



Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion

Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Deputy Leader of the Nationals
Country Liberals Senator for the Northern Territory

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MINISTER HAS NO IDEA ABOUT INDIGENOUS HOUSING PROGRAM

Evidence provided through Senate Estimates has revealed that Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin did not know her own department was planning to terminate the contract of one of the alliances responsible for delivering Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory.

Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion said it was unacceptable that Minister Macklin had put her hand on her heart and claimed the program was on track, while being ignorant of such a crucial development.

“Australians expect Federal ministers to tell the truth. They also expect them to be up to date with the status of their programs,” Senator Scullion said.

“And yet despite the well-documented problems besetting the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program, Minister Macklin didn’t realise things were so bad that one of the alliances would have to go.”

On March 17, 2010, Minister Macklin said:

“An assessment of SIHIP by independent consultants Dr Owen Donald and Julia Canty-Waldron found that the changes and recommendations of the 2009 review have been implemented, and have put the program on track to achieve its targets of 750 new houses, 230 rebuilds and 2500 refurbishments over the period to 2013.”

“The very next day, when Jenny Macklin had her facts straight, she announced that the Government had been forced to terminate the contract of one of the alliance partners,” Senator Scullion said.

By way of explanation, the Minister’s departmental secretary said this week:

“It would not have been necessarily the case that the minister’s office or the minister would have been aware, when that first release went out, that we were planning the very next day to terminate the Earth Connect contract.”

“Minister Macklin needs to focus less on donning hard hats and bright vests for photo opportunities, and more on understanding the serious failures of her program,” Senator Scullion said.

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