

PRESS RELEASE

Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage

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The Northern Territory Government's response to the Federal Government's ill-conceived invasion of the Northern Territory ("Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage") is a small step in the right direction, but clearly inadequate.

The Government has committed only \$286.43 million over 5 years for a combination of measures including child protection, community justice, alcohol, health, housing, education and employment.

These are obviously areas of dire need, but the Government's own figures, tabled in Parliament in June 2006, stated that remote Northern Territory housing alone requires an immediate injection of \$1.4 billion in infrastructure funds to construct 4000 homes.

The current Northern Territory Government, and previous Northern Territory and Federal Governments over the last 35 years, are jointly culpable for massive and arguably discriminatory infrastructure underspending in remote communities which has resulted in the present crisis.

It's not good enough for the government to claim it has no money. 30 years ago the Everingham CLP government issued bonds and staged lotteries to underwrite the construction of Northern Territory tourist infrastructure. This Northern Territory Government could do likewise or borrow money to meet infrastructure needs.

The public interest in balancing the Territory budget is far outweighed by the right of remote Territorians to be relieved of their miserable third world living conditions.

Similarly, the Federal Government, which has enjoyed billions of dollars in surplus for several years, could fund the Northern Territory's remote infrastructure needs in one fell swoop if it is sincere about eliminating child abuse.



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