

From: Benjamin Thompson [REDACTED]@natsiha.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 20 August 2025 9:13 AM
To: [REDACTED]; GMU Canberra
Subject: Spoken Data Project
Attachments: SPOKEN data Project_Overview .zip

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Good Morning [REDACTED] and Team,

Please see our recent changes to the Spoken Data Project Overview with some written commentary to support

NIAA comments:

SPOKEN

- This will require details on how the platform was co-designed and how it is culturally safe

NATSIHA Response:

As you know, NATSIHA is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled National Peak Organisation. Our Board is 100 per cent Indigenous, our Acting CEO, and all but one member of our Executive team are also Indigenous. Furthermore, all project-level staff engaging with communities on this initiative are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The platform has been co-designed in genuine partnership with our sector, working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Organisations (ATSICHOs) across the country. Every stage of development—from initial concept to design, testing, and implementation—has been led by Indigenous people, ensuring the platform is culturally safe, responsive, and aligned with the needs and priorities of the communities it serves.

The co-design process included:

- Community-led consultations where ATSICHOs and local community representatives identified key functionalities, design features, and culturally relevant approaches.
- Iterative development cycles that allowed feedback from partners to directly shape the platform's features and workflows.
- Cultural governance oversight provided by NATSIHA's Board and Executive to ensure that all elements of the platform reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, protocols, and ways of working.

This approach ensures that the platform is not only technically effective but also culturally safe, trusted, and owned by the communities it serves. It is a platform created by mob, for mob, and remains firmly under Indigenous governance and control, supporting the sector to achieve better outcomes while respecting self-determination and community priorities.

Kind regards, Ben



Benjamin (BJ) Thompson

Executive Director

Housing Sector Strengthening

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SPOKEN: A Sector-Led Data Platform

**An Overview for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Housing
Organisations data platform.**

**Your Data. Your Stories. Your
Platform.**



RECOGNITION

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First People of Australia and the Traditional Custodians of the lands, rivers, seas and sky throughout.

We pay our respect to Elders and acknowledge the continuous living Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, diverse languages, customs and traditions, knowledge systems and governance.

We acknowledge the significance of our Elders, for they hold the memories, the storylines, the traditions, and the cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our nation.



SPOKEN OVERVIEW

SPOKEN is a sector-led, community-governed data platform developed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA). Designed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisations, SPOKEN is the first platform of its kind—giving the sector the tools to clearly demonstrate its footprint, capability, and value.

Policy and funding decisions affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing have been made without a clear or complete understanding of the sector. SPOKEN addresses this gap by shifting control back to communities—ensuring the data that informs planning, investment, and reform is grounded in the lived reality and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations.

What SPOKEN Delivers

SPOKEN is more than a data collection tool. It is a foundational infrastructure that strengthens the housing system by:

Capturing the scale and scope of the sector: Including stock numbers, locations, housing types, workforce size, governance models, and unmet demand.

Providing a practical, live dashboard: For participating ATSICCHOs to track their data, identify gaps, and engage confidently with governments and partners.

Generating national and jurisdictional insights: To inform policy, investment strategies, and the design of future programs and funding rounds.

Embedding sector ownership and design authority: Data is contributed voluntarily by registered organisations, analysed collaboratively, and shared back in a way that respects cultural ownership and local context.

Strategic Alignment

SPOKEN delivers directly on the commitments outlined in key national frameworks:

- **Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4:** Enabling shared access to data and information at the community level.
- **Clause 45 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap:** Supporting the development and strength of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector.
- **Target Outcome 9A:** Providing a mechanism to measure overcrowding, unmet need, and progress towards appropriate housing.
- **National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness:** Supporting data-informed, outcomes-based approaches to housing and homelessness.

A sector-led data platform was identified as a priority under the Housing Sector Strengthening Plan, endorsed by the Joint Council and supported by all jurisdictions, which led to the establishment of SPOKEN as foundational infrastructure designed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisations

ABOUT THE PROJECT

RECLAIMING OUR DATA, STRENGTHENING OUR SECTOR

NATSIHA is committed to making sure our sector's data tells the real story—one that reflects the work of our sector and the needs of our communities. The SPOKEN project is about putting that data back into our hands, making sure it's accurate, relevant, and community-owned.

Why Spoken, Why Now

The name SPOKEN comes from the way our people have passed down knowledge for over 65,000 years—through language, storytelling, and lived experience. Whether it's how to hunt, navigate Country, or sustain our communities, this knowledge isn't written down—it's taught, shared, and remembered through speaking and listening.

Our housing data should be no different. For too long, external systems have defined our sector without reflecting the real experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisations. The data that shapes policy, funding, and investment decisions needs to come from us.

As the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, NATSIHA is leading this work because it's our responsibility to make sure the sector has the tools and evidence needed to advocate for our communities. SPOKEN is about putting that data back in our hands, making sure it is accurate, relevant, and community-owned.

This is not just about collecting numbers—it's about ensuring that the story of our housing sector is told by us, for us.



