

Media release

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MYTHBUSTING - SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation continues to support Town Campers and community members during this time of grief and cultural sorry business.

CEO Walter Shaw acknowledged the strength and resilience of the Alice Springs community and extended his thanks to staff, partner organisations and community members who continue to provide support during this time.

“During this time, our priority remains the wellbeing, safety and support of community members,” Mr Shaw said.

“That remains our focus. Tangentyere remains committed to supporting our communities, through respectful engagement, culturally appropriate responses and quality service delivery underpinned by collaboration with service providers and community representatives.

“Recently, Tangentyere has been subjected to scrutiny in the media regarding quality of service provision to Town Campers, funding and costs and investment relating to Town Camp housing.

“Our funding is subject to rigorous acquittals under government contract requirements, whether this is NT or Commonwealth.

“In response to inaccurate recent media reporting regarding Tangentyere's programs and services, I am taking the opportunity in this statement to set out the facts regarding the programs and services Tangentyere is funded to deliver.”

Tangentyere programs

Tangentyere currently delivers 120 programs across eight divisions, delivering services in Town Camps and remote communities across central Australia. Of these programs, 104 are funded by the Territory and Federal Governments and the remainder from philanthropic funding.

Types of programs which Town Campers, visitors and the community access include family violence prevention; men's behaviour change; youth recreation and diversion; community safety; social services such as aged care, return to country (which is not currently funded), assistance with identification; early childhood education; employment services; community centres; art gallery; municipal and essential services; local decision making and governance; family support services, kinship care and out-of-home care; limited tenancy support services.

Housing and maintenance

The 293 dwellings on the 16 Town Camps in Alice Springs are assets of the NT Government and residents pay rent to the NT Government as the landlord.

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Community Housing Central Australia (CHCA) provides tenancy management to the town camps under a contract with the NT Government. CHCA is an independent, not for profit, company limited by guarantee.

Tangentyere and CHCA have proposed a new model to more effectively deliver and manage housing and services on town camps. We have been advocating to Federal and NT Governments for some time to bring Town Camps under this new integrated community-controlled model.

The repairs and maintenance program to houses on Town Camps is delivered by Tangentyere Constructions. All job requests under the program must be individually approved by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development. There is no guaranteed operational funding for this program.

In the 2024/25 financial year, a total of 2,882 maintenance jobs were completed, many involving multiple tasks. Of these, 2470 jobs were under \$1000, with a total value of more than \$885,000. There were 412 jobs of over \$1000, with a total value of \$1.2 million. Vacant property works were completed on 14 dwellings to bring them up to re-letting standard, with a value of \$787,132.

Ultimately the NT Government sets and controls the budget which determines the work the repairs and maintenance program can deliver.

Municipal and Essential services

MES funding for 2025-26 is \$1,864,800 which covers

- repairs and maintenance of powerlines streetlights and power poles within all Town Camps
- repairs and maintenance of water and sewerage infrastructure
- grounds maintenance of common areas which includes grass cutting, and installing and maintaining fire breaks
- waste removal which includes removal of white and brown goods as well as floating rubbish. MES undertakes a weekly hard rubbish collection
- roads - repairing of roads and potholes, installing speed humps to slow traffic, installing and replacing road signage (stop signs, speed humps and children ahead)
- in addition to the weekly hard rubbish collection, MES has been gradually increasing their stock of skip bins so that there are skip bins permanently located on every Town Camp. Skip bins are available to Town Camp residents for removal of yard rubbish. We now have 75 skip bins in various sizes which are rotated around within each Town Camp on a four week cycle.

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General operational funding

In 2025, Tangentyere's total income was \$45,208,401. Employee costs were \$24,045,650. There are currently 287 staff, including full time, part time and casual employees and 52.61 percent are Aboriginal Staff.

Tangentyere staff wages as a percentage of total income was 53 percent in 2025, approaching the accepted industry norm of 55-65 percent for human services organisations. This means the majority of every dollar of income goes directly towards staff who deliver services in town camps.

All Tangentyere accounts and balances are subject to independent audit, reported to each respective funding body and any funds not expended for their designated purpose are returned to government. Many of Tangentyere Council's government-funded programs run across multiple financial years and carrying funds forward with full acquittal obligations is standard practice across the community services sector.

"Tangentyere also supports communities such as Whitegate through services such as water supply funded through our own resources," Mr Shaw said.

"Tangentyere's long advocacy about the need for reform in the management, responsibility and resourcing of Town Camps is on the record.

"In 2016 an NT Government Public Accounts Committee inquiry found - 'long term problems in the management of Northern Territory town camps seems to fall in the "too hard basket" for the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments, that have not fulfilled their obligations as outlined in numerous MOUs and agreements over the past 10 years. The Northern Territory Government needs to make a serious commitment of time and resources to reforming the management of town camps. Without this level of commitment, the problems with the management of town camps will persist for many more decades into the future.'

"In the 10 years since this report was handed down, we are still waiting for the Government to seriously commit to working with us to improve conditions on Town Camps, which will also lead to benefits for the wider Alice Springs community."

ENDS

May 18, 2026