David Tollner
Minister for Lands and Planning

Review to revive tropical housing in the Top End

17 September 2015

The Territory’s construction and architectural experts are being brought together to find ways to encourage the design of more “tropical-friendly” homes in the Top End.

Lands and Planning Minister David Tollner said there was widespread concern that national building regulations were encouraging the construction of highly air-conditioned “esky” homes with small windows and a lack of traditional Territory features.

“Territory homes have to comply with the National Construction Code, but this code was designed with the aim of encouraging energy-efficiency in the southern states,” Mr Tollner said.

“It means new homes in the Top End are highly insulated and there is concern this discourages the use of traditional cooling features, such as verandas and large louvered windows.

“That’s why I’m bringing together our local building experts to review how these requirements affect housing in the NT and how we can fix the situation.”

The Minister has formed a Domestic Building Code Review Group to suggest possible Territory-wide changes to the National Construction Code.

The group is chaired by acclaimed Darwin architect Phil Harris, of Troppo Architects, and also includes representatives of the Building Designers Association, Engineers Australia, the Housing Industry Association, the Master Builders Association, the Australian Building Sustainability Association and Master Plumbers NT.

Mr Harris said he was looking forward to improving contemporary building design in the NT.

“Whilst well-intentioned, energy-efficiency provisions under the national code have led us away from our common-sensical past,” Mr Harris said.

“With the science of today, this review offers a great opportunity to get back to shaping a charismatic tropical face for Darwin, building on the Top End’s unique architectural heritage.”

The group will have administrative support from the Territory Government’s Building Advisory Services department, but will be fully independent.
The group will seek written and verbal submissions from the building design and construction industry as well as technical experts and other interested parties.

Its final report is due to be delivered to the Minister in March 2016.

Media contact: Stuart Sherwin 0438 103005

Review group contact: Helen Farquhar 8924 7287