

# Northern Territory

## NATIONAL HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS AGREEMENT

### PRELIMINARIES

1. This Schedule is an agreement that is a supplementary housing agreement for the purposes of section 15C of the FFR Act.
2. This Schedule will commence as soon as the Commonwealth and Northern Territory sign this and the Agreement.
3. Unless terminated earlier or extended as agreed in writing by the Parties, this Schedule will:
  - (a) expire no later than 30 June 2023; and
  - (b) be replaced for further terms of up to five years by the written agreement of the Parties.
4. A Party to this Schedule may terminate their participation in the Agreement at any time by giving 12 months' notice of intention to do so, in writing, to the other Party.
5. This Schedule may be amended at any time by agreement in writing by the relevant Commonwealth and State portfolio ministers.
6. The purpose of this Schedule is to provide an indication of how the Northern Territory intends to implement the conditions agreed in the Agreement, including the actions that will be undertaken as stated in the Northern Territory's housing and homelessness strategies, and any actions to be undertaken by the Northern Territory to support the Data Schedule.
7. To enable payments to commence from 2018-19, the Northern Territory confirms that it satisfies the requirements of clause 17 of the Agreement as at 1 July 2018 and as set out in this Schedule. At the commencement of this Schedule, the Northern Territory notes that during 2018-19, it will be reviewing and updating its housing, and homelessness strategies as referenced in Parts 2 and 3 of this Schedule.

## PART 1 – OVERVIEW

8. The Northern Territory context is distinctly different to the rest of Australia. This results in significant challenges and opportunities in delivering sustainable and effective services and infrastructure to its residents. Following is the current environment that influences delivery of housing and homelessness services.

### **Demography and geography**

The Northern Territory has a population of 246 105 (1 per cent of Australia's population) spread over 17 per cent of the nation's landmass. Of this, 74 509 (30 per cent) are Aboriginal people, the highest proportion of any jurisdiction and higher than the overall national average of three per cent.

In February 2018, 35 261 Aboriginal people lived in the 73 remote communities which represents 61 per cent of the Northern Territory's Aboriginal population.

Over 100 Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> languages are spoken across the Northern Territory. A national survey undertaken in 2008 identified that over 53 per cent of Aboriginal Territorians speak an Aboriginal language as their main language at home. This rate increases to 64 per cent for Aboriginal people living in regional and remote areas.

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are more likely to experience higher levels of social and economic disadvantage compared to non-Aboriginal people. They are more likely to have lower education attainment, be unemployed, over-presented in the justice system, live in overcrowded conditions and have lower incomes compared to non-Aboriginal Territorians.

### **Economy**

The Northern Territory's headline economic growth has been strong over the last five years, driven primarily by major projects. In recent years however, the underlying economy has shown signs of weakening with low population growth, low inflation and fluctuating state final demand.

The outlook for the Northern Territory housing market remains subdued, with weak leading residential indicators suggesting a further moderation in the medium term following slowing economic activity and subdued population growth.

Given the Northern Territory's low to negative population growth and previous land releases, supply in Darwin is not considered an issue in the broader housing market at this point in time, although affordable rent is still a challenge for low income earners.

### **Housing**

As at February 2018, the Northern Territory's public housing portfolio was 12 167 dwellings (comprising urban, remote, industry housing, government employee housing, emergency housing, community housing and affordable rental housing). Forty-one percent (5 013) of the portfolio is urban public housing while 42 per cent (5 097) is remote.

The demand for public housing far exceeds supply. As at February 2018, there were 5 666 households waiting for public housing in the Northern Territory (3 646 in urban and 2 020 in remote areas).

Aboriginal people make up 50 per cent of urban public housing tenancies and 99 per cent of remote public housing tenancies in the Northern Territory.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, the term 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The majority of Northern Territory public housing tenants are low income and welfare dependent. In addition, many tenants have multiple and complex needs that require additional support services from government agencies and the non-government sector.

Overcrowding is a significant issue in remote areas where, based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS), it is projected that up to 15 124 additional bedrooms (5 041 additional three bedroom homes) are required between now and 2 028 to address overcrowding in communities where public housing is provided.

### **Homelessness**

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of homelessness in Australia at 599.4 per 10 000 people.

