

# REVITALISING THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY HOUSING STANDARDS

A community housing industry led project to revisit and revitalise the NCHS turning them into *tools for improvement*.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

This is a community housing industry led project to revisit and revitalize the National Community Housing Standards (NCHS) turning them into “tools for improvement” – carried out by professional, independent and experienced assessors – making clear recommendations and sharing best practice to raise organisational performance.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Thank you to all the community housing organisations who participated in the survey. The results showed a good level of interest in revitalising the NCHS in a way that ensures no duplication with existing regulatory systems, provides clear value to participants, and reduces the burden of work for participants. Key findings include:

- 81% support for developing an updated suite of industry led and owned standards with a reputable company to audit them.
- The commonly used assurance or audit systems currently in use by the sector are:
  - Independent audits
  - Globalmark for accreditation and NCHS
  - Other measures, e.g. for funding requirements
  - ISO for policy and procedure (the cost of accreditation was prohibitive)
  - Housekeys
  - NRSCH.
- Respondents like the proposed modular approach to the standards. Priority service areas/functions for the standards are: Repairs, Tenancy management, Tenancy sustainment, Income management.
- 84% of the respondents think it would be helpful for the standards to provide descriptions of a “good” and “poor” service

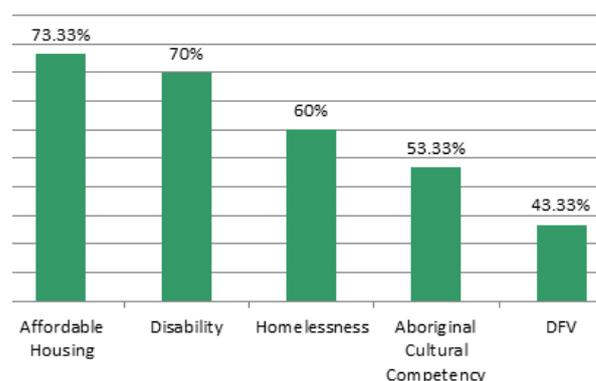
## MARCH 2019 PROJECT UPDATE

The CHIAs have now finalised the survey and an environmental scan. We will be setting up the Advisory group and starting design in April.

## WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

We are looking for individuals and CHOs to support and drive the project. More details are overleaf.

- There was strong support for additional modules:



- The majority feel that they would use the standards to drive service improvements. This was followed by:
  - Supporting governance processes
  - Demonstrating good practice
  - Raising the profile of the industry
  - Publicly articulating the community housing model

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN - SUMMARY

When originally developed in the late 1990s, the NCHS enabled CHOs to demonstrate good practice in core business areas in the absence of an independent regulatory regime.

A new approach could now help the industry define excellence beyond registration requirements. The system could demonstrate specific business competences or specialisations not covered by the regulatory regime, such as affordable housing, Aboriginal cultural competency, disability inclusive housing, and specialist asset activities.

Adopting a modular or segmented approach, instead of certification against a suite of standards, would enable standards and accreditation to be more responsive to emerging areas of business and other industry changes. It also creates a scheme with lower barriers of entry, enabling smaller providers to participate more robustly.

### What can be learned from the broader environment?

Two examples of schemes in Australia owned by independent, not for profit organisations are:

- The [White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program](#), which focuses on achieving behaviour change through leadership and prevention of and responding to domestic violence.
- The National Association of Community Legal Centres National Accreditation Scheme is designed to promote best practice and consistent high-quality services by setting industry standards.

In the UK, the [Housing Quality Network Accreditation](#) offers segmented assessment so that organisations can choose to focus on specific service areas or achieve full accreditation over time.

Also in the UK, the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(DAHA\)](#) offers accreditation in responding to domestic violence in housing management. The program is focused on a specialist expertise related to a core business activity.

### Considerations for the NCHS Review

A segmented approach to accreditation has several advantages:

- an organisation can choose to seek accreditation against selected, specialised standards that reflect its strategic goals, suite of services and size of its business
- flexibility to add standards in new areas as the industry changes and develops

An updated scheme can provide options to allow organisations to understand how their performance compares with other organisations and the standards. Organisations can choose how to promote their results publicly.

Please contact us if you'd like a copy of the full Environmental Scan.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact

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This project is managed by CHIA,  
CHIA NSW & CHIA VIC



Community Housing  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



Community Housing  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
VICTORIA

## WANT TO HELP? GET ACTIVELY INVOLVED

There are many ways to influence the revitalisation of the NCHS. We are now establishing a **Project Advisory Group**, which will inform the development of both the standards and the assessment or accreditation mechanism.

Please contact us to get involved. Even if you indicated interest through the survey, **please email us**.

We're also currently looking for people to participate in:

May-July	Focus groups/ webinars	Structured discussions to develop standards and the process, max 2 hours
July-Oct	Design	Commenting and providing feedback on drafts of the standards
Aug-Sept	Pilots	Pilot and test the standards and the assessment process. You'll need to review the standards, provide documents for assessment, complete a self-assessment, participate in onsite assessment, provide feedback, and debrief.

Contact [nchs@communityhousing.org.au](mailto:nchs@communityhousing.org.au) to get involved.