

The Great Australian Dream in Urban Indigenous Australia

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Abstract

'The Great Australian Dream' is a metaphor which refers to the expectation of home ownership which is general to mainstream Australian society. Indigenous Australians often hold no such expectation and are unfamiliar with the idea that it is every Australian's 'right' to own a home. Indigenous Australians' long experience of poverty and unemployment has served to prevent such expectations from arising.

This paper points out the contrasts between the housing careers of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous Australians. It seeks to explain these contrasts by examining housing ideologies among Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous housing ideologies concern rental housing, whereas non-Indigenous housing ideologies concern private home ownership. The housing ideal among Indigenous Australians is a public housing rental home because of the stability it offers through the longevity of the lease. Non-Indigenous housing ideologies devalue renting, regarding rental as appropriate for a particular time of life when people are 'just starting out', that is, during young adulthood. In the regard of non-Indigenous Australians the least reputable form of rental housing is public housing. The paper concludes by examining the particular welfare economics practiced among Indigenous household groups, in relation to Indigenous housing careers in the towns and cities of Western Australia.

Key words; Indigenous housing, Indigenous home ownership, housing ideology, Western Australia

The Great Australian Dream in Indigenous Western Australia

Introduction

This paper draws on five research projects on Indigenous housing and homelessness carried out by the author between 2007 and 2009 (Birdsall-Jones and Corunna 2008; Birdsall-Jones, Corunna and Turner forthcoming; Habibis and Birdsall-Jones forthcoming; McKenzie, Rowley, Brereton, Rhonda and Birdsall-Jones 2009; Memmott, Moran, Birdsall-Jones, Fantin, Kreutz, Godwin, Burgess et al. forthcoming). This body of research was carried out in Perth, the capital city of the State of Western Australia and in the northern coastal regional town centres of Carnarvon and Broome.¹

Methodology

All five of these research projects utilised qualitative methodologies. The Indigenous mobility research (Habibis and Birdsall-Jones forthcoming) employed a semi-structured interview technique. The data for the research into Indigenous home ownership on communal title lands (Memmott, Moran et al. forthcoming) employed a detailed, structure interview schedule designed to elicit understandings of home ownership, housing aspirations and basic concepts connected with a home mortgage. The research on Indigenous housing and homelessness (Birdsall-Jones and Corunna 2008; Birdsall-Jones, Corunna and Turner forthcoming) was carried out using the ethnographic interview. In these studies, the ethnographic interview means an unstructured interview focused on eliciting information that constitutes a cultural interpretation by the participant for the interviewer of his or her own story of housing and /or homelessness. Participants were recruited to these all five studies through a process of cumulative referral, often referred to as the 'snowball' technique.

A key feature of housing careers in Australian cities and towns has traditionally been the strong correlation between life stage and dwelling type (Beer, Faulkner and Gabriel 2006). The non-Indigenous expectation in general terms has been one of a progression from rental to purchase associated with increasing household income over the life course. *Yearbook Australia 2007* summarises the expected course of the average housing career as follows:

As people progress through different life cycle stages and their family structures and financial situations change, so do their housing needs and preferences. For young people leaving their parental home, a typical life experience with housing might begin with renting a small flat or unit for themselves or sharing a group house, then moving on to renting an apartment or house with their partner while saving for a deposit on their first home. Many couples will buy their first home and pay off a considerable part of their mortgage before having their first child. Then, as the number and age of children increase, many will upgrade to a larger house. After the children have left home, most home owners will probably remain in the same home at least until retirement, by which time most will own their home outright. After

¹ This discussion is also supported in a general way by research documenting Indigenous social, economic, and political organisation in the context of native title research carried out between 1998 and 2004 (Birdsall-Jones 2001; 2002; 2004)

retirement, some will change location, and in doing so a few will choose a smaller home, possibly a unit in a retirement village. Later, some who are too old or frail to live in their own home will move into cared accommodation (Trewin 2007 233).

This is very much an idealised portrait of non-Indigenous urban housing careers and as such it conveys the generally accepted view of housing as a consumable commodity in terms of price, quality of the dwelling and quality of the location. In reality, however, non-Indigenous housing careers tend to vary more widely than this profile would suggest. For example, young people are living with their parents for longer, partnering later, and buying their first homes later. Some follow other paths entirely and may choose not to enter into home ownership at all (Beer, Faulkner and Gabriel 2006). This is to some extent explained by the (until recently) rising cost of home ownership over the last decade and a half.

