

# TANGENTYERE ABORIGINAL COUNCIL REFUSES TO ENTER 99 YEAR LEASE OVER TOWN CAMPS

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Funding offer announced by the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, 17 April 2007 Tangentyere Council decline to sign Memorandum of Understanding, 18 May 2007

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In May 2007 the Tangentyere Aboriginal Council ('Council') of Alice Springs rejected an offer to hand over control of their housing to the Northern Territory Government in return for \$60 million in funding from the Federal Government. The Council refused to sign a 'memorandum of understanding' that would create 99 year subleases in return for this funding. The acceptance of this proposal would have meant that the 18 housing associations which oversee the town camps would retain complete control of the land if it was unconditionally sub-leased to the Northern Territory Government.

The Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough expressed his concern over the refusal, stating that it was not in the best interests of the town camps, particularly the children of those camps, nor of Alice Springs as a whole. Mr Brough said that without the agreement, the federal funds - which were assigned for camp upgrades and short-term demountable accommodation - would be withdrawn and redirected to other communities. Nevertheless, Dennis Bree, acting chairperson of the Alice Springs Town Camps' steering committee, commented that it was his understanding that funding for the camps would still be available should Tangentyere Council re-approach the Federal Government with an acceptable alternative proposal.

The executive director of Tangentyere Council, William Tilmouth, said the proposal was rejected because of concerns about handing control over housing to the Northern Territory Government. He said that the town camp housing associations were not opposed to the principle of subleasing, increasing rental payments, or private home ownership. Rather, he stated, that they wanted to maintain a role in the decision making surrounding how their housing is managed so that the community could have an input on the betterment of their living conditions. Mr Tilmouth stated that the Council has proposed a number of alternate subleasing models to

both the Australian and Northern Territory Governments centred on maintaining a degree of input for the housing associations over how their housing is managed.

*The media release detailing the full statement of policy appears on the website of the Hon Mal Brough MP: <<http://www.facsia.gov.au>>.*