

Evaluation of the
Aboriginal Communities
Development Program

Summary report

Final Report December 2011

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

The Aboriginal Communities Development Program (ACDP) was a \$240 million NSW Government capital works program delivered in selected Aboriginal communities throughout NSW. The ACDP commenced on 1 July 1998 with the budget fully expended as at June 30 2011.

Robyn Kennedy Consultants Pty Ltd were engaged by Aboriginal Affairs NSW to conduct the evaluation of the ACDP in two stages. Stage One, completed in August 2008, was a program level review focusing on issues such as planning, governance and program delivery. Stage Two, completed in September 2010, involved on-site consultations with six selected communities with a view to assessing local level social and economic benefits of the ACDP.

This is a Summary Report of the findings of the ACDP Evaluation. More detailed program descriptions and analysis is included in separate reports on Stage One and Stage Two of the evaluation.

1.2 Purpose of the ACDP

The overall purpose of the ACDP was to raise the environmental health and living standards of selected Aboriginal Communities through:

- focusing funding and effort within these communities;
- increasing the capacity of these Aboriginal communities to maintain housing and environmental health infrastructure within agreed sustainability frameworks; and
- adherence to the fundamental principles of community capacity building through consultation and self-determination in the Aboriginal communities involved.

A principal aim of the ACDP was to implement a new funding model, concentrating funding in select locations as an alternative to previous funding models that spread funding thinly over multiple locations which was seen as inefficient and as resulting in critical infrastructure needs remaining unmet. The ACDP also aimed to build on the successful collaborations between NSW government agencies through the Aboriginal Environmental Health Infrastructure Forum which combined funding from agencies to achieve agreed priority environmental health projects.

1.3 Program structure

The ACDP consisted of four components:

1. Priority Communities – funding new and replacement housing and repairs and refurbishment of existing housing stock. Priority Communities was the largest component of the ACDP. Priority Communities was delivered in 22 locations in NSW.
2. Water and Sewerage - upgrading or replacing water and sewerage systems in 47 communities.
3. Housing for Health - improving the safety and health of housing through, for example, testing household plumbing and electrical systems, and fixing damaged and unsafe areas. Under the ACDP Housing for Health was delivered in 38 communities.

4. The Employment and Training Strategy – designed to support the operation of community building enterprises and the training of apprentices in building trades. The Employment and Training program was primarily delivered in conjunction with Priority Communities.

Aboriginal Affairs NSW was responsible for program management of the ACDP as a whole including the Employment and Training Strategy. NSW Public Works was the Program Manager for Priority Communities and the Water and Sewerage sub-programs. NSW Health was the Program Manager for Housing for Health.

1.4 Achievements

1.4.1 Capital works

The ACDP has been very successful in meeting its objective of concentrating effort in a small number of selected locations. The Priority Communities budget accounted for 78% of the total ACDP budget. Additionally, many of the 22 Priority Communities also received funding under the Water and Sewerage program and/or Housing for Health. Overall, the 22 Priority Communities received around 93% of total capital works funding (\$199m).

The Water and Sewerage program and/or Housing for Health were also delivered in 50 other communities. In total, 72 Aboriginal communities have benefited from the ACDP.

The table below shows the number of houses involved in the ACDP and the estimated number of people benefitting.

Sub-program	Number of houses	Number of people (estimate)	Benefits
Priority Communities	1434	4500	Adequate, appropriate housing. Approximately 1300 extra people housed
Water and Sewerage	870	4000	Clean, safe drinking water and appropriate sewerage treatment
Housing for Health	1210	5500	More functional, safer and more liveable housing.

Source: NSW Public Works, NSW Health December 2011

As shown, an estimated 4500 people have been provided with adequate, appropriate housing. Clean, safe drinking water and appropriate sewerage treatment has been delivered to around 4000 people. Through ACDP funding of Housing for Health, housing for around 5500 people is more functional, safer and more liveable. Around 3,514 properties have been included in the ACDP - 1434 new or refurbished properties under Priority Communities, 870 under the Water and Sewerage sub-program and 1210 under Housing for Health.

Of the 1434 houses involved in the Priority Communities housing program, 322 (23%) have received emergency repairs while 735 (51%) have received repairs/refurbishment. Around 377 (26%) new houses have been built or spot purchased.

The Water and Sewerage sub-program has been able to address significant outstanding need with respect to the water and sewerage needs of Aboriginal discrete communities. Typically, local government provides a single water connection to the site boundaries of discrete communities, leaving Local Aboriginal Land Councils with the responsibility to provide the infrastructure from site boundaries to individual houses. In most cases, Aboriginal communities have been unable to meet the cost of supply and maintenance of required systems. The Water and Sewerage program has connected houses to town water supplies and installed a range of infrastructure to deliver clean water and to treat sewerage.

Housing for Health has enabled health and safety standards to be addressed in small communities unable to be included in Priority Communities. Data on Housing for Health outcomes shows a substantial increase in functionality of primary health and safety items such as electrical systems, washing facilities and waste removal. A recent evaluation of HfH¹ found that the population exposed to the program were 40% less likely to be hospitalised with infectious diseases compared to the rest of the rural NSW Aboriginal population. Housing for Health has also acted as an effective mechanism to engage Aboriginal communities in better appreciating the links between health hardware and personal health status.

The total number of people who have benefited from the ACDP cannot be precisely determined due to some likely overlap of individuals between sub-programs (some communities have received two or more sub-programs) but it is estimated that around 10,000 people may have benefited from the ACDP. It is clear that the ACDP has made a substantial contribution to raising the living standards of Aboriginal people.

1.4.2 Housing outcomes

The evaluation of the ACDP included an assessment of housing outcomes in six selected communities – Armidale, Brewarrina, Collarenebri, Kempsey, Tabulam and Wilcannia. In most of the selected communities the standard of housing viewed was good to high. New build houses were generally well designed and constructed. The standard of refurbishments viewed was more variable than the new build but generally provides improved amenity, more functional use of space and better access for people with a disability.

Spot purchase of properties in mixed neighbourhoods has acted to break down barriers between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people. Additions to stock through building and spot purchases have reduced overcrowding but overcrowding continues to be a problem in some locations.

Overall, there was a high level of satisfaction by tenants in the selected communities with their housing. It was frequently said that greater pride was shown by tenants in their homes and tenants took better care of their housing. The program was said to have changed the behaviour of young people with more respect for property being shown. There was much pride among community members in having local Aboriginal people build their homes. There was said to be less vandalism of housing built or refurbished by Aboriginal people.

Overall, the housing program has been very beneficial, increasing the quality of life of Aboriginal tenants and improving the environmental health and safety of communities.

1.4.3 Employment and training

As well as delivering tangible outputs in the form of housing and environmental health infrastructure, the ACDP aimed to use funded construction to provide opportunities for Aboriginal community members to undertake apprenticeships and participate in employment. As part of the employment and training strategy, thirteen Aboriginal building enterprises were established to provide a means to deliver training and create business opportunities. In support of these objectives, the ACDP achieved significant cross-agency participation including TAFE as the training authority and funding in the form of subsidies paid to building companies from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; and Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (through Community Development Employment Projects).

¹ *Closing the Gap: 10 years of Housing for Health in NSW: An evaluation of a healthy housing intervention.* NSW Health 2010

The existence of the community builders allowed good skills to be developed among community members and provided a framework for apprentices to undertake training in their local community. Data indicates that 230 community members were engaged in TAFE Certificate courses under the program. Of these, 44 of the 118 (37%) enrolled in building trades completed their apprenticeship and 19 of the 112 (17%) enrolled in non building trades fully qualified. There was partial completion of qualifications by 99 (43%) individuals. Overall, 30% of participants withdrew from their training.

The employment and training program had a profound positive effect on the self confidence and self esteem of the individuals who participated. Many apprentices said that they would not have gained their qualifications without the ACDP. In some cases the structure and discipline of the training program enabled apprentices to move away from destructive lifestyles and apply themselves to learning a trade. The employment and training program also provided broad benefits to the community particularly in isolated communities including increased income, community pride and reduced drinking, crime and violence; benefits which have been at least partly sustained.

The employment and training program also enabled positive role models for young people – seeing family members in sustained employment has assisted in breaking inter-generational unemployment and welfare dependence.

In relation to the outcomes for individual apprentices, while the attainment of qualifications for a reasonable proportion of those enrolled was a good achievement, the rate of completion could potentially have been higher if it had been possible to address some of the structural and operational issues limiting the effectiveness of the program. These issues include the ratio of building supervisors to apprentices being higher than the desirable rate, the quality of supervisors particularly in remote communities, and the difficulty for some apprentices in accessing off-site classroom training. Additionally, in some cases the building program was simply too small to enable the completion of on the job competencies and stop-start construction in some communities also undermined achievement of these competencies.

The evaluation made a number of recommendations for future employment and training programs.

1.4.4 Community Working Parties

Community Working Parties (CWPs), established during the planning stage of the ACDP, involved broad representation of community leaders and local services and provided a framework for community decision making, consultation and ownership of the ACDP.

While CWPs have not been without conflict, they have been successful in offering community members a meaningful role in program delivery. The process of bringing together community members who may have previously been at odds was seen as a very positive outcome and as laying the groundwork for future cooperation. Consultation participants also felt that CWPs have provided opportunities for increased knowledge and skills development in environmental health issues. Some risks related to accountability for decision making were however, identified. The evaluation recommended that the strengths and weaknesses of the CWP model be taken into account in the implementation of the Partnership Community Program.

1.5 Issues affecting program implementation

1.5.1 Planning processes

As little program planning had been completed prior to the commencement of the ACDP, a process needed to be developed to both select the Priority Communities and to scope capital works at the local level. The evaluation found both these processes to be problematic. In relation to selection of the Priority Communities, the process was complex and inconsistent with inadequate documentation of the factors supporting selection.

At the local level, the primary planning tool in Priority Communities was the Community Housing and Environmental Health Plan (CHEHPs), a model adopted from the National Aboriginal Health Strategy. A primary intention of the ACDP CHEHPs was to scope housing need – both required repairs and upgrading as well as new housing to address unmet need. In practice however, the CHEHPs were unable to substantiate estimates of need for new housing as there was no definition of eligibility.

The inability to implement the CHEHPs was one of a series of planning and policy development gaps that resulted in delays to roll-out of the ACDP. Delays were also caused by a number of other factors such as lack of suitable land supply and the functioning of the employment and training strategy – ensuring training objectives were met often resulted in construction taking much longer than had been anticipated. The program deadline was extended several times from its original 5 years in 1998 to its completion in June 2011 bringing program roll-out to 13 years.

1.5.2 Eligibility and prioritisation in Priority Communities

To enable a housing capital works program to be scoped a definition of eligibility for new housing to address unmet need was formulated in 2002. This was equivalent to eligibility for the AHO's Housing Aboriginal Communities Program – primarily low income and not already adequately housed.

The eligibility assessment process undertaken by AANSW took some years to complete as did prioritising of eligible applicants for new housing, a role undertaken by Community Working Parties. Taken together, the eligibility and prioritisation process resulted in significant delays to roll out of new housing construction although other works including repairs and maintenance were able to be undertaken. Overall however, there was an ongoing struggle to meet program expenditure targets.

The eligibility assessment process also found that in some cases, estimates for new housing as set out in the CHEHPs had been over stated, resulting in a smaller than anticipated new housing construction program with more housing need able to be addressed through repairs or upgrading rather than new construction. Lower than anticipated new housing was also related to the role of CWPs in program implementation - in some cases, CWPs decided that it would be more cost effective to repair existing housing than build new ones.

