



Australian Government

## Northern Territory Emergency Response



One Year On

# Foreword



This report marks the first anniversary of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), launched on 21 June 2007 in the wake of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report.

Children are the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Australian Government is determined to take action to protect children and improve their life chances.

The NTER is an important bipartisan commitment to protect children in Northern Territory Indigenous communities. The Government supported the NTER in Opposition and welcomes the current Opposition's ongoing support as the NTER continues to make progress.

The NTER is a key element of the Government's plan for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This report details some of the outcomes and achievements of the NTER over the last 12 months.

Many families in remote communities report feeling safer because of the increased police presence and reduction in alcohol consumption.

Women in many of the targeted communities are finding that the new income-management arrangements give them confidence that they can buy essentials for their children such as food and clothes.

There is a small, encouraging increase in the school attendance rates in those communities where the School Nutrition Program is in place.

The licensing of community stores has resulted in improvements in the quality and availability of food, including fresh food, and established a platform for assessing and ensuring longer term food security.

Almost 11,000 child health checks have identified children who require surgery or other follow-up treatment. Some follow up has already taken place in the Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine regions.

The Government is determined to keep up the momentum.

In line with a commitment to an evidence-based approach to Indigenous policy, the Australian Government is reviewing the effectiveness of all measures. This is an opportunity to assess what is and is not working and to make recommendations for the future.

It is vital that assessments of the NTER are based on data and hard facts. Recommendations for the future must be grounded in a clear evidence base if we are to achieve long-term change.

The NTER Review Board is expected to provide the Australian Government with a final report by 30 September 2008.

The review does not mean a slowing in progress. The Government will keep pressing forward with ways to improve child protection in Indigenous communities.

We have committed \$666 million to continue addressing Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory in the 2008–09 Budget. As well as continuing with all current NTER initiatives, we are providing nearly \$100 million to provide 200 new teachers for the Northern Territory and almost \$30 million for three Indigenous boarding facilities.

We have already learnt some important lessons from the NTER which we will be acting on as we move forward. It is imperative to involve Indigenous people in developing solutions. And we must build mutual trust so that Indigenous communities are willing to trial and buy into new programs.

Listening to local experiences and acknowledging any unintended consequences in the implementation of some measures is an important step in building trust.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the fundamentals of a decent life—a safe home, good health and nutrition, a decent education and a job—are available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We are determined to keep working towards closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Protecting children and finding out what gets results are essential for achieving long-lasting change.



**Jenny Macklin**

*Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs*

20 June 2008





## About the response

The Northern Territory Emergency Response was announced in response to the first recommendation of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report. This asked that: *Aboriginal child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory be designated as an issue of urgent national significance by both the Australian and Northern Territory governments.*

The report came from the Northern Territory Government's Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, commissioned in August 2006 following revelations about serious child abuse made by Alice Springs prosecutor, Nanette Rogers.

The inquiry reported on 15 June 2007, finding evidence of sexual abuse in all 45 of the communities visited.

The Northern Territory Board of Inquiry was just one of a number of special commissions and coronial inquiries in recent years into disturbing conditions and events in Indigenous communities across Australia.

The report was the catalyst for radical and immediate action by the Australian Government in a jurisdiction where it has considerable powers under the Constitution.

The Emergency Response's main aim was the protection of children living in Aboriginal communities and town camps in the Northern Territory—making them safe in the short-term and laying the basis for a better life for these children in the longer term.

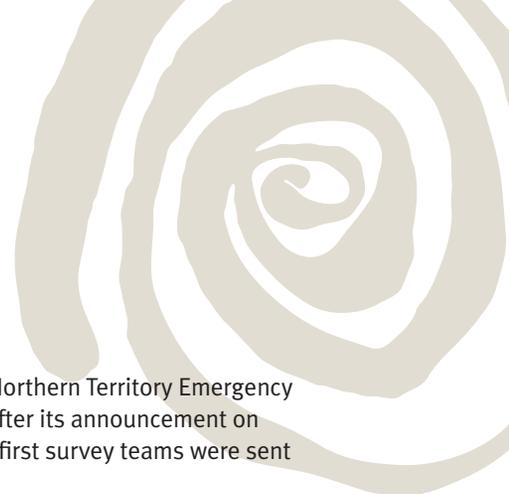
Implementation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response began soon after its announcement on 21 June 2007, when the first survey teams were sent into communities.

