

25 July 2023

Strategic Policy and Priority Reforms  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Unit  
Department of Housing  
GPO Box 806  
Brisbane QLD 4001

**By Email:** [ourplace@chde.qld.gov.au](mailto:ourplace@chde.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: OUR PLACE: A FIRST NATIONS HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN 2024-2027**

The Real Estate Institute of Queensland (**REIQ**) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Our Place: A First Nations Housing And Homelessness Action Plan 2024-2027 Consultation Guide* (**Consultation Guide**) released by the Department of Housing (**Department**) on 12 June 2023.

We note the purpose of the Consultation Guide is to invite consultation on what matters should be included in the *Our Place: A First Nations Housing And Homelessness Action Plan 2024-2027* (**Our Place action plan**) to commence in 2024 and replace the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023* (**ATSIHAP**).

**Our proposals for collaboration**

The REIQ has a proud history of working collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing providers and supporting initiatives and programs focused on housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have also forged an excellent working relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland (**ATSIHQ**) since its inception in 2021.

We respectfully acknowledge the importance of feedback provided by ATSIHQ, First Nations persons and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing providers in this consultation process. The voices of First Nations persons should lead discussions on this issue.

As the peak body for real estate in Queensland, the REIQ's enduring purpose is to lead a sustainable industry which makes important contributions to government legislation and policy settings, and advocates for balanced regulations for the benefit of all stakeholders in the housing sector.

Our vision statement, for the real estate profession, extends our support and expertise beyond our membership to the broader real estate profession and community. We believe everyone should be able to make educated, informed decisions about buying, selling or renting property and business in Queensland.

The Our Place action plan provides a unique opportunity for the Queensland Government to work with ATSIHQ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing providers to support First Nations persons by facilitating initiatives designed to improve housing outcomes. The REIQ is eager to collaborate on and contribute to initiatives, where considered appropriate.

In the lead up to forming our response to the Consultation Guide, the REIQ recently met with ATSIHQ and we have agreed in principle to work together to develop and deliver co-branded property management and sales training and education programs.

## **Training for Property Managers**

As the peak body for real estate professionals in Queensland, the REIQ is well placed to collaborate with ATSIHQ to develop training for property managers working in both the private rental housing sector and the community housing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sectors, that will improve the experiences of First Nations persons renting in Queensland.

By developing this training together with a focus on cultural sensitivity and wellbeing, we can raise the standard of practice in the real estate sector to ensure property managers and salespersons have the skills and knowledge to service and support First Nations persons.

Additionally, to support the work of ATSIHQ, we suggest the Queensland Government consider investigating opportunities to help First Nations persons transition to home ownership, where appropriate.

## **Delivering real estate qualifications for First Nations persons**

We are also interested in the traineeship/training outcomes of the ATSIHAP. As identified in the Consultation Guide, obtaining qualifications and improving employability can significantly improve outcomes for First Nations persons.

We propose that consideration is given to how this initiative could be expanded in the Our Place action plan. As a Registered Training Organisation, the REIQ offers internationally recognised award-winning accredited VET courses that have employment outcomes in the real estate and housing sector.

A qualification in real estate can provide opportunities to work in a number of roles in the community, such as a property manager in a private agency or community housing provider, or as a salesperson or auctioneer. It is worth noting that property managers are in high demand across Queensland.

We propose that we work with ATSIHQ and the Queensland Government to deliver in-person courses for First Nations persons, including in remote and discrete communities across Queensland. The Queensland Government could, for example, implement a scholarship program under the Our Place action plan.

## **Other initiatives for the Our Place action plan**

The Consultation Guide notes that in 2021, 81% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland lived in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) dwellings. Since 2021, rental housing vacancy rates have consistently decreased, breaking records across the State.

In its *Policy Statement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing* published in May 2022 (**ATSIHQ Policy**), ATSIHQ noted that the lack of social housing and affordable housing options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander low-income earners has resulted in the use of boarding houses, caravan parks and tents as long-term shelter for some people. It was highlighted that in 2016, approximately 8,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland were experiencing homelessness and that since, there has not been any significant improvement<sup>1</sup>.

For the benefit of stakeholders providing feedback on the Our Place action plan, it would be advantageous for the Queensland Government to confirm if the level of housing delivered under ATSIHAP is considered adequate in the continuously declining housing market. If not, what improvements can be made to ensure a greater number of affordable houses in locations where they are needed can be delivered under the Our Place action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy Statement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing, ATSIHQ

We note ATSIHQ kindly provided a copy of their submission in relation to the Our Place action plan to our office in advance of consultation closing. We commend the dynamic and ambitious proposals of ATSIHQ to reform the First Nations housing framework in Queensland to deliver meaningful outcomes to First Nations persons.

We support and welcome the specific goals and housing outcomes outlined in the submission. In particular, we support:

- Outcome 3 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are connected with all relevant housing services to meet their housing needs;
- Outcome 5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are motivated to take responsibility for their own housing needs; and
- Outcome 6 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients implement personal housing advice that they have received about improving their housing circumstances.

We also support the proposal to improve tenancy sustainment as an identified service system enabler. We acknowledge the significant role of service providers in supporting tenancy sustainment and wellbeing. The REIQ strongly believes in this objective and has previously collaborated with the Tenancy Skills Institute in the development of training and education materials to support similar work focused on tenancy procurement and sustainment.

We also commend ATSIHQ for proposing robust actions to form the Our Place action plan and setting out a suggested design for the new action plan.

We are supportive of recommendation 8, that the Department of Housing develop and support the establishment of a First Nations Housing Service Centre Tenant Participation Program, that allows tenants to provide an opportunity to influence decisions about housing services that impact them.

We are also supportive of recommendation 14, for the Queensland Government to commit funding to ATSIHQ so it may continue its work, to inform policy settings and advocate on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing sector and First Nations persons.

## **Conclusion**

The REIQ supports tailored solutions for First Nations persons experiencing housing inequity including in remote and discrete communities across Queensland.

The REIQ recommends that a comprehensive consultation paper be released by the Queensland Government to articulate what is proposed to be included in the Our Place action plan, including identifying evidence-based outcomes that will be achieved by 2027.

If you would like to discuss the REIQ's submission on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Katrina Beavon, General Counsel of the REIQ on [kbeavon@reiq.com.au](mailto:kbeavon@reiq.com.au) or 3249 7303.

Yours Sincerely



Antonia Mercorella  
Chief Executive Officer