

# BARKLY REGIONAL COUNCIL



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**12 December 2014**

## **Call for action on housing crisis in Elliott**

Barkly Regional Council (BRC) is set to lobby the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, to help tackle the growing housing crisis in Elliott and Newcastle Waters.

Aboriginal housing in Elliott (Gurungu and Wilyugu) and Newcastle Waters (Malinja) has reached a crisis point.

Councillor Bob Bagnall said that in March this year a delegation of residents addressed Council at its Elliott ordinary meeting, raising issues of housing and the need for housing replacement.

“Many houses are over 30 years old and most are past their economic life,” he said.

“No new stock has been built for more than 15 years. There has been minimal maintenance and upgrade funding to the houses in these areas, resulting in many houses now considered to be beyond repair.”

Councillors also attended a meeting with the Northern Land Council in August about housing. Land tenure and housing maintenance continued to be the main issue.

As a result BRC resolved at its December meeting to facilitate a meeting between councillors and stakeholders and to lobby the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion.

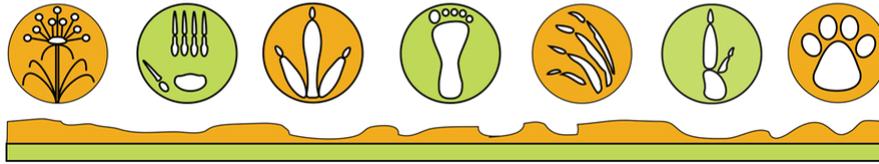
BRC also recommended lobbying the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments for funding for a housing renewal and upgrade program for the north and south camps of Elliott and Malinja outstations.

Council currently receives funding for maintenance of houses from the Department of Community Services. However, this is rationalised at around \$2500 per house. Given the state of housing in north and south camps of Elliott, this is little more than a bandaid.

Cr Bagnall said in order to undertake the work at the lowest cost possible, more than 50 per cent of the budget supports the wages of the building team.

“If specialised services are required, the cost plus travel, can easily take up the entire annual allocation for one house in just one visit,” he said.

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Quotes sourced by BRC 18 months ago for basic urgent repairs for more than 20 houses in Elliott ranged from more than \$1000 to \$46,000.

“It must be said that most of these houses are at the end of life. At post 20-year construction in the NT with materials that are not durable, most are beyond economic repair,” said Cr Bagnall.

In addition, white ant activity is becoming a major issue as these houses deteriorate and any pest control sits outside the funding scope. For example, the cost of pest prevention costs around \$1500 to \$3500, depending on the size and infestation, plus \$4000 travel from the closest contractor in Katherine.

Council also recommended to facilitate a meeting between the relevant range of stakeholders (BRC, NLC, Traditional Owners, Housing Reference Group and community) in early 2015 to progress this issue.

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