

7-9-93

T. Hamilton

HOMES ON ABORIGINAL LAND

BRIEFING NOTES



September 1987

EXTRACT MINISTER'S STATEMENT

IN VIEW OF THE GRIM FINANCIAL OUTLOOK WE ARE TAKING A SENSIBLE COURSE TO MARK I.Y.S.H. WITHIN OUR EXISTING BUDGET WE HAVE RE-ORDERED OUR PRIORITIES TO TARGET SPECIAL EFFORT INTO KEY AREAS OF NEED.

INSTEAD OF ANNOUNCING SOME FANCY AND EXPENSIVE PROGRAMS TODAY I INTEND TO ANNOUNCE SOME IMPORTANT CHANGES IN DIRECTION AND EMPHASIS FOR THE POLICIES OF MY DEPARTMENT. A PRIME EXAMPLE OF OUR NEW PRIORITIES IN THIS I.Y.S.H. IS A GREATLY EXPANDED PROGRAM TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR ABORIGINES.

WE HAVE DECIDED TO DOUBLE THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING'S ABORIGINAL HOUSING PROGRAM AT A COST OF ABOUT \$17 MILLION. DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS OVER THE PAST DECADE THE SAD FACT REMAINS THAT THE GROUP WITH THE GREATEST HOUSING NEED IN AUSTRALIA IS OUR ORIGINAL INHABITANTS. WE DO NOT WISH TO FACE THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR WITHOUT MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO RIGHT THAT PARTICULAR WRONG.

UNDER OUR NEW SCHEME WE WILL PROVIDE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR 600 NEW HOMES FOR ABORIGINES AT A COST OF ABOUT \$33 MILLION. IN DOING SO WE WILL CONSULT EXTENSIVELY WITH A RANGE OF ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES OVER THE SERVICING OF LAND, THE PLANNING OF NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND THE BUILDING OF APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION.

10th March, 1987

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Other references : Bundanoon papers (Bart Barrack)
Aboriginal Housing Programs (Tim Dunlop)

THESE NOTES WERE PREPARED FOR CIRCULATION WITHIN THE N.S.W.
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING FOR USE ON THE HOMES ON ABORIGINAL LAND
PROGRAM IN AUGUST 1987, BY:

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STATED OBJECTIVES

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME ARE:-

- ★ TO ENSURE THAT THE PLANNING, PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME IS ACCOUNTABLE TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.
- ★ TO PROVIDE CULTURALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES TO PEOPLE OF ABORIGINAL BACKGROUND AND IDENTITY.
- ★ TO MAXIMISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT.
- ★ TO ENSURE THAT HOUSING SERVICES ARE VIEWED WITHIN THE BROADER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES WHICH FACE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.
- ★ TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN IN CONSULTATION WITH THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY HAVING REGARD TO SITE AND BUILDING LAYOUT, LANDSCAPING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND HOUSING MANAGEMENT.
- ★ TO INVOLVE THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IN THE SELECTION OF CONSULTANTS WORKING ON THE PROGRAMME.
- ★ TO REVIEW ABORIGINAL HOUSING CONDITIONS AND NEEDS SO THAT A STAGED DEVELOPMENT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED.

- * WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS LEGISLATION IN 1983, THERE HAS BEEN A GROWING DEMAND FROM ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO BUILD AND/OR IMPROVE HOUSING ON ABORIGINAL LAND.

- * LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

EACH LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY GROUP WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO AN L.A.L.C. APPROXIMATELY 115 LOCAL LAND COUNCILS ESTABLISHED TO DATE.

- * REGIONAL A.L.C.

EACH LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTS 2 REPRESENTATIVES TO THE REGIONAL COUNCIL. THERE ARE 13 REGIONAL COUNCILS.

- * N.S.W. A.L.C.

EACH REGION ELECTS ONE REPRESENTATIVE AS A MEMBER OF N.S.W. A.L.C.

THE STATE LAND COUNCIL ADVISES THE MINISTER ON THE ABORIGINAL HOUSING CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM AND ISSUES RELATING TO ABORIGINAL HOUSING GENERALLY.

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS
OF DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMS

SHORT-TERM

- . INCREASE AVAILABLE STAFF RESOURCES - BOTH DEMAND AND PRODUCTION.
- . REVIEW ROLE OF D.O.H. PERSONNEL IN WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES - PARTICULARLY REGIONAL LIAISON OFFICERS AND PRODUCTION PERSONNEL.
- . COMMITMENT TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING.
- . ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS.
- . REVIEW OF MAJOR SITES, NEEDS AND IMPEDIMENTS.
- . CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES ON SITE LAYOUT, HOUSING NEED, DWELLING DESIGN, LANDSCAPING AND CONSTRUCTION.
- . INVESTIGATION OF WAYS TO MAXIMISE ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT ON SITE (T.A.P.E., SELECT TENDER, CONDITION OF CONTRACT).
- . INCREASE TRAINING RESOURCES FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL LAND COUNCILS INVOLVED IN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.
- . COMMENCE DETAILED DATA AND MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW IN CONJUNCTION WITH MINISTRY AND STATE LAND COUNCIL.

MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- . TOTAL PHYSICAL, ARCHITECTURAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF ALL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AND LAND-HOLDINGS IN NEW SOUTH WALES.
- . LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLANNED FOR UPGRADING/- REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING SITES.
- . TOTAL REVIEW OF SERVICING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING PROVISION RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN AND WITHIN FEDERAL/- STATE AUTHORITIES - PARTICULARLY AS THIS RELATES TO SELF DETERMINATION OBJECTIVES.
- . DEVELOPMENT OF AGREED PROPERTY MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES (RENTS, SUBSIDIES, ADMINISTRATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, MAINTENANCE, ALLOCATIONS).
- . ONGOING REVIEW OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS.

Consultation is a worthy ideal but in Australia it is not usually practised in an open ended form which allows people to ask for, and get, the types of dwelling and town plan which will really suit them. Often the delivering authority has already made most of the decisions before coming to talk to the recipients, and merely allow them to decide between plan A and plan B or to say "yes" to plan A. When this happens people are not given the chance to think about the implications of a house for their life-styles such as whether they can pay the rent, or whether they would be better off with a different design or in a different location. Usually they will see to agree rather than risk ending up with no house at all and try to cope with the problems later. This is one of the reasons why houses have sometimes been abandoned, damaged, or rents have not been paid. We tend to forget the main reason for consultation which is that a person is more of an expert on his or her own requirements than we as outside planners could possibly be. People also have more commitment to a house which they have decided on themselves.

Although most untrained non-Aboriginal people take a long time to make sense of architectural plans, many planners expect to bring a set of plans to a group of Aboriginal people they have never met and expect the people to understand and agree to the plans the same day. Photos and miniature models are also inadequate to show people what a house will eventually be like to live in. We need to develop more effective ways of helping people to communicate their ideas to design (and helping the designers to hear them) unless of course the people can avoid dependence on non-Aboriginal designers altogether. Once a design has been drawn up people need to be able to imagine what it would be like to live in such a house.

Extract: Northern Territory Construction, July 1983 by Helen Ross



CONSULTATION

CONSULTATION DAYS - NOT PENSION DAY!

Bob Edwards from the Aboriginal Housing Unit advises that it would be most inconvenient for most Aboriginal families to be available for consultation on pension days. These are listed below for information.

1987

CALENDARS

1988

Easter Day, April 3

	July	August	September
Sunday	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Monday	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29
Wednesday	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Thursday	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24
Friday	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25
Saturday	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26

	October	November	December
Sunday	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27
Monday	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29
Wednesday	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30
Thursday	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31
Friday	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25
Saturday	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26

	January	February	March
Sunday	31 3 10 17 24	7 14 21 28	6 13 20 27
Monday	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23	1 8 15 22 29
Wednesday	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	2 9 16 23 30
Thursday	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	3 10 17 24 31
Friday	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	4 11 18 25
Saturday	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	5 12 19 26

	April	May	June
Sunday	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26
Monday	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Tuesday	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Wednesday	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29
Thursday	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Friday	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24
Saturday	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25

HOMES ON ABORIGINAL LAND

TENANT CONSULTATION - GUIDELINES



KEEP A RECORD

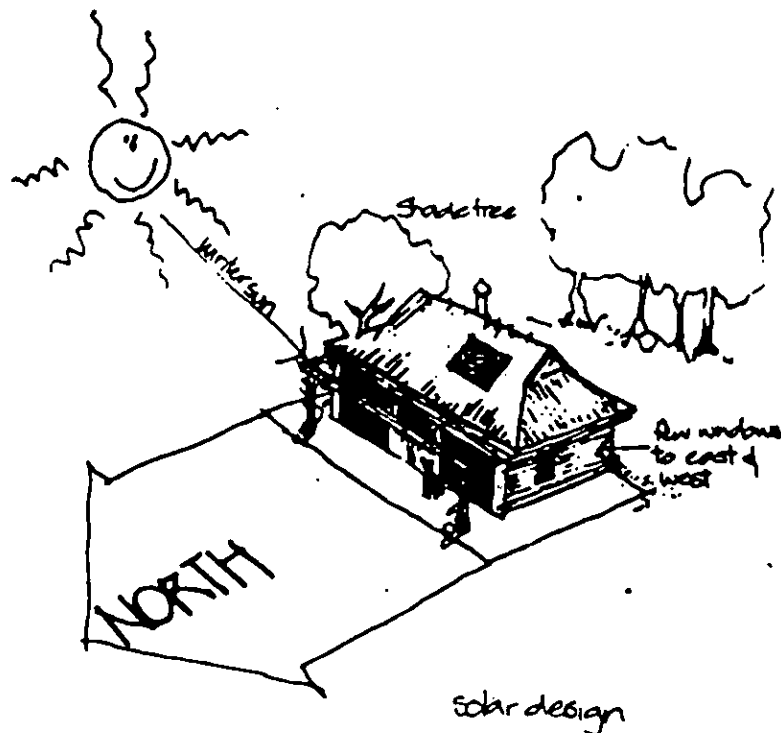
METHOD

- * Explain the two consultation process. Ask people to think about what colours, materials etc., they would like so that they can tell us next time.
- * Take note of any preferences voiced at first meeting but stress that final decisions are not needed yet.
- * Suggest that client looks at other houses in the town and picks out what features they like and dislike.
- * Talk to the client family in their present house if possible.
- * Explain that we are not just building standard houses. We want to find out what people want.
- * The consultation should be done in at least two stages. The first stage will establish the basic design brief from which sketch plans and elevations can be drawn.