According to the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), Australia has been experiencing a national 'land boom' (Australian Local Government Association 2007). In its *State of the Regions Report: 2006–07* the ALGA pointed out that over the nine years from 1996 to 2005 the value of land in Australia tripled, and the increase was led by residential land values. The report points out two things of significance: first, that this was not due to an increase in the land available; and second, that capital gains were made on land, not buildings. Correspondingly, housing affordability in 2006 reached its lowest point since 1990 (Real Estate Institute of Australia 2006) and changed little over the succeeding two years (Real Estate Institute of Australia 2008a; 2008b). Despite the worsening situation of low affordability until the onset of the global financial crisis in late 2008, it is still the case that non-Indigenous housing careers in Western Australia are dominated by ownership rather than rental (see Table 1). As of the last census, 70 per cent of non-Indigenous Western Australian households either owned their own homes outright or were owners with a mortgage. 26% are renters and of this proportion, 42% rent privately. Only 15% of non-Indigenous Western Australians are public housing renters.

Non-Indigenous Western Australians tend to conform to the long established pattern of being consumers of housing with a range of choices. This range has undeniably been modified by the recently prevailing conditions of low affordability. However, choice is still demonstrably a part of the non-Indigenous pattern of housing consumption. This is in direct contrast to the Indigenous experience of housing.

In Western Australia, 62 per cent of Indigenous households rent their homes and 30 per cent are home owners or are purchasing their homes (Table 1). This contrast of tenure types extends into rental tenure. 40 per cent of all Indigenous renters in Western Australia rent their homes either from The State Department of Housing (DOH) (25 per cent) or from a community housing agency (11 per cent). About 20 per cent of Indigenous renters are renting privately. Indigenous housing careers are therefore dominated by rental, not ownership, and are characterised by the experience of public rather than private rental.

Insert Table 1 about here

Ideologies of Housing

Table 2 shows the differences in home ownership rates among the states and the Northern Territory by Indigenous status. The Northern Territory has the lowest home ownership rates in Australia for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In the case of non-Indigenous people this may be due to the higher rate of employer supplied housing in the Northern Territory. In the case of Indigenous people the reasons for the low rate of home ownership may be due to the greater number of remote communities on communally owned land. This title makes private home ownership somewhat complicated (Memmott, Moran et al. forthcoming). Tasmania has the highest rate of Indigenous home ownership nationwide, and the reasons for this would bear looking into. In New South Wales and Tasmania, the rate of Indigenous home ownership has dropped between the censuses. In all other states and in the Northern Territory, the rate has risen by an average of nearly 5%. The primary Federal vehicle for Indigenous home ownership promotion is Indigenous Business Australia which provides home loans to Indigenous home purchasers. All states and territories have Indigenous home ownership programs as well. In Western Australia, Keystart, an assisted purchase scheme, is marketed to Indigenous people through the Aboriginal Housing Scheme.

Insert Table 2 about here

An emphasis on Indigenous home ownership has been a part of Indigenous policy for many years, and has remained a part of the Indigenous policy platforms of both the present and the previous Federal governments (Macklin 2008; Northern Territory. Local Government Association of the Northern Territory 2006; Oxfam Australia 2007). The reason that governments seek to foster Indigenous home ownership is partly because home ownership is regarded as an indication of personal wealth.² Greater rates of Indigenous home ownership are therefore taken as an indicator of increased standards of living among Indigenous people. As well, home ownership is viewed as indicating Indigenous participation in the national economy. While this view is often vague in terms of its specifics, the general view of successive governments clearly assumes that the connection exists. One of the generally agreed effects of home ownership, however, is that it results in the inter-generational transfer of wealth. In the absence of greater representation of home ownership among Indigenous Australians, this is certainly one means of economic improvement from which most Indigenous people are cut off (Peterson and Taylor 2005).

