Opposition Leader, Terry Mills has written to Defence Minister, Stephen Smith, urging him to retain homes at RAAF Base Winnellie for use by Territory families and workers.

Mr Mills said while it isn’t the role of the Commonwealth to fix the Territory Government’s housing blunders, plans to demolish or relocate almost 400 houses at Eaton, the RAAF Base’s residential area, would serve only to worsen the Territory’s already critical accommodation crisis.

“The Commonwealth must re-consider plans to demolish or relocate the homes,” Mr Mills said.

“My Federal counterpart, Member for Solomon Natasha Griggs, has been at the forefront of a campaign to keep the houses where they are and the community is mobilising through the newly established Save Eaton campaign (web link attached).

“In my letter to Stephen Smith, I point out not only the desperate need for more housing in Darwin, but also the social impacts of relocating the homes as well.

“The crisis is so great, 700 more people left Darwin to live interstate than moved here over the past 6 months.

“This speaks volumes for the pressures ordinary people are under trying to meet the cost of housing themselves and their families.

“At $571 a week for a 3 bedroom home, Darwin has the country’s highest median rents and at $581,290 the house price is out of reach for many wage and salary earners.

“On that basis, it is inconceivable the Commonwealth wouldn’t preserve the RAAF Base houses.

“One of the reasons offered up for shifting or bulldozing the houses is noise from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, but it could be years before they arrive in Darwin.

“If the Commonwealth refuses to permanently retain the RAAF homes, they could lease them to Territory families for 5 years until there is some respite from the housing crisis.

“The Commonwealth is already overseeing the removal of dozens of homes from the Larrakeyah Naval Base which could be made available to Territory families instead of sold off to developers.

“I urge Mr Smith puts party politics to one side and keeps the Eaton homes where they are.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594