



What is a Township Lease?

A Township Lease is a voluntary, long-term lease over a township on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

Under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, Traditional Owners with help from their Land Council can negotiate a Township Lease with the Australian Government.

Once everyone agrees on the details of the Township Lease, a 'Head Lease' over the community is granted by the Aboriginal Land Trust to the Executive Director of Township Leasing (Executive Director).

The Executive Director will manage the land in the township for the Traditional Owners for a long time, usually between 80 to 99 years.

Land leased under the Head Lease will always remain Aboriginal Land. The Executive Director, on behalf of the Australian Government, will manage the land on behalf of the Traditional Owners following the rules in the Head Lease.

The Executive Director works very closely with the Traditional Owners through an advisory group known as the Consultative Forum.

The Consultative Forum gives advice to the Executive Director and together they make decisions about how the land is used in the township.

The Executive Director issues subleases to people and organisations in the community and collects rent on behalf of the Traditional Owners, as per the rules of the Head Lease.

A Township Lease provides certainty of tenure through long term subleases. This means that government and commercial developers can operate in the township knowing they have secure land tenure under their sublease.

A Township Lease:

- Is a voluntary agreement between the Traditional Owners and the Australian Government
- Is negotiated with Traditional Owners with help from their Land Council
- Does not change the ownership of the land
- Ensures Traditional Owners are recognised as land owners
- Establishes a Traditional Owner Consultative Forum to discuss land use and development in the township
- Is confined to a boundary that is agreed to by Traditional Owners
- Boundary covers all of the land in the township including important infrastructure like barge landings and airstrips
- Boundary covers only the township – it does not cover outstations, homelands or land outside the community
- Is an agreement for a very long time – up to 99 years
- Provides security for all land users
- Ensures Traditional Owners receive fair rent for the use of their land
- Creates better conditions for business development and economic opportunities