1.5.3 Registration of housing providers

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between AANSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) entered into in 2000, Aboriginal housing providers receiving funding under the ACDP were required to meet AHO registration requirements. The intention of registration was to ensure that Aboriginal housing providers met appropriate standards of tenancy and property management. Many housing providers selected by Community Working Parties struggled to meet registration requirements, resulting in delays to the allocation of funding for housing capital works.

1.5.4 Impact of delays

Delays in capital works and the smaller new housing construction program had an impact on the training and employment strategy – there were fewer construction jobs and fewer houses for apprentices to work on to learn their trade. Capital works delays also increased prices. Price increases were however, able to be offset by savings from the construction program. That Priority Communities was able to house all eligible applicants was largely due to these budget savings.

While some delays in the housing-related capital works program were largely unavoidable, earlier recognition of the implications of significant policy issues such as eligibility and housing provider registration may have reduced delays resulting from these issues. If delays had been able to be minimised, budget savings from the construction program may have enabled additional achievements such as housing in other communities or additional community infrastructure in the 22 communities such as roads, street lighting and community facilities.

1.5.5 Governance issues

The failure to address the housing provider registration issue in an effective manner is reflective of the policy development process under the ACDP as a whole. The evaluation found that in general, policy development lagged behind program implementation and policy was largely developed retrospectively, rather than guiding the planning and implementation process, perhaps due to pressures to deliver the program and initial under resourcing of staff positions. These issues were a particular problem in the early years of the program. Policy development issues were also compounded by the establishment of the Aboriginal Housing Office at the same time as the ACDP – there was a key role for the AHO in providing advice on issues such as eligibility but the AHO was still developing its expertise at this time.

There have also been some shortcomings in governance including record keeping and at times, lack of clarity as to the roles of key agencies under the ACDP.

The evaluation recommended that AANSW provide greater leadership to address policy gaps, improve governance and reporting and clarify roles and responsibilities.

1.5.6 Sustainability of community builders

The existence of the community builders has allowed good skills to be developed among community members and provided a framework for apprentices to undertake training in their local community. Given that only two of the thirteen community building enterprises remain functioning, the community builders model has however, clearly been unsustainable. The operations of the community building enterprises were largely supported by financial subsidies and preferred contracting for ACDP projects. Once those sources of funding came to an end, operations were generally unable to continue. While the intention of the ACDP was to support community builders to become self sustaining over time through bidding for work outside of the ACDP, few had success in this area.

Many consultation participants felt that the ACDP had provided insufficient training and support in business development and skills relevant to operating a viable building company and a number of consultation participants felt that there had been unrealistic expectations about the number of community building enterprises that could be sustained particularly in remote communities.

The creation of community builders in small communities was likely to never have been sustainable once subsidies ceased, given the lack of local construction markets and a preference for apprentices to remain within local communities rather than seeking employment opportunities in town centres.

If sustainable business was to be a core objective of the ACDP, then additional resources were needed from the outset to support business establishment and develop strategies on sustainability, in partnership with other Government agencies. The evaluation found that learning from the ACDP Employment and Training program would usefully inform similar future programs. Recommendations reflecting this objective were made as discussed in section 11.

1.5.7 Housing sustainability

The evaluation found that while there was some improved rent collection and reduced rental arrears under the ACDP, rent levels generally remained relatively low and were often insufficient to meet repair costs. Getting repairs done was a problem in a few of the selected communities and more generally, improvements in housing management prompted by registration requirements were often not sustained.

In general, the ACDP has not been able to make a significant contribution to improved housing sustainability. Housing sustainability was however, very unlikely to have been achieved by the ACDP alone as sustainability is linked to a number of factors outside the control of the ACDP including registration standards for housing providers, the availability of subsidies to meet any gaps between rental income and costs and economies of scale. These issues are currently being addressed through reforms being implemented by the Aboriginal Housing Office and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council as discussed in section 8.

1.6 Future housing and infrastructure needs

At the time of commencement of the ACDP, there was a significant backlog of capital works to make Aboriginal community housing more liveable and environmentally healthy. The ACDP capital works program has resulted in significant improvements to housing and water and sewerage infrastructure. Due to budget limitations and the goal of concentrating effort in a small number of locations, not all communities have benefited from the ACDP although they may have benefited under other programs over the duration of the ACDP.

There is still a need for housing capital works as recognised in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing which in NSW will deliver over 300 new houses and \$100m in backlog maintenance. This funding is likely to make a substantial contribution to outstanding housing need.

In relation to water and sewerage, the key issue of sustainability of infrastructure has been addressed through the 2008 *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program* which provides recurrent funding for maintenance of water and sewerage infrastructure in discrete communities as well as a small capital component. As to the need for a future capital program beyond what is available under the *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program* the evaluation was not able to determine although it is noted that not all discrete communities were included in the ACDP Water and Sewerage Program and a number of communities received a compromise solution rather than a best fit. This group of communities may be the best place to start in terms of determining any outstanding capital needs.

In relation to Housing for Health, through the ACDP and other funding sources HfH has completed works in over 70 Aboriginal communities and is currently targeting urban communities. NSW Health is working closely with the Aboriginal Housing Office to integrate Housing for Health in the delivery of the NP on Remote Indigenous Housing. It is also noted that the reforms being implemented by the AHO and NSWALC will likely contribute to better maintenance of Aboriginal housing which potentially will ensure repairs to and replacement of health hardware items on a needed basis.

A number of additional capital works needs remain in Aboriginal communities in NSW, particularly in discrete communities. A 2009 report by NSW Commerce² found significant unmet needs in relation to community infrastructure such as power, garbage/waste removal, stormwater and drainage, community meeting facilities, telecommunications, kerbing, guttering and footpaths, emergency management, street and public space lighting, while a 2010 report by the Roads and Traffic Authority³ found a range of road safety infrastructure gaps on discrete communities.

Any future funding sources targeted to capital works is not necessarily best managed through a structure like the ACDP. The ACDP was a very complex, ambitious program with multiple objectives and partner agencies. Since the ACDP was developed, a number of mechanisms have been developed which support cross-agency partnerships and governance structures such as the NSW State Plan. Overall we consider that any future funding aimed at addressing unmet need such as community infrastructure is best conceived of in terms of funding streams, coordinated through existing cross-agency mechanisms rather than a composite model like the ACDP. AANSW would clearly have a key role in any such future efforts in relation to guiding policy, coordination with other relevant government initiatives and supporting the effective participation of Aboriginal communities through structures like the Community Partnership Program.

² NSW Commerce *Environmental Health and Community Infrastructure Project of 62 Existing Aboriginal Communities in NSW 2010*

³ NSW Centre for Road Safety (Roads and Traffic Authority) *Road Safety Infrastructure Assessments for Identified NSW Aboriginal Communities* (January 2010)

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Aims and structure of the ACDP

This report summarises the findings of the evaluation of the Aboriginal Communities Development Program (ACDP).

The ACDP was a \$240 million NSW Government capital works and delivered in selected Aboriginal communities throughout NSW. The ACDP commenced on 1 July 1998 with the entire \$240m budget fully expended as at 30 June 2011. In the rollout of the ACDP, additional funds from various sources were also pooled into the ACDP. A small component of the additional funds will be spent through 2011/12, allowing all of the ACDP commitments to be realised.

Throughout its duration the ACDP was based in Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) now part of the Department of Education and Communities.

The overall purpose of the ACDP was to raise the environmental health and living standards of selected Aboriginal Communities through:

- focusing funding and effort within these communities rather than through existing state-wide government programs;
- increasing the capacity of these communities to maintain housing and environmental health infrastructure within agreed sustainability frameworks; and
- adherence to the fundamental principles of community capacity building through consultation, community development and encouraging participation and self-determination in the Aboriginal communities involved.

The ACDP consisted of four components:

- *Priority Communities* – primarily funding new and replacement housing and repairs and refurbishment of existing housing stock. Priority Communities was the largest sub-program of the ACDP, representing 78% of the ACDP budget. Priority Communities was delivered in 22 locations in NSW. NSW Public Works was the Program Manager for Priority Communities.
- *Water and Sewerage* - upgrading or replacing water and sewerage systems. Water and Sewerage had a total budget of \$20m directed to 47 communities. NSW Public Works was the Program Manager for Water and Sewerage.
- *Housing for Health* - improving the safety and health of housing through, for example, testing household plumbing and electrical systems, and fixing damaged and unsafe areas. Housing for Health was managed by NSW Health. Housing for Health was jointly funded by the ACDP and Two Ways Together⁴. The ACDP component of the budget was \$10m which enabled delivery of Housing for Health in 38 communities.
- *Employment and Training Strategy* - Priority Communities provided the framework for delivery of the ACDP Employment and Training Strategy which has enabled individuals to access TAFE courses and on the job training in building trades so that building qualifications could be obtained.

⁴ Two Ways Together (TWT) was the NSW Government 10 year plan (2003-2012) to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people in key human service areas. TWT is administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

2.2 Objectives of the ACDP

The original goals of the ACDP as identified at its commencement⁵ were:

- Improved coordination with ATSIC housing and infrastructure programs
- Developing strategies to ensure local government services were accessible and appropriate for Aboriginal residents
- Addressing the backlog of Aboriginal housing and infrastructure needs
- Increasing the involvement of the Aboriginal community in skills development and labour associated with the capital works programs
- Consulting with Aboriginal people in the design and construction of their housing

The objectives of the ACDP were subsequently expanded as follows:

- to improve coordination across all relevant government agencies by working in partnership with them to identify joint funding and construction opportunities;
- to develop strategies to ensure that local government services are accessible, integrated and appropriate for Aboriginal residents, by working with local government in the development of projects and the identification of responsibility for maintenance and recurrent costs;
- to work with Government agencies at all levels to remove disadvantage through additional funding and better coordination of existing programs;
- to encourage the establishment of Aboriginal owned businesses to undertake capital works and to adopt contracting practices that maximise training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people;
- to maintain the concept of appropriate consultation and involvement of Aboriginal people, by adherence to an open consultative process based on the principles of Aboriginal self-determination and self-management; and
- to achieve long term sustainability, through the use of appropriate design and technology methods, quality control systems, and the training of communities in the management and maintenance of assets.

⁵ Cabinet Minute on Aboriginal Community Development Program, Hon AJ Refshuage, MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, February 1998

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Conduct of evaluation

The ACDP evaluation was conducted in two stages. Robyn Kennedy Consultants were contracted to undertake both stages.

Stage One (completed in August 2008) undertook a program-wide review of all four components of the ACDP (Priority Communities, Water and Sewerage, Housing for Health and Employment and Training) focusing on issues such as planning, governance and program delivery. Stage One reviewed the overall achievements, strengths and constraints of the ACDP drawing on available data, program documentation and stakeholder consultation. *Stage Two* (completed in September 2010) focused on assessment of the local level social and economic benefits of the ACDP. The methodology included visits to six of the 22 Priority Communities.

Separate reports have been produced for Stage One and Stage Two of the evaluation. This report summarises the main findings of the two reports.

