TACKLING THE HOUSING DEFICIT IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

SUMMARY

Labor will invest over $1 billion over 10 years in Remote Housing

In Government Labor will provide a 10 year $1.1 billion remote housing program to lift the amount of housing, living space and rooms available to Territorians living in remote communities.

These funds will be allocated from within the Territory budget for infrastructure. This budget is expected to be around $1.4 billion per year over the next few years and this allocation represents 8% of the total infrastructure budget. It is within the resources of the Territory to achieve this. Labor recognises that this investment will be required to be backed by a package within the infrastructure budget which provides for the necessary civil works to match the planned housing expansion.

This funding will be allocated to 5 housing construction and expansion programs. These are:

1. **HomeBuild NT** - A direct Territory Government investment in building new housing, living space and rooms in remote communities.

These funds will be additional to the Australian Government’s commitment through the national partnership. Labor will provide $500 million over 10 years from Territory infrastructure budgets to pay for this program.

**HomeBuild NT** will be focused on bringing new homes on line for Territorians in remote communities. The program will be flexible enough to include remote specialist housing for aged Territorians and for those with a disability, mental condition or in recovery from addictions and dependency on alcohol and other drugs.

2. **Territory Government will invest in repairs and maintenance of houses beyond the funds currently provided by the Australian Government.**

Labor will provide an additional $20 million per year to repairs and maintenance programs once again beginning in the 2017-18 budget and extending through the full 10 years.

3. **Labor will introduce a new program called Room To Breathe NT.**

This program will fast track the building of rooms, ‘granny’ flats and spaces designed to provide more living space, sleeping space and shelter for remote Territorians. The program will include outdoor living and cooking areas. $20 million per year will be provided from 2017-18 onwards for 5 years to get quick results.

4. **An expanded Government employee housing program that is accessible by locally recruited remote Government employees, with access governed by transparent criteria based on an annual assessment of priority needs.**

Labor will provide $20 million per year additionally to support this initiative.

5. **An expanded Homelands Extra funding program.**

Labor will lift the program to $6000 per eligible family per year and reform the eligibility criteria.
Table of Expenditure on Building and Construction

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Managing this investment through Devolution to Local Groups

It is the intention of Labor to devolve key decision making over housing back to indigenous people living in remote communities. Labor is prepared to devolve to shires, regional authorities or to housing groups the decision making about what to build, where to build it, how to build it and who will build it. Labor is also prepared to work with new models of decision making that engage communities and external groups such as resource centres.

Managing Tenancies

Labor will re-invigorate the Housing Reference Groups and will ensure that communities have local housing officers to support local initiatives and improve government responses. Initially Labor will ensure that housing officers exist across 25 major areas. Labor is prepared to devolve the tenancy management for remote communities away from Territory Housing. Similarly Labor will review the housing repair contract arrangements in an effort to make housing repairs and maintenance a more locally provided service, with local trade workers on site for quicker response.

Leasing

Labor wants to work with what works; not create more administrative delays and road blocks. 40 year leases, developed with the land councils under Labor, are working to assist in delivering improvements to social housing. We will support the preference for and leasing arrangements for 40 years with the Territory Government on a block by block, town by town approach.

Housing on Homelands and Outstations

Labor believes that the policy approach to the provision of housing on homelands and outstations is in need of rethinking. Therefore Labor will address the issue on a case by case basis. We are prepared to provide new housing to some outstations and homelands where the proponents are prepared to place co-funding into the proposal. Labor will also investigate the establishment of a grants program that applies to building houses in outstations and homelands.

Labor will also investigate designed for purpose financial models and products that can help people borrow money to build their own homes. These models are being developed around the world and should be examined for applicability in the Territory.