“NO” WAS THE WRONG DECISION

The Territory Opposition has condemned the decision by the Tangentyere Council to turn its back on the Federal Government’s offer of $60 million for the town camps it administers.

“Yes’ was the only answer that could reasonably be given, yet, somehow, the Tangentyere Council managed to get it wrong,” says Dr Richard Lim, Shadow Minister for Central Australia.

“The suggestion that the Federal and Territory Governments’ proposal wasn’t culturally appropriate for indigenous people is based on confused logic.

“The $60 million proposal was to shift management of the camps from Tangentyere to NT Housing AND improve the living conditions of the thousands of indigenous people now living in the squalor of the town camps.

“NT Housing currently has thousands of indigenous Territorians living in its houses, some of whom are living in the suburbs of Alice Springs.

“The argument cannot be sustained in light of that fact. Its time people who purport to speak on behalf of indigenous people come out from behind argument of ‘cultural differences’.

“I can only ask how it is culturally appropriate to live in squalor, and having children exposed to the poor hygiene, violence and abusive activities in the town camps in Alice Springs.

“The fact is that significant amounts of money have been made available for the Tanentyere Council to improve conditions in the camps, and not one camp can be shown to have improved in its state of habitation. It has failed to deliver the necessary improvement.

“Given that failure, the Federal and Territory Governments recognised an alternative approach was necessary if things were ever going to improve in the camps, through a process that enabled indigenous people to retain their lease in perpetuity on the town camps. They will NEVER lose ownership of their town camp land.

“Not surprisingly the Governments decided that the alternative approach required new management of the camps.

‘I think the self interest of a few has got in the way of the common good.

“It is a terrible day for the people living in the camps and for the rest of us in Alice Springs.”

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