenant described how since becoming a grandmother they no longer regularly hosted visitors, instead they spent much of their time looking after their grandchildren.

5.4.2.2 Housekeeping Practices

In the Halls Creek town-camps domestic cleaning practices included sweeping floors, cleaning surfaces in bathrooms and kitchens, and the storing of belongings. They also included keeping the yard orderly, such as sweeping dust and rubbish off the veranda and gardening. Discussions with tenants revealed these practices were performed at various intervals, sometimes weekly and sometimes rarely, if at all.

As identified in Alice Springs, 'sayings' about these practices reveal a range of common understandings about housekeeping standards. Some of these social expectations involve taking pride in the town-camps and their properties (including in one case, a legacy dwelling):

> *It's not easy, but I do the garden, plant flowers and my son put that [pergola] up over there and I keep these pots up here in the shade. It's important, you know, to take pride. It looks better too, you know, it's much nicer (T05WA, 2010).*

> *You need to take a bit of care. Lots of people don't. But we think it's important, to take a pride. Keep it nice (T01WA, 2010).*

Moreover, as was the case in Alice Springs, the 'sayings' of many of these tenants also revealed shared practical knowledge about the health and hygiene benefits of domestic cleaning practices:

> *And I do that [clean up] because I don't want these bugs and things. We get the sprays sometimes, if it gets bad, but it's expensive. Better to just keep it clean (T01WA, 2010).*

However, other 'sayings' reveal how practical knowledge about the capacity to eradicate cockroaches had led to the retirement of some other housekeeping practices:

> *We used the sprays before. But then they told us they don't work ... that you can't get rid of them [cockroach infestations] like that (T06WA, 2010).*

On the other hand, the diversity of domestic cleaning practices is linked to a range of 'sayings' about the condition of the material infrastructure implicated in these practices. The 'sayings' of tenants who reported infrequently undertaking cleaning tasks, often highlighted overcrowding, unaddressed maintenance issues (such as leaking taps and roofs and blocked toilets and sinks) and design issues (such as the lack of sealed driveways or lack of storage space):

> *When we've got a lot of people staying, there is not much we can do. I try and keep the roaches out but then I can't clean up for everyone, it's just not…you know…and then it's a mess again (T04WA, 2010).*

> *It is difficult keeping the house how it was [when new], we've had a broken toilet and the tap's leaking (T03WA, 2010).*

> *The other problem with the house is that the driveway isn't paved so it gets so muddy when it rains, and then everyone walks through the mud and it ends up going everywhere. It might be cleaner if they could fix that (T03WA, 2010).*

As was the case in Alice Springs, this suggests in some cases housekeeping practices had not been established or were disappearing because of their perceived ineffectiveness in the current housing environments.

Lastly, whereas in Alice Springs, 'sayings' about these domestic social practices highlighted obligations to keep the house clean, this was not mirrored in Halls Creek.

5.4.2.3 Personal Hygiene Practices

One of the main personal hygiene practices that tenants talked about were practices involving the use of the bathroom amenities, such as bathing. Tenants' bathing practices strongly parallel those of Alice Springs: these were performed sometimes daily, sometimes far less frequently, and equally, some tenants were vague about the regularity of their performance. In two instances tenants referred specifically to washing their hair. However, the usage of cleaning products (such as soap and shampoo) was mentioned by only one tenant.

Tenants' 'sayings' highlighted the ways in which material infrastructures were implicated in these practices. In one regard, these sayings were similar to those in the Alice Springs study. For instance, maintenance problems with hot water systems, broken showerheads, or a lack of plugs meant bathing practices were being performed less regularly and for shorter durations:

> *We had a problem with the hot water. It's fixed now. We couldn't take showers much when we waited [for maintenance] (T10WA, 2010).*

> *Last year we had a broken shower. We didn't use the bathroom much then, there was water everywhere (T07WA, 2010).*

These practices were also performed less frequently due to difficulties for two wheelchair bound tenants to access and use bathroom facilities:

> *He needs help. Like it's not well designed for the [wheel]chair. If someone helps he can have a shower (T09WA, 2010).*

The interviews also revealed that visitors' lack of practical knowledge about the usage of bathroom amenities also resulted in tenants' practices being transformed.

For instance, whilst waiting for toilets to be unblocked or showers and pipes fixed, the performance of practices in the house involving these amenities (such as showering and toileting practices) abated.

On the other hand, these 'sayings' about bathing practices differed from those of the tenants in Alice Springs in their frequent references to the material infrastructures of past accommodation. In doing so, these sayings revealed more about how these practices had been transformed since moving into their current house. For instance:

> *When we were in the demountable there, and before that in the old caravan there, well, we had no water or toilet.   It is much better now, in this new house…and we've got the bathroom now. We can just use it when we need to - it is so much easier, especially with the kids and the grandkids (T03WA, 2010).*
>
> *It's much better now. Much more private, so people don't mind using the bathroom, having a shower (T04WA, 2010).*

Their 'sayings' also highlight practical knowledge that has been acquired from community services, such as healthcare clinics:

> *We've been told about washing and that, to look after the kids and keep us healthy (T10WA, 2010).*
>
> *The kids learnt about that at school too. About keeping clean to stay healthy (T09WA, 2010).*
>
> *I've been told to wash my face. I've got problems with my eyes. So I do that more now. Never did that before (T01WA, 2010).*

Tenants' 'sayings' also revealed practical knowledge about the health benefits of washing clothes, and of clean towels and bedding. However, laundering practices were a far lesser focus in discussions than in Alice Springs, possibly due to the debate surrounding the supply of washing machines with the new houses there.

Tenants 'sayings' did not directly reveal much about the social expectations surrounding their bathing practices. However, when tenants suggested that their visitors did not generally share the same bathing practices, their 'sayings' suggested that this was because they did not always share the same social expectations and practical knowledge as their visitors:

> *Visitors don't always know these ways. You know, they're not used to having a shower regularly. They haven't been told about that. It's not what they do (T05WA, 2010).*

5.4.2.4 Food Practices

As was also the case in Alice Springs, cooking and eating were the primary food practices discussed by tenants. Cooking practices were comparably unestablished or were not currently being sustained in many households. There were a few notable exceptions in which tenants either cooked in the kitchen or set up a makeshift campfire outside. These tenants' 'sayings' revealed common understandings and practical knowledge about looking after family, healthy nutrition and household budgeting (for instance, a tenant described buying discounted cuts of meat from the butcher):

> *My sister and I help each other with the shopping and then the cooking. Everyone needs to eat and we don't have the money. It works out cheaper this way. My mother taught us a little bit, and about looking after the kids, and then we've learnt some other things (T01WA, 2010).*

They also highlighted social expectations around providing food for visitors:

> *It's usually me and her, we go into town and buy the food. With my son's job, well people expect we'll give them a feed when they stay. It's family so we all just share (T01WA, 2010).*

As was also identified in Alice Springs, the 'sayings' of tenants who rarely or never performed cooking practices, revealed limited knowledge about kitchen appliances and/or cooking, and/or limited or broken material infrastructures (such as ovens or cooking equipment):

> *I don't really do that much [cooking]. We had a problem with the stove. We haven't talked to them [DHW] about it, every time I am in town I keep forgetting to tell them (T06WA, 2010).*

Eating practices also varied. In the households in which cooking practices were rarely performed, eating practices were sustained by accessing the supermarket, butcher and bakery in Halls Creek. The type of food bought would depend on access to money (commonly Centrelink payments) with, for instance, junk food or pre-prepared meals (an expensive option):

> *We get food in town. It just depends. We like the stuff that's ready to eat. But we just buy what we've got the money for. We just buy it and eat it. If we leave it [lying around] here someone else will eat it. But we make sure the kids get something, everyone gets something anyway (T06WA, 2010).*

For these tenants, and in the households where cooking practices were performed outside, eating practices usually involved informal gatherings of householders and visitors. In contrast, when cooking practices were frequently performed inside, eating practices occurred in smaller family groups.

5.4.2.5 Mobility Practices

The mobility practices performed by tenants of the Halls Creek town-camps involve short or long distance travel. Short distance travel involved trips to other town-camps (to visit kin) and travel into Halls Creek usually on foot, by bike or car. Mobility practices involving trips to more distant locations and for longer periods of time were performed frequently by some tenants and infrequently by others. Unlike in Alice Springs where alternative travel options (such as minibus and taxis) were available, the performance of mobility practices in Halls Creek generally relied upon access to private cars, a school bus, one taxi and a small bus service. Longer trips beyond Halls Creek were performed frequently by some tenants and involved travelling, usually by car to remote communities, or by car or bus to other towns or further afield.

'Sayings' about these practices highlight common understandings about the importance of spending time with family and about cultural traditions (such as attendance at cultural ceremonies). Tenants described extended tenancy absences as a result of these mobility practices:

> *When we got a car, we would go out to the communities to spend time*
> *with my family…if there is something we need to stay for, then we just*
> *stay for that time and then come back [to Halls Creek] when we're*
> *ready (T10WA, 2010).*

Unlike in Alice Springs, 'sayings' about these mobility practices did not suggest that tenancy regulations (such as obligations surrounding tenant absences and requirements to give notice for leave) restricted their performance in any way.

In some instances, 'sayings' about these practices suggested they were disappearing nonetheless, due to the material infrastructure. For instance, tenants performed more hosting practices due to the extra capacity of their new houses to accommodate family, and this in turn was replacing the performance of mobility practices (through which tenants would otherwise see family). Conversely, mobility practices were also being superceeded by healthcare practices (for instance, frequent access to health clinics in Halls Creek for dialysis) that were incompatible with travel (and absences from Halls Creek). In other cases, it was the lack of material infrastructure (such as car access) that was leading to the retirement of these mobility practices:

> *All our family is around here. Some up in Kununurra. We can only*
> *travel if someone can take us, we don't have a car (T05WA, 2010).*

We don't travel to see family too much cos we don't have a vehicle (T02WA, 2010).

5.4.3   Conclusion

This section gave an account of the lived experience of tenants in the town-camps of Halls Creek.   It began by describing tenants' understandings of home.   As identified in the previous chapter in relation to Alice Springs, the diversity of definitions hints at the range of common understandings about living in a house. Following this, and mirroring the structure of the previous chapter, Section 5.4.2 described the hosting, housekeeping, personal hygiene, food, and mobility practices commonly performed by tenants in town-camps.   As was also the case in Alice Springs, these practices were shown to be diversely established and composed, and sustained and transformed.   By detailing some of the elements of these practices, this section links the diversity in practices to variances in their constitutive elements.

Mirroring the findings of the previous chapter, material infrastructures are identified as important in sustaining and transforming many domestic social practices.   For instance, poor housing infrastructure is shown to sustain and transform domestic social practices, such as personal hygiene and housekeeping.   However, whilst in Alice Springs rules were also identified as important in much the same way (such as in transforming mobility practices), rules appear to be less paramount to the social practices performed in Halls Creek.   Indeed the 'sayings' about most domestic social practices in Halls Creek reveal little of the rules implicated in these practices. However, as was also the case in Alice Springs, tenants are found to be recruited to a large proportion of their domestic social practices by shared social expectations related to the Indigenous domestic moral economy.   Thus, the findings of this section further corroborate two conclusions drawn in the previous chapter.   First, that common understandings often play an important role in informing the social practices performed by tenants.   And second, that these social expectations, as highlighted in relation to the construct of home (Section 5.4.1), vary amongst town-camp tenants.

5. 5   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings from an investigation into the macro and micro level contexts of the current Indigenous housing reforms in Western Australia.

Section 5. 3 described the systems of housing welfare provision to the town-camps of Halls Creek. It found the systems of provision for public housing management and tenant support were comparably problematic as those identified in the Northern Territory. In describing the management of the town-camp tenancies and housing assets in Halls Creek, inconsistent tenancy management practices and substandard property management practices emerged again as critical issues. Equally, in describing the provision of tenant support, inadequate programs were also identified as a key issue. And whilst the contributing factors for these issues were found to vary from those identified in the previous chapter (sometimes quite considerably), the findings similarly suggest that the effectiveness of the current reform agenda may be currently compromised.

In Section 5. 4 the focus shifted to the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps of Halls Creek. Tenants' definitions of home varied, corroborating the suggestion made in the previous chapter that both a range of common understandings potentially inform tenants' domestic social practices, and moreover, that given the centrality of the Indigenous domestic moral economy, these are likely to differ from western social expectations about living in a house. Accounts of the same five sets of social practices described in Chapter 4 demonstrate commonality and diversity both within Halls Creek and also between jurisdictions. Again, this diversity is linked to differences in the composition of practices. Common understandings were similarly highlighted as playing an important role in tenants' recruitment to some social practices, although these social practices were not identical. However, whereas in Alice Springs, all four practice elements were shown to be implicated in these practices, in Halls Creek tenants' sayings' about social practices revealed very little about the role of rules.

In the previous chapter, concerns were raised about the ways in which the new systems of housing welfare provision may cause disruptions in the practice elements implicated in tenants' domestic social practices. This chapter does little to abate these concerns by finding the systems of housing provision equally problematic in Western Australia, and thus raising further questions about the ways in which rules might be altered by inconsistent tenancy management practices, the ways material infrastructure might be changed by substandard property management, or the ways practical knowledge might be altered by inadequate tenant support programs. It similarly leaves unclear how common understandings might be altered through these systems of housing provision, although it does

corroborate findings in the previous chapter concerning the role of these common understandings in the recruitment of tenants to some domestic social practices. The strong suggestion of a mismatch between the new systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision and the lived experience of town-camp tenants, first raised in the previous chapter, and corroborated here, is investigated further in the following chapter.

