

Aboriginal Housing
Northern Territory

ELECTION PLATFORM

Our policy position for the 2024 NT election

About us

Our purpose

We advocate for appropriate and affordable housing and essential services for Aboriginal people. And we help strengthen Aboriginal-controlled organisations as they manage housing and homelands.

Context

In the Northern Territory:

12 x

the rate of homelessness is 12 times the national average

87%

87% of homeless people are Aboriginal

98%

over half of all remote community homes are overcrowded, and 98% of people living in severely overcrowded dwellings are Aboriginal

Compounding the issue, about 10,000 Aboriginal people live across homelands which have seen no government funding for new houses since 2015. The housing that does exist on homelands is run-down, energy inefficient (hot boxes in the desert, rusting out on the coast) and in many cases beyond economic repair.

The commitment of \$4 billion over 10 years to build new remote community houses is a step in the right direction. We want to ensure that funding goes to where it will have greatest benefit in reducing the negative effects of overcrowding. To do this, we need to ramp up the program of repairs and maintenance in remote communities, and we must build new houses on homelands. Houses must be better designed for the harsh Territory climate, which will become more severe as climate change escalates. Underpinning all our efforts, we need a strong Aboriginal-controlled housing sector to build and maintain houses that meet the needs of their residents.

WE CALL FOR:

- 01** **new housing for homelands and enough funding for repairs and maintenance**
- 02** **Aboriginal say in design and construction – with genuine opportunity to build for climate, culture and healthy living**
- 03** **enough funding to support the transition to Aboriginal control of Aboriginal housing**
- 04** **improved government accountability in the housing program**
- 05** **action to address the rising cost of living in the Northern Territory**

01 New housing for homelands and enough funding for repairs and maintenance

Context

The NT and Australian governments are in the first stages of restoring funding for homelands with \$120 million over 3 years for much-needed repairs and maintenance for houses on homelands. This builds upon the \$100 million delivered in 2022-2024.

The NT and Australian governments have taken the first step in restoring the rights of Aboriginal people to live on their ancestral lands, but there is much more to be done. Homelands have seen no new government funded houses built since at least 2015. The housing that does exist is in disrepair, and service providers do not get enough funding to do preventative repairs and maintenance.

AHNT calls on all parties to:

1. Enable the **building of new housing for homelands** and infrastructure as a part of the new \$4 billion funding agreement for remote housing.
2. **Increase the budget** for repairs and maintenance to at least \$12,000 per dwelling.
3. **Triple the Homelands Grant Program funding** to \$120 million a year to ensure upgrades, repairs and maintenance can be preventative and cyclical.



*As per Central Land Council's policy position

02

Aboriginal say in design and construction – with genuine opportunity to build for climate, culture and healthy living

Context

The NT Government contracted Menzies School of Health Research to monitor and review its program of preventive and cyclical maintenance. Menzies identified many areas for improvement and produced a detailed report of its findings in September 2023. AHNT supports all recommendations of the report to do preventative and cyclical maintenance and to ensure houses can support the 9 Healthy Living Practices.

The NT's design guidelines are ill-suited to remote communities, particularly in relation to climate change and the goal of reducing the negative effects of overcrowding. Roof ventilation is specifically prohibited, and air conditioning is omitted by default or there is only one installed.

Aboriginal housing across the NT reflects these ongoing design failures, including poor thermal performance, lack of cultural consideration, overcrowding and insufficient maintenance.

AHNT calls on all parties to:

1. Raise the **minimum energy rating to 7 stars** for new houses, in line with requirements across the rest of Australia.
2. Implement all recommendations from the Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Report (2023).



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3. **Contract architects to review and strengthen standard designs** to look for cost-neutral or high-value ways to improve house designs to perform better in a rapidly changing climate and with potential overcrowding.



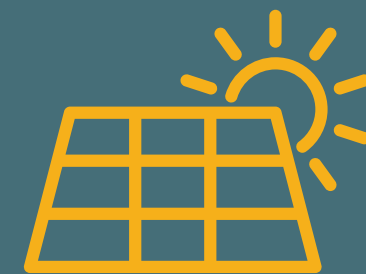
For example:

- keeping cool – mandatory insulation of floor, external walls and ceiling by default, wider eaves, roof ventilation.
- accommodating fluctuations in resident population – wider verandahs to provide flexibility of sleeping arrangements, one toilet in each house to have an external door, all houses and wheelchair-accessible bathrooms with grabrails, wider doorways and ramps if there is a level-change.
- better landscaping – landscaping and particularly, planting of shade trees or vines, is a low-cost, high-value means of reducing heat gains in housing – and improving the wellbeing of residents.

