Having reached the point where tipping more money into the troubled SIHIP program became a necessity, more evidence that the program is failing to meet its promised targets has come to light, said Shadow Indigenous Development Minister Adam Giles.

"In a briefing from the NT Department of Local Government and Housing the funding bombshell was dropped this week," Mr Giles said.

"I was advised that the target of 2500 ‘fix and make safe’ houses would not be met in the five year program due to funding constraints and the target would now have to be reduced.

"When pushed, the Departmental staff would not confirm how many hundreds of ‘fix and make safe’ houses would be knocked off the target but there will definitely be reductions.

"It is important to remember that these 2500 ‘fix and make safes’ were originally supposed to be full refurbishments at an average cost of $75,000 each.

"Now all that is being delivered is a stainless steel bench in the kitchen and repairs to the electrical and plumbing.

"There is absolutely no way that these “fix and make safe” repairs could average $75,000. Even the federal department officials admitted in the recent Senate estimates that the scale of works on each repaired house needed to be reduced in order to make the money go further.

"We now have confirmation that bureaucracy and poor administration of SIHIP has emptied the cookie jar, consuming so much that even the most basic ‘fix and make safe’ target of 2500 cannot be achieved under the original $672 Million allocation.

"It took a departmental briefing in 2009 to expose the original incompetence of this government resulting in a partial federal government takeover and the removal of all infrastructure work from the program.

"Now in 2010 I am told that the SIHIP is an even greater financial mess than in 2009 and once again an admission that there is no way that the promised targets will be delivered," Mr Giles said.

"This isn’t the first change of targets. Originally there were supposed to be 230 full rebuilds of houses deemed beyond economic repair, now they..."
are just upgrades, and the target of 750 new houses were supposed to be just that, houses, but now we learn 10% are 1 bedroom units and 40% are 2 bedroom duplexes.

"SIHIP was supposed to address the chronic housing shortages in Indigenous communities as a measure to respond to child protection as detailed within the Little Children are Sacred Report.

"Housing is also detailed as a key priority in the recent Bath Report into Child Protection titled Growing them Stronger, yet this Government doesn’t see the urgency of this matter, it doesn’t take child protection as an emergency”

"In all but a few cases SIHIP dollars has been wasted or washed away with bloated bureaucracies, interstate consultants and travelling contractors, all filling their pockets while Indigenous kids continue living in substandard conditions.

"The SIHIP program has blown out from day 1. The funding allocation has been changed, the infrastructure component left undone and the people of the Territory are left wondering.

"The announcement of an additional $317 Million from the Commonwealth and $140 from the Territory to bring forward 180 homes and 180 rebuilds from the 10 year National Partnership Agreement, and to do the infrastructure that was to be delivered under SIHIP Mark One, takes the cost of a new home to almost $1 Million each.

"The Minister must stop this charade that SIHIP is on target and on budget and release exactly how much money has been spent to date and what it has been spent on.

"Simply saying that it will all be right at the end of the program is not acceptable.

"The Labor government clearly has no idea of where all the money has gone with their incompetence resulting in the number of homes to be rebuilt go from 230 to zero and the number of refurbishments now slashed from 2500 to an unknown number of simple fix and make safe repairs.

"It is time that a full judicial enquiry is conducted into SIHIP mismanagement and profiteering.”

Further comment: Adam Giles 0421 588 118