



Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP)



SIHIP delivers four refurbished houses to families on Groote Eylandt

31 July 2009

The keys to four newly refurbished homes on Groote Eylandt have been handed to families in Umbakumba and Angurugu. These houses, three in Umbakumba and one in Angurugu, are part of refurbishment works completed under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), a \$672 million joint housing program of the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

Earth Connect Alliance General Manager Andrew Schroth said refurbishment works on 18 houses were underway right now.

“We have handed four houses back to the community and we’re still working on others,” said Mr Schroth.

Mr Schroth said the refurbishment program was currently two weeks ahead of schedule.

“This is because of good planning, supervision and skilful work by the mostly local workforce,” he said.

“We’re really focused on employing local Indigenous workers to not only build the homes but develop skills that they can use beyond SIHIP.

“We want to give local people skills and opportunities to help them plan for long-term working lives within their own community – not just for this program.”

The alliance has started clearing on several lots at Umbakumba. A ground-breaking ceremony in the first week of August signalled the start of construction on the first new homes for the community under SIHIP.

“We are aiming to have six or seven houses to lock up stage by the start of the wet season,” said Mr Schroth.

The project team will continue work through the wet season on the internal finishes of the new houses so there will be no delays in the construction process.

“We plan on having a good supply of materials and preparing houses to a stage where we can continue work through the wet,” said Mr Schroth.

To keep the housing work on track, the team has organised transitional housing for residents while housing upgrades are completed. The first two of these are located in Angurugu.

“When we upgrade a house we need to move the existing occupants out of their home,” Mr Schroth said.

“We will use a couple of the unoccupied upgraded homes as transitional housing and we have also come up with a concept called a ‘plug-in’. A plug-in is a separate one- or two-bedroom accommodation unit that’s bolted onto the side of an existing house attached by a verandah or walkway.

“In some circumstances we will move the tenants into the new plug-in while we upgrade the main home. Later on the plug-in can provide additional accommodation for the wet season to help reduce overcrowding.”

While the scheduled 75 home refurbishments will continue, the plan is for at least one new home to be completed before Christmas 2009. This is possible because the homes are modular using pre-fabricated construction which is easy to assemble.

Mr Schroth said they have been working with local organisations such as GEBIE and Aminjarrinja so they can assemble these modular homes using local Indigenous labour.

“The alliance is committed to supporting the local workforce,” Mr Schroth said.

“I really believe two things will come out of this project. One is much-needed homes for the Indigenous community. Secondly and more importantly, is the creation of a sustainable workforce.”

