

OUTSTATIONS POLICY

Questions and Answers

1. What is being done and why?

From 1 July 2008 the NT Government took over the responsibility for looking after outstations, including essential and municipal services. Prior to 1 July 2008, outstations have been the responsibility of the Australian Government.

The NT Government needs to develop a policy to determine how it will support outstations.

2. How long will this take?

The process will not be rushed.

A carefully researched, planned and implemented policy development process will take place.

Government has agreed to a comprehensive 5 stage consultative process

Stage One: Release of the *Outstations Policy Discussion paper* and call for submissions. (The deadline for written submissions is **1 December 2008**).

Stage Two: Community engagement and economic modelling. This process is intended to take place in the period **October to December 2008**.

Stage Three: Policy framework endorsed by Northern Territory Government. Subject to Stage Two, it is intended that this will be achieved by **February or March 2009**.

Stage Four: Implementation, including any follow-up consultations. Subject to previous stages, it is intended that this will take place in the period **March to June 2009**.

Stage Five: Formal commencement of service and program delivery under the new Northern Territory "Outstations Policy". Subject to previous stages, it is intended that this will commence on **1 July 2009**.

3. What questions does the Government want answers to?

There will never be sufficient money to meet the service demands of all outstations, so Government wants to know what outstation residents and stakeholders think about:

- Which outstations should be supported, and why?
- What level of support should be provided to outstations?

The discussion paper asks for written submissions on five main questions, but any other

comments are also invited. The five main questions are:

Question 1: Eligibility for Support

- What are the principles that should be applied to decide whether an outstation is eligible to receive support?
- Should the outstation be the sole or principle residence?
- Should there be secure land tenure over the outstation?
- What kind of water supply is required?
- What level of access is required?
- What level of support is required (eg from a Shire or an Outstation Resource Agency (ORA))?
- Are there cultural, social or economic reasons to support some outstations?

Question 2: Definition of an Outstation

In 1987, outstations were defined as

small, relatively permanent, decentralised communities consisting of closely related individuals which have been established by Aboriginal people with a strong traditional orientation.

- Is a new definition required?
- If yes, what should be included in a new definition?

Question 3: The Service Model

- What is the preferred service model or models for outstations?
- Does a 'hub and spoke' model work? ('Hub and spoke' is where one or more outstations receive or access services from a larger centre)
- How do Shires and ORAS fit in with Government services like education, health and police?

Question 4: Outstation Service Levels

- What level of services should be provided to outstations?
- What considerations should be used to determine service levels?

- How can outstation populations be estimated?
- Should some outstations be considered as a major community?

Question 5: Additional Issues for Comment

- What research is required?
- Should an outstations advisory group be set up?
- Should housing on outstations be treated purely as private property or as a Territory housing asset?
- How should Government develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for outstations policy?
- What is the relationship between community living areas and outstations policy development?

4. What are the benefits of having NT responsibility for Outstations?

An effective policy framework will provide clarity and certainty for outstation residents and service providers.

Additional benefits could include improved economies of scale and less red tape between levels of government.

5. Will Outstations be shut down?

No. Outstations play an important role in the economic and cultural life of the Territory. The NT Government values the contribution of outstations to the economic, social and cultural life of the Territory and the important role they play for Indigenous Territorians who have chosen to live on their traditional lands.

6. Will new Outstations be supported?

No. The Northern Territory Government will not support new outstations.

7. Is there any program to help with private (non-Government) money for Outstations?

Yes. Outstations will have access to the Australian Government's Home Ownership on Indigenous Land (HOIL) program. HOIL provides Indigenous families living in communities on Indigenous land with access to affordable home loan finance, discounts on purchase prices of houses, and money management training and support.

8. Who will be delivering outstation services?

The Minister for Housing and Local Government has provided certainty for the financial year 2008-2009 by continuing to fund outstations at no less than 2007-08 funding levels.

In most cases, outstations previously supported by Community Government Councils are now supported by Shires. There are currently approximately 109 outstations currently supported through 7 Shires.

Outstations previously supported by ORAs will continue to be supported by ORAs. There are currently approximately 348 outstations currently supported through 26 ORAs.

One of the key issues for discussion in the development and implementation of the Outstation policy is whether outstations services will continue to be delivered by Shires and/or ORAs.

9. What impact will CDEP reforms have on Outstations?

CDEP is currently being reviewed by the Federal Government. This review will have a significant impact on outstations service delivery and will need to be considered in this context.

10. What is the money story?

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian and Northern Territory Government transferring responsibility for Outstations to the Territory committed \$20M per year for three years to the support of Outstations.

Additional funds have been made available in 2008-09 to convert approximately 137 CDEP positions into full-time jobs in municipal and essential service delivery to outstations.

The extent of both capital and recurrent funds required to meet the service delivery level to be agreed under the new outstations policy will be a matter for research and consultation throughout the policy development process.

11. Where can I get more information?

The Office of Indigenous Policy in the Department of the Chief Minister is managing the Outstation Policy development process.

Phone: 08 8999 5270

Email: outstations.dcm@nt.gov.au

Website: www.action.nt.gov.au/outstations