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MEDIA RELEASE

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Alice Springs Town Camps move to 'normalise'

After a series of discussions of all available options, Tangentyere Council Executive today decided to formally endorse two proposals to 'normalise' key aspects of town camp life, including rent increases for all town camp residents and a resolution of support for the declaration of town camps as 'dry' areas using existing legislation, circumventing the need for additional laws.

RENTAL INCREASES ACROSS ALL TOWN CAMPS

Tangentyere Council will begin the implementation of a dramatic rental increase across all town camps this week. Rents will increase from 12% of income to 23% of income, to come in line with Territory Housing levels.

The increase, unanimously endorsed by the Tangentyere Executive in early March was put on hold awaiting the outcome of the Town Camp lease negotiations with the Federal and NT Government.

Mr William Tilmouth, Executive Director of Tangentyere Council, said:

"The Federal Government would like the public to believe that no Aboriginal communities collect rent, recover costs for deliberate damage, or have tenancy agreements with residents. This appears to be their prime justification for seizing community land. The facts are that Tangentyere Council operates a nationally recognised indigenous housing management programme, proclaimed in a FACSIA funded Fixing Houses for Better Health (FHBH) report in May last year to be one of the best indigenous housing providers in the country."

"We currently collect twice the amount of rent requested by the Federal and NT governments under their grant conditions. With the Federal Government now indicating their intention to abandon funding for all community housing associations owned and managed by Aboriginal people, Town Camp Housing Associations are left with little option but to increase rent levels to ensure their basic repair and maintenance costs can be paid for."

SUPPORT FOR 'DRY' TOWN CAMPS WITHIN EXISTING LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Tangentyere Executive today called for the Liquor Commission to work with each town camp to declare all open spaces in town camps 'dry' under the existing provisions of the Liquor Act. Individual town camp houses will also seek to become 'dry' on a case by case basis.

Tangentyere Council Executive Director William Tilmouth said:

"Town camp residents want to reduce drinking in town camps. Tangentyere Executive has continued to express strong concerns about the impact of having public areas of Alice Springs declared dry with the exclusion of town camps. We believe that many people will move their drinking to Town Camps and this may result in greater levels of harm for residents of those camps, particularly for women and children"

"This process we have endorsed will be both quicker and longer lasting than the one the Minister has proposed. We are informed by the Liquor Commission that these declarations could take as little as three weeks, as they will be made under the provisions of existing Northern Territory legislation."

"We support long term, sustainable solutions to the problems caused by alcohol abuse. These restrictions would be ongoing - lasting beyond the Minister's proposed six month restrictions."

"We now call on the Commission to meet with each Housing Association as a matter of urgency to progress this issue."

"The support of the residents of each Town Camp and every house declared dry will make this a realistic proposal in terms of enforcement, rather than a political stunt. If you do not have the support of the people, this will not work."

"This is the way Aboriginal people do business. We consult and debate all available options, and then we make a decision. This is self-determination."

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