The second stage will be the presentation of the sketch design to the client, not as something final but as something which can easily be changed as the client wishes. The sketch design should therefore look as "sketchy" as possible.
- * Use visual aids - diagrams, perspectives photographs and magazines are helpful;
- * Plans can often be difficult to understand;
- * Using furniture in plans can be helpful to give a scale and comparative size;
- * Present a wide range of different ideas;

GENERALLY

- Discuss passive and active solar design;
- Check local materials which can be utilised;
- Work out where and which way on site the house is to be positioned;
- Discuss any maintenance problems of any materials
- Take a tour of the neighbourhood and town to identify preferences for appearances;- this can be done at the second consultation.



PRESENT HOME

1. What do you like or dislike about your present home?

2. Are there any items of furniture or equipment that should be allowed for in your new home?

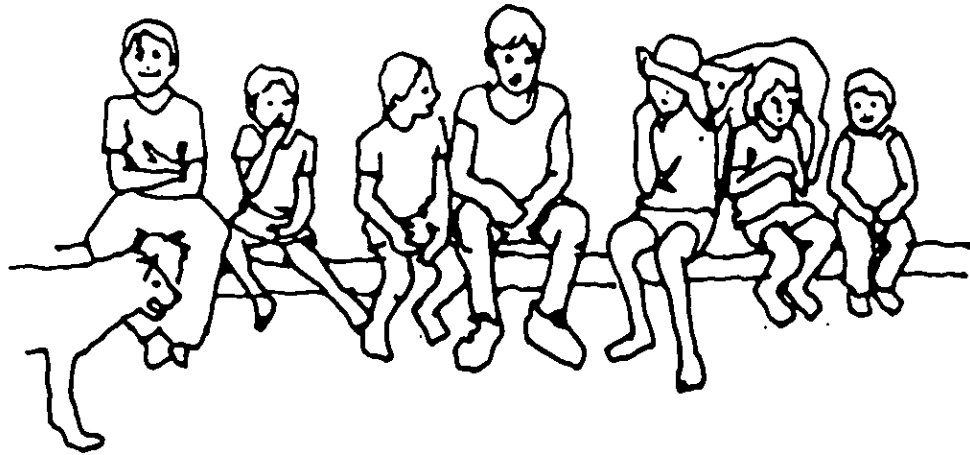
NEW HOME

1. What would you like your new home to be like?

 What are the most important things you want your new home to have?

 What will your new home look like?
 What words would you use to describe your new home?
2. Where do you think you'll spend most time in your new place?

 What do you want to be able to see from there?



HOUSEHOLD

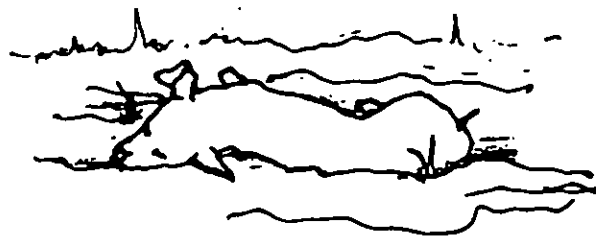
1. What are the names of the people who will be living in the new place permanently? (How old and what sex are the children?)
2. How many bedrooms do you think you need?
Do you want anybody to share a bedroom?
Do you want study space in the bedrooms or separate?
3. Do you have any disabled or elderly members of the family who might need special fittings?
4. Do you have any hobbies or work done at home which require a special space?
5. Do you often have friends and relatives staying for a long visit?

6. What would have been the largest number of people you might have had staying?

7. Where do you want visitors to sleep?

- in bedroom ie., sharing with family
- in a spare room
- in living areas, sleepouts

8. Do you need extra cupboards to store visitors gear?



NEW HOME

COOKING AREA

(Show sketches/perspectives)

- How do you like to work in your kitchen?
- Would you like to be able to eat in your kitchen or separate dining area?



3. If its separate would you like to be able to see through to the dining area?

4. Would you like kitchen, dining and living all as separate rooms or opening into each other?

Do you want double doors between them.

5. Do you do any cooking outside, or is it all inside, or both?

6. What sort of stove - slow combustion or electric? What other fittings ? (eg., freezer)

7. How much storage do you want?

Try to relate to what client has in present house - eg., twice as much, and estimate size

Are overhead cupboard OK?

What about a pantry cupboard?



EATING/LIVING AREA

1. What would be the largest number you would have for a meal at one time?

 How often would you have this number?
2. How big should the living room be?

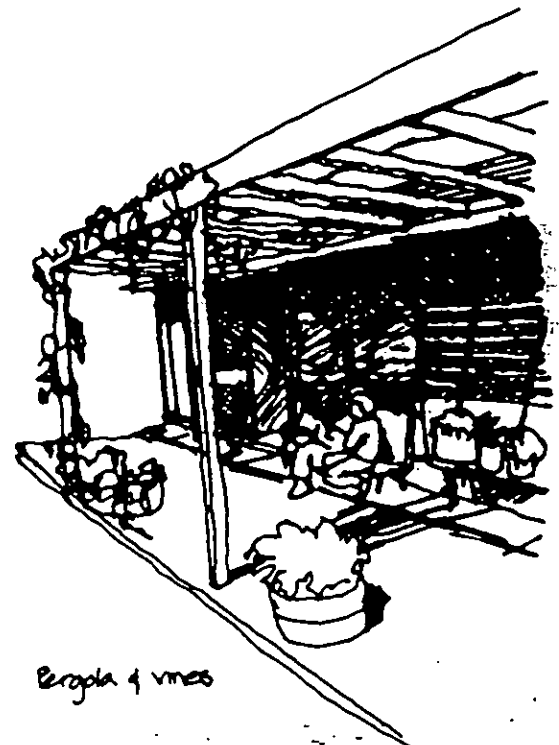
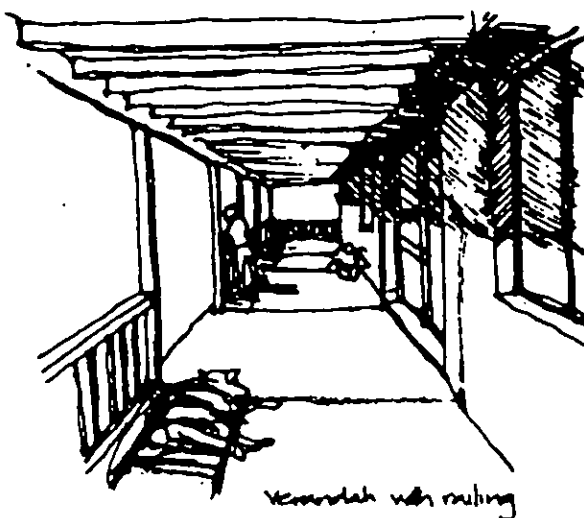
 What activities should be catered for?
3. What source of heating would you prefer? (openfire place potbelly stove etc.,)
4. Would you have your entry door straight into the living area or have an entry space/hall?

BATHROOM/LAUNDRY

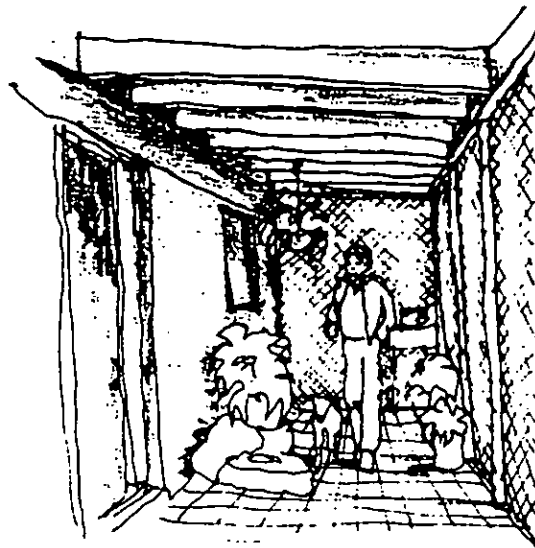
- What facilities do you want - shower & bath?
- Would you like a separate toilet and separate shower?
- Would 2 toilets be necessary?
- Do you want an external door to the laundry?
- Would you like a laundry large enough to do the ironing in?

GENERAL

1. Where would you want windows/views to the outside?
2. What size windows would you like and would you like any full height glazing?
3. Where would you want doors from the outside?
4. Would you like a verandah or an external covered area?
Where? - Front, back or all round?



5. Would you like flyscreens?
6. Would you like screening or shade cloth (show sample) blinds to outside areas?
7. What rooms and spaces do you want close together?
- Do a rough sketch or use cardboard cut out rooms (with furniture) to work out a rough layout of the house.
8. Is there anything else you want to mention? eg., carport



Screened-in verandah

SECOND CONSULTATION

At the second consultation with a sketch design presented to the client, the following can be finalised. Take client on a tour around the town so that they can show you the features, colours etc., that they like or dislike.

1. Colours
2. Materials
3. Facade details e.g., verandah posts balustrade
window details roof shapes
verandah profiles.
4. Fences and gates
5. Clothes drying lines
6. Placement of windows and doors
7. Size of windows.



ABORIGINAL HOUSING BRIEF

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2.1 Site planning

2.2 Services

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Small house

Large house



ABORIGINAL HOUSING
BRIEF

1. Context

Housing on Aboriginal Land Council land.

1.1 Department of Housing Policy

Economic

The Department of Housing (DH) receives Housing for Aborigines (HFA) funds from the Commonwealth government. In the past these funds have been used to house Aboriginal families through new construction, package-deals, and spot purchases. This housing has become DH stock and been managed by the DH. With the introduction of Land Rights legislation another means of providing Aboriginal housing has become available. Local Aboriginal Land Councils can request that the DH use some of its HFA funds to build housing on Land Council land. When constructed, this housing will be owned and managed by the Land Councils.

While recognising the particular needs of Aboriginal families, the DH is committed to an equitable expenditure for the housing of each of its tenants or clients. Therefore any specially designed houses for Aborigines must be equated in some way to standard DH designs. A basis for deciding equivalence, between houses designed to accommodate different life styles and different rates of occupancy is yet to be determined. One criterion which may be useful is the area of dwelling per person accommodated. The DH normally allocates families of three (one parent plus two children of different sex) to six (two parents plus four children of same sex, or two of each sex) members to a three-bedroom house. As a DH three-bedroom house has a built area of about 90m², each person accommodated has from 15 to 30m². In four-bedroom houses the range is from 11.67 to 26.25m². On the same basis an Aboriginal house designed to accommodate twelve people could have an area of 140 to 360m².

