

NT Aboriginal Housing Forum 2018
“Good housing starts with community control”
7-9 March 2018, Hilton Hotel, Darwin

Communique

Preamble

Over three days from 7-9 March, approximately 190 people from 62 organisations across the NT and nationally, came together to discuss the issues of Aboriginal housing in the Northern Territory. The Forum acknowledged the work of the Aboriginal Housing NT (AHNT) committee and APO NT in the work they have done since the last forum in 2015.

The Forum was heartened by the attendance and commitments of the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, together with the Minister for Housing and Chief Executive of the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Forum was also attended by Senator Patrick Dodson, and Federal Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowden.

The Forum presentations reaffirmed the strong evidence that housing is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our families and communities and to outcomes in education, employment and community sustainability. The continuing crisis in our housing underpins the failure of progress on Closing the Gap and the Forum notes that addressing the housing issues we face requires an outcomes-framed, evidence-based approach.

The Northern Territory is unique in its demographics with 30% of its population being Aboriginal, 80% of whom live in remote areas. Aboriginal families account for 100% of remote tenancies and 50% of urban tenancies. With a young and fast growing population, we urgently need to address the intergenerational housing inequity that successive governments have failed to address.

The Forum:

1. Welcomes the long-term commitment of the Northern Territory Government to set aside \$1.1 billion over the next 10 years for Aboriginal housing in the NT, and calls on the Australian Government to shoulder its responsibility to fund remote Aboriginal housing on a needs basis. We remain deeply concerned that the current commitment falls significantly short of the level of funding committed under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous

Housing (NPARIH), which has failed to deliver an overall increase in housing stock.

2. Calls on the Australian Government, as a matter of urgency, to make clear its commitment to Aboriginal housing in the NT from July 1 2018, when the NPARIH funding ceases. Without resolution, Aboriginal communities face significant risk of uncertain housing service provision.
3. The Forum recognised the inequity in current policies relating to remote and regional Aboriginal communities, homelands, outstations and town camps. We call for consistency in funding that recognises these different community contexts. We also call for the urgent release of the NT Town Camp review and a process for community response.
4. Calls on the NT Government to work collaboratively with AHNT and APO NT to develop regional and local housing models, and to return control of all housing functions in a staged approach, to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.
5. Calls for the review of NT Government and Commonwealth procurement principles in collaboration with AHNT/APO NT to ensure that Aboriginal organisations and businesses are given priority in housing-related contracts, including through the incorporation of the APO NT Partnership Principles into all procurement policies and guidelines, together with strong accountability mechanisms.
6. Welcomes the commitment of the Chief Minister to support the development of an Aboriginal community controlled peak housing body for the NT and to support AHNT and APO NT to progress this work.