3.2 Stage One methodology

3.2.1 Overview

The methodology for stage one of the Program evaluation comprised the following phases:

- Consultation with program management agencies
- Consultation with other stakeholder agencies
- Review of ACDP program-related documentation including:
 - history, structure and purpose of the ACDP
 - process used to identify program delivery locations
 - program planning arrangements
 - governance and coordination arrangements
 - information relating to sub-program funding as well as the overall ACDP budget and
 - key performance indicators
- Analysis of data collected by Commerce on capital works, business and training outcomes; and NSW Health on Housing for Health completions

3.2.2 Consultations

Consultations were undertaken with the following agencies and individuals who were involved in delivery of the program:

- NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Executive Director, Program Manager, Central Office and Regional Staff
- NSW Department of Commerce, Program Director, Program Manager
- NSW Department of Health, Program Manager, HfH Project Managers and Healthabitat
- Aboriginal Housing Office, CEO, central office staff
- Aboriginal community builders - Itha Mari Pty Ltd, Barriekneal Housing and Community Pty Ltd.
- Former ACDP Program Director

- Former ACDP Employment and Training Project Officer

3.2.3 Research and data analysis

Research and data analysis focused on:

- Review of program documentation
- Assessment of program outputs against the output KPIs.
- Evaluating program outputs against the budget.
- Assessment of the processes used to identify program locations. This included an assessment of:
 - available data and records
 - consistency and transparency of the process for selection of ACDP communities
 - variations in the selection process
- Review of program planning and delivery arrangements including the Community Housing and Environmental Health Plans (CHEHPs) and survey processes used for water and sewerage works and Housing for Health.
- Review of program governance including the structure and function of program governance, cross-agency committees and associated Memorandums of Understanding
- Review of community governance including the structure, role and sample minutes of CWP meetings and other records.
- Review of Water and Sewerage maintenance arrangements
- Preliminary assessment of Aboriginal business development and Aboriginal employment through the ACDP
- Review of training programs including analysis of enrolment numbers from local communities, trades, completion rates and resulting qualifications.
- A review of the application of the Aboriginal Housing Office Building Standards.
- Review of housing ownership and management including tenant eligibility policies, title and housing registration issues

3.3 Stage Two methodology

The primary methodology for stage two was consultations conducted at six of the 22 Priority Communities. These were:

1. Armidale
2. Brewarrina
3. Collarenebri
4. Kempsey
5. Tabulam
6. Wilcannia

A desk top review of Menindee was also included.

The example communities were selected to on the basis of illustrating a mix of smaller and larger capital works programs, larger regional and more remote locations and examples of varying success in implementation of the ACDP. Consultations focused on:

- the outcomes of the housing program including benefits and issues and sustained housing improvements
- the operation of Community Working Parties including benefits and issues

- the operation of the employment and training strategy at the local level including qualifications achieved, the success of community builders and ongoing employment opportunities

Local consultations varied depending on the issues applicable to each location – in some cases it was focused on residents of ACDP housing and/or apprentices and in other cases it was broader, involving a range of agencies. Local level consultations for the project included:

- Community Working Party members
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Apprentices under the ACDP
- Social housing providers
- Aboriginal community builders
- Community Development Employment Project providers
- Regional Aboriginal Affairs NSW staff
- Regional and central TAFE staff
- Shire Council senior staff and councillors
- Residents of housing built or repaired under the ACDP
- Regional Aboriginal Housing Office staff
- Regional staff of Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs
- Regional staff of the Department of Education and Training

The methodology also included review and updating of TAFE data on apprentices under the ACDP.

4 CONTEXT OF THE ACDP

4.1 Historical program drivers

In February 1998, a Cabinet Minute submitted by then Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Andrew Refshauge proposed funding of \$200 million for a five-year ACDP commencing in July 1998, to ensure “better health and better lifestyles in Aboriginal communities”.

There were three key factors influencing the development of the ACDP:

- Successful collaborations between NSW government agencies through the **Aboriginal Environmental Health Infrastructure Forum** which combined funding from agencies to achieve agreed priority environmental health projects. The success of the AEHIF initiatives was a principal driver of the ACDP. Two features in particular were seen as worthy of replication. One was the employment and training projects operating in Dareton and Muli Muli. These involved funding from the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs which allowed for the employment of an on-the-job trainer and trade accredited qualifications for participating Aboriginal apprentices. The other feature was the involvement of Community Working Parties.
- **Aboriginal Land Rights Act** – much of the infrastructure and housing that Local Aboriginal Land Councils inherited through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 was of poor quality. It was recognised by government that additional funds would be needed to improve capital assets.
- **New funding model** – the ACDP aimed to concentrate funding in select locations as an alternative to previous funding models that spread funding thinly over multiple locations which was seen as inefficient and as resulting in critical infrastructure needs remaining unmet.

4.2 Establishment of the Aboriginal Housing Office

Around about the time of the announcement of the ACDP, the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) was being established. The AHO is a statutory body responsible to the NSW Minister for Housing. It develops, manages the delivery of, monitors and evaluates housing assistance programs to Aboriginal people throughout NSW. The decision was made to locate the ACDP with AANSW rather than the AHO as the role and funding base of the AHO at the time had not been finalised (at that stage Cabinet had approved the establishment of the AHO but it had not yet been formally established through legislation).

Locating the ACDP in AANSW resulted in some complexities in relation to funding arrangements and also in relation to roles and responsibilities. AANSW had responsibility for delivering an Aboriginal housing program under the ACDP but under the Aboriginal Housing Act the AHO was established as the body responsible for Aboriginal housing programs in NSW. This structure resulted in an ongoing need to ensure clear identification of roles and responsibilities between AANSW and the AHO, which were formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding. Collaboration with the AHO was needed in relation to policy related issues such as eligibility for ACDP housing. Coordination between the ACDP housing capital works programs and the AHO's housing programs was also needed to avoid duplication.

4.3 Changing policy context

Since the development of the ACDP in 1998 there have been significant policy changes with respect to Aboriginal Affairs at both national and State levels that have given additional emphasis to the objectives of the ACDP. At the State level in 2003 *Two Ways Together* was established as the framework to address Aboriginal disadvantage through coordinated activity across the whole of NSW government. *Two Ways Together* also worked in partnership communities utilising the Community Working Party model.

The *NSW State Plan* first issued in 2006 contained a specific priority to improve health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people.

At the national level, the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (2008) established targets to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians in health, education and employment outcomes. As one means to close the gap the 2009 *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* provides funding for new houses as well as backlog maintenance.

These initiatives have assisted in raising the profile of Aboriginal disadvantage and provided more coordinated structures for developing responses.

5 PROGRAM EXPENDITURE

5.1 Overview

A primary goal of the ACDP was to focus effort on a small number of selected communities. This means that initially, in addition to the housing capital works, it was intended to fund water and sewerage only in the selected 22 communities. Fairly early on however, it was determined to extend the water and sewerage program to other communities identified in a 1996/97 Department of Lands and Water Conservation survey and to include Housing for Health as a component of the ACDP.

The total budget available for the ACDP program from inception until completion was \$240m. The original ACDP budget, approved in 1998 was \$200m. The Priority Communities sub-program was originally limited to 18 communities but in 2001, four additional communities were added. The ACDP budget initially accommodated these additional commitments by reducing funding commitments elsewhere, including reducing the Housing for Health budget to \$5.5m. These reductions were partly re-instated when Treasury subsequently approved a budget increase of \$40m to the ACDP, \$17m being supplementary funding and the balance, indexation.

Table 5.1 on the following page shows the total ACDP budget to June 2011 for each ACDP community. As shown, total expenditure for the three sub-programs was approximately \$216.3m. The remainder of the \$240m budget has been spent on Program Management by NSW Public Works and contributions to AANSW's head office and regional administration.

Priority Communities expenditure totals \$186.4m. This represents 86% of the combined capital works budget across the three sub-programs and 78% of the total ACDP budget of \$240m. As shown, a number of Priority Communities have also received funding under Water and Sewerage and Housing for Health. The goal of the ACDP to concentrate spending in a small number of selected communities has clearly been achieved. At the same time, the ACDP has also directed funding to key health-related infrastructure in additional communities through the Water and Sewerage and Housing for Health programs. A total of 72 communities have benefitted from the ACDP, ranging from a total of \$20m in Kempsey to \$1,000 in Murrays Flat.

Table 5.1 Total ACDP budget including commitments to June 2011

Community	Priority Communities	Water and Sewerage	Housing for Health	Total
Armidale	\$10,458,459		\$268,700	\$10,727,159
Balranald		\$42,000		\$42,000
Baryulgil		\$703,000	\$112,500	\$815,500
Bellbrook		\$312,000	\$220,000	\$532,000
Bennelong		\$134,000		\$134,000
Bilong		\$22,000		\$22,000
Boggabilla/Toomelah	\$11,561,785	\$1,636,500	\$607,500	\$13,805,785
Bodalla		\$1,250,000		\$1,250,000
Bowraville			\$322,500	\$322,500
Bourke	\$11,881,682	\$6,000		\$11,887,682
Box Ridge/Coraki			\$240,000	\$240,000
Brewarrina	\$16,476,465	\$27,000	\$621,700	\$17,125,165
Broken Hill			\$193,000	\$193,000
Brungle		\$1,187,000		\$1,187,000
Cabbage Tree Island	\$9,742,623	\$470,000		\$10,212,623
Cobar			\$119,500	\$119,500
Collarenebri	\$4,920,563	\$196,500	\$121,238	\$5,238,301
Condobolin	\$947,408			\$947,408
Coomaditchie			\$210,000	\$210,000
Coonamble	\$8,117,619			\$8,117,619
Corindi		\$21,000		\$21,000
Cummerangunja		\$799,500	\$262,500	\$1,062,000
Dareton	\$6,727,284	\$135,000		\$6,862,284
Dorrigo			\$50,000	\$50,000
Enngonia	\$3,471,078	\$364,000		\$3,835,078
Erambie		\$28,000		\$28,000
Figtree		\$4,000		\$4,000
Goodooga	\$6,285,600	\$311,000	670,000	\$7,266,600
Green Hills		\$18,000		\$18,000
Grong Grong		\$42,000		\$42,000
Gulargambone	\$3,295,198			\$3,295,198
Gunderimba/Lismore			\$352,500	\$352,500
Ivanhoe			\$144,500	\$144,500
Karuah		\$946,000		\$946,000
Kempsey	\$19,984,815		\$770,205	\$20,755,020
La Pouse			\$220,000	\$220,000
Lightning Ridge	\$5,522,232		\$225,156	\$5,747,388
Loftus Road		\$286,500		\$286,500
Macksville			\$120,000	\$120,000
Malabugilmah		\$853,000	\$127,500	\$980,500
Menindee	\$4,162,698		\$280,000	44,442,698
Mirriwinni		\$1,310,000		\$1,310,000
Moonacullah		\$26,500		\$26,500
Moree	\$16,488,750	\$204,000	\$540,000	\$17,232,750
Muli Muli	\$3,039,335	\$2,474,500		\$5,513,835
Munginda			\$97,500	\$97,500
Murrays Flat		\$1,000		\$1,000
Murrin Bridge	\$5,427,303	\$12,000		\$5,439,303
Namina		\$50,500		\$50,500
Narrabri			\$520,000	\$520,000

Narwan		\$127,000		\$127,000
New and Old Burnt Bridge		\$4,600		\$4,600
Orient Point	\$7,270*		\$210,000	\$217,270
Pilliga		\$43,000		\$43,000
Purfleet		\$14,000	\$570,000	\$584,000
Stuart Pt		\$9,600		\$9,600
Summervale		\$1,590,000		\$1,590,000
Tabulam	\$6,411,221	\$1,380,000	\$412,500	\$8,203,721
Tamworth			\$112,500	\$112,500
Tenterfield			\$180,000	\$180,000
Tibooburra		\$400,000		\$400,000
Tingha		\$437,000	\$187,500	\$624,500
Walcha			\$202,500	\$202,500
Walgett	\$8,492,920	\$178,500		\$8,671,420
Walhallow		\$30,000		\$30,000
Wallaga Lake		\$1,037,047	\$277,500	\$1,314,547
Wanaaring		\$32,500		\$32,500
Wee Waa			\$130,000	\$130,000
Weilmoringle	\$8,513,086	\$777,000		\$9,290,086
Wilcannia	\$14,482,546			\$14,482,546
Willow Bend	\$17,150*		\$220,000	\$237,150
Wongala		\$2,300		\$2,300
Total	\$186,435,090	\$19,978,047	\$9,918,999	\$216,332,136

Source: NSW Public Works, NSW Health, December 2011. *A small component of the Priority Communities budget was expended in Orient Point and Willow Bend although these two locations are not Priority Communities

5.2 Delays in budget expenditure

The timeframe for delivery of the ACDP has shifted forward several times. Originally, the program was to be expended over five years, commencing on 1 July 1998 but as no detailed program planning had been undertaken prior to approval of the budget, it soon became apparent that the budget could not be spent in this time frame. The program was subsequently extended by two years to 2004/05. When the four extra communities were added to Priority Communities in 2001, the target date for program completion was extended to June 2008. The program was completed on 30 June 2011, bringing the program rollout to 13 years.