Seventy-three Aboriginal communities, numerous community living areas and town camps in or near major urban centres became part of the Emergency Response.

The Australian Government's legislation for the Emergency Response was passed in September 2007, including two appropriation bills providing up to \$580 million in funding in 2007–08.

Since then, the Australian Government has committed a further \$313.5 million in new NTER funding at Additional Estimates in February 2008 and \$323.8 million in the 2008–09 Budget in May 2008.

The Government has also made major commitments outside the context of the NTER, including \$547 million for major housing initiatives in the Northern Territory and \$30 million for the construction of new boarding facilities.





# Main Emergency Response measures



## Coordination

- ▶ Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce
- ▶ Government Business Managers to live in and work with communities
- ▶ Logistical support from Defence
- ▶ Community engagement
- ▶ Ombudsman support to the NTER

## Law and Order

- ▶ More police in remote communities
- ▶ Bans on alcohol and pornography in prescribed areas
- ▶ Expanded night patrol services
- ▶ Additional legal services and interpreter services
- ▶ Child abuse intelligence desk

## Supporting Families

- ▶ Children's services and family support
- ▶ New and improved safe houses for families experiencing violence
- ▶ Additional child-protection workers and Aboriginal family and community workers
- ▶ Diversionary activities for young people

## Welfare Reform and Employment

- ▶ Income management of half of people's welfare payments to ensure children's needs are met
- ▶ Licensing of community stores

- ▶ Creating real jobs in communities outside Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)
- ▶ Increased participation in remote areas including Work for the Dole activities
- ▶ Community Employment Brokers in communities

## Improving Child and Family Health

- ▶ Health checks and follow-up treatment for children
- ▶ Specialist support for children who have been abused
- ▶ Extra drug and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services

## Enhancing Education

- ▶ Extra teachers
- ▶ Extra classrooms
- ▶ Expansion of literacy programs
- ▶ Quality Teaching Package
- ▶ School breakfast and lunch program
- ▶ School boarding facilities (outside the NTER framework)

## Housing and Land Reform

- ▶ Fixing up existing houses and cleaning up communities
- ▶ Five-year leases on Aboriginal townships
- ▶ Building new houses, upgrading houses and new arrangements for the management of public housing in communities (outside the NTER framework)



## Leadership and advice

The Australian Government has been guided and advised by an expert taskforce during the first year of the Emergency Response. The Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce has also overseen implementation of the first phase.

The Taskforce has been chaired full-time by Dr Sue Gordon. Its Operational Commander, Major General Dave Chalmers, has managed the roll out of the measures from the NTER Operations Centre, initially in Alice Springs and more recently in Darwin.

The Taskforce met 12 times, engaged with a range of stakeholders, alerted government to emerging issues and helped to promote public understanding of the Emergency Response.

Taskforce leadership had an active program of community visits. Dr Gordon has visited 44 communities, and Major General Chalmers 48 communities. Both have also visited town camps involved in the response. On five occasions the Taskforce visited communities as a group.

The Taskforce leaders have been the main spokespeople for the Emergency Response, in the media and more generally. Other members have also contributed to public discussion of issues arising from the Emergency Response.

The Government has recently received the Taskforce's final report, with recommendations on a range of topics: viability and government investment; mediation; child protection; whole-of-government coordination including the role of Government Business Managers; health; housing; employment; early childhood; education; income management and stores; alcohol and policing.

The Government has been considering the Taskforce's advice as the Emergency Response rolled out. The Review Board will meet with Taskforce members over the course of their work.

