

WE OPPOSE THE REMOTE RENT FRAMEWORK PROPOSED BY THE NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Today, a broad coalition of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Land Councils, Legal Services, and Peak Bodies call on the Northern Territory Government to:

1. Immediately repeal the proposed remote rent framework.
2. Maintain current rent arrangements until a new model is designed in partnership with all key stakeholders
3. Provide mean, median and mode rates for rent paid by dwelling size for 2020/21 and 2021/22.
4. Commit to designing a new remote rent model in partnership with key stakeholder organisations and communities in the spirit of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and in consideration of income, need, and circumstance/context.



We oppose the proposed remote rent framework for the following reasons:

1. The Northern Territory Government's advice is that 68 per cent of households may experience a rent increase of up to 40 per cent under the proposed new framework. Given the poverty levels experienced by many households in remote communities, it is unrealistic to expect that households will be able to pay the increased rent. More households are likely to find themselves in debt due to rent arrears.
2. The proposed remote rent framework in its current form is racially discriminatory in effect because tenants from 'remote communities, Alice Springs Town Camps and Tennant Creek Community Living Areas', where the vast majority of people are Aboriginal, will not be 'eligible for a rental rebate'.
3. The 'Safety Net' aspect of the Remote Rent Framework will not work like the Rental Rebate and many remote tenants will fall through the cracks and not have the Safety Net applied. Many remote tenants are Aboriginal-language speakers first and may not know who to speak to, to ask for the safety net to be applied. By comparison, the maximum rebated rent an urban tenant can be charged is 25 per cent under the Rental Rebate Policy, regardless of their circumstances.
4. The proposed remote rent framework will increase the vulnerability of head tenants as they will be legally responsible for a household's entire rent regardless of household occupancy and composition. Many head tenants are already vulnerable based on gender, age, health and disability.
5. Public policy reform must never disadvantage remote tenants. The proposed remote rent framework will further disadvantage remote Aboriginal families and remote households who are already experiencing some of the highest costs of living nationally. Aboriginal families in remote communities are already being forced to pay inconceivably high prices for basic goods, essential groceries, fuel and standard day to day items.
6. The proposed remote rent framework will exacerbate the already disproportionately high numbers of rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek as people in remote communities, who are unable to pay increased rent, are effectively forced into seeking alternative accommodation in urban centres.

The Northern Territory has deferred the proposed framework for five months from September 2022 to February 2023 to allow for further engagement with residents ahead of implementing the new model.

This is despite the fact that the four Land Councils and Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory have called for a moratorium to allow for a new model to be designed in partnership with all key stakeholders.

We remind the Northern Territory Government of its commitment to genuine partnership by its signing of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and commitment to its Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

All Territorians should have access to safe, healthy and affordable public housing, regardless of their location and a public housing rental model that does not further impoverish nor diminish the well-being of those families.

Contact

Leeanne Caton
AHNT Chairperson
0483 818 699
ceo@yillihousing.com.au