02

BUILDING THE SPOKEN DASHBOARD

The SPOKEN dashboard is designed as a practical tool for ATSICCOs, providing clear, useful data to support decision-making, advocacy, and engagement.

About the Dashboard

The dashboard will bring this information together in a way that's easy to use, helping organisations see their position within the sector and identify trends to support their work.

Participating ATSICCHOs will have exclusive access and play a key role in shaping how it develops—what data is included, how it's displayed, and how it can best support the sector.

What We Need From You

ATSICCHOs taking part in this phase will:

- Contribute data to help create a true picture of the sector.
- Gain exclusive access to the SPOKEN dashboard once it's live.
- Guide what's next by providing feedback on what data is most useful.

Why This Matters

This is our opportunity to build a data system that works for us. The more organisations that contribute, the stronger our collective evidence base will be. This data will help demonstrate the role and impact of ATSICCHOs at state and national levels, reinforcing the need for ongoing investment in community-controlled housing

GET INVOLVED



Next Step

If your organisation hasn't yet contributed, now is the time to get involved. The collection phase runs until May, and the dashboard will be developed based on the insights gathered. This is about ensuring ATSICCHOs have the tools and data needed to drive change—on our terms.

For those already involved, your participation is invaluable. Your input will directly shape the dashboard and set the direction for the next phase of SPOKEN. Let's make sure our sector's story is told accurately, powerfully, and by us.



Complete the Survey

The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. You can follow this link or use the QR code below to use a tablet or phone.



[Click here for survey link](#)



Follow this QR code to go directly to the survey.

CO-DESIGN

Co-design is a commitment to equity, respect, and shared authority.

When we talk about co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisations, we are talking about a process that centres community leadership, cultural knowledge, and lived experience.

SPOKEN: A Sector-Led Innovation

SPOKEN, developed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association, is a powerful example of what true co-design looks like. It is the first community-governed data platform built by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations. SPOKEN is not just a tool—it's infrastructure that reflects the sector's footprint, capability, and value.

Developed Through National Community Consultation

SPOKEN was not created in isolation. It was shaped through extensive community consultation across the country, with real-time feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisations. Workshops were held in diverse regions, ensuring that the platform reflects the voices, priorities, and lived realities of the sector. This process ensured that SPOKEN is grounded in community-defined needs and aspirations, not imposed from the outside.

This collaborative approach is what makes SPOKEN truly unique, it is a platform designed with, not for, the sector.

WHAT SPOKEN DELIVERS

SPOKEN is not just about data, it's about empowerment, community control, and ensuring the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector can advocate for itself, backed by its own evidence and priorities.

Visibility at Scale

Captures stock numbers, locations, housing types, workforce size, governance models, and unmet demand.

Empowerment through data

Participating organisations access live dashboards to track their data, identify gaps, and engage confidently with governments and partners.

Insights for Action

Generates national and jurisdictional insights to inform policy, investment strategies, and future program design.