This is significant considering the homelessness rate for Australia is 49.8 per 10 000 people and that the rate for other jurisdictions ranges from 31.8 to 50.4 per 10 000 people. In addition, the homelessness rate for the Northern Territory is 11.9 times greater than the next jurisdiction with the highest homelessness rate, which is New South Wales at 50.4 rate per 10 000 people.

In exact numbers, there were 116 427 homeless people across Australia on the 2016 census night and 13 717 (12 per cent) of those were from the Northern Territory, even though the Northern Territory only comprises one per cent of the national population.

Aboriginal people make up 88 per cent of the Northern Territory's homelessness population. In comparison, Aboriginal people make up 20 per cent of all homeless persons nationally.

Overall, homelessness in the Northern Territory is significantly high in remote areas (77 per cent) compared to urban areas (23 per cent). This is due to people living in severely crowded dwellings.

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of homelessness people living in severely crowded dwellings at 483.5 per 10 000 people. This is significant when compared to the national average of 21.8 per 10 000. In comparison, other jurisdictions range from 5.2 to 22.5 per 10 000 people.

Of major concern, it is children under the 'age of 12' and youth 'aged 12 to 18' years who are most affected by homelessness in the Northern Territory. These groups equate to 22.8 per cent (3 132) and 13.8 per cent (1 899) respectively of all homelessness people in the Northern Territory and are the highest in their cohorts across all jurisdictions.

In addition, the Northern Territory has the highest rate of homeless people living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (47.9 per 10 000 people) compared to the national rate of 1.4 per 10 000 people.

The Northern Territory client base for homelessness services generally comprise people with multiple and complex needs, which contributes to higher overall costs for support services.

Homelessness services in the Northern Territory are accessed by various cohorts including women and children affected by family and domestic violence, Aboriginal people, children and young people. In 2016-17, 9 187 people accessed a homelessness service in the Northern Territory. Of this, 4 320 (47.3 per cent) reported domestic and family violence as a reason for seeking assistance. There were also 4 172 unmet requests for assistance for homelessness services in the Northern Territory due to service capacity being exceeded, with more than 3 000 of these requests from women and children.

The high mobility of Aboriginal residents between remote communities, service towns and urban centres also puts pressure on available accommodation and increases demand for support services.

### **Homelands**

There are also approximately 10 000 Aboriginal people that live in over 2 400 dwellings on more than 500 homelands and outstations widely spread across the Northern Territory, reflecting the profound connection between many Aboriginal people and their homelands.

The Northern Territory provides municipal and essential services and housing repairs and maintenance to eligible homelands as a 'contribution' to support the cost of living on homelands (all dwellings on homelands are privately owned).

### **Less developed Non-Government Organisation sector**

Overall, the Northern Territory has a small but developing non-government organisation service sector. In general, the sector faces key challenges such as high staff turn-over and limitations in ability to forward plan strategically and focus on long-term outcomes due to short funding terms and funding uncertainty.

The Northern Territory is introducing five year grant funding agreements which will provide stability to the sector, allow them to be more strategic and to build capability of their workforce.

The Northern Territory community housing sector is also in its infancy, with only two organisations currently registered under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing.

### **High costs to deliver services and programs**

Compared to other jurisdictions the Northern Territory has a higher than average demand for government services and infrastructure due to its significant levels of social and economic disadvantage.

The complexities in providing services are compounded by the Northern Territory's wide geographic spread, dispersed population, cultural and language diversity, isolation from major centres and extreme climate conditions (i.e. monsoonal seasons resulting in remote communities being inaccessible). These factors all contribute towards high costs in delivering services and building homes.

The Northern Territory remains committed to delivering services and programs that maximise opportunities and improves the lives of Territorians.

## **PART 2 – NORTHERN TERRITORY HOUSING STRATEGY**

9. With respect to the requirement to have a housing strategy, as outlined in clause 17 of the Agreement, the Northern Territory is developing and will have a new strategy in place and publicly available by 30 September 2019. The period from 1 July 2018 to 30 September 2019 is a period prescribed for the purposes of sub-clause 18(e) of the Agreement for which it is not reasonably practicable for Northern Territory to have a publicly available strategy.
10. The table below includes details of the Northern Territory's housing priorities, policies and initiatives that supplement the Northern Territory's housing strategy as per clause 19 of the Agreement.

