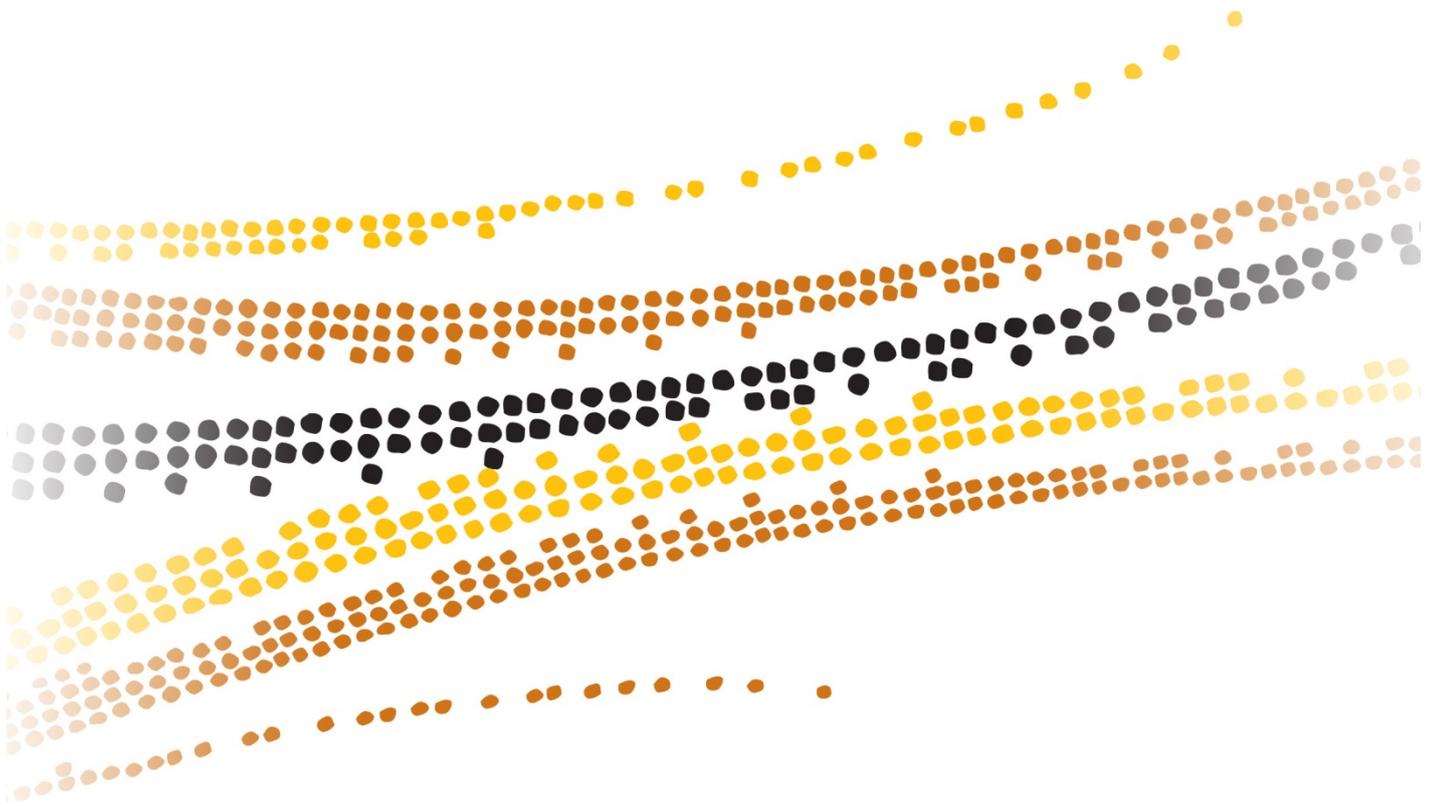


**Centre for  
Appropriate  
Technology**

**Post Occupancy Evaluation  
of Alice Springs Town Camp Housing 2008 - 2011**

**Stage 2.1 Report**

Date: December 2012



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The Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) is the national Indigenous science and technology organisation. CAT's vision is Happy and Safe communities of Indigenous peoples and its purpose is to secure sustainable livelihoods through appropriate technology. CAT is currently funded from a variety of sources including the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments and private sources.

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securing sustainable livelihoods through appropriate technology

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## Executive Summary

This is an interim report (Stage 2.1) for a two-stage post occupancy evaluation of housing completed in the Alice Springs town camps since 2008. The total length of the longitudinal study extends over 18 months and comprises three rounds of fieldwork conducted at 6 month intervals. This report marks the completion of the second round of fieldwork. The baseline study in Stage 1 was completed in March 2012 and the second round was completed in September 2012.

The time between Stages 1 and 2.1 was utilised to interview other institutional stakeholders involved in the housing process including Territory Alliance, Tangentyere Design, Department of Housing, Local Government and Remote Services (DHLGRS), Alice Springs Transformation Plan and two members of Housing Reference Groups. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a broader perspective on the housing delivery process which was in many cases crucial to the procurement process. The data collected in Stage 1 and through these stakeholder interviews was used to develop the fieldwork for Stage 2.1.

In Stage 1, the research team conducted a survey of the houses as well as interviewing residents. It was agreed by the researchers and the client that the survey of the housing fabric would be excluded in Stage 2.1, and only interviews would be conducted. This decision was based on the judgement that an interval of 6 months for inspection of the building condition would not yield enough data about changes in the housing fabric, and the survey at 12 months (March 2013) would be sufficient.

The interviews in Stage 2.1, informed by Stage 1 and stakeholder interviews, explored selected aspects of the housing experience in greater depth than in the first round in areas such as tenancy management. The interview questions were developed in conjunction with researchers from Tangentyere Research Hub with the aim of engaging residents more deeply and subjectively on the evolving nature of their relationships with their houses using themes that had emerged in Stage 1. The themes were:

1. household composition – changes to the household in the last 6 months
2. design – tenants adapting the house/yard design to suit their changing needs
3. feeling – evolving level of comfort experienced by residents in the house/yard
4. maintenance – condition of house and property management regimes
5. tenancy management – tenants' perception of tenancy arrangements and rules

The research team interviewed 39 of the original 53 households that participated in Stage 1 in the 6 selected town camps over three weeks. The difference in numbers was due to absent or unavailable house bosses, inaccessibility to camps during 'sorry business' and illness. As in the previous Stage, interviews were generally conducted in pairs which included one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous researcher.

Only one of the Tangentyere researchers involved in Stage 1 was able to participate in Stage 2.1 interviews, and new researchers were introduced to the process. This meant a greater emphasis on the role of the CAT researchers in the interviews to elicit the depth sought from the questions.

## Summary of findings

### *Household*

In the households interviewed in Stage 2.1, one quarter had some change in composition, although only one had changed house boss. Residents remained wary about giving too much information about their visitors, possibly due to issues such as responsibility for rent or damage. Further, it became clear that the term 'visitor' requires further precision in its relationship to family or not and length of stay: in Aboriginal mobility studies 'visitor' remains hazily defined vis-à-vis family. It is not clear that the new houses have actually helped to reduce the stresses of crowding, as half the residents said that they felt stressed by the presence of visitors both for behavioural reasons as well as the financial burden that it puts on house bosses.

### *Design*

Although there were hardly any adaptive changes made to the new and Tangentyere rebuilt houses, at least half of the residents of the TA rebuilt and refurbished houses had made changes. Where alterations were made, residents were wary of the tenancy guidelines related to damage. Residents mainly expressed a wish to make small changes such as hanging pictures and curtains or buying white goods or furniture for their houses. Over half of the Territory Alliance refurbished house residents wanted to paint the inside of their houses. While half or more of interviewed residents wanted to make changes to the refurbished and rebuilt houses, they were more vocal and insistent about the changes they wanted in their yards. Lack of money was cited as the primary reason for the residents' inability to make changes, and one of most often stated improvements residents wanted for their yards was to plant trees to create shade.

### *Feeling*

Most residents in all the house types felt more comfortable in their houses now than they were 6 months earlier. Although the houses were cold in the winter the residents found ways to cope with the cold using heaters, carpets and by sealing gaps in the house. Most of the residents of the Tangentyere rebuilds were satisfied with the performance of the ceiling heaters, although three households felt the need to supplement the ceiling heaters with bar heaters.

The residents were largely pleased with the infrastructure works like roads, drains, streetlights and letter box installations taking place in some town camps. They based their assessment on infrastructure works recently completed in Trucking Yards. They felt proud of street names, but also safer on account of streetlights and footpaths.

On the subject of improved community bonds, the residents were ambivalent about the role of the new infrastructure works in strengthening them. In fact, some residents were even critical of the current house allocation process that was undermining the existing community bond. This made residents feel unsafe. However, the majority of residents said that they still felt safe in their houses since the kin system of allocation is still largely intact within the town camps.

### ***Maintenance***

Nearly half the residents reported that houses had repairs in the last 6 months and many residents reported new problems had emerged too. The residents also reported some confusion about which authority to report problems to. Although the tenants are all aware that they are responsible and pay for damages to the house, there is some confusion about what constitutes 'tenant- related damage'. The costs associated with repairs resulting from damage are a source of worry to the residents.

### ***Tenancy Management***

Most tenants other than the residents of Tangentyere rebuilds are not worried about paying rent, abiding by tenancy rules or hosting visitors. The residents of Tangentyere rebuild tenants attributed their worries about rent to a lack of transparency around their payments and high rent. They are also worried about visitors because they are aware that the house boss is ultimately responsible for damages to the houses that are inflicted by visitors. Nor did the residents express any problems with operating any of the installed equipment in the houses. However, all the residents said that they wanted to receive a statement from DHLGRS outlining deductions from their Centrelink accounts for housing.

### **Recommendations**

In addition to continuing or following up interviews with the institutional stakeholders, the focus of the last set of interviews and survey will be on better understanding the role of tenancy management and property management in shaping the housing experience of the town camp residents.

In order to ensure that a reasonable number of households respond in the final stage - assuming that a similar or higher percentage of households will be unavailable as there were in Stage 2.1 - a change in approach to the households may be necessary. Tangentyere Council, Research Hub and Design will be approached to consider appropriate options including a more regular contact with households leading up to the survey time. Further, anomalies that arose between interviews and the data held by institutional stakeholders, such as CAAHC, regarding the level of repair work and service, need to be further investigated in consultation with Tangentyere Design, CAAHC and Territory Housing to ensure an accurate picture of the outcomes of the various procurement processes involved.

The final report will amalgamate the findings of Stages 1 and 2.1 with the new findings in Stage 2.2 to help inform the providers of Indigenous housing on the success and the failures of the housing provided in the Alice Springs town camps since 2008.

## **1. Introduction**

This report represents the findings of the second round of fieldwork (Stage 2.1) in the Post Occupancy Evaluation of the Alice Springs town camps. In addition to interviews with service providers and other agencies, the fieldwork included interviews with town camp residents conducted between 3 September and 28 September 2012. The same tenants interviewed in Stage 1 were interviewed in this round.

While Stage 1 of the project was comprehensive and established the baseline data for the study through residents' interviews and household surveys, Stage 2 comprises an interim set of interviews at six months (Stage 2.1) and a final round, Stage 2.2, of interviews and surveys at twelve months. Stage 2.1 sought to explore in further depth issues that had come up in Stage 1, including how residents were coping with the new tenancy management regime and their responses to the new infrastructure being installed in some town camps. The questions for this round were also informed by the interviews with other stakeholders involved directly and indirectly in the roll out of housing in the town camps since 2008. The fieldwork also sought to record and document tenants' changing feelings towards their houses and their evolving relationship with their homes.

Accordingly, the method for gathering the data for this stage involved a mix of open-ended questions and structured questions. In contrast with the previous round, which included a semi-structured interview and a survey of the houses, only interviews were conducted in Stage 2.1, as it was unlikely that another household condition survey at 6 months would yield much useful information and further risked relationships with householders sensitive to the intrusion that surveys can represent.

Researchers from the Tangentyere Research Hub were once again at the centre of developing the questions, carrying out the fieldwork and in assisting with the analysis of the data. New researchers with the Hub, who had never previously conducted fieldwork, were initiated into the data collection and interviewing process.