## Members

Members at June 2008 are:

**Dr Sue Gordon AM, Chair**, magistrate in the Perth Children's Court and former chair of the National Indigenous Council

**Major General Dave Chalmers AO, CSC, Operational Commander**

**Dr Bill Glasson AO**, ophthalmologist and former president of the Australian Medical Association

**Mr Roger Corbett AO**, businessman and board member of the Reserve Bank of Australia

**Mrs Miriam Rose Baumann AM**, former school principal and chair of the Aboriginals Benefit Account Advisory Committee

**Mr Terry Moran AO**, Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Mr Mike Burgess**, Chief Executive of the Northern Territory Department of the Chief Minister

Former members were Mr John Reeves QC, Dr Peter Shergold AC and Mr Paul Tyrrell.





## Coordination

The Northern Territory Emergency Response is a whole-of-government initiative involving six Australian Government portfolios, working cooperatively with the Northern Territory Government.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) is the lead coordination agency. FaHCSIA convenes the cross-agency Project Management Board which oversees coordination at the national level.

In Darwin the NTER Operations Centre, to continue at least until December 2008, is responsible for the roll out of measures. The Operations Centre plans and manages all implementation and has an important role in working with communities.

Across the Northern Territory there are currently 51 Government Business Managers (GBMs) servicing 72 communities. GBMs are the local face of the Emergency Response. They live in and work with communities, coordinating government programs and services and ensuring that local issues and concerns inform government action.

The network of Indigenous Coordination Centres in the Northern Territory is becoming increasingly involved with the Emergency Response. The Indigenous Coordination Centres now have supervision of Government Business Managers.

Cooperation and consultation with communities is an important Australian Government priority.

In December 2007 the Prime Minister and the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs met with a range of Indigenous leaders in Darwin to discuss the future of the Emergency Response and committed to ongoing consultation with this Indigenous Reference Group. The Minister met with this group in April and another meeting is scheduled for July–August 2008.

The 2008–09 Budget also provides for the engagement of up to 20 Indigenous community members to act as community agents, providing a conduit between community and government representatives and facilitating greater community input to government decision-making.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman is supporting the Emergency Response and investigating complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by an Australian Government agency.





## Law and order

The protection of children and improved community safety are foundation aims of the Emergency Response, flowing from the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report. There have been no law-enforcement authorities in many remote communities and serious violence has often gone unreported.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response has provided more police and police stations to enforce the law, help prevent violence and anti-social behaviour and enforce the bans on alcohol and prohibited material. The Australian Government has sent members of the Australian Federal Police, while various States have committed policing resources.

There are currently 51 extra police serving 18 communities that had no police presence before the Emergency Response. Their duties include community-engagement activities, such as coaching the local AFL team or monitoring the local pool, to ensure that people in communities trust the police and can communicate with them.

Since police have become part of the community, people feel safer and there has been a positive impact on the numbers of intoxicated people in the community and incidents of domestic violence and substance abuse. As opposed to wanting less involvement by police, communities are expressing a desire for police to engage with them more, at all levels. A number of people have expressed the view that, as a result of the policing services provided, they feel they are regaining control of their community.

The *Little Children Are Sacred* report identified alcohol abuse as ‘destroying communities’ and the ‘gravest and fastest growing threat to the safety of children’. The Australian Government has legislated to ban alcohol in prescribed areas of the Northern Territory and to ensure that take-away sales across the Territory are monitored to prevent grog trafficking.

Some adult materials have also been banned in prescribed areas, so that children are not exposed to sexually explicit material. A range of penalties apply, with higher penalties for ‘traffickers’. Police are able to seize or destroy prohibited material.

Prescribed areas include all Aboriginal land in the Territory, as well as town camps and others areas determined by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Night patrol services have been a community-generated response to law and order problems over many years. They patrol community ‘hot spots’, diffusing violent situations, taking people out of harm’s way or diverting potential offenders from contact with the justice system. Night patrols are being extended to all 73 communities under the Emergency Response.

The Government is providing extra funding to strengthen legal aid and interpreter services for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. The Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Taskforce, part of the Australian Crime Commission, is conducting targeted intelligence operations within the Northern Territory’s Aboriginal communities and more widely across Australia.





