IHANT is the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory.

It is a partnership between the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth Government represented by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and by the Department of Family and Community Services.

The powers and functions of IHANT are to:
- develop and review annually a five year strategic plan for the delivery of housing and related infrastructure to Aboriginal communities,
- submit the Strategic Plan to the Parties to the Bilateral Agreement annually for approval,
- establish policies and guidelines for the delivery of services and programs,
- determine a rolling three year operational plan, incorporating annual funding allocations, and report annually to the Parties on the forthcoming year's operational plan.

All funds for Indigenous housing from the parties involved are pooled and then allocated by IHANT to the seven ATSIC regional councils in the Territory. The funds are received from:
- The Commonwealth Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP); the
- Northern Territory Indigenous Housing Programs; and the
- ATSIC Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP).

The fundamental objective behind IHANT is that better housing for Indigenous people throughout the Northern Territory will be achieved if:
1. Indigenous people make decisions about Indigenous housing;
2. There are cooperative working relationships between all levels of government; and
3. Funding from all levels of government is pooled to achieve maximum outcomes.

Each year approximately $42.3 million in Indigenous housing funding is pooled, with ATSIC contributing $16.7 million and the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government contributing the remaining $25.6 million. These pooled resources are then distributed by IHANT to ATSIC Regional Councils and then to Community Councils, Indigenous Housing Organisations and Homeland Resource Centres. IHANT operates several programs, under two group-

### IHANT Achievements

- Introduction of Construction and Environmental Health Standards
- IHANT is an effective partnership between ATSIC, the NT Government and the Commonwealth Government.
- The IHANT program has created economic benefits to communities and reduced reliance on outside services.
- Indigenous organisations are able to make their own decisions and achieve what they need for their communities.
- The better care and maintenance of housing is increasing the longevity of housing in Indigenous communities.

Key achievements are:
- Since the formation of IHANT in 1995 approximately 2200 houses have been constructed, upgraded or renovated, thereby better housing 17,600 Indigenous people.
- 75% increase in rent collection over 4 years ($8.8 million collected in 2000/2001).
- Introduction of Construction and Environmental Health Standards to Indigenous communities.
- Introduction of technical compliance audits of new houses built.
- Conduct of annual Environmental Health Survey
NT Statistics
Source: http://www.ihant.org.au

Population
The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous people for any State or Territory in Australia with 28.5% of its population identified as being Indigenous at the time of the last Census in 1996.

The NT's Indigenous population has a median age of 20, approximately ten years younger than that for the non-Indigenous population, at 30.

Nearly 40% of the NT's Indigenous population were aged under 15 at the last Census, compared to 22% for the non-Indigenous population.

Just over 70% of Indigenous people live in the remote regions of the Territory, while 80% of the non-Indigenous population live in the Territory's urban areas.

Income and Expenditure
Median incomes of Indigenous families and individuals in the NT were 40% less than those of non-Indigenous families and individuals.

Median incomes of Indigenous families living in remote areas was less than half of the median incomes of non-Indigenous families living in the same areas.

Indigenous Territorians were two and half times more likely to earn less than $300 per week than non-Indigenous Territorians.

Less than two percent of Indigenous Territorians had incomes of over $800.

Low incomes of Indigenous people, and expensive food in the remote areas of the NT mean that the food budget can represent a more significant proportion of total household income.

NT Labour Force
Indigenous Territorians are three times more likely to be unemployed than other Territorians.

Of those employed Indigenous Territorians, close to half are participating in the CDEP scheme. (The Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) is a community development scheme that provides work and develops skills in unemployed Indigenous people through participation in community managed activities.)

Most employed Indigenous Territorians worked as labourers, while most non-Indigenous Territorians worked as managers, administrators or professionals.

Housing
Two thirds of Indigenous households were renting their dwellings at the time of the last census, compared to just under fifty percent of non-Indigenous households.

While approximately fifty percent of non-Indigenous households were either buying their home or owned their home, only fourteen percent of Indigenous households were home owners or purchasers.

Thirteen percent of Indigenous households were living in improvised dwellings, compared to only five percent of non-Indigenous households.

The number of Indigenous people per dwelling ranged from 8.4 in the Nhulunbuy region to 3.9 in Darwin and Alice Springs regions. The NT Indigenous average number of people per dwelling was double that for non-Indigenous people.

Education
Twice as many Indigenous people in the NT are likely to have left school before turning 15 years of age, than non-Indigenous people.

Three times as many non-Indigenous people attended tertiary institutions as Indigenous people.

Studies into reading levels amongst NT students in 1998 showed that 20% of Indigenous students could read at a Year 5 level, while 78% of non-Indigenous students could read at the same level.

Health
Five times the number of Indigenous mothers gave birth aged under 20 years than non-Indigenous mothers.

Twice as many babies born of Indigenous mothers had birth-weights under 2500 grams, as did other babies.

Indigenous people account for more than half of the hospital separations.

The life expectancy of NT Indigenous people is approximately 20 years less than for the non-Indigenous population.
Environmental Health Resources

Environmental Health Standards for Remote Communities in the Northern Territory
The Environmental Health Standards for Remote Communities in the Northern Territory was originally released by the Northern Territory Government in 1998. The Standards describe the minimum level of environmental health infrastructure and essential services required to facilitate a healthy environment. The Standards are called up by both the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory (IHANT) and the National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) programs under the Conditions of Grant and Project Management Contracts respectively.

National Indigenous Housing Guide
The National Indigenous Housing Guide is a useful, technical manual to assist everybody involved in the delivery of housing to Indigenous people to do a better job. The application of the guide will achieve major improvements in the function of houses. Working health hardware is critical for performing healthy living practices such as washing people and removing waste. Architects, builders, plumbers, electricians and community housing managers have just as important a role as doctors, nurses and health workers for improving the health of Indigenous people.

The Toilet Book- available through the Environmental Health Branch
Safe Food is good food – video- available through the Environmental Health Branch
“Take Care of Outside to take care of inside” booklet - available from David Brewster, RDH Paediatrician

For more information contact
Department Of Health & Community Services
Environmental Health Branch
Director Xavier Schobben
PO Box 40596 Casuarina 0801
Phone 08 8999 2400

Universal Adaptable Fittings

Recently Universal Adaptable Fittings were included in the Environmental Health Standards for Remote Communities in the Northern Territory. These standards are above and beyond the Building Code of Australia.

The Universal Adaptable Fittings are important as many Indigenous people experience physical disability at a younger age. By including disabled access and fittings into the design of remote housing many more people will be able to live longer in their own community.