menzies SCHOOL OF HEALTH RESEARCH

MEDIA RELEASE

The intersection of health and housing: new funding to improve culturally safe housing services, centred on lived experience

28 July 2026

The lived experiences of Aboriginal people are at the core of a new research collaboration led by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), investigating the health impacts of housing instability, rough sleeping and overcrowding in the Northern Territory (NT).

Partnering locally with Aboriginal Housing NT and Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, this project will focus on Aboriginal leadership and lived experience to ensure changes to health and housing policy and service delivery are both culturally appropriate and benefit Aboriginal people.

This project has been made possible thanks to new funding announced last week from a Targeted Call for Research by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Commencing in January 2027 and running for 3 years, this co-designed work will focus on:

- developing best-practice outreach guidelines for engaging with individuals who are sleeping rough
- supporting remote communities to lead planning for diverse accommodation needs to increase individual safety
- conducting resident-centred evaluations of housing maintenance programs.

The team will work with individuals and service providers in relation to experiences across the breadth of housing seen in the NT including urban social housing, town camps, informal camps, remote communities, and homelands. The program will particularly focus on the impacts on mental health, housing maintenance and the experiences of vulnerable groups amongst Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness.

Access to good-quality, well-maintained housing is vital for health and wellbeing. Without it, factors like overcrowding, lack of maintenance and inadequate housing for the climate, can increase the risk of infectious diseases and other short and long-term impacts on health. This collaboration looks to produce practical, locally focused solutions that are desired by Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, Aboriginal people, and communities, to support better health outcomes across the NT.

Learn more about this work, titled: *Centring Consumers at the Health and Homelessness Intersection in the Northern Territory – A Roadmap for Integrated, Culturally Safe Service Delivery.*

Quotes attributable to Chief Investigator of the project and Menzies Principal Research Fellow, Associate Professor Liam Grealy:
"The investigators and organisations involved in this collaboration provide the best chance possible for the research to have a meaningful impact in the lives of people marginalised by the housing system.

"This project aims to centre lived experience of homelessness and housing instability in policy making and program design. To do so is necessary to improve health and justice outcomes."

Quotes attributable to Co-Investigator of the project and Deputy CEO of Aboriginal Housing NT, Nathan Evans:
"This project comes at a critical time for the Northern Territory. Now, more than ever, we need Aboriginal people and the Aboriginal community-controlled housing sector leading policy and program design and implementation.

"Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory overwhelmingly experience the highest rates of homelessness and severe overcrowding when compared to all other jurisdictions. This project is an important step forward to ensuring Aboriginal people with lived experience can drive reforms to have real, measurable and lasting impact."

Quotes attributable to Associate Investigator of the project and Outreach Manager of Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Aaron Motlop:
"Housing is the foundation of health, dignity and opportunity. When Aboriginal people experience homelessness, overcrowding or unsafe housing, the impacts reach every part of life from health and education to employment, family and culture. Real solutions must be Aboriginal-led, shaped by lived experience and grounded in our communities.

"Larrakia Nation is proud to support this research to strengthen culturally safe services, influence policy and improve outcomes for Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory."

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About Menzies School of Health Research
Menzies is at the forefront of health and medical research dedicated to improving the lives of peoples across the Northern Territory, Asia Pacific and beyond. By joining scientific knowledge with community wisdom, Menzies strives to Close the Gap, and shape a healthier, more equitable future where communities can thrive.