



The Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Disability Reform

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 7560
Facsimile: (02) 6273 4122

MC12-011501

09 JAN 2013

Mayor Felicity-Ann Lewis
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor Lewis

Thank you for your letter of 27 September 2012 about Resolution 18 – Infrastructure within Aboriginal Urban Living Areas, passed at the 2012 National General Assembly of the Australian Local Government Association. I appreciate the ongoing commitment of the Australian Local Government Association in working with the Australian Government and state and territory governments to improve housing and infrastructure outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Responsibility for town camps

Aboriginal Urban Living Areas, or town camps, are generally the responsibility of the relevant state or territory governments. This responsibility includes funding and delivery of municipal and essential services, as well as long-term asset management of the related infrastructure.

Given the primary responsibility in this area falls with states and territories, the Australian Government will not be seeking to legislate on infrastructure in town camps.

My Department continues to work with state and territory governments, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve infrastructure in Indigenous communities. In particular, service delivery standards are one of the key issues being considered by the Multilateral Working Group on Remote Indigenous Infrastructure and Municipal and Essential Services. The Australian Local Government Association, as well as officials from all state and territory governments, is represented on this working group.

While the delivery of municipal and essential services, including the supply of power and water and the management of infrastructure, is the responsibility of state and local governments, the Commonwealth continues to support these efforts. For example, the Australian Government provides over \$40 million a year through the Municipal and Essential Services Program to support the delivery of these services to a large number of remote Indigenous communities across Australia. In addition, outstations and homelands in the Northern Territory will benefit from a \$221 million investment in basic essential and municipal services over 10 years as part of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package.

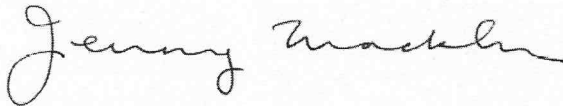
The Commonwealth has also provided unprecedented investment in the Alice Springs town camps as part of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. It is a central tenet of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan for both the Australian and Northern Territory Governments to work with municipal and essential service providers to improve infrastructure and municipal and essential service delivery so town camp residents can benefit from the same level of services and opportunity as residents in the rest of Alice Springs. The Commonwealth has invested over \$150 million in the transformation of Alice Springs town camps including significant upgrades to infrastructure and housing to assist in achieving this objective.

Rateability of land in town camps

I understand that you also raised specific concerns with respect to rateability of properties in town camp precincts. My Department is currently considering the challenges local governments face in raising revenue through the application of rates on Indigenous-held land, including the effect on service delivery outcomes in town camps. It is important that we engage with local government on this matter and I would appreciate if you could share your views and experience on this issue with my Department.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenny Macklin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

JENNY MACKLIN MP