



“Make the Territory get its own house in order”: Central Land Council

The Central Land Council calls on the Minister for Indigenous Australians to make the NT government revise its harsh plans for tenancy reforms.

“Minister Malarndirri McCarthy has our backing to push the Territory government to get its own house in order rather than go after its tenants.

It needs to fix, maintain and deliver houses that are worth the rent it charges the poorest Australians,” CLC chair Warren Williams said.

“The Territory has committed to do so under the housing partnership agreement with the commonwealth and needs to be held accountable.

The Territory wants to fast-track evictions and disproportionately target Aboriginal tenants with rental debt recovery.

“It’s not surprising that rental debts have spiralled,” Mr Williams said. “In this cost of living crisis public housing tenants out bush, with low incomes and sky-high store, power and transport prices, are doing it especially tough.”

Rents have gone up steeply under the two-year-old NT Remote Rent Framework, particularly for three and four bedroom houses, and more and more tenants are falling behind in their payments.

The Territory must explain how it plans to squeeze rent arrears from empty bank accounts and how this will not lead to even more Aboriginal people in jail or homeless.

The Territory government charges increased rents for unsafe and uninhabitable houses.

The Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) High Court case and Watiyawanu (Mount Liebig) coronial inquest have highlighted the severe lack of repairs and maintenance Aboriginal people continue to put up with.

“They have to pay rent for houses that do not meet acceptable standards, and where no one would live if they had a choice,” said Mr Williams.

During this summer’s extreme and prolonged record heat remote community tenants have suffered in overcrowded ‘hot boxes’, often without air conditioning.

“With the highest levels of overcrowding and homelessness in the country the Territory can ill afford more evictions and draconian tenancy policies.”

The Territory’s plans also fly in the face of the homelessness and overcrowding targets under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

“The Territory must fulfil its responsibility as landlord and provide safe and habitable housing,” said Mr Williams.

“It must bring existing housing stock to an acceptable standard and implement an effective cyclical and preventative maintenance program.”

He said Minister McCarthy should demand to know what the Territory is doing to understand why people are struggling to pay their rent and how many are falling through the housing safety net.

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