6   REFORMING THE SYSTEMS OF HOUSING PROVISION

6. 1   INTRODUCTION

The settlements of Alice Springs and Halls Creek are both home to Indigenous town-camp communities. These communities share a history of housing policy failure. Today, they similarly face many housing problems, largely due to their shared experience of remoteness, poor access to services and employment, and a legacy of chronic infrastructure and service underfunding. In the context of severe overcrowding and poor maintenance, the subsequent cultural disconnection has meant housing welfare (both house and housing management) has been largely unconducive to the housing and non-housing outcomes otherwise afforded by housing welfare. The lived experience of housing welfare varies within and between town-camp communities and across jurisdictions. However, as seen in the previous two chapters, the profiles of these town-camp communities and their housing arrangements differ. The town camps of Alice Springs, scattered around the third biggest town in the Northern Territory, are far more numerous and have access to a broader range of services than those on the fringes of the small remote town of Halls Creek in far northwest Western Australia. And whilst town-camp housing management in Halls Creek is undertaken directly by government (Department of Housing and Works), in Alice Springs it is jointly provided by government (Territory Housing) and an Indigenous contracted service provider (Tangentyere Council). Most significantly, jurisdictional-level interpretations of Commonwealth housing policy have informed different approaches to housing management in each jurisdiction.

Practice theory offers a compelling paradigm for understanding and exploring social change across these town-camp communities as a result of the current housing reforms. By expanding the subject of social change to encompass how tenants live (social practices), this theoretical perspective overcomes both the singular focus on the individual (and their attitudes, opinions and preferences) and the disregard for context and need, that characterise behavioural change paradigms of social change. The analysis in this chapter draws on the analytic framework detailed in Chapter 2, in which social practices comprise four elements: rules, material infrastructure, practical knowledge and common understandings (Strengers, 2009). The potential of the current systems of housing provision is predicated on the extent to which they

form part of the reproduction and performance of a tenant's social practices (Schatzki, 2002).

The function of this chapter is to provide an analysis of this study to understand the ways in which the current Indigenous housing reforms might support sustainable tenancies for Indigenous tenants. This chapter addresses this aim across two sections. Based on recognition of the multiple causal drivers of housing outcomes, Section 6. 2 reviews the impact (and potential impact) of the current systems of housing welfare provision on how tenants live. In particular, the four constituent elements of social practice are used to structure a comparison of the systems of provision for tenancy management, property management and tenant support in Alice Springs and Halls Creek, and the key factors contributing to the quality of these. This analysis exposes that the fourth practice element – common understandings – is overlooked. The significance of this oversight is discussed. Section 6. 3 analyses the discussion of the systems of housing welfare provision within the context of the sustaining tenancies agenda, which is an important objective of the reforms. It begins by reviewing the extent to which key sustaining tenancies interventions are incorporated within the reforms. It discusses how jurisdictional-level amendments to the public housing model (hybridisms)[39] may enable supportive housing management to be better incorporated into public housing management. This analysis reveals how these public housing hybridisms can recast the roles of tenants and landlords in housing governance and thereby provide a new platform for the governance of social practices. The conclusion of the discussion in this chapter will be presented in the final chapter (Chapter 7).

6. 2   FLAWS IN THE SYSTEM OF PROVISION

The account of the lived experience of housing welfare in Chapters 4 and 5 detailed the hosting, housekeeping, personal hygiene, food and mobility practices that are carried by town-camp tenants. Some of these practices aligned with conventional western domestic ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy, whilst others did not. The noted diversity within each of these practices intimates variances in the compositions and combinations of practice elements that are experienced by the

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[39] As stated previously, this thesis refers to jurisdictional-level changes to standardised public housing management as 'hybridisms' or 'hybridisations', adopting the term from Porter's (2009b) report: *Towards a Hybrid Model of Public Housing in Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Communities*.

tenants, as carriers of these practices (Strengers & Maller, 2011). This section analyses how the current housing reforms have modified the four practice elements and discusses the implications of any such changes on tenants' domestic social practices. In doing so, its intent is to provide a new way of understanding the likely impact of the current Indigenous housing reforms on the social practices performed by tenants in the town-camps. The first three subsections compare tenancy management, property management and tenant support arrangements in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. They describe how these arrangements have modified the rules, material infrastructure and practical knowledge elements and the implications of this for domestic social practices carried by tenants in the town-camps. This analysis exposes that the fourth practice element – common understandings – remains unchanged by these reforms. Section 6.2.4 discusses the roots of this oversight and its significance.

6.2.1 Rules

The recent shift to public housing management in Indigenous communities is premised on establishing regulatory incentives and disincentives for tenants to adopt western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy. These incentives are established through (jurisdictional) *Residential Tenancy Act* (RTA) compliant tenancy agreements. The implications of this shift are understood as a product of the impact of the rules on the domestic social practices carried by Indigenous tenants. From Chapter 2, rules are understood to be 'sanctions or mandatory aspects of practices which must (or must not) be done' and concern direct attempts by interested parties to reinforce or reconfigure social practices (Strengers, 2010:8; 2009). This subsection compares the management of town-camp tenancies in the Northern Territory and Western Australian. It focuses on what these reforms have done to modify the rules element, and the implication of any such modifications on tenants' domestic social practices.

Tenancy management is inherently different in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This is largely because of the form of Australian federalism which allows States and Territories considerable influence in the administration and delivery of federal policy (Section 2.3.4). Thus, standard public housing management has been significantly manipulated and altered in each jurisdiction. Housing Management Agreements (HMA) and Housing Reference Groups (HRG) are the most significant hybridisms in Western Australia and the Northern Territory respectively. They share

a policy intent to engage Indigenous communities in shaping housing management by introducing platforms for community engagement.

However, these hybridisms support markedly different community dialogue: the HRG supports on-going community engagement whereas the HMA involves a one-off community engagement during its negotiations. The location and continuity of influence also differs. At best, HRG recommendations influence day-to-day local level housing management practices (policies remain wholly unchanged),[40] and the level of influence is in a state of flux, peaking only when housing managers adhere to HRG recommendations. On the other hand, the HMA gives permanent legal standing to amendments to housing management policies and procedures, which in turn impact management practices. However, whilst the HMA aims to establish other processes, standards and reporting requirements for the provision of all housing management services, HMAs were unsigned for the town-camps of Halls Creek (with the exception of Red Hill town-camp) at the time of this research (2010). This potentially skews understandings of the impact of these policy differences, although there were several suggestions that the existing interim tenancy arrangements were very similar to RTA conditions. Further to these policy-level differences, local housing management arrangements differ: Halls Creek is under direct housing management whilst the town-camps of Alice Springs are co-managed by Tangentyere and Territory Housing's Town Camp Unit (TCU).

However, notwithstanding these considerable differences, local tenancy management practices in Halls Creek and Alice Springs suffer similar problems. The management outcomes from the introduction of these hybridisms is unpredictable: sometimes standardised public housing management policy and procedures are preserved, but in other cases there are unanticipated diversions from standardised public housing management practices. Sections 4.3.2 and 5.3.2 described ad hoc, unpredictable, case-by-case tenancy management approaches to sign-ups, move-ins, property damage and other tenancy breaches, between different housing professionals, and over time. The findings indicate these inconsistent tenancy management practices embody a partially (or sometimes wholly) inaccurate picture of tenants' new rights and responsibilities (rules) under public housing management.

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[40] This contradicts the influence on management rules and procedures suggested by Porter (2009b).

These tenancy management practices are thus highly significant in shaping the 'rule' element. Tenants' understandings of housing management rules are largely informed by their experience of tenancy management practices. A consistent management response conveys a clear message to tenants about specific housing regulations (e.g. the consequences of tenancy breaches). On the other hand, the inconsistent management responses described in the previous chapters obscures this regulation by sending mixed messages to tenants. This is captured in examples of tenants' erroneous understandings of housing regulations, such as the consequences of tenancy breaches or absences. Likewise, as discussed in relation to HRGs, tenancy management practices that incorporate the wishes of the community lead some tenants to believe that the new tenancy regulations are malleable. Overall, tenancy management inconsistencies undermine the legal authority of the tenancy agreement by creating uncertainties about tenant and landlord responsibilities and accountabilities, and creating divergences from intended regulatory changes. Thus, as observed and understood through inconsistent and unpredictable tenancy management practices, these new rules are a source of confusion for tenants.

Given that the implications of the shift to public housing management are a product of the impact of the rules element on the domestic social practices performed by Indigenous tenants, these understandings of the rules element are significant. In particular, they indicate that the rule element manifest in Indigenous tenants' social practices is unlikely to align with standardised public housing management regulations. Accordingly, it is doubtful that the shift to public housing management will produce the anticipated social change in Indigenous tenants' ways of living.

The lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps of Alice Springs and Halls Creek corroborates this suggestion by highlighting how imposed regulatory environments have not transformed domestic social practices. For instance, in both jurisdictions, mobility practices involving long-term tenancy absences are carried by tenants despite regulations about tenancy absences and liability for tenancies. Conversely, hosting practices were performed involving large groups, excessive noise and alcohol, despite tenancy regulations about anti-social behaviour and liquor consumption bans in the town-camps. These findings corroborate the account of the imposition of regulatory environments in housing welfare in Chapter 2 in which Indigenous ways of life were shown to be preserved despite public housing regulations in urban public housing. Specifically, the findings here demonstrate that

changes to housing rules may not manifest in the transformation of the domestic social practices carried by Indigenous tenants. Chapter 2 also described how the mismatch between housing management regulations and tenants' ways of living commonly resulted in shorter tenancies or evictions. Understandings of social practice composition provide an alternative explanation for this, by revealing that these transformations are not forthcoming due to disjunctions between practice elements. In the findings of this research, the 'sayings' suggest common understandings informed by the Indigenous domestic moral economy are in tension with the rules. For instance, the retirement of some cleaning practices is occuring despite regulations about the expected condition of houses. This is explained by 'sayings' which highlight tension between rules, practical knowledge about health and hygiene, and the material infrastructure required to support these practices.

However, despite this, the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps also reveals some cases where domestic social practices are being transformed or retired due to new housing regulations. This was particularly the case in Alice Springs. For example, some hosting practices are being transformed such that they don't include alcohol or large groups, and the 'sayings' about these practices highlighted new public housing tenancy regulations. Conversely, some housekeeping practices (such as cleaning the house and yard) were being established and performed more frequently by some tenants. The 'sayings' about these practices highlighted new regulations about expected standards during tenancy inspections. Likewise, some mobility practices were retiring, and the 'sayings' about these revealed regulations about tenancy absences and liability for tenancies. It appears these practice changes are related to a comparatively higher awareness of the new housing arrangements in Alice Springs.

In this regard, controlling the level of inconsistent management practices may provide a partial remedy for this. This requires that the contributing factors for inconsistent management practices be understood and addressed. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 identify some critical issues common to both jurisdictions. Policy ambiguity similarly arose from professionals' differing perceptions of diversions from standardised public housing management. In Western Australian, policy ambiguity arose primarily from divergent understandings of the implications of the co-implementation of HMA agreements alongside standard RTA-compliant tenancy agreements. At one end of the spectrum were those who considered HMA negotiations to be tokenistic given the limited scope for amendments to be made to

public housing management. At the other end of the spectrum were those who considered Indigenous public housing as a new form of social housing. Policy ambiguity in the Northern Territory similarly arose from differing perceptions of the extent to which housing welfare provision diverged from standardised public housing through amendments, such as HRGs. In particular, there was contention surrounding the quality of community engagement, the influence of HRG recommendations and the capacity for housing management to diverge from standard public housing procedures.

In turn, this policy ambiguity encouraged procedural ambiguity in the co-implementation of hybrid and standard public housing policies. In particular, it indicates insufficient forethought around prescriptive procedures to seamlessly and consistently translate policies into management practices (such as decisions regarding which policies were relevant when). In Western Australia, the HMA theoretically alleviated procedural ambiguity by establishing clear direction about procedures. However, this was not substantiated at the local level in this study due to the status of HMAs in Halls Creek at the time of research. Indeed there was some suggestion the co-existence of the HMA and RTA-compliant tenancy agreements might exacerbate procedural confusion. As illustrated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, this procedural ambiguity similarly produced unpredictable tenancy management practices, sometimes conformant and sometimes divergent from standard public housing management.

Further to this, procedural ambiguity also arose from the incongruity of some mainstream policies and procedures in the town-camp setting, such as evictions. This incongruity was linked to unaddressed overcrowding, government failure to meet their own responsibilities (such as repairs and maintenance services), tenants' limited understanding of the RTA (in part due to the mixed messages produced through procedural inconsistencies), the permanence/longevity of tenants' leases, the lack of alternative accommodation options, and the lack of auxiliary non-housing services normally available to public housing tenants. Given these factors, the incongruity of stringent RTA enforcement was similarly identified in both jurisdictions. There was some consensus that sensitivity or leniency in housing management was required. The notion of a 'grace period' or 'transition period' enabling tenants to adapt to new expectations and responsibilities was particularly evident in Western Australia. However, in both jurisdictions the timelines and

management practices associated with this were vague, and where alternative approaches were established, these were not systematically adhered to.

The identification of policy and procedural ambiguity in Indigenous public housing management recalls the context of systemic ambiguity and conflict under which frontline professionals (described in Section 2.4.4) are afforded high levels of decision-making discretion. Contextualised within this literature, the descriptions of inconsistent and unpredictable tenancy management practices in Chapters 4 and 5 corroborate the considerable and unintended discretion afforded to local housing professionals in the management of town-camps tenancies. Furthermore, whilst the literature is limited in explaining the complex web of influences acting upon frontline professionals (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Brodkin, 1995; Peters, 2007:156),[41] the critical roots of policy ambiguity (HMAs and HRGs) and procedural ambiguity (policy ambiguity and the incongruity of the town-camp setting) identified in this study are unique to Indigenous public housing. The specificity of these factors to the town-camp context hint that the levels of discretion afforded to local housing professionals in town-camp housing management are higher than those usually afforded to their counterparts in urban public housing. From Chapter 2, this management discretion is understood as a 'wild card' of policy implementation. The literature cautions that unaudited tenancy management practices can become 'business-as-usual', despite the fact that their resilience does not ensure their alignment with policy goals or their justness.

