

Northern Territory Government Initial Response to the **Independent Town Camps Review** Report



Contents

- 04 **ONE** About the Review
- 05 **TWO** Our Vision
- 06 **THREE** Local Decision Making
- 07 **FOUR** Our immediate actions in response to the Review
- 08 **FIVE** Community led approaches towards a sustainable future
for town camps in the Northern Territory
- 09 **SIX** Clear and consistent rules to underpin the reform agenda
SEVEN Local economic participation opportunities to support
economic and social cohesion
- 10 **EIGHT** Governance and accountability

ONE ABOUT THE REVIEW

In April 2016, the Northern Territory Government commissioned an independent review into identified systemic issues and challenges associated with the governance and administration and condition of housing and infrastructure of the 43 town camps in the Northern Territory.

The objective of the Northern Territory Town Camps Review was to provide an informed evidence base to develop long term strategies to improve living conditions and service delivery in the town camps.

The Northern Territory Town Camps Review is the most comprehensive single review ever undertaken for town camps. The independent Review, undertaken by Deloitte, adopted a place-based approach and included seven focus areas:

- community aspirations
- legislation and governance arrangements
- leasing and tenure arrangements
- housing quality, management and ownership
- municipal and essential infrastructure
- service delivery arrangements
- potential economic development opportunities.

The Review report contains over 16 000 pages of information including key findings and recommendations.

The Review identified opportunities to improve governance arrangements to support town camps, including from within the organisations which hold ownership of the town camps and government.

Additionally, the Review identified repairs, maintenance and upgrade works required for town camps to bring them up to current standards.

While further work is required to understand the scale and applicability of proposed works, the estimated costs are significant. Prioritisation of repairs, maintenance and upgrade works will be informed by town camps' residents, together with opportunities for local Aboriginal economic development and contracting.

The Northern Territory Town Camps Review Report has been released and can be accessed from the Department of Housing and Community Development's website www.dhcd.nt.gov.au.

The Northern Territory Government supports or supports in-principle the 22 summary recommendations in the report. As an independent report, the Northern Territory Government does not support the report in its entirety, particularly comments relating to the transition of residents away from their homes for economic opportunities. We will support residents to stay in their homes and develop a sustainable future for town camps. It is important for the community to provide feedback via the website.

Your feedback will be reviewed as part of the considerations for the longer term strategy and policy framework for town camps.

***THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE MODEL FOR TOWN CAMPS
WHICH EMPHASISES LOCAL DECISION
MAKING, AND CONNECTIONS TO
FAMILY, CULTURE AND COUNTRY, WHILE
RECOGNISING THE FUNDAMENTAL
IMPORTANCE OF SAFE AND SUITABLE
HOUSING TO THE SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF
ABORIGINAL TERRITORIANS***

THREE

LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Through its Local Decision Making agenda, the Northern Territory Government recognises the importance of Aboriginal communities and town camp residents being empowered to make choices about service delivery, repairs and maintenance priorities, and economic development opportunities. This will be achieved through governance and capacity-building of community leaders; clearly defined rules, regulatory frameworks, roles and responsibilities; and a cohesive reform pathway developed in consultation with residents and all stakeholders.

The Northern Territory Government recognises there is much work to be done to ensure town camps' residents are in a sound position to influence improvements to their living conditions, and to provide targeted support for the organisations who manage town camps.

The issues facing town camps and their residents are varied, complex and long-standing, and will not be resolved through a 'one size fits all' policy.

While recognising the value of information gathered throughout the Review, the Northern Territory Government considers the Review to be the first step of an important journey, together with communities and town camp residents, to build a more cohesive, sustainable and longer term approach to town camps in a way that empowers residents and Aboriginal people to live healthy and harmonious lives.

Initial responses to the recommendations of the Review are outlined in the Northern Territory Government Initial Response to the Independent Town Camps Review Report Recommendations document.

It is clear that there is much more work to be done, together with Aboriginal communities and the Australian Government, to establish a clear and cohesive policy and regulatory framework to underpin a sustainable approach to town camps in the future.

FOUR OUR IMMEDIATE ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW

There is a need to reset the operating environment for town camps and establish sound evidence-based policy to underpin future investment and support for town camps. This work must be done in partnership with the town camp landowners and residents.

The Northern Territory Government will immediately establish a dedicated Town Camps Futures Unit within the Department of Housing and Community Development to work with town camp residents and stakeholders, including the Australian Government, to develop future government policy and a long-term plan for each of the Territory's 43 town camps.