National Priority Policy Areas	Northern Territory Initiatives	Indicative timeframe
<p><b>Social housing</b> including that stock is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– utilised efficiently and effectively (may include redevelopment and stock transfers)</li> <li>– responsive to the needs of tenants (may include redevelopment and stock transfers;</li> <li>– appropriately renewed and maintained (may include redevelopment and new construction)</li> <li>– adequately meeting demand (may include new construction and re-development)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update the Housing Strategy as part of the requirement for the Agreement</li> <li>• Develop and implement an Asset Management Framework aimed at improving decision making around the public housing asset portfolio (i.e. life-cycle approach to asset planning, investment and management)</li> <li>• Implement the \$1.1 billion remote housing program 'Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes'</li> <li>• Undertake consultations with senior Territorians and those approaching retirement regarding aged care housing (i.e. identify demand) and provide findings to the private sector to help identify potential opportunities for future private sector development of seniors appropriate accommodation</li> <li>• Continue to provide repairs and maintenance support for occupied dwellings in homelands and town camps</li> </ul>	<p>September 2019</p> <p>2018 to 2023</p> <p>2017 to 2027</p> <p>Dec 2018</p> <p>2018 to 2023</p>
<p><b>Community housing support</b> that improves the viability and encourages growth of the sector (may include redevelopment and stock transfers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement an urban Community Housing Strategy that identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– approaches to support the growth of the Northern Territory community housing sector; and</li> <li>– inform the transfer of 750 urban public dwellings to the sector</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Construction of community housing dwellings in urban centres</li> </ul>	<p>All initiatives 2018 to 2023</p>
<p><b>Affordable housing</b> (may include stock transfers and incentives to increase supply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more affordable housing options for Territorians including the Real Housing for Growth initiative which will see additional head-leased dwellings available for low to middle income key workers</li> <li>• Increase supply of additional public housing accommodation through social housing head leasing in urban centres</li> <li>• Construct new public housing dwellings through a targeted investment program</li> </ul>	<p>All initiatives 2018 to 2023</p>

<p><b>Tenancy management reform</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Northern Territory is currently exploring its public housing legislative framework to consider tenancy reforms that may further address the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable Territorians (i.e. <i>Residential Tenancies Act</i>)</li> <li>• Implement a new Urban Public Housing Rent Model focused on achieving equity and consistency in the application of rental rate structures across all tenancies</li> <li>• Develop a new Remote Public Housing Rent Model aimed at improving administrative efficiency and is easier for tenants to understand</li> <li>• Implement the Automatic Rent Deduction Scheme aimed at preventing rent arrears</li> </ul>	<p>July 2018 to 2023</p> <p>Oct 2018</p> <p>Dec 2019</p> <p>2020 to 2023</p>
<p><b>Home ownership</b> including support for first home buyers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support home ownership opportunities through provision of loan products, grants (first home owners and first home owners discount) and concessions such as the 'HomeBuild Access' initiative which provides low deposit home ownership opportunities to both first home buyers and non-first home buyers looking to buy or build a new home</li> </ul>	<p>2018 to 2023</p>
<p><b>Planning and zoning reform and initiatives</b> including consideration of inclusionary zoning and land release strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide increased scope for the provision of affordable housing products through incorporation of a flexible approach to zoning, including through the use of Specific Use Zones in the NT Planning Scheme</li> <li>• Facilitate land release in remote Aboriginal communities through extension of the exemption under the <i>Planning Act</i> (Regulation 3A) which removes the need for subdivision approval for development associated with the \$1.1 billion remote housing program</li> <li>• Implement changes to improve planning approval processes in the NT in line with Government's planning reform initiative – 'Review, Reframe, Renew and the Phase I Priority Reform Paper'</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2018-2023</p> <p>2018-2021</p>

## PART 3 – NORTHERN TERRITORY HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

11. With respect to the requirement to have a homelessness strategy, as outlined in clause 17 of the Agreement, the Northern Territory is developing and will have a new strategy in place and publicly available by 31 December 2018. The period from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018 is a period prescribed for the purposes of sub-clause 18(e) of the Agreement for which it is not reasonably practicable for the Northern Territory to have a publicly available strategy.
12. The table below includes details of the Northern Territory’s homelessness priorities, policies and initiatives that supplement Northern Territory’s homelessness strategy as per clause 19 of the Agreement.