This management discretion is all the more concerning given the range of organisational issues affecting tenancy management in both jurisdictions (especially at the local level). In the Northern Territory, beyond substantive resourcing issues, intra-governmental relationships were a primary concern and specifically, the division of tenancy management between Tangentyere and TCU and the organisational partitioning of TCU within Territory Housing. Equally, in Western Australia, in addition to resourcing issues, inter-organisational/agency relationships and specifically, the organisational capacity of the housing providers and the quality of interagency relationships were the main focus. These differences are explained

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[41] This literature predominantly concerns civil servants and government. Further consideration of government contractors is required, especially as, for example the literature suggests that these frontline professionals are perhaps driven by different motivations than government staff (Peters, 2007).

by substantive differences in the complexity of local arrangements for housing management and the involvement of Territory Housing Urban (THU) in the Northern Territory research. Notwithstanding these differences, the impacts of organisational inefficiencies are similar: the quality and consistency of housing management is compromised, as is organisational momentum, professional know-how and communication. As foreshadowed in Chapter 2, in the context of high levels of management discretion, these organisational issues leave frontline housing professionals to independently reconcile competing management tensions (Barton, 1989:44). Perhaps, most significantly, this discretionary role potentially limits (and at the very least renders unpredictable) the translation of community dialogue (policy hybridisms) into housing management practices. This is especially evident in the case of the HRGs in the Northern Territory.

This section suggests that until such time as these contributing factors are understood and addressed, it is unlikely that changes in public housing regulations will, in themselves, play a significant role in transforming tenants' social practices to conform to regulations.

6.2.2 Material Infrastructure

An important facet of the current Indigenous housing reforms is the creation and upkeep of the living environments (housing assets) in the Indigenous town-camps such that these are conducive to the adoption of western ways of living in a house and managing a tenancy. This is being achieved through the implementation of public housing standards of property management and an extensive concurrent housing construction program for new builds and refurbishments. The implications of these changes are understood as a product of the impact of the material infrastructure element on the domestic social practices performed by Indigenous tenants. 'Material infrastructure' is understood to comprise the means by which practices are undertaken and made possible and, thus, includes objects, technologies and infrastructures (Strengers, 2009). Specifically, Section 2.5.2 (Chapter 2) referred to the notion of 'scripting' through which an object is understood to recommend or prescribe certain social practices. This subsection compares the management of public housing assets in the town-camps of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It focuses on what these technical approaches have done to modify the material infrastructure element, and the implication of any such modifications on tenants' domestic social practices.

Property management policy and procedures are similar between Western Australia and the Northern Territory, despite the jurisdictional-level public housing policy hybridisms referred to in the previous section. However, at the local level, the provision of property management differs between town-camps: Halls Creek is under direct management (as with tenancy management), whilst in Alice Springs, Tangentyere has an informal agreement for the property management of the town-camps, although Territory Housing retains some oversight of this. Further to this, as priority communities under NPARIH, both the town-camps of Alice Springs and Halls Creek are similarly in receipt of extensive housing construction investments. However, Alice Springs is benefiting from a notably larger program, primarily due to the Northern Territory-based Strategic Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), under which all existing houses in the town-camps are being brought up to public housing standard and an additional 85 new houses are being built. As noted, these construction programs are not a focus here per se, but rather their impacts on the condition of housing assets.

Despite these commonalities and differences in property management arrangements there are marked similarities between the problems identified in Halls Creek and Alice Springs. As detailed in Section 4.3.3 and Section 5.3.3, poor property management services and, in particular, serious delays to repairs and maintenance services are found in both locations (although there are some reports of improvements to property management services). Both tenants and professionals describe ongoing, frequent delays and also the repeated reporting of similar issues, despite public housing standards that include strict timelines for actioning repairs and maintenance issues. Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that these issues stymie improvements to the town-camp housing assets (material infrastructure) under the current reforms. Indeed, as a result of these issues the state of town-camp housing (material infrastructure) appears variable (spanning the gamut from disrepair to well-maintained) and, in many instances, falls short of public housing standards.

Given that the implications of these technical approaches are a product of the impact of the material infrastructure element on the domestic social practices performed by Indigenous tenants, these understandings of the material infrastructure element are critical. Specifically, these findings suggest that the material infrastructure element implicated in tenants' social practices is unlikely to be of public housing standard. Subsequently, it appears improbable that the shift to

public housing standards of property management and the concurrent construction program will lead to the social change anticipated by this reform agenda.

Accounts of the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps of Alice Springs and Halls Creek in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 suggest that in some instances these changes have altered tenants' domestic social practices. For instance, the introduction of washing machines established and sustained laundering practices in many cases. Functioning bathroom amenities have sustained some bathing and showering practices, and in other cases created new ones. Yet whilst these practice changes conform to expectations, other examples demonstrate how tenants' domestic social practices are currently not being transformed. For instance, the provision of kitchens has not established or sustained cooking practices, especially in Halls Creek. The findings also reveal that domestic social practices are being transformed in unpredictable ways. For instance, the provision of new or refurbished houses has increased the performance of some hosting practices, especially in Halls Creek, and air-conditioning has led to an increase of indoor hosting practices. There are also multiple examples of how housing infrastructure (e.g. broken hot water systems and faucets, toilet blockages and damaged stoves) has led some personal hygiene practices, house-keeping practices and cooking practices to not be established, to be performed less frequently or to disappear altogether. In such cases, these material infrastructure elements are in tension with other elements, such as rules about keeping tenancies clean or common understandings related to the Indigenous domestic moral economy. The resolution of this disjunction between elements is unpredictable. This indicates that poor property management services can have unpredictable implications for sustaining and reconfiguring the social practices performed by tenants.

First and foremost, these findings corroborate the literature in Section 2.6.3, which suggested the ways in which material infrastructures (houses) are implicated in social practices are not readily anticipated. Equally, these findings corroborate the literature in Section 2.2.2, which foreshadows that social practices will not be drastically transformed by the introduction of more conventional housing with below par repairs and maintenance services. Specifically, the literature illustrated that whilst the imposition of conventional housing on Indigenous communities over the last century has changed Indigenous ways of living, these new ways of living have not systematically aligned with western ways of living. Indeed social practice theory relegates the role of material infrastructures in achieving social change by

suggesting that whilst these can be important in sustaining and transforming social practices, they are not *more* important than rules, practical knowledge or common understandings. These understandings provide an alternative perspective on the widely criticised emphasis on improving the condition of houses, casting this an oversimplification of the contributing elements to social change in town-camp communities.

Notwithstanding this, social practice theory also suggests material infrastructures are long-lasting, path dependent and difficult to change (Strengers, 2009; Chappells & Shove, 2004). The findings here suggest this is not the case in Indigenous town-camp communities as housing upgrades are, in some instances, significantly altering the material infrastructure implicated in tenants' social practices. However, it is in the context of poor repairs and maintenance services that the unknowns surrounding the material infrastructure element (in this case the house and its amenities) increase, encouraging a high level of unpredictability in social practices. One way of limiting this unpredictability is to understand and address the factors identified in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 that contribute to poor property management.

The root causes of poor property management varied between jurisdictions. In the Northern Territory, organisational issues were identified as particularly problematic. Territory Housing's Town-camp Unit (TCU) was found to micromanage Tangentyere's property management remit. This management oversight produced unnecessary management inefficiencies and service delays (albeit whilst also facilitating the identification and reporting on property management issues). This co-involvement complicated simple processes (e.g. filing property maintenance reports and property inspection follow-ups) because it necessitated constant interactions between professionals from each organisation. TCU's oversight (especially their sign-off of job requests) increased the paper trail for each maintenance issue, adding to both agents' workload. It also provided a loophole for TCU to overcome the strict public housing turn-around times for repairs and maintenance by assessing turn-around times based on the date of issue of their work order. The implications of this were exacerbated by poor communication and antiquated systems for data management. Lastly, this co-management promoted high levels of tenant confusion about who was responsible for their property management. These organisational issues were not mirrored in Halls Creek, where the organisational arrangements for property management were far simpler. Instead, a major issue for Halls Creek was poor accountability for service standards

and deadlines, itself a result of the monopoly of a small number of contractors over repairs and maintenance services.

In both jurisdictions an additional issue was inadequate contingency planning during construction programs (i.e. a plan for rehousing tenants whilst their houses were being built or refurbished). Professionals reported tenants staying with friends or relatives whilst construction work was undertaken, increasing the pressure on these already overcrowded households. They also reported cases where tenants with insect-infested belongings were moved into new or refurbished houses, thus immediately detracting from the quality of the living environment with this hygiene hazard.

The suitability of house design and specifications also contributed to poor property management. Tenants cited the need for outdoor storerooms, garages, sealed driveways and better disability access. The lived experience of Indigenous tenants suggests that the lack of suitable amenities has repercussions for the condition of the housing asset. For instance, the personal hygiene practices of large numbers of tenants and visitors sometimes resulted in broken faucets, leaking pipes and blocked toilets. Likewise, excessive mud in the wet season due to unsealed driveways in Halls Creek led some housekeeping practices to retire due to their perceived ineffectiveness. Especially in the context of unaddressed overcrowding, these issues contributed to substandard housing conditions which in turn caused further delays (whilst other issues were remedied) or limited the capacity for contractors to satisfactorily undertake maintenance work.

Remedying these property management issues to create and upkeep public housing standard living environments in the town-camps (material infrastructures), may in turn manifest in the more successful transformation of tenants' domestic social practices. Further, as identified in Chapters 4 and 5, until such time as these below standard living environments are addressed, we can predict the disjunction will remain between material infrastructures and rules, practical knowledge and common understandings.

6.2.3   Practical Knowledge

There are a range of formal mechanisms, programs and services for informing and educating tenants about western ways of living in housing and managing a tenancy,

and supporting tenants in making these changes. Another aspect of tenant support is structured and unstructured engagements with tenants to inform tenants of the new housing arrangements, including their tenancy rights and responsibilities. The objective of these approaches is to sustain both the tenancy and the condition of the housing asset. The implications of these tenant support approaches are understood as a product of the impact of the practical knowledge element on the domestic social practices carried by Indigenous tenants. 'Practical Knowledge' as a element of social practices, is understood to comprise 'the tacit skills required to undertake a particular practice' (Strengers, 2009:39). This subsection compares the tenant support arrangements in the town-camps of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It focuses on what these arrangements have done to modify the practical knowledge element, and the implication of any such modifications on tenants' domestic social practices.

The content and delivery of tenant support differs between the Northern Territory and Western Australia, even though their policy strategies share some commonalities. Both jurisdictions have a three-pronged approach to tenant support provision. This is established in the Northern Territory and still being developed in Western Australia. This approach includes an intensive tenant support program and an 'induction to the house' program to be provided at the outset of the tenancy to meet NPARIH requirements. In Western Australia this is included in the New Living Skills (NLS) program. In the Northern Territory, on the other hand, living skills are part of the intensive tenancy support program, whilst the misleadingly-named Intensive Tenancy Support (ITS) Program is focused on tenancy rules and regulations, rather than living skills per se. The third aspect of their tenant support approach differs: in Western Australia this entails community education strategies whereas in the Northern Territory it comprises Basic Tenant Support (BTS), provided by housing professionals.

Notwithstanding some strategic overlap, the content and delivery of tenant support differs substantially on the ground in Halls Creek and Alice Springs. This is partially explained by tenant support approaches being under development in Western Australia at the time of research. However, the findings suggest it is also related to differences in the capacities of the local tenant support providers. In Alice Springs, tenant support is provided by the well-established and relatively large Tangentyere Family and Youth Services (TFYS) and benefits from access to a broader range of support agencies due to the size of Alice Springs. In contrast, tenant support is

provided directly by DHW under the Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) in Halls Creek. The size and capacity of SHAP is considerably more limited than TFYS, and these limitations are compounded by access to less auxiliary support services. This afforded Halls Creek tenants access to much lower levels of tenant support (including intensive case management) than their counterparts in Alice Springs.

Despite these fairly significant differences, tenant support in Halls Creek and Alice Springs faced two similar problems. First, tenants in both jurisdictions received mixed messages about changes to their housing arrangements and their new rights and responsibilities. In Halls Creek however, this was linked in large part to the pending status of HMA negotiations and thus a lack of communication with tenants. Tenant disengagement, rumours, confusion about concurrent construction work and local politics were also cited. In contrast, in Alice Springs, there was not a lack of communication per se (although communication was perceived to be worsening), but rather a lack of clarity and consistency in the messages delivered by housing agencies. This is linked to high levels of policy contention, the complexity of organisational arrangements and ineffective community engagement.

The inadequacy of tenant support programs with ad hoc delivery was the other major issue identified in both jurisdictions. There was little systematic early engagement with tenants, especially prior to relocations into new or refurbished houses. Moreover, delivery was often based on a trial-and-error approach that deviated from jurisdictional policy strategies. In Alice Springs, there were notable diversions from the Remote Housing Tenant Support Framework (RHTSF). TFYS was primarily focused on intensive case-management (largely due to their existing client base), contrary to the expectations of some Territory Housing professionals. Conversely, the NPARIH tenant support requirements were being met not through ITS, but through an amended form of their Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP). There was disagreement surrounding the effectiveness of short-term, infrastructure-focused programs (ITS) without first providing intensive support to address tenants' underlying issues (e.g. domestic violence, alcohol abuse, etc.). These differences are linked to varying interpretations of NPARIH tenant support requirements. In Halls Creek, the primary issue was that the local response to NPARIH tenant support requirements were still being developed and thus support was very piecemeal. The NLS program was criticised as an overly simplistic, tick-the-box approach to tenant support. The underdeveloped state of tenant support

approaches in Western Australia is traced to both its low priority within the reform, and the State's commitment to substantial (and time-consuming) legislative housing reform.

