

BARKLY REGIONAL COUNCIL



MEDIA RELEASE

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Budget boost for Barkly receives mixed reception

Barkly Regional Council President Barb Shaw has responded with mixed feelings to the Barkly's budget boost as part of the NT Government's Budget 2016-17.

While Ms Shaw welcomed the overall package of \$187.87M, she said it was difficult to make a comprehensive commentary without the full details.

She also expressed disappointment at the financial shortfalls in housing, real job opportunities and growth and road upgrades for the region.

"We could have so easily not received any financial assistance so we are grateful for what we did get," said Ms Shaw. "However, there are some critical shortfalls in the Barkly that need to be addressed."

Ms Shaw outlined how there are a lot of costs attached to covering a region as large as the Barkly, which is approximately 325, 251 sq km, especially in the areas of housing, roads, infrastructure and growth.

She said that the housing package worth almost \$50 million did not go anywhere near in dealing with the dire housing crisis in the region.

"For many years, people in the Barkly have raised the issues of the lack of housing, affordable housing for low income earners and long-term infrastructure.

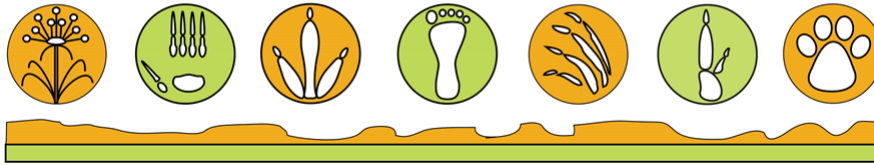
"The budget has addressed these needs, especially in Arlparra and to some extent in Elliott, but there are other communities including the township of Tennant Creek which need assistance."

There is also a shortfall in providing funds in providing real growth and job opportunities, especially for Indigenous people and youth.

The 2011 Australian census shows that 78 per cent of the population in the Barkly is Indigenous with statistics from 2013 highlighting that 46.5 per cent of the population include children and youth (0-25years).

"We have a high percentage of low literacy levels and unemployment levels in this region and we need more than the \$59.95M allocated to better schools and training and \$1.25M to support economic development to bridge that gap," she said.

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“Tennant Creek, for example, is a town that is growing slowly and not at the pace of Alice Springs or Darwin and this needs to be taken into account when allocating funds.”

Roads have been another critical area where there were gaps in financial assistance. “While we are grateful to the \$13M allocated to upgrade the sealed Tablelands Highway and the unsealed Sandover Highway, there are many other unsealed roads to remote communities like Wutunugurra which are impassable during the wet season.

“For instance, the \$1M for road upgrades to support open speed limits on arterial roads like the Stuart Highway could have been distributed elsewhere.”

“While it is appreciated that the Government cannot be all things to all people, the budget cycle and allocation must be consistent each year for adequate project management and not allocated on a piecemeal basis.

“Nevertheless, the Barkly commends the Northern Territory Government for the funding allocations to the region.”

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