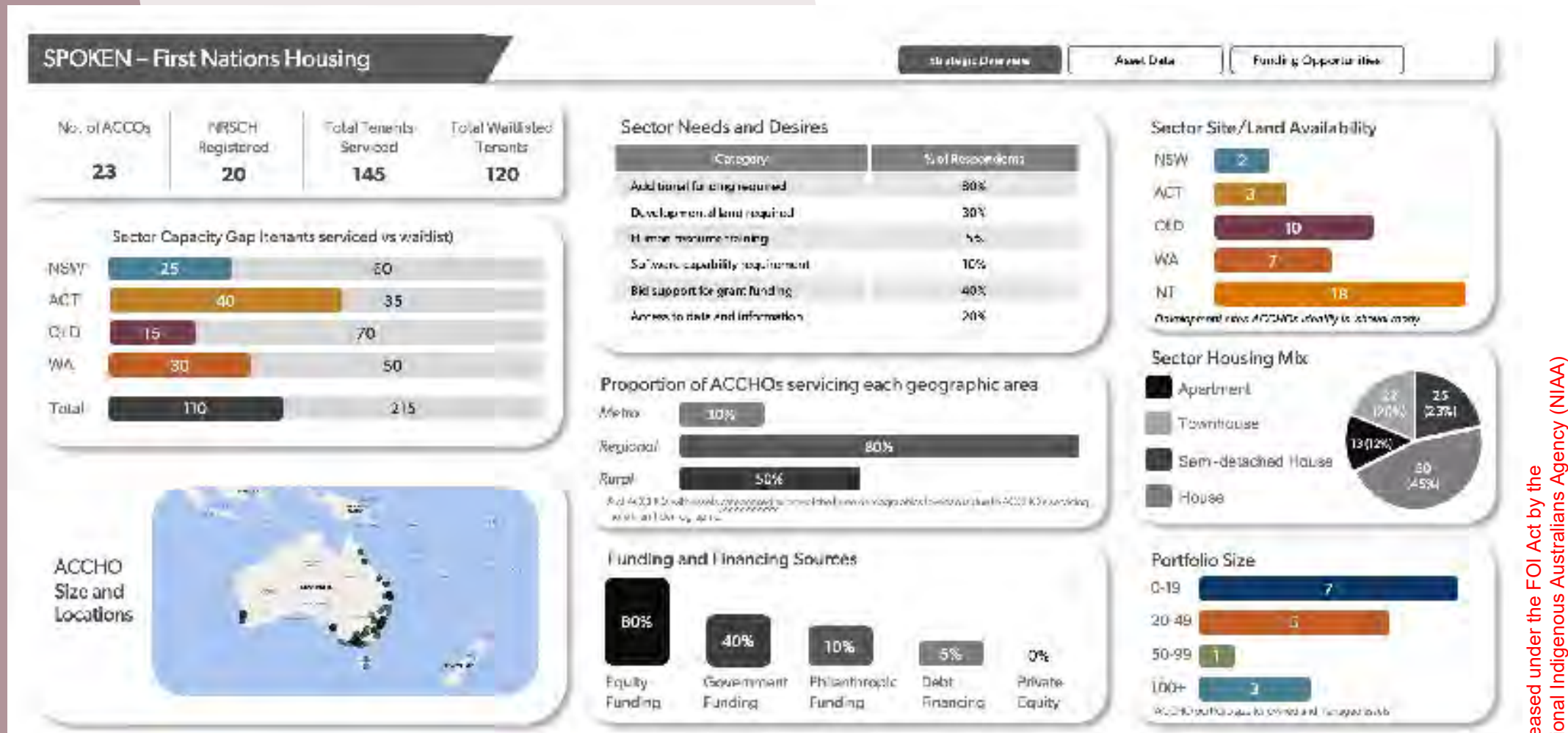
Delegation of Board Powers

Clarity on decision-making structures that enhance operational effectiveness.

Cultural Ownership

Data is contributed voluntarily, analysed collaboratively, and shared in ways that respect cultural ownership and local context.

SPOKEN DASHBOARD



*Data is for illustrative purposes only, and does not reflect actual data



National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Housing Association

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From: Benjamin Thompson [s47F]@natsiha.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 20 August 2025 9:19 AM
To: [s47F]; GMU Canberra
Subject: Governance in our Hands
Attachments: Governance in out hands_review_V13.zip

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Good morning [s47F] and team,

Please see the recent changes made to the Governance in Our Hands Review

NIAA Comments

Governance training

- This will require details on how the training was provided and / or developed in a culturally safe way.

NATSIHA Response:

Much of the valuable feedback previously shared under the Governance Training initiative is equally relevant to our organisational structure, reflecting the strength and consistency of our approach. The Governance Training program has been thoughtfully co-designed in partnership with Directors and Executives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing Organisations (ATSICHO's) across the country.

This program is co-delivered by our Lawyer alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from NATSIHA, ensuring both legal rigour and cultural integrity. Indigenous staff play a vital role in each session, sitting alongside ATSICHO representatives to foster cultural safety, respond to participant questions in real time, and support deeper engagement. They also gather outstanding questions for collective discussion at the end of each session, promoting shared learning.

This collaborative and culturally grounded model creates a safe and inclusive training environment, encourages open dialogue, and empowers participants to engage meaningfully. It also establishes a strong foundation for continuous improvement, with participant insights actively shaping future iterations of the program.

We hope this meets the project requirements

Kind Regards, Ben



Benjamin (BJ) Thompson

Executive Director

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GOVERNANCE IN OUR HANDS PROGRAM

OVERVIEW AND REVIEW



NATSIHA
National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Housing Association

RECOGNITION

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First People of Australia and the Traditional Custodians of the lands, rivers, seas and sky throughout.

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We acknowledge the significance of our Elders, for they hold the memories, the storylines, the traditions, and the cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our nation.

CONTENTS

The Governance In Our Hands program was developed in collaboration with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). We sincerely thank you for your ongoing commitment to the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NIAA's support of the partnership between King & Wood Mallesons (KWM) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA) has been instrumental in its creation and success.

02

CONTEXT

Context
Building Together
Delivery partnership

07

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program objectives
Content areas
Program snapshot

13

REVIEW

Reach, design and participation
Program outcomes
What we heard

18

RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking to the future

20

APPENDIX

Location and cohort overview



CONTEXT

The NATSIHA Governance In Our Hands Program was designed to support capability development for all levels of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisation, from frontline staff and operational workers through to senior executives and board directors. The program created space for each individual to understand their role in supporting the broader organisational purpose, including how day-to-day work contributes to strong decision-making, board accountability, and community responsibility.

The program seeks to demystify governance. It gave staff the tools to see how their actions support the leadership of the organisation, while also providing board members with strengthened knowledge around their legal obligations and financial governance whilst acknowledging their cultural responsibilities. This included targeted work on financial literacy and internal financial controls to ensure greater transparency and confidence across the organisation.

The program's design has been shaped by extensive sector consultation. It directly responded to issues raised through the development of the Housing Sector Strengthening Plan and the 2022 National Engagement Workshop, and has since been tested and refined through NATSIHA's ongoing engagements with the sector. The design process ensured the program reflected real challenges and strengths across housing organisations of different sizes and geographies.



