



MEDIA RELEASE

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HIGH STAKES AS DEADLOCK ON HOUSING CONTINUES

The stand-off between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments over a \$550 million commitment for remote housing is shaping up as a significant blow to the aspirations and prospects of families and children across the Territory, according to affordable housing and homelessness peak body NT Shelter.

Earlier this year, NT Shelter wrote to Commonwealth Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion and NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner, urging all reasonable efforts be taken to resolve the impasse since the Commonwealth's commitment was announced in April 2018.

"The inability of the two Governments to finalise an agreement threatens to impact on the delivery of much needed housing for many disadvantaged Territorians. According to recent data released by the Productivity Commission, 54.3% of state owned and managed housing in the NT is overcrowded", said NT Shelter's Executive Officer Peter McMillan.

Mr McMillan said that both sides of politics and all levels of Government had noted the extent of housing disadvantage in the NT and the need to close the gap on Aboriginal disadvantage.

"This is an important test of both governments' ability to work together to improve the lives of families whose kids are disadvantaged with early childhood development and education opportunities, and get sick from preventable illnesses, because they live in poor quality, overcrowded housing. Failure to do so, and the potential winding back of remote housing construction, puts at risk the needs of highly disadvantaged families across the NT", Mr McMillan said.

NT Shelter believes it is incumbent on both parties to negotiate in good faith and finalise remaining issues immediately, especially bearing in mind that 2019 will see a Federal election called and caretaker conventions put in place.

"The people who have placed conditions on this deal need to reflect on whether the demands they are making are achievable and reasonable. We're virtually out of time. Territorians expect their governments to be fair dinkum and honour the commitments they've made, especially when it comes to their housing", he said.

"If this is not sorted before a Federal election is called, the money is effectively gone, responsibility for remote communities is up in the air and we're back to square one", warned Mr McMillan.

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