



# Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

## Forward

As we present the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan it is an exciting time in the social housing sector, with a new State Government direction for housing through the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017 – 2027 and the announcement of the Commonwealth Government's new national scheme, the National Housing Finance Investment Corporation (NHFIC), starting in July 2018. These significant policy directions will hopefully alleviate some of the pressures on the shortage for social housing options and availability. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures for 2011 identify that Far North Queensland is the 7th highest region for homelessness, out of 328 regions across Australia. First Nations peoples, women escaping domestic & family violence and young people are overrepresented in these figures and finding appropriate housing and sustaining these tenancies continues to be at the heart of our efforts. Our work with the Dignity First project to support homeless people has strengthened our commitment to respond to this issue in our region.

This Strategic Plan builds on a platform that has been focussed on growing the portfolio of properties, as the Company has not seen any significant growth in stock for at least the last four (4) years, despite growth in demand for housing in the region. The transfer of properties owned by housing providers and the local government, who are not seeking registration under the National Housing System, will hopefully be finalised in the near future and the focus will be on utilising reserves to build additional, appropriate and much needed housing stock. The development of a Business Development Plan highlights the priority to grow housing stock by 10 % over the duration of this Strategic Plan.

Our focus for this Strategic Plan is about sustaining and growing our business, about promoting connections and being innovative. We are confident that this Strategic Plan will continue to build on the valuable work being undertaken to support our tenants to ensure sustainability of their tenancies and to equip them with skills to achieve future housing stability and security. Acknowledging the unique and diverse profile of our tenants, we will look to further develop our Reconciliation Action Plan and build the capacity of all staff to respond to the needs of all of our clients.



**Mark Stallman**  
Chair



**Donna-Maree O'Connor**  
CEO





## About Access Community Housing Company

Access Community Housing Company (ACHC) began operations in 1991 and is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Today ACHC has a portfolio of approximately 570, approximately 70% of these properties being owned by the Queensland State Government, approximately 20% privately owned and the remaining properties are owned by Cairns Regional Council and Boulders Court Housing Company. Both the local government and Boulders Court Housing properties are in the process of being transferred to ACHC, as they did not seek registration under the National Regulatory System (NRS). ACHC is a Tier 2 provider under the NRS. ACHC operates a number of housing programs, including Long term housing, Community Rent Scheme (CRS) (transitional housing) and CMSU (Community Managed Studio Units). At any time there are approximately 1250 people living in ACHC properties.

Partnerships with State Government Departments particularly the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW), support and community services and organisations, real estate agents, property owners and contractors are essential to our ability to prioritise the needs of our tenants and to respond in a caring and timely manner. Events such as NAIDOC week, International Tenants' Day and Homelessness Week are events that are on our calendar each year and in 2017 ACHC launched its Reconciliation Action Plan to respond to the significant proportion of our tenants who are First Nations peoples. Our commitment to responding and supporting the diversity of tenants in culturally appropriate and respectful ways is at the basis of all interactions and actions. Our annual tenant survey continues to provide opportunity for feedback and for our tenants to have a voice about the services we provide.

The board of ACHC is a group of committed business and community members who oversee the governance and adherence to compliance for the company, along with providing expertise in a range of fields via sub committees of the board. These consist of the Finance and Risk Management Committee, the Building and Development Committee and the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.

## Profile of Cairns Properties

ACHC has properties from Mossman in the north to Babinda in the south with most properties in the Cairns City area. Cairns has a strong economic focus on tourism and the service sector which results in some employment being seasonal and casual. Cairns has traditionally had higher unemployment rates than the state average with the rate in December, 2017 being 5.9%. (Herron, Todd White, Cairns Watch Jan, 2018). Whilst housing prices remain stable, the rental market continues to be very tight or stressed. The vacancy rate for December, 2017 was 1.5% for houses and 1.5% for units, an overall vacancy rate of 1.5% (Herron, Todd White, Cairns Watch Jan, 2018).

The Register of Need, managed by the Department of Housing & Public Works continues to remain around 1600 applicants with little movement during the past year. The highest demand on the waiting list is for one bedroom properties but one of the challenging features is the length of time large families are waiting before they are offered larger properties. Larger properties with more than 3 bedrooms are scarce and this results in longer waiting periods for a house. Affordability in the private rental market continues to be a major issue.



Our Purpose

To improve people’s lives through the provision of housing and the assistance to sustain tenancies.

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Our Vision

To grow the stock of housing and build support systems for tenants in the Cairns community.

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Our Values

**Respectful.** We foster an environment of mutual respect, empathy and compassion for tenants, staff and all partners.

**Value People and Diversity.** We are a people-focussed organisation seeking to understand, value and respond to peoples’ diverse needs in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways.

**Accountable.** We are committed to honouring our promises and being responsible for our actions and behaviours.

**Fair and Just.** We will uphold high standards of fairness and integrity and deliver services that are inclusive and considerate of individual needs. We take responsibility for our decisions and actions and do what we say we will do.