In both jurisdictions their tenant support approaches were found to overlook the range and complexity of tenant needs (including the potential new support needs of head tenants). For instance, in circumstances where more pressing needs remain unaddressed, basic education about the infrastructure of their houses was considered superfluous. The untailored support approach was also especially problematic given the high levels of tenant confusion surrounding the new housing arrangements. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 indicate that the current provision of tenant support inhibits the capacity to educate tenants (practical knowledge) about new regulations and expectations about how to live in a house and manage their tenancy.

Given that the implications of these tenant support approaches are a product of the impact of the practical knowledge element on the domestic social practices performed by Indigenous tenants, these understandings of the modification of the practical knowledge element are significant. Specifically these findings suggest that the practical knowledge element implicated in tenants' social practices is unlikely to be changed to include public housing standards of living in a house and managing a tenancy. This indicates that it is unlikely that current approaches to tenant support will lead to the social change being sought through these reforms.

Accounts of the lived experience of housing welfare in the town-camps of Alice Springs and Halls Creek in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that in some instances tenant support has altered tenants' domestic social practices. For instance, hosting practices are performed indoors due to new understandings about air-conditioners and the health benefits of keeping cool in summer (especially for the very young and elderly). Likewise, cleaning practices to control pest infestations highlight practical knowledge related to hygiene and health. Bathing, showering and laundering practices are also being established or reconfigured based on new understandings about hygiene and health. Additionally, cooking practices are changing based on new understandings of kitchen infrastructure and the benefits of healthy eating. However, whilst this confirms the ways in which practical knowledge can, and has, reconfigured some social practices performed in the town-camps, it is not evident

that the practical knowledge implicated in these practices results from new tenant support provision.

Furthermore, accounts of many other social practices suggest the current tenant support arrangements have not modified the practical knowledge element. For instance, the 'sayings' about some housekeeping and personal hygiene practices reveal little awareness of their health and hygiene benefits. Likewise, where cooking practices were not established, there appeared to be limited knowledge about kitchen appliances. In other cases, 'sayings' about some cleaning, bathing and laundering practices reveal that these practices are retiring or transforming due to disjunctions between elements (rather than because of a lack of practical knowledge about conventional ways of performing these and the associated health and hygiene benefits). For instance, some laundering practices are retiring due to broken washing machines (material infrastructure) and some cleaning practices are disappearing due to unaddressed maintenance issues, such as leaking pipes (material infrastructure). Additionally, 'sayings' about some housekeeping practices revealed erroneous practical knowledge, such as about the capacity to avoid cockroach infestations, which has led to the retirement of frequent house-cleaning. This illustrates a potential impact of tenants receiving mixed-messages.

Significantly, Alice Springs town-camp tenants had access to a broader range of more highly developed tenant support programs and services than their counterparts in Halls Creek. Notably, this did not filter through to substantive differences in the lived experiences of tenants between the town-camps in both jurisdictions. This is best explained by the absence of high-need tenants in the dataset, who are the primary recipients of intensive tenant support services. Thus the impact of the availability of these services is perhaps not well captured in this study. In a similar vein, whilst most tenant support targets the lowest common denominator, it may not impact significantly upon the ways of living of most average-to-low need tenants, namely the participants in this study.

Remedying the issues currently impacting on the provision of tenant support (namely mixed-messages and inadequate programs) requires that the contributing factors for these be understood and addressed. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 identify several critical issues common to both jurisdictions. First, the problematic implementation of public housing management was found to similarly inhibit the provision of tenant support. The significance of this is highlighted by the discussion

in the previous two sections. It is also demonstrated in the examples of social practices in this section. For instance, material infrastructures are leading to the transformation of some practices despite modifications to the practical knowledge element. This indicates some social practices are not transformed due to disjunction between the rules and practical knowledge elements (as highlighted in this section).

Another critical contributing factor to problematic tenant support provision was the mismatch between program content and tenant support needs. Although the details of this varied between jurisdictions, both cases highlighted how untailored approaches to support provision ignored the diversity of tenant need (from low to high needs, as well as new advocacy needs due to the head tenant model). Organisational issues were also identified in both jurisdictions, although the details of these differ. In Western Australia, the limited organisational capacity of SHAP was identified, in particular its poor service integration with other support agencies. On the other hand, the resourcing of TFYS, rather than broad organisational capacity, was identified in Alice Springs. Indeed, at the interagency level, TFYS benefitted from its position within Tangentyere and subsequent organisational ties to relevant in-house departments (e.g. in coordinating support with other family and child services). In both jurisdictions resourcing pressures hampered the relationships between tenant support providers and tenants, although longstanding tenant support staff in Alice Springs had established strong relationships with some tenants. Lastly, disputation surrounding reform priorities and tenant support funding were also identified in Western Australia. Whilst these issues are also hinted in the Northern Territory case, the more extensive discussion of these issues in Western Australian is likely a product of the higher proportion of state level professionals participating in that study.

6.2.4 Overlooking Common Understandings

The previous three subsections reviewed the ways in which the new systems of housing welfare provision in the town-camps are modifying the elements of social practices. It identified how the rules, material infrastructure and practical knowledge elements are changing as a result of the current reforms and demonstrated how this manifest in the domestic social practices carried by town-camp tenants. 'Common understandings' as the fourth element of social practices is notable in its absence. As described in Chapter 2, these are accepted benchmarks or expectations for

particular practices that inform acceptable and unacceptable practices. Common understandings are socially engendered and, therefore, are informed by a range of people, events and things. What these reforms have done to modify the common understandings element is not apparent, thus far, from this analysis. However, the previous chapters identified and described the hybridisation of the public housing model in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. This revealed, as touched on in Section 6.2.1, the novelty of both the HRG in the Northern Territory (echoing Porter's findings) and the HMA in Western Australia in enabling otherwise standardised public housing management to incorporate specialised and flexible approaches based on community engagement. This section begins by returning to these hybridisms to discuss the incorporation of Indigenous common understandings in public housing management through these platforms for community engagement. Finding this problematic, the subsequent two subsections highlight the significance of this.

6.2.5   Public Housing Hybridisms

Social practice theory sheds new light on the significance of the HMA and HRG in Indigenous public housing. First, as platforms for community dialogue, these hybridisms are understood to potentially recast the rules of Indigenous public housing welfare as malleable and changeable (within limits), rather than rigidly fixed as is the case with standardised public housing policies and procedures. Moreover, they can also be conceptualised as a platform through which Indigenous common understandings may be vocalised and considered in housing management. This is illustrated both in Section 4.3.2.2 which describes how HRGs can incorporate critical cultural and social information into housing management, and again in Section 5.3.2.2 which describes how HMAs might ensure cultural sensitivity through cultural variations in housing management.

However, the findings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 also highlight two substantial impediments to the functioning of these community engagement platforms. The first of these concerns community engagement as discussed in Sections 4.3.2.2 and 5.3.2.2. At its heart, this issue concerns how Indigenous wishes/values (which include common understandings) are acknowledged, understood and translated into housing management practices (rules). The quality of community engagement is considered problematic in both jurisdictions for a range of reasons, including poor engagement with tenants and under- and mis-representation of community wishes.

Additionally, the findings suggest community engagement is potentially compromised, and of limited influence (tokenistic), due to the incapacities of housing management to diverge from standardised public housing management policies, procedures and management practices.

Furthermore, as discussed in Section 6.2.1, local housing professionals are afforded high levels of discretion in the translation of polices and procedures into management practices (Western Australia), and in the translation of HRG recommendations into management practices (Northern Territory). In Indigenous public housing, procedural ambiguity is exacerbated by both the complexity of implementing mainstream and hybridised policies side-by-side and by the incongruity of some policies and procedures in the town-camp setting (as highlighted in Section 6.2.1). Thus, housing management practices, which are understood from the literature to be unsystematic and highly discretional in welfare policy implementation generally, are potentially even more so in Indigenous public housing. Within this context, local housing professionals play a significant role in shaping public housing management practices (rules).

Accordingly, to the extent that the community is able to vocalise (its) common understandings, the translation of these into housing management practices (rules) is limited both by management discretion and the poor record of engagement. Accounts of the lived experience of housing welfare corroborate these impediments by providing little indication of how the rules element is being modified on the basis of Indigenous common understandings. The following subsections explain the significance of this missed opportunity. Section 6.2.6 uses the construct of 'home' to illustrate differences in common understandings about living in a house amongst Indigenous tenants and between these tenants and non-Indigenous Australians. Section 6.2.7 demonstrates, using the need for home as an example, that these differing common understandings may create specific housing needs that are not easily met by standardised housing welfare. In doing so, it suggests that the failure to consider Indigenous social expectations in the current housing reforms may equate to ignoring a known source of tenancy instability.

6.2.6   Constructs of Home

In much of the western world, expectations about establishing a home inform social expectations about how one should live in a house. Many domestic social practices

are intimately linked to the concept of 'making a home', specifically expectations related to family, identity, privacy, stability, autonomy, belonging and attachment. Thus, the correlation between house and home is particularly pronounced in the western construct of home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Bachelard, 1994). The house, as an ensemble of material infrastructures, is understood to be scripted with particular common understandings (Akrich 1992 in Strengers, 2009). As such, the house prescribes certain practices through which its inhabitants achieve a sense of home. Lounge rooms and kitchens provide gathering spaces for families to socialise (family), security systems (e.g. locks and alarms) enable inhabitants to protect their belongings (security), and bedrooms, doors and curtains enable inhabitants to sleep in privacy (privacy).

These (western) normative meanings of home are challenged by, and incompatible with, many Indigenous constructs of home (see Long et al., 2008a:71; Cooper & Morris, 2005; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Birdsall-Jones et al., 2010). Absenting a house and repainting it following the death of an inhabitant is illustrative of this. For town-camp tenants, home was primarily about a sense of belonging. This was achieved through the physical presence and proximity of family and kin. For others, this was achieved through spiritual connections to land and place, through shared, longstanding histories and family associations, countering perceptions of Indigenous mobility and transience. For many other tenants, connections to both people (spiritual stability) and place (physical stability) were central to their construct of home. Most significantly, the construct of 'home' for town-camp tenants was varyingly predicated on the Indigenous domestic moral economy (Peterson & Taylor, 2003) and the subsequent importance of Indigenous mobility in supporting this. This includes inter-family visiting and hosting and tenants' own capacity to travel to see people and places of significance, for which there is no western parallel. This suggests that whilst western world common understandings pertaining to living in a house are informed by expectations related to making a home, for many Indigenous tenants, these common understandings are derived from a commitment to the Indigenous domestic moral economy. However, where tenants' commitment to these social imperatives was weaker, their definitions of home shared more parallels with typical western constructs of home. For instance, the house, although generally less significant than in the western construct, was often included in these tenants' definitions.

The lived experience of tenants in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 corroborates this by illustrating a range of social expectations about living in a house in the 'sayings' about domestic social practices. Some of the diversity in social expectations can thus be traced to variations in tenants' commitment to the Indigenous domestic moral economy. For instance, many tenants' 'sayings' about hosting and mobility practices highlight social expectations about spending time with (and hosting) family. In these cases, domestic social practices performed within the house (by tenants or visitors) sometimes result in damage to the material infrastructure through overuse or misuse (e.g. blocked toilets, water leakages and broken washing machines). Moreover, sometimes in these cases, despite common understandings about hygiene, domestic and personal cleaning practices (such as washing clothes) were transforming or retiring due to disjunction with the material infrastructure element. Conversely, other 'sayings' about hosting and mobility practices imply a weaker commitment to the hospitality of visitors and to travel to visit kin. And equally, 'sayings' about housekeeping, domestic hygiene and food practices reveal common understandings aligned with western ways of living in a house (such as expectations about particular levels of domestic and personal hygiene, and social expectations about providing healthy food for families). In this way, the divergences from western social expectations about living in a house are often most pronounced where tenants' commitment to the Indigenous domestic moral economy is strongest, and least pronounced where it is weakest. Moreover, in this latter category, tenants whose way of life aligned more closely with western ways of living, commonly reported a slightly stronger attachment to their house, and identified as more house-proud than other tenants, evoking the western construct of home.

These divergent constructs of home, are particularly significant here to the extent that they adeptly illustrate the existence of a range of social expectations about living in a house between Indigenous tenants and non-Indigenous Australians, and to a lesser degree amongst tenants.

6.2.7 The Need for Home

The need for home is universal (Relph, 1984). Indigenous constructs of home are understood to inform an Indigenous-specific need for home. As described above, for many Indigenous tenants, meeting this need involves a level of commitment to the Indigenous domestic moral economy. However, the findings from this study suggest that meeting these needs within a housing welfare context may be

problematic. Indeed this shortcoming of the current reforms was (unknowingly) touched on by one professional when they claimed 'tenants are used to living in houses, not homes' (P09WA, 2010).

The lived experience of tenants reveals how honouring a commitment to the Indigenous domestic moral economy (common understandings) calls for ways of living that are counter to those expected or required under current physical (material infrastructure) and regulatory (rules) housing welfare arrangements. The difficulties in meeting this need for home are encapsulated in the disjunction between common understandings and other practice elements. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 detail several hosting, mobility and housekeeping practices in which tenancy regulations and/or material infrastructures clash with Indigenous social expectations. For instance, some mobility practices involving extended absences to visit kin are in tension with tenancy regulations, and some hosting practices involving accommodating large numbers of visitors are in tension with restrictive housing layouts. Contextualised within understandings of the new housing arrangements, these findings suggest that these practices are likely to result in tenancy instability. This indicates two things. First, that tenancy instability is likely to eventuate from some attempts to satisfy their need for home. And second, where practices such as these are retired, current housing welfare may not enable Indigenous tenants to satisfy their need for home, in the way it is presumed to for non-Indigenous Australians.

