Dear Prime Minister,

I write to request the urgent establishment of a Royal Commission into remote housing services in the Northern Territory.

My request comes on the back of the release of the Cattermole-Davies report into the Strategic Indigenous Housing Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) and a raft of long-standing issues associated with the provision of housing in remote parts of the Northern Territory.

In my role as Shadow Minister for Indigenous Policy, I have become increasingly aware of high levels of dissatisfaction among stakeholders and the inability of the Henderson Labor Government to adequately deliver remote housing services.

The terms of reference should include:

- investigation into gouging by the Territory and local governments and independent consultants;
- a probe into claims tenants are renting near-demolished housing;
- an examination of construction and maintenance practices;
- investigation into the health and well-being impacts of sub-standard remote housing;
- consideration of alternative housing models to SIHIP;
- an assessment of the viability of public, private and community housing in communities;
- the impact on overall housing numbers of the proposed demolition of remote Indigenous housing deemed ‘beyond economic repair’.

I have received two separate departmental briefings by senior Territory Government officials in relation to the Commonwealth’s $100 million contribution to the redevelopment of town camps in Alice Springs. From one briefing I was told ‘about 40 houses will be built’ and from the other that ‘significantly less than 40 houses’ will be built.

This is despite Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, committing to the construction of 85 new houses in the town camps.

It beggars belief that the training providers and housing construction sub-contractors will be the same company that has managed the town camps for many years.

If you would like to discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience on 08 89524177 or adam.giles@nt.gov.au

Yours sincerely,

Adam Giles
Member for Braitling.