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This workshop not only provided knowledge of governance and of being a Director but a chance to network with other organisations.

BUILDING TOGETHER

CO-DESIGN PROCESS: BUILDING LEGAL INTEGRITY AND SECTOR RELEVANCE

The Governance in Our Hands program was developed through a careful co-design process to ensure it meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations, while maintaining legal accuracy and regulatory alignment.

The initial framework was developed in partnership with King and Wood Mallesons, providing a strong legal foundation covering governance responsibilities, compliance obligations, and regulatory expectations. This ensured the program could support organisations operating within complex legal environments while staying true to the principles of community control.

Each delivery of the program has been used as a testing ground to refine and strengthen its content. Sessions were tailored to the specific participant group, with content adjusted to reflect the types of organisations in the room, their size, structure, and where they are in their governance journey. The intent was always to make the program relatable, allowing participants to engage with real-world governance scenarios, test out responses to challenges, and build a deeper, more practical understanding of their roles.

Getting the program to where it is now involved working directly with participants to identify what resonated and where improvements were needed. Some participants returned for more than one round of training, giving NATSIHA a unique opportunity to test how well the program had been adapted and whether the changes made a difference.

The final program is the product of that collaborative, sector-led process. While it has a strong foundation, it remains adaptive by design. Ongoing feedback will continue to shape how the content is delivered, ensuring it remains relevant, grounded, and useful to organisations working in a constantly evolving environment.

Built with the sector,
shaped by experience, and
designed to grow with us.

”

Enjoyed the case examples to explain risks/issues.

PARTNERSHIP

Governance in Our Hands supports long-term strength by embedding shared governance knowledge across the organisation. It ensures the next person stepping into a governance role won't be starting from scratch—they'll be walking into a culture of clarity, confidence, and readiness.

”

I learnt a lot from this session, great presenters. Thank you for all your knowledge.



The partnership with King & Wood Mallesons ensured all materials and frameworks meet legal requirements and can withstand the pressures of changing policy or legislative environments. This legal grounding was critical in supporting organisations to remain confident and compliant in a fast-moving sector landscape.

One of the program's defining features was its attention to cultural governance, recognising and affirming the role of cultural authority and decision-making alongside formal board structures. The program helped organisations explore how cultural governance strengthens the integrity and accountability of the organisation overall, and how it is often misunderstood or overlooked by mainstream systems. This work also brought to light the additional complexity and expectations placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and their leaders, and the need to ensure governance approaches are culturally safe, locally legitimate, and sustainable.

By addressing both compliance-based and culturally embedded governance, this program has supported 116 housing organisations to clarify responsibilities, strengthen operations, and prepare for the sector's future role in delivering more housing solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

PARTNERSHIP

”

The attendees of the governance training held across the country for community-controlled organisations in the housing sector have been an amazing group of committed, purpose-driven leaders. Representing a range of organisations, they came together to strengthen their understanding of key aspects of mainstream governance and, most importantly, to learn from each other.

It is clear that the unique knowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders hold of housing circumstances in their communities and of local cultural ways is critical in the effective delivery of appropriate housing solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Combining this knowledge with a deeper understanding of corporate governance responsibilities has hopefully assisted these organisations to strengthen and grow better enabling them to achieve their objectives.

**Berkeley Cox,
Delivery Partner**



Released under the FOI Act by the
National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

PARTNERSHIP

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

A key feature of the Governance Training Program is a formal partnership with the University of Adelaide, which recognises the depth and rigour of the program through a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangement. This partnership affirms the quality of the content and delivery, and provides participants with the opportunity to translate their learning into academic credit towards a Graduate Certificate or Master's degree in Business.

This offering reflects a growing recognition that community-led governance training—rooted in cultural authority, lived experience, and sector expertise—has equal value alongside formal education. It also represents an important step in creating clear, supported pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to continue their development beyond the program.

Through this collaboration the University of Adelaide and NATSIHA are working together to strengthen the leadership pipeline by validating and elevating First Nations governance knowledge within the higher education system. Further information about eligible units and how to apply for RPL will be provided to all participants as part of the training journey.

KING & WOOD
MALLESONS
金杜律师事务所



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Governance in Our Hands was designed as a tailored, whole-of-organisation initiative to ensure governance is embedded in every part of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisation, from front-line staff to board directors. Each component of the program has been developed in response to lived realities raised by the sector and reflected the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, which must navigate both cultural and corporate systems.

Throughout all modules, cultural governance was embedded as a key theme, acknowledging the unique responsibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to uphold cultural values, maintain community trust, and lead through local governance structures. The program made space to explore how cultural authority and corporate accountability can work together, rather than in tension.



”

Thank you so much - Stories used from real life were very helpful.

The Governance in Our Hands program ensures that governance is not confined to boardrooms but is actively supported by all staff in their day-to-day work.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

01

WHOLE-OF-ORGANISATION GOVERNANCE CAPABILITY

Embed a shared understanding of governance responsibilities across all levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Housing Organisations, ensuring that governance is not confined to boardrooms but is actively supported by all staff in their day-to-day work.

