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Central Australia: Leases What the communities have been offered

Three Aboriginal communities in the Central Land Council's region have been told by the Australian Government they have three options - to accept one of two government leasing offers and the new housing that comes with them or receive no new housing at all.

The ultimatums have been put despite there already being drastic housing shortages in each of the communities.

No other communities have been offered a deal of any sort so far.

The Offers

The government is offering each of the Hermannsburg, Lajamanu and Yuendumu communities two lease alternatives. A 60 year lease over the whole community or a 40 year lease over the parts of the communities where the houses are built.

The "whole of the community" lease, which covers the entire community brings with it a \$2 million payment to the community and \$2 million payment to traditional owners, but community members and traditional owners give away any control over the development of their communities.

The precise terms of a whole of community lease, including its length and the amount of the payments, are subject to negotiation.

Hermannsburg

Both options would attract \$9.6 million for housing, but the 40 year lease, which would just cover the part of the community where houses are built, does not include any payments in the deal.

Lajamanu

The Commonwealth has promised to spend \$8.7 million on new houses, major fix-ups and infrastructure (power, water, sewerage) in Lajamanu, if a long-term lease is signed.

Yuendumu

If a long-term lease is signed, the Australian Government has promised to spend \$13 million on the construction of new houses, the repair of existing houses and infrastructure (power, water and sewerage).

Summary

The CLC's director David Ross says: "We think that the housing lease is a better option – it's a shorter time and a smaller area but we also think there should be guarantees that housing will improve.

"As far as I can see, the Whole of Community leases as they stand, aren't a good deal and if people want to sign up to them we advise them to take their time negotiating with the Commonwealth in order to get the best possible deal.

The communities understand this.

They are concerned about entering into a deal that will affect their children and grandchildren – perhaps even their great-grandchildren.

"Territory Housing would take control of the houses – its track record isn't great in places like Alice Springs so if people agreed to housing leases we would want to see some rules applied.

"However the money allocated for housing is not a huge amount when you consider that infrastructure will take up about 30 per cent of it. That means in the case of Yuendumu that only \$9m would be available for housing or about 18 houses."



Carbon offset industries for Indigenous communities

A new carbon offsetting industry could create over 1000 new jobs for Indigenous Australians and generate income of \$52million per year according to a new CSIRO report.

The study of six Indigenous Land Corporation properties across Western Australia, Northern Territory, and Queensland looked at land management practices including fire management, reforestation and grazing land management. These practices can sequester carbon or change emissions regimes and the change in carbon stocks or emissions could be sold as offsets.

"This research found potential greenhouse emissions offsets from fire management on Indigenous lands are worth A\$52 million per year* to Indigenous communities," says CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems Chief Dr Dan Walker.

"In employment terms this is equivalent to 346 full-time jobs or 1029 seasonal jobs for Indigenous people.

"This industry could prevent 2.6 million tonnes of carbon entering the atmosphere each year.

"Indigenous lands account for 54 per cent of all potential emissions reductions from Australia's fire-prone savannas and rangelands, meaning that Indigenous contributions to greenhouse gas abatement are very significant to

Australia," he says.

Indigenous fire management for carbon offsets has multiple benefits – greenhouse mitigation, biodiversity protection and helping to break the poverty cycle in Indigenous communities.

The report showed the main drivers determining whether offset projects would be feasible will be access to markets and the price paid for offsets.

Other issues of importance in Indigenous land management for carbon offsets are property rights on Indigenous lands, side effects on other natural resource management considerations such as biodiversity and water availability, and whether offset projects are compatible with traditional land management practices.

CSIRO warned that while the preliminary study demonstrates that greenhouse gas offsets from Indigenous land management can operate on paper more research was needed to further explore the potential of the research findings.

* Based on potential emissions offset of 2,597,758 t CO₂-emissions per year and a carbon price of \$20 per tonne.