## Supporting families

The Northern Territory Emergency Response includes measures to support parents and improve family safety. A Family Support Package is being funded and implemented as a joint project of the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

Safe houses to help protect families and children experiencing violence are a key component of this package. Services in Alice Springs and Darwin are being expanded and new safe houses are being built in up to 16 remote communities.

The Australian Government has been consulting with communities to determine community needs, including the appropriateness of safe houses and safe house models for men and women. To date, ten safe houses have been completed for eight communities, and others are under construction.

The Family Support Package is strengthening the Northern Territory Government's child-protection workforce. A mobile child protection team began work in May 2008, and the Northern Territory Government has recruited additional child-protection workers and Aboriginal family and community workers.

The Australian Government is supporting a range of activities to curb alcohol and drug abuse and anti-social behaviour among young people. Twenty-four projects have been funded so far, with further activities provided for in the 2008–09 Budget.

In its first year the NTER has established five playgroups and ten new crèches and expanded early childhood development services to assist parents and lay the basis for the transition to school.



## Income management

More than 13,300 people in NTER communities and town camps currently have their welfare payments managed by Centrelink.

Income management is a central measure in the Northern Territory Emergency Response, ensuring that money provided to help children is used for their benefit and providing increased financial security for people raising children.

Every community member who is receiving a relevant Centrelink payment receives 50 per cent of their payment in the usual way, while the other 50 per cent is reserved to pay for priority needs, such as food, clothing, housing, transport and utilities.

People on income management meet with a Centrelink officer to agree on how the money will be allocated to best meet the needs of the household. Funds that are income managed cannot be used to purchase items such as alcohol, tobacco, pornography or gambling products.

So far more than 90 per cent of income-managed money has been spent on priority needs. There are early indications from store operators that shopping habits are changing, with community people buying more fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy goods, frozen vegetables and meat. Sales of cigarettes at community stores have approximately halved. Customers are also saving for the purchase of whitegoods, such as fridges, so they can store fresh food at home.

Some Centrelink customers are using income management as a saving mechanism—for example, an elderly woman in the community of Titjikala has been able for the first time in her life to save money to buy furniture and a television.

Store operators are also reporting that there is less cash moving around their communities and that community residents have more control over their money, with less ‘humbag’ for goods or cash.

Income management is currently in place in 52 communities and associated outstations and seven town camp regions. It is expected that some 20,000 Centrelink customers in the Northern Territory will be income managed in all identified communities.

The introduction of income management has revealed a need for training in money management and family budgeting. Financial training has begun in a number of communities and funds provided for further training in the 2008–09 Budget.

## Welfare reform across Australia

Income management in the Northern Territory is part of a wider agenda, recognising that passive dependence on welfare undermines individual responsibility and community cohesion.

On Cape York in Queensland the Australian Government is working with the State Government and the Cape York Institute on a welfare-reform trial in four communities. A Family Responsibilities Commission set up in each community will decide action in relation to individuals referred to it, including the management of welfare payments.

In the Kimberley region and the Cannington area of Perth, Western Australia, a trial beginning in 2008–09 will give State child-protection authorities the power to recommend to Centrelink that income-support and family payments to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are managed for the benefit of their children. This is the first activation of income management under the Government's National Child Protection Framework.

As part of this initiative families will be assisted in developing budgeting and money-management skills. Families experiencing difficulties in managing their money will have voluntary access to income management.

The Australian Government is developing an Income Management Card to be available in 2008–09 to assist in the delivery and use of income-managed funds. The card will operate across a range of outlets, giving people greater flexibility in where they can shop.





184

Kleenex

Black Gold

24 Packets  
20 Foams

## Community stores

The way community stores operate and the quality of food they provide are critical to the Australian Government's efforts to improve the lives of Indigenous people through the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

The quality and integrity of stores is also important to the initiative to manage the income of people receiving welfare payments.