Physical

In recognition of the wide range of circumstances and aspirations of Aborigines across the State, it is intended that the design of their housing should reflect this diversity. Thus, in response to the priorities of the local Land Council, the housing provided may range from simple shelters with lockable storage, to very large houses appropriately fitted out to accommodate an extended family. The simple end of the range will be designed to cater for groups wishing to follow a largely traditional lifestyle, mostly outside, and involving a high degree of mobility.

Whichever part of the design range is chosen by the particular Land Council, the choice must be justifiable in terms of the needs of the client, and the need for cost compatibility with other Department of Housing programs.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING
BRIEF

1.2 Land Council Policy

Legislative context

The "Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983" is the legislative framework within which Land Rights for NSW Aborigines are being achieved. This Act established a three-tiered structure of Aboriginal Land Councils, as follows:

1. Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC's):
Each local Aboriginal community group will be incorporated as a Local Aboriginal Land Council. All Aborigines living within a particular geographical area will be members of a LALC. There are at least 115 LALC's established to date.
2. Regional Aboriginal Land Councils (RALC's):
Each LALC elects two representatives as members of the RALC constituted for its region. The RALC carries out certain administrative and financial functions in respect of the LALC's in its region. There are 13 RALC's in N.S.W.
3. N.S.W. Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC):
Each RALC elects one representative as a member of the NSWALC. The NSWALC carries out administrative and financial functions in respect of all the RALC's and LALC's in N.S.W.

The Act also establishes three means by which Land Councils can gain land. They are -

1. Claims to Crown Lands. The Act defines "claimable Crown Lands" as those which are (a) able to be lawfully sold, or leased or are reserved or dedicated; (b) not lawfully used or occupied; (c) not needed, nor likely to be needed for an essential public purpose. Thus land belonging to the Department of Housing may be able to be claimed, if for example it is surplus to requirements.
2. Purchase or lease, etc of property. The NSWALC is paid each year, an amount equal to 7.5% of land tax. These funds are distributed to RALC's and LALC's mainly for the acquisition of land in their regions or local areas. Land Councils are also authorized to acquire property by gift, devise or bequest.
3. Appropriation or resumption of land, on the recommendation of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, by the Governor. The NSWALC or the relevant LALC may be required to pay compensation for land appropriated or resumed on its behalf.

A LALC is not permitted to sell, exchange, mortgage or otherwise dispose of land vested in it. It may lease land only with the approval of the RALC.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING
BRIEF

Economic, Social, Physical, Management

With the exception of the decision-making functions set down by the Act for RALC's and the NSWALC, Local Aboriginal Land Councils are autonomous bodies. They make their own decisions as to the land they claim or acquire, and how they develop that land, given the constraints of the funds available to them.

In relation to the housing built for a LALC on its own land, by the Department of Housing: the LALC is responsible for its allocation, management and maintenance. It determines how much rent will be paid, and collects that rent. While there is no overall Land Council policy on these matters, it can be safely assumed that each LALC desires to minimize its maintenance costs, and running costs for its members.

The economic performance of housing is not simply a measure of its construction cost. The maintenance of housing is a direct, on-going cost to the Land Council which should be minimized. The costs payable by the tenant to heat, cool, cook, bathe and wash clothes in each housing unit affect the Land Council when these are at a level which affects the tenant's ability to pay rent. The minimization of running costs through energy efficient design is thus an economic as well as a social consideration.

The views of individual Land Councils on the social aspects of their housing will vary a great deal across the state. As far as possible their views should be sought at the design selection/site planning stage.

Preferences for certain physical attributes of the housing will again vary from LALC to LALC. At the NSWALC level a preference has been stated for brick veneer construction, but it appears that this reflects a disaffection with "fibro", and a desire for sturdy construction, in keeping with general community preferences. Designers should seek, as much as possible to satisfy local preferences, and allow houses to express a local identity.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING BRIEF

1.3 Clients

Culture

The importance of anyone involved in the provision of housing for Aborigines, understanding their culture, cannot be over-emphasised. It is essential to recognise that many ideas concerning housing, are culturally based. (See Amos Rapoport's book House Form and Culture). Aboriginal culture is markedly different from European cultures and so Aboriginal attitudes to housing are also very different. Any non-Aboriginal designer of housing for Aborigines must question all of his/her assumptions about the essential requirements of housing. The clients' priorities must be sought, as they will probably be different to the designer's. It will be against those priorities that the 'value' of the houses will be judged.

While NSW Aborigines no longer live a traditional Aboriginal lifestyle, some knowledge of that lifestyle and culture is needed to understand their present preferred lifestyles and the values behind them.

Traditionally, Australian Aborigines lived as hunter-gatherers, and were nomadic, as far as the ecology of their local areas necessitated. That is, in rich well-watered areas where game was plentiful, they maintained fairly stable settlements; in poorer, more arid areas they moved from place to place within tribal and clan areas. Their attachment to the land in which they moved (whether a large area or small) was deep and spiritual. As one writer has put it, the landscape to the Aborigines was "a humanized realm, saturated with significations". All aspects of nature had a spiritual explanation, an origin in The Dreaming.

Apart from their deeply religious nature which influenced every aspect of their life, the most striking aspect of Aboriginal culture was their well developed systems of kinship and descent groups. These were also based in The Dreaming, but had the practical effect of regulating all aspects of daily life. Decision-making, co-operation in hunting, marriage, exchange, child-care, and education, were all achieved by reference to kin. Most importantly, in the context of this brief, where a person lived and with whom, was determined by the kinship system. These systems varied in type and complexity across Australia but politically they had one feature in common - they were not hierarchic; centralized political power or authority was completely unknown to Aborigines.

There is no shortage of anthropological literature available on Australian Aborigines, if more information is required. For the purposes of this very brief outline, perhaps only one more point needs making. Aborigines are known to have lived in Australia for at least 40,000 years. Their ways of life, culture, languages and religion thus had tremendous depth and stability. In less than 200 years their society has collapsed, and much of the landscape in which it operated, drastically changed.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING
BRIEF

Culture (contd.)

Despite the cataclysmic effects of those changes, the depth and strength of Aboriginal culture is still evident in today's Aboriginal people. Their material circumstances, and the country, may have radically changed, but for most, their attitudes to the world and each other, are closer to those of their ancestors than to any white Australian. The land and their kin are still the most important aspects of life to today's Aborigines.

Social Conditions

As for their traditional culture, the present conditions of Aboriginal people cannot be fully described here. Again, for those wanting background information, a great deal has been written on the fate of Aborigines since colonization and their present social conditions. In summary, Aborigines are the poorest group in Australian society. Their poverty is reflected in their high infant mortality rate, low life expectancy, generally poor health, very low educational attainment, high unemployment, high representation in prisons, and alcoholism. A major aspect of Aboriginal poverty, to which many of their health problems can be attributed, is the poor standard, and overcrowded nature of their housing. On the fringes of many Australian country towns, Aboriginal families live in shelters built of discarded materials, without running water or sanitary services.

While Aboriginal poverty is a well-documented fact, it cannot be simply viewed as a lack of resources. Especially in relation to housing, the way Aborigines respond to their poverty can only be understood in the light of their culture. Aboriginal attitudes to money and property in general are very different to European attitudes. These attitudes are largely affected by their strong attachment to kin. "Kin" is not restricted to blood relations; it can be extended to include other Aboriginal people and even white friends. Generally this means that resources of any kind are shared. Any housing that one family may have, including welfare housing, will be available for others to share as indefinite guests. Being able to live close to relatives is often given greater priority by Aboriginal people than having a reliable income or a house of their own.

Throughout the post-colonial history of Australia various government policies have been followed in relation to Aborigines. Segregation and assimilation have both been tried. The current policy is to allow self-determination. Land rights legislation now in force in some States is a step in this direction. It seeks to enable Aboriginal groups to have control over their own resources, and thus be able to make real decisions on how those resources are utilized for their welfare. In the design and provision of housing for Aborigines, a maximum of participation by the future users should be sought. The more an Aboriginal community is involved in their housing, the more successful it is likely to be.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING BRIEF

Lifestyle

It is impossible to give a description of an Aboriginal lifestyle which is valid to all parts of N.S.W. This general brief can only bring to the awareness of the designer, some aspects of Aboriginal lifestyle which may be relevant to particular areas. Whether or not a particular group display any of these aspects, depends on a number of factors:

- (a) their adherence to traditional Aboriginal ways,
- (b) their adherence to European values,
- (c) their level of poverty,
- (d) whether they live in an exclusively Aboriginal neighbourhood, or among whites,
- (e) the modifying effects of the local climate and topography.

With the possibility of diversity in mind, the following aspects of lifestyle are common:

Large households:

These may be made up of a couple with several children, or of a variety of compositions, of related, or unrelated, adults and children. e.g. a woman, her uncle, her brother, her adult neice and nephew, and her two grandchildren share a house in Griffith. (P.W.D. Brief).

Kinship Groups:

Where people are able to choose where their dwellings are located (i.e. in fringe settlements and some isolated communities) they may group them according to kin relations. A number of closely related families may be placed close together, focused on a communal open fire. Some distance away may be another group, or a single dwelling perhaps where one older person lives. The groups of dwellings are linked by a network of tracks. In plan, such settlements have an organic appearance, and the dwellings often seem randomly scattered to European eyes used to regular subdivisions. The importance of such a distribution of dwellings should not be disregarded. It is not random; the groups and their spacing are a direct reflection of the kinship groups operating in the community. If an Aboriginal group for whom the Department is providing housing, expresses a wish for their housing to be sited according to kinship groups, every effort should be made to satisfy that wish. This requirement should be discerned as early as possible in the design process because it will have a major effect on (a) how Local Government approvals are sought
(b) how roads and services are provided.

(See 2.1 Site Planning, and 2.2 Services).

Visitors:

Throughout this century and particularly since World War II, there has been a pattern of Aboriginal migration from the remote western areas of the State to the more closely settled areas and especially the coast. The extent of this migration is indicated by a recent University of NSW survey which found that 86% of Aborigines living in the inner-city suburbs of Sydney had been born outside Sydney. The main reason for this migration has been the search for better economic prospects. Its effect is that a great number of Aborigines living in urban areas in eastern NSW have familial ties to the more remote western areas. This means that many will visit relatives remaining in these areas, and that their relatives will visit them. Because Aboriginal housing is in short supply, and because Aboriginal families are not likely to turn visitors away, or ask them to leave, the reality is that a majority of Aboriginal homes, especially in the more settled areas, are accommodating visitors virtually all of the time. Sleeping space for guests will be found wherever possible in existing Aboriginal homes. It should be included as a necessity in any new designs. Sanitary and other facilities should also anticipate this need.

