



Housing for Health Incubator 2019 Wrap-up and the Year Ahead

Happy holidays and all the best for the new year from the Housing for Health Incubator. 2019 rushed by and we'd like to thank everybody who contributed their ideas, time, and energy. We're coming into the final year of our funding – what follows is a brief overview of our work in 2019 and a look ahead to 2020.

In line with the Incubator's original purpose, we have been pursuing work across three key strands: interrogating the question, why is the consistent supply of routine repair and maintenance in Indigenous housing so hard to secure? What can we do to assist the practical questions of our key partner, Healthabitat, in their ongoing work with Indigenous communities and organisations? And how can we understand infrastructural inequalities and policy cultures, writ large?



Working with Water workshops at Johnston's Creek in Jubilee Park.

The Incubator began 2019 with our first **policy roundtable**, [‘Living with Water: Questions for Policy and Action’](#), which was followed by the [‘Working with Water’](#) workshops. Thanks to Aron Chang, Martin Ayers, Guy Redden, Astrida Neimanis, Kate Johnston, and Susanne Pratt for your wonderful contributions to those workshops, and to the [Sydney Environment Institute](#) for funding support. The roundtable discussion between Tess Lea, Aron Chang (urban designer), Lauren Walker (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency), David Morris (Environmental Defenders Office NSW), and Robert Griew (Nous Group) highlighted the key interests and approach of the Incubator: the need to think about and act on housing and water issues together. We confirmed that healthy, sustainable housing depends on available, safe water supply and functional intersecting infrastructures.

This set of simultaneous concerns is evident in our **submissions to ongoing regulatory reforms**. The Incubator provided submissions to the [Review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1999 \(NT\)](#) and to the [Northern Territory Water Regulatory Reform](#) process. Related to the latter, Liam Grealy and Kirsty Howey presented research focused on the lack of NT legislated protections for drinking water supply and quality at the inaugural Top End STS seminar, generating interviews on [ABC Radio](#) with the NT Chief Health Officer and a representative from Power and Water Corporation.



Miriam Charlie at Tarnanthi at AGSA. Image courtesy of Rhett Hammerton

This research on the legal geographies of water protections followed a series of water contamination events across the Northern Territory, including at **Borrooloola**, where the

Incubator has been investigating the non-provision of public housing. Artist [Miriam Charlie](#) has documented the state of local housing in a new exhibition at [Tarnanthi](#) at AGSA, funded by a NT Emerging Artist grant co-authored by Charlie, Howey, and Grealy, with professional project support provided by artist [Rhett Hammerton](#). A huge thank you to Senator Malarndirri McCarthy and Matt Ward for their letters of support in that grant proposal.

The Incubator's **collaborations** have taken multiple forms over the past year. We are grateful to everyone who has provided us time, access, and support in our **fieldwork**. This includes participating in [Housing for Health projects](#) in NSW and in the United States, where Housing for Health principles were embedded in the [Community Plumbing Challenge](#), a collaboration between the Navajo Mountain chapter, the International Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Foundation, DigDeep, and Healthabitat. The Incubator coordinated two conference panels in 2019, with Lea and Grealy organising ['Permeable Housing and Intersecting Infrastructures'](#) at 4S2019 in New Orleans, and ['Infrastructural Inequalities and Toxic Sovereignty Under Late Liberalism'](#) at the American Association of Anthropology meeting in Vancouver. Thanks to Alison Kenner, Paola Villegas, Moritz F. Fürst and Alain Bovet, Eve Vincent, Kirsty Howey, Benedict Scamبارy, Sarah E. Holcombe, and Dominic Boyer for your excellent papers.



New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board Drinking Water Treatment Plant at Carrollton

Our collaborations have encouraged experimentation with **methods and outputs**, including at the 4S conference where the Incubator partnered with the Blue House Civic Studio to run a workshop on [Mapping Drinking Water Systems](#) and a [fieldtrip](#) to the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board Drinking Water Treatment Plant at Carrollton. In September, the Incubator hosted two talks at the Blue House fika series, by [Nick Shapiro](#) and [Tess Lea](#). Grealy has also

contributed to the team for the larger [Mixed Media: Water Systems](#) project, which focuses on the role of New Orleans drainage pump stations and operators in pumping water beyond the city walls, as New Orleans sinks and sea levels rise. A photographic exhibition including work by [CFreedom and Maggie Hermann](#) is ongoing at The Blue House, and a lift-out featuring this work will be published by the city's daily newspaper, *The Advocate*, on Saturday December 22nd.

The **Infrastructural Inequalities** collaboration with [Snack Syndicate](#) is an ongoing pleasure. Our Infrastructural Inequalities [reading group](#) has continued, with topics including Words, Wires, and Data and Prediction. In October, we were also very excited to launch our [Infrastructural Inequalities Journal](#). Thanks to Uncle Jimmy Smith, Eve Vincent, Kirsty Howey, Nina Serova, Karma Eddison-Cogan and Fiona Allon, Kynan Tan, Michael Richardson, Elizabeth Duncan, Christen Cornell and Thuy Linh Nguyen, Naama Blatman-Thomas, and Dean Cross for your wonderful contributions. Special thanks to [Kynan Tan](#) for the outstanding website design.