A total of 60 community stores have been licensed under a special NTER scheme: 44 stores operating under their own licences and 16 stores operating under corporate licences.

Licences are issued to community stores that:

- ▶ are able to meet the requirements of the income-management scheme
- ▶ have a reasonable quality, quantity and range of groceries and consumer items, including healthy food and drink, available and promoted at the store
- ▶ can demonstrate sound financial structures, retail practices and governance.

Every effort is being made to ensure stores are operated by people who can meet these standards. If a store operator initially cannot meet some of the assessment criteria, a conditional licence may be issued, with guidance on how to meet all the criteria.

The Australian Government provides assistance to store operators to help them administer income management. This includes initial set-up support and upgrades to the point of sale and accounting systems in the store.

Store operators report that income management has been positive for their businesses. Many stores have reported an increase in turnover, which has enabled them to provide fresher produce and a wider range of goods.





# Employment

The Australian Government is facilitating employment and economic development as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) is available in remote communities as an interim arrangement from 1 July 2008.

The Australian Government has been consulting Indigenous people across Australia on a reformed CDEP scheme and the Indigenous Employment Program, to complement the Government's new employment services system. These consultations will help to inform a broader Indigenous Economic Development Strategy to be launched later in 2008.

A key priority of the NTER has been the creation and funding of jobs in government service delivery, moving people out of CDEP positions into paid employment with superannuation and other benefits.

In December 2007, the Government provided more than \$90 million over three years for a Northern Territory Jobs Package that will generate around 2000 jobs supporting government service delivery. At 18 June 2008, 1147 jobs supporting Australian Government service delivery had already been created in areas such as health, community care, land management, education, municipal services, night patrols, child care, language and cultural maintenance, sport and recreation, broadcasting and the arts. The remaining jobs will be created in the new financial year.

The Australian Government is matching dollar-for-dollar the Northern Territory's commitment to spend up to

\$10 million a year over three years to create off-CDEP jobs that support the delivery of Territory and local government services. So far 153 jobs have been created in this sector, with up to 400 jobs expected in the new financial year.

All Remote Area Exemptions in the welfare system were removed by the end of 2007. Most job seekers living in remote areas of the Northern Territory now have to look for work or participate in work-related activities in order to receive their income-support payments.

The Australian Government is providing Community Employment Brokers (CEBs) to help community people understand their participation requirements and connect them to employment-service providers. There are currently 43 CEBs servicing 64 communities, two associated outstations and four town camp regions.

Participation activities include Work for the Dole, a work experience program involving community based projects across Australia. A total of 79 activities have commenced in NTER communities since July 2007. Currently, there are 53 Work for the Dole activities being delivered across NTER communities—39 activities are being delivered to participants in 33 prescribed communities, 12 activities are being delivered in town camps, and two activities are being delivered in outstations.

The initial focus of Work for the Dole activities was to assist with community clean up and repair. Activities currently being developed focus on providing quality work experience and enhancing local communities.

These activities will help people's transition into employment as real jobs are created in communities.





## Improving child and family health

The health of children has been a priority concern within the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Medical teams have been visiting communities since July 2007 providing access to voluntary, comprehensive health checks for children up to the age of 16 years. The child health checks are based on the existing Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Child Health Check Item and assess a child's overall health and wellbeing.

More than 8800 health checks have been completed under the NTER so far, covering almost all identified communities. Additionally, child health checks have been provided by local health services as part of their usual service delivery. Overall, approximately 11,000 child health checks have been provided in the prescribed areas of the Northern Territory since July last year.

Analysis of 7733 child health checks undertaken shows that:

- ▶ 66.9 per cent of children have received one or more referrals
- ▶ 32.1 per cent of children have been referred for dental care
- ▶ 37.7 per cent of children have been referred for further primary health care
- ▶ 11.8 per cent of children have been referred to a paediatrician
- ▶ 8.2 per cent of children have been referred for specialist ear, nose and throat services.

