



MEDIA RELEASE

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A BUDGET 2022-23 “NO BRAINER”: SHORT-STAY ACCOMMODATION FOR KATHERINE

The provision of culturally appropriate, short-stay accommodation for visitors coming to Katherine for medical, cultural, family, and other reasons is a “no brainer”, the peak body for affordable housing and homelessness in the Northern Territory says.

Released to the public today, NT Shelter’s Pre-Budget Submission puts 13 key asks to the Northern Territory Government ahead of its 2022-23 Budget. A commitment to financially support the development of a Katherine visitor accommodation model headlines those asks.

NT Shelter’s Executive Officer, Peter McMillan, said there was strong local support for the project, with 19 leading organisations signing a joint statement in 2020 to bring to the attention of Government that Katherine had been “overlooked” and “neglected” on short-stay visitor accommodation, and that it was “time to put this right”.

A survey undertaken in 2020 by management at the Katherine Doorways Hub revealed that 94% of people who had come to Katherine for a medical appointment were sleeping rough due to the absence of any affordable and appropriate short-stay accommodation options.

“Katherine is a major regional hub that covers a footprint the size of Victoria and Tasmania combined. It is completely unacceptable that people coming to town for medical help and surgery from outlying communities have nowhere to stay”, Mr McMillan said.

Mr McMillan said that the COVID-19 pandemic put the vulnerabilities of people living in overcrowded housing or sleeping rough firmly in the national spotlight. In Katherine, the absence of appropriate accommodation meant that Government-funded, temporary motel accommodation was the only option available to protect families sleeping rough.

“It took a crisis in Tennant Creek to get all three levels of Government together to strike a regional deal which, among other things, committed to culturally appropriate short-stay accommodation for visitors to Tennant Creek. It shouldn’t take another crisis to get similar safe and secure infrastructure built in Katherine, which would be value for money and the least we can do for people who need to come to town”, Mr McMillan said.

NT Shelter is also calling on the major parties contesting the 2022 Federal Election to commit to funds for capital work associated with the construction of a facility, with the Northern Territory Government to support any ongoing operational costs.

“This is exactly the sort of social infrastructure project that Infrastructure Australia and Infrastructure NT have both stressed is critically important for ensuring vibrant and livable communities. We simply can’t afford to let this opportunity slip through the cracks”, Mr McMillan said.

FAST FACTS

- Katherine is the only major regional centre in the Northern Territory that does not have, or will not soon have, short-stay accommodation for visitors. Over the past 4 years, commitments have been made in Darwin (as a pre-election, Coalition commitment) and Tennant Creek (through the Barkly Regional Deal).
- Alice Springs already has a short-stay visitor park, and the Northern Territory Government, of its own volition, has established a 300-bed short-stay accommodation facility in Marrara.
- According to the 2016 Census, the homeless population in the Katherine region is approximately 31 times the national rate.
- The 19 organisations that have signed the joint statement are:
 - Kalano Community Association
 - Australian Medical Association (AMA) Northern Territory
 - Katherine Town Council
 - Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory
 - Aboriginal Housing NT
 - The Salvation Army
 - Binjari Community Aboriginal Corporation
 - Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service
 - Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup
 - Jesuit Social Services
 - North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
 - Katherine Women’s Crisis Centre
 - Anglicare NT
 - Mission Australia
 - Save the Children
 - CatholicCare NT
 - Somerville Community Services
 - TeamHEALTH
 - NT Shelter

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Attachments (2): NT Shelter’s Pre-Budget Submission: NT Budget 2022-23
Joint Statement on Katherine Short-Stay Accommodation