### **1.1. What did we seek to find in Stage 2.1?**

In Stage 1, we identified in consultation with Tangentyere researchers the themes around which we intended to evaluate the housing experience of residents in stage 2.1. The themes were:

- Household
- Design
- Feeling
- Maintenance
- Tenancy Management

In conducting the Stage 2.1 interviews 6 months after the initial fieldwork, the underlying intent of Stage 2.1 was to understand and record if anything has changed since the first round with selected house occupants. The changes could relate to any of the themes identified above.

## **2. Methodology**

This section of the report details the methods that were selected and employed for data collection. It also explains the choice of methodology that was selected and why it was in variance to the earlier methodology used in Stage 1 of the project.

The choice of methodology for Stage 2.1 was influenced by the issues that emerged from the analysis and findings of Stage 1, as reported in June 2012. The following areas were flagged for investigation:

- Had householder's relationships with the houses changed after 6 months?
- How did residents cope with the cold of the winter months within the house (this aspect of study also has resonances with the NCAARF study being conducted by RMIT)?
- Evaluating the qualitative performance of the house against changing needs and requirements.
- Processes of housing allocation to be discussed in greater depth with HRG reps, Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services (DHLGRS), Central Australian Affordable Housing Company (CAAHC)

Although it was originally planned to conduct a condition survey at 6 months, it was determined, based on our Stage 1 experience, that a period of 6 months would not be a sufficiently useful interval to study fabric deterioration, particularly when combined with concerns about the burden on residents. It was agreed that we would rely on tenants' verbal reports on any breakdown in the last 6 months, rather than independently conduct a survey at this stage, and then conduct a full survey at 12 months.

### **2.1. Housing Reference Groups**

A newsletter describing the findings of Stage 1 was hand delivered to all residents participating in the evaluation. Copies of the newsletter were also delivered to members of the Housing Reference Group (HRG) of each of the selected town camps. An invitation to HRG members to talk to us about their experience of HRG meetings and process was also included. Only one HRG representative responded to the newsletter request and was interviewed; another HRG representative was interviewed in the course of identifying respondents for Stage 2.1.

The research team contacted several organisations, including Territory Housing, CAAHC and Tangentyere Council to get the names and addresses of members of the HRGs in the selected town camps. This proved to be a difficult task; however, a name list without addresses was finally received from CAAHC. The difficulty in obtaining names and addresses of HRG members is a cause of concern and its significance is discussed in greater depth in section 4 of this report.

## **2.2. Stakeholder Interviews**

We included a wide range of stakeholders involved in delivery and management of the Housing. Accordingly we interviewed and talked to a number of institutional actors, who were a part of the process, including:

- Territory Alliance (TA)
- Territory Housing (TH)
- Tangentyere Design (TD)
- Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP)
- Central Australian Affordable Housing Corporation (CAAHC)
- Two Housing Reference Group (HRG) representatives from 1 camp.

Information collected in the discussions with stakeholders prior to the second round of fieldwork influenced in particular interview questions related to the effectiveness of tenancy and property management.

In the discussion section of this report, the voice of the interviewed institutional stakeholders is used to confirm or contrast our theme-based reporting of findings on the ground. Transcripts of the interviews are also included in the appendices for reference.

## **2.3. Interviews and survey process**

With the completion of the infrastructure works at Trucking Yards prior to Stage 2, residents of other large camps such as Larapinta Valley and Hidden Valley got a preview of what their camps may look like upon the completion of their infrastructure works. Opinions of residents of the larger camps and smaller camps were sought on the completed infrastructure works in Trucking Yards and how they felt about the infrastructure works with reference to their own camps. The vast majority of those interviewed had either visited Trucking Yards or were aware of the recently completed infrastructure works there and their opinions were based on this awareness or experience.

Residents were asked if they or their visitors understand how to use installed equipment in their houses, e.g. hot water system, evaporative air conditioner, to assess the effectiveness of the tenancy induction process. The induction process is an outcome of the SIHIP Performance Specifications for New Remote Public Housing (GHD 2008 p. 7) which calls on the builder for the provision of a 'Household Induction Manual' that provides information on the everyday management of the completed house to the owner. Accordingly, DHLGRS has produced an Induction Kit that informs tenants of day-to-day house and component management which CAAHC are responsible for handing over to tenants (Berriman and Davidson 2012).

For consistency with Stage 1, the questions for the Stage 2.1 interviews were organised under the themes used in Stage 1.

- Household
- Design
- Feeling
- Maintenance

- Tenancy Management.

Due to the character of many of the responses in Stage 1, the research team thought that the researchers would engage more deeply and conversationally with respondents around the issues that are under scrutiny. That is, it was found that respondents in the interview seldom offered qualifications to their responses which limited the emergence of subthemes for further exploration. In critically analysing the survey and interview process used in Stage 1, the researchers felt that more time needed to be devoted to talking through and around each question (keeping most questions open ended). Accordingly the following modifications were made:

- The number of questions was reduced to relieve pressure on the interviewer and respondents
- The survey was not conducted in this round since it was unlikely to yield much information about the house conditions. Further; it added to the pressure of time and serves as a distraction for the respondent, in part due to the perception of its invasive nature, which also impacted the respondent's willingness to be interviewed. Difficulty in accessing the house is not a new phenomenon for researchers conducting POE's in Indigenous communities – Fletcher and Bridgman (2000 p. 62) and Seemann *et al* (2008 p. 75) have identified the reluctance to allow internal access to the house, bedrooms, bathroom etc.as a methodological problem that impacted the final outcome of their study .
- The researchers relied on tenants reporting of damage to the house or breakdown of fixtures since the Stage 1 interviews in March 2012.

A preliminary set of questions was developed by the CAT researchers for Stage 2.1 based on the above criteria and themes. The preliminary set of questions was then workshopped with two senior Tangentyere researchers over two half days. The Tangentyere researchers were instrumental in re-phrasing questions into a more comprehensible form for the town camp residents to elicit responses and information that was being sought. The researchers also actively drew attention to the lived world of the town camp residents ensuring that the questions and their import to the residents remained grounded in the resident's everyday existence.

As in the previous rounds, it was decided that researchers would go into the field in two teams each consisting of at least one Researcher from the Tangentyere Research Hub and one CAT researcher. The Tangentyere Researchers advised that only three attempts should be made to interview the residents. If the interview was not possible due to the absence of the tenant or requested another time, the researchers attempted to contact the tenant two more times. If that failed, it was concluded that the resident did not wish to speak with the researchers. The Tangentyere researchers also advised against revisiting some camps on account of 'sorry business'.

The fieldwork was conducted over three weeks from Monday to Thursday each week. As far as possible, interviews were conducted in the morning between 9am – 1pm. The 1.00 pm time guide for interviews worked well for the town camp residents because afternoons are taken up with other businesses and with children coming back from school. It also enabled more comprehensive planning of the next day's activities jointly with the Tangentyere researchers, was preferred by the Tangentyere researchers, and further enabled CAT researchers to complete the data entry for each day's interviews. Exception was made, where necessary, for respondents who were employed in day jobs or requested to be interviewed at

another time. Fridays were difficult for Tangentyere researchers and so were used as a day of consolidation of data entry as well as planning the research plan for the week to follow. There was a week's break between week 2 and week 3 of the fieldwork to enable consolidation and entry of data.

Tangentyere Research Hub advised the CAT that two researchers who had worked on the POE project in Stage 1 would not be available for Stage 2.1. Denise Foster further informed the research team that given the high number of jobs that the Research Hub was involved in September and October 2012, they would need to hire and train new researchers to help with data collection both in the POE and with the other projects. Accordingly, three new Tangentyere researchers were introduced to the project and a brief workshop with them was held early at the start of fieldwork to discuss the interview questions. Its primary aim was to try to ensure that all the researchers involved in the project understood what information was sought through the interview process.

#### **4. Discussion**

As noted earlier, in the second round of fieldwork, the research teams returned only to the households that had been interviewed and surveyed in Stage 1. In Stage 1, 53 houses were covered, while in stage 2.1 only 39 house bosses of the original 53 houses were interviewed.

The reason for the reduction in houses covered in Stage 2.1 has been noted in the methodology section, that is, the final number of interviews was affected by factors such as availability of the house boss, inaccessibility to the town camps during traditional ceremonies or simply disinterest expressed by house bosses directly or indirectly in participating in the interview. As Tangentyere researcher, Denise Foster indicated in our discussions, the disinterest was attributed to the fact that some respondents felt that they had already conveyed what they wanted to say about their houses during the Stage 1 interview and did not feel that they had much more to contribute in the ensuing interviews at Stage 2.1.

The participants were advised in Stage 1 that we would return again for interviews after 6 months and then again after 12 months. This was also reiterated in the newsletter that was distributed at the start of Stage 2.1 of the project. What may not have been clear to the participants was the purpose of three rounds of fieldwork and the significance of lapsed time to the study of their houses and of their opinions. One of the challenges, then, of the final set of interviews will be to re-engage or convince the researchers and tenants of the usefulness of participating again in this evaluation.

The observations in this section apply to all house types unless specified otherwise. Details are in Appendix 6.2. Furthermore, the discussions are structured around the five themes that were identified at the time of developing the interview. The discussion reflects not only the views of the residents but is also substantiated or contrasted against the views expressed by institutional stakeholders about that theme, which in some cases supplies multiple perspectives on some common areas.

## 4.1 Households

This section of the interview was designed to record any changes that have occurred in the households over the last six months including information on visitors or aspects of stress associated with crowding or change of income.

### *Household changes*

House bosses have mostly stayed the same. Only in two houses was a change of house boss recorded, which was attributed to a death in one, and in the other the previous boss had gone away.

There were some modifications to households on account of births, or as a result of family members moving out or in. Of the 39 households interviewed, 12 indicated a change in family composition, while 24 households reported the presence of visitors. Comment on the issue of mobility in this context is made below. Income changes were reported in about a quarter of the interviewed houses and was for a mix of reasons including finding employment or changes to welfare benefits.

### *Overcrowding*

Reduction in overcrowding is a critical factor to the success of SIHIP. Reduction in overcrowding was one of the key planks on which the Australian Government lunched the housing programme. One of the aims of Stage 2.1 was to ascertain from residents of the town camps if the combination of new houses (including the rebuilt or refurbished), tenancy management and property management had contributed to the reduction of overcrowding in houses.

One of the key contributors to overcrowding in Aboriginal homes is visitors, especially in regional population centres prone to mobile population influx (Habibis *et al.* 2011 p. 18) which is inadequately reported in NATSSIS figures (Memmott *et al.* 2011). The issue of visitors is complicated. It appeared to the researchers that the respondents were not very forthcoming on information on visitors. Most acknowledged that they had visitors, but invariably several, if not most, respondents said – "...we get visitors during the footy season. They come for the weekend and go back to the community." This response points in part to the seasonality of visitors in Alice Springs town camps. It could also point to a reluctance to provide information about the actual length of stay of visitors to the researchers, which possibility was suggested by a Tangentyere researcher's interpretation of respondents' behaviour and physical expressions, such as an averted gaze or a smile that were directed towards the Tangentyere researcher. The reasons for such reluctance could be attributed to a number of factors, including: stricter tenancy rules, caution around strangers, and concern about higher rents for more tenants in a house.

It should be noted also that long term visitors aren't necessarily welcome - a previous study on mobility found that there is an expressed desire amongst town camp residents for a maximum of 2-3 nights (Foster *et al.* 2005 p. 44).

In some interviews, the reference to visitors elicited comment about visits by family. Foster *et al.* (2005 p. 38) do not make a strong definitional distinction about types of visitors, and comment that the bulk of the visits in their mobility study in the Alice Springs town camps study were attributed to 'family visits'. It will at least be worth more clearly defining for this study who is a 'visitor', given some ambivalence in the description.

A reasonable proportion (nearly 44%) of the respondents expressed increased stress on account of visitors. The bulk of this stress was related to alcohol or drug related behaviour disrupting their usual life in the house. However, several respondents also cited the financial burden of supporting visitors as a contributor to stress. The issue of house-related stress is also explored under other themes to establish what aspects of housing impact the wellbeing of tenants.

