CALL FOR ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INDIGENOUS HOUSING

Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Adam Giles, has today written to the Prime Minister seeking the establishment of a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Housing in the Northern Territory.

Mr Giles said his call was prompted in part by ongoing concerns with the poor administration of the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP).

"With SIHIP we see the continued bleeding of funds to administration with nearly 50% of original community budgets going into management of the project," Mr Giles said.

"Everyone wants a piece of the pie, be it the Northern Territory Government, industry consultants or the shire councils.

"Many people are not aware that only 15 of the 73 communities involved in the Intervention may one day receive new houses while the overwhelming majority will receive none.

"It's possible there will be less houses than when SIHIP began because many houses are beyond the point of economic repair and will have to be demolished.

"This outcome could have three possible effects including an increase in overcrowding, an increase in homelessness or an increase in the number of people moving from communities into towns seeking shelter."

Mr Giles said in addition to SIHIP, the Royal Commission should look at all aspects of the Henderson Government’s housing management strategy.

"There are people paying rent through Centrelink deductions for houses destroyed more than a year ago.

"In Santa Teresa around 80 houses had electrical safety switches installed in their power boxes. In a community where dust storms are common, most of these safety stitches now simply don’t work, putting families at risk.

"NT Worksafe was notified about this on July 1st, 2009, but still has not responded.

"There are examples right across the Territory, whether it be sewerage overflows in Ampliatiwatj, $100million for the construction of only 40 houses in Alice Springs, delays in Tennant Creek, Groote Eylandt and Tiwi Islands, consultant spin-offs or contractor nepotism."
“It actually goes to the heart of the management of Aboriginal housing across the Northern Territory.

“We cannot sit back and continue aimlessly with a welfare dominated housing model where Government drip feeds housing to Aboriginal Territorians, a model that bleeds money, doesn’t work and encourages welfare dependency.”

Mr Giles said a Royal Commission should examine alternative housing models including private rental and ownership as well as the provision of public and community housing.

“I am concerned the Territory Government doesn’t have the capacity to deliver housing whether it is public, community or private.

“Its mismanagement extends beyond SIHIP – there is a chronic shortage of public and private housing in the major Territory centres as well.

“Territory Housing Minister Rob Knight lacks the capacity to manage SIHIP, manage Territory Housing, improve opportunities within the private sector and provide adequate oversight of the portfolio.”

To arrange further comment: Adam Giles 0421 588 118