MACKLIN MISSESTHE MARK

Tangentyere Council’s decision to knock back $125 million to improve life for people living in Alice Springs town camps is an immense disappointment.

Shadow Indigenous Policy Minister Adam Giles said the rejection of this massive cash injection highlighted another Labor policy failure.

“It signifies the gutless and incompetent approach to improving life on the Town Camps by both the Territory and Federal Labor governments,” Mr Giles said.

“I would have thought the Federal Government would have got this right by now, but it’s failed again.

“Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin have had nearly two years to bring about change – and they’ve done nothing.

“The Commonwealth and Territory governments should stop pussy-footing around and consider the rights of the women and children who are desperate for a better life.

“They should also consider whether Tangentyere Council is fulfilling its commitment under the terms of the Town Camps leasing arrangements and whether it’s fulfilling its obligations to the rights of children who live there.

“To do anything else smacks of gross negligence and condemns the residents to more of the degradation and abuse they have lived with for decades.

“A successful outcome would include private sector investment and home ownership models mixed with public and community housing.

“Everybody would benefit from putting an end to these enclaves and incorporating residents into mainstream Alice Springs.”

Mr Giles said the money on offer by the Commonwealth – and rejected by Tangentyere – was disproportionate to other financial commitments by Labor.

“The $125 million that was offered for the 1600 Town Camp residents works out at nearly $80,000 for every man, woman and child,” he said.

“It’s about one-quarter of the money up for the entire Northern Territory under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP).
“And the Territory Government offered just $280,000 for new land release in Alice Springs in the Territory budget.

“The Federal and Territory Labor governments promised they would overcome the blame game – but now we’ll see more buck-passing and blame shifting over who is responsible for the camps.”

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