



# Homelands – a shared responsibility

## Questions and answers about the new policy

### What is an outstation or homeland?

Homelands and outstations are interchangeable terms used in different parts of the Northern Territory to describe places where small populations of Indigenous people live in remote areas, on lands to which they have traditional ownership or historical association.

Homelands/outstations are distinguished from urban living areas (or town camps), which have different opportunities and challenges. They are also distinguished from major and minor remote communities, which are characterised by public housing and essential services assets owned and controlled by government, and the direct presence of formal local government services.

### How many homelands are there, how big are they and how many people occupy them?

There are approximately 500 homelands with 2,400 dwellings in the Northern Territory. The larger homelands have populations of up to 100 people while some of the smaller ones may consist of only a single dwelling. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 people live on homelands.

### Why does government have a Homelands Policy?

The Northern Territory Government is committed to improving services and living conditions on homelands. This will require the joint efforts of governments, landholders and residents. We all share responsibility for the future of homelands, and need to work together to achieve the best possible results for homelands.

### What are the new funding arrangements?

There are currently two new methods of funding.

The first includes Municipal and Essential Services (MES), Capital Infrastructure Grants (CIG) and Housing Maintenance Program (HMP) components. Service providers will be offered a single three year funding agreement with twice-yearly payment and reporting requirements.

The second is the Homelands Extra Allowance, which will be available to residents through an application process via service providers, providing they meet the eligibility criteria. To read the eligibility criteria and to find out more, view the Homelands Extra Allowance Fact Sheet.

### What homelands will be eligible?

Government will focus its support on existing homelands used as a principal place of residence or as a location for sustainable, on-going, social, cultural and economic development programs.

There are additional criteria for the Homelands Extra Allowance, see the Homelands Extra fact sheet for more information.

### How will service providers be allocated funding?

Homelands funding will be determined on a 'per dwelling' basis. The 'per dwelling' figure will be adjusted for those homelands that are difficult to access and/or have to provide their own power (that is, they are 'off the grid' and not serviced by Power and Water Corporation). An eligible dwelling is a principal place of residence or a dwelling used for a recognised community program.

### When will the new policy requirements take effect?

The new funding model will take effect from 1 July 2013. Other aspects of the policy will be introduced in a staged process, for example service providers will not be required to provide Asset Management or Service Delivery Plans until later in 2013.

### What services will be delivered on Homelands?

Homelands are specifically funded to receive a range of municipal and essential services, as well as housing maintenance services from a designated service provider. This is on top of the funding provided to local government to deliver services across a shire. In addition, homelands typically receive a range of education, health, employment and community safety services.

In the short term services will continue to be provided by recognised service providers. Residents can request to see the service delivery plan which will outline the frequency and type of services that service providers will deliver. The plans will also clearly identify the responsibilities of residents for the care and maintenance of their houses and homelands.

### What constraints will apply to the funding?

Funding provided under each grant category is to be used for specific purposes:

- MES funding is for the delivery of municipal and essential services to homelands, essential services includes power and water and municipal services includes rubbish management, slashing and maintenance of internal roads and common areas.
- CIG funding is to assist eligible organisations with the purchase of capital items and to undertake capital works to improve municipal and essential service delivery to outstations/homelands.



- HMP funding is for general repairs, maintenance and management of homeland dwellings.
- HEA is an amount to be applied for and spent on repairs and maintenance identified in consultation between residents and service providers.

### What will residents be expected to contribute?

Residents are expected to contribute to the cost of repairs and maintenance of their homelands and dwellings through a residential service fee. This fee currently varies across homelands and service providers. The government will establish a review process to assess the adequacy of this fee and determine a fee level that is appropriate based on what is affordable for residents and reasonable for the level of services required.

### What about new homelands or new dwellings?

The Northern Territory Government has no immediate plans to build new houses on homelands or establish new homelands. However, housing repairs and maintenance and municipal and essential services for these developments may be supported provided eligibility criteria are met. In order for government to consider supporting new homes or homelands, they must have access to potable water, education services and support from a recognised service provider.

If new homelands are established or new houses are built on existing homelands, development costs will need to include a provision to upgrade or establish essential services infrastructure. As homelands funding has been set for the next 10 years, new developments will reduce the amount of funding available to existing homelands.

Government will support homelands residents seeking to establish plans for independently maintaining and developing their homeland, including planning the level of private investment required to sustain their homeland infrastructure over the longer term.

### How do homelands not currently funded get into the program?

The Northern Territory Government are aware of some homelands that have applied for funding in the past. The Homelands Unit is currently contacting service providers to develop a comprehensive list of homelands, including those that are not currently funded.

If you live on a homeland that is not currently supported by a service provider you are encouraged to contact the Homelands Unit on 1800 031 648.

### What will government do to support economic development and employment?

The government will ensure that existing Indigenous economic development programs such as the Indigenous

Business Development Program are focused on maximising jobs and economic opportunities for homeland residents.

The department will work with service providers to maximise employment through the Shires Matching Grant (employment program), and the Converted Jobs Package.

### How will government consult with residents and service providers?

The Northern Territory Government has undertaken extensive consultation with homeland residents and service providers and the current policy has been largely informed by those consultations.

To improve transparency and accountability, the Northern Territory Government will consult with service providers and residents to develop clear program guidelines. Program guidelines will be publicly available and will include:

- funding commitments, formulae, reporting requirements for MES and HMP and the Homelands Extra Allowance.
- a description of asset management and service delivery plans.
- the role of service providers, service standards and expectations.
- resident responsibilities.

The Northern Territory Government will convene Homelands Advisory Forums to enable homelands residents to identify and discuss service delivery and policy issues, and to develop agreed ways forward.

### How will we know if living conditions on homelands are improving?

Government acknowledges the importance of collecting and utilising accurate information about homelands to inform governments, service providers and residents about the best way for homeland residents to access services.

The government will work with service providers to ensure there is improved accountability and transparency. Service delivery plans will be available to homelands residents if requested and performance information including funding amounts will be made publicly available.

Performance indicators will be developed for the overall homelands policy and for each of the associated programs.

### Where can I get more information?

To find out more, speak to your local service provider or phone the Homelands Unit on 1800 031 648. You can also read more online, by visiting [www.homelands.nt.gov.au](http://www.homelands.nt.gov.au)