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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE: Bus Policy isn't New – But the Sign Sends a New Message

Peak bodies and major NT community and homelessness service providers are calling on the Northern Territory Government and Department of Logistics and Infrastructure to reconsider the messaging and impact of newly publicised public transport signage disallowing “dirty or stained” clothing on buses.

While the policy may have existed previously, its prominent publication through new signage sends a strong and troubling message – one that risks further marginalising people experiencing homelessness, poverty, and disadvantage. It is also likely to disproportionately impact Aboriginal people.

NTCOSS's latest [Cost of Living](#) report show that transport costs are already placing significant pressure on Territorians. For a typical NT working household, transport costs account for at least 16% of their weekly income – well above national benchmarks. At the same time, access to a private vehicle remains out of reach for many, making public transport essential, not optional.

The sector is calling for an immediate review of the signage and for decision-makers to engage with community organisations to ensure public policies are grounded in dignity, equity, and inclusion. This call is especially important in light of the NT Government's newly launched Homelessness Strategy, which aims to build people's capacity through greater access.

“Does this mean a tradie heading home after a hard day's work, or a group of school kids catching the bus after footy training, will be refused service? If we're serious about reducing crime and improving community safety, we need systems that include people, not push them further to the margins.”

- Paul Royce, NT Regional Leader, Mission Australia

“Policies that restrict access to public transport based on clothing risk harming Territorians experiencing homelessness. Buses are a lifeline to shelter, food, medical care and employment. Just last week the NT launched a Homelessness Strategy, a goal of which is building people's capacity through greater access to income, connection, and self-reliance, none of which are possible without transport.”

- Annie Taylor, CEO, NT Shelter

"Everyone has a right to feel safe and to move freely in their community. When public transport becomes harder to access for some, it risks pushing people further into isolation and instability – and that doesn't make any of us safer."

- Gerard McGeough, CEO, Victims of Crime NT

"I cannot see the purpose of blaming marginalised groups for a whole of society issue. If poverty makes people uncomfortable, surely the answer lies in tackling poverty, not further discriminating against people who need our support and understanding."

- Craig Kelly, CEO, Anglicare NT

"Policies like this rely on vague, subjective standards that can lead to discrimination. Who decides what's 'too dirty'? And who is most likely to be judged unfairly? We see this kind of policy in action – and it's people living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or dealing with trauma who are most often excluded. Public transport is a public service, it should be built on access, not appearance."

- Rachael Bowkers, CEO, Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS)

"Policies like this are likely to disproportionately impact Aboriginal people - we're meant to be closing the gap, not widening it. Public transport must be part of the solution. Safe, affordable and accessible transport is a pathway to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our Territory lifestyle – for all Territorians."

- Sally Sievers, CEO, Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS)