

Indigenous houses a disgrace, says Abbott

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Opposition leader Tony Abbott has suggested Prime Minister Julia Gillard use her trip to central Australia to check out the low standard of federal government funded renovations on homes at the Santa Teresa indigenous community.

Mr Abbott said he welcomed Ms Gillard's visit to Alice Springs to examine some of the serious problems afflicting the town.

He said while in the Territory, the Prime Minister must also inspect the quality of housing in remote indigenous communities.

"As I did, the Prime Minister should travel the one hour from Alice Springs to Santa Teresa to examine the work that has been done under her government's \$670 million Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP)," he said in a statement.

"The houses in Santa Teresa are an embarrassment and a disgrace. The so-called refurbishment work done on these houses is third world work in a first world country."

Mr Abbott said regrettably the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on the houses in Santa Teresa had been completely wasted.

He said tiles had been ripped up and not replaced, cracks in walls had been covered rather than fixed and furniture and fittings had been removed and not replaced.

"Families now live in worse conditions than they did before the so-called refurbishment," he said.

"If the Prime Minister is serious about addressing indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory then she must also see first hand and fix the appalling mismanagement and waste in her Government's own Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program."

Mr Abbott said he wrote to the prime minister in March proposing urgent action in the form of a new intervention to deal with the gathering social dysfunction in Alice Springs and some other NT regional centres.

"Unfortunately, the Prime Minister declined to join me on a joint trip to Alice Springs in April. However this week's visit is welcome," he said.