Moreover, in this context, the house becomes a site of tension between the rules (those scripted into the material infrastructure and those explicitly imposed by housing management) and social expectations of the Indigenous domestic moral economy (common understandings). Where tension between elements is particularly pronounced, the performance of domestic social practices has implications for the state of the material infrastructure. For instance, property damage occurs through overuse or misuse. In turn, the modification of material infrastructures in this way has worrisome implications for some housekeeping, domestic hygiene and food practices being performed by tenants. Specifically, this is found to encourage the retirement of some of the very practices these reforms aim to establish and sustain, such as housekeeping practices.

These findings corroborate the (predominantly anthropological) literature in Chapter 2 which demonstrates that the cultural imperatives of the Indigenous domestic moral

economy are at odds with physical and regulatory housing welfare interventions. However, it moves beyond this to provide a new understanding of these based on the composition of tenants' domestic social practices. In particular, it reveals that alternative ways of living do not arise solely from a lack of know-how (practical knowledge), limited regulatory incentives (rules) or inadequate physical environments (material infrastructure), but rather that the domestic social practices performed by town-camp tenants also comprise Indigenous-specific common understandings. Most significantly, practice theory allows the established tension between Indigenous ways of life and housing welfare to be recast as the disjunction between common understandings elements and other practice elements in tenants' domestic social practices.

6.2.8 Conclusion

This section provided a new way of understanding the likely impact of the current Indigenous housing reforms. Domestic social practices, and specifically understandings of their composition, provided new insights into the ways in which tenancy problems are created and exacerbated in current Indigenous housing welfare. The first three subsections compared the systems of provision of public housing management and tenant support in the town-camps of the Alice Springs and Halls Creek focusing on how these reforms modify the elements of social practice. In doing so, it exposed how the rules, material infrastructure and practical knowledge elements of social practices have been changed. Moreover, it revealed how inconsistent tenancy management, substandard property management and inadequate tenant support programs variously distort and impede the ways in which these respective elements of social practice are modified. Drawing from the lived experience of town-camp tenants, it illustrated that whilst these changes to the elements have manifest in some domestic social practices being modified, others are being sustained or transformed in unpredictable ways. Beyond the inherent changeability of social practices, this unpredictability has two sources. It is traced to an erratic disruption within each of these elements. For instance, the material infrastructure element is modified in unpredictable ways due to poor property management. It is also traced to a disjunction between the practice elements. Specifically, changes to the rules, material infrastructure and/or practical knowledge elements are shown to have modified practices but in tension with other elements. For instance, rules about tenancy absences have changed, yet common understandings about the importance of visiting kin remain, and thus there is tension

between these elements which renders the performance of mobility practices unpredictable. These findings alone indicate significant operational faults in the current system of housing welfare provision.

Moreover, social practice theory emphasises the criticality of all four elements in reconfiguring social practices. Through the initial three-part analysis, this section exposed that common understandings implicated in tenants' domestic social practices are unchanged by current housing reforms. Notwithstanding this, the hybridisms of the public housing model were identified as a (currently) problematic community engagement platform through which Indigenous common understandings can be introduced into public housing management (rules). However, that this opportunity is currently unfulfilled marks perhaps the most critical flaw within the current systems of provision. The construct of home was used to frame differences in common understandings about living in a house amongst town-camp tenants, and between these tenants and non-Indigenous Australians. This suggested that some alternative ways of living arise from Indigenous-specific social expectations, and not, as currently espoused by government, from a lack of know-how, limited regulatory incentives or inadequate physical environments. The universal need for home was then used as an example to illustrate that differing common understandings may give rise to specific housing needs (in this example, an Indigenous need for home that differs from normative western understandings).

This section thus provides a new way of understanding the limited capacity for public housing welfare to meet Indigenous needs (Chapter 2). Previous housing policy has imposed physical and regulatory environments, naively and rigidly expecting this to result in social change with limited success (Section 2.2). Underlying the well-established disconnection between Indigenous cultural imperatives and Indigenous housing welfare lies a disjunction between Indigenous common understandings, and the rules and material infrastructures elements in the practices carried by tenants. The community engagement supported through new public housing hybridisms potentially circumvents this disjunction by enabling Indigenous social expectations concerning their tenancy (which are otherwise still largely overlooked in the current systems of housing provision) to be incorporated into housing management. Critically, by disrupting the rules element, these hybridisms potentially ease disjunctions between Indigenous common understanding and rules and material infrastructures. As such, a more diverse range of social practices may be sustained, and moreover tolerated by housing

management within Indigenous public housing tenancies. Potentially included amongst these are social practices informed by Indigenous-specific common understandings. However, as the findings indicate, these hybridisms are currently problematic due to high levels of housing management discretion and the quality of community engagement. Their current failure to assist in the incorporation of Indigenous common understandings has evident repercussions for achieving social practice change. However, this shortcoming is perhaps all the more pertinent given the objective for sustainable tenancies, as it cautions that current housing welfare may be overlooking a range of Indigenous housing needs that emerge from these social expectations.

Ultimately, this section confirms an underlying incompatibility between the new systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision and the lived experience of town-camp tenants, first hinted in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. All this does not mean that behavioural change reform approaches should be replaced by radical new social practice theory-based approaches. Indeed rational actor based policy discourses are enduring (reinforcing and reinforced by their supporting theoretical discourses) and alternative policy paradigms will go largely unnoticed. Instead, the appeal of this new paradigm is that it paves the way for a much broader range of potential strategies, across various scales, involving the reconfiguration of practice elements. In this light, there is a need for a practical response to address the identified implementation issues which are shown to inhibit the modification of the practice elements. Moreover, there is a need for further consideration of the ways in which the disjunction between Indigenous social expectations (common understandings), and other social practices elements might be alleviated. One strategy is to investigate how common understandings might be modified to align with western social expectations. However, this is not straightforward as although common understandings are individually experienced, they emerge from 'socially shared and culturally similar conditions and experiences with practices' (Strengers, 2009:42). A more promising strategy is thus to consider the ways in which physical (material infrastructures) and regulatory (rules) arrangements might be more successfully altered to assuage the tension between these and Indigenous social expectations (common understandings). This is considered in the following section in the context of the sustainable tenancies agenda.

6. 3   RETHINKING THE DYNAMICS OF THE SYSTEMS OF PROVISION

The purpose of this section is to analyse the discussion of the systems of housing welfare provision within the context of the sustaining tenancies agenda, which is an important objective of the reforms. The adoption of a sustaining tenancies agenda across all social housing in Australia is predicated on the view that tenancies should be sustaining, not simply sustained (Seelig & Jones, 2006). The difference is a question of housing and non-housing outcomes secured for the tenant. Although still loosely defined, this agenda entails interventions to assist at-risk tenants in advoiding tenancy failure based on approaches aimed at achieving positive tenancy outcomes (Seelig & Jones, 2006). The application of this agenda is particularly critical to the housing outcomes of Indigenous tenants given the fragility of Indigenous social housing tenancies described in Chapter 2. Social practice theory construes this agenda as the provision of support to establish and sustain the range of social practices required to meet broader housing needs (such as the need for home, residential stability and other outcomes) and not simply the social practices conformant with tenancy regulations (although this is also critical). However, as described in Chapter 2, the uptake of this agenda in public housing is problematic (Section 2.4.3) as it conflicts with other public housing management agendas (Section 2.4.4) in which the focus is much narrower (i.e. on achieving social practices that comply with tenancy regulations).

Practice theory provides insights into opportunities to alter the course and composition of social practices (elements) to better accommodate the sustaining tenancies agenda within the constraints of the current reforms. Initially, this appears counterintuitive to perceptions that there are 'no reliable means of steering or governance' of social practices and that 'practices and systems of practice have lives of their own' (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). However, as described in Section 2.5.3, studies by Shove and Walker (2010) among others, advance the concept of the 'governance of social practices' to demonstrate how often deliberate interventions have been cumulatively effective and have resulted in changes to social practices.

The intent of this section is to analyse how the housing reforms incorporate, and can better incorporate, the sustaining tenancies agenda. The first three subsections review the incorporation of three critical sustaining tenancies interventions - service integration, tenant support, and supportive tenancy management (described in

Section 2.4.2) - within the reforms. It considers these in light of the flaws in the systems of housing welfare provision (Section 6. 2). Of these, it remains unclear how supportive housing management is facilitated through these reforms. The potential for jurisdictional-level hybridisms of the public housing model to provide a platform for incorporating supportive housing management is considered. Through this, the analysis reveals that the traditional roles of the landlord (housing professionals) and the tenant in housing governance may be recast by these hybridisms. Section 6.3.4 expands on the significance of this by investigating how public housing hybridisms might shape particular roles for tenants and landlords in Indigenous public housing and, therein, also present a new platform for the governance of social practices.

6.3.1 Service Integration

Service integration across the human service sector (inclusive of tenant support services) is considered critical. This is especially so as the sustaining tenancies agenda does not exist in a housing management vacuum, but rather it reflects the trend in public sector management towards whole-of-government approaches that bring together human service sectors to achieve better social policy outcomes (See Jones et al., 2007). It also reflects the concurrent increased targeting of social housing at special/complex needs individuals. The range of organisational issues identified in this study (including poor communication and over-stretched resourcing) thwart the implementation of public housing management and tenant support services. These issues also jeopardise service integration. Specifically, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 demonstrate how these issues impinge on the quality of intra-organisational relationships within housing management (such as between TCU and Tangentyere in Alice Springs) and the inter-organisational relationships between housing management and tenant support agencies (e.g. between DHW and SHAP in Halls Creek). These issues are all the more significant for the quality of service integration as they occur in a context of inadequate concurrent organisational change management in SHAs, through which collaborative partnerships across the human services might otherwise have been established.

6.3.2   Intensive Tenant Support

Tenant support is another critical intervention for sustaining tenancies. Chapter 2 highlighted the capacity for tenant support (and especially intensive case-management) to enable tenants to sustain their tenancies and achieve a raft of positive outcomes (Habibis et al., 2007; Flatau et al., 2009).   Tenant support provision is the most explicit indication of the uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda in these reforms. However, Sections 4.3.4 and 5.3.4 detailed a wide range of issues impacting on its provision. These issues suggest that many of the critical ingredients for tenant support (Chapter 2) are not currently present in town-camp tenant support approaches and programs.

Organisational issues such as problematic and inadequate resourcing (Alice Springs) and limited organisational capacity (Halls Creek) contribute to staff turnover, especially among local-level staff. This in turn inhibits the development of local knowledge and cultural sensitivity and, most importantly, client trust which are all known contributors to successful tenant support outcomes (Flatau et al., 2009). Equally, Chapters 4 and 5 highlight the inadequate development of support programs (especially in Western Australia) and disagreement over program content between funding provider and support provider (in Alice Springs). These factors jeopardise the capacity to deliver early intervention and the comprehensive provision of case management to all tenants in need. Further to this, program content (and specifically the lack of tailored responses to individual need) fails to respond to the diversity tenant needs (including new advocacy needs related to new tenancy responsibilities). Yet from Chapter 2, early intervention, intensive case-management and tailored services are identified as critical to achieving positive tenancy outcomes (Flatau et al., 2009).

Strategic issues regarding reform priorities and funding are also identified (particularly in Western Australia) as affecting tenant support provision. Tenant support is found to be a victim of poor promotion. Specifically, in both jurisdictions, the entrenched government focus on housing infrastructure (material infrastructure) and housing legislation (rules) is seen to relegate the development and funding of tenant support programs, despite evidence of their criticality. In turn, this dictates the underdeveloped nature and unfulfilled potential of this sustaining tenancies intervention as identified in Halls Creek and Alice Springs. This finding supports the literature (Section 2.4.2) regarding the difficulties in securing tenant support funding due to the lack of established systematic data on their programs' achievements.

These issues are all the more significant as Section 6. 2 identified that the practical knowledge element of social practice was solely modified through tenant support, and thus the criticality of its successful provision.

However, as Section 6. 2 highlights, changes to one practice element alone is an insufficient predictor of the transformation social practices. Indeed the analysis in the previous section provides new ways of understanding the operational issues affecting the provision of tenant support (identified in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). Specifically, the problematic provision of public housing management affects how the rules and material infrastructure elements are being modified by these reforms. The domestic social practices of town-camp tenants illustrate how changes to these two elements can in turn hinder the effectiveness of tenant support in transforming some domestic social practices. For instance, practical knowledge about health and hygiene is not transforming some laundering practices due to tension with the material infrastructure element (e.g. broken washing machines).

Furthermore, that common understandings are not changing as a result of the reforms (Section 6. 2) has implications for the effectiveness of tenant support provision. For instance, practical knowledge about tenant liabilities (including during tenancy absences) is not manifest in the transformation of some mobility practices due to tension with the common understanding elements (such as social expectations around spending time with family). Thus, whilst the current levels and quality of tenant support may alter practical knowledge elements, it inevitably falls short of reconfiguring the associated common understandings. This provides a new way of understanding contentions in the sustaining tenancies literature that 'no amount of life skills [tenant support] is going to bridge the gap between some Indigenous populations and the white 'model' of urban living [common understandings]' (Habibis et al., 2007:99).

Significantly, best practice for sustainable tenancies promotes action research and community empowerment principles, delivered together with Indigenous organisations to ensure cultural sensitivity. This Indigenous involvement is predicated on broadening support programs to acknowledge and incorporate Indigenous social expectations (such as cultural imperatives). In this way, this best practice appears to be an (unwitting) acknowledgement that common understandings need to be considered and incorporated into support approaches to achieve sustainable tenancies. However, in the context of current tenant support

provision, the organisational, programmatic, strategic and operational issues identified in this study represent considerable barriers to incorporating these best practice principles.

