



MEDIA RELEASE

10 November 2020

BUDGET MISSES OPPORTUNITY TO RAMP UP INVESTMENT IN HOUSING AS PATHWAY TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Today's release of Budget 2020 by the Northern Territory Government represents a missed opportunity to stimulate economic recovery through increasing social and affordable housing supply, according to housing and homelessness peak body NT Shelter.

Executive Officer Peter McMillan said that all other states and territories across Australia had recognised the key role that new social housing investment played in delivering better economic and social outcomes, as well as stimulating the economy through construction sector jobs and income generation.

"From Tasmania to Queensland, and everywhere between, State and Territory governments have recognised the need to up the ante on social housing as a lever to rebuild their economies after COVID. For some reason, despite a loud chorus of endorsement from economists across the nation, this opportunity has not yet been grasped in the Northern Territory", Mr McMillan said.

Budget 2020-21 will see continued significant investment in remote housing programs and the return of program funding to complete the \$100 Million Public Housing Stimulus program, both of which are welcome news.

"We realise the fiscal challenges that the NT Government is facing and that difficult decisions need to be taken on how to best support the economy, but we're very disappointed to see no specific commitment to short stay visitor accommodation for Katherine, nor any clear messaging in the Budget regarding how the NT Government is going to tackle the estimated 10,000 house shortfall outlined in its Housing Strategy", said Mr McMillan.

The incorporation of the former Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development into a combined agency with the former Department of Territory Families has resulted in less visibility in the Budget on line item expenditure for key initiatives, raising several questions as to program priorities and resourcing over the coming year.

"We will need to work through the specific impacts of this Budget with the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities and what it means for housing and homelessness strategies, and opportunities from here. This needs to include finding ways to ramp up supply of social and affordable housing by non-profit community housing organisations, as other States have already done".



Mr McMillan said that while Budget 2020 delivered little for those who continue to wait for unacceptably long periods for public housing, progress could be still be made.

“Ultimately we need a plan. The Northern Territory Government can’t reasonably be expected to build everything itself and foot the bill for it. But it does need to take a leadership role and signal its intentions on how it is going to deliver on its housing and homelessness strategies and ultimately ensure there are enough houses to meet our current and future needs”, Mr McMillan said.

-ENDS-

Media contact: Peter McMillan (0447) 234 217