Gathering and Interaction:

Hospitality is often extended not only to sleeping guests, but regularly to any number of visitors, calling unannounced to socialize with the members of a household. The cultural constraints on visiting and being visited, which are common to Europeans, are largely absent in Aboriginal society. Whereas Europeans are conditioned by their culture to visit most friends only when invited and not to "outstay their welcome", Aboriginal culture places the obligation on hosts to welcome visitors and expect them to stay for meals at a moment's notice.

Social gatherings of up to thirty people in a house are common. The focus of such gatherings tends to be the kitchen, because then the people preparing food or drinks can be involved. (See Kitchen and Living Spaces under Dwelling). People in a house - residents or visitors - seated at the kitchen table, like to be able to see outside the house as much as possible. Activities outside the house, people walking or driving past, and people approaching the house, are all of interest to those inside.

While adults tend to sit and talk, their children will be playing nearby and depending on their age, continually going to the adults for some reason. The segregation of adults and children is not generally desired; the sight and sound of children playing is welcomed by Aboriginal adults as a natural accompaniment to their own socializing.

2. Aboriginal Housing Developments

The nature of these developments will depend to a large extent, on the land which Local Aboriginal Land Councils can claim or buy. If an individual lot in a suburban-style subdivision is to be developed then the following sections on Site Planning and Services will not apply. If a number of adjacent lots, or a large parcel of land is to be developed, then there is scope for the Land Council to make its own decisions on site planning and servicing issues.

2.1 Site Planning

The common Australian practice of subdividing residential land into regular lots, of 500 to 1000 square metres, is a cultural choice. Our culture places a premium on individual "ownership" of property and on clear recognition of the rights and privileges an individual enjoys on their own property. An Aboriginal group that wishes to live according to many of the values of their traditional culture, may prefer to have a common title over their land, and to rely on the rules of their own culture to protect their members rights in relation to their dwellings.

If a Land Council wishes to develop a parcel of land with houses sited according to kinship groups or the choices of individual families, the Local Government requirement for a subdivision plan, cannot be met. However Local Government can allow development of a parcel of land with housing, without subdivision taking place. Statutory Planning advice should be sought as to the best way of approaching Local Government in such a case.

Carparking

Off-street parking for at least two cars should be provided for each house. In a suburban-style subdivision vehicle access to the rear yard should be provided. If individual yards are not delineated, vehicle circulation should not conflict with major pedestrian circulation routes, or with main outdoor gathering areas.

2.2 Services

The provision of water, electricity, gas, sewerage and drainage service is geared to the "normal" layout of suburban subdivisions. Where houses are proposed to be built in a dispersed, irregular arrangement, the normal means of providing these services will be very expensive.

This may be a difficult situation to resolve. The site-planning of houses according to the clients' wishes, will be a key factor in the ultimate success of the development. However, two other requirements must be given equal consideration: First, that health and safety standards should be the same as for other Department of Housing developments; Second, that costs be minimized, so that as many suitable houses as possible can be provided. With these considerations in mind, alternative options for the servicing of Aboriginal houses should be explored. In terms of allowing Aboriginal communities to be self-reliant, reducing their running costs, and minimizing the impact of their housing on the environment, there is much to be said for an "autonomous house" approach.

Rainwater collection, solar power, wind power, composting, and anaerobic digestion systems should all be seriously investigated for their applicability to the forms of housing development sought by Aboriginal clients. If any of these systems meets all requirements, great care should be taken in making a case for its use. The most authoritative opinions on its performance, safety and reliability should be presented. The successful use of alternative energy sources and waste disposal systems in Aboriginal housing developments could have far-reaching benefits for other Department of Housing programs. Thus the performance of any such system should be well monitored and recorded. It must be stressed, however, that alternative systems will be chosen primarily for their suitability to Aboriginal housing preferences, not for the purpose of research.

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2.3 Dwelling

The remaining sections of this Brief will outline the requirements of various rooms in a dwelling. Some of these rooms may not be required.

It may be appropriate to design "small" houses which can be added to, to create "large" houses. However, the "image" desired by a Land Council for their houses should not be sacrificed to the expedient of "modular" design.

Whatever size houses are being provided, the image they project to their users and to the general community should be carefully considered. In general it should be a conservative image, in keeping with the local, current, vernacular. The houses should not have any visual "architectural features" which make them stand out. They should not look mean or cheap, nor extravagant or luxurious.

It may seem contradictory to be seeking house designs which will meet the needs of a different culture, and yet to want them to look like the houses of the predominant culture. The point is that there are no Aboriginal "house forms" in the strong visual sense that Europeans are used to. There are Aboriginal ways of using and organizing space, and their traditional dwellings reflected those ways. However their use of space was, and is, dynamic.

Permanent structures did not suit people whose culture embodied mobility. Thus a permanent architecture with a distinctive visual style never developed in Aboriginal Australia. Today's Aborigines, therefore only have European-Australian house-forms to refer to. While they know that spatially, these forms do not work for them, visually they recognise them as "proper" houses, or rather "homes".

A distinctive Aboriginal architecture may eventually emerge, but today a designer truly seeking to meet Aboriginal needs must acknowledge, and operate in, this ambiguity. Aborigines desire to follow Aboriginal lifestyles within dwellings which project a European image of respectability. This is not simply a defense against white criticism, but also a genuine expression of how they feel about house-form.

2.3.1 Kitchen/Dining/Living

This room will form the core of the house, in a physical and a social sense.

Activities:

Food preparation
Food storage
Cooking
Eating
Socializing - often simultaneously with eating, food preparation and cooking.
- between those preparing food and those eating it.
Child supervision
Surveillance of outside activities
Watching TV

Large gatherings.

Usage Patterns:

- A few people (about 3) will usually be preparing/cooking food.
- Several people (about 8) will usually be sitting at the dining table, eating and/or socializing.
- Several children may be playing/watching TV or frequently spending some time in the room with the adults.
- A large number of people (about 30) may gather in this room, around the heat source to eat/drink/socialize.

Relationship to Other Areas:

Direct access to outside living.
Direct access to outside.
Close to laundry.
Close to W.C.

Environmental Issues:

- Maximize solar access in winter.
- Maximize natural light and ventilation.
- Maximize visual access to outside.
- Allow walls to outside, and outside living area to be opened up.
- Protect against intrusion of insects and dust.

Size:

4.8m. minimum dimension

Finishes:

Floor - vinyl tiles.
Walls - cement-rendered brick/concrete block
Benches - plastic laminate on timber.

Services:

Water, hot and cold
Electricity
(Gas)

ABORIGINAL HOUSING
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2.3.1 Kitchen/Dining/Living (cont)

Fittings/Fixtures:

Sink - double bowl
Benches
Cupboards - mainly low-level
Cooking facility

- slow combustion stove or
- gas hotplates and oven or
- electric hotplates and oven.
- open fire or barbecue (outside)

2.3 .2 Laundry

Activities:

- Clothes washing
- Clothes sorting, folding and ironing.
- Storage of cleaning agents etc.
- Access to outside
- Access to W.C.

Usage patterns:

- One or two people could be washing/sorting/folding clothes.
- One or two people could be making frequent visits to the laundry to load/unload washing, deliver/collect clothes, check progress of wash.
- At the same time individuals will be passing through the room, to/from W.C., or to/from outside.

Relationship to Other Areas:

Direct access to outside
Direct access to W.C.
Close to kitchen.
Close to sleeping areas.
Close to outside clothes drying areas.

Environmental Issues:

Natural light and ventilation.

Size:

2.1 x 3.3m.

Finishes:

Floor - ceramic tiles; Walls-cement rendered

Services:

Water, hot and cold - to tub and washing machine.
Electricity.

Fittings/Fixtures:

Laundry tub.
Washing machine cocks and drain.
Hot water storage unit.
Bench.
Storage.

2.3 .3 Separate W.C.

Relationship to Other Areas:

Direct access to laundry (or other space serving as an airlock between Kitchen and WC).
Close to sleeping areas.
Close to living areas.
Easily accessible from outside.

2.3 .3 Separate W.C. (cont)

Size: 0.9 x 2.1m

Finishes: Floor - ceramic tiles.
Walls - cement rendered.

Services: Sewer connection, or other sanitary disposal system.
Hot and cold water.

Fittings/Fixtures: W.C. fixture.
Handbasin.
Toilet paper holder.
Towel rail.
Mirror.

2.3 .4 Shower room

Relationship to Other Areas: Close to sleeping areas.
Not directly accessible from kitchen/dining/living.

Size: 0.9 x 2.1m.

Finishes: Floor - ceramic tiles.
Walls - ceramic tiles to 1800mm above floor level.

Services: Hot and cold water.

Fittings/Fixtures: Shower base.
Shower rose and mixer set.
Handbasin.
Curtain rail.
Towel rail.
Soap holder.
Mirror.

2.3 .5 Outdoor Living/Sleeping Areas:

Activities:

- Socializing.
- Childrens recreation.
- Eating - formally at a table or
- informally
- Sleeping - residents and
- guests
- Gathering
- Observation of neighbourhood activities.

Usage Patterns:

- Depending on the weather, may be continuously used by residents and guests.
- The space may be subdivided into living and sleeping zones, or the whole space may be used for living and sleeping at different times.

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2.3 .5 Outdoor Living/Sleeping Areas:

Relationship to Other
Areas:

Direct access to kitchen/
dining/living.
Close to W.C.
Close to shower.

Environmental Issues:

Protection from sun, wind and
rain should be flexible allowing
this space to be as adaptable as
possible to various environmental
conditions.
Residents should be able to keep
this space dry, clean, insect-free
and at a comfortable temperature
(to the limits of passive controls)
The degree to which resident
operation is relied upon to maintain
the amenity of this space, should
be a matter of consultation with
the client Land Council.

Size:

40m² minimum
2.4m minimum clear dimension.

Finishes:

Floor - Timber decking
Quarry tiles.
Walls - Canvas)
Shade-cloth) removable
Insect screens)
Roof - Insulated metal deck
Pergola and removable
canvas or shade-cloth.

2.3 .6 Bathroom

Activities:

- Washing, including washing of children by adults.
- Teeth cleaning, shaving, applying make-up, drying, combing and styling hair.

Usage patterns:

- Frequently used by a number of people at a time.

Relationship to
Other Areas:

Close to Bedrooms.
Not directly accessible from Kitchen/Dining or Living areas.

