

Joint Steering Committee for Remote Housing Northern Territory

Communiqué

24 August 2023

The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) held its seventeenth meeting on Thursday 24 August 2023 in Alice Springs. Representatives from the Australian Government's National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the Northern Territory (NT) Government's Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet, Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council and Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory were in attendance. Representatives from Tiwi Land Council were apologies.

Capital Works Delivery in Remote Communities

The NT Government continues to implement strategies to accelerate delivery of housing despite facing challenges unique to construction works in remote areas. Progress is also continuing around leasing and subdivision/infill lots.

Despite not reaching the target of delivering 1,950 bedrooms by 30 June 2023, significant efforts continue to ensure the delivery of works under the National Partnership on Remote Housing Northern Territory, with around 280 bedrooms remaining to be delivered. In addition, houses have already been delivered under the Northern Territory Remote Housing Federation Funding Agreement.

Septic Tanks Safety and Audit

Members noted the tragic death of a toddler in April of this year after falling into a septic tank in the remote community of Mt Liebig. The NT Government has commenced a Territory wide audit of septic tank systems including public housing properties as well as all NT Government owned and managed assets.

Since the commencement of the audit in July 2023, approximately 700 individual sites have been inspected. The audit is expected to conclude in October 2023.

Homelands

The NT Government is undertaking urgent repairs and maintenance to housing and infrastructure across Homelands in the NT as part of the \$100 million Homelands Housing and Infrastructure Program.

The first stage of rapid response works is well underway with 6 projects initiated and one housing upgrade completed. Regional Work Plans to guide needs-based investment in Homelands have been finalised in partnership with Land Councils, Aboriginal Housing NT and the NT Government with works prioritised to commence.

Future options for remote housing investment

Current agreements that guide investment in remote housing in the NT expire in June 2024, with work required to plan for future options to ensure delivery continues. Members noted future arrangements should consider options to support the transition of remote housing in Aboriginal communities to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

Proposal to investigate options for Aboriginal-led housing system governance

The Central Land Council and Aboriginal Housing NT proposed options for establishing an Aboriginal Governance Agency for the remote housing system in the NT be investigated. A future transition to community control is in line with the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.

Communications Strategy

A Communications Strategy will be developed to provide information to communities, residents and other key stakeholders on historic, current and planned investment in the remote housing investment program.



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Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on 23 November 2023 in Darwin.



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