02

SUPPORT BOARDS TO MEET LEGAL AND STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Equip directors with a clear understanding of their legal duties including director responsibilities, financial governance, related party benefits, and conflict management

03

BUILD FINANCIAL LITERACY AND RISK AWARENESS

Improve financial governance capabilities across boards and executive leadership, enabling organisations to engage with budgets, financial reporting, and funding compliance from a position of confidence and accountability.

04

INTEGRATE CULTURAL GOVERNANCE AS FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICE

Elevate cultural governance as a core strength of the sector and support organisations to formalise and communicate their cultural governance approaches alongside corporate structures.

05

PREPARE FOR SECTOR CHANGE AND FUTURE-READINESS

Ensure organisations are well positioned to respond to emerging legislation, policy reform, and sector transformation by building internal systems and practices that are both culturally grounded and legally sound.

06

FOSTER A SHARED GOVERNANCE LANGUAGE ACROSS ROLES

Create a common language and understanding between board members, CEOs, staff, and communities that strengthens communication, reduces internal silos, and supports aligned decision-making.

07

ENSURE CULTURALLY SAFE AND SECTOR-OWNED DELIVERY

Deliver training that is shaped by the voices of the sector, led by trusted facilitators, and grounded in First Nations governance values, ensuring the program reflects the lived reality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations.

08

IDENTIFY TARGETED TRAINING NEEDS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Gather insights into where the sector requires more focused or advanced training—for example, in audit and risk committee governance, succession planning, governance of partnerships, or housing-specific compliance frameworks—so that Phase Two of this work can deliver deeper, more targeted governance development in response to sector-identified priorities.

09

SCOPE THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR DEEPER IMPACT

Assess the need for advanced, fit-for-purpose governance tools and templates that support implementation beyond training—helping to institutionalise governance capability and ensure resources are tailored to the housing sector's needs in the next phase of this work.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

COURSE DESIGN PURPOSE

- Supports a whole-of-organisation approach to understanding governance
- Builds confidence across teams by embedding a shared understanding of what strong governance looks like now and into the future.
- Reinforces the cultural governance principles already embedded in community-controlled organisations, supporting the alignment of cultural authority and corporate accountability

CONTENT AREAS COVERED

- Directors' duties
- Related party benefits
- Financial governance
- Emerging trends
- Managing internal and external conflicts
- Delegation of Board powers
- Emerging trends and risk management

DELIVERY MODEL

- Sessions designed for 20–25 participants
- Format encourages:
- Interactive delivery
 - Peer learning
 - Organisational reflection
 - Mix of structured learning, scenario-based discussion, and reflective practice

FUTURE FOCUS

- Prepares organisations to embed governance knowledge across their teams
- Builds a strong governance culture that can be sustained even as leadership evolves



CONTENT AREAS

DIRECTORS DUTIES

WHAT IT COVERS

A clear breakdown of the legal obligations of directors under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) and other relevant frameworks. Topics included duty of care and diligence, acting in good faith, avoiding conflicts of interest, and using position and information appropriately.

WHY IT MATTERS

Many board members come to their roles with deep cultural authority and community trust, but limited formal training in corporate governance. This module helped directors understand their personal liability, how to meet their legal obligations, and how to balance these with cultural leadership responsibilities. It gave directors clarity and confidence to make decisions within the law while continuing to lead in culturally grounded ways.

RELATED PARTY BENEFITS

WHAT IT COVERS

Guidance on identifying related parties (such as family members, business partners, or entities with shared interests), how benefits must be disclosed, and how boards can manage or avoid perceived or actual conflicts. This included the importance of proper registers, reporting obligations, and transparent decision-making.

WHY IT MATTERS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are interconnected, and relationships often span personal, cultural, and organisational boundaries. This can create complexity around decision-making. Boards valued learning how to remain transparent and accountable while operating in close-knit communities. The module helped protect both the organisation and the individual directors from reputational or legal risk.

FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

WHAT IT COVERS

Strengthening understanding of organisational finances, including reading financial reports, understanding budgets, identifying financial risks, setting financial policies, and ensuring internal controls are in place. Participants were provided real world examples to explore.

WHY IT MATTERS

Financial mismanagement—whether accidental or systemic—can lead to funding loss, reputational damage, and in some cases, legal penalties. Many boards expressed that they didn't feel confident reading financial statements or asking questions about finances. This module built shared responsibility across the organisation for financial health, while giving directors tools to ask the right questions and exercise informed oversight.

CONTENT AREAS

EMERGING TRENDS

WHAT IT COVERS

An overview of key policy, legal, and funding trends relevant to the housing sector—including changes to the CATSI Act, funding reform, increased scrutiny from regulators, and expectations around data, performance, and compliance.

WHY IT MATTERS

Many organisations operate at full capacity and have limited time to scan the horizon. This component helped directors and senior staff step back and understand what's coming, so they can prepare and adapt. It provided space to think strategically and invest in building long-term capability.