6.3.3 Supportive Housing Management

Supportive housing management is a crucial, yet highly problematic, intervention for sustaining tenancies. As outlined in Chapter 2, the content of supportive housing management is itself contested and under-researched, especially for Indigenous town-camp communities. Even so, there is consensus in the Indigenous housing literature that (even subtle) flexibility in the management of Indigenous cultural imperatives (Flatau et al., 2005; EOC 2004; Cooper & Morris, 2005; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Jacobs & Atkinson, 2008) and specialised service delivery models and practices (Milligan et al., 2010:50; 2011; Long et al., 2008a; AIHW, 2009a) can successfully address Indigenous needs. Indeed in Chapter 2, the mainstream public housing model in urban and regional areas (and its associated standardised management practices) was shown to impinge on Indigenous tenants' residential experiences and the viability of their tenancies (Prout, 2008) and evoke feelings of vulnerability, humiliation and shame (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008). Through the understandings arising from the previous section, these problems are conceptualised as disjunctions between the elements of tenants' domestic social practices, and in particular, between Indigenous-specific common understandings, and rules and material infrastructures. Thus, the appeal of management flexibility and specialised service delivery is understood to lie in its capacity to better incorporate the Indigenous social expectations that impact on their ways of living in a house (common understandings) in housing management (rules) in order to ease the disjunction between practice elements. It is indeed unsurprising to find that at the heart of the sustaining tenancies agenda is an intervention through which common understandings can be incorporated, given their criticality (alongside the other three practice elements) to changing the practices carried by tenants.

Prior to this study, little attention had been paid to the capacity to incorporate specialised and flexible policies and procedures into the mainstream public housing model in an Indigenous town-camp context. The singular exception to this, Porter's Northern Territory based research (Section 2.3.4), does not discuss the sustaining tenancies agenda per se nor its call for supportive housing management. However, it does identify the potential for public housing hybridisms (i.e. the HRG) to

incorporate tailored and flexible approaches in public housing management. This study corroborates this finding, and additionally identifies a similar potential for flexible and specialised policies and procedures in the HMA in Western Australia.

However, having identified these opportunities for incorporating supportive housing management, the intent is not to enumerate housing policies and procedures (rules) that would better accommodate (or be less in opposition with) the common understandings associated with the Indigenous domestic moral economy. This would be superfluous, especially as the previous section revealed through the construct of home, that a range of common understandings are implicated in the domestic social practices of tenants. For instance, mobility practices involving long tenancy absences and hosting practices involving large groups of visitors are recruiting some tenants, but not others. Accordingly, for those tenants who have been recruited to competing mobility and hosting practices, changes to the rules element (based on cultural imperatives surrounding kin reciprocity and support) are likely to have unpredictable outcomes on these practices. Instead, the purpose here is to expand on the ways in which this opportunity for incorporating supportive housing management into public housing management is currently problematic.

As previously identified in Section 6.2.5, public housing hybridisms are currently problematic on two accounts: the quality of community engagement and the high levels of housing management discretion. In the context of sustaining tenancies, these problems should be revisited. With regards to community engagement, the range of Indigenous social expectations (common understandings) about living in a house and managing a tenancy (described in Section 6.2.4), cautions that even genuine community engagement (such as outlined by Lee and Morris (2005)) will only produce housing management practices (rules) that reflect a portion of these. Navigating this shortcoming is likely to be complicated for local housing professionals.

Further, in the incorporation of supportive housing management, the high levels of management discretion afforded to local housing professional identified in Section 6.2 is all the more problematic. As substantiated by the literature in Chapter 2, this management discretion renders local housing professionals particularly vulnerable to reconciling the tensions and ambiguities that result from competing agendas within public housing. This vulnerability is all the more critical given that the known barriers to the uptake of supportive housing management (Section 2.4.4) appear

also to be present in Indigenous public housing. Specifically, adhering to a sustaining tenancies agenda will call for supportive management practices (rules) that may conflict with standard disciplinary public housing policies and procedures (rules). Indeed, disciplinary approaches are an integral part of the tenancy agreements and through which the new individual responsibility agenda is enacted.

In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 this conflict is most evident in the contestation surrounding housing management leniency. For instance, it is evident in the conflicting references to the comparative management leniency of Indigenous public housing and urban public housing (Northern Territory), and in references to a 'grace period' or 'transitional phase' during which management would be less stringent on tenants (Western Australia). Professionals' interpretations of housing policy and procedures (themselves partially informed local sensitivities and management experience) appear to shape the varyingly lenient (or strict) tenancy management practices. As described previously, the hybridisms currently complicate this process by creating uncertainties about which policies and procedures should be adopted when, where and for whom. Through this contestation surrounding local housing professionals' conflicting policing and caring roles, Lea's (2008b) image of the Indigenous healthcare professional under conflicting pressures as community advocate and government agent appears to be transposed to Indigenous public housing management. Contested management leniency thus encapsulates the difficulties of reconciling a disciplinary and supportive role within Indigenous public housing management (Section 2.4.3).

Additionally, corroborating the literature in Section 2.4.3, this study demonstrates that local housing professionals are constrained by financial agendas and the need for management efficiencies. This is especially evident in accounts of property management, such as the lack of contingency planning for accommodating tenants during construction work. Conversely, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 reveal how in both jurisdictions there has been a lack of organisational change management in conjunction with these significant reforms to support local housing professionals in negotiating these management tensions.

Further, whilst discretion may be precisely what allows the tension between competing agendas to be negotiated, the corollary of this is inconsistent tenancy management practices. Indeed variations in management practices are perhaps to be expected from management flexibility. However, as argued in Section 6.2.1, the

result is diversity in the ways the rules element is modified, which in turn manifests itself in unpredictable domestic social practices. In this light, local housing professionals' current unabated discretion to determine management practices appears imprudent. This is especially so in the context of the significant implementation issues (and particularly organisational issues). The inconsistency and unpredictability of the outcomes of this discretionary role suggests that the capacity for public housing hybridisms to provide a platform for supportive management practices is currently qualified.

However, whilst for now these two issues hinder the successful uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda in Indigenous public housing (and specifically supportive housing management), the public housing hybridisms also present new housing governance opportunities. Specifically, they call into question the traditional roles of local housing professionals and Indigenous tenants in Indigenous public housing and the dynamic of their relationship in shaping housing management practices (rules). For the tenant, this new role emerges in relation to their community engagement, whilst for the local housing professionals, this new role emerges through their discretionary management power (itself a product of the public housing hybridisms). Both parties are thus potentially significant in reinforcing or modifying the rules element of social practices through their involvement. The next section expands upon the significance of these new roles.

6.3.4 Housing Governance

Social practice theory informs us of the likely success of particular governance approaches. Specifically, it rejects the 'us' and 'them' dialectic of those being governed, and in particular its implication that one set of actors governs over another (Shove & Walker, 2010). Instead, social change is understood to depend upon 'self-organising and to a degree self-regulating forms of self-governance' (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). Thus, practice theory underscores the criticality of the role of consumers/practitioners (tenants) in social change, not just that of producers/promoters (landlords) (Shove & Walker, 2010:475). Within a housing governance context, the tenant is thus no longer passive; instead, their role in this dynamic is understood in relation their capacity for 'generating, sustaining and overturning' social practices (Shove & Walker, 2010:476). This new role resonates with the conceptualisation of the 'responsible' tenant as an increasingly central figure in social housing governance (Flint, 2004b).

In Indigenous public housing, the hybridisms identified in this study potentially accommodate new governance arrangements for facilitating social change. Specifically, these platforms for tenant engagement recall the co-management of social practices framework described in Chapter 2. The co-management approach to housing governance necessitates new ways of thinking about the tenant-landlord relationship that go beyond its traditionally legal form as embodied in the tenancy agreement. This governance framework calls for a participatory and collaborative approach to housing welfare management in which there is mutual responsibility between landlords and tenants. The hybridisms of the public housing model (HMA negotiations or HRG meetings), in which engagement between tenants and housing professionals is their raison d'être, potentially encapsulates this dynamic.

The co-management framework conceptualises two flexible, interchangeable roles for tenants. The first is a traditional role: the tenant is a carrier of practice (whilst the landlord is an 'active and deliberate facilitator of practice configurations' (Strengers, 2011:48)). The second role is the tenant as facilitator of their own co-management (Strengers, 2011:48). This role represents a marked diversion from roles played by urban social housing tenants, whom identify as 'petitioners with needs' rather than 'consumers' with a range of housing options within the housing system (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008:36). The first of these roles manifests in changes to the rules element which lead to the transformation or retirement of particular social practices carried by tenants. The latter role however, is not directly apparent. As discussed, whilst the HMA and HRG potentially afford the tenant opportunities to influence housing management practices, the findings of this study do not suggest an increase in tenant control in housing management. These findings may be partially a result of the infancy of the reforms, nevertheless the problems detailed in Section 6.2.5 suggest there are certainly other substantive factors at play. Significantly, this indicates the role of the tenant as a critical change agent in housing governance is, as yet, unrealised in Indigenous public housing management.

However, this study reveals (currently unfulfilled) potential for these hybridisms to expand the tenant's role in housing governance and through which tenant-driven changes to housing management (rules element) can be harnessed. Specifically, the hybridisms suggest that housing governance could be a potentially nuanced and dynamic process in which tenants' social practices are reconfigured by changes to rules, material infrastructure and practical knowledge (as described in Section 6. 2),

but equally, through which rules are modified to accommodate Indigenous social expectations (common understandings).

This study suggests the nuances of Indigenous housing governance will be defined by the format of community engagement supported by each hybridism, and the scope for housing management discretion this format affords. In the Northern Territory, the ongoing nature of community engagement required by the HRGs, dictates that both the sustained quality of this engagement, and the translation of HRG recommendations into housing management practices will remain critical to supporting this dual role for tenants in housing governance. In contrast, in Western Australia, as community engagement is a 'one-off' during HMA negotiations, it is both the quality of this singular engagement and the continued translation of the subsequent hybrid policies and procedures into management practices that will be critical. On this basis, the significance of community engagement and management discretion are reconsidered here in light of these governance arrangements.

As raised in Chapter 2, an important emergent distinction is made between obligation (rules) and desirability (expectations) in the social control discourse in social housing governance. In the case of the former, the centrality of RTA compliance to tenancy management demonstrates that this holds true for Indigenous public housing. In the case of the latter, Chapter 2 describes 'a [recent] moral exhortation of tenants enacted through policy discourse or housing management techniques' (Flint, 2004b). This aligns with the widening of tenant responsibility through 'moral communitarian duty'. In the same way that the bifurcation of good and bad tenants in social housing is based on dominant (western) social values (Saugeres, 2000:590), Flint describes tenants being required to 'regulate their own behaviour in accordance with the "norms" and values of these communities' (Flint, 2004b). However, whilst this self-governance discourse in housing studies has not been applied to the Indigenous public housing context, it does suggest the roles of tenant and landlord in public housing appear less rigid than either the terms 'the governed' and 'the governing' imply or than intimated by the enduring history of social control in housing welfare. Notwithstanding this, the findings of this study suggest conventional forms of self-regulation per se, which are an increasingly common technique to meet this second government aim (Flint, 2004b; Rose, 1999), do not feature in Indigenous housing reform. Indeed the range of Indigenous social expectations revealed in Section 6.2.4, and their divergence

from western social expectations, suggest the outcomes of self-regulation in Indigenous public housing may be particularly unpredictable.

Instead, it appears that the concept of desirability is introduced and enforced in Indigenous public housing through the hybridisms. Much like mainstream self-regulation strategies, and in the same vein as previously imposed 'white' institutions and structures for Indigenous governance, the involvement of the tenant in public housing governance relies on voluntary tenant participation in HMA negotiations and in (selective) voluntary participation in the case of HRGs. The criticality of incorporating Indigenous common understandings into housing management to achieve supportive housing management (Section 6. 2), makes the widening of tenant responsibility all the more onerous in Indigenous public housing. Ultimately tenants' new role in housing governance relies on the unproven skills, capabilities and willingness of (selected) tenants.

Additionally, the discretionary role of housing professionals identified in this study, raises new questions about governance dynamics within the co-management framework. In short, it suggests these governance processes are far more complex than indicated by the literature in Chapter 2. On the one hand, management discretion expands the capacity to accommodate Indigenous wishes (common understandings) by allowing housing professionals scope to adopt flexible and specialised management practices (rules) to cater for these. This is illustrated by lenient management practices in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, for instance, which allow tenants to absent their tenancies for long periods without ramifications. On the other hand, management discretion also acts as a barrier to genuine tenant involvement in the co-management process by distorting or ignoring Indigenous wishes (including common understandings) in their translation into management practices. This is most evident in cases where HRG recommendations are not accommodated in housing management leading to management decisions (rules) that are in opposition with community wishes (common understandings). Furthermore, understanding is urgently needed of the influences shaping local housing professionals' management practices in these housing governance contexts in order to assure that community dialogue is respectfully and meaningfully translated into tenancy management practice.

As Section 2.4 described, in urban public housing the relationship between Indigenous tenants and local housing staff is problematic, characterised by an

imbalance of power and a lack of transparency (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008). Moreover, this contested relationship is a cause of tenancy instability and negative tenancy outcomes (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Beresford, 2001). Whilst this alone provides an incentive to reconsider the tenant-landlord relationship, this is all the more important in the case of Indigenous public housing due to the perpetuity of tenant leases. In reconsidering the dynamics of the tenant-landlord relationship through these hybridisms, there is an opportunity to do just this.