The various extensions to time frames were primarily due to delays in expending the Priority Communities budget, as discussed further in section 8. Delays in commencing housing works in Priority Communities were however, able to be at least partly offset by spending on Water and Sewerage and Housing for Health.

The delays in rolling out Priority Communities had an impact on the ACDP budget – rising costs over time meant that planned capital works cost more than anticipated, and economies of scale were eroded due to stop-start construction in some locations. Due to a lower than anticipated construction program budget savings have however, been able to be made enabling Priority Communities to meet its housing targets.

6 PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

6.1 Selection of ACDP communities

At the time of the establishment of the ACDP, the specific communities to benefit from the program had not been determined so an early task was to develop a methodology to select the communities. In relation to water and sewerage, a Department of Lands and Water Conservation survey of 54 communities undertaken in 1996/97 was used as the primary data source. For Housing for Health a range of factors were taken into account such as the known condition of housing and the extent of works being undertaken by other programs.

The process of selection of the 22 Priority Communities varied over time but in essence involved a complex scoring system based on approaches that had been used to rank communities under the ATSI Health Infrastructure Priority Program (HIPP). The scoring system ranked projects according to a range of physical and social factors which aimed to quantify need and assess the sustainability of capital investment. The ACDP made a number of changes to the HIPP scoring system and also took into account other factors such as the involvement of communities in programs such as the Aboriginal Environmental Health Infrastructure Forum.

Overall, the evaluation found the process to be complex and inconsistent with inadequate documentation of the factors supporting selection. Overall a less complex, more transparent and more easily understood selection process was **recommended** for any similar, future funding program.

One issue to highlight with respect to the selection of Priority Communities is whether it might have been appropriate to determine whether the 22 communities were still priorities over time. Originally, the ACDP was to be delivered over 5 years but given that the program was extended several times it may have been appropriate to determine whether needs had changed over time particularly whether needs in other communities may have escalated in the intervening years. The program outputs tend to support the view that the level of need in the 22 Priority Communities was very variable with expenditure comparatively low in some locations (e.g. \$1m in Condobolin) and no new housing built in several locations.

It was noted by some stakeholders however, that the ACDP was designed to address need as existed when the program was established – it was not intended to add to or vary the program as it progressed.

6.2 Local level planning

The primary local level planning tool for the ACDP was the Community Housing and Environmental Health Plan (CHEHP). CHEHPs were first produced under the National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) through Community Working Parties, primarily in the Murdi Paaki region. This model was seen as being worthy of replication under the ACDP. At program commencement a number of ACDP Priority Communities already had CHEHPs, developed under NAHS. CHEHPs had to be developed for the remaining Priority Communities.

It is clear from the CHEHPs that they were a very broad planning exercise that did not provide what was needed to properly scope a capital works program, in particular estimates of unmet housing need could not be substantiated because there was no determined eligibility for new housing under the ACDP.

With no definition of eligibility, estimates of housing need in the CHEHPs were primarily based on housing provider waiting lists, noting that at the time, getting on a provider waiting list was often

simply a manner of putting your name down. It appears that it was not uncommon for community members to put their name down in the hope of getting new housing through the ACDP, even though they may have been adequately housed.

At that stage, the scope of CHEHPs in terms of facilities apart from housing remained broad, reflecting the original aim of the ACDP - "better health and better lifestyles in Aboriginal communities" with funds able to be used for "housing, water, sewerage, health and the sporting and cultural needs of Aboriginal communities". Of five CHEHPs developed during 2000, all contained bids for one or more of road works, bridge works, footpaths, storm water, fire control, emergency services, sport and recreational facilities, street lighting and waste disposal.

CHEHPs therefore often operated as a statement of all community needs, rather than priority needs. Housing need was sometimes overstated. As an example, the CHEHP for Lightning Ridge estimated that 99 new houses were needed but in reality, only 6 were required. On the other hand, it was commonly queried by CWPs (see section 7) that there was enough new housing identified in CHEHPs to meet demand in some locations.

A few years into the ACDP it became obvious that the Priority Communities budget was not going to be able to deliver everything that was sought by communities. A decision was taken by AANSW to restrict Priority Communities to housing-related capital works and communities were advised accordingly but not before some capital works in addition to housing had been delivered (see section 8).

6.3 Program management

AANSW had overall responsibility for and management of the ACDP. AANSW's role included policy development, expenditure approval, implementation of the employment and training strategy and support of Community Working Parties.

NSW Public Works was the Program Manager for Priority Communities and Water and Sewerage. NSW Public Works was responsible for acting as the Principal on capital works contracts for Priority Communities and Water and Sewerage, making payments on these contracts and keeping records of account. NSW Public Works also supervised Project Managers and ensured that capital works complied with appropriate standards and all State and Local Government requirements.

NSW Health was responsible for management of Housing for Health as part of its in-kind contribution to the ACDP. This role included coordinating implementation of the Housing for Health methodology, making payments to contractors and keeping records of program outputs including number of items repaired.

At the local level, individual projects in communities were delivered by Project Managers who were selected by an Expression of Interest process involving the participation of Community Working Parties. NSW Public Works oversaw the work of individual Project Managers, who included government agencies and private sector firms.

It took a few years for program level arrangements to be put in place through a Service Agreement between AANSW and Public Works and a Partnership Agreement between AANSW and NSW Health but over time strong working relationships developed between AANSW, Public Works and NSW Health.

It also took a few years to develop Memorandums of Understanding with key agencies. In 2002 a MOU between AANSW and NSW TAFE was agreed setting out cooperative arrangements on the education and training of Aboriginal people. In 2000 a MOU was entered into between AANSW and the AHO regarding a coordinated approach to capital works, planning and funding. Coordination of housing capital works with the AHO was a key issue given that the AHO had

responsibility for its own Aboriginal housing programs. The evaluation found that in practice, coordination appears to have worked relatively well and there was little duplication of housing efforts on the ground.

The evaluation found however, that there were some deficiencies in implementation of the MOU between AANSW and the AHO. These related to mechanisms to ensure that Housing Agreements between AANSW and Aboriginal housing providers were kept up to date and that the AHO's interest in properties funded through the ACDP was registered on the title. While these deficiencies were later rectified, these issues reflect a lack of clarity as to the roles of key agencies under the ACDP perhaps due in part to the complexity of the program.

6.4 Cross-agency collaboration

Throughout the operation of the ACDP there was a focus on cross-agency governance structures in an effort to coordinate program delivery and reduce duplication, particularly capital programs. For most of its duration a broad cross agency Steering Committee operated to shape the program and support whole of government approaches. For several years, there was also a capital works coordinating committee involving the key agencies and the AHO, Housing NSW and FaHCSIA.

The Employment and Training Strategy in particular provides an example of effective coordination achieved between agencies under the ACDP. As discussed in section 11, the funding model involves contributions from three agencies (AANSW, DEWR and FACSHIA) with training provided by TAFE. The Employment and Training Strategy was used as a case study by the Auditor General in their 2006 *Performance Audit: Agencies Working Together to Improve Services* where they found that the coordination and collaboration achieved through the Employment and Training Strategy had improved services and results and enabled the breaking down of traditional barriers between agencies to focus on a common outcome.

6.5 Program staffing

Since the commencement of the ACDP, the program budget has provided funds for the establishment of positions in the AANSW to manage the program but it appears that program administration was significantly under resourced in the early years of program roll out.

In 2005, management of the ACDP was regionalised, although some regional positions were not filled until late 2006. The Sydney office maintained oversight of program delivery as a whole, but direct support was provided through Regional Managers based in Bourke, Coffs Harbour, Narooma, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga. The issue of clarity of roles between AANSW Sydney and regional offices was raised during the evaluation. It was said that initially, the roles of head office and regional offices with respect to the ACDP were very unclear and there was no formal hand over process for program management. Delegations and transfer of files did not occur immediately, leaving regions reliant on a historical understanding of the ACDP. It appears that some lack of clarity of roles continued throughout the program.

6.6 Program documentation

The evaluation found considerable room for improvement in relation to program records and management information. There was a shortage of files that could be consulted to provide an historical record of program development. Data on program outputs was not available in a form that enabled interpretation from the perspective of evaluation.

The evaluation also found that in general, policy development has lagged behind program implementation. A policy on eligibility for new housing in Priority Communities was not available until late 2002. Guidelines for Community Working Parties were not produced until April 2004.

Policy has largely been developed retrospectively, rather than guiding the planning and implementation process, perhaps due to pressures to deliver the program and initial under resourcing of staff positions.

The evaluation **recommended** that AANSW address policy gaps and improve program record keeping. These recommendations were attempted to be implemented by AANSW but by this stage the program was nearing completion so improved processes had limited benefit.

7 COMMUNITY WORKING PARTIES

7.1 Role of Community Working Parties

Community Working Parties (CWPs) were established in NSW in the mid 1990s as a culturally appropriate and representative means of consultation, decision-making and community action for Aboriginal people. At the commencement of the ACDP, eight CWPs were in existence through processes developed primarily in Murdi Paaki region. AANSW's role has been to establish CWPs in the rest of the 22 Priority Communities and ensure that CWPs were representative of their community.

CWPs have a key role in identifying local needs and proposing the allocation of ACDP funding in Priority Communities⁶. The Community Working Party Guidelines (2004) produced by AANSW for the ACDP envisage a representative mix of community members and key representative bodies. Community Working Parties aim to represent the views of the local community, including the interests and needs of specific target groups such as elders, young people and children.

Key roles for CWPs include:

- influencing the scope of proposed spending including reallocating resources such as between repairs and new build
- determining the employment and training approaches taken in their community e.g. while most communities pursued apprenticeships programs other communities opted for straight forward employment opportunities
- supervising the function and performance of Project Managers at a community level
- determining which Aboriginal housing provider would manage the new housing and which body would be the principal in the contract of works with Public Works, generally the community builder where there was one (see section 11)

While AANSW had the role of determining eligibility for new housing under the ACDP (see section 8), CWPs were responsible for prioritising applicants from the AANSW-approved waiting list. The prioritisation process met with delays due to tensions and conflict over who should be prioritised. From the program Progress Reports it is clear that in some cases, prioritisation continued unresolved for years, delaying housing construction works.

