SIHIP – WHO’S CHECKING THE HEADLINES

Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson and chair of the Council of Territory Cooperation (CTC), says is concerned about the shallowness and lack of depth in some recent stories in both local and Australian newspapers about several aspects of the SIHIP programme.

Firstly there have been a number of stories re houses or partially completed houses being demolished on Groote Eylandt. Attached to this media release is a response to questions Gerry asked Andrew Kirkman following estimates, which include pictures of what was to be demolished. As one can see from these pictures no houses are being demolished – the closest thing to a house is a floor. Interestingly, from a CTC’s point of view the CTC was not shown these sites by Earth Connect Alliance when they visited Groote earlier this year.

The second matter relates to refurbished houses at Willowra. It was claimed by the Government Business Manager that recently the refurbishments could have been done cheaper by others than by the Alliance. This same matter was raised at both a CTC meeting (30 April 10) which questions Mr Ian Boyson from the Commonwealth Government and there was also questioning of the NT Government at Estimates. Attached is the transcript from Mr Boyson outlining the reasons why? Has anyone in the media checked to see if Mr Boyson’s answer was reasonable?

Gerry says that because refurbishments are also part of a total package including new houses and rebuilds, then all the costs of the package are spread out over all aspects of the programme including refurbishments.

Gerry says perhaps what should have happened at the beginning is that the Alliances should have only dealt with the new houses, the rebuilds, the designs, the scoping, the new subdivisions, the infrastructure and the community consultation. The refurbishments perhaps could then have been done under a normal tender process.

Gerry says no doubt there are issues with SIHIP but he says let’s make sure those issues are dealt with fairly and impartially with the object to get the best outcomes for Indigenous people not as a means of creating headlines or promoting a particular point of view.
Gerry will be available to about 4pm today and is then heading off to the Laynhapuy homelands at the invitation of the Traditional Owners made last year.