



Main Office

P.O. Box 646; Katherine NT 0851
Lot 508 McKeddie Rd Katherine, N.T. 0851
Phone: (08) 89 722 588 Facsimile: (08) 89 710
105

14 March 2016

Mr. Russell Keith,
First Clerk Assistant,
Public Accounts Committee,
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory,
GPO Box 3721,
Darwin.
NT. 0801

pac@nt.gov.au

Dear Mr. Keith,

SUBMISSION- INQUIRY INTO HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE ON TOWN CAMPS

Background

The Kalano Community Association Inc. has developed from a skeleton organisation in 1975 which took an active responsibility for meeting the needs of a largely unaccommodated Aboriginal population living in makeshift and camp conditions on the outskirts of Katherine. From these lowly beginnings Kalano has grown in stature and has, and currently over the years, delivered a wide mix of programs for its members- including housing, municipal functions, alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation, community patrol, aged care along with programs based on economic activity such as farming and commercial activity. A large percentage of its resources go towards job and employment programs. Amongst these and over the years Kalano has taken the initiative and has been successful in obtaining funds for other "social" type programs promoted by Government from time to time.

The last "new" houses constructed on Kalano land, for its members, was during the Commonwealth Government's ACHIP program- a good 12-15 years ago. Kalano currently controls a number of residentially tenured land at its communities of Rockhole, Mailli Brumby and Geyulkan. Kalano also is fortunate to own a number of residential leases in the township of Katherine. These houses are allocated as staff and member (of Kalano) housing.

Attachment "A" is a copy of Kalano Community Association's current housing policy which was approved in 2014.

Attachment "B" is a listing of land tenures held by the Association.

Kalano's housing stock is as follows:

- . Town Leases- 15 houses,
- . Community leases- Miali Brumby (32 houses, 5 flats) and Geyulkan (5 houses) and Rockhole (22 houses).

A considerable number of these housing units are in a poor state of repair and two remain uninhabitable because of their run down state.

The Kalano Association has an energetic and well managed housing program however there remains a number of conditions or situations which hamper its progress. These are identified as:-

- . Overcrowding and homelessness,
- . A large backlog of repairs and maintenance,
- . A slow refurbishment and upgrade program,
- . A number of rental arrears,
- . The condition of some housing being uninhabitable,
- . Lack of land availability for the construction of new accommodation units within the Katherine township and its environs and
- . The high cost of repairs, services and materials

amongst others.

It is important to reflect on the impact of overcrowded and deteriorating housing conditions have on the health and social situations facing its inhabitants. In the Katherine township area the Kalano Community Association works with Wurlu Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Service to do what we can from a preventative and primary health care focus. For a successful program in this area it requires access to "proper" and sufficient accommodation.

In recent times Kalano Management and Executive have been in discussion with Governments (The NT Government in particular) as to the level of resource support to boost its needs in achieving better housing outcomes. The Kalano Council is adamant that it will not sacrifice its control over its lands in return for a small increase in funding availability.

The reference throughout the NT to "Town Camps" to some is a derogative term which belongs in the past. The so called Town Camps are now permanent housing provided to Indigenous people who are genuinely permanent residents and members of the local township or society. Kalano members would claim the term should be dropped from the Territory vernacular.

Attachment "C" is data which reflects the state of repairs undertaken and due on Kalano's housing stock.

Kalano Community Association Inc. is an Aboriginal owned and controlled resource organisation providing housing and a range of services to members of its Aboriginal Urban Living Areas and the Aboriginal Urban population of Katherine.

Timeliness of completing repairs

The very age of most of its accommodation units hampers repair work being done in a timely manner. The state of repair of the older accommodation units frustrates the form of repair of what might appear to be a simple job. The initial request for repair is just the tip of the iceberg. Aging plumbing, wiring and fittings contribute to making the building safe and suitable for habitation. The hard ware is or has worn out.

Urgent repairs where danger and the resident's safety are at risk (e.g. electrical and drainage/plumbing) are completed immediately.

Kalano has a regime for house inspections and depending on the reports and faults identified a schedule as timing of corrective action is determined. The actual timing of such repairs to some extent is itself determined by the actual state of the residence (please see the paragraph above).

Any major repairs or upgrades (such as painting and refitting) can only be attempted on vacancy of the residence- for long term tenants this may be a problem as vacant houses aren't immediately available for temporary accommodation. Kalano's housing applications and waiting lists in the main mean that all housing that is available for use is readily taken up.