MANAGING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONFLICTS

WHAT IT COVERS

Practical tools and culturally informed processes to identify, address, and resolve internal disputes (e.g. between board members, or board and staff) and manage external conflict (e.g. with funders, regulators, or local stakeholders). It also covered the importance of having policies in place before conflicts arise.

WHY IT MATTERS

Conflict is a natural part of leadership, but unresolved conflict can derail an organisation's work and damage relationships. Many participants said they hadn't had space to talk openly about how to manage conflict, especially when cultural or kinship dynamics are involved. This module provided structured approaches that respected cultural protocols while supporting organisational integrity.

DELEGATION OF THE BOARD'S POWER

WHAT IT COVERS

Clarified what powers the board holds and how they can be delegated responsibly to CEOs, managers, or subcommittees. Emphasis was placed on setting clear boundaries, documenting delegation, and monitoring performance.

WHY IT MATTERS

Understanding where the role of the board ends and the CEO or staff responsibilities begin is essential to strong governance and effective leadership. This component helped boards create clarity around who is authorised to make decisions and under what conditions. It reduces micromanagement while strengthening oversight, enabling directors to focus on strategy and accountability, not daily operations.

CONTENT AREAS



”

Great course. All Local Aboriginal
Land Councils should do this course

The strength of the program lay not only in the depth of its content but in its responsiveness to the needs of participants. Sessions were shaped by an understanding of who was in the room—what types of organisations were represented, and what specific challenges they might face. This allowed for case studies and examples to be tailored, making the content directly relevant and immediately applicable.

Having legal experts with a deep understanding of governance and law present in each session meant participants could ask real-time questions and explore complex issues as they arose. This expertise added clarity and confidence, helping translate high-level legal concepts into practical understanding for community-controlled organisations. The ability to respond to real organisational scenarios as they emerged reinforced the program's strength-based, adaptive approach.

PROGRAM REVIEW

This review reflects on the delivery, outcomes, and lessons of the Governance in Our Hands program. It explores how the program has supported strong governance practice across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector and highlights where further investment and support can continue to build capability.

Drawing on participant feedback, insights from delivery partners, sector leaders, and NATSIHA's own tracking of tool uptake and participation trends, the review presents a strengths-based reflection on what worked well, what was learned, and how future efforts can deepen impact.



PURPOSE

The purpose of this review is to assess the impact, reach, and effectiveness of the Governance in Our Hands program, which was funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency under projective objective G of the Culture and Capability Programme Grant.

This review provides an overview of how the program was delivered, what outcomes were achieved, and where further support is needed. It also ensures accountability for the investment and informs future directions for governance development across the sector.

APPROACH

This review draws on participant feedback, internal reflection, and qualitative input from delivery partners and sector leaders. NATSIHA also tracked uptake of tools and participation trends to understand how the program translated into practice.

”

That was excellent. I enjoyed the training and the new skills I have learned and need to investigate. Cheers

”

I'm very happy and gained much knowledge, thank you.

REACH, DESIGN AND PARTICIPATION

ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENT

Each delivery of the program included a feedback and reflection loop. Sessions were evaluated in real-time through participant input, and the program was continuously adapted and built upon to reflect what was working well and where further clarity or emphasis was needed.

This iterative approach ensured that Governance in Our Hands remained responsive to the sector, grounded in community experience, and capable of addressing emerging governance challenges as they arose.



