Refurbishments under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) have started on the Tiwi Islands, Groote Eylandt and in Tennant Creek, with construction of new houses expected to start in coming months.

The major new works will deliver 55 new houses and 308 refurbishments in communities on the Tiwi Islands, Groote Eylandt, Bickerton Island and in Tennant Creek.

SIHIP is a $672 million joint Australian and Northern Territory Government housing program and represents the largest investment by governments in Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory.

The state of Indigenous housing across remote Australia is the most visible and enduring evidence of the failure of Governments, over decades, to address Indigenous disadvantage.

The Australian Government is determined to address the appalling living conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

Decent housing is essential for protecting children, improving health, education and employment and re-building positive community norms.
On the Tiwi Islands, overcrowding will be reduced by around 60 per cent and on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, new housing and refurbishments will deliver housing improvements for more than 600 people.

At Tennant Creek, new infrastructure including power, water, sewerage and roads and refurbishment works will deliver improvements to all town camps.

In each of the three locations, at least 20 per cent of the local workforce will be Indigenous.

This will help drive longer-term employment outcomes for communities and builds on existing training and employment programs which are helping increase opportunities for local Indigenous workers.

On the Tiwi Islands seven local Indigenous people have been employed for initial work and in Tennant Creek 12 Indigenous trainees have completed an eight-week program to prepare them for work.

The program is also about changing the way governments deliver infrastructure to remote Indigenous Australians through a more consultative approach.

For example, on Groote Eylandt, local people contributed to housing design which included improving access and functionality for sufferers of the genetic Machado-Joseph Disease.

Decent housing is key to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage, reducing overcrowding and increasing employment opportunities.

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