## **4.2 Design**

This section of the interviews was devised to capture the adaptive practices that residents employed to cope with house and yard design issues that were raised in Stage 1. Some of these issues had related to dissatisfaction with amenity in the yard or the general lack of storage space.

### *Making Improvements*

Many residents clearly expressed a desire to make improvements to their houses but were unable to do so due to the lack of money. The data suggests that there were very limited interventions made by residents to improve house amenity. This may partly have to do with the financial health of the residents and their ability to make payments either for furniture, materials or equipment. However, there were several suggestions that the tenancy regulations, that required written approval, prevented residents from making even minor modifications, such as hanging curtains to the house.

A few residents made physical adaptations in the house that did not require permissions or approvals from the DHLGRS to cope with the cold of the winter, such as buying a heater, or carpets to insulate their feet from the cold ceramic floor tiles. It becomes evident that residents are more likely to take the initiative to adapt to the house when they are less constrained by rules. Considering the low rate of uptake in Indigenous communities for homeownership and a higher dependence on rental housing, in contrast with mainstream housing demand, it is worth considering how rules around minor modifications to the house can be made less limiting and more enabling to facilitate adaptation. This may call for developing a modified set of tenancy rules for town camp housing that acknowledges that many residents have been tenants in the same house for 20 or 30 years.

Some tenants did report buying some furniture and whitegoods to augment their housing. Where instances of personalising the houses with pictures were reported, respondents noted that care was taken to ensure that walls were not damaged in the process. Those that spoke of bigger changes to the house such as enlarging the kitchen, enclosing the laundry or removing the stainless steel bench felt that such changes were beyond their control. Some of the issues around adaptation can also be addressed through simple design solutions such as installing picture rails or providing curtain rods. However, the real challenge in design solutions is in striking a balance of providing flexible opportunities for tenants to adapt and transform their houses without compromising the structural integrity of the house but which will also operate within a regulatory framework that is in accordance with the spirit of the Residential Tenancies Act.

### *Design satisfaction and issues*

Most residents of the Tangentyere rebuilds expressed satisfaction with their houses, with little and even in one instance no desire to make improvements to their houses. However, residents of the TA refurbishments were unhappy with the partially completed painting job done. In the new houses, residents noted design issues previously identified in Stage 1, such as introducing a gutter between roof and carport, and enhancing storage, which was reiterated informally by some residents in stage 2.1. It should be noted that although residents were not directly questioned about design satisfaction/dissatisfaction in Stage 2.1, informal comments such as the above were made. In Stage 2.2, we will revisit this aspect of continued dissatisfaction with the original design, which residents have not been able to reconcile.

### *Storage issues*

Storage was an issue that emerged strongly in the Stage 1 interviews with town campers. Interviews with Territory Alliance and Tangentyere Design confirmed recognition of the issues: Tangentyere Design (Broffman 2012) had wanted to enhance storage, but was required to eliminate some storage such as concealed storage areas. Improving storage was one of the changes that Territory Alliance would make in their design of houses in the future (Barker 2012). Previous POEs have identified inadequate storage as a universal problem that also applies to Indigenous housing. This implies that no opportunities should be wasted in providing storage that is accessible and located sensibly. For instance, it has been suggested that more storage be provided in bedrooms to overcome the ownership issues that arise from large households (Memmott *et al.* 2000 p. 102). Furthermore, the design solutions that emerge for storage must factor in the everyday realities of the context within which it must perform its function. For example, rather than simply eliminate concealed storage in existing houses that tend to collect waste, house dogs and breed pathogens, it may be worthwhile for designers to find appropriate design solutions for storage that will permit the retention of the storage space while preventing the less desirable consequences associated with concealment.

Other design changes or enhancements that Territory Alliance's Design Manager (Barker 2012) would make included:

- Using top-hung demountable horizontal sliders in the windows rather than the bottom-supported aluminium currently in use for improved longevity and easier maintenance
- Make insect screen doors more robust
- Modifying kitchen size to suit the house size (this was an issue that was identified by the researchers in the first round)
- Delete combination locks from the specification as they were found to be both ineffective and of poor quality
- Provide more storage in the kitchen and laundry where possible.
- Create opportunities for personalisation - tenancy rules should facilitate personalisation rather than discourage it.

Tangentyere Design (Broffman 2012) also offered a list of design enhancements for future housing:

- changed design of the kitchen cupboards
- kitchen detail designed to conceal the sink plumbing
- change stainless steel kitchen bench design from modular to customised.

- adequate fixed ventilation in the bathrooms
- greater consultation with tenants in the design of kitchens, bathrooms and finishes.

### *Yards*

Most tenants said that they made changes to their yards but are often limited by the lack of finances. The changes included simple interventions such as cleaning the yard, but also included some landscaping activities such as planting trees and laying a lawn. Some tenants installed windbreaks and metal sheets for cooking to make their yards more amenable to outdoor living.

Significantly, all respondents wanted to improve their yards, including repairing fences and gates. Most of the improvements mentioned further confirmed that an appropriate outdoor living amenity is severely lacking in all the yards. The significance of outdoor living to Aboriginal lifestyle and a suitable architectural design response to this need has been identified as a problem in significant POEs conducted in Aboriginal communities since 1993 (Morel and Ross p. 11) and again in 2000 (Memmott *et al.* p. 100-101). Although many of the suggestions from Memmott *et al* with regards to the improved design considerations for verandas has been incorporated into the SIHIP design guidelines, many of the recommendations appear to have been overlooked especially in the new houses.

Further, TA advised that 12 plants were to be supplied to each house, but since there was no consultation with residents about the plant types they wanted, they were not provided. The maintenance of the yards, it was pointed out, is a Tangentyere responsibility (Barker 2012). In answer to the same question, Broffman (2012) from Tangentyere Design said that landscape in the yards was partially considered but not accorded high priority. A number of plants were specified and planted for each Tangentyere refurb house that would be irrigated by the evaporative bleed off. However, most plants died due to a lack of water that was dependent on the house being occupied and the evaporative air conditioning being used. While this was an innovative approach to irrigation and sensible use of water, it would in retrospect be prudent to install irrigation until the plants are established. This is all the more necessary given the vagaries of house allocation and temporary or intracamp mobility. Tangentyere Design also included some fence repairs as well as outdoor shade shelters in their scope of works.

That yards are important to the residents is clear, and recognition of the issue was at least initially in the SIHIP design guidelines. Whether tenants are making changes to their yards as they can because of its importance to them, regardless of any rules, or because of a lack of rules relative to the indoor spaces is unclear - a few residents expressed desire to build bough shelters, and be outside (see Memmott's (2000 p. 100) observation that residents gravitate towards open shaded areas, especially trees when the weather gets hot), which may or may not be indicative of traditional influences.

TA reported that they sought advice from tenants on placement of outdoor shelters which was to be facilitated by DHLGRS. However, the lack of feedback from DHLGRS resulted in the placing of the outdoor shelters (Barker 2012) accompanying the TA buildings to the front (road-facing) or the side of the house, and they appear to be used primarily as carports.

### 4.3 Feeling

This section of the Stage 2.1 interview sought to get responses to how people are responding to or feeling about the changes that have occurred since the completion of housing and infrastructure works. While the previous section on design seeks to find out what active measures, if any, residents take to improve their environment, this segment assumes that residents simultaneously make active adjustments and adopt reconciliatory practices to adapt to the physical environments they find themselves in. Through this section of the interview, the researchers hoped to capture the changing opinions of their house and their comfort levels within it.

Although most of the residents said that they felt comfortable in their new homes, half the tenants in the TA refurbished house felt more comfortable in the houses since the first stage interviews, while the other half felt less comfortable. The former ascribed their greater satisfaction to the comfort that comes with familiarity with somewhere one has lived long. Interestingly, the latter felt less comfortable because the houses still had the old problems. This suggests that the refurbishment for some did not live up to their expectations of what would be fixed in the houses, while the others did not hold too many expectations about what would be done to their houses. This is a theme that may need further exploration and confirmation in the final round.

On the other hand, the residents of the Tangentyere rebuilt houses mostly felt more comfortable in their rebuilt houses. Even though residents credited this phenomenon to less crowding, it may have to do also with a clearly articulated scope of works that did not raise tenant expectations. This phenomenon associated only with Tangentyere rebuilds is possibly worth investigating further.

In the case of the TA Rebuilds and new houses, all tenants claimed to be either more comfortable or comfortable in their houses. Given that relatively few people made physical adaptations to their houses, the higher levels of comfort expressed by residents could be attributed to other forms of adaptation including active acceptance or simply resignation to what's provided.

Although almost everybody claimed that their houses were cold in the winter, they also said that they coped alright with it. Many bought heaters, sealed gaps, placed carpets on the cold tiled floors etc. to cope with the cold. There were mixed reactions to the utility and effectiveness of the installed ceiling heaters in the Tangentyere Rebuilds. Either way, at least three residents felt the impact of heating through the inflated electricity bills. Given that the power costs in the NT are slated to climb rather steeply in the coming months and in the future, it is worth looking at other passive means of keeping the house cool and warm and making the house more energy efficient. These means could include improved insulation, building orientation, shading walls and windows, painting roofs white or building thermal mass into the design rather than relying on energy-intensive installations with recurring costs to the tenant.

Some efforts to reduce the heat load were evidenced in the form of reflective custom orb cladding attached to the outer wall of exposed Tangentyere rebuild houses. It would be worthwhile to record and document the energy savings associated with such low-cost devices.

Another aspect of SIHIP policy was the drive to ‘normalise’ town camps or to make them physically indistinguishable from other suburbs in Alice Springs. Department of Housing electronic newsletters describes the completed infrastructure works thus, “The look and feel of Trucking Yards is now on par to any other suburb in Alice Springs...” (NTG and AG 2012). Three town camps, Trucking Yards, Larapinta Valley and Hidden Valley were selected as ‘growth camps’ where this vision of normalisation is implemented through infrastructure works. At the time of writing, only Trucking Yards has had its infrastructure works completed and was upheld as an exemplar of the SIHIP vision for town camps by the researchers to draw responses from those interviewed. Respondents from other town camps were asked to comment on how they felt about aspects of infrastructure works if applied to their camps.

The residents of Trucking Yards are all quite happy with the infrastructure changes that have occurred in their camp. Several residents expressed pride in their camp and the honour that has been bestowed to families through road-naming. They all feel that the footpaths have made it safer for kids and welcomed individual letterboxes and enhanced safety from streetlights. Clearly, these interventions have instilled a sense of pride in the residents of Trucking Yards.

Residents of the other town camps too, including the camps where no major infrastructure works are planned, also weighed in their support behind the infrastructure works in Trucking Yards as something desirable for every camp.

The question of whether the recent works have helped strengthen community bonds brought mixed responses. It ranged from some residents suggesting that nothing had changed; some felt that the tenancy management regime and allocation practices had made it worse, while still others felt that it was better because people stuck to themselves.

Housing allocation and the role of HRG’s remains an issue, with the ineffectiveness of the process highlighted in the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s report. The process clearly plays a pivotal role in building or straining community bonds. This was reiterated by members of the HRG in our conversation with them. Given the traditional practice of kin-based establishment of town camps (e.g. Trucking Yards and Ilpeye Ilpeye), and family-based enclaves within the larger camps (Hidden Valley, Larapinta), the recent introduction of a non-family orientated, needs-based system of allocation as prescribed by DHLGRS appears to have created tensions

Most tenants expressed a feeling of safety in the camp and their houses. This has been attributed to a number of factors such as living in close proximity to family, being able to control visitor influx to the camp and access to the house, the introduction of streetlights and footpaths, fewer visitors (potentially discouraged by tenancy rules) etc. However, in one instance, a resident talked of feeling less safe because of the allocation regime that allowed strangers to be allocated a house beside her.

