ABORIGINAL HOUSING IN REMOTE SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AN OVERVIEW OF HOUSING AT OAK VALLEY, MARALINGA TJARUTJA LANDS

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an overview of housing at Oak Valley, a remote Aboriginal community in the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands. It paints a broad contextual picture of the political processes and resultant housing, examines specific cultural and environmental issues relevant to the population and remote areas of South Australia, documents the process and structures for the provision of housing and investigates the subsequent housing types.

The study utilises the ethnological techniques of participant observation and social survey to evaluate housing at Oak Valley. This includes observations of housing features, usage, occupant aspirations and housing issues associated with the occupation of moveable housing, community built shelters and community housing. Staff housing is also addressed in the same manner to gain insight into variances in usage.

The overview illustrates that housing choices for Aboriginal people in remote areas in South Australia are particularly limited. Housing is based on non-Aboriginal models with adaptations specific to environmental conditions. The development of housing models for specific Aboriginal lifestyles and cultural issues is minimal and resisted by the Aboriginal occupants. At the same time occupants’ satisfaction levels were consistent with the ability of housing to perform to cultural needs and occupants’ lifestyle. Encouraged themes include the development of public participation processes, post occupancy evaluation and individual consultation to involve occupants in the housing process.