**Flexible and Agile.** We manage change through adapting and innovating our practices to accommodate the diversity of needs and the unexpected requirements of our business.

Key Success Factors	Strategies	Connections & Partnerships	Innovation
Delivering Quality Housing Services	Regular inspections. Monitor tenant payments. Referrals and support. Tenancy engagement.	Support services and community groups. Contractors. Owners and real estate agents. State Government.	Enhance tenancy engagement, processes for maintenance and service standards to improve efficiency. Explore ideas for tenant training and support.
Growing our Portfolio	Implementation of the Development Business Plan. Undertake a building development utilising reserves.	DHPW, local council and Economic Development Qld to participate in future growth in social housing in the Cairns region.	New builds with effective design and new ideas. Mixed housing that includes social and affordable housing. Consideration of alternative models.
Effective Governance and Business Management	Board and committees to meet regularly. Review plans and actions to maintain financial viability. Source funding and business opportunities.	NRS. All levels of government and funding providers. Other housing providers and housing networks.	New ways of working and engaging that might include equity of properties and different funding models. Receptive to new business opportunities. Strengthen our focus on achieving housing solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Strengthening People and Culture	Recruit, recognise and retain quality staff. Support training, development and performance planning for all staff. Build a positive work culture.	Training providers and facilitators. Support services and community organisations. Social Service and housing networks. Indigenous agencies and networks.	Implement strategies to recruit First Nations peoples and grow the diversity of the staff profile. Implement an annual employment engagement survey. Analyse staff turnover to identify areas for improvement.
Efficiency through agile systems and processes	Identify system and technological solutions that enhance delivery of services.	Other housing providers and peak housing bodies. Information and system providers.	Future proofing our organisation by examining new and improved options and ideas. Look for new and improved ways to inform the long term Strategic Asset Management Plan and financial forecasting.

# Key Success Factors

## 1

### Delivering Quality Housing Services

#### Actions:

- Conduct regular inspections on all properties (3 – 6 monthly) to ensure all properties are safe, secure and properly maintained.
- Deliver responsive, client focussed services to tenants, clients and partners.
- Work with owners and real estate agents to maintain the quota of CRS properties and build positive partnerships.
- Plan for the long term maintenance of state government properties to ensure their viability.
- Monitor rent and non-rent payments in a timely way to support tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- Work with tenants to ensure awareness and commitment to tenancy responsibilities.
- Make referrals to support agencies and connect tenants to the services they need to manage the range of challenges they face.
- Engage with tenants to develop skills, identify barriers and strengthen the local community.
- Conduct an Annual Tenancy Survey and use results to develop an action plan.

## 2

### Growing our Portfolio

#### Actions:

- Deliver on the Development Business Plan to grow the supply of social and affordable housing in Cairns.
- Seek opportunities and funding to expand the portfolio of properties.
- Work with government and the private sector to plan and progress the precinct development at Grove & Charles Streets.
- Engage with the Real Estate Sector to improve the commitment to social housing and maintain the support for transitional housing.
- Work with tenants to move through the continuum of housing options to relieve pressure on housing resources.

## 3

### Effective Governance and Business Management

#### Actions:

- Maintain strong corporate governance and operational performance.
- Ensure compliance with the National Regulatory System to maintain registration.
- Strengthen partnerships with all levels of government and identify funding opportunities.
- Grow the focus on business analysis to identify areas for improvement and growth.
- Promote and advocate for Housing & Homelessness issues and take opportunities to lead in this field.
- Implement and review the Reconciliation Action Plan 2017 - 2020.
- Adapt and operate within a policy environment, for example to achieve outcomes that are in the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2017.
- Review and revise planning tools to guarantee currency and flexibility.
- Enhance business planning, reporting and analysis.

## 4

### Strengthen People and Culture

#### Actions:

- Review organisational structure and skills to ensure the achievement of the strategic goals and outcomes.
- Recruit and train staff to ensure a capable, agile workforce.
- Promote diversity of staff and proactively recruit First Nations peoples.
- Build a positive organisational culture that is supportive of the Operational Principles and is adaptable to change.
- Provide training and support to staff following difficult and traumatic events.
- Grow sector links to participate in shared training opportunities across the sector.
- Establish clear accountabilities through performance planning and reviews.
- Update the Workforce Management Plan to ensure strategies to manage recruitment, leadership development and succession planning.

## 5

### Efficiency through agile systems and processes

#### Actions:

- Identify and implement system improvements that assist in achieving strategic goals and outcomes.
- Consider and employ technologies that support customer service and organisational performance.
- Review and analyse processes and systems to achieve consistency and efficiencies that will assist with planning and continuous improvement.
- Ensure induction and updates are provided to staff so that there is a thorough understanding of processes and procedures.