



# Media Release

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## Link Aboriginal housing to jobs says former Labor Minister

The Menzies Research Centre today released its latest policy offering, research by Aboriginal policy expert and by former Labor Minister, the Hon Dr Gary Johns, that recommends linking housing to employment.

The study, ***No Job No House: An Economically Strategic Approach To Remote Aboriginal Housing***, argues that governments should cease building permanent housing for Aborigines in remote communities where they do not have a job in the real economy and where they are unable to, like other Australians, pay rent or a service a mortgage.

From his original analysis of 2006 Census statistics; comparisons of Aboriginal behaviour in other parts of Australia; and observations of non- Aboriginal behaviour in remote areas, Dr Johns concludes that the best policy to adopt is one that links housing to employment.

Dr Johns recommends that in developing policy the Government should distinguish types of location:

- Outstations and homelands - with no permanent accommodation unless a case for economic viability is proven.
- Larger indigenous settlements - where land title changes are essential before there is any public and private investment. These settlements are not likely to be economically viable but regional stability dictates some public investment.
- Country towns - which will experience stress due to influx of Aboriginal settlers should be better provided with services, including 'refugee' resources and facilities.
- Major cities and regional centres - where any shortfalls should be handled by mainstream services, including 'refugee' resources and facilities.

"Governments should explore the location and eligibility for each form of accommodation," says Johns.

“Such exploration should be undertaken on the basis that Aborigines when informed of their options may consider them and make decisions about where to live. The aim should be to house people in a sustainable fashion.”

The research also suggests that accommodation solutions will require a suite of other policies to reinforce the responsibilities attached to the housing market.

“These will range from welfare obligations, specifically income management as with the NT Intervention initiatives, land title changes, ‘refugee’ services to assist resettlement, and financial schemes such as ‘sweat equity’, ‘financial literacy’ and government special assistance to encourage home ownership.”

“Infrastructure expenditure should be approached with caution and incorporate discussion about future viability of the communities.”

“In this regard, structural adjustment will be essential as many communities face change in their livelihood and location. Structural adjustment requires that governments assist people to move and establish themselves where prospects are better, or if not, be made aware of the consequences of remaining.”

The launch of this research is particularly timely, as the Rudd Government’s National Policy Commission is considering the very issues canvassed in this paper.

“Dr Johns’ research produces new evidence about the disconnect between remote communities and employment opportunities,” said MRC Executive Director Julian Leaser.

“Since 1999 Indigenous policy has been one of the major focal points for the Menzies Research Centre. Dr Johns’ paper continues our important work in what remains one of the major social policy challenges for Australia.”

*No Job No House: An Economically Strategic Approach to Remote Aboriginal Housing* is the second paper Dr Johns has written for the Menzies Research Centre. This paper follows his 2006 paper: *Aboriginal Education Remote Schools and the Real Economy*.

A copy of the complete paper can be downloaded at [www.mrcld.org.au](http://www.mrcld.org.au).

**For more information or to arrange an interview with Dr the Hon Gary Johns, contact Simone Holzapfel on 0417 656 668.**