Since Richards' (1990) work in Victoria nearly twenty years ago, there has been no research specifically examining Australian housing ideologies (Richards 1990). With regard to Indigenous housing ideologies, this subject formed a small part of the larger study into Indigenous housing careers carried out by Birdsall-Jones and Corunna (2008) in Western Australia. It must be said however, that housing ideologies generally have not been well studied recently, despite the important role such ideologies play in the consumption of housing. As well, there is little recent international research in this field. There is Gurney's research concerning housing ideologies in Britain which resonates strongly in cultural terms with the non-Indigenous Australian born population that Richards' work concerns and this has proved useful in providing greater depth to the existing understanding (Gurney 1999).

² The Australian Census does not collect statistics on accumulated savings and other resources and so home ownership has become a 'proxy' indicator in this regard (Altman and Hunter 2003). It is possible that the vagueness of representations of the relationship between home ownership and economic participation is a reflection of the lack of detailed information in this field.

In terms of the commonsense ideology of wider Australian urban society, home ownership is believed to confer higher moral standards on account of the responsibility involved in home ownership as opposed to rental. Correspondingly, it is believed that the acceptance of greater responsibility which accompanies home ownership will lead to higher standards of home care and maintenance than are considered to exist among renters (Gurney 1999; Richards 1990). Finally, there exists additional prejudice against renters who are public housing tenants (Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson and Baum 2004). It is not difficult to imagine how all this might play itself out in regard to Indigenous public housing tenants. For one thing, it accounts for the urgency which governments express in promoting the idea that Indigenous people in Australia's cities and towns must move from public rental to private rental and from private rental to home ownership.

Counting the Indigenous homeless

Broadly speaking, Indigenous housing careers present a mirror image of non-Indigenous housing careers. This reversal of fortunes extends to homeless careers as well. This is indicated by a comparison of the numbers of Indigenous and other Australian born Western Australians seeking the services of the Commonwealth funded Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). Table 3 shows that the numbers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian born SAAP clients are very similar, as are the respective percentages they form of all WA SAAP clients. However, Indigenous SAAP clients form 6.5% of the total Indigenous population group aged 10+ years, and 3.0% of the WA Australian-born 10+ population. Non-Indigenous Australian born SAAP clients form 0.3% of the Australian-born WA population of this group of and nearly 65% of the total Australian-born WA population.

Currently, families constitute the fastest growing component of the national homeless population (Noble-Carr 2006). Indigenous families may become homeless through a variety of circumstances which include family or neighbourhood violence, poverty, loss of access to a dwelling, reasons associated with substance abuse and/or mental illness, and in the case of women and their children, domestic violence. Indigenous women and their children constitute the most frequent users of SAAP services, with the Northern Territory and Western Australia constituting areas of particular concern in this regard (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004; 2008).

Insert Table 3 about here

While the purpose of SAAP is to assist the homeless, SAAP clients are not included in the homeless count in the national census because, if they have become SAAP clients, they are counted as housed. We are therefore dependent on the national census for the enumeration of the Indigenous homeless in Australia's cities and towns, and this presents some difficulties. Unfortunately, the 2006 census data on homelessness was not available at the time of writing. Comments here are therefore restricted to the 2001 census.

Some of the difficulties in the enumeration of the homeless population are inherent in the definition of that category for census data collection. Prior to the 1996 census, only people who were without shelter of any kind on census night could be picked up in the census as homeless. According the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003), it is likely that using this definition the census was able to account for only 14 per cent of homeless people. The balance of homeless people

were probably in short term accommodation with friends or family, in boarding houses, hostels, night shelters, refuges, or may have been in transit from one shelter on the way to looking for somewhere else. The 1996 census used categories differentiated according to 'absolute homelessness'; people living without a roof over their heads; and relative homelessness which was subdivided into three subcategories. These were adapted from the work of Chamberlain and MacKenzie (Chamberlain and MacKinzie 1992).

There is evidence that people experiencing housing shortages will refrain from participating in the census because they are currently solving the problem of shelter by increasing household occupancy rates in contravention of the conditions of rental leases. While it is not true that an individual's circumstances can be deduced from census data, the belief exists that one may endanger the security of existing shelter arrangements by honestly answering census questions in these regards. Recent research in Karratha indicates that this is not only a problem for Indigenous Western Australians. Non-Indigenous fly-in fly-out mine employees chose not to report their overcrowded housing conditions on the census forms for the same reason. These conditions are reflective of the severe shortage of housing in Karratha

Table 4 about here

Together, these issues make it difficult to adequately account for the homeless quantitatively. Qualitatively, published research in this field is available for NSW, QLD, and Vic (Hunter 1999; Memmott and Chambers 2005; Memmott, Long, Chambers and Spring 2003) In all other states and territories, only unpublished reports are available. There is, however, one thing that we can say about Indigenous homelessness and this concerns its significance in Indigenous housing careers. Unlike non-Indigenous housing careers, homelessness forms a common part of many Indigenous housing careers. The explanation for this close relationship between Indigenous housing careers and homelessness needs to be considered in the context of the Indigenous economy and housing careers.