The Australian Government is committed to providing all follow-up required as a result of the child health checks. The Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services and Aboriginal community-controlled health services are being funded for this purpose. Primary health-care follow-up services are being delivered through local health services and follow-up surgical services are being provided in regional hospitals.

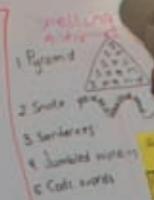
The Australian Government has also funded the establishment of a Mobile Outreach Service linked to the existing Sexual Assault Referral Centre in the Northern Territory. The outreach service will work with children and families affected by child abuse and trauma.

In recognition of the health impacts of the NTER alcohol bans, the Australian Government has funded the development and implementation of a package of measures to provide alcohol and other drug detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation services across the Northern Territory.

Planning is also underway to expand primary health-care services to deliver long-term, sustainable improvements in the Northern Territory primary health-care system that will assist in closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health outcomes in the Territory.

shelf / hals  
teachers desk  
library shelf  
cleaning  
pencil case

My little  
- Santa  
- Zorro  
- Tintin  
- Lizzie  
- Jodie



- 1 Pyramid
- 2 Snake
- 3 Squirrels
- 4 Jumbled words
- 5 Coll. words



## Enhancing education

The Northern Territory Emergency Response has provided extra resources to ensure children in communities and town camps have access to a good education.

Approximately 8000 children (180 non-Indigenous) are enrolled in 69 schools in the 73 NTER communities, at least 2500 of whom were not attending school regularly when the Emergency Response began. As many as 2000 children of school age were not enrolled in education. At least 10 schools in prescribed areas had an average student attendance that exceeded available classroom capacity, with classroom pressures emerging in further schools.

This under-investment in remote Indigenous education has arisen in part from an assumption that many children in remote communities would simply not attend school. The NTER has challenged this assumption and asserted the right and obligation of school attendance.

In February 2008, \$98.9 million was provided over five years for 200 additional teachers (50 each year) for schools in the Northern Territory, to help educate the approximately 2000 young people not enrolled. The first 19 teachers are currently undergoing remote teacher training, pending deployment.

Capital funds are being provided to build more classrooms to help cope with classroom pressures. The Northern Territory Government has been allocated \$6 million to construct up to 14 additional classrooms and the Catholic Education Office \$1.703 million to build four new classrooms in Wadeye. These classrooms will be available in 2008.

Under the \$4.854 million Accelerated Literacy initiative, regionally based specialist teams are working with 45 remote community schools to provide professional development on site and in context over the 2008 school year. The Australian Government has also invested \$3.854 million to establish a Quality Teaching Package. This is focused in particular on developing and training local Indigenous teaching staff who are more likely to stay in remote locations over the longer term. Both initiatives are being implemented in partnership with the Northern Territory education providers.

The Australian Government is also committed to building three new boarding facilities in the Territory, the first to open in 2009 and the others in 2010. These will accommodate students from years 8 to 12 and help to give young people from remote areas access to a secondary education. The colleges will be linked to major sources of employment in each region and provide pastoral care and support to students and their families.

To improve school attendance, a School Nutrition Program is being rolled out in NTER communities, providing breakfast and/or lunch to school-aged children. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the costs of meals through income-management. The program also provides job opportunities and training for local community members.

A further welfare-reform measure linking parents' welfare payments to their children's school enrolment and attendance will begin in 2008–09, initially in six Northern Territory communities and two urban areas in other States. This will be the first use of income management to tackle educational outcomes for children.



SCHOOL



## Housing and land reform

The Northern Territory Emergency Response is helping to achieve cleaner, healthier communities with better facilities and services. Government Business Managers are helping to coordinate service delivery in response to local needs.

A Community Clean Up Program is providing essential repairs to houses and tidying up community surrounds with help from local people.

Community clean up teams have been visiting communities to go through each house and work out what needs to be done. Tradespeople are doing any immediate repairs that can be done, 'locking down' or 'tagging' repairs that cannot be done, and returning with the required materials to complete these repairs at a later date. The tradespeople are only doing the special work they are qualified to do, such as electrical work and plumbing. Simpler repairs are being done by community members, under the guidance of the tradespeople.