Size:

2.1 x 2.6m

Finishes:

Floor - ceramic tiles
Walls - ceramic tiles/cement rendered

Services:

Hot and cold water
Electricity

Fittings/Fixtures:

Shower, base, solid screen, and door
Bath
Handbasin or Vanity
(consider 2)
Mirror(s)
Towel rail(s)

2.3 .7 Separate WC No. 2.

Relationship to
Other Areas:

Close to Bedrooms.

See 2.3 .3 for Size, Finishes, Services, Fittings/Fixtures.

2.3 .8 Bedrooms

Activities:

Sleeping
Dressing - including dressing of babies and toddlers by adults or older children.
Clothes storage
Baby-care - nappy-changing etc.
Studying
Storage of books, toys, sports equipment etc.

Usage Patterns:

One or more Bedroom may be used by parent(s) and children. i.e. parents plus youngest one or two children. A bedroom may be used as a parents + childrens room, or a childrens room, at different times in the life of a family.

A childrens room may be occupied by two to four children of the same sex. Frequent accommodation of visiting children, or single adults will be required.

HOUSING

Bedrooms (cont)

Ship to

as:

Close to Bathroom and 2nd W.C.

ntal Issues:

- Protect from summer heat.
- Maximize winter solar access.
- Maximize natural ventilation.

4.2 x 4.2m.

Floor: carpet

Walls: plastered/cement rendered brick or concrete block.

Electricity.

Fixtures:

Built in wardrobes.

Built in desks/dressing tables.

Living Area

arate room; an extension of the Kitchen/Dining area.

as:

Child recreation - watching TV, listening to music, playing.

Adult socializing - integrated with activities in Kitchen/Dining.

Large gatherings - dining/socializing using combined Living/Kitchen/Dining areas.

Ship to

as:

Adjacent to Kitchen/Dining.

Close to Separate WC No. 1.

ntal Issues:

- Maximize solar access in winter.
- Maximize natural light and ventilation.
- Maximize visual access to outside
- Allow walls to outside to be opened up.
- Protect against intrusion of insects and dust.

4.2 x 4.8m.

Floor: vinyl tiles or carpet?

Walls: plastered/cement rendered brick/concrete block.

Electricity.

Fixtures:

Heat source - open fire, or
- slow combustion heater, or
- other

ABORIGINAL HOUSING
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2.3 .10 Verandah

Refer to 2.3 .5 for Activities, Usage Patterns, Environmental Issues and Finishes.

Relationship to
Other Areas:

Direct access to Living or
Kitchen/Dining or Laundry.

Size:

2.4m minimum clear dimension.

2.3 .11 Sleep-outs

Refer to 2.3 .5 for Environmental Issues and Finishes.

Activities:

Guest accommodation.

Usage Patterns:

The number of guests, the number of each sex, and their length of stay cannot be predicted. The space should therefore be flexible and comfortable enough to provide short or long term accommodation for up to ten adults.

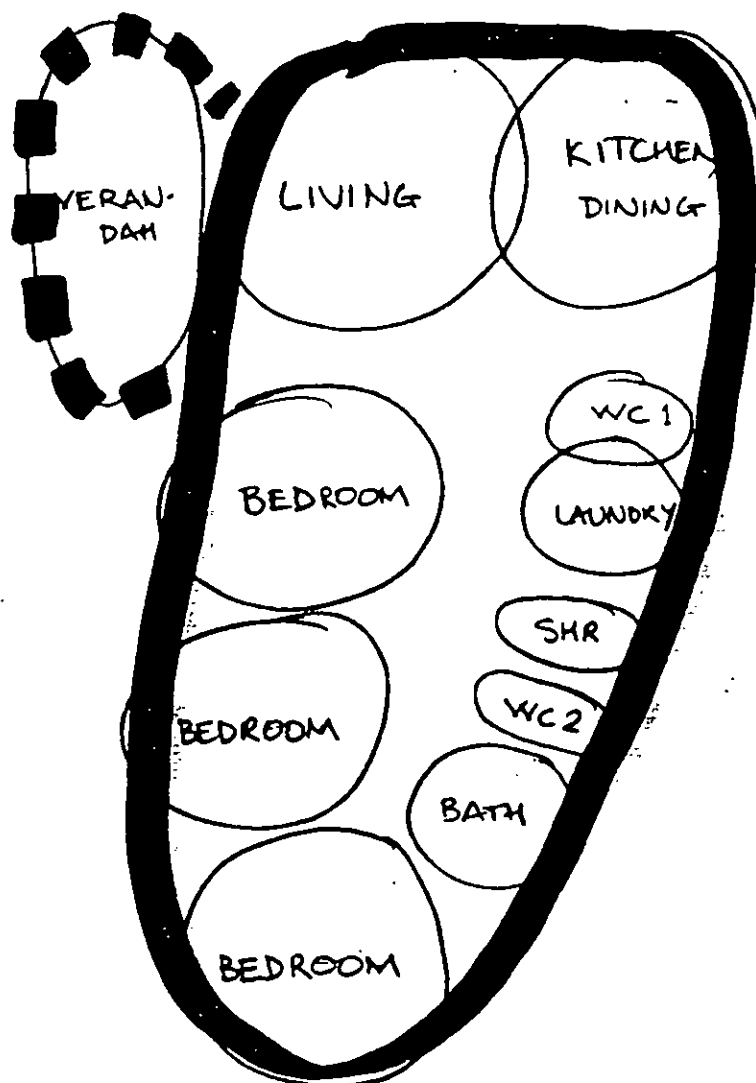
Relationship to
Other Areas:

Close to Bedrooms.
Close to Bathroom and Separate WC (2)
OR
Close to Shower and Separate WC (1).

Size:

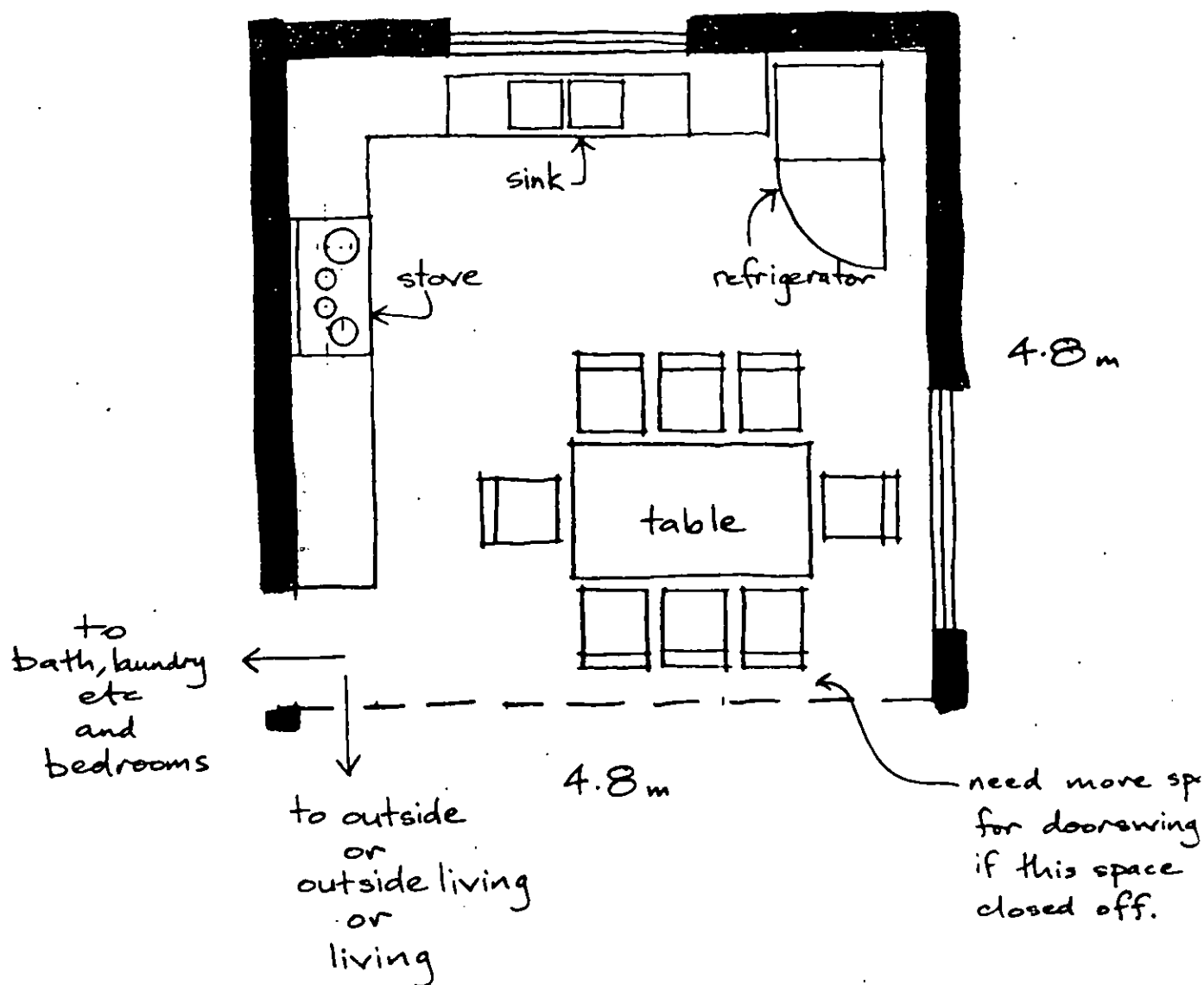
Minimum clear dimension = 2.4m.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING
BRIEF