6.3.5 Conclusion

This section analysed how the current housing reforms incorporate, and can better incorporate, the sustaining tenancies agenda. In doing so, it substantiated concerns foreshadowed by the literature in Chapter 2 about the difficulties in the uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda in public housing. It began by reviewing how service integration, tenant support and supportive tenancy management, (as key sustaining tenancies interventions) were incorporated in the reforms. This suggested that supportive housing management, whilst particularly critical to the uptake of this agenda, was not readily identified within the systems of housing welfare provision. However, the jurisdictional level hybridisms of the public housing model are identified as providing an appropriate platform through which such management practices can be incorporated. Specifically, these hybridisms carve out a place within an otherwise rigid and standardised social housing management model, for specialised and flexible policies and management practices through which Indigenous common understanding may be considered in public housing management. However, this potential is found to be qualified on two accounts. First, reflecting the competing agendas facing public housing, local housing professionals are tasked with resolving the tension arising from this. Moreover, whilst high levels of discretionary power potentially enable housing professionals to reconcile these tensions, the outcomes of this are neither predictable nor consistent. The second issue concerned the capacity for tenant engagement to be meaningfully translated into housing management practices. In identifying these two issues, this section exposed the difficult uptake of the sustaining tenancies agenda in Indigenous public housing as a function of the respective roles of local housing professional and Indigenous tenants. Significantly, these roles diverge from those traditionally found in public housing.

A discussion on housing governance is used to capture the way in which these hybridisms of the public housing model might enable the uptake of supportive housing management in Indigenous public housing to achieve the objective for sustainable tenancies. A framework based on the co-management of social practices is used to describe the nature of the new roles for tenants and landlord entailed in these governance arrangements. Critically, tenants are understood to be drawn into the co-management of their domestic social practices through the genuine sustained community engagement potentially supported by these hybridisms. This ultimately enables housing management (rules) to be informed by Indigenous common understandings, thus easing the disjunctions between the social practice elements which were identified in the first half of this chapter. However, whilst identifying this potential, this section also highlights that as yet, these new roles are not yet in play in remote Indigenous communities.

7 CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

7. 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis began by suggesting that securing a reform objective for sustainable Indigenous tenancies potentially offers a critical reprieve for Indigenous housing welfare recipients from an enduring cycle of housing policy failure. It described how Indigenous housing reforms emerge from prevailing neoliberal government beliefs about (Indigenous) social dysfunction and the individual's role in perpetuating this. It explained how this positioning provides a template for housing welfare based on (rational actor model) behavioural change theories of social change. It showed how these theoretical assumptions obscure from view the role of other factors in shaping how Indigenous tenants live, thereby ignoring the ways in which social practices are composed and changed. The aim of this thesis was to investigate the potential for the current housing reforms to lead to sustainable tenancies for Indigenous town-camp tenants. To achieve this aim, this study undertook a dual analysis of the current systems of housing welfare provision and the lived experiences of Indigenous town-camp tenants. Whilst recognising the multiple causal drivers of housing outcomes, this inquiry revealed new understandings about the ways in which housing welfare sustains and transforms the social practices carried by town-camp tenants. It also revealed flaws in the current systems of housing welfare in reconfiguring tenants' social practices which inhibit the (predictable) transformation of social practices. In doing so, it also identified that the current systems of housing provision are poorly positioned to achieve sustainable tenancies. In making these discoveries, this thesis suggests that tenancy instability and failure will likely feature in the housing futures of town-camp tenants. In response, this thesis identified hybridisations of the public housing model as potential platforms for better integrating a sustaining tenancies agenda in Indigenous public housing. To develop this potential, this thesis considered the scope for a new dynamic in the relationship between tenant and landlord in Indigenous public housing governance.

The function of this final chapter is threefold: first, to describe the key empirical and theoretical contributions of this study (Section 7.2); second, to identify some of the implications of these contributions both within and outside academia (Section 7. 3); and third, to state the limitations of this study and identify future research directions (Section 7. 4). This thesis concludes on a hopeful note by reiterating that given the infancy of these reforms and noted opportunities within the current systems of

Indigenous housing welfare, there is both time and scope to address flaws in the housing welfare system to break the cycle of failing tenancies.

7. 2   KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis was concerned with the potential for the current Indigenous housing reforms to achieve sustainable tenancies in Indigenous town-camp communities. It builds on previous critiques of Indigenous housing welfare and its impacts on the lives of Indigenous people. In particular, this thesis revisits the 'wicked' problem of Indigenous housing policy within the context of the current housing reforms and recasts this problem based on social practice based understandings of social change. In doing so, it extends upon the contributions of a broad range of previous research regarding the significance of policy flexibility in accommodating Indigenous ways of life in mainstream housing welfare (Flatau et al., 2005; EOC 2004; Cooper & Morris, 2005; Birdsall-Jones & Corunna, 2008; Jacobs & Atkinson, 2008; Milligan et al., 2010; 2011) and previous research regarding the ways in which sustainable tenancies can be achieved (Seelig & Jones, 2004; 2006; Habibis et al., 2007). Most importantly, this thesis builds on the very limited literature on the initial implementation of the current Indigenous housing reforms which identified the potential of amendments to the public housing model in the Northern Territory (Porter, 2009b). The primary contribution of this thesis is to bring together a review of the current systems of housing welfare provision in town-camp communities, with a practice-based analysis of the lived experience of housing welfare in Indigenous town-camps, to develop new understandings of how the sustaining tenancies agenda is met within current Indigenous housing welfare reforms, and especially how the criterion for supportive housing management can be achieved through new dynamics in public housing governance. This section describes the empirical and theoretical contributions made in addressing the research aim.

7.2.1   Empirical Contributions

The current Indigenous housing reforms seek to create social change in Indigenous communities by transforming the regulatory arrangements for housing management, by improving the quality of the living environments in which tenants reside, by educating tenants about conventional western ways of living in a house and managing their tenancy, and by supporting tenants to adopt these changes. By

investigating the new systems of housing welfare provision and the lived experience of these housing arrangements, this study makes four important empirical contributions.

7.2.2 Practical Problems

Social practice theory intimates that the reforms will be influential only to the extent that they form part of the reproduction and performance of a tenant's social practices (Schatzki, 2002). This inquiry identifies that flaws within the current systems of housing provision impact on how the social practices carried by tenants are sustained, transformed and retired. An argument is constructed based on how inconsistent and ad hoc tenancy management practices manifest in the rules element, how below-par living environments and property management standards manifest in the material infrastructure element, and how untailored and contested tenant support approaches manifest in the practical knowledge element. Thus, this thesis suggests that whilst these elements of social practice are altered by the reforms, the social practices in which these are implicated are being transformed in unpredictable, and sometimes undesirable ways. Thus, two significant findings of this thesis are: the new understandings of the ways in which the systems of housing provision can produce social change, and second, that social change may not be immediately forthcoming, or that it will not occur in ways currently anticipated, as a result of these current reforms.

This thesis also makes an important contribution to understandings of the machinations of the early phases of policy implementation by identifying the contributing factors for the aforementioned flaws in the current systems of housing provision. The identification of these programmatic, operational, strategic and organisational factors are particularly significant given both the infancy of the reform and the lack of investigation into, or understanding of, the implementation process (especially at the local level). Although some of these factors are unsurprising given their persistent recurrence in Indigenous housing management, their reoccurrence under current policy conditions is notable. Specifically, the prevalence of some issues indicates the failure of the current housing arrangements to address the very issues these reforms were deemed so suited to fixing (especially standardised public housing management). Conversely, other issues identified, such as discretionary housing management and corporate change-management, are of

interest as they have hitherto not been an important focus in discussions of Indigenous housing management.

New understandings of the ways in which housing welfare can produce social change also provides original insights into how the remedying of these issues should be prioritised. Namely, the priority of issues which may previously have been assigned secondary importance (i.e. tenant support), can now be reassessed based on new understandings of the importance of a broader range of factors in shaping how tenants live.

7.2.3   New Understandings of Old Policy Problems

This thesis also extends beyond the practical critique of the current systems of housing provision (and the identification of the tangible implementation issues referred to in the previous section (Section 7.2.2)) to provide a conceptual critique. Using a social practice perspective enabled this thesis to not only highlight how the common understandings element of domestic social practices were unchanged by these reforms, but moreover, to explain the significance of this oversight. This thesis thus highlighted the important role of social expectations in informing tenants' ways of living, whilst also challenging prevailing government framings in which these are a product of regulatory incentives (rules), living environments (material infrastructure) and tenant support provision (practical knowledge). Moreover, using the construct of home, this thesis demonstrated variation in these social expectations (especially with regard to the centrality of the Indigenous domestic moral economy in these constructs) amongst Indigenous tenants and between these tenants and non-Indigenous Australians. Using the need for home as an example, this thesis also demonstrated how differences in common understandings can form the basis for specific housing needs. The failure to consider Indigenous social expectations in public housing welfare thus suggests that these Indigenous specific housing needs are unlikely to be met. This finding corroborates the (predominantly anthropological) literature (for example Memmott, 1988). Specifically, it suggests the capacity for standardised housing welfare to meet Indigenous needs (especially those needs arising from Indigenous specific cultural imperatives, i.e. common understandings), continues to be problematic, and moreover, largely ignored by policy-makers. These findings imply the current reform agenda may be ignoring a known source of tenancy instability in failing to change the common understandings implicated in the social practices performed by tenants.

However, this study extends beyond simply corroborating the mismatch between Indigenous ways of living and standardised housing welfare approaches which is described in the literature. Specifically, it provides a new way of understanding this mismatch as the product of disjunctions between the practice elements, and in particular, between common understandings, and rules, material infrastructures and practical knowledge. Moreover, in making this conceptual contribution, this thesis redefines the ways in which housing policy might secure further social change. Within this study, these new understandings enabled the identification of an opportunity within the current systems of housing provision through which social change might be more successfully promoted.

7.2.4   A Sustaining Tenancies Agenda for Indigenous Public Housing

The housing reform agenda aims to create the conditions for tenancies to be sustained and sustaining. This thesis finds that the uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda is currently problematic in Indigenous town-camp communities. This finding corroborates the literature on the difficulties surrounding the uptake of this agenda in public housing generally (Seelig & Jones, 2004; 2006; Habibis et al., 2007). In particular, this thesis makes a practical contribution by revealing difficulties in the implementation of this agenda. It highlights critical impediments to three known sustaining tenancies interventions: service integration, tenant support and supportive housing management. Corroborating the literature, this study finds the uptake of supportive housing management most problematic (Seelig & Jones, 2004).

In seeking to understand how supportive housing management can be incorporated within Indigenous public housing, this thesis extends beyond the prescriptive understandings of this sustaining tenancies intervention in the literature (Seelig & Jones, 2004; 2006) and good practice guides (Habibis et al., 2007). It describes how public housing hybridisms carve out, within an otherwise rigid and standardised housing management model, a place for specialised and flexible policies and procedures. This thesis argues this policy flexibility is critical, on the basis that the key to successful policy reform lies not in making social practices more predictable, but rather in the capacity to respond to the uncertain, changing and diverse nature of social practices (Shove & Walker, 2010).

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This thesis identifies how these hybridisms provide potential platforms through which housing professionals might reconcile the competing pursuit of an individual responsibility agenda (including the disciplinary management practices this requires) and the sustaining tenancies agenda (and specifically the supportive management practices this entails). However, having identified this opportunity to incorporate supportive housing management, this thesis found this to be qualified on two accounts. First, local housing professionals assume a central role in reconciling the competing agendas of supportive and punitive housing management in public housing. However, whilst high levels of discretionary power provide scope to reconcile these tensions, they are also linked to unpredictable and inconsistent outcomes. Second, the capacity for tenant engagement to be meaningfully translated into housing management practices through these hybridisms is identified as problematic.

Notwithstanding these issues, the identification of this opportunity contributes to a re-conceptualisation of the nature of supportive housing management. In particular, this thesis suggests that supportive housing management is a function of the respective roles of local housing professionals and Indigenous tenants in housing management and the relationship between these parties. Moreover, it argues that this necessitates a departure from the traditional, rigid roles of the tenant and landlord in social housing governance.

7.2.5   Rethinking Housing Governance

The hybridisms of the public housing model embody new housing governance arrangements. In this thesis, social practice theory informs us of the likely success of these arrangements. The hybridisms enable tenants to be drawn into the co-management of their social practices. Specifically, genuine, sustained community engagement can potentially erode the 'us' and 'them' of traditional housing management and recast the tenant as a critical change agent. This tenant influence over the regulatory arrangements of their tenancies will potentially enable social practices informed by Indigenous specific common understandings to be accommodated within public housing management. However, whilst identifying this potential, this thesis suggests that limitations surrounding the hybridisms mean these new roles are not yet in play in Indigenous town-camp communities.

These new ways of seeing Indigenous public housing governance build upon important emergent distinctions in housing governance between obligations (i.e. regulations) and desirability (i.e. expectations) (Flint, 2004b). This thesis identifies that this emergent distinction is not pronounced in Indigenous public housing, or at least not in the forms commonly found elsewhere. Whereas in mainstream social housing, tenants are called upon to regulate their behaviour in accordance with dominant (western) norms and values, in Indigenous public housing, the hybridisms can potentially expand the notion of desirability to include some aspects of Indigenous social expectations. These findings contribute to the advancement of the self-governance discourse in housing studies, which has until now not been considered in Indigenous housing welfare.

7.2.6   Theoretical Contributions

This research also makes a theoretical contribution. As noted, social practice theory is not a coherent theory, but rather an emergent assemblage of theoretical elements and common assumptions about the performativity of practices (Halkier, 2009). In applying social practice theory to an empirical study, this thesis corroborates the difficulties identified in the literature regarding empirical social practice analysis. This finding is to be expected given the embryonic status of this theoretical analysis (notwithstanding the application of a recognized analytical framework). This thesis contributes to the development of practice theory in three main ways: (i) by identifying two conceptual concerns regarding the elements of social practice, (ii) by countering social practice research trends through the dual analytical focus of this study, and (iii) by applying this theory to a new disciplinary field. This subsection expands upon these contributions.

