



Major gathering to rethink Aboriginal housing

3 April 2023

Key workers and stakeholders from across the nation's Aboriginal housing sector will gather in Darwin in a fortnight for the inaugural NT Remote Housing and Homelands conference. The 3-day gathering is a chance to untangle complex issues of homelessness; crowded houses; impoverished homelands; and beleaguered town camps and community living areas.

The forum will reignite discussions and reinvigorate work toward a system of Aboriginal housing that meets the common goal: a sufficient supply of appropriate and affordable housing for Aboriginal people – delivered and managed by Aboriginal community organisations. Delegates will hear from commonwealth and territory ministers as well as senior managers and directors of government agencies, academics, community-controlled housing providers and residents.

Host for the forum is Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT) Aboriginal Corporation, the NT peak body funded to help bring about systemic change. Its CEO, Skye Thompson, says: 'Our role is to support all the players in this space. We support housing and related service providers to strengthen their capacity. We support the Northern Territory government to make good, transparent decisions as they invest in infrastructure for homelands and town camps. And we support everyone – including or especially residents – by hosting forums like this to exchange ideas and join forces. Together, we will level up Aboriginal housing.'

The first day will deal with the critical issue of homelessness, which affects Aboriginal people with devastating disproportion: almost 9 out of every 10 homeless territorians are Aboriginal – and unlike in other states, most of those are outside the capital city.

Day 2 will address challenges in the transition back to an Aboriginal community-controlled housing system, economic independence and good design.

Homelands are the topic of the third and final day. 'We'll hear from CEOs and directors of 5 corporations serving Aboriginal homelands,' Ms Thompson said. 'We know living on Country is good for our people's health, education and employment outcomes, and now governments at all levels recognise that, we're starting to see significant reinvestment. This conference will help us to navigate a path from the current state of neglect and disrepair to a future state of thriving on-Country communities.'

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