7.2 Issues and challenges

Issues and challenges identified by stakeholders for CWPs under the ACDP include:

- There was the potential for significant conflicts of interest to arise with respect to housing allocations and employment opportunities through construction or repairs projects. The CWP Guidelines do not clearly identify a process for managing conflicts of interest
- Lack of accountability for decision making has been a criticism of the CWP governance structure. CWPs were not incorporated under legislation and the basis for their authority in community decisions making – which extended to making decisions about assets that are to be managed and/or owned by a third party – were defined only by the objectives set out under the ACDP

⁶ Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Community Working Party Guidelines 2004

- Membership was via self nomination rather than by election and the number of attendees may vary from meeting to meeting which raises issues of credibility and accountability
- Despite strong encouragement from AANSW, local Aboriginal housing providers were not necessarily represented on CWPs – in this context the question arose as to the appropriateness of CWPs determining the priority of housing allocations.
- In some cases CWPs selected as the body to manage new housing Aboriginal housing providers who were very unlikely to meet AHO registration standards – this had implications for capital works rollout and the sustainability of housing funded through the ACDP.

Despite these challenges the evaluation found that CWPs had been successful in offering community members a meaningful role in program delivery. The process of bringing together community members who may have previously been at odds was seen as a very positive outcome and as laying the groundwork for future cooperation. Case studies highlight the benefits and challenges of the CWP process as outlined as follows.

7.3 Case studies

In Armidale, the ACDP Community Working Party was seen by many as a positive experience and a mechanism to build strength in the community. Individuals gained skills from the CWP process with some going on to assume leadership roles in the community. The CWP was said to have functioned well in terms of decision making although as for other CWPs, prioritisation for the new houses was a problematic issue.

In some locations, the CWP achieved a representative mix of community members. In Brewarrina for example, the Community Working Party included representatives of five Aboriginal geographic communities as well as representatives of specific target groups and government agencies.

In Kempsey the CWP was said to have provided good training in governance and increased the skills of community members. The CWP enabled community members to better understand funding and accountability processes. The CWP adopted a policy that to be eligible for allocation or R&M/refurbishment an applicant must agree to pay rent – this policy resulted in a reduction of rental arrears. Leases were also introduced. The CWP was seen to be a useful alternative to the LALC in representing the views of community members. The CWP process was seen to have strengthened relationships in the community and with AANSW.

The key issue in Kempsey as with other communities was prioritisation of applicants. Attempts were made to prioritise eligible applicants on the basis of need such as young families, people with disabilities and elderly but there were significant differences of opinion about the relative needs of these groups. There were also disputes as to the eligibility of more recent arrivals to Kempsey resulting in a policy that an applicant had to have been resident for five years to be eligible for allocation.

In Tabulam, CWP members felt that the ACDP has been a positive program. The CWP said that the model provided a voice for the community with everybody given the opportunity to have a say. The CWP was said to have acted as a broad advisory body on a range of community issues.

In Wilcannia the Community Working Party experienced significant divisions of opinion over a number of matters and there was difficulty in achieving consensus decision making, with divided support for some decisions. In Menindee, CWP conflicts resulted in disputes that have extended for several years. These problems underscore a significant constraint in the operation of the ACDP

Community Working Party model as outlined above that is, the unincorporated nature of the CWP meant that there were few formal mechanisms to regulate decision making and ensure appropriate accountability.

The evaluation **recommended** that the strengths and weaknesses of the CWP model be taken into account in the implementation of the Partnership Community Program. It is noted that a governance framework has been produced for the Partnership Community Program and the CWP model continues to be built on through implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery.

8 PRIORITY COMMUNITIES

8.1 Capital commitment to Priority Communities

Table 8.1 shows total expenditure across the 22 communities for each sub-program. As shown, the 22 communities have received approximately \$186.4m through the Priority Communities program with an additional \$8.2m from Water and Sewerage and \$4.5m from Housing for Health, a total of \$199.1m representing 93% of the capital works funding available across the three sub-programs.

An additional \$1.1m has been funded under Two Ways Together for Housing for Health projects in Condobolin and Walgett.

Table 8.1 Total ACDP expenditure in 22 Priority Communities

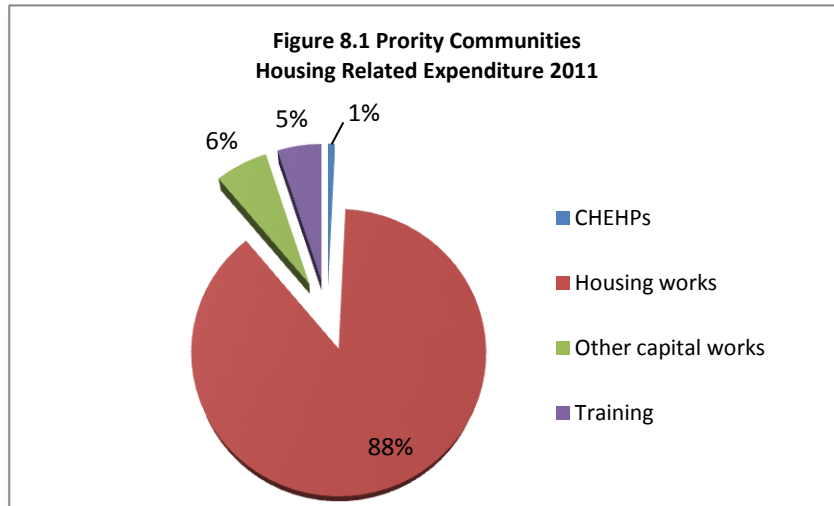
Town/community	Priority Communities	Water & Sewerage	Housing for Health	Total
Armidale	\$10,458,459	-	\$268,700	\$10,727,159
Boggabilla/ Toomelah	\$11,561,785	\$1,636,500	\$607,500	\$13,805,785
Bourke	\$11,881,682	\$6,000	-	\$11,887,682
Brewarrina	\$16,476,465	\$27,000	\$621,700	\$17,125,165
Cabbage Tree Island	\$9,742,623	\$470,000	-	\$10,212,623
Collarenebri	4,920,563	\$196,500	\$121,238	\$5,238,301
Condobolin	\$947,408	-	TWT	\$947,408
Coonamble	\$8,117,619	-	-	\$8,117,619
Dareton	\$6,727,284	\$135,000	-	\$6,862,284
Enngonia	\$3,471,078	\$364,000	-	\$3,835,078
Goodooga	\$6,285,600	\$311,000	\$670,000	\$7,266,600
Gulgargambone	\$3,295,198	-	-	\$3,295,198
Kempsey	\$19,984,815	-	\$770,205	\$20,755,020
Lightning Ridge	\$5,522,232	-	\$225,156	\$5,747,388
Menindee	\$4,162,698	-	\$280,000	\$4,442,698
Moree	\$16,488,750	\$204,000	\$540,000	\$17,232,750
Muli Muli	\$3,039,335	\$2,474,500	-	\$5,513,835
Murrin Bridge	\$5,427,303	\$12,000	-	\$5,439,303
Tabulam	\$6,411,221	\$1,380,000	\$412,500	\$8,203,721
Walgett	\$8,492,920	\$178,500	TWT	\$8,671,420
Weilmoringle	\$8,513,086	\$777,000	-	\$9,290,086
Wilcannia	\$14,482,546	-	-	\$14,482,546
TOTAL	\$186,435,090*	\$8,172,000	\$4,516,999	\$199,124,089

Source: NSW Public Works, NSW Health December 2011

* Includes \$24,420 expended in Orient Point and Willow Bend

8.2 Housing-related capital works

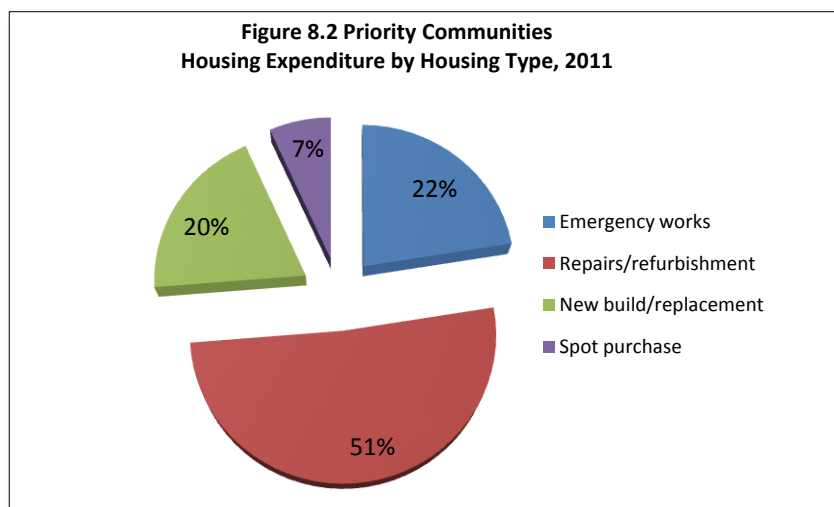
As at June 2011, \$186.4m has been expended on Priority Communities. The bulk of the Priority Communities budget, \$147.7m (79%) has been directed to housing capital works. Training subsidies to builders for apprentices are additional to capital works costs. These payments totalled \$8.4m (5%). \$10.1m (5%) has been spent on other capital works (e.g. road works, street lighting – see section 8.2.1). Preparation of CHEHPs cost \$1.3m, 1% of the budget. The budget breakup is shown graphically below.



8.2.1 New and upgraded housing

Of the \$147.7m spent on housing capital works as at June 2010 the majority of the budget \$75.7m (51%) was expended on repairs/refurbishment and \$33.2m (22%) on emergency repairs with construction (new and replacement housing) totalling around \$28.8 (20%) Spot purchase accounted for \$10m (7%) of the housing budget.

This expenditure is shown graphically in Figure 8.2 below.



Originally, it had been envisaged that a large proportion of the budget would be expended on construction. It appears that this expectation was largely informed by the CHEHPs. It is noted that only in few cases did the CHEHP accurately predict the number of new houses or other housing works. As noted in section 6, in some cases, the need for new housing was much lower than estimated in the CHEHP.

8.2.2 Other capital works

A wide range of community infrastructure needs were set out in the CHEHPs and as noted earlier, a budget commitment was initially made to these facilities which included community halls, road paving, street lighting, landscaping, parks and playgrounds.

As noted earlier subsequently, it was determined to focus the Priority Communities budget on housing-related capital works only. Some expenditure from the Priority Communities budget was however, directed to other capital works in the first years of the program. This included road works, sporting and recreational facilities, landscaping, street lighting, stormwater, street cleaning and fire control equipment. These capital works were completed in around half of the 22 Priority Communities.

8.3 Policies that have had an impact on housing capital works

Two key policies that had an impact on housing-related capital works were: eligibility for housing and the registration status of housing providers with the AHO.

8.3.1 Eligibility for new houses

Under the CHEHPs estimates of housing need were primarily based on the number of names on a waiting list, without an objective assessment. It was not possible to fully scope a capital works program in terms of the number or configuration of new housing without a clear indication of need. This meant that a policy on eligibility for new housing needed to be developed - the issue of eligibility for housing under the ACDP is restricted to housing that is newly constructed or spot purchased. In the case of repairs, refurbishment or replacement of housing, there is no need to determine eligibility as tenants are already in occupation of the housing.