6
States &
Territories



212
Participants



116
Organisations



23%
Sector
Coverage

FINDINGS

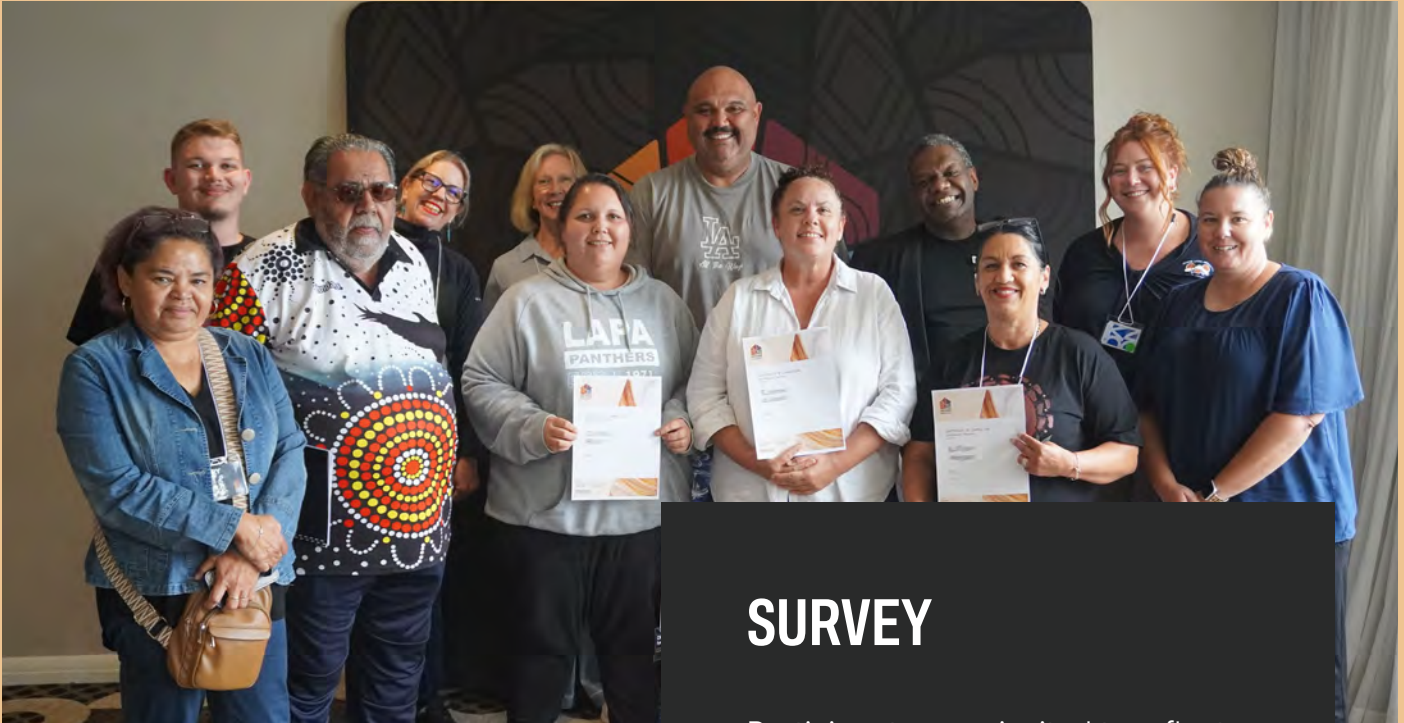
The program design enabled high engagement across job roles and geographies. Whole-of-organisation delivery was a key success factor, breaking down silos and helping everyone see where they fit into the governance ecosystem.

Participants especially valued the space to engage with governance concepts in ways that were practical, relevant, and culturally informed. This inclusive and adaptive design contributed directly to increased uptake of tools, shared language around governance, and a stronger culture of accountability.



REVIEW

Strong governance is already practiced across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations—grounded in cultural authority, collective decision-making, and accountability to community. Governance in My Hands builds on this strength, providing a shared foundation for whole-of-organisation readiness, so that anyone stepping into a leadership role in future understands their responsibilities and the standards expected.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Before the workshop, participants rated their organisation's understanding of governance at 3.6 out of 5.

After the program, this increased to 4.4, with 52.2% rating their understanding at the highest level.

Individual understanding also rose to match—showing a shift toward shared confidence across roles.

SURVEY

Participants were invited to reflect on their existing governance knowledge across key areas before and after the training, allowing them to assess how the program deepened their understanding and confidence.

”

**EXCELLENT
SESSION, EASY TO
UNDERSTAND AND
VERY INFORMATIVE**

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Below reflects the shift in understanding before and after attending the Governance In Our Hands Program:

FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

Participants deepened their confidence in understanding key financial responsibilities. Post-training scores rose to 84.6%, reflecting stronger financial oversight capabilities.

74.2%

Understanding
Before

84.6%

Understanding
After

MANAGING DISPUTES

Participants reported clearer understanding of how to resolve issues within governance structures. A rise from 74.2% to 86.2% demonstrates strengthened conflict resolution knowledge.

74.2%

Understanding
Before

86.2%

Understanding
After

DIRECTORS DUTIES

Clarity on legal and ethical duties of directors significantly improved. Understanding increased from 69.4% to 84.6%, supporting more informed decision-making.

69.4%

Understanding
Before

84.6%

Understanding
After

MANAGING CONFLICT

Participants gained tools to approach internal conflict with accountability and respect. Showing deeper capacity for culturally responsive resolution.

66.1%

Understanding
Before

86.2%

Understanding
After

RELATED PARTY BENEFITS

This area saw the largest improvement, indicating clearer understanding of transparency. Scores jumped from 46.8% to 89.2%, reinforcing integrity in organisational dealings.

46.8%

Understanding
Before

89.2%

Understanding
After

RISK MANAGEMENT

Participants became more confident in identifying and managing governance risks. Scores increased from 69.4% to 74.2%, with room for ongoing strengthening.

69.4%

Understanding
Before

74.2%

Understanding
After

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE ACROSS OUR SECTOR: LOOKING AHEAD

This review draws on survey data and participant feedback, alongside NATSIHA's commitment to sector-wide capability and cultural integrity. It builds a foundation for future investment and program development, shaped by community priorities and whole-of-organisation aspirations.

GOVERNANCE STRENGTH EMBEDDED

Organisations bring strong cultural governance, community accountability and deep relational ways of working. This program affirms those strengths and supports people to grow their understanding of how cultural and corporate governance work together, creating readiness for future leadership and succession.

SHARED LEARNING

Survey insights highlighted a strong desire to share knowledge across whole boards, not just with those who attended. Participants called for practical tools to support this, including self-assessments, templates, and guides to embed learning and support succession planning.

A Governance Toolkit would provide a clear pathway for participants to continue applying their insights, strengthening governance across their organisations and building shared understanding at every level.

