

6.11. NOTICE OF MOTION - ABORIGINAL HOUSING - DOUGLAS SHIRE - CLOSING THE GAP PROGRAM

COUNCILLOR: Cr Terry Melchert

NOTICE OF MOTION:

I hereby give Notice of my intention to move the following Motion at the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 23rd February 2016:-

"That Council make a submission to the Prime Minister, the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Senator Nigel Scullion, the Member for Leichardt The Hon Warren Entsch MP and the State Member for Cook the Hon Billy Gordon MLA requesting them to do all in their power to facilitate the immediate provision of increased funding provided to Indigenous Housing programs in the Douglas Shire under the "Closing the Gap program" for:-

- 1. the maintenance of existing indigenous housing stock,**
- 2. the provision of new housing stock, and**
- 3. the provision of emergency "respite" housing for victims of Domestic Violence."**

BACKGROUND:

I am receiving increasing reports that due to previous funding cuts the stock of indigenous housing [sic] in the Shire is actually decreasing and the maintenance of exiting [sic] housing [sic] stock is falling behind.

By all reports there is a high level of "overcrowding" in the small number of houses which are currently available, and the situation is worsening.

Likewise there is no stock of suitable "respite" or emergency housing for victims of Domestic Violence.

This motion seeks to have these issues addressed as a matter of urgency with the assistance of renewed funding provided under the "Closing the Gap" program.

OFFICER'S COMMENT:

Officers of the CEO Unit have been advocating for an increase in housing and funded services in the Shire since 2010.

To provide a coordinated approach, the Douglas Community Housing Group (DCHG) was formed in mid - 2011. The purpose of the DCHG was to identify the levels of overcrowding, rough sleeping and absence of funding for specialist homelessness services in Douglas.

DCHG successfully received funding through the Blue Print for the Bush program and support from Council to commission a Report to quantify homelessness in Douglas and identify actions to reduce homelessness. *'Homelessness in Douglas - It's much more than not having a roof over your head'* was finalised and printed in late 2012.

The Report was distributed widely including hand delivery to the former Member for Cook, The Hon David Kempton in early 2013 and The Hon Billy Gordon MLA in 2015.

The DCHG meets regularly to exchange information and provide a coordinated regional voice and response to housing and crisis accommodation needs. DCHG also takes part in the Cairns Homelessness Project Group (Taskforce), led by the Department of Communities every quarter, with statistics detailing the number of homelessness and housing incidents dealt with by local service providers to highlight the amount of unfunded need in the region.

In mid 2015, Council officers commenced a dialogue with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships detailing local concerns and the effects of State Government funding reductions. A copy of the *'Homelessness in Douglas'* report was also provided for the benefit of Minister Curtis Pitt.

Most recently the DCHG have initiated the 'More than a roof over your head' program. A consultant position funded by Partners in Recovery, directed by DCHG and an advisory body of services users, has been established to research successful crisis accommodation models and identify an appropriate Peak Body to drive the establishment of a facility for the local community.

Support from the Elected Members to advocate for the ongoing work of DCHG and Council Officers would add strength to a coordinated approach.