



Office of the Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Disability Reform

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Dear *Name and address withheld for confidentiality reasons*

Thank you for your letter to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Minister for Disability Reform, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, about the National Indigenous Housing Guide and quality assurance processes underpinning the delivery of remote Indigenous housing. The Minister has asked me to reply to you on her behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

As Minister Macklin stated in her address at the World Indigenous Housing Conference in June 2012, there is a critical need to address issues of significant overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities due to decades of neglect in remote Indigenous housing. The Australian Government entered into a National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (the Agreement) with the Northern Territory and state governments to deliver an unprecedented \$5.5 billion investment in remote Indigenous housing over 10 years to help close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Under the Agreement, up to 4,200 new houses will be constructed and more than 4,800 existing houses will be rebuilt or refurbished. As at 30 September 2012, 1,450 new houses and 4,874 refurbishments or rebuilds have been delivered since the Agreement was introduced in 2009.

You referred to the National Indigenous Housing Guide (the Guide). This Guide was developed by the Government together with Indigenous communities, health workers, housing design consultants and architects. New and refurbished houses under the Agreement are being delivered in some of the harshest environments and most remote locations in Australia. The Guide helps to ensure that housing is appropriate to the needs of Indigenous Australians, particularly those living in remote Indigenous communities, and provides assistance and information for architects and companies interested in the design of housing for Indigenous people.

The review of the Guide is in the early stages of planning. The process, throughout 2013, will include consultations with stakeholders such as the state and Northern Territory governments and others involved in the delivery of remote Indigenous housing.

The Guide forms part of a broader framework to steer the delivery of quality housing in remote Indigenous locations that acknowledges the unique environmental conditions and requirements in these remote areas.

Quality Assurance frameworks have been developed by each state and the Northern Territory Government to ensure that all houses are constructed to an appropriate standard required under the Agreement to improve the sustainability and life span of remote housing.

Implementation Plans under the Agreement include clear requirements for all jurisdictions to deliver houses to rigorous standards, in compliance with the National Building Code of Australia, relevant Australian and state-specific construction standards and legislation and, as I have mentioned, to draw on the principles set out in the Guide. Community engagement and consultation on design and delivery issues are also an integral part of the arrangements to ensure houses suit the needs of Indigenous Australians living in remote communities.

Regular site inspections and post-completion checks are undertaken during construction or refurbishment and a minimum 12-month defect liability period is required for new housing contracts.

The Government is committed to improving housing, living and employment conditions in Indigenous communities and to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation. The Minister appreciates your interest in these housing issues.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

Adv/ser

Name of advisor withheld for confidentiality reasons