Poverty Economics

Indigenous people are the most socially and economically disadvantaged definable group in Australian society, and this has always been the case (Australia. Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2003; 2005; 2007). Social housing therefore plays a vital role in improving the state and status of Indigenous people. Because the structural positioning of Indigenous people within Australian society is largely determined by a condition of poverty, and because of the generational nature of this position, it is not reasonable to view the Indigenous need for public housing in terms of the same paradigm as that of the more general need of low-income people in Australia. The longstanding generational character of Indigenous poverty has driven the correspondingly longstanding fact of Indigenous people's social exclusion from wider society. This social exclusion has enabled Indigenous people to undertake the continuous development of their culture in response to the economically, socially and politically excluded nature of their position in Australian society.

The fundamentals of Indigenous social organisation in the towns and cities have been well noted in the literature since the post World War II era (Barwick 1963; 1964; Beckett 1958; 1965a; 1965b; 1988; Calley 1969; Reay 1945; 1946; 1947; 1949; Reay and Sitlington 1948; Sitlington 1948). These fundamentals include the regulation of

most activities through kinship, the dominance of women in the context of social life and household economy, and a high rate of mobility among kin related households both within towns and among towns. Importantly, kin obligation exerts a strong cohesive force enabling urban Indigenous groups to maintain a high degree of solidarity over time and distance. To a greater or lesser extent, these fundamentals are shared by all Australian urban Indigenous groups. Owing to the longstanding, generalized inability of the Australian economic and social systems to permit their active inclusion, Indigenous people have achieved an indirect economic engagement with the Australian economy and have subverted the need to engage socially and politically with Australian society. An indication of the political disengagement of Western Australian Indigenous people is the problem of recruiting them to the electoral role since the dissolution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC). According to one regional director of the Australian Electoral Commission, it is now very difficult to get Indigenous Western Australians registered to vote because the ATSIC elections no longer take place (McKenzie, Rowley, Brereton, Rhonda and Birdsall-Jones Forthcoming). With no Indigenous representation, Indigenous people seem to see little point in exercising their vote.

Indigenous Housing Careers

The first move in an Indigenous housing career is likely to be an application to DOH. Waiting times for DOH housing are long and have been so for a number of years (Gordon, Hallahan and Henry 2002). According to Indigenous DOH tenants surveyed in Perth, Carnarvon and Broome (Birdsall-Jones and Corunna, 2008), waiting times are between two and five years on the ordinary list. Some report having been on the priority list for over a year. Unfortunately, but understandably, single young adults are not a housing priority for the public housing provider and waiting times will be correspondingly longer. As increasingly happens in the wider society, young adults will remain in the parental home because they cannot afford the cost of private rental. During this housing hiatus, the young adult will probably form his or her first conjugal partnership and the young couple will live in the home of either set of parents. They will also probably have their first child in the parental home and on this basis make a new application to DOH. With the two to five year waiting list, the young family may include two or more children by the time they obtain their first home. The increase in the size of the young family puts added pressure on the parental home, even if the couple's parents are not already housing other kinfolk in similar circumstances. If they are, then the housing stress increases.

At this point, should we regard the young couple as homeless? Or should we wait until the situation in the parental home becomes too stressful to bear, and they leave to find housing with other relations, or perhaps live with their children in their car? DOH considers both these situations as homelessness and under these circumstances, the young couple is eligible to go onto the priority housing list. It may still take more than a year to obtain housing however, and they are not eligible for emergency housing if they are still living with family. There are those who have abandoned this overcrowded housing situation and sought shelter in a refuge in order to demonstrate to DOH that they are in crisis and in need of emergency housing. This doesn't necessarily work because crisis accommodation is one of the housing options that DOH applies in providing emergency housing (Western Australia. Department of Housing 2009).