In recognition of the more immediate housing repairs and maintenance work identified by the Town Camps Review, an additional \$24 million over two years has been made available by government. These works are already underway and aim to make the dwellings as functional as possible, with priority investment in 12 town camps.

The new Town Camps Futures Unit will be operational by 1 July 2018. Initially the unit will work through all elements of the Town Camps Review and, together with town camps residents and landowners, develop a comprehensive approach across all of the key elements identified in the Review, through the establishment of a Town Camps Policy and Implementation Plan by mid-2019.



**IMMEDIATE FUNDING OF
\$24 MILLION OVER TWO YEARS
TO UNDERTAKE PRIORITY
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE
FOR TOWN CAMPS HOUSING
AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES**



LOCAL DECISION MAKING



**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TOWN CAMPS
FUTURES UNIT IN THE DEPARTMENT
OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT TO PROGRESS
A LONG-TERM POLICY AND
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR
TOWN CAMPS**



**OFFICE OF ABORIGINAL
AFFAIRS REMOTE ABORIGINAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND PROMOTING
GOVERNANCE, CAPACITY BUILDING
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

FIVE COMMUNITY LED APPROACHES TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE **FOR TOWN CAMPS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

Together with communities, and as part of the Northern Territory Government's commitment to it's Local Decision Making approach, our objective is to work with individual town camps and communities to establish collective goals and approaches that build the capacity and capability of communities to control their own living environments and futures.

The Local Decision Making process operates within a 'place-based' framework. The framework will be flexible enough to respond to local priorities that currently sit within Northern Territory Government agencies and programs. This is particularly relevant for town camps wanting to improve outcomes for children and families for the future.

The Local Decision Making framework will provide a clear and flexible process for representatives of town camps to work with government to make decisions and, in some cases, take control of delivering government services. This allows for place-based solutions for greater impact of desired outcomes.

The framework will set out how to transfer control of service delivery to local providers in town camps based on their aspirations. The Town Camps Future Unit will work with town camp residents to fulfil their aspirations to move from government led service delivery to Aboriginal-controlled service delivery where appropriate and possible.

As part of this process, Aboriginal-controlled community organisations will be supported by the Department of the Chief Minister's Office of Aboriginal Affairs and Regional Networks to ensure good governance is in place and capacity is built to achieve the aims of the community in rolling out Local Decision Making.



SIX CLEAR AND CONSISTENT RULES TO UNDERPIN THE REFORM AGENDA

The Town Camps Review identifies the importance of clear and consistent roles and responsibilities, together with clarity over regulatory, decision making and funding frameworks to underpin long-term pathways for sustainable and socially cohesive town camp communities.

Clarity over land tenure and leasing arrangements for town camps aligns with the Northern Territory Government's broader commitment to ensure land ownership delivers on the economic and social aspirations of Aboriginal Territorians.

SEVEN LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

The Town Camps Review identifies a range of economic participation opportunities arising through a long-term investment approach in town camps, including through incentives to enable the employment of local Aboriginal residents.

The views of community members and landowners on the opportunities available will be important in taking forward a renewed emphasis on economic participation in town camps.

The Northern Territory Government already has mechanisms through Procurement Rules and Guidelines to support increased numbers of Aboriginal jobs, and awarding of contracts to local Aboriginal businesses in remote and regional communities.

In addition, the Northern Territory Government has committed to the development of a new Aboriginal Contracting Framework that will:

- apply to government procurement and grants across diverse government activities (not just major construction works)
- identify what government agencies can do to target and influence outcomes across the procurement and grant lifecycles
- incorporate labour supply, business capability development and industry strategies.

EIGHT

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The development of the Northern Territory Town Camps Policy and Implementation Plan is an important issue for Aboriginal Territorians.

The Town Camps Futures Unit will have a primary focus of restoring the governance arrangements which support the landowners and residents. The unit will develop, together with Aboriginal communities, a Town Camps Policy and Implementation Plan by mid-2019 that will outline clear roles and responsibilities for regulation reform, governance and funding as well as the long-term policy for achieving a sustainable future for town camps.

The Northern Territory Government will work with the Australian Government to progress a joint approach to investment and Aboriginal land and leasing reforms.

WHERE DO I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Further information on the Northern Territory Government's initial response to the Town Camps Review, Frequently Asked Questions, and the entire Deloitte Northern Territory Town Camps Review report, *Living on the Edge*, is available at **www.dhcd.gov.au**