AANSW worked with the AHO to determine eligibility and in 2002 it was agreed that eligibility for ACDP new housing would be equivalent to that applying to the AHO's Housing Aboriginal Communities Program (HACP), which was similar to public housing. Defining eligibility was however, only the first step in determining a housing construction program – applicants had still to be assessed for eligibility and subsequently, approved eligible applicants had to be prioritised for housing by CWPs.

With the assistance of the AHO, application forms for new housing were developed and distributed to communities. Completed applications were assessed by AANSW. A significant problem was encountered in undertaking assessment - some community members did not wish to submit substantiating documentation, often because they were adequately housed in public or Aboriginal housing but were keen to get new housing. Resolving these issues took time, particularly as the AANSW had no statutory right to verify income or housing circumstances.

Uncertainty about eligibility (and the subsequent prioritisation process by CWPs) led to construction delays, sometimes for several years, and stop-start construction work which had an impact on costs and training programs. In the meantime, those parts of the CHEHP that could be substantiated were however, able to be commenced, such as housing repairs, water and sewerage works and Housing for Health.

8.3.2 Registration of housing providers

The MOU between AANSW and the AHO acknowledged the requirement that ACDP funds may not be directed to Aboriginal housing organisations that are not registered. Part 5 Sections 26 and 28 of the Aboriginal Housing Act, 1998 provides for the registration of Aboriginal housing providers.

Many Aboriginal housing organisations struggled to meet registration requirements. This caused significant delays to expending funds for housing works, sometimes extending for years. Often a housing provider was unable to meet rent collection targets required to be registered because tenants refused to pay any, or more, rent.

There were examples of informal relaxation of registration requirements to overcome these kinds of obstacles. In some cases, funds have been applied to upgrading of houses where tenants had signed a lease and were paying rent. ACDP funding in this context was a means of rewarding tenants for signing up and paying rent and Aboriginal housing providers for their efforts to get tenants to do so. It was hoped that other tenants would be encouraged to pay rent if they saw that doing so would lead to an upgrade of their house.

It was also noted that at the local level some housing providers were able to scrape over the line to achieve registration but frequently, once a housing provider had their housing, practices such as improved rent collection fell away.

8.3.3 Impact of delays in the housing program

A range of delays were experienced in the housing program. In addition to delays caused in determining eligibility, prioritisation and the housing provider registration process, there were delays in delivery of building materials particularly in remote communities and the collapse of community builders in a few locations (see section 11) also acted to delay housing programs. There were also delays due to a lack of suitable land so that alternatives such as spot purchasing needed to be explored.

The speed of construction of community builders was also an issue in some cases, with some community builders taking much longer to complete building projects than commercial builders. Ensuring training objectives were met for apprentices often resulted in construction taking much longer than had been anticipated.

Spot purchases were also undertaken in some cases due to lack of land supply but also because they were speedier and sometimes more cost effective than construction. The recognised downside of spot purchasing was however, that they did not deliver any employment or training outcomes noting that there needed to be a sufficient construction program for apprentices to work on.

Delays in the housing program had an impact on budgets through rising prices over time. As noted earlier, some savings were however, able to be achieved because more housing need than originally anticipated was able to be addressed through repairs or upgrading rather than new construction. Lower than anticipated new housing was also related to the role of CWPs in program implementation - in some cases, CWPs decided that it would be more cost effective to repair existing housing than build new ones.

That housing need (in terms of eligible households) in Priority Communities was able to be met within the global ACDP budget was primarily due to the smaller than anticipated new construction component.

Additional achievements such as housing in other communities or additional community infrastructure in the 22 Priority Communities may have been possible if delays in undertaking

housing-related capital works could have been avoided through better planning and earlier recognition of the implications of significant policy issues such as eligibility and housing provider registration.

Despite these constraints the ACDP has enabled very positive housing outcomes as discussed in the next section.

8.3.4 Housing outcomes in selected communities

The evaluation included an assessment of the housing outcomes in the selected six communities.

In most of the selected communities the standard of housing viewed was good to high. New build houses were generally well designed and constructed, providing spacious indoor and outdoor living areas and separate bedrooms for children. In addition to extensions and new bathrooms and kitchens, refurbishments include access ramps, decks and verandas and modifications for people with disabilities including accessible bathrooms, widening of doorways and lowering of bench tops. The standard of refurbishments viewed was more variable than the new build but generally provided improved amenity, more functional use of space and better access for people with a disability.

Spot purchase of properties in mixed neighbourhoods has acted to break down barriers between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people. Additions to stock through building and spot purchases have reduced overcrowding but overcrowding continues to be a problem in some locations such as Wilcannia and more generally due to continued population growth of Aboriginal communities.

Tenants in the selected communities were often involved in design and selection of materials such as colour schemes, floor coverings, cupboards and tiles. It was frequently said that greater pride was shown by tenants in their homes and tenants took better care of their housing. The program was said to have changed the behaviour of young people – more respect for property was shown and young people became involved in projects such as planting gardens.

There was much pride among community members in having local Aboriginal people build their homes. There was said to be less vandalism of housing built or refurbished by Aboriginal people.

Overall, there was a high level of satisfaction by tenants with their housing and overall, the housing program has been very beneficial, increasing the quality of life of Aboriginal tenants and improving the environmental health and safety of communities.

In two of the selected communities however, there were problems which resulted in less satisfactory housing outcomes. At the time of the evaluation, in Collarenebri and Wilcannia there were a range of defects in housing that represented a health and safety issue and/or an impingement on quality of life. In relation to Collarenebri, some defects such as leakage of roofs around heater flues and windows were identified at the time of final defects notification by the project manager but were not rectified by the community builder. Other defects appear to have occurred subsequently. While the latter was technically be the responsibility of the housing provider, the Local Land Council was under administration. The evaluation **recommended** that in Collarenebri the defects identified at the time of final defects notification by the project manager be rectified as soon as possible. These repairs have now been completed. It was also **recommended** that AANSW work with the AHO and NSWALC to investigate options for rectifying other defects and repair issues in Collarenebri.

In Wilcannia, there was extensive cracking of the external walls of houses on the Mallee and displaced windows and door frames and loose bricks. There were also a number of issues impacting on quality of life including the lack of appropriate internal storage, eroded landscaping and a range of repair issues. The evaluation **recommended** that AANSW work with Public Works and other agencies to resolve issues and defects related to design and/or construction of housing in Wilcannia and that AANSW work with the AHO and NSWALC to investigate options to address repairs and maintenance issues. It is noted that all the cracked blockwork and internal lining cracking in housing has now been rectified but there is a need to maintain a focus on addressing maintenance issues.

Construction and refurbishment problems experienced in Wilcannia and Collarenebri highlight some of the challenges experienced by the ACDP in ensuring appropriate project management and construction supervision, particularly in remote locations.

8.3.5 Housing sustainability

Sustainability of housing was a key issue for the ACDP given the very substantial investment in housing. Sustainability requires sufficient income to be able to meet operating costs including repairs and maintenance as well as competent housing management practices. The evaluation found that while there was some improved rent collection and reduced rental arrears, rent levels generally remained relatively low and were often insufficient to meet repair costs. Getting repairs done was a problem in a few of the selected communities and more generally, improvements in housing management prompted by registration requirements were often not sustained.

Overall, the ACDP was not able to make a significant contribution to housing management sustainability. Housing management sustainability was however, very unlikely to have been achieved by the ACDP alone as sustainability is linked to a number of factors outside the control of the ACDP including registration processes for housing providers, the availability of subsidies to meet any gaps between rental income and costs and economies of scale.

Current AHO reform directions reflected in the Build and Grow ⁷ strategy are however, likely to improve sustainability. A key component of the Build and Grow strategy is the replacement of the registration system that was applicable under the ACDP with a new Provider Assessment and Registration Scheme (PARS). PARS has been modelled on the mainstream community housing registration system and provides a much more robust assessment of provider capability. To gain access to backlog maintenance funding available under the NP on Remote Indigenous Housing providers must either be approved under PARS or agree to headlease their properties to the AHO who subleases them to a PARS approved provider. The intent is to build the scale of competent housing providers to support economies of scale and to provide opportunities for small operators to outsource housing management.

These reforms are supported by the new AHO Rent Policy which sets new rent levels for properties managed by PARS approved providers as well as a commitment to recurrent funding of PARS approved providers to meet the gap between rental income and operating costs.

Reforms have also been introduced by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. In an effort to improve governance and housing management, Local Aboriginal Land Councils wishing to operate social housing schemes must be assessed against the standards-based Social Housing Approval and Provide Evaluation process.

Together these reforms will potentially substantially support improved sustainability of housing management in Aboriginal communities.

⁷ <http://www.aho.nsw.gov.au/the-build-grow-aboriginal-community-housing-strategy-update>

9 WATER AND SEWERAGE

The ACDP Water and Sewerage program aimed to address water and sewerage needs in Aboriginal discrete communities. In NSW, water is supplied by specialist water authorities e.g. Sydney Water or by local Councils. In rural and remote areas, Council is typically the supply authority, providing a single metered connection to private lands. As Aboriginal discrete communities are identified as private land, a single water connection is generally provided by Council to the site boundary with Local Aboriginal Land Councils expected to address the infrastructure requirements from site boundaries to individual houses. Most discrete communities are responsible for the provision of their own water and sewerage but have little capacity to provide for or maintain this infrastructure.

Under the ACDP approximately \$20m was expended on upgrading water and sewerage infrastructure in 47 communities. Works undertaken to improve water supply included connection of houses to town water supplies for the first time, drilling of new bores, installation of water tanks and pipes. Improvements to sewerage infrastructure included installation of new sewerage rising mains and development of sewerage treatment infrastructure including oxidation ponds.

In addition to discrete communities, the Water and Sewerage program also contributed to the cost of delivering municipal wide water and sewerage programs in some towns with high Aboriginal populations, in partnership with local Councils and the Department of Water and Energy.

It is estimated that the water and sewerage program has improved the living conditions of approximately 4000 people and improved the amenity and functionality of 870 houses.

A key issue for the water and sewerage program was provision for ongoing maintenance of water and sewerage infrastructure on discrete communities. The NSW Aboriginal Community Water and Sewerage Group convened by NSW Health met for a number of years in an attempt to resolve the issue of responsibility for water and sewerage in discrete communities. A key issue was that no one agency was responsible for this infrastructure which highlighted the need for a cross agency response.

A 2007 Issues Paper by the NSW Aboriginal Community Water and Sewerage Group highlighted the need for a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to ensure that water and sewerage capital infrastructure was maintained in order to sustain quality standards and prevent premature failure of infrastructure.

In recognition of these issues, on July 1 2008 the *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program* was established. The program commits over \$200m over 25 years in joint recurrent funding from the NSW Government and NSWALC for the operation, maintenance and repair of water and sewerage infrastructure in Aboriginal discrete communities. Funds are administered by the NSW Office of Water.

The program focuses on:

- full routine operation and maintenance servicing of the water supply and sewerage systems
- repairs to existing pipes, pumps and treatment plants to return them to full operating capacity
- emergency repairs - fixing pumps or other equipment if they break down

- improvements to water quality and sewerage services
- regular inspection and maintenance of pumping stations and treatment plants
- regular maintenance and cleaning of sewer pumps and sewer mains
- regular collection and testing of water
- preparation of management plans to advise how to protect water and sewerage systems

The program also includes a small component of funding for water and sewerage capital upgrades in several sites.