Community clean ups have commenced in 66 remote communities. More than 2900 properties have been surveyed and more than 2700 minor repairs undertaken. Make safe and minor repairs have been completed in 45 communities.

Asbestos surveys are being conducted in all 73 NTER communities, and have been completed in 58. On 29 May 2008 the Australian Government made a commitment to remove all asbestos-containing material from communities within 12 months.

To provide for the security of government assets in communities and facilitate rapid improvements, the Australian Government has acquired five-year leases over 64 Aboriginal townships. The area of land involved is approximately 0.1 to 0.2 per cent of all Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

The leases will help to underpin major investments in remote Indigenous housing, including housing upgrades.





## More and better housing

The Northern Territory Emergency Response is helping to lay the basis for major improvements in housing stock and housing management for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. Housing is critical to children's health, education and wellbeing and to functioning communities.

The Australian Government is investing \$813 million in remote Indigenous housing and infrastructure services in the Territory, including \$793 million over the next four years for housing projects and related services under a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Northern Territory Government. A further \$20 million announced in February 2008 will help refurbish houses in six Indigenous communities.

The main initiative is the joint Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), announced by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments in April 2008. SIHIP will use \$547 million of the \$813 million committed by the Australian Government, with the Northern Territory Government contributing another \$100 million.

SIHIP will fund capital works in 73 targeted communities and urban living areas. The roll out of SIHIP will improve the living conditions of up to 80 per cent of Indigenous people in the targeted communities.

SIHIP will provide:

- ▶ about 750 new houses including new subdivisions
- ▶ more than 230 new houses to replace houses to be demolished
- ▶ more than 2500 housing upgrades
- ▶ essential infrastructure to support new houses
- ▶ improvements to living conditions in town camps.

Of the \$547 million for SIHIP, \$420 million will be directed to 16 high-need communities for major capital works. This will include building new homes and upgrades to existing dwellings. More than \$124 million of refurbishments will be funded in 57 other Indigenous communities. A further \$98 million will be set aside for town camps and urban living areas, and \$5 million for a small number of existing housing programs.





Construction firms engaged to undertake this work will be required to meet targets for local Indigenous employment. Local people will get jobs and training in their communities, leading to future job opportunities in construction, repairs and maintenance and more sustainable housing.

New property and tenancy management arrangements are currently being introduced for public housing in 64 Northern Territory Indigenous communities where the Australian Government holds five-year leases. The Northern Territory Government will oversee the administration of the new arrangements, which will be based on their Remote Public Housing Management Framework.

After a transition period, the houses will be managed in a similar way to other public housing properties. This means there will be:

- ▶ waiting lists based on need
- ▶ effective maintenance and upkeep procedures
- ▶ support services to ensure that tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and can meet their obligations, including paying rent and maintaining their home.

Better housing management will help to ensure that houses last, and that they become part of the personal responsibilities of those living in them.





## NTER Review

Announced on 6 June 2008, an NTER Review Board is conducting an independent and transparent review of the Northern Territory Emergency Response to assess whether the measures are effective and their impact to date on individuals and communities. The review is part of the Government's commitment to an evidence-based approach to closing the gap.

The three-person board is:

- ▶ **Mr Peter Yu** (chair), until recently chair of the Halls Creek Project Management Committee, Western Australia
- ▶ **Ms Marcia Ella Duncan**, former chair of the New South Wales Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce
- ▶ **Mr Bill Gray AM**, former Australian Electoral Commissioner.

The board will:

- ▶ examine evidence and assess the overall progress of the NTER in improving the safety and wellbeing of children and laying the basis for a sustainable and better future for residents of remote communities in the Northern Territory
- ▶ consider what is and isn't working and whether the current set of NTER measures will deliver the intended results, whether any unintended consequences have emerged, and whether other measures should be developed
- ▶ in relation to each NTER measure, make an assessment of its effects to date, and recommend any changes to improve each measure and monitor performance.

