

# RADIO NEWS & TALKBACK PRECIS



**Morning / Lunch Period (9am–1pm)**  
(Plus talkback items scanned from last night 6pm–6am)  
**Wednesday, 7 March 2012**

## RADIO NEWS BROADCASTS

**Brendan Moran, Director of Business Operations & Projects,  
Housing SA (639ABC 10.13-10.22)**  
Housing maintenance on the APY Lands

*Jones: Yesterday we received a call from Yami Lester from the APY Lands ... he had some concerns about housing on the APY Lands, in particular the upkeep and ... maintenance of certain issues around his house and community.*

***Excerpt of Yami Lester interview***

***Lester: What they are saying ... he's running out of money, didn't give him enough money, the Government gave him a job but didn't give him enough money to work on ...***

***other thing, they used to do pest control spraying ... they don't do it now ... they still do it like, Government workers living in the houses, they do it for them ... but for me here they don't come around and do it***

***... for me here the air conditioning, it's been pretty hot ... it's making funny noise and they never check it for two, three years.***

***They used check them out and see if it's working alright, they don't do that. [End excerpt]***

*Jones: ... we've got Brendan Moran ... what is the maintenance regime for the housing provided on the APY Lands?*

Brendan Moran

Over the past three to four years, Housing SA has taken on the responsibility for managing all of the tenancies, all of the houses on the APY Lands on behalf of the Aboriginal communities ... one of the most important things we've done as part of that is put in place a new maintenance program, a new maintenance service ... we think this has gone on balance very, very well. About three or four years ago we spent about \$1.4m including about \$1m on replacing and repairing nearly all the septic tanks. This financial year we've spent about \$2.8m to date ... there's a lot of backlog maintenance to be done in the APY Lands.

*Jones: Yes, Mr Lester was particularly worried about a couple of things, including pest control ... he seemed to think that that hadn't been done for a number of years; it was still getting done to those houses that had government employees in them but not to the general population. Is that something that has been discontinued?*

Brendan Moran

It's probably worthwhile clarifying that we are providing maintenance services in all the major APY communities from Indulkana, Amata, Fregon, through the Pitjantjatjara but Yami Lester ... is one of a number of people who live on very small what they call homelands properties which might be one or two properties ... certainly the direction we've had from the Commonwealth Government, who are our funder, in this is that we can do ... necessary maintenance services like health and safety and the like on the homelands communities, repairing air-conditioners ... but certainly the major maintenance programs are around plumbing, electrical upgrades and new construction ... that is confined to the major APY communities ...

*Jones: So plumbing doesn't count as one of the major things that you would look at for good housing?*

Brendan Moran

No, they're saying in terms of the homelands communities, which are a relatively small number compared to the 450 houses in the larger communities, in the smaller homelands ... we will do the necessary maintenance in terms of breakdown or ... where it relates to health and safety ... a plumbing issue like a blocked drain,

we will deal with that on a homelands property. But in terms of doing an upgrade to a bathroom and so forth, we won't do that on a homelands property, we'll do that ... in the houses in the larger communities.

*Jones: ... one of the issues that Mr Lester did bring up was ... dripping taps and broken taps ... also broken glass in the windows that hasn't been replaced.*

Brendan Moran

Again, certainly with the homelands properties we will repair ... urgent matters that relate to health and safety like broken glass and like blocked drains and the like. But certainly other type of maintenance... the direction we've had, which is very clear from the Commonwealth Government, is that ... we are spending money on the major communities ... there's five or six of those major communities.

*Jones: How does that reflect on the equity of the situation? ...*

Brendan Moran

It's not for me to comment on ... Commonwealth Government policy but that is the direction we've had. As I said, we are investing significant amount of money in doing maintenance on the APY Lands and we've put in place a new maintenance service in October last year, and Mr Lester referred to the contractor who we believe is doing an excellent job. But because of the backlog in maintenance we've found our expenditure this year has increased quite significantly and we are now working through that and negotiating with the contractor, putting more, money into that budget. The contractor is also running quite an innovative service for us in the sense that he's going around his staff and instead of just responding to the odd call here and there they're going to every house in the community and in the planned maintenance program, looking at plumbing, electrical, air conditioning ... as you can imagine that's a much more sensible way to do maintenance but also it's much more costly in the short-term - we believe less expensive in the long term. *(Jones: So this new contractor, how long have they been on board?)* Since October last year. *(Jones: And so there's still a backlog - that's what your message, you're trying to say?)* Yeah, we're talking about [unclear] 450 houses, some of

which were built 20, 25 years ago in very harsh conditions and the maintenance service up until the past two or three years has been probably inadequate and so what we have found, we want to put in place a better quality of maintenance and much more timeliness around maintenance because we were finding when we first came into the APY lands that some items ... serious items have been broken for some long group of time - six to nine months - we aim now to get serious work done -that is, urgent health and safety work done within 24 to 48 hours at the utmost and by and large we are competing against that target and we believe it's providing a much better quality of life for people living in these communities.

*Jones: As you can imagine after we received the call from Mr Lester [phonetic] we started to make calls to other people. Everyone that we could think of in fact who might be able to comment on what was going on and ... what we got from the APY lands was that many people were in fact a little bit scared to talk about this because they thought that it might mean that they would go down in the list of things that would put them ... lower down in the list to get to.) ...*

Brendan Moran

Housing SA in terms of long history of providing fair and equitable customer services to all of our customers and people have a right to want to express their concern or complaints ... I deal with lots of complaints - a number of complaints every week. That does not affect our program, our Mission - if you like - of providing high-quality, good quality housing services to people in communities and this work in the APY lands is relatively new to us and it's quite exciting ... we've established an office in Umuwa about two or three years ago. We're employing Aboriginal people both in our office, in our construction program as we were building ... over 150 houses in the APY lands, we're renovating probably another 200 houses and ... employing 20% of Aboriginal people in those programs. ... we've taken over the management of the housing, the communities have leased the housing to us and we really are working on building a really strong partnership and relationship with community members across this community - and by and large we think ... it's going very, very well. There's always going to be some teething issues but by and large we think the maintenance story is by and large a very good news story from our point of view and from the community's point of view most importantly.

*Jones: So because this is a relatively new sort of arrangement, could you describe then the lines of responsibility that Housing SA has in terms of what they need to be and the standard that they need to be providing for housing?)*

Brendan Moran

Yeah ... we work towards a housing standard which is stipulated by the Commonwealth, ensuring that housing has to be healthy and habitable and so that attends to major items in the house ... when the plumbing, the electrical and the lights. ... we want to provide a standard which is similar to what is provided across the rest of South Australia, if not the rest of Australia in the public housing system. And so we are quite unequivocal about that, that's the standard we want to work to and ... our new construction program and our renovation program has gone a long way we believe to reducing overcrowding but putting in place a decent standard of amenity ... which in some cases ... when I was up in the APY having a look at that, in some cases hasn't been sustained up until the past two or three years.

*Jones: Just finally, it is a relatively new contractor as well as a new arrangement with Housing SA. If there are people listening in who are on the APY lands and I know we do have listeners out there, if they're worried about certain issues to do with their housing, what should they do?) ...*

Brendan Moran

they should ring our office at Umuwa in the APY lands and I've just got the number here ... 08 9548 188 ...

*Jones: ... I think we've got one number missing ... I'll get the right number ... Brendan Moran ... I do appreciate you spending some time with us to explain the situation today, thank you for your time.*