



Land council slams Territory for secretive changes to sacred site protections

The Central Land Council has condemned the Territory government's latest attempt to rush through ill-considered changes to laws that will threaten traditional owners' rights and interests – without consulting them.

Late on Thursday afternoon the CLC executive members and representatives of the other NT land councils met with Minister Josh Burgoyne to find out about mooted amendments to the NT's Sacred Sites Act.

"We asked for information, he gave us platitudes. He disrespected us and treated us like little children," said CLC chair Warren Williams.

"He asked us to simply accept that the government's intentions behind the changes are good. He wouldn't give us any details about the changes or how they would work. All he had was empty talk. No wonder we are all very alarmed."

"Do not believe him if he tries to pass off this cynical tick-a-box exercise as 'consultation' with the land councils."

The CLC is concerned the government will rush the changes through parliament without leaving sufficient time for land councils to consult their membership.

"Sacred sites belong to us, not the government, and it should not change the law protecting our sites without consulting traditional owners and native title holders," Mr Williams said.

"This is not how informed consent works."

The CLC asked the minister for adequate time to consult with traditional owners about the proposed changes before they are rushed through the parliament.

"He refused to give us this commitment," Mr Williams said.

"The government needs to stop this rushed process and take time to consult with the people whose culture will be affected by it."

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