Cost of Repairs

The Kalano Community Association funds the repair costs of its housing from a mix of areas, viz. a mix of grant funds and rental income. The actual work is undertaken by Kalano employed staff or contractors which is determined by the activity required and resources available within the Kalano workforce at the time. It can be generally argued that repairs requiring trades such plumbing and electrical are purchased from local contractors.

The repairs and maintenance budget expenditure, aside from salaries, is the most expensive item of Kalano's housing budgets.

A comparison of the expenditure over the last two years is set out below.

	Salaries		R & M
2013-14	\$374,767	(oncost not inc.)	\$142,247
2014-15	\$388,277	(ditto).	\$148,614

Kalano Community Association Inc. is an Aboriginal owned and controlled resource organisation providing housing and a range of services to members of its Aboriginal Urban Living Areas and the Aboriginal Urban population of Katherine.

Kalano's housing budgets are limited and a comparison of the years 2013-14 and 2014-15 were unable to meet all costs. In those years a deficit against each year was the outcome. The deficit for 2014-15 showed a marked improvement on the previous year and there is every expectation that it will continue to drop due to improved budget and data controls. These deficits have been met in the past by the Association.

Kalano meets the cost of all water and sewerage rates in the first instance with the tenant being responsible for excess water. There are a number of cases where the tenant declines to pay. Given the nature and objectives of the Kalano Community Association eviction is unlikely to be an option and in any case if eviction was an outcome the tenant would become a likely applicant for a NT Housing owned house or unit.

Consistency, accessibility and efficiency of administrative arrangements

Funding from the NT Government for the maintenance and upgrade of Kalano's housing stock has been based on a pre-determined formulae over the last few years. This funding has been used for the correct purposes but given the overall costs of maintaining even a seemingly favourable housing program there is still an over-run in costs not recoverable from Government. This brings back the focus to issues outlined at the opening of this submission.

The funding formulae used by the NT Government appear to be based on criteria related to land tenure issues. The cost of maintaining housing should be based on factors relating to reasonable costs of maintaining "healthy" houses. Enquiries by Kalano officers have determined that levels of funding per house/accommodation vary over the NT from approximately \$2,000 to \$7,000 per unit. Kalano attracts the lower figure but our repairs and maintenance costs remain high. The land tenure factors here are: (a) Estate in Fee Simple (mostly houses managed within the township of Katherine and (b) lease hold for "Town Camp" properties. Another anomaly in the equation is that a higher rate applies to the housing at Rockhole as distinct to that Mailli Brumby and Geyulkan. It is believed that the difference may lie in a determination or decision by the NT Government.

If it is the intent of the Government not to meet all reasonable costs with maintaining and developing Kalano's housing program and additional building sites don't become available the Kalano Community Association will need to deliberate its future responsibilities in this area.

The objects of the Kalano Community Association are all based on achieving a health living environment for its members and with its housing responsibilities has resolved the Territory Housing Departments from having to face the individual responsibility of including these people in their own regular Katherine based housing responsibilities.

Kalano Community Association Inc. is an Aboriginal owned and controlled resource organisation providing housing and a range of services to members of its Aboriginal Urban Living Areas and the Aboriginal Urban population of Katherine.

The issues for Kalano are not about the efficiencies etc. of NT Housing but rather evolve around the growth of its own member population and the standards they demand, and are entitled to, as against a limited ability of the Association to reasonably meet those demands financially.

From the mid "eighties" representations have been made by Kalano's Executive to access what was considered vacant land in and around the Katherine Township on which accommodation could be built and maintained by the Association but apart from a tenure over the low lying area of Geyulkan (formerly "The Wailbri Camp") no offers have been forthcoming.

Provided a level playing field the Kalano Community Association has the ability and know-how to re-establish its Kalano Building Company, a company and legal entity established during the ACHIP days to build and maintain housing stock. Along with the move for Aboriginal people to benefit from the capital works planned for the Katherine Region over the next few years the Kalano Council members are looking at new ways to encourage business links and identities in the commercial world. Amongst them could well be a commercially viable housing construction and management regime.

Conclusion

The Kalano Association's housing and Town Camps Programs benefit from the Association being in charge of the program and the work undertaken with funds made available from the NT Government. A single point of entry or control of the physical and operational environment of the actions needing to occur is a priority and important.

Kalano Management has taken steps in recent years to improve the efficiency of its program and this is reflected in the lessening deficit each year. Never-the-less costs are high and outside the scope of funding provided. The issues of overcrowding and some aspects of rental returns and lack of capital and land on which to construct new dwellings remain. The granting of access to a number of properties within the Katherine Town area has not reduced the level of the growing populations in Kalano's town camps nor to some extent the number of "unhoused" visitors to the town.