While the *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program* now provides recurrent funding for maintenance of water and sewerage infrastructure in discrete communities it would have been beneficial if a funding source for maintenance had been identified much earlier in the roll out of water and sewerage works in ACDP communities. Throughout consultations for the evaluation the dilemma of delivering communities infrastructure that they 'could afford' as opposed to the infrastructure that would offer the best technical solution to their situation, was raised by a number of agencies. The lack of a recurrent funding program that could assist communities maintain their assets and facilitate service agreements with Local Government was identified as a significant obstacle to achieving the best outcomes for communities through the ACDP water and sewerage program. If Government support for a recurrent funding approach had been achieved prior to the exhaustion of ACDP funds, better community outcomes may have been achieved through a best fit, rather than compromise, capital investment.

10 HOUSING FOR HEALTH

Housing and infrastructure have long been identified as major environmental factors affecting the health of people. Inadequate or poorly maintained housing and the absence of functioning infrastructure can pose serious health risks.

The aim of Housing for Health (HfH) was to assess, repair or replace health hardware so houses are safe and occupants can carry out healthy living practices. Housing for Health assessed the adequacy of health hardware such as toilets, lights, drains, taps, showers and kitchens. The HfH methodology can only be implemented by individuals who have been accredited and trained in the use of the methodology by Healthabitat⁸.

Under the HfH methodology, following the identification of safety issues, repair and maintenance issues that promote healthy living practices are prioritised according to their impact on health outcomes. These include in order of priority:

- Washing people
- Washing clothes and bedding
- Removing waste safely
- Improving nutrition
- Reducing overcrowding
- Reducing the impact of animals, vermin or insects
- Reducing dust
- Controlling temperature
- Reducing trauma

The first four points are considered to be critical to healthy living practices. Most of the works carried out focus on safety and these four points. Immediate life threatening dangers, particularly electrical, gas, fire, sewage and structural safety issues are addressed as the highest priority.

Under HfH survey teams conduct detailed surveys involving standardised tests of each home. The 'no survey without service' philosophy of HfH ensures that repairs or replacement of health hardware that do not require a licensed tradesperson and can be done immediately, are fixed on the spot or in the days immediately following the first survey.

Under HfH no targets were set for the number of houses to be completed by HfH under the ACDP. Rather the funds available were divided by an estimated project budget of \$7,500 per house. This was increased to \$10,000 in 2007 to take into consideration the increase in house repair and maintenance costs between 1998 and 2007 in line with the Consumer Price Index. In NSW HfH has been jointly funded by the ACDP (\$10m), Two Ways Together (\$5.8m) and NSW Health.

Under the ACDP 38 communities participated in the HfH program. HfH under the ACDP included over 1200 houses in which almost 32,000 items have been fixed. This work has benefited over 5,500 people.

⁸ The HfH methodology was first developed in South Australia by Healthabitat Directors Dr Paul Torzillo, Stephan Rainow and Paul Pholeros. The methodology became recognised nationally as the yardstick for environmental health intervention in Indigenous communities. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody made specific reference to the importance of the model and recommended its' wider implementation.

HfH was able to demonstrate its value in the early stages of the ACDP, through its capacity to roll-out quickly and effectively in communities, to form good relationships with communities and to address the most critical safety and health hardware issues in existing housing stock. The program facilitated 'buy in' from communities including incentives for housing providers to improve housing management practices.

A recent evaluation of Housing for Health⁹ found that the program had resulted in:

- 9 fold improvements in electrical safety
- 4 fold improvement in fire safety
- Over 2 fold improvement in structural safety and access in houses
- Over 2 fold improvement in the ability to wash people and to wash clothes and bedding in homes
- 2 fold improvement in removing waste safely from homes
- Over 3 ½ fold improvement in the ability to prepare, store and cook food in home.

Research conducted as part of the recent evaluation of Housing for Health demonstrated that repairs undertaken as part of the original efforts were sustained over time.

The HfH evaluation also found that residents of houses where the Housing for Health intervention was implemented had a significantly reduced rate of hospital separation for infectious diseases – 40% lower than for the rest of the rural NSW Aboriginal population where Housing for Health interventions were not implemented. The report concluded that “Public health evidence clearly demonstrates a link between the high burden of infectious diseases, particularly in children, and chronic diseases in later life. This program is not only contributing in the short term to reduced hospital separations for infectious diseases, but also in the long term to addressing in part, the epidemic of chronic disease in the Aboriginal population.”

⁹ *Closing the Gap: 10 years of Housing for Health in NSW: An evaluation of a healthy housing intervention.* NSW Health 2010

11 EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

11.1 Background

A primary aim of the ACDP employment and training program was to support Aboriginal community members to obtain a building trade qualification and to foster economic development through the establishment of local building enterprises known as community builders. Apart from career and business development goals it was also anticipated that the employment and training program would build a workforce of skilled tradespeople able to maintain community housing.

The policy framework and structure of the ACDP Employment and Training (E&T) strategy was informed by the success of the Aboriginal Environmental Health and Infrastructure Forum (AEHIF) community pilots which operated during the mid to late 1990s. Each of these projects included the development of a TAFE supervised training program in each of the communities as part of the strategy for delivering the construction components of the projects.

There are two parts to obtaining a building trade qualification - completion of specified Certificate III training modules delivered by a Registered Training Organisation (generally a TAFE Institute) and achievement of workplace on the job competencies.

The structure of the ACDP model involved enrolling community members in a trade certificate course at a local TAFE and delivering workplace competencies through working on ACDP building and R&M/refurbishment projects. The intention was to provide a sufficient program of works over a long enough period of time to achieve training and competencies - this is normally four years, commonly two years in the classroom and two years on site. There was also an intention to assist Aboriginal people who had already partly completed their training to finish their qualification.

Apprentices were generally employed by an Aboriginal community builder although five commercial builders were also employed apprentices under the program. The ACDP supported establishment of community building enterprises in fifteen locations. In many cases, community builders were established on the back of existing CDEP¹⁰ organisations and functioned in tandem with CDEP operations. This relationship meant that the community builder could make use of the administrative and management resources and infrastructure of the CDEP.

Community builders became the registered employer with TAFE, responsible for supervision of workplace competencies. Community builders contracted licensed builders or other qualified tradespeople to train and supervise apprentices on site. Under the funding model, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the ACDP both provided subsidies of \$10,000 per annum per apprentice and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) paid wages for two days a week through the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). These payments were in addition to the contract value of the building projects.

¹⁰ Under the CDEP, Aboriginal organisations develop enterprises that train and employ Aboriginal people and pay a wage in lieu of income support payments. From July 1 2009 CDEP was discontinued in "locations with established economies" and continued with a new structure in remote locations. The restructured CDEP has changed from directly providing employment, to building the skills of participants in remote communities to find jobs outside the CDEP. The CDEP no longer pays wages; participants need to apply for income support.

It was anticipated that there would be sufficient income from the contract value and subsidies to meet the costs of operation including a salary for a building supervisor, apprentice wages and administrative costs. In many cases a single select tender process was used to assist community builders to secure ACDP building work. As preferred contractors, Aboriginal community builders secured around 50% of ACDP housing capital works.

11.2 Apprentices

Under the ACDP, apprenticeships were largely in Carpentry/Joinery with a small number of other building trades. In Brewarrina, Cabbage Tree and Goodooga, TAFE records include a range of non building trades and skill areas. Non building certificates include horticulture, rural skills and local government works.

In total, 118 individuals were enrolled in building courses. The results for those enrolled in a building trade are as follows:

- 44 individuals achieved Complete Proficiency in Certificate III – this means they fully completed their apprenticeship and are qualified tradespeople. This represents 37% of those who enrolled in a building trade apprenticeship. 41 of the 44 are carpenter/joiners.
- 21 individuals (18%) achieved Complete Craft in Certificate III – this means they fully completed their on the job competencies but do not have a Registered Training Organisation qualification – generally this means that some training modules have not been completed. These apprentices may work as trades assistants but not tradespeople.
- 15 individuals (13%) achieved Complete Proficiency in Certificate II and 2 (2%) Complete Craft in Certificate II. These apprentices may work as trades assistants but not tradespeople.
- 36 individuals (30%) withdrew or their enrolment expired

A further 112 individuals enrolled in a non building course. The results for those enrolled in a non building certificate are as follows:

- 19 (17%) fully completed their Certificate III and 8 (7%) partly completed.
- 26 (23%) fully completed a Certificate II and 27 (24%) partly completed.
- 32 (29%) withdrew or their enrolment expired

Table 7 below provides a summary of overall completions.

Table 7 Summary of qualifications through ACDP¹¹

	Certificate III		Certificate II		Cancelled/withdrawn Expired/transfer	Total
	Complete proficiency	Complete Craft	Complete proficiency	Complete Craft		
Building Trades	44 (37%)	21 (18%)	15 (13%)	2 (2%)	36 (31%)	118
Non Building Trades	19 (17%)	8 (7%)	26 (23%)	27 (24%)	32 (29%)	112
Total	63 (27%)	29 (13%)	41 (18%)	29 (13%)	68 (30%)	230

That 30% of those enrolled in a trade certificate withdrew may reflect the difficulties apprentices encountered in relation to TAFE training modules – these included having to travel to a TAFE centre, literacy and numeracy disadvantage and a preference for on the job training rather than the classroom. The ACDP did attempt to limit the amount of travel required for apprentices through extensive negotiation with TAFE and the MOU between AANSW and TAFE committed TAFE to delivering training on site as much as possible. This met with varying levels of success depending on the TAFE Institute involved.

It is likely that a proportion of those individuals who have not completed the TAFE component of their apprenticeship may have only a small number of modules to complete. These individuals could potentially be supported to complete their TAFE training and qualify as a tradesperson. Similarly, individuals who fully completed Certificate III could potentially be supported to complete Certificate IV.

It also needs to be noted that there is missing data for some communities which means that the number of apprentices who qualified may be understated. Records from NSW Public Works indicate that funds under the ACDP employment and training strategy were expended in several locations for which there are no TAFE NSW records. In some cases such as Dareton and Boggabilla, apprentices were enrolled in interstate TAFE colleges.

It is estimated that between 60-70 individuals were enrolled in building training programs for which there is no TAFE NSW data. The outcomes of this training are not known. In addition to apprenticeship programs, the ACDP also created many short and longer term jobs - it is estimated that several hundred community members were engaged in short or longer term jobs over the life of the program.

11.3 Outcomes of employment and training program

As part of the evaluation, the outcomes of the employment and training program in the selected communities were explored through consultation. In the selected communities, it was found that the employment and training program had a profound positive effect on the self confidence and self esteem of the individuals who participated. Many apprentices said that they would not have gained their qualifications without the ACDP. In some cases the structure and discipline of the training program enabled apprentices to move away from destructive lifestyles and apply themselves to

¹¹ Complete proficiency: Full qualification for the Certificate - all training and on the job training completed
 Complete craft: All on the job training completed but no RTO qualification
 Cancelled: A cancellation occurs when an employer notifies TAFE that the enrolled person has left.
 Withdrawn: An enrollee notifies that they are discontinuing
 Expired: Notification of completion of competencies has not been received
 Transfer: Transfer of contract of employment

learning a trade. Strong mentoring in the discipline required to sustain fulltime employment has been a key factor in supporting apprentices to achieve a trade qualification.

