



25 August 2022

Historic meeting of NT Land Councils held on Gurindji country

The four NT Land Councils held a historic meeting on Gurindji country, on Thursday, 25 August 2022.

Executive Council Members discussed a range of topics including Uluru Statement from the Heart, Voice to Parliament, Northern Territory Treaty, how to address the poor turnout in remote Aboriginal communities at the last election, remote housing and homelands and imminent rent increases for remote communities planned by the Northern Territory Government, and township leasing arrangements on Aboriginal land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

Chair of the Central Land Council, Mr Robert Hoosan, said he was proud to host Executive Council Members from Tiwi Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council and Northern Land Council at Kalkaringi.

“Gurindji Country is the birthplace of Land Rights and this week the anniversary of the Wave Hill Walk Off. History was made 56 years ago this week and history was made again today,” Mr Hoosan said.

Senator Patrick Dodson, Special Envoy for Reconciliation and the Implementation of the Uluru Statement, and Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour, spoke about a range of matters including the Voice to Parliament. The combined Executives passed a resolution supporting implementation of the Uluru Statment from the Heart in full and changing the Australian Constitution to enshrine a Voice to Parliament within this term of Government.

Chairman of the Northern Land Council, Mr Samuel Bush-Blanasi said he was proud to support this historic resolution. “We have been waiting too long for the Voice. I heard Prime Minister Albanese speak at Garma about changing the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I’m glad to see things are moving forward again.”

Representatives from the Australian Electoral Commission were also invited to attend to address Executives Members on how to ‘close the gap’ in voter enrolment and participation rates between urban and remote areas of the NT and other states.

Mr Gibson Farmer-Illortaminni said this is an important issue. “I heard today as many as 25,000 Territorians are not enrolled to vote. We need to do better. This is about getting our young men and women involved and educating our people about having a say in elections for the Territory and Commonwealth governments,” Mr Farmer-Illortaminni said. “Things are not much better for older people, the system often fails them too.”

The Executive Council Members also discussed funding for remote housing and the Northern Territory Government’s plans to impose a large increase in rent in remote Aboriginal communities commencing in September. Members passed a resolution calling on the NT

Government to implement a moratorium on the rent increase until further consultations have occurred on the rent framework, a permanent subsidy is put in place and rates per room are brought into line with levels proposed in consultations in 2018.

Council Members also welcomed the Government's \$100 million election commitment for NT homelands. Members passed a resolution seeking a commitment from the Commonwealth Government to ongoing funding for homelands and to co-design a process for the distribution of homelands funding.

"This is important for all Aboriginal people on homelands and for Aboriginal people in the Anindilyakwa region," Mr Thomas Amagula, Deputy Chair of Anindilyakwa Land Council, said.

The combined Executives also discussed township leasing arrangements on Aboriginal land. Chairman of the Northern Land Council noted that funding for townships leases and the cost of administering these leases comes from the Aboriginals Benefits Account.

"The Government should pay for this somewhere else. It should not come from ABA – that is Aboriginal money," said Mr Bush-Blanasi. Executive members agreed to send a delegation to Canberra to discuss these issues with Minister Burney, Minister McCarthy, Senator Dodson and Member for Lingjari, Marion Scrymgour.

ENDS