Major boost for housing in remote NT

Territorians living in remote communities will benefit from significantly improved housing and employment and training opportunities, thanks to a $350 million investment by the Australian and Northern Territory governments.

The two jurisdictions have agreed a new approach is needed to address overcrowding and poor housing in remote communities, one based on delivering outcomes for residents in these communities rather than just getting the money out the door.

The agreement between the Commonwealth and NT is the first to be reached under the new Remote Housing Strategy, which is replacing the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).

Under this agreement and our National Partnership Agreement on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment, more than 350 new houses will be built and more than 1000 refurbished.

Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, and Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Adam Giles, said today the investment would significantly improve the quality of housing and economic opportunities for local First Australians by:

- delivering improved employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through better links with the Community Development Programme;
- driving the development and engagement of local Indigenous businesses so that communities can get contracts to build, repair and maintain their own houses;
- increasing opportunities and removing barriers to local residents buying their own houses; and
- supporting reformed property and tenancy arrangements by developing local workforces and ensuring tenants understand their rights and obligations.

Minister Scullion said the requirement that local Indigenous businesses be directly engaged was in stark contrast to the NPARIH, which contracted large alliances with a “fly-in, fly-out” workforce.
“This new agreement will create important local employment and training opportunities for First Australians living in remote communities,” Minister Scullion said.

“The new outcomes-driven approach the strategy adopts will improve the sustainability of social housing and increase the lifespan of remote houses in the Northern Territory.”

Chief Minister Giles said that from August 2012 to March 2016 the Northern Territory Government had built 460 new homes, refurbished 474 and upgraded 805.

“This new partnership with the Commonwealth will enable us to expand the work that needs to be done,” he said.

“Remote housing has been a challenge for decades and we recognise it needs to be improved.”

The Remote Housing Strategy is a new national agreement that will deliver $774 million over the next two years to improve the outcomes from Commonwealth investment in remote Indigenous housing and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to better housing.

The funding has been redirected from the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, which was a 10-year agreement from 2008 to 2018 that the new Strategy is replacing.

The National Partnership Agreement on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment is the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments’ $988 million agreement to deliver investment in schooling, community safety, health and housing.

Media contacts: Ben Houston – 0429 236 016 (Minister Scullion)

Michael Gorey – 0437 249 003 (Chief Minister Giles)