An independent expert group will support the Review Board:

- ▶ **Donna Ah Chee**, deputy director, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- ▶ **Michael Berto**, CEO, Roper Gulf Shire Council and chair, Northern Territory Indigenous Housing Advisory Board
- ▶ **Vicki Gillick**, coordinator, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
- ▶ **Ronald Lami Lami**, chair, West Arnhem Shire Transition Committee
- ▶ **Mavis Malbunka**, vice-president, Ntaria (Hermannsburg) Council
- ▶ **David Ross**, director, Central Land Council
- ▶ **Dr John Taylor**, deputy director, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), Australian National University
- ▶ **Neil Westbury**, CAEPR associate and former senior public servant
- ▶ **Ann Rebgetz**, co-principal, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Wadeye
- ▶ **Tobias Nganbe**, co-principal, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Wadeye

The NTER Review Board is expected to provide its final report to the Australian Government by 30 September 2008.

## Progress on NTER measures since the election

Measure	At 23 November 2007	At 18 June 2008*
<b>Coordination</b>		
Government Business Managers (GBMs)	38 GBMs in 61 communities	51 GBMs in 72 communities
<b>Law and order</b>		
Police	38 new police deployed in 10 communities	51 police (33 interstate and 18 NT Police) in 18 communities
Night patrols	Around one third of the communities had night patrols	Set up and recruitment is occurring for additional night patrols
<b>Supporting families</b>		
Safe houses		Ten safe houses completed for 8 communities
Child protection workers		One coordinator and 7 additional child protection workers recruited with Australian Government funding
Aboriginal family and community workers		Two coordinators and one manager recruited with Australian Government funding
<b>Welfare reform and employment</b>		
Income management	1408 people income managed in 8 communities	13,309 income managed in 52 communities, associated outstations and 7 town camps
Community stores	10 stores licensed	60 stores licensed
Financial management		Being delivered to 42 communities, associated outstations and 7 town camp regions



Measure	At 23 November 2007	At 18 June 2008*
<i>Welfare reform and employment continued</i>		
Jobs created outside CDEP	55 funded jobs created	1147 funded jobs in Australian Government service delivery; 153 jobs in NT Government service delivery
Work for the Dole activities	36 activities in 28 communities	53 activities
Community Employment Brokers (CEBs)	16 CEBs in 30 communities and associated outstations	43 CEBs in 67 communities and associated outstations
<i>Improving child and family health</i>		
Child health checks	4630 through the NTER (59 per cent of communities visited)	Almost 11,000 health checks, including 8857 provided through the NTER (70 out of 73 communities visited)
Follow-up treatment		<p>Oral health – 63 children have undergone dental surgery; 350 children have received non-surgical dental services</p> <p>Ear, nose and throat – 46 children have received surgery; 227 non-surgical follow up</p> <p>Audiological services – 669 children</p>
<i>Enhancing education</i>		
School Nutrition Program	Limited programs operating prior to the NTER	<p>49 communities, associated outstations and 7 town camp regions</p> <p>42 provider contracts in place, with 22 additional providers under offer of contract</p> <p>69 community people employed</p>

Measure	At 23 November 2007	At 18 June 2008*
<i>Enhancing education continued</i>		
Accelerated Literacy		Specialist teams working with 45 remote schools
Additional teachers		First-stage recruitment completed – 19 teachers undergoing specialist training
Extra classrooms		13 classrooms to be available in September 2008; 4 in Wadeye by December 2008
<i>Housing and land reform</i>		
Community clean ups	4 communities	66 communities
Surveys of five-year leases boundaries	Consultation visits in 8 communities	Field surveys completed in 49 of the 64 communities subject to leasing

\* The majority of the figures are based on a situation report provided by the NTER Operations Centre, dated 18 June 2008. For some categories of information the figures may be valid for dates prior to 18 June; however, they were the most up-to-date figures available on that day.

## Further information

Further information on the Northern Territory Emergency Response can be found on the website of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Go to [www.fahcsia.gov.au/nter](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/nter)

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