Graham Castine
Chief Executive Officer.

Attachments to the Submission- Kalano Community Association-

Attachment "A" Kalano's Housing Policy- approved October 2014

Attachment "B" Land Tenures held by Kalano and

Attachment "C" Repairs and Maintenance- Current Status

Policy Title:	Housing
Policy Number:	OP009
Category:	Policy and Procedures
Classification:	Operational
Status:	Approved 14 th October 2014

Purpose

- To ensure Kalano Community Association Inc. has clear guidelines that are adhered to in the management of all community houses;
- To ensure Kalano Community Association Inc. has clear guidelines that are adhered to in the tenancy of all community houses and are in legal accordance with the NT Tenancy Act; and
- To fulfill the requirement under the AS/NZS ISO 9001:2008.

Scope

This policy will be applicable to all KCA housing properties and the tenants therein.

Policy

Kalano Community Association Inc. (KCA) was originally established in 1975 to provide housing and associated services to the local Aboriginal community members.

KCA continues to provide affordable housing to local Aboriginal community members and the associated services with tenancy such as repairs and maintenance. The association also provides essential services such as rubbish collection and care of community facilities in common areas.

KCA prides itself on being able to continue to provide the housing and essential services to community members in a culturally sensitive manner and to support community members to establish healthy home environments for their families.

All Kalano Community housing will be managed in accordance with the Assets and Infrastructure Management policy and systems.

All tenants of KCA housing will have current and relevant Tenancy Agreements.

All repairs and maintenance will be undertaken in a timely manner within budget. The manager may need to set priorities when addressing the needs in this area.

Procedures

Staff Responsibility:

- The KCA Housing Tenancy Manager will be responsible for the completion of all Tenancy Agreements upon residency being taken up;

- The KCA Housing Property Manager will be responsible for the service delivery of repairs and maintenance in a timely manner; and
- The CEO (or delegate) and Manager of Tenancy will be responsible for the Tenancy allocation of all KCA housing properties with the guidance of the respective community Housing Sub-Committee.

Housing Sub-Committees:

- To be made up by the Elected Community Members of their respective community to KCA Council (Rockhole, Myalli Brumby, Town, Geyulkgan);
- To meet on a quarter-yearly basis to discuss the currency of the 'Waiting List', new applications and any relevant issues in housing with the managers; and
- To give advice on improvements to the service delivery in housing.

Relevant Documents

<i>Related Policies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>OP007 – Assets and Infrastructure Management</i> •
<i>Related Publications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kalano Community Association Inc. Constitution</i> • <i>NT Residential Tenancy Act, 2013</i> •

LAND TENURES HELD BY THE KALANO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

KALANO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC.

SUBMISSION TO THE NT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY- INQUIRY INTO REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE ON TOWN CAMPS

Lot Number(s)/Portion	Tenure	Location
1864	SPL	Miali Brumby
508	Estate in Fee Simple	Farm
1533	Crown Lease in Perpetuity	Rockhole
03031	Crown Lease in Perpetuity	Gewyulkgan
02305	Estate in Fee Simple	Coolibah Cir.
01265	As above	Cox Crs.
00184	As above	Dowling St.
02174	As above	Finnis Pl.
01696	As above	Hudspeth Pl.
00567	As above	Pearce St.
01305	As above	Prior Ct.
01304	As above	Prior Ct.
01303	As above	Prior Ct.
01302	As above	Prior Ct.
01301	As above	Prior Ct.
01300	As above	Prior Ct.
01299	As above	Prior Ct.
01298	As above	Prior Ct.
02033	As above	Sandalwood Crs.
00243	As above	Shepherd St.

All addresses are within the township of Katherine. NT.

ATTACHMENT "C"

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE- CURRENT STATUS

KALANO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC.

SUBMISSION TO THE NT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY- INQUIRY INTO REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE ON TOWN CAMPS

PROPERTY STATUS	COMMENT	NUMBER
Houses/units/flats	Spread around Katherine (1)	76, includes vacant lots. (2)
Units requiring upgrade	All forms of land tenure	71 over a two year cycle. (3)
Urgent Minor Repairs	All forms of land tenure	Undertaken as required. (4)

- (1) Includes all tenured land and lots within "community" leases.
- (2) Also includes one unserviceable home
- (3) The undertaking of upgrades and renovations generally require the property to be vacated. Costs associated with upgrades are high. Kalano plans to achieve this program at a rate of 4 upgrades a calendar year. This figure includes work on properties completed at the beginning of the cycle.
- (4) Priority is given to those repairs of an urgent nature based on health, safety and necessity e.g. plumbing and electric.