Although DHLGRS have said that they act mostly on the HRGs recommendations for allocations, it is worth noting that some town camp residents including members of HRGs feel that the current working of the HRGs is flawed and not truly representative of the camp. HRG decision making is seen with suspicion and some of the camp residents we spoke with felt that the representatives consulted by DHLGRS are unquestioningly compliant with DHLGRS’ wishes. DHLGRS simultaneously stressed that their allocation practices were influenced by a universal ‘needs based’ approach usually associated with mainstream public

housing rather than an ethno-specific approach that may be expected for town camp housing. This further reinforces the dominant motive to ‘normalise’ town camps rather than to deliver the promised “...tenancy management and repairs and maintenance services having regard to the needs and requirements of town camp residents...” (Macklin 2008).

The community’s attitudes towards social bonds and safety within the camp appear to be coloured by a sense of a loss of control in managing the camp and housing allocation. Nonetheless, the tenancy rules that restrict visitors have largely been embraced as a means of empowering house bosses and therefore enhancing a sense of safety.

Conversely, CAAHC are of the opinion that the 6-week visitor restriction aspect of the tenancy rules has not been very effective in handling or restricting visitors because visitors leave and return after 6 weeks to start the clock again.

#### **4.4 Maintenance**

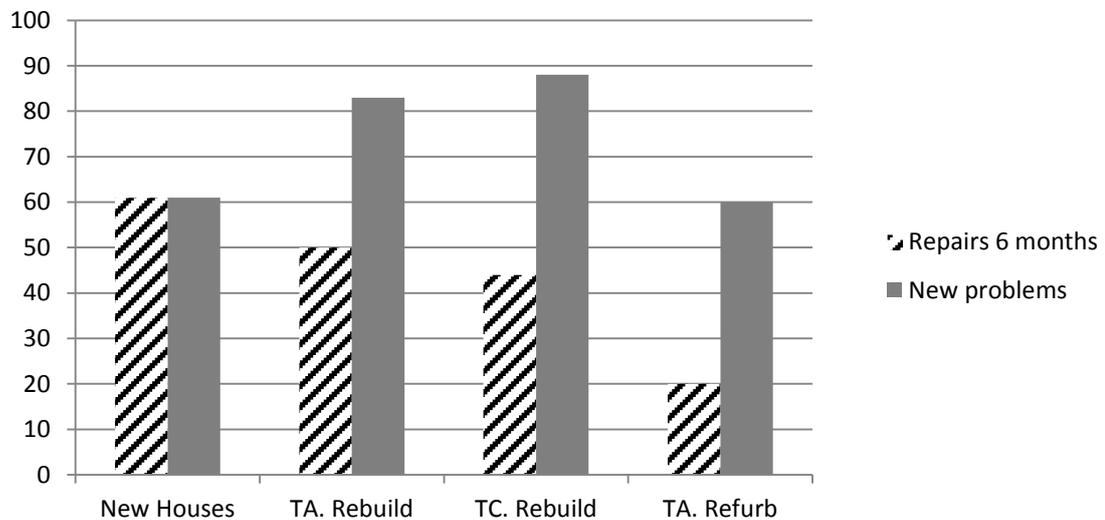
In the absence of a survey in Stage 2.1, the researchers relied on tenants recounting their reports of breakdowns and defects in their housing to be able to assess any developments in the repairs and maintenance (R&M) area. In general, the property management regime currently in place has been criticised for being reactive and depends on tenants reporting damage to the property managers ( in the case of Alice Springs town camps - CAAHC or DHLGRS) through tenancy officers (CO 2012 p. 34-38). Apart from querying the maintenance and property management regimes in operation, this section also reflects on the quality of construction, especially for the new houses, and the selection of building materials and quality of interventions in the rebuilt and refurbished houses.

The researchers interviewed CAAHC and Tangentyere Design, and further analysed the contents of the CAAHC’s repairs and maintenance database. The latter exercise threw up a number of questions about the housing procurement, what was in scope or not, particularly regarding the Tangentyere Rebuilds. The questions related primarily to cost of repairs and maintenance, length of time that Tangentyere rebuilds remained vacant after completion and the contribution of tenant- related damage to the annualised recurring costs incurred on the house types. There was not enough time in this round to further investigate the anomalies between perceptions about repairs and maintenance and what is in the CAAHC data base. Return visits to the CAAHC and TD databases will be necessary in Stage 2.2 to clarify if possible the discrepancies. .

CAAHC confirmed that the Commonwealth government pays DHLGRS \$7,300 per house annually for repairs and maintenance. It is unclear whether this figure only covers both actual R&M costs and administrative overheads or only actual expenses. Either way, according to CAAHC, this is a rather high payout for the repairs or maintenance of public housing units considering mainstream public housing only costs about \$1,200 per house per annum for responsive repairs and maintenance and \$800 per house per year for cyclical maintenance. The above figures would suggest that the quality of the house and hardware specified or supplied through the public housing system to Indigenous communities does not respond adequately to the known manner of house use impacted by factors such as crowding and continuous flow of visitors. It may also lend weight to HealthHabitat’s claim that the houses themselves are examples of poor workmanship and quality.

Except for TA Refurbs, all other house types reported that nearly 50% (averaged across all house types) of all interviewed households had some form of repair work carried out in the last 6 months. However, there is a spike in the number of ‘new problems’ being recounted by the tenants in each of the interviewed households except in the new houses. New problems in the context of this report refer to the current house-related problems that are being experienced by the respondent while ‘Repairs in the last 6 months’ refers to house problems that were fixed in the last 6 months. In the table below, ‘new problems’ therefore refers to unattended older problems as well as problems that have cropped up more recently and remain unreported to R&M authorities. Refer to the table and chart below.

|                   | <b>Total Houses interviewed for Stage 2.1</b> | <b>Repairs in last 6 months</b> | <b>New Problems</b> |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>New Houses</b> | 13  | 8                               | 10                  |
| <b>TA Rebuild</b> | 12  | 6                               | 10                  |
| <b>TC Rebuild</b> | 9   | 4                               | 8                   |
| <b>TA Refurb</b>  | 5   | 1                               | 3                   |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>39</b>                                     | <b>19</b>                       | <b>31</b>           |



**Figure 1 Comparing repairs in the last 6 months against new problems for each house type as a percentage of interviewed households in St 2.1**

The new houses appear to have a high demand for repairs and maintenance (R&M) that does not seem to vary over time. Much of the repair work carried out has occurred around wall cracks and other teething problems associated with a new house. The new problems being reported are a mix of use-related problems or sometimes unattended problems that were reported earlier. CAAHC noted in their interview (Berriman and Davidson 2012) that in their view too much is being spent on the maintenance of the new houses.

With the TA and Tangentyere rebuilds and TA refurbished houses, proportionately fewer repairs have been carried out when compared with the new houses. However, significantly higher numbers of new problems have surfaced with all the rebuilt and refurbished house types. Residents reported new problems like leaking taps, doors, screen doors and windows, heaters, stove and air conditioner in the TA rebuilds. The new problems in the TA rebuilds were related to blocked drains, choked sewage, flowing flush, oven functioning, damaged fence, and poorly functioning solar hot water systems. The high incidence of new problems could be a direct consequence of the ageing housing fabric of refurbished and rebuilt house types. However, in CAAHC's estimation and according to residents, the Tangentyere rebuilt houses have performed better from a maintenance perspective than the TA equivalent (Berriman and Davidson 2012).

Drawing on statistics received from CAAHC, the largest chunk of R&M expenditure is related to the trade category carpenter/ builder (40% - averaged across all house types) followed closely by the trade category plumber (about 27% - averaged across all house types). See figure 2 below.

While the pattern of R&M expenses for the rebuilt and refurbished houses appears to be consistent, it is quite different for the new houses where the relative plumbing costs have been quite low and the carpenter/builder costs have been quite high.

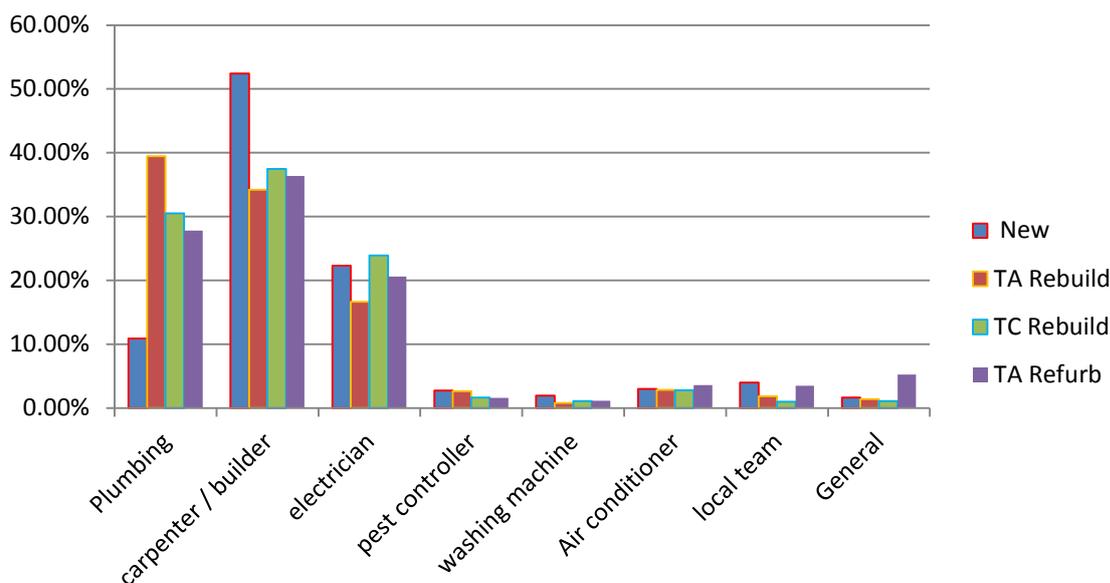


Figure 2 Contribution (%) of various trades to total R&M costs (Sept 2010 - October 2012). Source: CAAHC data

The nature of problems for each of the house types is as follows:

*New*

- From Figure 2 above, approximately 50% of R&M expenditure in the new houses is devoted to the trade classified as 'carpenter / builder' for the new houses. The next highest contributor to R&M expenses for this house type is the electrical instalment whose share of expense is about 22% of the total.
- From the CAAH data, a large proportion of the 'builder / carpenter' work is related to the repair/replacement of doors, windows, mesh, screen doors, door/window hardware etc'. This is consistent with Barker's observation about the flimsiness of the installed screen doors.

- The repair of walls does not appear in the list unless it is classified as tenant damage. This is also because much of the wall repair cost was borne by the supplier/contractor who installed the walls even, in some instances, after the defects liability period as confirmed by Barker.
- The electrical installation related to the stoves, fans and associated switches and controls, smoke detector replacement and repairs are amongst main contributors to the electrical R&M costs. Some of this may be due to tenant damage as well.
- The main contributors to the plumbing expenses are related to blockages in the toilet drains, hot water system repairs, repairs to taps and fixtures, fixing miscellaneous leaks etc. Plumbing, contributes 11% to the R&M cost of each new house. Infrastructure issues may be a contributor to these costs. The plumbing infrastructure is particularly poor and is only now being renewed in a small number of town camps.

#### *TA Rebuild*

- In the TA rebuilds, nearly 40% of the average R&M expenditure is related to plumbing issues. A large proportion of the costs are channelled towards the repairs and maintenance of the hot water systems—which are mainly solar) There were a number of old HWS that were to be replaced but were not within the scope of works. There were also blocked drains, maintenance & repairs of taps and fixtures etc.
- Nearly 34% of the expenses are directed to carpenter / builder for repairs to doors and windows, mesh, door hardware, installing fittings and fixtures (toilet paper & soap holders, shelving for increased storage etc.).
- The electrical problems are related to HWS installation, replacement, service and repairs of stoves and washing machines, wiring installation, no vermin protection, repair and replacement of light fittings, smoke detectors etc. Electrical problems constitute nearly 17% to the cost of R&M for TA Rebuilds.
- CAAHC were informed that DHLGRS ceased undertaking pest control on a 6 monthly basis in 2011. This has created electrical issues with many appliances and household wiring.