The employment and training program has also provided broad benefits to the community including increased income, community pride and reduced drinking, crime and violence; benefits which have been at least partly sustained. Many community participants said the training and employment program had a positive effect on the families of apprentices, particularly in isolated communities - people were more motivated and there was an increase in self confidence and self respect.

The employment and training program has also enabled positive role models for young people – seeing family members in sustained employment has assisted in breaking inter-generational unemployment and welfare dependence.

While in most locations the building program was planned to ensure that apprentices had sufficient buildings to work on to gain on the job skills, this was not always the case. In Collarenebri where all apprentices were only able to achieve Certificate II before construction ended, apprentices felt let down and disillusioned. These apprentices had anticipated that the employment and training program would lead to them becoming qualified tradespeople. But in locations such as Collarenebri the building program was not large enough or long enough to achieve this outcome. Some apprentices could potentially have finished their course at a larger regional centre but moving away from their community was a barrier to this option.

The stop-start building program experienced in communities like Tabulam also acted to discourage apprentices leading some to discontinue their training.

While many apprentices have secured jobs in building trades or other areas such as property management, finding work has been constrained by the design of the employment and training program which focused almost exclusively on carpenters over other trades. In small communities there is insufficient work to sustain multiple carpenters. While there could be potential work opportunities in other towns, many apprentices do not want to move away from families.

Around 37% of apprentices fully qualified as building tradespeople. The rate of completion of qualifications could potentially have been higher if it had been possible to address some of the structural and operational issues limiting the effectiveness of the program. For example, many consultation participants felt that there was insufficient support for the number of apprentices. The ratio of building supervisors to apprentices was often higher than the desirable rate of 1:4.

The quality of supervisors was commonly raised. Remote communities in particular often struggled to attract sufficiently qualified supervisors and supervisors did not necessarily have skills in delivering training and skill development.

Many apprentices preferred on-site to classroom training from TAFE but not all TAFE colleges were responsive to this issue. Where attendance fell below six students, TAFE trainers were often reluctant to travel to the community.

Within the design of the program there was no provision to follow up individuals that dropped out of their course or assist them to return to their studies. It is likely that many individuals are not fully aware of their TAFE status and what would be required for them to complete their program and/or how their training could be recognised as prior learning in another course of study.

There was also no provision to support individuals who completed their apprenticeship to find and manage work for example, managing tax issues and insurances.

A number of **recommendations** were made for future employment and training programs. It was recommended that such programs place an emphasis on:

- assisting apprentices who reached Certificate II under the ACDP to gain a Certificate III qualification;
- supporting tradespeople who achieved Certificate III under the ACDP to become a licensed builder where they wish to do so;
- supporting qualified tradespeople to operate independent businesses including provision of training in business development and management;
- addressing the factors involved in ACDP apprentices discontinuing their TAFE program through development of appropriate strategies

11.4 Sustainability of community builders

Even with substantial subsidies, some community builders were unable to operate successfully with some collapsing prior to the end of the ACDP such as Thungutti Aboriginal Housing Company in Kempsey and GN Constructions in Tabulam. In these cases replacement community builders or in the case of Tabulam a commercial builder was engaged to complete construction. The table below lists the initial community builder and where applicable, the subsequent builder/employer organisation.

Table 2: ACDP community builders

Location	Registered employer
Armidale	Armidale Building Aboriginal Corporation
Bourke	Gundabooka Aboriginal Corporation <i>replaced by</i> Kuru Building Aboriginal Corporation <i>replaced by</i> Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprises
Brewarrina	Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation
Cabbage Tree Island	Bunjum Aboriginal Co-op Ltd
Collarenebri	Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprises
Coonamble	Ellimatta Housing Aboriginal Corporation
Dareton	Itha-Mari Ltd
Goodooga	Pulkurra Building Coop Ltd
Gulargambone	Ellimatta Housing Aboriginal Corporation
Kempsey	Thungutti Aboriginal Housing Company <i>replaced by</i> Aboriginal Connections Building Corporation
Lightning Ridge	Barriekneal Housing & Community Ltd
Menindee	Itha-Mari Ltd
Moree	Nindethana Aboriginal Corporation
Murrin Bridge	Murrin Bridge Advancement Aboriginal Corp
Tabulam	GN Constructions <i>replaced by</i> Robin Snow (commercial builder)

The intention of the ACDP was to support community builders to become self sustaining over time through bidding for work outside of the ACDP but most struggled to achieve this goal.

Most of the community building enterprises no longer function with the exception of Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation and Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprises. While Bunjum Aboriginal Co-op Ltd in Cabbage Tree Island voluntarily chose to close their building program at the end of the ACDP, in

general the remainder of the community building enterprises were unable to continue operating once subsidies under the ACDP discontinued. This was primarily due to either lack of effort or lack of skills in tendering for work outside of the ACDP. While the single select tender process for community builders was an appropriate strategy to ensure they had building contracts, it also meant that community builders did not get much exposure to competitive tendering for work outside of the ACDP. The stop-start construction that was common to many communities also acted to reduce the viability of community builders – wages had to be paid even if there was no income from building contracts.

Many consultation participants felt that the ACDP had provided insufficient training and support in business development and skills relevant to operating a viable building company including planning, marketing and financial management. While it is noted that the NSW Government Industry and Investment Department did provide some support in business skills to community builders as did AANSW and Public Works, it appears the level of resourcing needed was beyond what was able to be offered.

A number of consultation participants said that there had been unrealistic expectations about the number of community building enterprises that could be sustained particularly in remote communities and that there should have been some emphasis on supporting people to be independent tradespeople.

For those community building enterprises that are still operational, their success appears to be linked to a number of key factors:

- strong, competent leadership that is focused on community benefit
- a business model that is commercially oriented and sufficiently diverse to attract income from a range of sources
- achieving an appropriate balance between training objectives and operating profitably – this generally means a small number of apprentices at any one time supported by a competent supervisor and flexible delivery models of TAFE training.

Mentoring from local project managers such as Resitech and GHD also played a role in developing successful operations.

Where the community builder was able to operate successfully this acted to create faith in Aboriginal businesses and made local people proud. There was much disappointment among apprentices and the broader community about community builders that were not a long term success.

It was proposed that a more sustainable model might have been one where building enterprises supplied components for building elsewhere such as trusses, roofs, windows and kitchens. While some people felt that this approach should have been implemented from the outset, this approach would likely not have enabled apprentices to obtain the full range of competencies required to gain a trade qualification.

Many consultation participants also argued that a mixed trade structure including glaziers, plumbers and electricians would have been a more sustainable model than the single focus on carpenters.

The skilled workforce generated by the ACDP is under utilised in some locations with a number of tradespersons or trades assistants working in unskilled roles or unemployed for a range of reasons including local economic conditions, changes to the CDEP or in some cases, reluctance of non Aboriginal employers to hire Aboriginal employees. There was wide spread agreement that this

skilled workforce could be well utilised in maintaining houses in local communities but with the discontinuation of most community building enterprises and changes to the CDEP, there was no local infrastructure to support this model.¹²

The evaluation made the following **recommendations**:

- It is recommended that future economic development and employment programs for Aboriginal communities include a strong emphasis on business skills and utilisation of the workforce created through the ACDP employment and training program.
- It is recommended that housing and related capital infrastructure programs in Aboriginal communities include development of the skills and operational infrastructure to support the sustainable provision of housing repairs and maintenance.

¹² It is noted however, that in 2001 (updated in 2007) the NSW Government put in place the *Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines* aimed at supporting and encouraging more employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people on government construction projects. These Guidelines form part of the NSW Government Procurement Policy and apply to all government agencies covered by the Procurement Policy.

12 FUTURE HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

12.1 Housing and community infrastructure

At the time of commencement of the ACDP, there was a significant backlog of capital works to make Aboriginal community housing more liveable and environmentally healthy. The ACDP's capital works program has made a significant contribution to addressing this backlog. Due to budget limitations and the goal of concentrating effort in a small number of locations, not all communities benefited from the ACDP although they may have benefited under other programs over the duration of the ACDP.

There is still a need for housing capital works as recognised in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. The NP on Remote Indigenous Housing is a ten year program to address severe overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages. In NSW the program will deliver over 300 new homes and provide \$100m for backlog maintenance. Potentially, this funding source will provide housing and repairs to communities that may not have benefitted from Priority Communities. This program will potentially address a substantial proportion of supply and repairs needs.

While housing supply issues may be at least partly addressed by the NP a number of additional needs remain particularly in discrete communities. A 2009 report by NSW Commerce *Environmental Health and Community Infrastructure Project of 62 Existing Aboriginal Communities in NSW* examined community infrastructure on discrete communities. Items included in the study were power, garbage/waste removal, stormwater and drainage, community meeting facilities, telecommunications, kerbing, guttering and footpaths, emergency management, street and public space lighting. The report found that there were significant unmet needs in relation to community infrastructure.

A report by the NSW Centre for Road Safety (Roads and Traffic Authority) *Road Safety Infrastructure Assessments for Identified NSW Aboriginal Communities* (January 2010) found that Aboriginal people are over represented in the road toll and that road safety-related infrastructure generally falls below that for comparable non Aboriginal communities. As part of the project, on site surveys of 66 discrete communities were conducted. The report found a range of road safety infrastructure gaps including poor signage, uneven and poor road surfaces, lack of line markings, narrow roads and lack of speed management.

While the NP on Remote Indigenous Housing is likely to address a significant proportion of unmet housing need, there are clearly significant additional ongoing funding requirements if discrete communities are to be brought up to standards comparable to non Aboriginal communities.

12.2 Water and sewerage

The sustainability of water and sewerage works under the ACDP is being addressed through the *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program* which provides recurrent funding for maintenance of water and sewerage infrastructure in discrete communities as a well as a small capital component. As to the need for a future capital program beyond what is available under the *Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program* the evaluation was not able to determine although it is noted that not all discrete communities were included in the ACDP Water and Sewerage Program and a number of communities received a compromise solution rather than a best fit. This group of communities may be the best place to start in terms of determining any outstanding capital needs.

12.3 Housing for Health

Since its commencement in 1997 Housing for Health has been undertaken in 72 communities through the ACDP and other funding sources. Housing for Health is currently engaged in a 4 year program focusing on housing in urban settings through funding provided as part of the NSW Government's contribution to the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Health.

NSW Health is working closely with the Aboriginal Housing Office to integrate Housing for Health in the delivery of the NP on Remote Indigenous Housing. It is also noted that the reforms being implemented by the AHO and NSWALC will likely lead to better maintenance of Aboriginal housing which potentially will ensure repairs to and replacement of health hardware items on as needed basis.

12.4 Managing future funding sources

Any future funding sources targeted to housing and infrastructure capital works is not necessarily best managed through a structure like the ACDP. The ACDP was a very complex, ambitious program with multiple objectives and partner agencies. Since the ADCP commenced a number of mechanisms have been developed which support cross-agency partnerships and governance structures such as through the NSW State Plan. Overall we consider that any future funding aimed at addressing unmet need such as community infrastructure is best conceived of in terms of funding streams coordinated through existing cross-agency mechanisms rather than a composite model like the ACDP. AANSW would clearly have a key role in any such future efforts in relation to guiding policy, coordination with other relevant government initiatives and ensuring the effective contribution of Aboriginal communities through structures such as the Partnership Community Program.