National Priority Homeless Cohorts	Northern Territory Initiatives	Indicative timeframe
Women and children affected by family and domestic violence	NT initiatives will include a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of accommodation options (i.e. short-term, medium-term and crisis accommodation) for women and children affected by domestic and family violence</li> <li>• Support services to assist women and children to access, retain and transition into independent and long term accommodation</li> </ul>	All initiatives 2018 to 2023
Children and young people	NT initiatives will include a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of accommodation options (i.e. short term, medium term and crisis accommodation) for young people and families</li> <li>• Support services that helps establish family connections / or peer support networks, build capacity for independent living, and increase level of engagement in education, training, employment and community life</li> <li>• Intensive case management, counselling, referrals and support for young people and families to avert homelessness</li> </ul>	All initiatives 2018 to 2023
Indigenous Australians	The majority of NT initiatives are accessible to Indigenous Australians.  NT initiatives will include a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation and support services that are culturally appropriate and meet the needs of individuals and families</li> <li>• Support services with the aim to successfully transition from rough sleeping to stable accommodation through case management and wrap around support</li> </ul>	All initiatives 2018 to 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support services for people living in accommodation where their tenancies may be at risk</li> </ul>	
People experiencing repeat homelessness	<p>NT initiatives will include a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support services for people living in accommodation where their tenancies may be at risk (i.e. including in public or private housing, and alternative accommodation)</li> <li>Supporting residents to transition into long term housing</li> <li>Intensive case management, counselling, referrals and support for young people and families to avert homelessness</li> <li>No Interest Loans Scheme for those on low incomes to obtain no interest loans for essential housing items</li> </ul>	All initiatives 2018 to 2023
People currently exiting institutions and care into homelessness	<p>NT initiatives will include a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assisting to gain skills to maintain and sustain independent tenancies</li> <li>Aftercare support for individuals that have exited an institutional setting</li> <li>Support services that helps establish family connections / or peer support networks, build capacity for independent living, and increase level of engagement in education, training, employment and community life</li> <li>Outreach services linking clients to support, including; legal; health; financial; Centrelink; and housing and education</li> <li>Establishment of a private rental brokerage program for young people who are leaving out-of-home-care up until the age of 25 years old</li> </ul>	All initiatives 2018 to 2023
Older people	The majority of NT initiatives outlined above are accessible to older people	All initiatives 2018 to 2023



Homelessness Priority Policy Reform Areas	Northern Territory Initiatives	Indicative timeline
Achieving better outcomes for people  Early intervention and prevention  Commitment to service program and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a Homelessness Strategy and Five Year Action Plan:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– strengthen interagency responses</li> <li>– streamline and strengthen preventative support</li> <li>– improve the Department of Housing and Community Development’s policy and practices (to better respond to homelessness and the risk of homelessness)</li> <li>– increase access to and supply of private rental, affordable and social housing</li> <li>– Work with the Specialist Homelessness Services sector to strengthen service responses for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2018 to 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Northern Territory will also support the homelessness sector through its homeless grants program and by implementing five year grant agreements with the sector</li> </ul>	2018 to 2023

## PART 4 – JOINT REFORM COMMITMENTS

13. The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory will work jointly on the following initiatives:
- (a) Exploring the potential of establishing a Youth Foyer model in the Northern Territory aimed at assisting young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to develop the skills, and lead independent and productive lives through provision of accommodation, personal support and mentoring, living skills and education and training pathways.
  - (b) Develop the evidence base for potential future Social Impact Investment, work together to identify potential target groups and design interventions.
  - (c) Work collaboratively to determine how any new Commonwealth investment into programs in the Northern Territory can contribute to improved outcomes supported by the Agreement. This includes identifying opportunities for integrating with the Northern Territory housing and homelessness strategies and programs, which will support better targeting of resources, help avoid duplication and address service gaps to better assist people in need.
  - (d) The Northern Territory and the Commonwealth will explore opportunities to share data and undertake agreed projects to share and link social housing and homelessness data with social security and other datasets.