"SMALL HOUSE"-RELATIONSHIPS

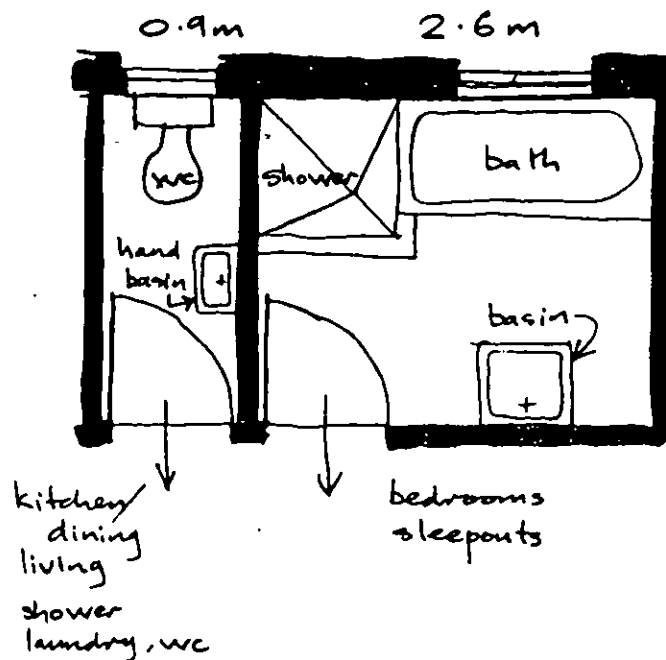
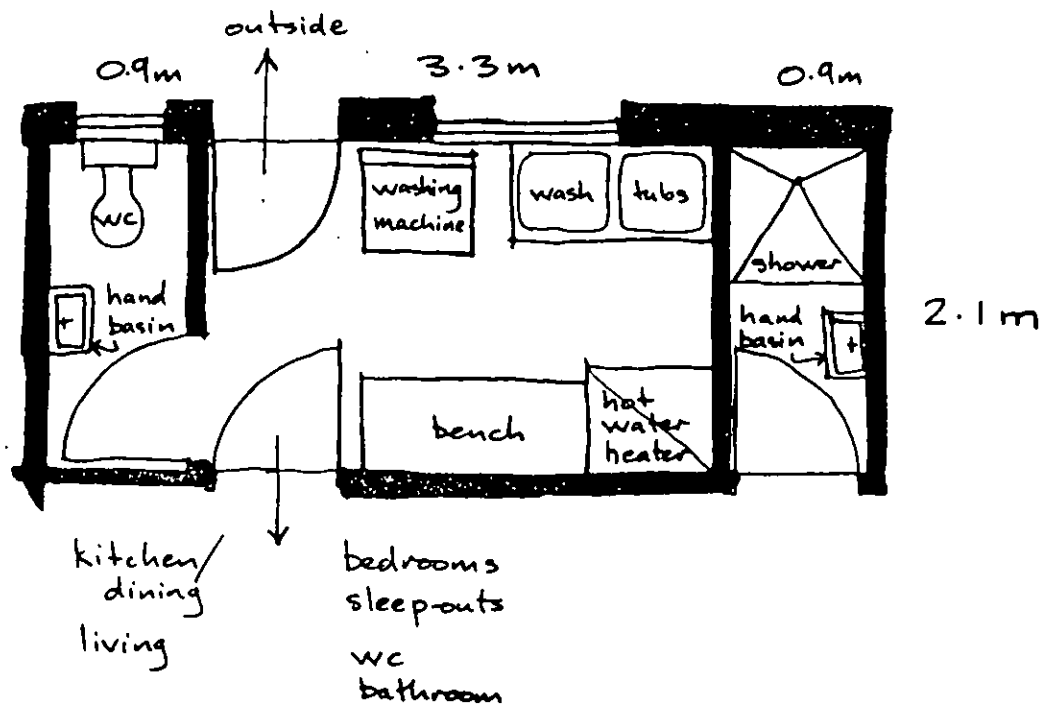
ABORIGINAL HOUSING BRIEF



KITCHEN/DINING

1 METRE

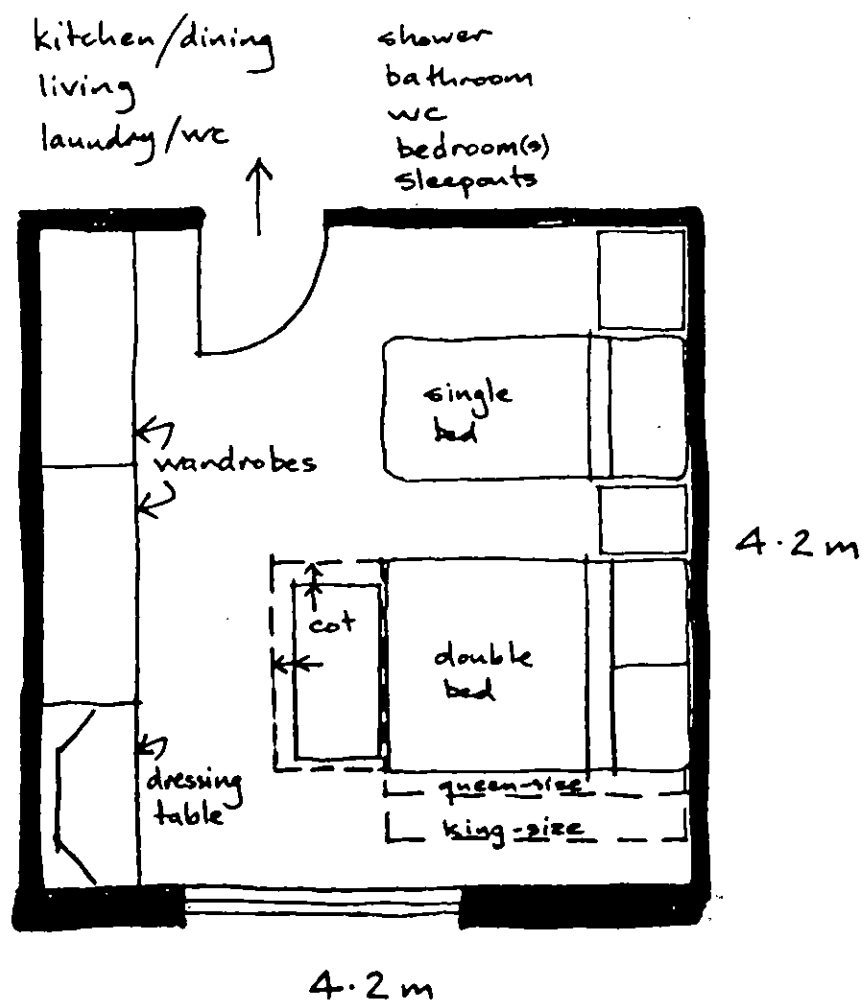
ABORIGINAL HOUSING BRIEF



WC'S, LAUNDRY, SHOWER, BATHROOM

1 METRE

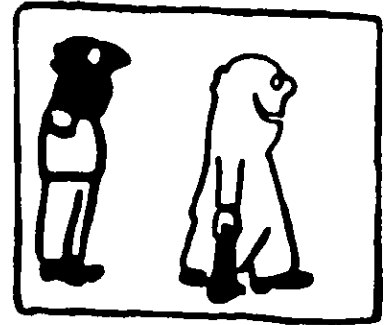
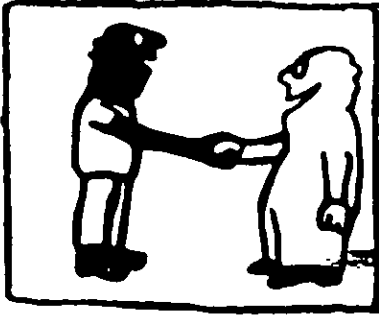
ABORIGINAL HOUSING
BRIEF



PARENTS' BEDROOM

1 METRE

SOCIAL ASPECTS



As the Department of Housing takes steps to overcome the appalling housing conditions of Aboriginies in N.S.W. a number of related issues have emerged which require the same level of priority, and must be addressed in unison with our programme. Health, Education, Employment, Income Security and The Extended Family all contribute in varying degrees to inadequate/poor living conditions, be they on reserves or in townships.

HEALTH

In many instances major services (water and sewerage) or the lack of retard attempts to alleviate health problems such as hepatitis, diarrhoea, dermatitis and other related conditions.

Alcohol abuse or misuse also contributes to problems which have far reaching effects and may lead to child abuse and neglect.

Many reserves are situated outside town limits, they have predominatly, unsealed roads, no kerb and guttering and as a result, in the wet seasons become quagmires and in the dry, dust bowls. This leads to ear, nose and throat problems as well as trachoma.

EDUCATION

This issue not only concerns the young but covers a whole spectrum of learning.

If young Aboriginies are to achieve the basics for future life, they must have access to a safe non-threatening environment where they are encouraged to strive to reach their personal best.

As many older people have a minimal education, steps must be taken to ensure they acquire skills which will enable them to survive in society.

EMPLOYMENT

Many Australians are unemployed but the level of unemployment amongst Aboriginies is far higher than any other population group, and in some communities reaches 95%.

This being the case, then an approach of "Beneficial spare time consumption" should be looked at.

In this, the benefits gained are not only to the individual but the community as a whole, and may take in such activities as market gardening, artifacts manufacturing construction of play areas and home maintenance.

As we begin to build dwellings, local unemployed or trained people should have the opportunity at gaining employment and training through our programmes, this would have the benefits of lifting the self-esteem of long term unemployed and a sense of pride in the dwellings built.

As well, local communities would gain an economical boost as a cash flow would be created.

INCOME SECURITY

As a huge proportion of the Aboriginal population are reliant on Social Security Benefits (Supporting Parents Benefits, Unemployment Benefits and Pensions) there is, in many communities on two pay periods per month.

During these binge and drought periods many events which have been publicised in the media have occurred. These periods have become most unproductive and visits have had to be ^{scheduled} off pay weeks so that community consultations could occur.

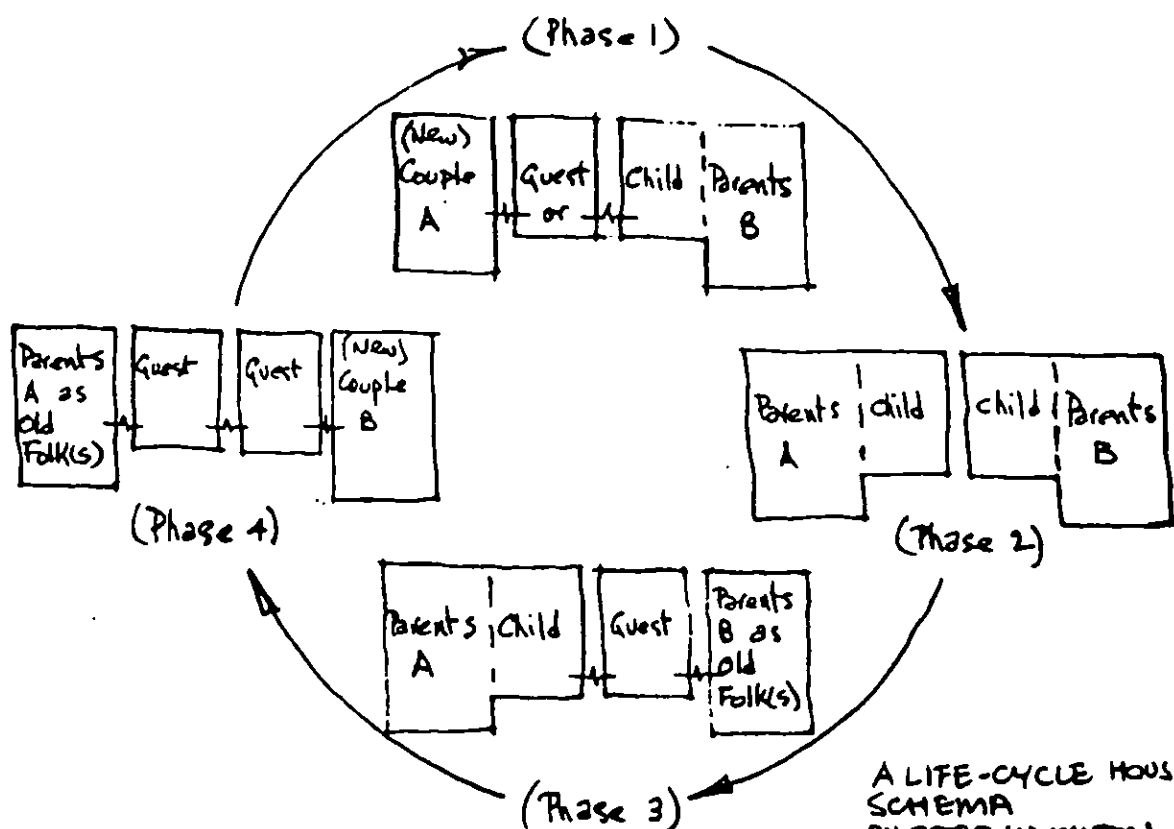
Though there is a level of income security the recipients do not gain enough to allow them the opportunity to live independently.

