Media Release

Adam Giles
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Spotlight on services at Town Camps

27 March 2015

Chief Minister Adam Giles has met with Chief Executives from key Government agencies about services and safety in town camps in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

“This morning I have met with the Acting Commissioner of Police, as well as the Chief Executives of Children and Families, Housing and Education to discuss where there is room for improvement from Government and the third parties it contracts to deliver services,” Mr Giles said.

“The meeting was an opportunity to run through the facts and statistics about the camps and get a handle on the main problems facing residents and agencies.

“The reality is that the issues vary in scale and severity across all Town Camps and across agencies.”

For example, in 2014 Police reported a 41 per cent reduction in assaults compared to a year ago. Domestic violence and sexual violence are also down.

The Department of Children and Families currently has 291 child protection cases open in the Alice Springs Region. 17 per cent of the total number of open investigations involved children from Town Camps. The most common reason for a child to be reported to DCF in Alice Springs is overwhelmingly neglect (59 per cent of cases). Eight per cent of reports relate to a notified concern of sexual exploitation. A third of all children in the care of the Chief Executive are under 5 years of age. Child Protection reports in the Barkly have also jumped sharply over the past four years.

In the course of these talks a range of ideas have been floated for further discussion including:

1. The possibility of co-locating staff from the agencies involved in town camps to assist with information sharing

2. The possibility of changing our trespass laws to make it easier and quicker to remove unwanted visitors from town camps

3. Shorten the time visitors are allowed to stay in town camps

4. The need for improved transport services to get children from Town Camps to school

5. Expanding the use of Public Housing Safety Officers in camps
6. The need for Federal funding for the Child Abuse Taskforce to be increased

7. An Education Department outreach service for town camp families to help them get children school ready.

“I have asked the Police Minister Peter Chandler to chair a more detailed meeting with a wider range of public servants this afternoon to flesh out these ideas and discuss any more that might be brought forward.

“This meeting will also look in more detail at the external service providers which governments contract to work in Town Camps and whether they are delivering for taxpayers and residents.

“I am committed to working with agencies, service providers and the residents themselves on improving the safety and living conditions experienced in Town Camps over the months ahead.”

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