Matt Conlan
Minister for Housing

Strong appetite for home ownership in remote communities

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Public Housing tenants in remote Territory communities have expressed strong interest in the Territory Government’s new home ownership drive.

Launched in June, the Remote Home Ownership Program will allow tenants on the Tiwi Islands, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island to buy their own homes.

“Over the past two months the Government has been speaking with these communities about our new homeownership program and the response so far has been very positive,” Housing Minister Matt Conlan said.

“It is clear there is an appetite for home ownership is in these communities with 11 finance applications already lodged, which is fantastic to see.

“This program is key to the Country Liberals Government’s plan to develop Northern Australia and drive economic opportunities in remote communities.

“Unlike the Labor party, the Country Liberals Government is determined to give Aboriginal people in the bush the same opportunities as Territorians living in urban areas and that includes the chance to buy their own home.

“We want public housing to be a pathway to home ownership, not an end in itself and it is pleasing to see this supported by these communities.”

Communities with long term township leases are eligible for the program which currently includes Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island and Milikapiti on Melville Island, as well as Angurugu and Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra on Bickerton Island.

$4.5 million has been set aside over the next three years for the program and up to half the Territory’s remote housing stock could be made available for sale to tenants who wish to purchase their home.

“The price of properties will be determined via an independent evaluation and it is expected that most homes would be available for purchase in the $50,000 to $150,000 range,” said Mr Conlan.
“A round of stakeholder engagement sessions discussing the program has commenced with groups including Traditional Owners, Land Councils, Regional Councils, Housing Reference Groups and Government Engagement Coordinators.

“Feedback from the communities so far has been great, they are excited about the opportunity for home ownership and the fact it will bring independence and the ability for people to stand on their own two feet.”

The next stage of the program will seek formal expressions of interest from tenants followed by an eligibility assessment for the interested home buyers.

Indigenous Business Australia will provide the loan products and services under the program including insurance for the first 12 months. At the completion of the sale, owner occupiers will be supported with a special incentive grant of $20,000 to help them upgrade and maintain their home.

As part of the program, case managers have been employed to work closely with eligible applicants. It is expected the first homes will be ready for sale towards the end of the year.

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