#### *Tangentyere Rebuild*

- Nearly 38% of the annual average expense for R&M in the Tangentyere Rebuilds is expended on the trade category of ‘carpenter / builder’. Repairs to doors, windows, security/insect screens, block work, installing shelving, fittings & fixtures, installing and repairing door hardware, kitchen repairs, painting, tile floor repairs etc. CAAHC suggested that these items may not have been within the upgrade scope but needed replacement over time. This will be confirmed with Tangentyere Design during the next stage.
- There appears to be a relatively high incidence of wall repairs and waterproofing issues in the shower areas. There is also an unusually high incidence of retrofitting with towel rails, shelves and clothes hooks in the bathrooms/toilets. It is unclear from the CAAH data whether this involves installation of new fittings or repairs to existing ones. The internal doors too are reported to need more attention when compared with other house categories. CAAHC claim that tenant- related damage could be a factor here.
- 30% of the R&M spending is accounted for by plumbing works, such as attending to and repairing problems with the solar HWS including installation

issues, repairs and replacement of taps and bathroom fittings, removing drain blockages, fixing laundry tub installation and drainage etc. CAAHC noted that the solar HWS were not upgraded in the scope of works. Most solar HWS have to be serviced every year and the water and extreme temperature here mean that the casing splits and the service normally costs about \$500 per year. There were also no roofing upgrades and many of the HWS pipes were exposed to the elements creating leaks and bust water pipes.

- Another issue to be explored further is what seems to be a much higher incidence of problems with drainage in the Tangentyere Rebuild houses when compared with the other house types. This could partially explain the relative high expenditure on plumbing in this house category. CAAHC advised that, depending on camps, this may be an infrastructure issue or TC leaving building rubbish in the drains etc.
- 23% of the R&M budget is dedicated to electrical issues in the house. The electrical issues include repair and replace switchboards, smoke detector/alarm replacement, and electrical issues with stoves. According to CAAHC, vermin damage was a major problem in 2011 due to the unseasonably wet summer and autumn.
- A high incidence of stove-related issues and HWS in the Tangentyere houses may be related to the problems with power installation. New stoves were included in the scope of works but were of a different brand from those that were provided by Territory Alliance. The TA supplied and installed stoves have reported fewer problems as per CAAHC repair and maintenance data. This problem could be due to a number of possibilities, e.g. the brand supplied by Tangentyere may not be of a good quality, but there may also be the issue of incorrect or poor electrical installation. More information will be sought from CAAHC.
- Broffman (2012) indicated that he was not entirely satisfied with the workmanship in the Tangentyere rebuilds in Stage 1 and 2 of the process, however, things did improve in Stage 3. He further said that the fragmented and dispersed subcontracting system adopted by the Tangentyere rebuild head contractor made quality control difficult. Each house was subcontracted by the head contractor to a general carpenter who was responsible for the coordination of all other trades involved in the house construction. This led to a high level of inconsistency across each of the Tangentyere rebuild houses. Broffman felt that the head contractor could have achieved higher consistency in quality control by maintaining a direct role in managing quality of trades other than only carpentry. If possible, it will be worth exploring further how Territory Alliance managed quality control across their project. It appears that TA also experienced some quality issues with specific trades such as concreter, painter and carpenter/builder.
- As compared with the 6 month defect liability period in the contract for TA houses, the defects liability period in the contract for the Tangentyere rebuilds is 12 months. Workmanship and quality can be directly related to the length of a contractor's liability for materials and installation, which provides users 6 months longer to identify and repair builder's defects. Based on this, the inference can be drawn that if a contractor is only liable for his work 6 months rather than 1 year, he or she is more likely to cut corners with quality and workmanship, if they are not concerned that their long term reputation is affected.

### *TA Refurb*

- Nearly 37% of the R&M expense for this category can be attributed to the carpenter / builder. The works carried out under this trade and house category include installing shelving and other fittings, repairs to doors and windows including hardware, roof repairs, installation of insect and security screens,
- There is a higher incidence of roof repairs and roof leakage and repairs to windows and doors in this house type in comparison with the other house types. Fixing loose block work and repairs to Perspex windows and louvers has added to the expense for maintenance cost. The bulk of the repairs to the doors have to do with the replacing of door hardware. Also re-meshing of insect screens appears to be a recurring problem under this category.
- The plumbing issues mainly involve fixing leaks, clearing blocked drains, replacing or repairing fittings, repairs to the HWS and burst pipes mainly outside but sometimes inside too. There are however some incidents of poor installation associated with both the supply pipe installations (viz. the water meter and isolation valves) as also with the waste disposal installations and the solar HWS (viz. the tempering valves).
- Electrical problems are mainly to do with light fittings, stoves, ceiling fans and smoke detectors. Stoves are a major contributor to the electrical cost because on an average they cost over \$900 to replace. CAAHC was of the opinion that the installed stoves were a poor design and had no vermin proofing.
- Costs under the trade category 'General' is relatively high when compared with the other house types – approx. 5% when compared with say 1.5% for the other house types. There is a high recurrence of cleaning up houses which has ramped up the jobs and the relative cost associated with the trade category 'general'. Not only does it include cleaning up the house itself, but includes activities such as disposal of abandoned white goods and cleaning up the yard.

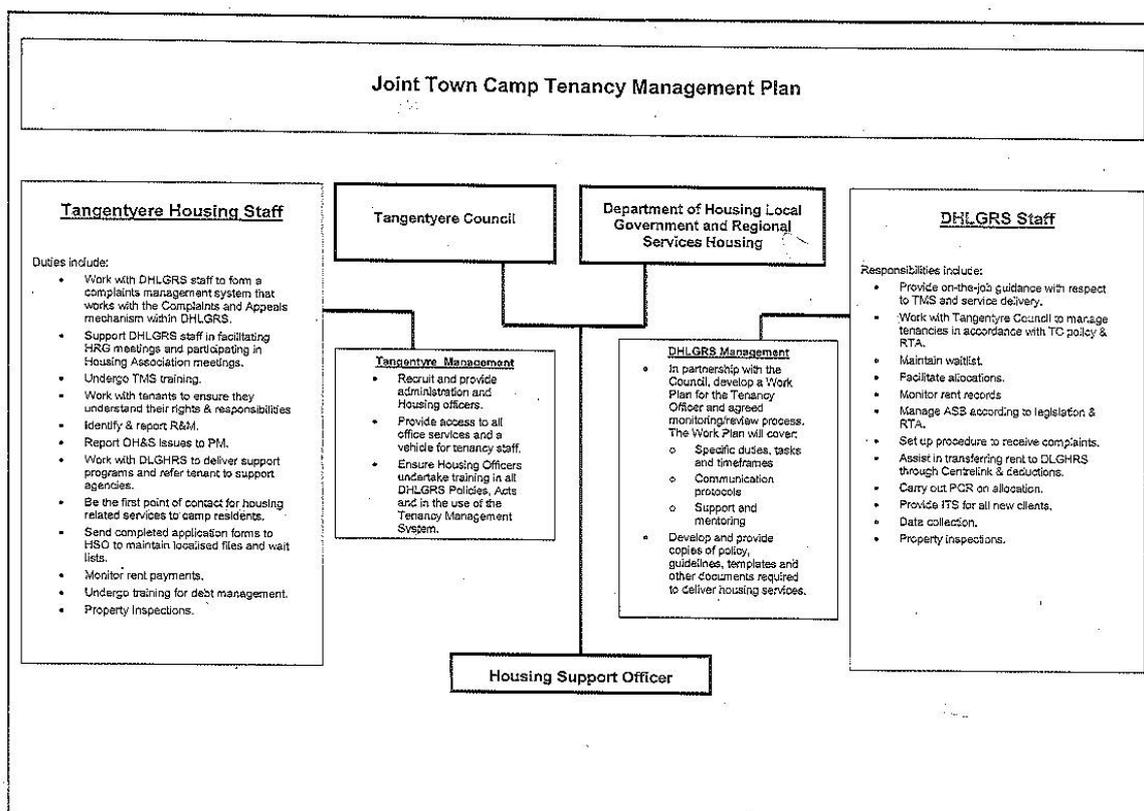
### *Reporting R&M*

There is clearly a fair bit of confusion amongst residents of the town camps about who to report repair and maintenance problems to. This was also confirmed in our interviews with CAAHC and TH (also known as DHLGRS - see figure 3 below). In many cases, some issues were allegedly reported a year or two ago and often times to multiple agencies. In many instances, residents reported a lack of response to the lodged complaint. Others said that they were weary from reminding property management staff about their maintenance issues. DHLGRS claim that maintenance and repairs are carried out irrespective of who it is reported to (Harley 2012).

The Commonwealth Ombudsman's Report (2012 p. 34) highlighted the following weaknesses in the property management (R&M) systems introduced through the NT remote housing reforms which also and equally apply to the Alice Springs town camps:

- The quality of communication – complaints getting lost in the system, lack of clarity about how the system works or what recourse tenants have for inaction, poor feedback mechanism to keep tenants updated.
- Timeliness and responsiveness to R&M requests – systemic problems around timeframes for repairs, monitoring of progress by DHLGRS, classification (immediate, urgent or routine) of repair requests
- Weaknesses in the systems and processes underpinning the new arrangements – lack of a centralised, coordinated and shared R&M database accessible to all levels of service providers, lack of transparency at the front end of the process.

Adding to the complexity of the relationship between DHLGRS and CAAHC has been the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP), which has an overarching responsibility for the rollout of SIHIP. Their responsibilities and mandate is to coordinate and monitor services to town camps with DHLGRS. ASTP pays for the tenancy management, but is delivered by DHLGRS who have partially subcontracted the service to CAAHC (Brand and Martin 2012).



**Figure 3 Complex relationship as well as joint tenancy and property management responsibilities shared between CAAHC (Tangentyere Council) and DHLGRS (TH) Source: CAAHC**

A prominent resident in one of the town camps blamed the lack of initiative on DHLGRS, claiming that their procedures were overly bureaucratic and that decisions were made in Darwin. Two tenants believe that maintenance under DHLGRS has deteriorated when compared with the Housing Association. While in a report prior to signing up of leases, The Australian reported that some of the residents of town camps accused Tangentyere Council of ignoring their housing plight too. Although, integral to the project, it is worthwhile further investigating how residents now feel about the transition from community housing to public housing in terms of allocation as well as repairs and maintenance.

With regards to repairs and maintenance, some residents said that DHLGRS staff photographed and took copious notes on the issues that they had complained about, but did not act on it. It is evident, based on our interviews with CAAHC and DHLGRS, that

DHLGRS has a method for prioritising repairs. However, the method is not clear to residents, and nor is there a system for keeping residents updated on the status of their report.

According to DHLGRS (Harley 2012), Tenancy Managers for Alice Springs town camps are allocated 50 dwellings each as against 100 dwellings each for Tenancy Managers in remote areas. This is in deference to the complexity and politicisation of town camp housing. Harley admitted that although there are many layers of government acting simultaneously in the town camps, confusing matters, the aim was not to let the tenants be affected. However the tenants are affected by the delays in repairs and the confusion surrounding who to report house problems to.

CAAHC proposed, as a part of their tender submission for tenancy and property management of Alice Springs town camps, the creation of Tenancy Management Officers (TMO) who will be responsible not only for recording and reporting maintenance, but also to provide tenants with ‘ maintenance notification numbers’ and keep tenants updated on approvals and disapprovals of maintenance requests (Berriman 2012).

CAAHC have also recommended to DHLGRS an annual cyclical management plan, which would include and budget for a preventative maintenance measure which has so far been ignored (Berriman and Davidson 2012).

Although practically all tenants are aware that tenants pay for and are responsible for wilful damage inflicted on the property including that caused by visitors, the lack of clarity around the type of damage is a source of stress. Many respondents said that even though they had not paid for any visitor related damage so far, it worried them, which then had an impact on their families. Berriman and Davidson (2012) feel that the transition to making tenants responsible for their house represents a major ‘mind shift’ for people who have never been responsible for their house. This is also a finding of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (2012 p. 41) with regards to tenancy procedures introduced through remote housing reforms operationalized in the NT since 2008.