Perhaps all will go well for the young couple, and they will obtain DOH housing within a period of time that elapses before they find it necessary to enter the homeless state. With luck, they will remain in the DOH system, receiving transfers to larger housing as the size of their family increases. This depends on maintaining good standing with the public housing provider, and given the vicissitudes of Indigenous economic life, this may not be possible. At the very least, they will at various times need to provide housing to their needy kinfolk. If DOH decides that this results in contravention of the lease, it will be cancelled and the household may be evicted.

However, they may retain their good standing with DOH, retain steady employment, and succeed in obtaining a home loan, exiting the DOH system altogether. If they manage this, they will almost certainly never buy another home, unlike many of their counterparts in the wider urban society who will “upgrade” their home several times over the course of their housing careers. But they will, with good luck and planning, succeed in retaining their home until their deaths, and pass this asset on to their children, some of whom will go on to own their own homes.

In the context of urban Indigenous poverty economics, what is housing? It is shared space, and a shared resource. It is multi-sited, a network of related households each of which has a dwelling that serves as a container of resources, goods and relationships. Connected households represent mutual fallback points in times of crisis. It is easy to think that because one can read non-Indigenous urban systems in a way that makes it possible to find such characteristics within ‘our’ society that Indigenous society is just the same. It is not. The fundamentals of these two economic systems are far removed from each other. The wider Australian urban society embodies ideologies that are characteristically born out by our individual capacity to engage directly with the national economy through work. Those who fail to engage with the national economy in this way are often marginalized; the impoverished elderly, the disabled, the abused, and the mad. Indigenous urban society has developed ideologies that are realizable entirely within an Indigenous context and require no such direct engagement. Those who fail to engage with the national economy through work are not marginalized. The Indigenous world is socially and politically interconnected wholly within itself and among its various component parts. It is not easy for Indigenous people to become marginalized within their own world, though it does happen.

Overcrowding

Given that the signal characteristic of this socio-cultural system is inclusiveness, it is not surprising that the obligation of kinfolk to look after one another constitutes one of the most strongly held features of urban Indigenous culture and identity. Those who might otherwise be without shelter will often find accommodation with kinfolk. In this way, homelessness is distributed throughout the Indigenous community as those who have either lost their housing, or failed to acquire any, seek shelter with their relations. In this way, it is also hidden. In hiding the real incidence of homelessness, Indigenous homes are often subject to overcrowding. Indeed, overcrowding is often only a hedge against homelessness. International research experience shows that household overcrowding is a direct precursor to homelessness (Bolger 1996; Dehavenon 1996) and the Australian research confirms this (Birdsall-Jones and Corunna 2008; Memmott and Chambers 2005; Memmott, Long, Chambers and Spring 2003; Western Australia. Equal Opportunity Commissioner 2004).

An examination of the DOH Rental Policy Manual reveals that HomesWest has a number of policies which would appear to provide constructive ways of dealing with some of the issues which face urban Indigenous tenants arising either through poverty or through Indigenous socio-cultural organisation. With regard to overcrowding, for example, as long as the rent is paid on time, according to the occupancy rate, and the neighbours do not complain, DOH “will take no action” (Western Australia. Department of Housing 2009). In the opposite situation in which the occupancy level drops such that the home has two or more spare bedrooms, the public housing provider ordinarily requires the tenant to relocate to smaller premises. Relevant to this, the DOH Rental Policy Manual has a specific guideline catering for urban Indigenous families.

Cultural obligations (e.g. Aboriginal families may have periods of under occupancy however allowances must be made for families who may house extended family members at other times throughout the year) p.8 Tenancy Management Policy (Western Australia. Department of Housing 2009).

On one level, DOH has clearly responded to the socio-cultural needs of Indigenous Western Australians in these and other policies. Confusingly, these policy responses are not mirrored in the experience of Indigenous DOH tenants. This was confirmed in the Equal Opportunity Commission’s (EOC) report of its inquiry into public housing in Western Australia in 2004, *Finding a Place* (Western Australia. Equal Opportunity Commissioner 2004). It has been reconfirmed in the course of two major projects from the Housing and Urban Research Institute of Western Australia (Birdsall-Jones, Corunna and Turner forthcoming; Birdsall-Jones, Shaw, Corunna, Smart and Turner forthcoming; McKenzie, Rowley, Brereton, Rhonda and Birdsall-Jones Forthcoming). Indigenous tenants still report experience that suggests that officers of the public housing authority are not applying the policies according to the guidelines governing Indigenous socio-cultural concerns set out in DOH’s policy manuals. Data recently gathered indicates that the EOC has continuously worked with DOH to resolve these issues and has been instrumental in establishing forums in which local Indigenous communities can consult with DOH at the regional level. The EOC’s efforts are well recognised by Indigenous people.