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

Whether it be traditional or contemporary this phenomenon does exist and we, within our programme must make allowances so that if families or communities wish to maintain this style of living they may.

In many instances, because of the type of dwelling provided overcrowding occurs. Therefore, when consultations are held each situation requires an individual approach so that self-determination is achieved.

Numerous communities have indicated they require single parent accommodation and within communities this is a recognition, of the problems extended families may establish.



HOUSING AND HEALTH



HOUSING OF ABORIGINES IN NEW SOUTH WALES IN 1976 AND ITS RELATION TO THEIR HEALTH

Paper by M. Dowling and J. Ward (Dr.)

NOTE:

The attached paper was prepared ten years ago and is a seminal work on housing-related health issues.

The paper is highly critical of N.S.W. Housing Commission policy at that time and makes several suggestions for improvement. With the current "Homes on Aboriginal Land" programme gathering momentum, it is highly recommended reading for the task ahead.....

COL JAMES

Housing of Aborigines in New South Wales in 1976 and its Relation to Their Health

M. Dowling and J. Ward

1. Summary

Aborigines in New South Wales do not enjoy the quality of physical and mental health enjoyed by white Australians.

One of the factors responsible for the high level of Aboriginal ill health is the housing and environmental conditions in which Aborigines in New South Wales are forced to live, particularly on Reserves.

Reserves in New South Wales are owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust which receives little funding with which to improve conditions.

The main Aboriginal housing programme in New South Wales is that of the Housing Commission. The programme is inadequate in extent, but in addition, some of its policies are not in accord with the life-style and expressed needs of Aborigines.

An alternate system to urgently improve the housing and environmental conditions of Aborigines in New South Wales is required. This system must retain social relations within communities and restore pride and self-reliance. The development of an economic base for the community must be an integral part of the housing programme.

2. Introduction

The level of physical and mental ill health of Aborigines in New South Wales is unacceptably high. Aboriginal children are admitted to hospital 4-8 times as frequently as white children in the same towns. (1,2) Compared with the white population, Aboriginal children in New South Wales are low in weight and height (1,3,4) and suffer high levels of ear disease and hearing loss, (1,10) gastro-intestinal disease including malabsorption, (1,4,5,6,7) anaemia (8,9) and dental disease. (11,12)

Aboriginal adults suffer higher levels of alcohol and analgesic abuse, anaemia, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. (1)

3. The Factors Responsible for the High Level of Aboriginal Ill-Health in New South Wales

One of the causes of the unacceptably high level of ill health is the social psychology of Aborigines - a complex syndrome but a direct and predictable result of the last 180 years of Aboriginal European contact, marked as it was by oppression (often violent), exploitation, institutionalisation on missions and reserves, ethno centrism and racism. The inevitable results of this experience are feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, apathy, frustration and hostility. Preventive health practices have little meaning under these conditions, and health services (always white-dominated) are poorly utilised.

Some situations related to housing are perpetuating this social psychology. One of these is the "ghetto-type housing settlement" in which Aboriginal families are crowded together in identical sub-standard dwellings in an area isolated from the town. Included in this category are West Brewarrina, Greenhills at Kempsey, Mehi Crescent in Moree, Box Ridge at Cereki, The Mission at Wilcannia, Three Ways Bridge at Griffith and Namitjira Avenue in Darlington.

The quality of the environmental conditions reinforce daily the Aboriginal's feeling of himself as inferior. Lack of adequate washing facilities has forced many young girls to give up jobs in town because of the difficulty of keeping uniforms clean. They are ashamed of being regarded as "a dirty Aborigine".

Another important cause of the high level of Aboriginal ill health is the housing conditions per se. A housing survey carried out by the field staff of the Aboriginal Health Section of the Health Commission of New South Wales in March, 1976, revealed that more than 2,000 families (50% of the Aboriginal population of New South Wales) live in housing conditions that are detrimental to physical and social health and would be unacceptable by standards normally applied to the white population.

4. Details of Housing Conditions

The housing conditions are characterised by overcrowding, unsafe or inadequate water supplies and waste disposal systems, and poor facilities for food storage.

Examples of overcrowded situations are:-

- (a) Wilcannia Mission consists of 10 tiny three bedroom houses each bedroom being 10' x 8'. In these 10 houses live 20 families at an average density of 12 persons per house i.e. at least 2 per bed.
- (b) In Namitjira Avenue, Dareton, 18 families live in 12 houses at an average density of 8.5 persons per house.
- (c) At Murrin Bridge, 260 people live in 28 three bedroom houses at an average of 9 per house.
- (d) At Moree, the 36 houses at Mehi Crescent, contain an average of 10.5 persons per house and the 28 houses at Stanley Village, an average of 9.5 per house.
- (e) At Toomelah, 32 families live in 28 tiny two bedroom houses at an average of 10 per house.
- (f) At Nanima, 56 adults and 108 children live in 17 three bedroom houses at an average of 10 per house.
- (g) At Gingie Reserve, Walgett, 158 people live in 12 three bedroom houses at an average of 13 per house.
- (h) On Cabbage Tree Island, 14 houses contain 131 persons.

This overcrowding is entirely due to lack of available housing. At the moment there are 551 Aboriginal families in rural New South Wales on Housing Commission applications lists. Even this number represents only a proportion of those families in urgent need of adequate housing (approx. 2,000).

In country areas of New South Wales (i.e. excluding Sydney,

Newcastle and Wollongong) there are at least 200 families without running water to their dwellings. They are forced to carry water which is then stored in large drums often in the sun.

This water becomes easily contaminated and, of course, families are reluctant to waste it on washing. The water supplies for Murrin Bridge and Wilcannia are unsafe. At Wilcannia the water comes straight from the river without treatment. White families have tank water for drinking and boil the river water if the tank runs dry. The majority of Wilcannia's Aboriginal population have no access to tank water and poor facilities for boiling the river water.

A recent laboratory analysis of the water supply for Murrin Bridge which also comes direct from the river without treatment revealed a heavy bacterial contamination by the domestic and wild animals which live along the river bank.

Human waste disposal services are designed in general, for communities living at an average density of 4-6 persons per dwelling. I have already described the density of living of some Aboriginal communities the mean for the State being between 7-8 persons per dwelling.

The importance of this high occupancy rate per dwelling includes:-

- (a) Households with a pan collection system use two or more pans per week. As these are collected only weekly, one or more full pans lie in the sun (often without lids) for several days.
- (b) Septic systems are often inadequate to cope with the load and frequently become blocked and overflow. Faecal matter teeming with worm eggs then lies on the ground.

Aboriginal communities rarely enjoy sewerage because the community has been placed some distance from town.

5. The Relationship between Housing and Health

The relationship between housing for Aborigines in New South Wales and their health is complex but includes the following:-

- 5.1. Overcrowding leads to the constant presence of a pool of infecting agents that are responsible for respiratory, ear, eye, gastro-intestinal and skin infections and infestations which together comprise most of the ill health of Aboriginal children.

Transfer of infection from one child to another is unavoidable when two or more share the same bed. After treatment a child returns to this environment to be immediately re-infected.

- 5.2. Overcrowded conditions are noisy and make sleeping difficult.

There is little privacy which strains marital relations and inhibits breast-feeding especially

in young mothers who live with brothers and uncles.

- 5.3. A lack of hot running water makes the preparation of sterile artificial milk difficult, an important factor in the high incidence of gastro-enteritis in young children. Skin infestations such as lice and scabies frequently become secondarily infected if bathing is infrequent.
- 5.4. Heavily contaminated water supplies such as Murrin Bridge and Wilcannia are a key factor in the high incidence of infectious diseases among children. This accounts for the fact that Murrin Bridge children spend 9 times as long in hospital each year as their white counterparts in town.
- 5.5. The absence of a facility for storage of perishable food reduces the amount of meat and fresh fruit and vegetables brought into the home. It necessarily increases the consumption of tinned and packet foods.

It increases the amount of damage being done by the decreasing incidence of breast-feeding and the corresponding increase in the incidence of bottle-feeding. Bottle-feeding may be safe in a house with electricity and hot water but can be extremely dangerous in the housing conditions of many Aboriginal families.

- 5.6. Both gastro-enteritis and hepatitis can be caused by children playing in the vicinity of uncovered sanitary pans or faecal material lying in yards. The high incidence of worms is also related to these conditions.
- 5.7. Living in these conditions is degrading, but in addition the constant illness among the children places extra psychological stress on mothers. Most mothers would have at least one child ill all the time. The poor physical facilities encourages doctors to hospitalise children for minor illness and in many cases contributes to the removal of children by the Welfare authorities.

The absence of storage space (shelves, cupboards etc.) means that false teeth and glasses are easily broken and that tablets and medicine (including oral contraceptives) are often lost or damaged.

- 5.8. For most Aborigines in New South Wales their social relations with other Aboriginal people are the most important aspect of their life.

In the more traditional communities in New South Wales the houses are placed so that families come into close contact only with relatives or close friends and can avoid contact with non-relatives.