Infrastructural Inequalities

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Journal



Introduction: Tending a Social Infrastructure

Liam Grealy, Andrew Brooks, Astrid Lorange, Christen Cornell, and Tess Lea



'The Comfort Zone's the Enemy of the Spirit, Jack!': An Interview with Uncle Jimmy Smith

Uncle Jimmy Smith, Andrew Brooks, and Astrid Lorange

The Infrastructural Inequalities journal

We concluded our public work this year with our second **policy roundtable**, this time focused on healthy housing provisions and residential tenancies acts. Presentations by [Dan Kelly](#) (ALRAR) on the ongoing Santa Teresa multi-plaintiff litigation and by [Dr Lucy Telfar-Barnard](#) (University of Otago) on New Zealand's Healthy Homes Standards were important for framing absences and possibilities in the Northern Territory. The Incubator believes that meaningful critique for actionable reform requires multi-disciplinary discussion from the outset, so thanks to folks from the Healthabitat network, Westmead, the Aboriginal housing sector, and elsewhere who leant their time and expertise to the workshop.

These roundtables and workshops are not simply about sharing ideas. They shape our research priorities and grant applications too. With funding from the former Office of Environment and Heritage (now Planning, Industry and Environment) Lea and Cornell worked with Nicole Gurrán and Ollie Jay to research *Climate Change, Housing, and Health: A Scoping Study on Intersections Between Vulnerability, Housing Tenure, and Adaptation Responses to Extreme Heat*. Our final report will be publicly released in early 2020, but key issues include the need to plan for informal housing arrangements and domestic climate refugees. The Incubator has also just secured funding from the [Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute](#) (AHURI) to model how sustainable housing (with sustainable repairs and maintenance) might be managed within the upheavals of climate change. This project is a collaboration with Gunida Gunyah Aboriginal Corporation, SA Housing, Healthabitat, and researchers at the University of Tasmania, the University of Adelaide, and the University of Sydney.



Tess Lea at The Blue House. Image courtesy Lilith Winkler-Schor

Throughout the year we've presented **our research** in diverse contexts, including the [Festival of Urbanism](#), the [Ethnography Studio](#) at Rice University, the [Allard School of Law](#) at the University of British Columbia, [The Blue House](#) in New Orleans, on the [Anthropology@Deakin](#) podcast, and at numerous academic conferences. Sincere thanks to Peter Phibbs, Andrea Ballestero, Douglas Harris, Aron Chang, Timothy Neale and David Boarder Giles, and many others for facilitating those opportunities and conversations. Our publications are mostly available [here](#) (Lea) and [here](#) (Greal).

The year ahead promises to be another busy one. A few things that we're especially excited about include:

- The new AHURI-funded project 'Building Sustainability in Regional and Remote Australia: Modelling a Multidimensional Approach' (Chief Investigator Lea)
- Research funded by a new NT History grant for the project 'Town Camp History: Infrastructural Legacies' (Howey and Greal)
- A second issue of the *Infrastructural Inequalities* journal
- The public release of our research report on climate change and housing
- Ongoing fieldwork in Northern Australia, NSW, and South-east Louisiana

- Publication of journal articles and chapters and a new book, [Wild Policy: Indigeneity and the Unruly Logics of Intervention](#).

Oh, and for summer reading, viewing, and thinking, the Incubator recommends:

- The film [Warburdar Bununu \(Water Shield\)](#) (dir. Jason De Santolo), which examines the impact of mining contamination on land, water, and sacred sites surrounding Borrooloola.
- The multi-plaintiff action led by [Australian Lawyers for Remote Aboriginal Rights and Grata Fund](#), which has proceeded to the NT Supreme Court in its claims over substandard housing in the Central Australian community of Santa Teresa.
- [Miriam Charlie's](#) new photographic exhibition on housing at Borrooloola, which premiered at Tarnanthi at the Australian Gallery of South Australia in October.
- The film [Undermined: Tales from the Kimberley](#), which charts the threats of mining, pastoralism, and irrigated agriculture to Indigenous land rights in the Kimberley.
- The exhibition [Moving Water](#) at the Blue House in New Orleans, featuring photography of Sewerage and Water Board drainage pump stations and operators.
- The interview, 'We all live in colonised time', with artist [Dean Cross](#) in the Infrastructural Inequalities special issue.
- Reporting in *The Saturday Paper* by [Stella Maynard](#) on the weaponisation of heat stress at Alice Springs Correctional Centre.
- The gorgeously illustrated memoir, [Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back](#), by Dion Beasley and Johanna Bell.
- [DigDeep](#), which runs The Navajo Water Project, providing domestic drinking water infrastructure to households across the Navajo Nation, and which partnered with the Navajo Mountain chapter, [the International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation](#), and [Healthabitat](#) in 2019 for the Community Plumbing Challenge.
- [Lorena Allam and Nick Evershed's](#) article 'Too Hot for Humans? First Nations People Fear Becoming Australia's First Climate Refugees' in *The Guardian*.
- The new national [Environmental Defenders Office](#), which sees eight state and territory EDOs join forces, and which we hope will increase its capacity for high-impact strategic litigation.

Stay in touch throughout 2020!

All the best for the holidays and the year ahead,
Tess Lea and Liam Grealy

The Housing for Health Incubator is located in the University of Sydney, which sits on the country of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. We acknowledge and pay respect to leaders past, present, and emerging of the lands where we work. Sovereignty was never ceded or sold and the struggles for justice continue on multiple fronts, including access to safe and functional housing.

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