

'Our Story. Our Future.' was created by proud Wiradjuri, Wotjobaluk, Yuin and Gumbaynggirr artist Luke Penrith and Maluiliilgal people, Badu Island artist Naseli Tamwoy.

Census data helps advocate for funding for Aboriginal community housing

SEARMS Aboriginal Corporation in NSW provides housing and support for Aboriginal people, including helping older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'age in place' in an appropriately modified home.

It manages over 230 rental properties in townships from Nowra and down the coast to Wallaga Lake, and across to Queanbeyan, Yass, Young and Goulburn. This is often a lifeline for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing poverty and entrenched disadvantage, as it provides access to affordable, culturally appropriate housing and pathways to other community services and supports.

CEO Kim Sinclair said SEARMS relies extensively on Census data to help determine where community housing is needed for those who can't access the private rental market.

"Factors like unemployment, vulnerable households and mental health impact housing security," Ms Sinclair said. "We use Census data to understand the prevalence of these factors to help us provide appropriate housing for Aboriginal people."

According to the 2016 Census, 4.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are aged over 65. This increases to 5.4% in NSW and 6.2% in the Shoalhaven local government area.

"The lifespan for Indigenous Australians is 15 years shorter than non-Indigenous Australians. This means aged care packages and modifications need to happen a good 10 to 20 years earlier."

"We are getting more requests for disability modifications to support people to stay at home and we don't have the money for these modifications. Census data helps us compile a business case so we can seek funding for ageing-in-place housing."

Knowing the areas of critical need means SEARMS can better anticipate who needs housing help, and where.

"We encourage all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to complete the Census because it bolsters our understanding of housing needs and priorities," Ms Sinclair said.