4. **Use culturally competent architects to engage with local communities** so that Aboriginal people have agency in the design and construction of their own housing.



5. **Install rooftop solar power** for all new houses built in remote communities, homelands and town camps and install a **community battery** for each community, ensuring that cost-savings are passed on to the community.



03 Enough funding to support the transition to Aboriginal control of Aboriginal housing

CONTEXT

In service of the priority reform under Closing the Gap to build the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, we need adequate resourcing for Aboriginal housing and homelands providers.

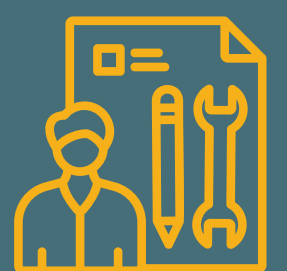
This view is supported by the NT Government's Community Housing Growth Strategy and local decision-making agreements. The NT 2024-25 Budget, however, did not include any specific funding for capacity-building for the Aboriginal controlled housing sector.

AHNT calls on all parties to:

1. **Provide subsidies** to Aboriginal-controlled housing organisations for tenancy sustainment as well as tenancy/asset management to reflect the complex nature of the tenancy and asset transfers.



2. **Invest in apprenticeships, on the job training and fee-free study** opportunities for Aboriginal people to help overcome skill gaps in design, building, repairs and maintenance in remote NT.



Include tenancy management on the NT skilled occupation priority list to enable fee-free training.

3. **Double investment in AHNT** as the peak body to better support community engagement, sector strengthening and the development of resources that provide administrative and governance support to housing and homelands providers.



4. **Undertake longer contracts**, of minimum 3 years with housing and homelands service providers, to provide financial security in long-term capital investments, enable sustainable apprenticeships and to reflect the unique challenges housing providers experience in remote and regional NT.



04 Improved government accountability in the housing program

Context

Responsibility for the construction, maintenance, and delivery of public housing and homeland services in remote NT is currently divided between the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) and Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC). As a result, there is limited accountability for the delivery of adequate services. AHNT calls for a better mechanism to hold government to account on their commitments to reduce overcrowding in remote NT.

AHNT calls on all parties to:



As per NT Shelter's call, **give Territory Families, Housing and Communities full accountability** for the specification, construction and delivery of urban and remote public housing, and ultimate responsibility for timely and cost-effective repairs and maintenance. This must include effective neighbourhood, community and stakeholder consultation at all stages of the supply timeline.

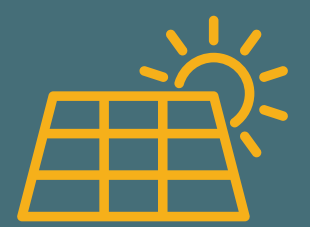
05 Action to address the rising cost of living

Context

Aboriginal people in the NT, especially in remote areas, are unfairly burdened by high costs related to housing and rent, electricity, food and transport. When residents experience housing stress they have less money for essentials such as food, electricity and transport.

AHNT calls on all parties to:

1. Ensure that all households that are eligible to access the **Remote Rent Safety Net** have it **applied automatically** to their rent.
2. **Upgrade road infrastructure** into remote communities and homelands to improve the supply of and access to **affordable food**.
3. **Roll out rooftop solar power** across all public housing, **pass on cost-savings** to residents and secure feed-in tariffs for excess power produced.
4. **Conduct a review of the power card electricity system** to ensure residents of town camps, remote communities and homelands have access to reliable, sustainable, and **affordable electricity**.



Organisations we represent



The Arnhem Land Progress
Aboriginal Corporation



Anindilyakwa Housing
Aboriginal Corporation



Community Housing
Central Australia



Ingkerreke Services
Aboriginal Corporation



Kalano
Community
Association



Laynhapuy
Homelands
Aboriginal
Corporation



Yilli Rreung
Housing
Aboriginal
Corporation