A first point raised by this research is that the distinction between common understandings and rules is perhaps less straightforward than the analytic dissection of social practices suggests. Whilst the literature distinguishes between these elements on the basis of what 'must' be done (rules) and what 'ought' to be done (common understandings), when applied empirically, this distinction is somewhat hazy. In this study, discussions surrounding the meanings of home for Indigenous tenants revealed the significance of the Indigenous domestic moral economy in constructing social expectations about living in a house and managing a tenancy. For Indigenous people for whom their commitment to cultural imperatives is particularly entrenched, the Indigenous domestic moral economy can itself be

construed as a rule, something which they 'must' adhere to. That is, whilst it is neither enforced or regulated through canons of law or bureaucratic rules it is clearly 'a source of social censure and new common understandings about in/appropriate practices' (Strengers, 2009:43). So whilst in the case of (common) legislation and regulations the distinction between rules and common understandings elements is straightforward, in the realm of rules that are derived from cultural or religious imperatives (for instance), these elements appear to blend together or mutate from one to the other in complex unexplored ways. Thus a primary concern is not just the capacity to analytically differentiate between different elements, but the significance of the difficulties in doing so.

This leads onto a second related point, which is the relationship between practice elements. Whilst other researchers have identified this need to consider the relationships between elements (such as how elements inform and are informed by other elements), this thesis suggests that it is not just this relationship that requires further attention. The interplay between multiple like elements (such as different rules and regulations). Furthermore, understandings are needed about why some elements are called into practices whilst others are ignored.

In addition to these two concerns, this thesis contributes to the development of social practice analysis by countering common trends in social practice-based empirical studies to exclusively study the performance of social practices. Whilst such trends are to be expected given the base unit of analysis, this thesis reveals the potential for a dual analytical approach. Specifically, the analysis in this thesis operates across two levels: the micro-level of the performance of social practices, and also the macro-level policy environment in which these performances are situated (systems of housing welfare provision). Based on emergent theoretical developments in the understandings of the constituents of social practice, the introduction of a macro-level focus provides beneficial insights into the nature of the elements of practice. The multi-level approach adopted here is perhaps particularly appropriate for studies in which an initial change is occurring beyond the social practices (e.g. legislative/regulatory reform) and where the research interest lies in tracing the impacts of this on social practices.

Lastly, this thesis represents the application of social practice theory to a new empirical field. This thesis thus contributes to the broadening of the empirical application of an emergent theory. This not only raises new considerations (such as

those outlined above), but it also provides a disciplinary contribution to housing studies by introducing a novel, theoretically-informed approach to Indigenous housing policy research that aligns with the emergent post-social turn. This latter contribution is all the more relevant given the criticisms surrounding housing research in Australia at present, as discussed in Chapter 3.

7. 3 IMPLICATIONS

The contributions described above have both practical and disciplinary implications, some of which have already been identified. Within academia, housing studies retains a problematic identity as an academic field (Chapter 3). Two conflicting agendas are at play: on the one hand, an interdisciplinary and heuristic agenda for housing research seeks to understand policy and its problems, and on the other hand, a purely prescriptive policy-orientated research agenda remains (Kemeny, 1992). Australian Research Council Linkage grants, driven by concerns of the partnering organisations (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2008b:237), can give rise to the tension between these agendas. As Atkinson and Jacobs (2008b:245) contend, the final analysis should not be constrained by conservatism or 'acts of circuit-making (rather than "circuit breaking" or critiquing) mode' to meet policymakers' expectations. This thesis overcomes these concerns by following what Atkinson and Jacobs (2008b:240) refer to as 'a twin-track engagement' combining policy-orientated research with academic outputs. By combining policy-orientated and theoretically positioned housing research, this thesis makes a contribution to the field of housing studies by demonstrating an alternative research approach. In doing so, it responds to Hulse and Saugeres (2007) concern that there are few accounts of how alternative types of housing research can be undertaken (in an environment in which funding is primarily government-allocated) to address perceived policy concerns. Likewise, this dual approach has demonstrated that different research designs can overcome some of the criticisms of post-social housing research as being overly descriptive, insufficiently scientific and politically conservative (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008). For instance, its policy-orientated focus enables the research to benefit from insights (and entry) into contexts to which it may otherwise be excluded (Allen, 2005).

Outside academia, this thesis has implications for the design, provision and management of housing welfare in Indigenous town-camp communities. As stated, the purpose of a social practice-based study of the potential impacts of housing

policy implementation is to provide insight into potential new ways of understanding how social change, and specifically sustainable tenancies, might be achieved. This thesis identifies a series of strategic, operational, organisational and programmatic implementation issues that require attention. These insights are potentially relevant to a range of Indigenous housing stakeholders, including: policy makers across a multiple areas (including housing management, design and construction and tenant support) and those tasked with policy implementation (e.g. housing and tenant support managers and staff).

At a fundamental level, this thesis challenges the assumptions embedded within the dominant behavioural change paradigm on which the current housing reforms are premised. Thus, in responding to these issues, the priority afforded to certain approaches and areas requires careful reconsideration in light of new understandings about the relevance of a broad range of factors in producing social change. Specifically, areas and issues which were previously under-prioritised (especially those which are known to be key to sustainable tenancies, i.e. supportive housing management and tenant support) require serious reconsideration. Any such reconsideration of housing policy priorities inevitably has implications for the funding of housing policy interventions. In particular, it suggests that the significance of regulatory, physical and tenant support interventions are arguably of far more comparable significance than current policy funding allocations suggest, and as such, funding priorities could be re-evaluated. Notwithstanding this, these suggested implications are presented here with awareness of the contested and ineffectual nature of much housing policy research in reshaping housing practices (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2008b) and especially the concerns raised by Seelig and Jones (2004) about researchers' poor comprehension of the complexities surrounding the practicalities of policy implementation and the obstacles that arise from competing objectives within government.

This thesis suggests that policy makers and social scientists in Indigenous housing policy will have to more seriously consider Indigenous social expectations as these relate to their tenancies. That these are diverse, as identified in this study, further substantiates claims about the incongruity of one-size-fits-all policy approaches. Thus, even in a quest for fundamental social change in Indigenous town-camps, these are expected to be insufficient and multiple methods that recognise the diversity (and changeability) of domestic social practices are likely needed. As stated, social practices will not be made more predictable, therefore the challenge

remains for policy makers to reconsider how policy can be made more adaptable to uncertainty (Shove & Walker, 2010). Thus, in seeking alternative approaches, a fundamental change on the part of large government bureaucracies is certainly required (Martin, 2006:12–13).

7. 4   LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research was conducted within a series of practical parameters which limited its scope and potential application. First and foremost, whilst this thesis has provided various insights into the composition of the domestic social practices carried by town-camp tenants, and the role of current systems of housing provision in transforming these practices, significant scope remains for further empirical studies of this area. A first step is additional (larger) studies of domestic social practices in town-camp communities, their composition (in order to explain diversity) and the ways in which they are transforming overtime, especially in relation to the ongoing implementation of these reforms. Further, although Chapter 3 discussed the relevance of moment-in-time studies in understanding social practices, future longitudinal studies will capture the dynamics of change in practices overtime. Additionally, whilst this thesis referred to the heterogeneity of town-camp demographics, the participant recruitment for this study involuntarily excluded some of this diversity, such as tenants at high-risk of tenancy failure and those in employment (due to the timing of recruitment). By including specific subgroups of tenants (such as vulnerable or low need tenants), there is an opportunity for future studies to better understand the link between demographic profiles, the nature and composition of the domestic social practices they carry, and the ways these are changing in response to housing welfare provision. Thus, further studies should consider research methods and techniques which engage with a more comprehensive cross-section of tenants. Furthermore, whilst this research identified divergences in common understandings as potentially highly significant, it also found the conceptual distinction between common understandings and rules problematic (as described in Section 7.2.6). Thus, there is an opportunity for future studies to clarify the interconnection and interplays between the practice components implicated in social practices in this context.

Second, the primacy of behavioural change theories of social change gives rise to expectations of linearity and predictability that serve to mask the uncertainty and unpredictability of social practices. This research has identified hybridisations of the

public housing model as potential platforms for the uptake of a sustaining tenancies agenda (and specifically supportive housing management) by changing the dynamics of Indigenous public housing governance. A critical next step therefore, is to understand the ways in which these can help address the uncertainty of domestic social practices. Whilst this research suggests new governance arrangements may resonate with a co-management framework, this is only an emergent concept even within its original field of environmental science. Thus, this avenue requires further development and refinement to explore its suitability to Indigenous public housing management. Additionally, studies are required to explore the scope for further hybridisation of public housing management both within and beyond the Housing Reference Groups (HRG) and Housing Management Agreements (HMA) identified in this thesis. One aspect of this will be studies to better understand the relationship between the two-tiers of government (state/territory and Commonwealth) to reveal the boundaries and complexities (including its politically-charged nature) of state autonomy from federal government in housing administration in which the design and implementation of these hybridisations occur.

7. 5   CONCLUSION

Much of the minutiae of Indigenous daily life may appear irrelevant to housing policy formulation and implementation. Yet it is the sum of the domestic social practices carried by each town-camp tenant that ultimately determines their tenancy outcomes. Whilst some tenancies will be sustained and sustaining on the basis of the performance, transformation and retirement of a complex of practices, others will be destabilised, or even fail, through an alternative sequence of practices. Government acknowledgement of the complex role of housing in the lives of individuals has led to its repositioning at the cornerstone of the current reforms to remedy Indigenous social and economic disadvantage. Yet prevailing understandings, grounded as they are in behavioural change theories of social change, fail to grasp how the success of housing welfare is premised on producing change within the constituent elements of these social practices.

This thesis has illustrated how current housing welfare provision has produced changes in the regulatory and physical environments (rules and material infrastructures) in which town-camp tenants reside, and in tenants' understanding of western ways of living in a house (practical knowledge). It has shown how these changes manifest in some domestic social practices being sustained, in others

being reconfigured and the disappearance of others still. Overall, however, it is unlikely that the sum of these practice changes will be sufficient to safeguard the tenancy futures of some town-camp tenants. This shortcoming is largely the result of a range of implementation issues which hinder how practice elements are changed by the new systems of housing provision. This is seen to heighten the disjunctions between elements resulting in unpredictable, and sometimes undesirable, practice changes. Of these issues, the problems surrounding the new public housing hybridisms are perhaps the most consequential as they destroy an opportunity to introduce Indigenous social expectations into public housing management. The resultant mismatch between some Indigenous social expectations (and the functional housing needs associated with these), and the systems of housing welfare provision strongly echoes past policy failings described at the outset of this thesis. However, in providing a new way of understanding this mismatch, an opportunity is identified in the hybridisms of public housing to overcome this enduring impasse in Indigenous housing policy. Taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the new systems of Indigenous housing welfare provision, whilst also addressing underlying implementation issues, can not only act as an antidote to halt the circularity and ineffectiveness of Indigenous housing policies, but moreover, can pave the way for securing sustainable Indigenous town-camp tenancies.

8   BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9   APPENDIX

Letter of RMIT Human Research Ethics Approval

Phone: 9925 4620

barbara.polus@rmit.edu.au

8 September 2010

Megan Worthington

Dear Megan

Project No A42/10: Sustaining tenanacies in remote Aboriginal communities

I am pleased to advise that this project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at its recent meeting for the period from **8 September 2010** until **31 December 2011**. The project has been classified as more than low risk (formerly risk level 3). The proposal was approved as it meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007).

Responsibilities of primary investigator

It is important to emphasise that primary investigators are responsible for ensuring that the project proceeds according to the proposal approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee's approval of the project is not absolute. New and unforeseen ethical issues may arise. A researcher should continue to consider the ethical dimensions of the research as the project progresses.

Conditions of approval

The Human Research Ethics Committee may apply additional conditions of approval beyond the submission of annual/final reports.

Adverse events or unexpected outcomes

As the primary investigator you have a significant responsibility to monitor the research and to take prompt steps to deal with any unexpected outcomes. You must notify the Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants, or unforeseen events, which may affect the ethical acceptability of your project. Any complaints about the project received by the researcher must be referred immediately to the Ethics Officer.

Reporting

Approval to continue a project is conditional on the submission of annual reports (see attached sample form). A final report should also be provided at the conclusion of the project. If your work is completed within twelve months a final report only is required. Report forms are available from the Human Research Ethics Committee web site: (http://www.rmit.edu.au/research/hrec_apply).

If a project is discontinued before the scheduled completion date then this needs to be reported immediately.

Please note that failure to submit reports will mean that a project is no longer approved, and/or that approval will be withheld from future projects.

Conflicts of interest

When reporting the research, the researcher should again disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation that bears on the research. Conflicts of interest can arise after a project has been approved, and where they do they must be reported as soon as possible.

Amendments

If, as you proceed with your investigation you find reason to amend your research method, you should advise the Human Research Ethics Committee and seek approval for the proposed changes. Depending on the type of amendment — whether it is minor or major — will determine how long the review process for an amendment will take. If you decide to discontinue your research before its planned completion you must also advise the Committee of this and of the circumstances.

Storage of Data

All data should *normally* be stored on University Network systems. These systems provide high levels of manageable security and data integrity, can provide secure remote access, are backed up on a regular basis and can provide Disaster Recovery processes should a large scale incident occur. The use of portable devices such as CDs and memory sticks may be valid for archiving, data transport where necessary and some works in progress. However, it must be noted that if identifiable information is included, then encryption should be used. The authoritative copy of all current data should reside on appropriate network systems; and the principal investigator is responsible for the retention and storage of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

If you anticipate any problems in meeting these requirements please contact me to discuss an alternative secure data storage arrangement.

All reports or communication regarding this project are to be forwarded to the Ethics Officer.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee I wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

A/Prof Barbara Polus
Chairperson
RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee

cc: Peter Burke
        Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee

        Prof John Fien, Supervisor