

The Equal Opportunity Commission's Housing Investigation Update

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The Equal Opportunity Commission has made good progress in work with the Department of Housing and Works on ways to put in place the outcomes of the Housing Inquiry.

An Action Plan was drafted in October 2005 and agreed on in March 2006. This grouped the 165 recommendations of the Inquiry into three themes:

- Promote Aboriginal accessibility, staff awareness and understanding;
- Review policy which impacts differentially on Aboriginal clients; and
- Manage property and administer services mindful of Aboriginal culture/issues.

The Department of Housing and Works (DHW) will do these using five strategies:

1. **New Training** - Looking at better ways of delivering services to Aboriginal people
2. **Clearer Communication** – improving ways and means of talking and writing to Aboriginal clients and their advocates
3. **Get Feedback** – seeking input through local consultation, complaints and suggestions for improvement, appropriate planning
4. **Review and Reform** – new policy and procedures to improve mainstream Aboriginal housing and remote area Aboriginal community housing
5. **New Models** – better styles of housing and housing service in urban and remote settings that customise design to Aboriginal families/people.

DHW will take a few months to complete some of the actions such as communicating in Plain English. For others such as Training this will begin later this year. The biggest changes, requiring review and reform will take place in 2007.

In the meantime you can look forward in the coming months to:

- **A Joint Statement on Aboriginal Housing** addressing indirect discrimination and improving housing and housing services for Aboriginal people. This will be signed by the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity Yvonne Henderson and the new Director General for the Department of Housing and Works, Bob Mitchell (June 2006).



Mr Bob Mitchell and Ms Yvonne Henderson discuss the joint statement.
Photo courtesy of Michael Wearne, DHW

- **An Implementation Report** and Schedule for everyone to see how the Department of Housing and Works is working and will work with the EOC and the Housing Inquiry (Section 80) Implementation and Monitoring Committee. This will be the way that advocates and the committee can work together with clients and staff of the Department of Housing and Works for the next few years (July 2006).

The Commission will visit regional Western Australia later this year to provide feedback on how the work of the Inquiry has resulted in changes to the Department of Housing and Works. This will be a chance for you to find out what will happen to change things for the better and to help in that.

The EOC Committee will continue meeting to see how the implementation of the Action Plan is going.

The Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Equal Opportunity Commission will continue to work together to see how they can assist the Department of Housing and Works put in place the Action Plan.