SEEKING OUT A SCAPEGOAT

Adam Giles MLA

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The Northern Territory Government should itemise exactly why it intends to demolish three houses constructed under the SIHIP scheme on Groote Eylandt.

Shadow Indigenous Policy Minister, Adam Giles, said that during last week’s Estimates Committee hearings, a Departmental bureaucrat admitted three SIHIP houses would be demolished on Groote and another four would cost $200,000 to repair, despite an internal audit identifying between $100,000 and $105,000 being required to finish off each house.

The bureaucrat said:

‘Three of the seven houses in Angurugu were not sufficiently progressed to be of use going forward. I think, for the most part, there might be a couple of low stilts in the ground for those which we will probably look at removing. Three of those will probably be gone - there is very minor work on those. For the remaining four which were significantly advanced, they will probably require a couple of hundred thousand to finish off.’

"These were the same houses about which Independent MLA Gerry Wood said on ABC television … ’wow, they are well built’," Mr Giles said.

"Instead of smearing the reputations of the Alliance partners, the Government should itemise exactly what’s wrong with the seven houses in question and why they will need to be demolished or significantly repaired and detail on what the $200,000 will be spent, item by item.

"So far, no adequate reason has been given as to why Earth Connect Alliance was sacked from the SIHIP project.

"After 15 months of consultation and waiting for bureaucrats to approve housing designs, the Alliance was just weeks away from completing houses on Groote Eylandt.

"As well, a house in Gunbalanya was due to be handed over the day after Earth Connect was sacked.

"As a result of bureaucratic incompetence, it was another three months before the house was handed over.

"Since Earth Connect was sacked, work at both Groote and Gunbalanya has ground to a halt, despite there being a number of pre-fab houses sitting in containers at Gunbalanya.

"The Henderson Government has had to resort to finding scapegoats as it struggles to explain why more than $200million has been spent on just 11 completed houses in two-and-a-half years.

"When the directors of Earth Connect looked in their mirrors the morning they were dumped, they would have seen a goat."

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