DEMYSTIFY GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

As the sector strengthens its voice and influence, there's a need for practical insight into:

- How government processes and funding decisions work
- How to navigate agreements, contracts and reporting
- What current policy shifts mean for housing organisations (e.g. HPP, NASHH, Closing the Gap)
- Including these insights helps organisations advocate and lead with even greater clarity.



Government training (how government works would be great!)

GOVERNANCE IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Participants saw clearly that strong governance doesn't sit only with Boards or senior leaders - it lives in how decisions are made every day. Staff at all levels saw their role in upholding integrity, transparency and cultural authority. The program supported that understanding across roles, creating a shared foundation.

MAKING THE PROGRAM AVAILABLE ANNUALLY

Participants were clear: governance is not a one-off event but part of a continuous learning journey. Making the program available every year in every state and territory will ensure that more people can engage over time, that new leaders are continually supported, and that the content evolves alongside changing policy environments and sector priorities.

PEER LEARNING MATTERS

One of the strongest pieces of feedback was the value of learning from each other. Participants want to hear what works, what's possible, and how others are navigating change. Embedding peer exchange, mentoring, and shared practice into the program will strengthen it even further.

This program is not about starting from scratch. It's about recognising and reinforcing the strength that already exists in our organisations — and creating tools and pathways to ensure that strength is passed on. Everyone in an organisation has a role to play in strong governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS



INTRODUCE SHORT, TOPIC-SPECIFIC DEEP DIVES AS FOLLOW UP

Offer modular learning options that allow Directors, CEOs, and staff to explore key governance topics in greater detail. These deep dives should reflect the most requested and high-impact areas from the program, such as:

- Financial Governance
- Conflicts of interest and related party transactions
- Risk management and emerging hazards
- Delegation of powers and cultural authority
- Government processes



Spend more time work shopping some issues like financial management and conflicts of interest.

These modules could be recorded for later access to build an ongoing library of governance knowledge.



GOVERNANCE STRENGTHENING TOOLKIT FOR ORGANISATIONS

To embed the impact of the Governance in My Hands program across whole organisations, a tailored toolkit will be developed to support Boards in building collective and ongoing governance capability regardless of who attended the initial training.

Purpose:

This toolkit will enable Boards to transfer key knowledge from the program, assess their current governance strengths, and identify clear steps for strengthening areas that may need further development. It supports strong cultural and corporate governance and prepares Boards for future readiness by building a common foundation of good governance.

Key Features:

- **A Knowledge Transfer Tool:** A structured summary of key learnings from the program designed for participants to share with their fellow Board members.
- **A simple presentation format or conversation guide:** Printable fact sheets on core concepts such as directors' duties, conflicts of interest, and cultural governance with a checklist of questions for the Board to reflect on together.

RECOMMENDATIONS



SELF RATING GOVERNANCE DIAGNOSTIC

A practical tool that allows individual Board members or the full Board to rate their governance understanding and confidence across key domains. For each area of the diagnostic, the toolkit will offer tailored pathways for strengthening practice.



RECOGNISED GOVERNANCE CREDENTIAL TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION PATHWAYS AND SECTOR CAPABILITY

Expanding the Governance in Our Hands program into a two-day offering, with the second day delivered in partnership with the University of Adelaide as a micro-credential opportunity. This builds on the existing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) already offered through the program, which acknowledges the skills and experience of participants and can contribute toward further tertiary qualifications.

The addition of a formal credential strengthens the education pathway available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing leaders and affirms the quality and impact of the program. It also supports the professionalisation of the sector by creating new, accessible routes into higher education that reflect the lived expertise and governance responsibilities held across the community-controlled housing sector.

A national annual rollout ensures wide access and builds consistent capability across the country, while fostering strong, place-based leadership. This recommendation reflects sector demand for continued learning opportunities and positions governance capability as a recognised and valued journey, supporting both organisational strength and long-term sector development.



Watch a short clip from the Governance session held at the NCIE in Sydney

APPENDIX

1. Location and cohort overview
2. Survey Output
3. Presentation slides



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Enjoyed the case examples to explain risks/issues

ENGAGEMENT TIMING

Locations were strategically selected to maximise reach and impact. For example, delivering the program on the Gold Coast enabled participation from both southern Queensland and northern and north-western New South Wales, supporting strong regional cohort coverage across state lines.

Location	Timeframe	Town	Cohort	Orgs	Participants
Queensland	July 2024	Brisbane	1	14	24
Queensland	Dec 2024	Thursday Island	2	2	9
Queensland	Feb 2025	Surfers Paradise	2	23	41
New South Wales	July 2024	Sydney	1	15	24
New South Wales	March 2025	Woolongong	2	20	38
Victoria	Sep 2024	Melbourne	1	4	7
South Australia	Aug 2024	Adelaide	1	6	10
South Australia	Aug 2024	Adelaide	1	NATSIHA Youth	6
Western Australia	April 2025	Broome	2	16	30
Northern Territory	Nov 2024	Darwin	1	15	16
NATSIHA	March 2025	Woolongong	National	1	7





NATSIHA

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Housing Association

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