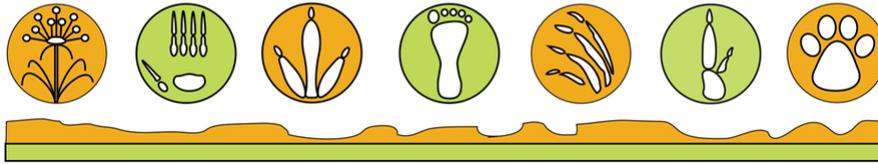


BARKLY REGIONAL COUNCIL



MEDIA RELEASE

10 February 2015

Call for action on housing crisis in Elliott

Barkly Regional Council (BRC) has resolved to invite Federal and Northern Territory Ministers to the Barkly to discuss Aboriginal housing in Elliott (Gurungu and Wilyugu) and Newcastle Waters (Marlinja).

BRC plans to invite the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, and, the NT Government Minister for Local Government and Community Services, Bess Price, to talk to community members about the state of their town camps and the Marlinja outstation.

As Nicolas Rothwell points out in the *Weekend Australian*, Aboriginal town camps are a very real manifestation of failed policy for the NT and not on anyone's radar.

To better understand the size of the problem, the Northern Territory Government is exploring funding for a scoping study that will take into account the cost of renewal and maintenance for these many properties that are past their useful life.

At a meeting held by BRC last week, President Barb Shaw and Councillors Bob Bagnall and Ray Aylett met with representatives of the Federal and Northern Territory governments, the Northern Land Council (NLC) and a delegation of residents to discuss issues of housing and the need for housing replacement.

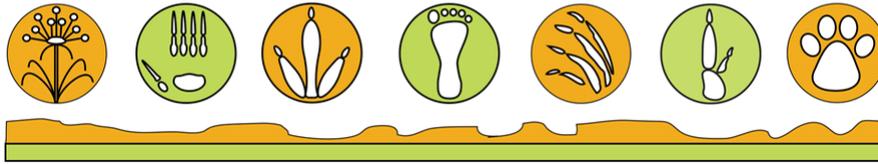
Clr Bagnall stressed that Elliott had been forgotten by government, highlighting that many houses were over 30 years old with 80% past their economic life. "No new stock has been built for more than 15 years," he said. "There has been minimal maintenance and upgrade to the houses in these areas, resulting in many houses now considered to be unfit for living."

BRC, as the current service provider, receives funding for maintenance of houses from the NT Government's Department of Local Government and Community Services, however, this is rationalised at around \$2500-\$3000 per house. "Given the state of housing in north and south camps this is little more than a band aid," said Clr Bagnall.

Clr Bagnall said that quotes obtained by BRC a couple of years ago itemised basic urgent repairs for up to \$46,000.

"It must be said that most of these houses are at the end of life. At post 20-year construction in the NT with materials that are not durable, most are beyond economic repair," he said.

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Leanne Evans, Senior Director of Homelands and Outstations, Department of Local Government and Community Services, told residents at last week's meeting that there is no funding for new houses on Aboriginal communities anywhere in the NT and that the NT Government is not looking to lease in any new communities.

Of the \$20 million received annually by the NT Government, this must be spread over more than 500 homelands and outstations including town camps, leaving very little for each dwelling.

Andre Burgess, Senior Advisor, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, also confirmed there was no funding for housing, outlining how there has been no negotiations in Elliott as the area is not on the Federal Government's Remote Housing Plan.

At last week's meeting President Shaw outlined proposals from the three levels of government to give Elliott residents an indication of how the crisis could be resolved.

The NT Government has agreed to look for money to fund a condition report on the houses and the Federal and Territory Governments and NLC have committed to working with the community and other levels of government to find new solutions.

To immediately assist with the situation, BRC proposes to increase capacity by working with the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) to discuss funding a position of a housing/environmental officer within the community.

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