Among the EOC’s findings and recommendations, DOH’s maintenance of its housing figures largely and reveals a disturbing picture of the state of Indigenous housing in urban Western Australia during the late 1990s and early 2000s (see also the forthcoming AHURI funded research reports cited above). The difficulty of getting maintenance carried out by DOH has become one of the dominant features of Indigenous housing careers. This is demonstrated in the striking similarity of Indigenous tenants’ representations of their maintenance problems, and also, the fact that the EOC’s recommendations in this regard still appear to be essential in the context of Indigenous housing.

Non-Indigenous Australian housing ideology is richly supplied with aphorisms and metaphors; “an Englishman’s home is his castle”, “safe as houses”, “it’s yours and no one can take it away from you”, “renting is just money in the landlord’s pocket”, “it’s the best investment people like us can ever make”. For this sector of Australian society, home ownership is regarded as being both normal and the ideal. This has been the case for long enough to constitute what Gurney terms “tenure socialisation”. That is, generations of non-Indigenous Australians have been brought up to regard home ownership as the norm. By way of contrast, rental becomes “abnormal”. The fact that most non-Indigenous Australian home owners established their first homes in

rental accommodation is normal only if it is regarded as a step on the way to home ownership.

Indigenous Western Australian people's housing ideology is characterised mostly by aphorisms that arise out long experience as public housing tenants. They tend to represent themselves less as consumers with a range of choices that they must make in a field open to their own domination, but rather as petitioners with needs they must fulfil through a narrow range of service and resource providers. It is the providers who control the granting of petitions for services and resources that are held by petitioners and these form a range characterised by scarcity of supply and type, a poor standard of maintenance and a corresponding lack of the quality of suitability. There are some Indigenous people whose experience of obtaining housing has followed an uncontentious course, upon which they have found little worthy of particular comment. However, the housing experience of many other Indigenous people is characterised by having to accept housing in a poor state of repair, that is in some way inappropriate to their needs, and for which they must wait years, during which they may have to accept living with their relations in preference to having no housing at all. The course of urban Indigenous housing careers in public housing tenancy tends to be a function of the relationship between Indigenous people as tenants and the public housing agency, DOH; and the ways in which Indigenous culture and society structure solutions to their problems of poverty and the housing shortage.

Tables

Table 1. Tenure type by Indigenous status of household

	Owners and purchasers	Renters (total)	Rental Tenure Type as percentage of total renters	
			State/community	Private
Indigenous Households	30%	62%	40%	20%
Non-Indigenous Households	70%	26%	15%	42%

Source: Australian bureau of Statistics 2006. Census of Population and Housing, Western Australia (State), Tenure Type and Landlord Type by Dwelling Structure by Indigenous Status of Household.

Table 2. Home ownership rates by Indigenous status of household

	2001		2006	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
New South Wales	37.9%	69%	36%	67.5%
Northern Territory	13.7%	53%	18%	55%
Queensland	28%	67%	31%	72%
South Australia	29%	72%	34%	70%
Tasmania	56.7%	73%	53%	72%
Western Australia	26.5%	72%	30%	70%

Source: ABS 2006 and 2001 Census of Population and Housing

Table 3. Indigenous versus other Australian born Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) clients (WA population aged 10+ years) during 2005-2006

SAAP Clients in Western Australia				
	number	Percentage of all WA SAAP clients	Percentage of WA population group	Percentage of WA population
Indigenous	3,200	40.7	6.5	3.0
Other Australian born	3,500	44.2	0.3	64.8

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007. Homeless People in SAAP: Western Australian supplementary tables.

Table 4. Indigenous Status by Enumeration in Improvised Homes, Tents and Sleepers Out

	1996	2001	Change
Indigenous	9,751	2,681	-7,070
Non-Indigenous	9,828	11,477	+1,649

Total	19,579	14,158	-5,421
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(Chamberlain and MacKinzie 2003a)

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