

Principles for Better Aboriginal Tenant Engagement

STREET SPEAK PROJECT

Internal capacity building is the process of enhancing an organisation's skills, knowledge, and resources to improve cultural competency, foster trust, and enhance communication, resulting in more effective and inclusive services for Aboriginal tenants. The **Principles for Better Aboriginal Tenant Engagement** have evolved from the Street Speak Project, incorporating key insights from Unity Housing and its partners during 2023/2024. These principles are designed to bolster the internal capacity and capabilities of community housing providers and other sector stakeholders, aiming to elevate the quality-of-service offerings to Aboriginal tenants through effective property and tenancy management, tenant engagement, and casework.

1. Getting started

- Ensure your Board and Executive management team have committed strong support through the provision of adequate resources to support a program of work that will improve the capacity and capability of staff.
- Identify internal 'Ambassadors for Change' with responsibility to co-design, lead and support internal capacity and capability initiatives. Project Ambassadors should be passionate about change needed to improve tenant experiences and, where possible, should identify as Aboriginal.
- Program success for Street Speak initiatives will be dependent on a robust project management methodology model, supported by a stakeholder and tenant communication strategy that engages Aboriginal tenants and key stakeholders in every aspect of change.
- Identify existing and required organisational policies needed to support internal capability and capacity building and ensure actions needed are included in the project management approach.

2. Involving Aboriginal Tenants

- Establish your performance baseline by seeking feedback from Aboriginal tenants. Ask them about their perceptions of your performance, what you are doing well, areas for improvement, and their priorities. Additionally, inquire if they would like to get involved in enhancing your service offerings.
- Utilise a variety of culturally relevant feedback tools, including postcard surveys, phone calls, emails, tenant newsletters, social media, face-to-face conversations, and localised small group yarning sessions. These methods will help you to gather meaningful input and engage with the community.
- Be respectful and communicate back to Aboriginal tenants with your learnings as soon as possible after survey close dates. Ask them again if they have any further ideas.
- Ensure your organisation's communication strategy includes accessible English, use of icons for people with low literacy, create an obvious impression of Aboriginality and Aboriginal connections as a service provider to Aboriginal people, create a Facebook presence, ensure your website is approachable and user friendly, and consider the appropriate use of videos (possibly with links to YouTube) to convey key messages. Also, remember to keep content current.

3. Action Plan Framework

- Establish what improved internal capacity looks like and work toward these indicators at the organisation, team and individual worker levels. Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training for all staff is an important first step and should be backed up with scheduled refresher training.
- Conduct a training needs analysis to identify gaps in cultural competence, communication skills, knowledge of Aboriginal housing issues, relationship building, and advocacy skills. There are many Aboriginal-led training and development providers who can advise and support you with this.
- Develop a detailed action plan based on your internal capacity assessment findings. Set specific goals and objectives for building internal capacity.
- Ensure learnings from Aboriginal tenant feedback, internal training, and capacity building are quickly operationalised, establishing a continuous improvement cycle for measurable uplift in staff professional practice.

Street Speak is an initiative of Unity Housing Company and generously supported by KWW Aboriginal Corporation, Point Heard, Community Housing Industry Association (SA), and Department for Human Services. For further information about Street Speak, please contact Unity Housing Company on 1800 551 814 or email customercare@unityhousing.org.au.