When a visitor damages the property, it is incumbent on the tenant to report the damage to the police. This could have several potential repercussions for the tenant. At least one of the respondents noted that an angry visitor damaged the power box of the house. CAAHC has said that replacement of damaged power boxes is fairly common. This requirement could therefore be detrimental to reporting damage when it occurs. It is worth noting, further, that one of the tenants commented said that if visitors paid for damage, they also felt that they had an entitlement to stay longer than welcome, a situation that poses a conundrum for residents.

#### **4.5. Tenancy**

The tenancy section of the interview related to tenancy sought understand the level of comfort that tenants felt with the new tenancy arrangements and rules that have come into force with SIHIP.

Under SIHIP, the new tenancy management system was designed to follow a social housing model as a part of normalising the town camps. Reformed tenancy and property management

are amongst the foundational objectives of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) (ANAO 2011 p. 122). A performance indicator for improved tenancy management as identified by NPARIH was the introduction of a 'standard' property inspection regime. Although not a part of the Stage 2.1 interview, some tenants reported that property inspections tended to be ad hoc in nature and not regular, let alone quarterly as promised. Some residents, responding to the question of tenancy rules, related that inspections as a source of stress, knowing that they would be required to pay repairs if any damages were found to the house. Inspections were therefore largely seen by tenants as a punitive instrument rather than a support mechanism for building sustainable tenancies. CAAHC informed the researchers that they were not aware of any clear policy within DHLGRS on what constitutes tenant-related damage (Berriman and Davidson 2012). This aspect of tenancy management, including inspections as support, clearly needs some further investigation to analyse its effectiveness.

CAAHC reported in their interview in early August this year that there has been a spurt in the reports of tenant-related damage since they have taken on R&M responsibilities and of these, 60-70% of the damage is on account of visitors (Berriman and Davidson 2012). The tenants however do not generally attribute high damage to visitors. Even though Lea and Pholeros (2010) place the blame on the poor condition of the Indigenous housing, that is poor workmanship and poor quality, the figures from CAAHC suggest otherwise as noted above. Several attempts were made to separate out 'tenant related damage' from routine repairs figures in the CAAHC data but were unsuccessful on account of the lack of compatibility between DHLGRS's and CAAHC's software for managing assets. This issue is further complicated by the lack of definition within DHLGRS around what constitutes 'tenant related damage'.

Housing allocation, which is an important aspect of tenancy management, is a contested issue. Although DHLGRS claims that they follow the HRG recommendations in allocation matters '99%' of the time, DHLGRS also acknowledges that HRGs are advisory bodies only and that DHLGRS take the HRG's recommendations into account before making a decision on allocation (Harley 2012). DHLGRS has been known to use discretionary powers in its allocation of houses, sometimes in opposition to the advice received from the HRGs. Such decisions directly impact the community bonds within the camp, but also undermine the authority of the HRG, and more importantly, it results in communities feeling that they are losing control of their town camps. The relationship between the housing allocation process and a sense of loss of control is yet another theme needing deeper analysis and confirmation in the continuing interviews with other HRG members in the last stage. . The vicissitudes of the loss and gain of control of the immediate living environment through changing housing policies is an often repeated theme in much of the Indigenous housing reports and political literature over the years (Barker 2003; Harris 2012; Neutze 2000). Further, the loss of control of one's life situation experienced as a consequence of housing tenure directly impacts emotional well-being and would therefore lead to higher levels of stress (Biddle 2011 p. 17).

Tenancy Support services were reinforced as another measure by SIHIP to create sustainable tenancies in Indigenous communities (ANAO 2011). The idea behind this was to impart information to tenants with regards to their rights and responsibilities as public housing tenants. This is currently the responsibility of DHLGRS. However, HRG members we spoke to said that tenancy rules were not explained to the HRG, since only a few members received invitations on time to be able get to attend HRG meetings which are held outside the camp.

As mentioned previously, despite sending out newsletters and requests to HRG members that we were aware of in the six town camps to speak with us, we only received a single response. However, we received a list of names of HRG members from CAAHC, which enabled this. However, it is worth noting that despite numerous attempts to follow up, DHLGRS would not provide a list of HRG members and even claimed that they do not call HRG meetings. We know from CAAHC that this is not the case and that it is DHLGRS that calls the HRG meetings.

Given that under SIHIP, DHLGRS has established and relies on HRGs for local community input on housing issues in the community, the lack of transparency and access to HRGs is surprising. Considering their pivotal role in housing outcomes, it is necessary to engage with the HRGs more deeply as well as extensively. In order to do this, it is proposed to deliver the stage 2.1 newsletters personally to HRG members and residents rather than dropping individualised newsletters and requests in the mail box. If necessary, it is proposed to organise a barbecue or sausage sizzle in each of the six town camps to informally gather residents' and HRG members' opinions.

Just about all the respondents want to receive a statement from DHLGRS that indicates their most up to date status on rent payments or other housing related arrears. It is not clear why this is not provided. The Ombudsman's Report and the Maintaining Houses for Better Health Report (2012; Mansell and Sowerbutts 2011) identify an inadequate IT system currently in use that is struggling to cope with the changes introduced or out of step with procedural practices. Multiple and uncoordinated computer systems, the Ombudsman's Report claims, make it both difficult and slow to issue rental statements. The report further states, "...procedural fairness plays a key role in people's trust of agencies and governments, and contributes to the willingness of people to cooperate with agencies and comply with rules".

In our interviews with residents and HRG members, as well as in other reports, the lack of trust in the government is evident in responses and this was clearly having an impact on the overall experience of housing from a user perspective (CO 2012; Harris 2012). For example, many residents felt stressed about inspections and the financial impact it could have on them (since tenants do not receive rental statements or deduction receipts for damage taken directly from Centrelink payments). CAAHC too stressed that the reporting mechanism currently in place privileged the asset rather than the tenant because it is more orientated towards identifying tenant-related damage or tenant obligations of maintenance rather than on tenant's rights or landlord's duty to maintain the asset (Berriman and Davidson 2012; Mansell and Sowerbutts 2011).

## 5. Summary and recommendations

### 5.1. Summary of themes

#### *Households*

There were no significant changes in the households. However, the topic of visitors is one of the key areas that contribute to stress in the household. Visitor management is a focus of tenancy management and had been identified as one of the key contributors to overcrowding in Aboriginal homes which was the impetus for the implementation of SIHIP.

The issue of visitors is multifaceted. On the one hand, tenants seemed pleased to have extended family visiting. On the other hand, having visitors seemed to result in household stress. Almost half of the respondents expressed increased stress on account of visitors. This was mainly due to alcohol or drug related behaviour and to an increased financial burden by supporting visitors.

Tenants also expressed their stress when asked about the TH rules of paying for damages and if the tenants would enforce TH rules of visitors paying for damages they have caused. Most tenants are aware that they have the right to enforce that rule but seem reluctant to do so on account of repercussions or providing a path for visitors to attain some level of control over the tenant's house rather than empowering the tenant. Some felt that them paying for the damages their visitors would cause was part of being a house boss.

However the tenancy rules that restrict visitors appear to have been embraced as a means of empowering households and enhancing a sense of safety. This is despite CAAHC's view that that the 6-week visitor restriction aspect of the tenancy rules has not been very effective in handling or restricting visitors, because visitors leave and return one weeks later to start the clock again (Berriman 2012).

#### *Design*

Questions about design or exploration of the extent in which tenants took active measures to improve their house and yard revealed that not many tenants made changes to their house. The data suggests that this is not because tenants don't want to make changes but are either/both unable to do so due to the lack of money and feel inhibited through the TH tenancy rules. Some felt it was too much effort to go through the process of getting written approval.

Changes tenants would like to make relate back to what was identified by tenants during the interviews in Stage 1. For example, some tenants in the new houses would like more storage space, change their stainless steel kitchen bench, to have guttering between their house and car port or enclose the laundry room.

Some tenants in TA refurbishment are still unhappy with partially completed jobs such as painting the inside of the house, more storage space and bigger kitchen. Most residents of the

Tangentyere rebuilds expressed satisfaction with their houses, with little and even in one instance no desire to make improvements to their houses.

Most tenants had made some improvements/changes to their yard such as cleaning the yard, some landscaping and planting. All tenants would like to make improvements to their yards such as planting trees, flowers, get the fence fixed to create a safer and better outdoor space.

### *Feeling*

Questions about how tenants are feeling about their house and therefore establishing if tenants have adapted to their house and yard, revealed that most tenants who lived in the TA new or TA rebuilt houses felt 'more comfortable' or comfortable in their houses. Similarly, most tenants of the Tangentyere rebuilt houses felt more comfortable in their houses.

Only half of the tenants in the TA refurbished house felt more comfortable and did so because of having lived in their house for a long time. The other half who felt less comfortable did so because of having the same old problems in their house.

This could suggest that tenants in the TA refurbished house may have had higher expectations about the work that was to be carried out to improve their houses, but this will need further exploration.

### *Infrastructure works*

Most respondents in all interviewed town camps view the completed new infrastructure works in Trucking Yards as a very positive development and would like the same for their town camps. Tenants were particularly interested in the safety aspects that sealed roads with speed bumps and streetlights would bring to their town camps. Street signs named or would be named after significant town camp community members instilled a sense of pride in the residents.

Tenants had mixed responses to the questions if the new works had strengthened the community bond. Some said it had, others said it was the same and some felt that it was worse because of the changes to the housing allocation practice through which residents feel a sense of loss of control in managing their town camp as well as in the ability to choose your neighbours.

### *Repairs*

Other than the TA Refurbishments, almost half of all other house types reported that some repair work was done in the last 6 months such as:

New houses had the cracks in their walls fixed, screen door, taps and electrical problems.

TA Rebuilds had plumbing fixed, bedroom window, taps and air-conditioner.

Tangentyere Rebuilds had bedroom window fixed, taps and plumbing.

Other than for new houses, more new problems are being reported which are a mix of unattended issues that were reported earlier or problems resulting from general use or damage. Some tenants were reluctant to report some of those problems for fear of having to pay for these. The lack of clarity around the type of damage that residents (or visitors) are responsible to pay for is a source of stress. Also, tenants seem to still be confused as to whom to report these problems too.

### *Tenancy Management*

Under SIHIP, a new tenancy management system was designed to follow a public housing model which includes a standard property inspection regime rather than a community housing model as was run by Housing Associations. .

Most tenants in all TA housing types were not worried about paying rent. However, most tenants in Tangentyere Rebuilds were worried about it. Similarly with Territory Housing rules, other than Tangentyere Rebuilds, most of the tenants in all other house types are not worried about Territory Housing rules. Some said that the TH rules are good because you got to look after your house well and it also helps with the visitors (management). However, residents are stressed by house inspections as it is unclear to them what damage they would be required to pay. At the moment, tenants do not receive any payment records from TH. All tenants would like to get records.

## **5.2 Directions for Stage 2.2**

The results of both Stage 1 and Stage 2.1 of the POE will inform the shape of the final round of interviews and the second survey in March 2013. The survey and interviews will be fully developed in collaboration with Tangentyere Design, Tangentyere Research Hub, the Tangentyere Executive and consultants Will Sanders and Paul Memmott. The following outlines the approach, with reference to issues discussed in this report as well as the earlier, June 2012 report.

### ***House Survey***

Each house will be surveyed again, to provide a comparison to the survey conducted in March 2012. The survey will provide an assessment of the impact of use on the house, the effectiveness of the design in relation to meeting the objectives of the Critical Healthy Living Practices explored in Stage 1, and any physical adaptations made by the tenants of the house and yard. The outcomes and findings of the survey will inform decisions related to the choice of materials and design that Tangentyere Council may use for future town camp housing. . The parallel study by RMIT, which will be completed early in 2013, will provide further insight into some of the heating/cooling aspects of the town camp housing to complement this POE.

The results of the survey will also be mapped against factors such as actual usage and accommodating visitors in order to draw a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the house design.

