

# 50 years of AHL

Since its establishment in 1973, AHL has offered a 'home away from home' for First Nations people.

For 50 steadfast years, providing around the clock services, AHL has delivered safe, culturally appropriate and affordable accommodation for First Nations people needing a place to stay.

In 1974, Dr Charles Perkins described AHL as an organisation which has been 'developed and managed in a large majority by Aboriginal people, who express Aboriginal values in their day-to-day operations.'

AHL Board Chair, Anthony Ashby, from the Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay nations told attendees at AHL's 50th anniversary event in Canberra that, 'as current stewards, we have inherited an organisation crafted by the wisdom and hard work of those who have played their part over the last half century.'

The vision back then remains the vision today – to improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for First Nations people.



**1967**  
Successful Referendum which opened the doors to First Nations Australian agency, bringing to light many strong leaders and organisations.

**1975**  
The Australian Parliament passes the Racial Discrimination Act to help ensure all Australians are treated fairly.



**1981**  
Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG appointed Board Chair (1981–1989).



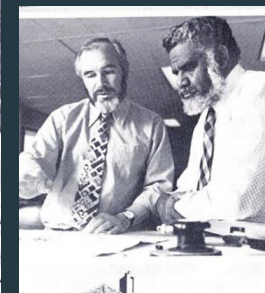
Neville Perkins OAM appointed as the General Manager – the first time this role was held by a First Nations person.

**1990**  
Bernard Valadian appointed Board Chair (1990–2000).



**2000**  
Elaine McKeon AO appointed Board Chair (2000–2011).

**2000**  
Cathy Freeman lights the cauldron at the Sydney Olympics and wins a gold medal in the 400-metre sprint.

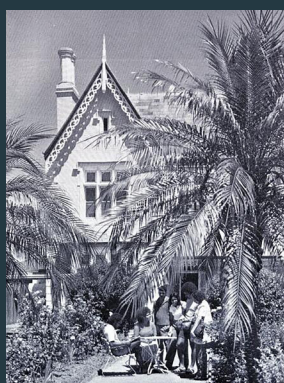


**2015**  
Dr Susan Gordon AM appointed Board Chair (2015–2020).

**2020**  
Anthony Ashby appointed Board Chair (2020–present).

1970

2020



**1973**  
AHL established on 6 June with Dr Charles Perkins AO as Board Chair (1973–1981).

**1974**  
Yumba, AHL's first hostel opens in Brisbane's iconic West End.

**1979**  
AHL's first construction project, the Sid Ross Hostel in Alice Springs, is completed, built by the Aboriginal-owned Apatula Construction Company.

**1991**  
Edna Barolits OAM appointed as first female General Manager.

**1992**  
'Terra nullius' – the doctrine that Australia was 'no man's land' – is overturned by the High Court, as a result of the Mabo land rights case.

**1996**  
The first National Reconciliation Week is held.



**2009**  
The Healing Foundation is established.



**2011**  
Kevin Smith appointed Board Chair (2011–2015).

**2023**  
AHL turns 50 on 6 June.