



No agreement undermines future of remote communities

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The Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) has called on the State Government to release details of its plans to manage funding of remote Aboriginal communities into the future.

Natalie Parker, YMAC Co-Chairperson, and Nyiyaparli (central Pilbara region) woman, said with only a few days until the Commonwealth and State Governments' National Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing expires, residents of remote communities across Western Australia were facing deep uncertainty over their future.

“For a decade, the agreement has provided much-needed funding to address overcrowding, homelessness and the poor condition of housing in remote Aboriginal communities,” Ms Parker said.

“The current agreement between the Federal and State Governments is due to expire this Saturday 30 June, and despite negotiations it seems neither party has a plan for future sustainable funding.

“YMAC is concerned there seems to be no plan in place with approximately 30 remote Aboriginal communities and hundreds of families within our region affected.

“YMAC understands the deep cultural and spiritual value that living on Country holds for many Traditional Owners; allowing them to practice traditional Law and customs as recognised under their native title determinations.

“The forced movement of Aboriginal people away from their Country is well understood to cause long-term trauma, social issues and degradation of land and culture – it is completely unacceptable in 2018.”

Simon Hawkins, YMAC Chief Executive, said research had consistently shown direct links between reliable housing and key social indicators including health, education, community safety and economic participation.

“The State and Commonwealth must reach agreement on the future funding of remote Aboriginal housing or they will undermine the sustainability of these homeland communities, and displace hundreds of WA Aboriginal families,” Mr Hawkins said.

YMAC calls on both governments to demonstrate a sustainable plan and respect for the health, wellbeing and safety of all Aboriginal people living remotely in WA.

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About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for the Pilbara, Murchison, Mid-West and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC has a representative area of over one-third of WA and represents over 24 native title claims, all with their own language, culture and traditions. YMAC is a not-for-profit organisation run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors and provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ONLY

- *The first National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) was signed in 2008 between the Commonwealth Government and all States and the Northern Territory, under the Rudd Government. The Commonwealth allocated \$5.4 billion over ten years.*
- *Funds were provided to build and upgrade remote housing, improve the management of housing stock and create employment opportunities for Indigenous people through the building program.*
- *The NPARIH was due to expire in 2018, however the agreement was concluded on 30 June 2016 and replaced with a new two-year National Partnership on Remote Housing (NPRH).*
- *How does this compare with other States?*
- *Western Australia has received \$1.164b of funding over the ten-year period 2008-2018, which represents 24.8% of all Commonwealth funding.*
- *Between 2014-16, the Commonwealth negotiated buy-out arrangements with Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales, as the majority of remote housing needs were met.*
- *In late April 2018, the Commonwealth entered into a new agreement with the Northern Territory, committing \$550m for five years, matching a commitment made by the Northern Territory Government.*
- *Queensland and Western Australia remain in negotiations, with the Commonwealth arguing that the State Governments have not shown adequate commitment to share funding responsibility. It is unclear exactly what offers have been made by the States.*
- *The Western Australian Government has stated it currently commits around \$86 million annually to support 165 remote communities across the state, through housing, community infrastructure and related services.*
- *It should be noted that not all remote communities fall under the responsibility of the State Government, with some falling under the Aboriginal Lands Trust and other bodies corporate due to underlying tenure arrangements.*
- *According to data from the Western Australian Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, approximately 30 remote Aboriginal communities are located within YMAC's region, with a total population of around 1,500-2,000 people. Ten of these fall within the Yamatji region, with the remaining 20 located in the Pilbara region.*