## PART 5 – STATE-SPECIFIC INDICATORS

14. Key performance indicators outlined below are related to initiatives outlined in the tables in Parts 2 and 3.

Outcome	Performance indicators
<p>A well-functioning social housing system that operates efficiently, sustainably and is effective in assisting low income households and vulnerable groups to manage their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of public housing dwellings</li> <li>• Number on waitlist</li> <li>• % of dwellings underutilised</li> <li>• % of dwellings overcrowded</li> <li>• % of greatest needs applicants that are housed into social housing</li> <li>• % of social housing households on low incomes in housing stress (&gt;30%)</li> <li>• Proportion of social housing occupied by Aboriginal people</li> <li>• Net recurrent cost for public housing</li> <li>• Total number of new households provided with financial assistance (loans)</li> <li>• Average duration of tenancies living in public housing</li> <li>• Number of homelands and town camps funded</li> </ul>
<p>An effective homelessness service system, which responds to and supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve and maintain housing, and addresses the incidence and prevalence of homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % unmet demand for accommodation and other services</li> <li>• % of people who receive assistance to maintain stable housing who do not become homeless</li> <li>• % of assisted people who remain in stable housing after episode of support</li> <li>• % of assisted people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness</li> <li>• Number accessing special homelessness services</li> </ul>

## PART 6 – REPORTING

15. As required by clause 40 of the Agreement, the Northern Territory will produce an annual report on the implementation of the reforms and initiatives agreed in this Parts 2, 3 and 5 of this Schedule. The report will be provided to the Commonwealth Minister with portfolio responsibility for housing and homelessness and will be made publicly available.
16. The report will consist of the following:
  - (a) The Department of Housing and Community Development’s Annual Report, which is released within three months after the end of the financial year. That report provides comprehensive reporting on the social housing and homelessness sectors and includes key statistics and data as well as strategic performance indicators. This report will cover the implementation of social housing and homelessness reforms and initiatives outlined in Parts 2, 3 and 5 of this Agreement;
  - (b) The Report on Government Services on housing and homelessness issued by the Productivity Commission in January of each year;
  - (c) The Specialist Homelessness Services Report issued by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in December of each year; and
  - (d) Reporting on any remaining initiatives not covered by the above reports.
17. In respect of the requirement in paragraph 37(a)(i) of the Agreement to disaggregate funding against priority homelessness cohorts, the Northern Territory will include disaggregated expenditure against the national priority cohorts; however, where not possible, expenditure will be identified as expenditure on general homelessness services. The expenditure on general homelessness services will include additional information, which at a minimum would include a list of the programs delivering general homelessness services.
18. To meet the requirement in paragraph 37(a)(i) of the Agreement, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory will work together to provide information relating to the proportion of clients from the national priority cohorts supported by the general homelessness services.

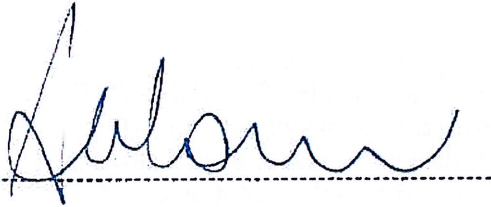
## PART 7 – OTHER CONDITIONS/PRIORITY POLICY AREAS

19. Other conditions and/or priority policy areas may be agreed between the Parties from time to time.

PART 8 – SIGN OFF

20. The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

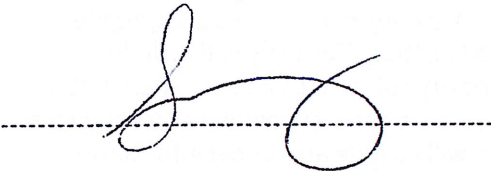
**Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Morrison', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

**The Honourable Scott Morrison MP**  
Treasurer

22 June 2018

**Signed for and on behalf of the Northern Territory by**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gerald McCarthy', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

**The Honourable Gerald McCarthy MLA**  
Minister for Housing and Community Development

25 June 2018