### ***Tenant Interview***

In addition to establishing any changes to household composition, interviews in the Stage 2.2 will review perceptions of how the house is working after one year and how tenants are ‘feeling ‘ about their homes. As it has become clear in the past two rounds of interviews that the tenancy and property management regimes are sources of confusion or obstacles to residential enjoyment, the interview will focus particularly on issues specific to tenancy and repairs and maintenance. How, for example, can the rules be more supportive of tenants, particularly those who have lived in their houses for over 20 years? How can the tenancy management regimes take into account ‘cultural fit’ or diversity in its many forms. Is there a way to ‘normalise’ or mainstream tenancy arrangements in town camps while simultaneously

providing the flexibility to tenants to allow adaptation by tenants to accommodate changing life circumstances such as family, visitors, or illness? The interviews will explore how the residents themselves perceive how tenancy and property management might be improved through questions such as:

- What are good rules that help you? (with the house, visitors etc.)
- What other things would help you to accommodate your visitors/ manage your house and yard?
- What process do you think would work best for knowing about what happens with repairs and maintenance?

### ***Approach (Methodology)***

In order to avoid the risk of further reduction in the households interviewed, the evaluation team will be seeking to actively re-engage all of those residents interviewed in the first Stage. Activities such as barbeques and interim visits or other mechanisms will be considered, alongside the planned distribution of information about the project results and posters alerting town camp residents to the final round's purpose. Ongoing visible support from Tangentyere Council itself and a mix of arrangements with the Tangentyere Research Hub to accommodate schedules will also be sought to generate enthusiastic participation in Stage 2.2.

With regard to the institutional stakeholders, the interviews and access to databases where permitted were informative. Anomalies that arose in the process, e.g. the difference in perceptions of repairs and what was recorded by CAAHC, will be further investigated through repeat interviews and further data analysis. Other stakeholders have also been identified for interview, including Tangentyere Constructions, other Housing Reference Group representatives (in particular Ilpeye Ilpeye); Ingerreke; Anglicare and Tangentyere tenancy support organisations; and materials suppliers, including wall supplier Ritek. It is hoped by the evaluation team that the results of Stage 2.2 will provide clear guidance to Tangentyere about where to focus its efforts in improving housing amenity in the town camps. This is particularly with regard to improvement in the tenancy and property management regimes, both of which have become increasingly prominent issues for town camp residents and other stakeholders, and which became increasingly evident in the interviews held in the interim Stage 2.1. Further, it is hoped that the next round will point the way to further research to resolve other emerging issues, such the role of the HRGs, or the energy efficiency of passive solar methods such as custom orb cladding in the Tangentyere rebuilds in light of rising electricity costs to the consumer. NT Government agencies and Territory Alliance will be approached again to assist in the access to information and data for determining actual value of the delivered housing against expenditure (y referred to as 'value for money'); to date, this has proved difficult to establish due to inadequate data. If sufficient access is not available, some triangulation of and speculation about the information that is available will be necessary to inform Tangentyere and town camp residents about what they are getting in return for their leases.

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. Householder Interview

Town Camp: \_\_\_\_\_ House No: \_\_\_\_\_

House Boss:

same

other (reason?) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. What are the changes in your household?

- **Family**

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- **Visitor**

how many/how long are they allowed to stay

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- **Income/employment**

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- **Stress**

Number of visitors/ overcrowding/ supporting extra visitors or family

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#### DESIGN

#### 2. Did you make Improvements to the house?

- **Lounge** (list improvements/changes made)

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- **kitchen**  
Improved storage?

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- **bedrooms**  
Improved wardrobe/storage?

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- **toilet/bathroom/laundry**

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---

- **other**

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*Take photos of improvements*

**3. Did you make improvements to the yard/outdoor living?** (list improvements/changes made)

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*Take photos of improvements*

**4. What are the improvements you would like to make?** (not what improvements you want others to make for you)

- **House** (list improvements/changes made)

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- **Yard/outdoor living**

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**FEELING**

**5. Do you feel more comfortable in the house now?**

- **Coping with winter/ getting used to house and yard/adapting to problems in the house/yard**

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**6. How are you feeling about the major changes in the town camp?**

- **Roads/drains**

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- Letterboxes/street names

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- Streetlights

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7. How close has the community bond been since the new houses/work was done?  
(sense of community and closeness)

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- feeling safe

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### Maintenance

8. Have repairs been done in the last 6 month?

- yes
- no

- What was repaired?

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- **Any new problems?**

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- **Have you reported the problem, when and to whom?**

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- **What was the response?**

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*Take photos of maintenance issues*

**9. Who pays for any damages?**

- **Do you pay for it?**

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- **Visitors**

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**10. Do you worry about paying for damages?**

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- **How does that affect you and your family?**

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**TENANCY MANAGEMENT**

**11. What are the things that worry you about the house?**

- **Paying rent**

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- **Territory Housing rules**

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- **Visitors (damaging things/understanding how to use the house)**

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- **Other**

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**12. Do you or your visitors have problems operating things?**

- **Air-conditioner**

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- **Toilet flush**

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- **Hot/cold water taps**

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• **Stove/oven** \_\_\_\_\_

• **Tangentyere heating**  
\_\_\_\_\_

• **Other**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**13. Do you get any records of rent payments or other payments from Territory Housing?**

**Yes**      What records? \_\_\_\_\_

**No**      Do you want to know?  
 **Yes**  
 **No**

**THANK YOU**

## 6.2 Summary of Results

This section of the report provides a snapshot of the data that was collected in Stage 2.1.

The data presented below is structured in accordance with the themes identified and used for the interviews. The data presented is further sorted out for each of the four house types. The data is presented both as a statistic and as a condensation of comments received during interviews.

Section 4 of this report analyses the data to extract meaning and develop the themes and the issues for the last and final round of data collection and fieldwork scheduled for March 2013.

### Households

Number of households interviewed

| House types         | Householders interviewed in Stage 1 | Householders interviewed Stage 2.1 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| New Houses          | 20                                  | 13                                 |
| TA Rebuild          | 17                                  | 12                                 |
| TA Refurbished      | 5                                   | 5                                  |
| Tangentyere Rebuild | 11                                  | 9                                  |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>53</b>                           | <b>39</b>                          |

Reasons for decline in interview numbers

| House types         | Sorry business, holidays, visiting family | Unavailable (tried 3 times) | Ill health |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|------------|
| New Houses          | 4   | 2                           | 1          |
| TA Rebuild          | 1   | 4                           | 0          |
| TA Refurbished      | 0   | 0                           | 0          |
| Tangentyere Rebuild | 2   | 0                           | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>7</b>                                  | <b>6</b>                    | <b>1</b>   |

Household composition

| House types         | Same house boss | Same family composition | Same visitor numbers | Same income | Increase in stress * |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| New Houses          | 12              | 9                       | 4                    | 9           | 7                    |
| TA Rebuild          | 11              | 8                       | 4                    | 9           | 6                    |
| TA Refurbished      | 5               | 4                       | 4                    | 4           | 2                    |
| Tangentyere Rebuild | 9               | 6                       | 3                    | 6           | 2                    |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>38</b>       | <b>27</b>               | <b>15</b>            | <b>28</b>   | <b>17</b>            |

\* Increased stress was reported to occur mostly because of visitors, and some from looking after the house and paying rent.

## **Design**

### ***New Houses:***

#### *Improvements made to the House*

Most tenants made no major changes to their house.

Some said they made minor changes such as buying new furniture (cupboards for storage, sofa, lounge chairs, beds) carpet, a fridge and a washing machine. Some put pictures on the wall with sticky tape as not to damage the wall.

#### *Improvements made to the Yard*

Most tenants said they made changes to their yard – such as cleaning their yard, planting trees and flowers, making a garden bed, looking after their lawn, building a windbreak to sit outside, put sheet of iron for fire,

#### *Improvements you would like to make to the House*

Many tenants (2/3) would like to make improvements to their house but lack money to do so.

Changes they would like to make are getting new furniture (tables and chairs, bed), new washing machine, put up posters and pictures, hang curtains, add gutters between carport and roof, put up a rack for tools in passageway, get locks on bedroom doors, get shower curtain.

Other improvements are outside their control such as take out the stainless steel kitchen bench, add more storage (bigger and better), enclose the laundry area and change their bathroom. One third of the tenants liked the house as it is.

#### *Improvements you would like to make to the Yard*

All tenants said they want make improvements to their yard such as planting more fruit trees, shade trees and flowers, building a bough shed (if they are allowed to do so), get a little garden shed, buy a shovel, clean the yard, screen their verandah and create more shade in the back to sit.

One tenant would like a campfire but isn't sure if he is allowed to make one.

### ***TA Rebuild:***

#### *Improvements made to the House*

Just over half of the tenants said they made small changes to their house such as buying some furniture for the lounge room, new fridge in the kitchen as well as new pots, pans, plates and cutlery.

One tenant put in a storage boxes for pots and pans.

One tenant who did not make changes said that they cannot make changes because they need permission for everything.

#### *Improvements made to the Yard*

Less than half of tenants said they made small changes to their yard, mainly cleaning it.

### *Improvements you would like to make to the House*

Almost all tenants would like to make improvements to their house but lack the money to do so.

Improvement they would like to make are: hang pictures of family, hang posters and paintings, hang curtains, buy more furniture, make the lounge & kitchen bigger, more storage in the kitchen for saucepans, change stainless steel kitchen bench back to old plywood bench, enclose and improve the sleep out (including ceiling fan, tile the floor), shelves in the bedroom, get locks and buy carpets.

### *Improvements you would like to make to the Yard*

Almost all tenants would like to make improvements to their yard but lack money right now to do so.

Improvement they would like to make are: plant more trees, make a garden, plant flowers, hanging baskets with flowers on the veranda, grade the ground, put in lawn, fix the fence and gates, use my fire bucket in the yard (but they don't allow it), protection from sun and rain around the veranda, get a clothesline at the right height and location for old ladies to be able to use.

### ***TA Refurbished:***

#### *Improvements made to the House*

Half of the tenants said they made small changes to their house such as put photos on wall, put up curtain, put up shower curtain and bought carpet.

#### *Improvements made to the Yard*

One tenant made improvements to their yard by planting trees, putting up pot plants, and shade on veranda (see photos)

#### *Improvements you would like to make to the House*

All tenants said they want to make improvements to their house such as hang some pictures, get a fan over the stove, get new air-conditioner, buy some new furniture and curtains, get new fridge and locks for bedroom doors.

Over half of the tenants want to get the inside of their house painted as it was only half completed by TA.

#### *Improvements you would like to make to the Yard*

All tenants said they want to make improvements to their yard such as planting trees including fruit trees such as mulberry tree, plant flowers, make a vegetable garden, make a nice lawn, get ground levelled, get fence fixed,

### ***Tangentyere Rebuild:***

#### *Improvements made to the House*

Most tenants said they did not make any changes to their house. One tenant said that they are happy with the house as it is.

### *Improvements made to the Yard*

Most tenants said they did not make any changes to their yard. Some tenants cleaned up their yard.

### *Improvements you would like to make to the House*

Most tenants said they want to make improvements to their house but have not got the money yet to do so.

Changes they would like to make are such as get furniture for the lounge room, get curtains, get proper storage in kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and laundry, put photos on the wall. One tenant would like to get a bigger kitchen, lounge room and wider veranda.

### *Improvements you would like to make to the Yard*

Most tenants said they want to make improvements to their yard such as getting more shade and fruit trees, get lawn around the house for dust control, plant flowers, get better fencing (one tenants said their yard was to big now and they like their fence closer to the house again).

## **Feeling**

### *New Houses:*

Most tenants said they felt comfortable in their house and coped alright with the winter even though most tenants also said that the house was very cold during the winter, in particular the tiled floor, and wind coming through the gaps of the air-conditioner and not well sealed window.

Most tenants bought heaters to stay warm.

### *Changes in the town camp*

Tenants thought the completed new infrastructure at Trucking Yards was very good. Tenants at Trucking Yards said they feel their town camp has changed for the better because of the new road, streetlights, street names and letterboxes. Issues they identified were awkward placements of driveways and the kerbs being too high.

Everyone likes the street light as it provides more security. Tenants said they are proud of important family names having become the street names in their town camp. They also said street names are important for taxis and ambulances to find the right house.

Even though most tenants are happy with letterboxes, they also said that the letterbox cannot be used because mail doesn't get delivered – they are just decorative at the moment.

Larapinta and Hidden Valley were in the process of getting their infrastructure installed and some residents had issues with the dust and noise.

*Community bond since the new houses/work done*

Most tenants said that the community feels stronger than before because everyone is doing their own thing, stick to themselves and doesn't create humbug. Some said it feels the same as before the new houses were build.

*Feeling safe*

Most residents said they feel safe as people stick to themselves and don't cause trouble to other groups.

***TA Rebuild:***

Almost all tenants felt more comfortable in their house; some said they had got used to the house now.

Tenants said the house was very cold during the winter, particularly with the tiled floor, cold wind coming through the gaps in the windows and air-conditioner – some tenants blocked off the gaps using sticky tape and cardboard, and some bought heaters to stay warm.

One tenant bought carpet to stay warm.

*Changes in the town camp*

Most tenants like the infrastructure installed at Trucking Yards (others had no comments). One tenant from another Town Camp said that Trucking Yards now looks 'deadly and flash'.

*Roads/drains*

Most tenants like the new roads. People at Trucking Yards are very happy because it makes Town Camp residents feel good – like you are someone, not 'just a town camper'.

Tenants like particularly the speed bumps as it slows cars down and makes it safer for children and pedestrians.

The tenants who live in a town camp who are not getting new roads would really like to get them in their town camp. They like speed bumps in their roads to stop drunks speeding and make it safer.

*Letterboxes/street names*

Most tenants liked new letterboxes even though some don't have one and there is no mail delivery yet.

Most tenants said that street names are good to identify the house and so things can be dropped off to the right place (e.g. deliveries through on-line shopping or Harvey Norman).

One tenant said that she is proud that their grandparent's names are being rewarded & respected for what they did to make this place.

*Streetlights*

Most Tenants liked new streetlights as it makes the Town Camp safer at night. Tenants from Town Camps without new infrastructure said they really would like streetlights to make it safer.

*Community bond been since the new houses/work done*

Half of the tenants said that the community bond has improved because people now have a place to call 'our own', because families are more aware of each other and maintain their family ties better, because people have their own private space but also participate in community centre (e.g. Larapinta).

“More different people make it more interesting” (said by a young mother in Larapinta).

One tenant said it is good except for other people's visitors who damage property once they get drunk.

Half of the tenants said that the community bond has not improved because there are lots of different people living in the Town Camp now that come from other places and that creates more fighting.

*Feeling safe*

Almost all tenants said they feel safe because they have their family living around them, feel safe in the house, some said they feel safe because of the improved infrastructure such as the footpath for children to walk around, speed bumps to slow down cars, streetlight for safety at night.

One tenant was concerned with the allocation process, as not knowing new neighbours (coming from different places) as compared to family lines, feels unsafe.

***TA Refurbished:***

Half of the tenants felt more comfortable in their house because they had been in the same house for a long time and got used to it, they feel happy with their place.

Half of the tenants did not feel comfortable in their house because the house still had problems such as hole which made it cold and allows snakes to get in even in the winter.

One has problems with her air-conditioner which blows out dust.

Tenants said the house was cold and drafty during the winter. Tenants had to buy heaters which increased their electricity bill.

*Changes in the town camp*

*Roads/drains*

All tenants living with new roads like them. The ones who got them said they are happy as it makes the camp look neater.

The tenants who are not getting new roads said they would like new roads like Trucking Yards. One tenant said a big flood will show how well the drains will work.

### *Letterboxes/street names*

Most tenants liked (or would like) new letterboxes even though there is no mail delivery; 'having street names makes me feel better connected to the camp because it links family to place.'

### *Streetlights*

Most tenants like (or would like) new streetlights as it makes the Town Camp safer and ensures that kids don't step on snakes at night.

### *Community bond since the new houses/work done*

Half of the tenants said that the community bond has improved because everybody sticks to themselves and more family can live here now.

Half of the tenants said that the community bond has not improved but still the same because the old differences are still the same as before and there are differences around housing allocation that are not resolved.

### *Feeling safe*

All tenants feel safe because it is quiet and peaceful where they live, the house is less crowded and people stick to themselves. One said they lock their gates so visitors cannot park in their yard.

### ***Tangentyere Rebuild:***

Almost all tenants felt more comfortable in their house because it is just their family living in their house (less crowded).

All tenants said they coped alright with the winter.

Many tenants said even though the house was cold the Tangentyere ceiling heaters worked well, although three tenants felt the Tangentyere heater didn't work and they had to buy bar heaters.

One tenant said he heard the new houses were cold because the walls were made of board and he is happy to have a solid house.

One tenant had to seal off the evaporative air-conditioner with plastic and sticky tape to keep drafts out.

### *Changes in the town camp*

#### *Roads/drains*

Almost all tenants like the new roads (or would like new roads like Trucking Yards) but like more speed bumps and better driveways (access to driveway) to their house.

### *Letterboxes/street names*

Most tenants liked (or would like) new letterboxes even though there is no mail delivery.

Most tenants like street names because it makes tenants proud to honour their ancestors and family names in the Town Camp. 'I am proud that my grandfather's name is one of the street

names.’ ‘We live on Benno St. which is named after my grandfather. I am happy and proud.’  
‘Proud as my ancestors names are in our community. Good feeling.’

### *Streetlights*

Almost all tenants like (or would like) new streetlights as it makes the Town Camp more safe for children and adults to walk around at night and to see who is coming down the road.

### *Community bond been since the new houses/work done*

Most tenants said that the community bond is better now because families minding their own business. One said it’s the same as it was, still visiting family for yarn (it’s good), One said it wasn’t good because visitors are arguing and fighting.

### *Feeling safe*

All tenants feel safe because they are surrounded by family and also the new footpath and fences around the house make it safer.

## **Maintenance**

### *New Houses:*

#### *Repairs done in last 6 months*

Over half the tenants reported repairs done in the last 6 months. Those were mainly fixing the cracks in the wall and or leaking taps.

#### *Any new problems*

Almost half of the tenants reported new problems such as damaged screen doors, loose hinges on screen doors, problems with screens on windows and doors, broken wardrobe, leaking taps, and one burst pipe in a front yard due to infrastructure works that had not been fixed.

#### *Did you report new problems, when and to whom?*

Tenants are still unclear whom to report to. An equal number of tenants reported to CAAH and to TH, some did both, one reported to the police hoping they would know what to do (his power box and washing machine got smashed).

#### *Who pays for any damage?*

All tenants know they have to pay for damages caused by them – some are unclear what damages are their responsibilities and which ones are not. All tenants are aware that they must pay for damages caused by themselves or their visitors.

#### *Do you worry about paying for damage?*

Most tenants are worried about paying for damages due to lack of funds. They are also worried about arguments that may be caused by asking visitors to pay for damages.

### ***TA Rebuild:***

#### *Repairs done in last 6 months*

Just over half the tenants reported repairs done in the last 6 month. Those were plumbing, outside tap, bedroom window broken, air-conditioner, and new ramp for wheelchair installed.

#### *Any new problems*

Over half of tenants reported new problems such as plumbing, sewage (related to new infrastructure), leaking taps, blocked sink, electrical problems and kitchen cupboards not working.

#### *Did you report new problems, when and to whom?*

Most tenants did report their problems. Over half of them reported it to TH, the other half to CAAH. Tenants are still unclear whom to report to. CAAH is responsible for the repairs and maintenance of the houses of five of the selected six town camps. DHLGRS is responsible only for Ilpeye Ilpeye.

#### *Who pays for any damage?*

Almost all tenants know they have to pay for damages caused by them – some are unclear what are the damages that are their responsibility and which ones are not.

Most tenants said that visitors have to pay for damages they cause, if reported to the police, prior to reporting to DHLGRS. .

#### *Do you worry about paying for damage?*

Most tenants are worried about how much they may have to pay for damages due to lack of funds which could mean no money left for food or power cards,

### ***TA Refurbished:***

#### *Repairs done in last 6 months*

Only one tenants had repairs done in the last 6 months, which was a door coming off its hinges.

#### *Any new problems*

Over half of the tenants had new problems which were a broken stove, broken oven, and outside toilet door.

#### *Did you report new problems, when and to whom?*

Two reported it to TH, one to CAAH.

#### *Who pays for any damage?*

All tenants know they have to pay for damages caused by them – ‘that’s the rule’.

One tenants said that visitors have to pay for damages as that is the TH rule now, two said they would pay. Seems tenants are reluctant to reinforce TH rules with their visitors.

#### *Do you worry about paying for damage?*

Over half of the tenants are worried about how much they may have to pay for damages due to lack of funds which could mean no money left for food or power cards and that is could cause arguments in the family.

One tenant said TH said they owe a lot of money for bond and rent but tenant is unclear how that could be so.

### ***Tangentyere Rebuild:***

#### *Repairs done in last 6 months*

Half of the tenants had repairs done in the last 6 months which were: bedroom windows, leaking taps, blocked sinks, lights.

#### *Any new problems*

Almost all tenants had new problems which were: flywire on screen door, doors, laundry tap, screen door not closing, air-conditioner, stove, heater not working.

#### *Did you report new problems, when and to whom?*

Most tenants said they will or have reported to TH, one reported to CAAH. One tenant reported the problem to Mission Australia who will report it to TH and another to the Community Centre who will report to TH.

#### *Who pays for any damage?*

Most tenants said they will have to pay for damages caused by them – ‘that’s the rule’. Over half of the tenants said that visitors have to pay for damages – that is TH rule now. Tenants have to report the visitors (TH told them so) and then the visitors get a letter - then Centrelink will deduct the money from the visitors. The rest of the tenants said they will pay for the damage caused by the visitors.

#### *Do you worry about paying for damage?*

Almost all tenants worry about paying for damage due to lack of funds. Tenants said if money gets taken out of their accounts, they will not have enough for food. They said it is a big worry as they are struggling to pay rent already.

One tenant said he would ask the person who damages to pay him not TH, but then the visitors will feel that they can stay longer if they have paid for damages.

## **Tenancy Management**

### ***New Houses:***

#### *What are the things that worry you?*

Paying rent: Most tenants are not worried about paying rent.

TH rules: More than half of the tenants are not worried Territory Housing rules.

Visitors: More than half of tenants are not worried about visitors

#### *Any problems operating equipment in the house?*

All tenants said they have no problems operating equipment in the house.

#### *Do you get any records of rent payments/others from TH?*

Most tenants don't receive any records of their payments from the TH, some receive records from Centrelink.

Most tenants want to get records from TH

***TA Rebuild:***

*What are the things that worry you?*

Paying rent: Most tenants are not worried about paying rent.

TH rules: Just over half of the tenants are worried about Territory Housing rules (and housing inspections). The rest of the tenants said that TH rules are good because you got to look after your house well and it also helps with the visitors (management).

Visitors: Most tenants are not worried about visitors but need to tell the visitors how to use the house and equipment in it.

*Any problems operating equipment in the house?*

Most tenants said they have no problems operating any equipment in the house.

*Do you get any records of rent payments/others from TH?*

Most tenants don't receive any records of their payments from the TH; some receive records from Centrelink.

Most tenants want to get records from TH

***TA Refurbished:***

*What are the things that worry you?*

Paying rent: Most tenants are not worried about paying rent.

TH rules: Most tenants are not worried about Territory Housing rules (and housing inspections).

Visitors: Most tenants are not worried about visitors.

*Any problems operating equipment in the house?*

All tenants said they have no problems operating any equipment in the house.

*Do you get any records of rent payments/others from TH?*

None of the tenants have received any records of their payments from the TH.

All tenants want to get records from TH.

***Tangentyere Rebuild:***

*What are the things that worry you?*

Paying rent: Most tenants worried about paying rent.

TH rules: Over half of the tenants are worried about Territory Housing rules (and housing inspections). The others say its ok – the rules help in a way to stay strong; some tenants don't know the rules but are not worried about that.

Visitors: Most tenants are worried about visitors. They worry about any damages they might do and then the tenants have to pay for it (or deal with the visitors).

*Any problems operating equipment in the house?*

Most tenants said they have no problems operating any equipment in the house and they show their visitors how their house and equipment works.

*Do you get any records of rent payments/others from TH?*

None of the tenants have received any records of their payments from the TH.

All tenants want to get records from TH.

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