Ignorance of the importance of social relations for Aboriginal people in the planning of all

housing programmes to date - missions, reserves, Protection Board Settlements, Housing Commission estates - has contributed greatly to the social destruction of Aboriginal life-style.

6. What is Wrong with the Current Housing Programmes in New South Wales

6.1. It is inadequate in extent.

In February, 1977, the Housing Commission were holding 551 applications from Aboriginal families that is about one quarter of the number of families in need of adequate housing.

In the 24 months, January 1975 - February 1977 the Housing Commission completed 420 houses and construction is currently proceeding at about 220 per year. This will barely account for the number of new families which form each year and will make little impact on the backlog of 2,000 families.

6.2. It is not meeting the needs of a large number of Aboriginal families.

6.2.1 Although there are about 2,000 families living in overcrowded or sub-standard housing conditions the Housing Commission held only 422 approved applications and 169 applications for review.

Some aspects of the Commission's activities are unfortunately discouraging Aboriginal people from applying. These include:-

- the absence of any Aboriginal involvement in decisions such as suitability of families for housing. An application for housing by an Aboriginal family is examined by a committee consisting of a representative of the Minister for Housing, a representative of the R.S.L., a representative of the Local Council and a woman (often in country areas nominated from the C.V.A.).
- delays in provision of housing which are not explained to the family concerned. The family is forced to "pester" the office (often by phone) to receive any information.
- the secret nature of priority lists.
- the absence of any concessions to cultural differences between Aboriginal and white families in the design and construction of houses.
- the feeling of powerlessness in the face of what Aborigines see as the total and arbitrary power of the Commission
- the lack of understanding on the part of some local officers of the social problems

faced by many Aboriginal families.

6.2.2 Too many families are failing in their attempts to rehouse. The causes include the following:-

- due to inexperience families run up large electricity bills that cannot be met.
- families find it impossible to meet rents due to inexperience at budgeting or low (and often irregular) incomes.
- rent arrears amount due to sickness or unemployment because families are not aware of their rights
- families are unable to maintain Housing Commission standards because of inability to cope with intra-family stresses.

Often families then move back to unhealthy housing conditions. This produces a very dangerous situation because the family may have lost "the art" of living without adequate facilities. The children will have lost their resistance to contaminated water supplies and the family may have to move back into an already overcrowded situation.

6.3. The weakening of social relations within communities.

Some housing projects (both previous and current) have served or are serving to weaken the social relations within the Aboriginal community.

Some examples include:-

6.3.1 ghetto-type settlements such as West Brewarrina, Murrin Bridge, Namitjira Avenue, Purfleet, etc. in which social relations were completely disrupted; families were forced to live side by side with strangers; a total lack of privacy prevailed, etc.

6.3.2 dispersal of Aboriginal families throughout towns in a ratio of one Aboriginal family to every 10 white families (Government policy until 1974).

(Kamien (1) "found that 74% of all the Aboriginal women in Bourke suffering from an anxiety state had two white neighbours. 40% of these were definite in attributing their symptoms to the time of moving from the Reserve to town". He infers that "since they live in a state of virtual siege by their white neighbours who do not want them, and since they become isolated to a degree from their relatives and friends on the Reserve, it is not a great wonder that symptoms of anxiety and depression should manifest at this time").

6.3.3 the Family Resettlement Scheme funded by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs whereby families

from Wilcannia, Bourke. Murrin Bridge and other communities are provided with a house and job in Albury, Newcastle, Wagga and Tamworth.

- 6.3.4 the Housing Commission and the Aboriginal Housing programme which in effect encourages families to move to Dubbo, Wagga, Sydney, Mt. Druitt, Newcastle, Wollongong, Tamworth, Lismore, Casino and other "growth centres" if they are to have a realistic chance of obtaining a house.

To substantiate this argument Table 8 shows the housing needs among Aboriginal families in a number of New South Wales towns. Also shown is the average number of houses built or purchased under the H.F.A. or Housing Commission Programme since the Housing Commission of New South Wales took responsibility for Aboriginal housing in New South Wales in 1969. From these two sets of figures can be deduced the average number of years a family would have to wait for a house following application now.

TABLE 8

Community	Housing Needs	No. of Houses Built Since June 1969 or under Construction	Average No Built Per Year Since June 1969	No. of Years to House a Family Applying Today
Wagga Wagga	1	22	3	0.3
Albury	3	19	3	1.0
Manworth	5	24	3	2.0
Orange	4	16	2	2.0
Vollongong	13	48	7	2.0
Coffs Harbour	19	18	3	3.0
Lismore	4	9	1	4.0
Dubbo	25	39	6	4.0
Sydney/Mt. Druitt	210	279	39	5.0
Newcastle	23	32	5	5.0
Caree	10	12	2	5.0
Nowra	28	37	5	6.0
Kempsey	21	23	3	7.0
Armidale	30	31	4	7.0
Wellington	7	10	1	7.0
Collarenebri	9	10	1	9.0
Inverell	13	8	1	13.0
Narrandera	14	9	1	14.0
Griffith	16	8	1	16.0
Mungindi	10	4	0.6	17.0
Moree	75	28	4	18.0
Menindee	14	4	0.6	24.0
Wilcannia	63	13	2	32.0
Wee Waa	14	3	0.4	35.0
Condobolin	16	3	0.4	40.0
Brewarrina	43	7	1	43.0
Tingha	20	3	0.4	50.0
Murrin Bridge (Lake Cargelligo)	30	4	0.6	50.0
Bourke	52	10	1	52.0
Dareton	33	3	0.4	58.0
Enngonia	16	0	0	?
Bogabilla	30	0	0	?
Goodooga	44	0	0	?

The above table reveals a vast discrepancy between geographical distribution of housing needs and proposed supply. This is having several effects:-

- (a) people have realised that to obtain a house they have to move to a major town (Sydney, Mt. Druitt, Newcastle, Wollongong, Albury or Tamworth). They are in effect, being encouraged to move away from the community to which they have deep ties.
- (b) communities in which Aboriginal people have security and an identity are being broken up.
- (c) many families refuse to sacrifice the security of their community for the uncertainty of urban existence. These families continue to live in unhealthy environmental conditions.

The basic strength of Aboriginal communities rests in the solidarity of family ties. The weakening of this social structure removes the only remaining support of many Aboriginal people. Consequently it may have a devastating effect on the mental health of those affected.

6.4. The Neglected "Reserves"

All land that was designated Aboriginal Reserve is now owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust of New South Wales. The trust was formed in 1973 by the New South Wales Government. It is an elected body of 9 members responsible to the New South Wales Minister for Youth and Community Services. The Trust now owns and manages more than 400 houses, several hundred shacks and other temporary dwellings. In all, at least 6,000 Aborigines live in dwellings owned by the Trust. Almost all dwellings are sub-standard suffering from decades of neglect by all Governments. The legacy handed to the Trust consists of hundreds of poor quality overcrowded dwellings with unsafe or inadequate water supplies and waste disposal systems. Despite this enormous legacy the Trust received a mere \$108,000 in 1975/76 with which to effect improvements on Reserves. The New South Wales Government which formed the Trust and defined its role contributes only the cost of the Trust's administration. On the other the Commonwealth Government will not provide the Trust with adequate funding because it disagrees with the role of the Trust as defined by the New South Wales Government. In plain terms this means that Aboriginal children continue to suffer unacceptably high levels of ill health because the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments cannot agree as to the method of funding for urgent improvements in environmental conditions on Reserves.

6.5. Lack of Training for Aborigines Involved in Housing Associations

Throughout New South Wales, Aborigines are being expected to run complex organisations handling large amounts of money. Their tasks include mobilising an apathetic community avoiding intra-community faction fighting; writing submissions; bookkeeping; staff supervision and staff training. For these

difficult tasks they receive little or no training while the cost of an error may be delays or cessation of funding. The additional cost of failure will be loss of self-esteem and perhaps community ridicule.

7. What Type of Housing Programme is Required in New South Wales

7.1. Expenditure of \$10,000,000 annually for 6 years.

7.2. Expansion of the Housing Commission Aboriginal Housing programme to cope with all families who wish to move to areas with greater employment opportunities provided that:-

(a) Aborigines are represented on all selection committees

(b) A trained Resettlement officer (preferably Aboriginal) is appointed to each growth area to assist families to find employment, settle into schools, obtain furniture, etc.

(c) An Aboriginal is employed in the Head Office of the Housing Commission to liaise with Aboriginal applicants.

7.3. Abolition of the Aboriginal Family Resettlement Scheme provided the recommendations in 7.2 above are carried out. The assistance provided to families who are housed under this Scheme should be available to all Aboriginal families who move from a remote community to a major town or growth centre.

7.4. The development of alternative housing programmes to that implemented by the Housing Commission.

These alternative programmes should concentrate on communities in which the Housing Commission is reluctant to build or in which employment opportunities at the moment are poor and incomes correspondingly insecure. If possible these programmes should be administered by the Aboriginal Community (with on-going training) and will allow Aborigines to decide:-

- . the siting and distribution of houses
- . the design of houses
- . the material to be used

The community should be involved maximally in the building of houses, road and sewerage construction and all development involved with the housing project. Apart from community development this creates employment and training in skilled occupations.

In this way communities can design houses according to the rents they can reasonably afford. The rents of Housing Commission houses are unnecessarily high because of their complex design and construction. Many families would prefer a simpler design involving a lower rental.

7.5. An adequate training programme for Aborigines administering Housing Associations or other community housing programmes. This training programme should be on-going.

and not require long periods away from the community. Above all it must be relevant.

7. 6. Training for Aborigines in the principles of community development. Aborigines from all major communities should be provided with training in community development. This will include an understanding of the social psychology of Aborigines today in the light of the last 200 years history as well as personal and group motivation, principles of community mobilization & social change.
7. 7. All communities should be provided with a safe water supply a safe method of food storage and adequate waste disposal facilities as a matter of urgency.
7. 8. In each community involved in a major housing programme, allowance should be made for the employment of an Aboriginal counsellor if the Housing Association feels such a person is necessary to prepare families for re-housing and assist them after re-housing.
7. 9. Agreement should be reached as a matter of urgency, between the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments as to the role of the Aboriginal Lands Trust of New South Wales and the method of funding for improvements in housing and environmental conditions on Reserves.
7. 10. All housing programmes will be of little long-term benefit unless communities can be freed of their dependence on the Welfare system. For some communities this will mean an increase in employment opportunities for Aborigines but for many communities it will require the development of an alternative economic base outside the present free enterprise competitive system.

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